

The Social Circumstances in which Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel Composed and Published

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In 2009, musicologist Angela Mace Christian detected the style of the composer Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel in the recording of a piano sonata attributed to Felix Mendelssohn. Christian was not convinced, however, by the evidence for this attribution to Felix and further investigated the sonata's manuscript and musical style. Her research resulted in the successful identification of Hensel's *Easter Sonata*, composed around 1828-1829 and supposed to be lost.<sup>1</sup>

The correction of the *Easter Sonata*'s attribution to Hensel received coverage beyond academic journals; news publications such as *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Smithsonian Magazine* proclaimed that a "Mendelssohn masterpiece" "finally gets its due," and that "Mendelssohn's sister finally had her own musical genius honored."<sup>2,3</sup> Furthermore, the BBC broadcasted the international premiere of the work under Hensel's name as a part of its 2017 International Women's Day celebration.<sup>4</sup> The awareness of Hensel as a composer undoubtedly increased thanks to this popular coverage. Yet, if the purpose of correct attribution is to allow a composer to be evaluated on their own merit, in their own right, the reattribution of the *Easter Sonata* has perhaps not yet met that purpose.

Glancing over the comments section of the article from *The Guardian*, one can see that the standard by which (at least some) readers approached the evaluation of Hensel's worth as a composer and value as someone who deserved being listened to was comparison to her brother Felix and other iconic names of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Such a reaction raises a plethora of questions, the least of which being: Why should Hensel's work have merit based on whether her work *might* have been received as well as that of her successful male contemporaries, or whether her work is as "sublime," "great," or "genius" (all highly subjective labels) as theirs? Can she not be received today as a new composer without advance

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<sup>1</sup> Angela Mace Christian, "Easter Sonata Discovery," *Angela Mace Christian*, accessed 11 April 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Furness, "Mendelssohn's sister finally has her own musical genius honored," *The Telegraph*, last modified 4 March 2017, accessed 8 April 2020.

Derek Hawkins, "A Mendelssohn masterpiece was really his sister's. After 188 years, it premiered under her name," *The Washington Post*, last modified 9 March 2017, accessed 8 April 2020.

Sheila Hayman, "A Fanny Mendelssohn masterpiece finally gets its due," *The Guardian*, last modified 8 March 2017, accessed 8 April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Christian, "Easter Sonata Discovery."

<sup>4</sup> Christian, "Easter Sonata Discovery." The first premiere of the *Easter Sonata* under Hensel's name was performed in the U.S. in 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Hayman, "A Fanny Mendelssohn masterpiece finally gets its due."

judgements, especially given that her work has rarely had the opportunity to be published and publicly performed?

These questions assume that publication was a mark of a composer's professional success. To be clear, this was true for male composers; female composers, on the other hand, were not expected to enter a profession, and thus publication would never have signified professional—then “masculine”—success except in rare cases, such as Luise Adolpha Le Beau. Understanding Hensel's circumstances and how they affected her composition only underscores today's folly of determining a composer's worth by comparing them to others, especially others of different—and more privileged—circumstances. To fully answer the above questions would require a broad analysis of gender roles and discrimination in music aesthetics, theory, and performance practice, as well as an analysis of intersecting movements, such as nationalism, anti-Semitism, and retrenchment of a classical music “tradition.” This paper aims to address one aspect of such a sweeping analysis by discussing why Hensel published so little of her work.

Multiple reasons compelled Hensel to not publish her compositions under her own name until her forties, the foremost among them being the social expectations of nineteenth-century upper-class German society which determined the environment in which Hensel composed. According to those expectations, it was unfeminine and therefore improper for a woman, especially an upper-class woman, to be active in the public sphere. Hensel's family defined their expectations for her based on these social frameworks. Their belief that she must prioritize the proper roles of wife and mother, and that her music would “ornament” those roles, simply further articulated the expectations of Hensel's society. Thus, one understands that a primary reason why Hensel published so little of her work under her own name was the conformist pressures from contemporary upper-class German society as well as her family's corresponding expectations.

