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Out of the Shadows: Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, and the Will to Persist

Juella Baltonado
CUNY Hunter College

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Out of the Shadows

Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, and the Will to Persist

by

Juella Baltonado

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Professor Catherine Coppola

Signature

May 9, 2017

Date

Professor Michele Cabrini

Signature of Second Reader

To my mentor, whose endless encouragement
has given me the strength to persevere.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is about two of the strongest women in the nineteenth century, whose brilliance overcame the impossible. Their strength and perseverance inspired this work, and I will take those qualities with me in all that I do. May this work help solidify their legacy, and bring them closer to the canon. I hope this work also serves to inspire women, young and young at heart, to never think that they have no place in the world, professional or otherwise.

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Chapters

Introduction

I. Loss of Identity and Agency,
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II. Education

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IV. Credit Where Credit is Due

Introduction

There is a default gender when discussing the identities of musician and composer, and this pre-conceived notion is an unspoken bias rooted in the history of discrimination against women in the music industry. The structural make-up of society dictated gender roles, which then played into the obstruction of women's upward mobility. Even women of higher economic status were subject to prohibitive gender expectations, furthering the argument that gender was a key factor in the discrimination. However difficult the situations were for many women in nineteenth-century Germany, they still found ways to succeed in music.

Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel were two formidable composers; however, many are unaware that these women composed or played music, let alone that they experienced discrimination and suppression based on their gender. Clara and Fanny, like most women in music, were barred from key opportunities that kept them from establishing their music as part of the canon. Too often, these historical composers have become almost invisible, and have remained in the shadows of their male counterparts. Due to their strong connection with these men, Fanny and Clara are the perfect subjects to help uncover the biases and discrimination that their gender brought them.

This thesis will explore the issues Clara Wieck and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel faced that cut away at their identity and agency, and will reveal some of the ways in which both composers persevered. Second, it will contextualize one of the means of perseverance: education, uncovering how these women of differing financial standings were able to attain musical knowledge. Third, it will inspect a counterbalance to the hard-won education: the mixed messages that these women heard throughout their lives, pushing them to and away from being a musician or composer. It will also explore the gender biases that the women faced in their lives,

especially in the struggle to establish themselves as composers. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications of the roadblocks to perseverance in light of a new discovery of Fanny Mendelssohn's music.

Loss of Identity and Agency, and the Will to Persist

There is much data to suggest that throughout Clara Schumann's life, she in some ways lost much of her own identity and agency, be it partially or entirely. This is not to say that Clara was hidden in the shadows in her own life. In fact, for much of it, she was under the spotlight, being one of the most prolific concert pianists of her time. However, in many instances her fate was controlled by those who held real power in the dynamic, most of whom were men. Her father provides the first example of this. Before she was even born, he decided she was to be his "ideal virtuoso piano pupil."¹ It is common for many parents to live vicariously through their children, projecting their dreams and unfulfilled goals onto their legacy. Though in the case of Clara, we see some particularly unnerving red flags. As a child, Clara was meek and barely spoke. In the diary Friedrich Wieck started for Clara when she was seven, he noted how she did not speak until she was over four years old. He claims she also understood very little, and that her self-absorbed disposition signaled that she was slightly deaf. The rumors of her slowness and deafness were common during her childhood.² It seemed there was less talk and more music playing in her home as a child. Scholars like Anna Burton assume that perhaps her child development was stunted because of her training in music.³ She learned to read and write music before she learned how to speak her native tongue. This development issue did not resolve itself quickly by any means, as she was often left under the care of her maidservant, who spoke very little. What did develop, however, were her incredible musical abilities and a father-daughter relationship that was centered around Clara's identity as a child prodigy. He trained her in formal music theory, from harmony and counterpoint to composition. She received instruction in voice,

¹ Anna Burton, "Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck: A Creative Partnership," *Music & Letters* 69, no. 2 (1988): 214.

² Nancy Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Woman and the Artist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 14.

³ Burton, 214.

violin, score reading, and orchestration.⁴ This childhood daily routine developed skills that even Robert Schumann would have yet to learn until after they married.⁵

A blatant loss of identity was evident in her diaries. Until Clara left her home at eighteen years of age, Friedrich Wieck supervised her every waking moment, writing in her diaries with her, and shockingly, sometimes even for her. This was not only a breach of privacy, but also a very literal loss of identity. As Clara's main manager and teacher, her father often wrote in her diaries correspondence that pertained to business, seemingly to teach Clara how to go about managing correspondence and arranging concert tours.⁶ Whether the diary served as a tool for practical development or personal reflection, it was highly problematic for Friedrich to supervise Clara's diaries, in that diaries are supposed to be private. In effect, a supervised diary not only disables any sort of autonomy, but also discourages any individuality in thought and personality. This level of supervision is tantamount to policing Clara's thoughts and speech, as well as an insertion of propaganda. What becomes of this is not a formation or recording of one's existence, but rather a mandated transference of personality and mindset.

While it is likely that Clara's success in her sixty-year career as a concert pianist is due in part to her father's teachings, despite her success, one must step away from romanticizing her childhood. It is evident that Clara had very little to say in her fate in music. Friedrich had decided everything for her. This trend carried on even after Clara had left her father, as Robert replaced her father's paradoxical role as both a controlling and encouraging figure.

It is well known that no musical union could compare to that of Clara and Robert. The two studied and played music often. They sought each other's opinion on pieces they played,

⁴ Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 212.

⁵ Reich, 215.

⁶ Nancy Reich and Anna Burton, "Clara Schumann: Old Sources, New Readings," *The Musical Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1984): 335-336.

pieces they composed, and those that they heard. Robert carried the torch as Clara's main source of encouragement when she left her father's home. From the moment they petitioned the courts to grant them their marriage, he acted as a gateway to her liberation. This was the first real step away from her father's total control. Friedrich disapproved of Robert, most likely out of the threat he posed to Clara's security. Though nine years her senior, Robert was far less financially wealthy than Clara.

What is less often discussed in the literature is the fact that in the context of nineteenth century German marriage practices, their union would be considered a bad match. The nineteenth century norms for marriage necessitated a male match with the capability to financially provide for the female and their eventual family, which was understandably the realistic course of action, considering it was a matter of survival.⁷ Love alone could not provide for the household, or satisfy hunger. Despite the dismal reality that socioeconomic dispositions brought down on love, ironically, this was also a time when the notion of marriages based on love also began to be idealized. The emergence of romance literature prompted a change in standard, helping reform the societal views on marriage.⁸ Romanticism itself grew prevalent, and its influence not only extended to artistic circles, but it also affected sociopolitical thinking. Although the sentiment favored love-based matches, evidence provides strong correlations with economic status and marriage. Peter Borscheid's study on marriage in Germany during the 1800s points to the fact that despite the widely propagated romantic notions of marriage, this type of union was not so much practiced as it was mostly idealized. Research also sheds light on how German citizens would often marry people of similar status. Marrying above or below one's

⁷ Peter Borscheid, "Romantic Love or Material Interest: Choosing Partners in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of Family History* 11, no. 2 (1986): 158.

⁸ *Ibid*, 159.

status was ill-advised; the goal was to marry into the best economic situation. This study helps inform us of Friedrich's well-known disapproval of their relationship, the consequences of which put incredible strain on the marriage, and consequently, Clara's artistic development and career. These factors dismantle the idealized image of the Schumann marriage, often romanticized for the simple fact that they were both successful artists. This union was far from blissful, and it presented many roadblocks for Clara.

One of the hurdles that Clara had to maneuver through was the civil suit that Friedrich filed against Robert Schumann. During this time, Saxon law required consent from the parents of both parties. Were there to be any rejections, an appeal to the court would follow. Robert was an orphan, and therefore did not have to worry about acquiring consent, and Clara's mother, Marianne Tromlitz Wieck Bargiel, gave Clara her blessing. Friedrich was the only one standing in the way. What followed was a long and expensive civil battle that ended in Schumann's favor. Friedrich had no intention of allowing his daughter to marry Robert, and he filed the suit on the grounds that Robert was not wealthy enough to financially provide for her (though ironically, he had provided for her financially for a full year prior to their marriage), that he was not socially skilled, and that he was crippled as a composer and as a performer, thus unable to help advance Clara's career. Friedrich also argued to the courts that Clara was incapable of managing a household, because she was trained as an artist.⁹ Friedrich's lawsuit against Schumann threatened both Clara's and Robert's careers as well as their relationship with Friedrich. Outside of the case, Friedrich also slandered the young artists, spreading libelous stories across Leipzig about Robert, and defamatory claims about Clara in Hamburg and Berlin prior to her performances in those cities. He even claimed she would ruin any pianos she touched.¹⁰ These

⁹ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 60-73.

¹⁰ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 75.

devastating rumors and the trial were large-scale attempts at character assassination, working to undo the many years of work that both the artists spent gaining the fame and support of many people through their talents. They serve as further evidence that Friedrich was not truly supportive of Clara, and beyond that, they exemplify the struggles that this marriage brought into Clara's life.