### **Social Status and Class in Bourgeois Society**

The most frequently cited reason for Hensel's hesitance to publish is the impropriety of her doing so; “for a ‘lady’ of her family background and social position, it would not have been considered

respectable [to publish her music under her own name].”<sup>6</sup> The prevailing view was that “the cultivated Berlin lady” had no financial need, being provided for by her father or husband, and was thus free to fulfill her proper domestic role and maintain the virtues of “modesty” and “obedience,” “qualities that could not be preserved while appearing in public and pursuing a career.”<sup>7</sup> Hensel’s father, Abraham Mendelssohn, wrote in a letter to Hensel on her twenty-third birthday about her domestic role: “You must... prepare more earnestly and eagerly for your real calling, the only calling of a young woman—I mean the state of a housewife.”<sup>8</sup> Abraham’s instruction highlights the importance placed on domestic duties for women in opposition to other activities, including music. Felix’s letter from 1837 in response to his mother pushing him to encourage Hensel to publish concisely illustrates the social view that domestic roles must take priority for women:

“If [Fanny] does resolve to publish anything, I will do all in my power to obtain every facility for her, and to relieve her, so far as I can, from all trouble which can possibly be spared her. But to *persuade* her to publish anything I cannot, because *this is contrary to my views and my convictions*... I consider the publication of a work as a *serious matter* (at least it ought to be so), for I maintain that no one should publish unless they are resolved to appear as *an author for the rest of their life*... From my knowledge of Fanny I should say she has neither inclination nor vocation for authorship. She is too much *all that a woman ought to be* for this. She regulates her house, and *neither thinks of the public nor of the musical world, nor even of music at all, until her first duties are fulfilled*. Publishing would only disturb her in these.”<sup>9</sup>

Like his father, Felix emphasizes that her family and home are Hensel’s first responsibilities before music. He goes farther in elucidating how publishing would “disturb” Hensel in her duties and in positing that Hensel does not think “even of music at all” until those duties are completed. Though Hensel demonstrates in her letters and diary that she was fully aware of how she was expected to prioritize, Felix’s last statement seems more reflective of prevailing theory rather than reality when one remembers how much energy Hensel invested in composition and performance, especially as she grew older.

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene Gates, “Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel: A Life within Domestic Limits,” *The Kapralova Society Journal* 5, Issue 2 (Fall 2007): 4.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy B. Reich, “The Power of Class: Fanny Hensel” in *Mendelssohn and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 88, 92.

<sup>8</sup> “Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel” in *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Carol Neuls-Bates (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 146-147.

<sup>9</sup> Author’s emphasis. *Women in Music*, 148-149.

For Hensel, as a woman of the nineteenth-century upper class, “receiving money for musical activities meant compromising her social position” because it “might well endanger the morals and character of a lady.”<sup>10,11</sup> Hensel’s letter to Felix announcing her first publications in 1846 remark on this concern for women’s morals: “I’ve done it of my own free will and cannot blame anyone in my family if aggravation results from it (friends and acquaintances have indeed been urging me for a long time)... I hope I won’t disgrace all of you through my publishing, as I’m no *femme libre*.”<sup>12</sup> Anticipating objections from her family, Hensel defends her morals and character by distancing herself from those of controversial female figures, such as Madame de Staël and George Sand.<sup>13</sup> Therefore only while Hensel’s music remained “an amateur activity carried on in her own home and for which she was not paid” was it socially acceptable for her to compose, perform on piano, and conduct in concerts.<sup>14,15</sup> It is notable that the professional women musicians of the nineteenth century, such as pianist and composer Clara Schumann née Wieck, “were not women from the bourgeois aristocratic class” and “worked because of need.”<sup>16</sup> As a lady from a wealthy family with a high social status, Hensel had no financial reason to justify an entrance into publishing or performing. Accordingly, Hensel’s one appearance in public was for a charity benefit; she received no money for her performance.<sup>17</sup>

Such stigma against professional women did not prevent Hensel from performing or having her compositions performed. She seized upon the full extent of her resources and “became the central figure in a flourishing salon, for which she created most of her compositions and where she performed on the

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<sup>10</sup> Marian Wilson Kimber, “The ‘Suppression’ of Fanny Mendelssohn: Rethinking Feminist Biography,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 118.

<sup>11</sup> Marcia J. Citron, “Women and the Lied, 1775-1850” in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986), 227.