Even after they married, the union was still problematic for Clara's lifestyle as an artist. Robert did not exactly hold modern views when it came to gender roles in the household. He maintained traditional opinions on how Clara should function in their home:

To have children and a husband who is always living in the realms of imagination do not go to together with composing. She cannot work at it regularly and I am often disturbed to think how many profound ideas are lost because she cannot work them out. But Clara herself knows her main occupation is as a mother and I believe she is happy in the circumstance and would not want them changed.¹¹

Robert claims Clara is happy to relinquish composing and abide by the either/or principles of work life and family life that the nineteenth century society has so long preserved. Clara loses her voice yet again with the assumptions that Robert makes about her desires and contentment. It is problematic for Robert to assume that he knows what his wife wants, especially considering there is evidence that opposes these assumptions. There are indications of an inner battle between personal impulses and outer expectations in a few of Clara's entries in her diary, which suggest that Robert's statement was not entirely baseless. It seems that the patriarchal rhetoric sometimes slips out through her tongue as well:

A woman must not wish to compose—there never was one able to do it. Am I intended to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that. That was

¹¹ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 215.

something with which only my father tempted me in former days. But I soon gave up believing this. May Robert always create, that must always make me happy.¹²

Unpacking this statement uncovers layers of internalized oppression. The first statement reflects the hegemonic masculinity that long pervaded society and rooted itself into its daily mentality. By virtue of an ambitious father, Clara found herself in a unique situation that allowed her the privilege of a career. She acquired the skills to subsist without aid, and the physical endurance to maintain a long, healthy life. Her fear based on the lack of precedent is frustrating from the modern perspective, given the historical information currently available on female composers. It is curious, even so, for her to claim that no other woman was able to do it, considering women like Hildegard von Bingen were composing as early as the twelfth century. However, just as the modern society does not know quite enough about Clara Schumann, the nineteenth century society was unaware still of Hildegard von Bingen. The earliest German biographical literature on her dates back to 1879 with J.P. Schmelzeis's work, *Das Leben und Wirken der heiligen Hildegardis nebst einem Anhang hildegard'scher Lieder mit ihren Melodien*, and an even earlier biography published in Paris in 1855, Jacques Paul Migne's *Sanctae Hildegardis Abbatisae Opera Omnia* was not printed in German until 1980.¹³ Clara would not have come across this literature, as she was writing this around 1840. Furthermore, her education was limited, as she did not attend a formal music institution, and her studies focused mostly on practical and theoretical studies, as opposed to history. Still, at this point in her life, Clara was already given official titles and accolades, the most prominent being the one the Emperor of

¹² Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 216.

¹³ Ian D. Bent and Marianne Pfau, "Hildegard of Bingen," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13016>.

Austria bestowed upon her in 1838: Royal and Imperial Chamber Virtuosa. This honor was unprecedented, for Clara was not only a woman, but she was also eighteen, a foreigner, and a Protestant. She broke ground solely due to her remarkable ability. She also racked up quite a bit of fame across Western Europe.

It is surprising for a woman already setting her own precedent, in spite of her gender, to be unwilling to pursue composition professionally. Yet, she calls composition a temptation, indicating that somehow, she views this as something sinful, going against the societal expectations of her as a woman, or even on a different level, challenging Robert's position as the composer in the house. There was no reason for her not to aspire to being a composer as a child, as she was encouraged to compose. Furthermore, whenever she presented her works to her husband, she was clearly frustrated by any negative comments he may have had on the work. This indicates that she cared for her compositions, and did not resign herself as merely an untalented woman. Furthermore, in Clara's last sentence quoted above, she does not affirm the statement as "I am happy that Robert creates," but rather, she phrases it as though she is trying to convince herself of this fact, "that *must always* make me happy," which means to say she has not yet fully accepted the fact that she is not to be a composer.

In many ways, her gender put her in a clear disadvantage due to societal expectations. As a mother of eight children, she often put aside her own creative pursuits to handle financial and family matters. She recognized that she could not perform due to "all sorts of household occupations."¹⁴ Bearing children did not necessarily stop her from performing, but pregnancies shortened the lengths of the concert tours.¹⁵ No preoccupations concerning children are noted in

¹⁴ Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life, Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 1.

¹⁵ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 112. The biographies do not mention any distress from Clara when it came to bearing children while performing concert tours. It seemed she accepted them as they came, but

men's lives as musicians and composers, despite being as much of a parent as their wives. Nevertheless, Clara persisted, and still forged through, balancing home life, a career, and her marriage. As we have seen, there were many instances of identity loss for Clara, as well as identities assigned to her. Although she was trained by her father in nearly every aspect of being an independent musician and a composer, he was culpable in stripping away her identity and agency. Moreover, her marriage brought much strain to her life as it did joy, and from the engagement on, there were struggles she had to face within her marriage, on top of the societal expectations that relegated her to traditional gender roles.

Just like Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn stole the spotlight in her household as the star pupil, the child prodigy of unprecedented skill. She was indeed advantaged by being four years Felix's senior, and therefore, much further along in her musical studies than he, despite having studied with him through adolescence. As Fanny was focused intently in her musical studies, she came to an abrupt change. At the age of fourteen, she was to have her confirmation and it was then that her father, Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, began to break the news to his daughter about the life he intended her to live. Abraham chose to convert his family to Lutheranism, a choice that would not only dictate the religious practices of their lives, but even more so their moral obligations based on their gender. He equated religious moral codes with legal codes, and so he was intent on having his children follow his religious ways.¹⁶ As his religious morality dictated, Fanny needed to dedicate herself to her home, family, and assume the role of motherhood.¹⁷ This, of course, left the idea of a career completely out of the question.

tried her best to continue being a working artist in order to feed both her family, and her artistic hunger. She understood the financial issues in her household and would sometimes seek opportunities to perform, of which she did not want Robert to be aware.

¹⁶ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, p. 68-69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Here we see the similarities between Clara and Fanny. Both women were impressive prodigies, and yet, due to their gender, societal expectations hampered their upward mobility and artistic growth. Clara's father differed in that he sought only to propel her career forward, although he wanted it done so on his terms, and often, to his financial benefit. Fanny's father was not one to deny the extent of her talents, yet his moral code dictated his attitude to her career. This was not a matter of whether or not he deemed Fanny good enough, gender and all, to be a musician; but it was gender that dictated that she was not destined to entertain professional careers. He wrote to Fanny that for Felix, "perhaps music will be his profession, whereas for you it can and must be an ornament, and never the fundamental bass-line of your existence and activity." He also adds that the joy she expresses when her brother wins applause proves that she "would have deserved it equally, had [she] been in his place."¹⁸

This letter must have sent a pang of devastation to young Fanny's heart. For years, she was relentless in her musical studies. Fanny was ahead of her brother in all aspects of musical ability. Compared to Clara Schumann, her economic status allowed her the privilege of financial stability. Yet, she was to see the seeds of her life's work freeze, never to come to fruition, all the while seeing her brother surpass her and actually pursue the musical career for which she seemed to have trained since childhood. That Papa Mendelssohn had to write a letter to his daughter, telling her specifically that she was not to even entertain the idea of being a musician, indicates a high probability that Fanny had intentions of pursuing this as a career. She was working tirelessly to perfection, often with the intention to please and impress her father. This makes the letter even more painful, considering that the very person who had given her these opportunities and the encouragement, the person to whom she looked for judgment and affirmation, was the

¹⁸ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 68.

one who wanted to put an end to her formal musical pursuits. Fanny fell victim to the same trappings that Clara endured. They both were given the opportunities and encouragement conducive to artistic development and yet, the narrative that women cannot succeed outside the confines of domesticity manifests in these barriers put forth by the very same people who enabled their development in the first place. Their journeys are more akin to pre-defined tracks laid for them by those who hold social power, most often men. They are to only go as far as those in power see fit, keeping them within certain boundaries in an effort to maintain the social order of gender roles. This a prime example of gender bias, given that gender alone supersedes ability. How insulting it must have been for Fanny to be better than her male counterparts, and yet be denied the opportunities she deserved, knowing that were she a man, the decision to pursue any profession would not have been questioned. Abraham and his wife, Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy gave their support to Felix unequivocally. It should be noted however, that not everyone in the extended Mendelssohn family approved of their decision to allow Felix to pursue music as a vocation. His uncle Jacob Bartholdy thought being a musician was neither a career nor a life, and advised them to have Felix study law and work in government. He thought it would be best to have art “remain a friend to him and a diversion.” Thus, it was not that men experienced no limitations or hurdles to overcome, but rather, they experienced disproportionately less limitations in their life choices. The adults at least argued over Felix’s career, whereas they all agreed that Fanny was not to have one at all.¹⁹

Fanny did not surrender these pursuits entirely, and it was difficult to cool her impassioned interests. When Felix went to Paris in 1825 to meet with the director of the Paris Conservatory, Luigi Cherubini, he was disappointed with the music scene and complained as

¹⁹ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 72.

such to his sister. To his disgust, many musicians were cruel, and put fame and money before their art. Frustrated with how low the educational level and artistic ambitions were, he wrote to Fanny about how awful he found it all. Fanny, of course, did not take the letter well at all, infuriated by Felix's gall to complain even one bit, when he was fortunate to be in Paris while she was forced to be left alone at home. She chastised him for the constant complaints in his letters, and asked him to consider writing about something pleasant for a change, like the paintings, gardens, or monuments around. He replied with rage, rebuking her assessment that he is in some kind of musical paradise. He cited the incredible lack of great programming, the dilettantism that the people exhibited, and called her blind and prejudiced for thinking she would know better than he, who was actually in Paris, how to judge the city and its music scene.²⁰ Certainly, Felix had a point, and a more accurate perspective of the musical life in Paris, but it never seemed to dawn on him how fortunate he was, and how jealous his sister might have been. His letters do not consider these feelings at all.