<sup>12</sup> *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, ed. Marcia J. Citron (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1987), 349.

<sup>13</sup> Angela Mace Christian, “Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Amateur or Professional?” in *Mendelssohn Studieren: Beiträge zur neueren deutschen Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Roland Dieter Schmidt-Hensel and Christoph Schulte (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2017), 158.

<sup>14</sup> Reich, 91.

<sup>15</sup> “Mendelssohn(-Bartholdy) [Hensel], Fanny (Cäcilie),” *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, ed. Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel (New York: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1995), 323.

<sup>16</sup> Reich, 92.

<sup>17</sup> *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, 323.

piano and conducted.”<sup>18</sup> Since she hosted the salon in her home, and as the audience attended only by invitation (as opposed to ticketed concerts where the public could access tickets), the regular concerts which became known as the *Sonntagmusik* “would not conflict with her role as wife and mother.”<sup>19,20</sup> Hensel composed some of her longest and most instrumentally expanded works for these concerts, which served as a means to access “a small choir which she rehearsed on Friday afternoons” and an orchestra of professional musicians which were necessary to perform those compositions.<sup>21,22</sup> Hensel’s *Sonntagmusik* were no simple affairs. She arranged formal programs and composed much of the repertoire for bi-weekly concerts that could draw as many as two-hundred guests<sup>23,24</sup> Indeed, the *Sonntagmusik* “became very prestigious events, and it was not uncommon for royalty or visiting musical celebrities to be seen in the audience.”<sup>25</sup>

Hensel evaded social censure in another way through which in all likelihood she became a fairly well-known composer. While it was inappropriate for her to publish under her own name, it was appropriate to publish under a male “editor’s” or collaborator’s name—in Hensel’s case, her brother’s.<sup>26</sup> During her early twenties, Hensel contributed a total of six Lieder to Felix’s Opus 8 and Opus 9; publishing with Felix under his name “afforded Fanny an audience beyond her familiar circle in Berlin, while the suppression of her identity safeguarded the privacy of the family.”<sup>27</sup> Contrary to multiple scholars’ claim that Felix stole Hensel’s Lieder, family letters and reviews of the published Lieder demonstrate Fanny’s equal role in the publishing process as well as acknowledgement and praise of her compositions.<sup>28</sup> After Op. 8 was published in 1826-1827, “the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* claimed

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<sup>18</sup> *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, 323.

<sup>19</sup> *Sonntagmusik*, or “Sunday musicale.” Gates, 7-8.

<sup>20</sup> Angela Mace Christian, “Hensel [née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie,” *Oxford Music Online: Grove Music Online*, last modified 28 November 2018, accessed 12 April 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Gates, 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Reich, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Gates, 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> Christian, “Hensel [née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie.”

<sup>25</sup> Gates, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Reich, 89.

<sup>27</sup> R. Larry Todd, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 104-105, 143.

<sup>28</sup> Kimber, 119.

that... a duet composed by Fanny, is the best song in the collection.”<sup>29</sup> A review of the same opus by John Thomson, a critic for the *Harmonicon* and a London acquaintance of Felix, simultaneously demonstrates a general prejudice against women composers and a strong admiration for Hensel’s work:

“I see so many ladies without one atom of genius, coming forward to the public with their musical crudities, and, because these are printed, holding up their heads as if they were finished musicians.... [Miss Mendelssohn] is no superficial musician; she has studied the science deeply, and writes with the freedom of a master. Her songs are distinguished by tenderness, warmth, and originality: some which I heard were exquisite.”<sup>30</sup>

Even Queen Victoria became aware of Fanny’s role as composer. As Felix wrote to his mother about visiting the Queen in England: “I naturally asked her [the Queen] to choose something from that [Felix’s op. 8]... and what did she pick? “Lovelier and lovelier”... I then had to confess that Fanny had written the song (found it difficult, actually, but pride must have a fall) and asked her to sing me one of my very own, too... She’d be happy to, she said.”<sup>31</sup> Felix’s letter indicates that he was forthcoming about Fanny’s authorship and further shows that her co-publication was hardly a secret.