Once Fanny was resigned to the home, she had to live vicariously through her brother, and this included musical activities. To get around Abraham's restrictions on her education, Felix would pass on to her the lessons he would take from musician and composer, Carl Friedrich Zelter. However, once he stopped taking lessons, in essence, so did she.²¹ Here we see Felix function as an ally to Fanny in the face of her oppression, yet his new position as her superior, granted to him rather undeservingly so, still fed into her adversity. The second-hand education was yet another way in which Fanny's identity was being eclipsed. She was to follow only in her brother's footsteps in education, never able to move ahead. There was very little control over her musical pursuits, other than that which she could do at home.

²⁰ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 121-123.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

Domestic life for Fanny was not exactly as glamorous as Felix's new life in Paris, but she made the most of what she had in her home. She married Wilhelm Hensel, a painter. They had one boy, Sebastian Hensel. Her biographer Françoise Tillard suggests that later she conceived a second child, but suffered a miscarriage. Fanny did not write anything in her diaries for nearly an entire year, but one of Wilhelm's paintings depicts a fairy with drooping wings, and a child upside-down inside a flower. This mirrors a previous painting that Wilhelm created when they conceived Sebastian, where the painting depicted a fairy waving a butterfly over a flower with a sleeping child inside.²² Fanny experienced post-partum depression, which prompted her to find a way to recover. She turned to music, and brought back the Sontaggsmusik that her father had put together for them when they were younger, particularly for Felix's benefit.²³ The state of music in Berlin was impoverished to say the least, with few orchestras and barely any opportunities for musicians. Berlin artists required private performances like salons in order to make a living, since the government on the local or state level were not interested in sponsoring concert series or orchestras.²⁴ Unfortunately, the salons across the city were scattered, and often the gatherings invited amateur musicians. Felix had the opportunity to help revive the music scene in Berlin. When Carl Friedrich Zelter died in 1832, the post for director of the Singakademie opened up and the Mendelssohn family pushed Felix to apply. Unfortunately, the association voted decidedly against Felix in favor of Carl Friedrich Rungenhagen, a much older and less risky choice. The members could count on Rungenhagen to stay in Berlin; Felix was young and very interested in traveling. There were also rumors that the Singakademie, being a Christian

²² Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 196. There was an outbreak of cholera at the time, and many people suffered, including some of their friends and family. The conditions during this time made it unsurprising that Fanny fell ill, and that she had a miscarriage.

²³ Sontaggsmusik was the Mendelssohn family's way of holding Sunday performances, stimulating their children's learning and broadening their performance experience.

²⁴ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 198.

organization, could not vote in the son of a Jew as its director.²⁵ While Felix was unable to cultivate the music life in Berlin, Fanny's revival of Sontaggsmusik provided these musicians with an opportunity to perform.

In March of 1825, she wrote a detailed proposal for a music lovers' association that would be linked to the Singakademie.²⁶ Fanny thought that uniting these musicians in a more organized fashion could be more conducive to the production and attraction of fine musicians. Symphonies were the main focus, considering their dominance in instrumental music, but Fanny also wanted to form her own chorus. The plan was to alternate performances of vocal and instrumental music, with her playing solo piano in between. She calculated costs and fees for the public subscriptions, as well as the statement of the fees such as room and board, and service. Interestingly, she sought to only gather men in her institution, although noting how the Singakademie's members were mostly women and young girls.²⁷ The Singakademie was focused on sacred music, which Fanny argued was not appropriate for concert halls. The logic was that the concert series that she was planning required much publicity, and that women of "private backgrounds shy away from appearing before an audience."²⁸ Her association would require a large orchestra and a full hall, hopefully attracting a loud audience. The sort of music and audience she had in mind was not suited to the religious and smaller scale groups the Singakademie offered, though, it still does not explain why Fanny focused solely on having men run the association and perform in the orchestra of her concert series. She still stated that she wanted to play solo piano in the concerts. Fanny's perspective on female exclusion may be a sign

²⁵ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 208-209.

²⁶ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 208-220. The Mendelssohns chose to break with the Singakademie after they snubbed Felix, causing the association many losses and issues, and Felix left to be the director at Düsseldorf.

²⁷ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 199.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

of internalized gender norms; she complained about the advantages that Felix's gender gave his career, yet in her own music association, she continued to offer men the very same advantage. This is perhaps explained by the dominance of men in the orchestral world.²⁹ Her position also might be more nuanced, in that this was a pragmatic choice on Fanny's part. Mirroring the structure of well-established institutions could solidify her association. It would probably stand a better chance with men at the helm, considering the controversy that may surround the association if a woman were to run it. Even a person of her status was not expected to do anything but work and perform music at home.

She received much support from Wilhelm and Felix. Wilhelm encouraged musical activity at home, sometimes collaborating with her on certain pieces. He wrote the text to her most recent composition for voice and orchestra.³⁰ His general support for her musical pursuits made him an ally, and helped foster the environment where she rebuilt Sontaggsmusik. Felix was also very pleased with the idea of a new Sontaggsmusik, and wrote to her with encouragement, offering to write new compositions for her concert series. Her parents participated in the festivities as well, which demonstrates their continuing support for their daughter, allowing her to flourish in her pursuits as best she could within the confines of her private life. The programs Fanny put together for her Sontaggsmusik included trios, concertos, and quartets from major composers like Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart, as well as her own and Felix's works in the concerts.

²⁹ Collins, Cynthia, Cmusic, Natalie, Angelica Frey, D. Grant Smith, Jordan Smith, and Tom Head, "Contribution of Women Musicians to Symphony Orchestras," CMUSE. August 10, 2015, Accessed April 09, 2017, <http://www.cmusic.org/contribution-of-women-musicians-to-symphony-orchestras/>. The inclusion of women in major orchestras did not occur until the late 19th century into the 20th century. Many European women who wished to play in orchestras played in America. One of Clara Schumann's former students Mary Wurm founded a women's orchestra in Berlin in 1898, serving as the conductor.

³⁰ Tillard, 206.

The musicians in her Sontaggsmusik were amateurs, an attribute that frustrated Fanny considerably. Her friend Pauline Decker was an exception; she was a wonderful soprano with the fearlessness and talent to tackle *Fidelio* and the Queen of the Night aria from *Die Zauberflöte*.³¹ Still, Fanny had to spend some time rehearsing with them, hoping to get them to play at her level, or at Decker's level. Nevertheless, the performers grew in numbers, and the attendance rose with time. One of the concerts saw an attendance of a hundred people, including families of high status, and the mayor of Berlin. Françoise Tillard surmised that the Singakademie's rejection of Felix deprived Berlin of the man who could have transformed it into a musical capital.³² However, Fanny picked up the torch and cultivated the musical culture of Berlin when she revived Sontaggsmusik. In the end, Fanny was able to succeed where Felix failed.

Her concert series were incredibly successful, and served as evidence that Fanny was more than just an exceptional musician. Tying her to the home cut away so many opportunities from her life, and yet, with the conception of a large-scale revival of her father's Sontaggsmusik, and the voracity for music-making and composition, she was able to create a world of music within the boundaries of the societal expectations built around her, carving her own path to maintain artistic pursuits. This perseverance in the face of subjugation exemplifies how Fanny was a modern woman of her time. Undoubtedly, the financial safety that family afforded her made it possible for her to pursue the creation of a program of this sort, but it was Fanny's choice to make her home something other than a simple, domestic life. Fanny still had to juggle life and art as Clara did, with entertaining visits, maintaining the household, and caring for her husband and son. Still, she was unlike so many women of her status in the nineteenth century, as she became a pioneer in this sense. Contrasting her life with Felix, she was able to compose over

³¹ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, p. 218-219.

³² Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 216.

four hundred pieces in her lifetime, despite not having the freedom of devoting herself completely to her art as Felix was able to in his trips and careers abroad. Through her program, she was cultivating the musical life of Berlin, producing fine artists and refining amateur musicians, and promoting the love for classical music among the public. This was a massive feat, made sustainable not only by her family's wealth, but with her pragmatic structuring of the budget. Her proposal took into account unexpected expenses and included ways in which the society could save money, such as a subscription to a lending library to save money on scores. She wrote that nothing would be undertaken unless the costs were first covered.³³ Fanny exhibited business sense and fiscal responsibility despite having grown up without having to worry about financial issues. It exemplified the intellect that defined her character, even outside matters of musical ability. It seems no one could truly confine Fanny or her ambitions, since her unbridled energy and thirst for artistry always found its way.

³³ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 200.

Education

Success in music is dependent on access to education, an essential foundation upon which musicians can build. In the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution brought about changes in the industries like agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, which led to an increase of the middle class. Given the changes in economy and industry, members of the middle class then persuaded governments to provide compulsory public education to provide their children the tools to achieve social and economic success. Despite the developments in accessibility to, and demand for education, nineteenth century viewpoints on gender roles reflected a divide in subject matter, in that the young men and women were taught subjects according to the roles they were expected to play when they came of age. In 1762, Jean Jacques Rousseau propagated his educational theories in *Emile*, claiming that men were fated to succeed as entrepreneurs or civil servants, whereas women were relegated to domesticity.³⁴ His ideas on education were accepted widely, and were incorporated into the institutions. Rousseau's points of view were thus more strongly rooted in society as Clara grew up. Music education mirrored the same issues that public education suffered. Generally, it was a privilege, and those who were given access to this privilege were most often men. Music education for women was mostly aimed at increasing their value in domestic life, allowing them to entertain guests at home, and making them more viable for marriage.³⁵ In 1843, Felix Mendelssohn founded the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig, which accepted women; men, however, still far outnumbered them. This provides insight into the continuing lack of accessibility and freedom for women to pursue music, even