Opus 9, published in 1830, appears similarly collaborative and demonstrates how Hensel negotiated social expectations. Hensel wrote to Felix that she “shoved [her songs] down Schlesinger’s [the publisher] throat,” which suggests “an especially active role on her part” in selecting and incorporating her *Lieder* into the publication.<sup>32</sup> The apparent force required to convince Schlesinger to accept Hensel’s compositions also indicates “the sort of resistance a woman attempting to publish her music might face.”<sup>33</sup> It is interesting that Hensel’s son, Sebastian, writes that the identities of Hensel’s *Lieder* in each opus were “well known among the friends of the family, but the public imagined her share of Felix’s publications to be much larger.”<sup>34</sup> Sebastian does not, however, note any negative social consequences for such public awareness. From that lack of consequences one can surmise that Hensel’s

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<sup>29</sup> Citron, “Women and the Lied, 1775-1850,” 232.

<sup>30</sup> Gates, 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin (Belmont: Schirmer, 2008 [1984]), 316-317.

<sup>32</sup> Kimber, 119.

<sup>33</sup> Kimber, 119.

<sup>34</sup> Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847) from letters and journals*, vol. 2, trans. Carl Klingemann (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), accessed through Hathi Trust Digital Library, 31.

“modesty” in publishing her work under a male editor’s name maintained her social reputation while allowing her compositions to have a public audience.

### **The Professional Music Institutions**

In addition to the social prohibition on professional ladies, publication by women composers was systemically discouraged in the professional music world. The turn of the nineteenth century witnessed sociopolitical trends that led to “women’s increased activity in bourgeois music-making” and a gradual enlargement of society’s “concept of appropriate musical education and activities for women.”<sup>35</sup> This enlarged conception of appropriate musical activities did not extend to the public sphere, and women were encouraged to perform and compose music within the home. The most basic manifestation of such encouragement was the lack of public educational and networking opportunities afforded to women. Citron concisely summarizes the impact of restricted access to opportunities on women composers: “Most female composers did not travel extensively; thus, they lacked the opportunity to perform their pieces for a wide audience and to meet the people necessary to catapult their names into professional prominence.”<sup>36</sup> Without travel, women composers were unable “to try out works for large audiences and make the necessary revisions after rehearsals, to hear painful criticism that would allow her to grow and develop as a composer.”<sup>37</sup> The social discouragement against publishing as discussed above only contributed to this lack of access to a wide audience.<sup>38</sup> In Hensel’s case, her brother Felix was provided with a “grand tour” around Europe to “launch” his career while she remained in Berlin with some travel around the German states.<sup>39</sup> In a letter in 1836 to her friend Klingemann in London, Hensel commented on the effects of losing her audience as her family circle shifted and spent time away from home:

“It is a pleasure to me to find a public for my little pieces in London, for here I have none at all... If nobody ever offers an opinion, or takes the slightest interest in one’s productions, one loses in time not only all pleasure in them, but all power of judging their

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<sup>35</sup> Citron, “Women and the Lied, 1775-1850,” 225.

<sup>36</sup> Citron, “Women and the Lied, 1775-1850,” 241.

<sup>37</sup> Reich, 94.

<sup>38</sup> Citron, “Women and the Lied, 1775-1850,” 241.

<sup>39</sup> Gates, 6.



value... But my own delight in music and [Wilhelm] Hensel's sympathy keep me awake still, and I cannot help considering it a sign of talent that I do not give it up, though I can get nobody to take an interest in my efforts."<sup>40</sup>

Hensel's comments reveal the compositional stimulus which any kind of audience gave her as well as the unreliability of her access to an audience. Three years later, Hensel had a once-in-a-lifetime chance to travel to Italy with her husband. Her experience there significantly contrasted with her experience in Berlin. In her diary, she wrote,

"I compose a great deal now [in Rome], for nothing inspires me like praise, whilst censure discourages and depresses me... I must not conceal from myself that the atmosphere of admiration and homage in which I have lived may have something to do with it, for even when quite young I never was made so much of as I have been here, and that this is very pleasant nobody can deny."<sup>41</sup>

Evidently, having such strong, continuous access to an audience was a new experience for Hensel; by traveling, she received inspiration, encouragement, and feedback for her compositions.