³⁴ Rossella Marisi, *Female Music Making in the Nineteenth Century*, 19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. By the time that Clara was a notable musician, she and Robert taught at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" in Leipzig, the school founded by Felix Mendelssohn. Notable students included Ethel Smyth and Edvard Grieg. The big universities were not founded until after the Schumanns and Mendelssohns made their careers, so it was difficult in general prior to the mid-nineteenth century to gain music education at a higher level institution. The university Mendelssohn founded accepted women, but there were only few compared to the men.

after the establishment of a public institution. As many women did, Clara and Fanny Mendelssohn learned music through training at home.

Clara Schumann was born to two musicians, Friedrich Wieck, a piano teacher, and Marianne Tromlitz Wieck Bargiel, a singer and a pianist. As an educator, Friedrich took on students in voice and piano, with Marianne's help. Being the better pianist in the household, she would teach the more advanced students.³⁶ Wieck began teaching Clara piano at an early age. It was not long before she would take formal piano lessons with him. Clara learned the music with ease, showing immediate promise to her father. According to Clara, Wieck was particularly focused on the "equality of touch," and the proper use of "the soft pedal."³⁷ His other daughter Marie Wieck, also a student of his, remarked of his teaching methods, noting the "rhythmic [exercises] united with the first rudiments of theory...[which were] designed to produce a fine touch, to encourage playing from memory and transposing."³⁸ Wieck based these practices from Johann Bernhard Logier's teaching methods. Logier was a German author, pianist, composer, and teacher, who studied in England. His treatise *A System of the Science of Music and Practical Composition*, comprises three branches, (1) the art of playing piano, (2) harmony and composition, and (3) methods of instruction to pupils.³⁹ Wieck most notably incorporated education in music theory, as well as group instruction. He would arrange for group instruction with students of various playing abilities; elementary students would play a basic theme, while advanced students would play variations on the theme,⁴⁰ which encouraged both a better

³⁶ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 43. When Marianne and Friedrich separated, Friedrich was granted custody of Clara. This separation occurred when Clara was at a young age, thus she learned music from her father once she began to learn more advanced music and piano techniques. Clara would keep in touch with Marianne through letters, but she did not take formal piano lessons with her at any point, according to the biographies.

³⁷ Friedrich Niecks, *Robert Schumann* (London: J. M. Dent, 1925), 71-72.

³⁸ Friedrich Wieck, *Pianoforte Studien*, ed. Marie Wieck (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1875).

³⁹ Johann Bernhard Logier, *A System of the Science of Music and Practical Composition: Incidentally Comprising What is Usually Understood by the Term Thorough Bass* (London: J. Green, 1827), xii.

⁴⁰ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 280.

understanding of harmony, as well as a development of improvisation. Students were first taught by ear in order for them to focus their attention on producing a full tone. They were drilled on playing scales and cadential progressions of I, IV, and V chords in all keys, trained to find and produce triads and dominant seventh chords with inversions in all keys. Incorporating these lessons, students would then work on improvisation or on little compositions of their own.⁴¹ It should be noted that the students began these lessons prior to learning how to read music. It is likely that the familiarity with the piano and the early practice of improvisation and composition were major factors in Clara's success as a pianist and her abilities as a composer. No doubt the early introduction of music and piano education, as well as the rigorous daily regimen that Friedrich put in place for Clara, enhanced her skills exponentially.

Fanny was born to a rather well-to-do family who saw the value in cultivating culture in their children. Abraham and Lea rose their children at an early hour and proceeded to spend the morning following strict orders of studies.⁴² Lea started having her children play the piano as soon as they were capable, with five-minute practice sessions every day. She would increase the period of the practice slowly if it seemed that the child was ready for it. The eldest of the family, Fanny, stayed ahead of Felix in terms of musical ability for a few years. The other two children, Rebecka and Paul, were also taught piano, but never attained the level of ability that Fanny and Felix garnered.⁴³

Once Fanny and Felix were a little older (Fanny at 11, and Felix at 7), Lea took the children to some lessons with famed pianist Marie Bigot in 1816. They studied works of the greats such as Beethoven, Bach, Haydn, and Mozart, as opposed to studying purely technical

⁴¹ Ibid., 281.

⁴² Larry R. Todd, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22.