At the same time, Kimber and Christian remind us that such a lack of egalitarian systemic supports is hardly surprising in a society that did not expect women to have public careers.<sup>42, 43</sup> Hensel's international musical reputation was a different variety of success than the highly public exploits of the Romantic "Great Composer."<sup>44</sup> The infrastructure in place supported women as amateurs, not professionals who intended to grow their skills for the long-term. It is telling that Hensel herself never expressed career ambitions in publishing her compositions but viewed publication rather as "a source of personal motivation."<sup>45</sup> The difference in expectations and therefore public experiences for women and men is easily seen in the critical review and publishing institutions which Hensel encountered when she decided to publish several of her compositions—under her own name—during her early forties. Bote & Bock and Schlesinger, two rival Berlin publishers, had "a view to bringing out more of her works" and made publishing offers to Hensel in 1846, and she accepted both of them.<sup>46</sup> (Apparently, Schlesinger no

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<sup>40</sup> *Women in Music*, 145-146.

<sup>41</sup> *Women in Music*, 149-150.

<sup>42</sup> Kimber, 120-122.

<sup>43</sup> Christian, "Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Amateur or Professional?," 158.

<sup>44</sup> Kimber, 121.

<sup>45</sup> Kimber, 118.

<sup>46</sup> Gates, 11.

longer felt such compunction about women composers as in 1830 when Hensel “shoved” her Lieder “down his throat.” The difference of sixteen years perhaps established Hensel’s lauded musical reputation.) Notably, Hensel did not initiate either publication herself; this “modesty” probably made her publishing under her own name more acceptable. This idea is supported by the fact that, in the letter to Felix in which she told him that she was “beginning to publish,” Hensel writes, “I can console myself, on the other hand, with the knowledge that I in no way sought out or induced the type of musical reputation that might have solicited such offers.”<sup>47</sup> Hensel emphasizes this sense of modesty, establishing her publication as more acceptable because she did not apply to the publishers.

The publishers’ interest in her compositions appears serious—that is, they intended her pieces for critical review. At the same time, the publishers may have also seen it as a form of “vanity publication,” the practice of which is criticized by the *Harmonicon*’s John Thomsen through his references to “so many ladies without one atom of genius” who hold up “their heads as if they were finished musicians” because “their musical crudities... are printed.”<sup>48,49</sup> However, given Hensel’s strong reputation as a highly talented pianist, composer, and salon hostess by that time, as well as the contrast Thomsen made between Hensel and vain amateurs, it is far from likely that the publishers thought they were printing “musical crudities.” This interpretation is only underscored by the fact that the *publishers solicited* Hensel’s compositions. Indeed, in addition to her rejection of the *femme libre* in her previously referenced letter to Felix, Fanny wrote about her dilettante status in comparison to her publishing offers:

“Bote & Bock have made offers to me the likes of which have *perhaps never before been given to a dilettante composer of my sex, whereupon Schlesinger even outdid them*. I do not in the least imagine that this will continue, but am pleased at the moment, having decided to embark on this course, to see my best works appear in print.”<sup>50</sup>

Hensel highlights the uniqueness of the publishers’ offers as well as her status as an amateur composer. She is evidently excited at the prospect of having her works printed; her qualifier of “not in the least”

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<sup>47</sup> *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, ed. Marcia J. Citron, 349.

<sup>48</sup> Kimber, 129.

<sup>49</sup> Gates, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Author’s emphasis. Gates, 11.

imagining a continuation in the publication of her works perhaps reveals that the possibility of it occurred to her but thought that possibility incompatible with the expectations for her social situation. The success of her publications nevertheless increased Hensel's musical gratification, anticipation of further publication, and what may be called gratitude for her unusual opportunity.<sup>51</sup> A year after her work was published, Hensel wrote, "It is enticing to have *this manner of success* at an age when such pleasures, *for women who experience them at all*, are usually at an end."<sup>52</sup> The dual nature of Hensel's publication—entering the public sphere yet retaining the nineteenth-century sense of propriety—speaks to how Hensel succeeded in negotiating social and institutional expectations and taking advantage of opportunities to achieve intellectual satisfaction.

The critical reviews of Hensel's 1846 publications reveal the gendered assumptions with which critics approached her work which prompted them to predicate true merit on any "masculine" qualities in her music. One illuminating critique of Hensel's Opus 2 said that it was written by a woman, yet its "outward composition *betrays* no trace of a *female* hand, but allows rather the *supposition* of a *masculine, serious study of the art*."<sup>53</sup> The connotations of the critic's word choice as well as their indication that only masculine traits comprised serious study demonstrates the social expectations for how women interacted with music. Another critic also referred to "a *masculine* quality in the overall artistic conception" of Hensel's compositions and praised two of them as "Schumannesque"—suggesting value through similarity to the style of a male contemporary.<sup>54</sup> Even if women composers' work "exhibit[ed] a musical sophistication equal to that of male contemporaries," any characteristics perceived by critics as inappropriately feminine promptly associated a composition with "an air of dilettantism."<sup>55</sup> In the eyes of critics, the feminine amateur was an innately inferior composer compared to the masculine professional composer. Other instances of praise for Hensel's compositions also reveal these suppositions. For

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<sup>51</sup> Reich, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Author's emphasis. Gates, 12.

<sup>53</sup> Author's emphasis. Gates, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Citron, "Women and the Lied, 1775-1850," 234-235.

<sup>55</sup> Citron, "Women and the Lied, 1775-1850," 224, 241-242.

example, other reviews lauded Hensel's "compositional dexterity" yet criticized her "lack of emotional depth."<sup>56</sup> These references to technical mastery and emotional skill represent the critical idea of a "genius-personality" which has presented women artists and intellectuals with a contradiction since the Enlightenment.<sup>57</sup> The critic conceptualized a serious composer as a man who could channel both "masculine" (music theory) and "feminine" (emotion) characteristics, positing that women could have neither simultaneously. Such criticisms confirmed Hensel's dilettante status by granting her one but not the other characteristic, even as they acknowledged and praised her compositional talent.

Another example of critics' approach to and expectations for women composers is aptly illustrated by a contemporary review of composer Luise Adolpha Le Beau, who was unique in that she did compose professionally—that is, for a living and long-term.<sup>58</sup> The critic wrote, "We believe we can give the works of Le Beau *no more worthy honor* than to say from the outset that everything we have heard from her *deserves to be judged by the standards we are accustomed to using—not for her female colleagues—but for her contemporary male colleagues.*"<sup>59</sup> To be considered a serious composer of merit, a female composer had to be judged as a male composer would be judged despite the inequity of their social circumstances. Reflecting the social expectations of its society, the professional music institutions which Hensel encountered did not perceive women composers as professional or having the possibility of being professional and thus provided no systemic support for women composers, either through education, critical reviews, or publication. Nevertheless, Hensel created her own success by taking advantage of musical activities that could be hosted from her home in addition to publication opportunities.

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<sup>56</sup> Citron, "Women and the Lied, 1775-1850," 234-235.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew Head, "Genre, Romanticism, and Female Authorship: Fanny Hensel's 'Scottish' Sonata in G Minor." *Nineteenth Century Music Review* 4, no. 2 (2007): 87.

<sup>58</sup> Judith E. Olson, "Luise Adolpha Le Beau : Composer in Late-Nineteenth Century Germany" in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986), 292.

<sup>59</sup> Author's emphasis. Olson, "Luise Adolpha Le Beau : Composer in Late-Nineteenth Century Germany," 292.

## **The Works of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel: Looking Forward**

Hensel's compositions and the decisions she made regarding music were significantly shaped by her social circumstances. She navigated perceptions of and expectations for women's roles in society as well as the institutional manifestations of those expectations to create her own success story within a semi-private sphere, as a composer, performer, and *saloniste* with an acclaimed musical reputation. As scholars and the general public begin to hear her music for the first time in the twenty-first century, let us dispense with the notion that we must judge Hensel's merit by the standard of whether she would have succeeded in the nineteenth century if she had composed in the same circumstances and privilege as her male contemporaries. Such a standard forgets that critics *did* praise her work despite their final judgements of immature writing. But that is neither here nor there; the critics of today are not required to oblige the social frameworks which shaped the critics of yesterday. Let us give Hensel's music an equitable chance *now*. Why not, if we can hear another piece of music by which we are moved?

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