⁴³ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 49.

exercises. Fanny complained to her father about the Cramer exercises that Bigot subjected her to as part of the daily regimen, particularly the exercises that aimed to strengthen the fourth and fifth fingers. Abraham wrote his daughter back, reminding her to “spend part of [her] practice time watching [her] fingers and pressing down firmly...with great deal of patience...[to achieve] equal strength in all the fingers.”⁴⁴ It was apparent to the Mendelssohns how strenuous Bigot’s lifestyle was, yet she persisted in order to provide for her family.⁴⁵ Proximity to a woman with such dedication and drive probably gave Fanny a glimpse into the life of a hardworking female artist. Surely, it served as some sort of assurance of the possibility that Fanny could live beyond the confines of domestic life.

Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy was just as invested in his children’s education as his wife, and expected perfection and exceptionality from them. The difficulty with him was not in the lack of support, but rather in the height of expectations that he set for his children. Much like Friedrich, he expected so much of them that he pushed his children much further than was probably healthy. Fanny was already exhibiting incredible musical memory. By the time she was thirteen, she played, by heart, all of the twenty-four preludes of the first book of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier*, as a surprise to her father.⁴⁶ From this we can assume that Fanny felt a great deal of pressure under her father’s supervision. Although her father was not quite as intrusive as Friedrich was to Clara’s life, Abraham demanded the best from his children. He provided them with the best teachers and resources. The next teacher that Fanny and Felix studied under was

⁴⁴ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 52.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 52. Her aunt, Henriette, expressed in a letter to her Lea how concerned she was for Fanny’s sake. She acknowledged how stunning the feat that Fanny was able to achieve at such a young age, yet found it a bit too much for Abraham to expect of his children. She called him insatiable, saying how the best was only ever good enough for him, and that it may be to the detriment to the children to place such high standards on their shoulders.

Ludwig Berger, a pianist from Berlin who studied under Clementi and Cramer.⁴⁷ In 1818, musician and composer Carl Friedrich Zelter⁴⁸ began to teach the children composition, and the year after, they started learning general studies from their tutor, Karl Heyse.⁴⁹ The boys were educated in a variety of subjects, including Greek mythology, science, German, history, geography, and some physical science. It was as though Abraham had pulled together a trinity of educators to teach his children. We can draw contrasts between Clara's and Fanny's education here, given their different socioeconomic backgrounds. It was much simpler for Fanny to obtain an education on different subjects because her father could hire whomever he thought best. Clara, on the other hand, was taught most of what she knew in matters of life, and in matters of music, by her father. Just as it is today, economic status can dictate an entirely different lifestyle. Yet, Clara still succeeded, but arguably had to work even harder than Fanny, as she was plagued with the financial demands of her large household.

The girls in the Mendelssohn home experienced a restriction in their training to which the boys were not subjected. As expected of an upper class nineteenth-century family, gender roles were very much internalized in their actions and intentions. It was not in the family's interest to further their studies beyond those that would serve the roles that were set for them. The extent to which women's education was that which served their household efficiency, and so, women were

⁴⁷ Tillard, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), 51.

⁴⁸ Hans-Günter Ottenberg, "Zelter, Carl Friedrich," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30917>. Zelter studied with C.F.C. Fasch, the founder of the *Sing-Akademie*, an institution of which Zelter later became a member. Under Zelter, the *Sing-Akademie* became the model for singing sacred music from the past. He set high standards for the performance of great pieces such as Handel oratorios, Bach motets, Mozart's Requiem. Currently he is known primarily as a composer, mostly for lieder.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

taught the necessary skills to manage the home, and any extraneous studies were designed for entertaining in the home, such as foreign language, music, dance, and ethics.

Felix and Fanny studied music together, often mirroring their compositions, as in one's creation appeared to be prompted by the other one's. Though their parents made certain of their formal education in music, the two were not treated equally in this endeavor. At age fourteen, Fanny's piano skills were more advanced than her brother's, who was ten at this time. Despite her musical genius, they decided to further promote Felix's musical training.⁵⁰ She instead was limited to compose "modest piano pieces and songs, genres associated with domestic music making."⁵¹ He went on to study music at the university level, while Fanny was left to study at home. Her education was cut short, molded to fit the gender roles she was set to fill. She witnessed how education was shaped around gender. On a different level, she witnessed the way gender informed opinions on musical ability. Their teacher, Carl Friedrich Zelter, once wrote to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, praising Fanny for how "she plays like a man."⁵² As ludicrous as it sounds, such a comment was considered high praise.⁵³ Fanny could not escape her identity as a female musician, and was surrounded by the rhetoric that somehow, playing "like a man" was better. Already from the early points in her life, she was subject to such discrimination. Despite

⁵⁰ Larry Todd, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32.

⁵¹ Larry Todd, introduction to *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), x.

⁵² Larry Todd, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), 146.

⁵³ Ellen McSweeney, "The Power List: Why Women Aren't Equals In New Music Leadership and Innovation," April 10, 2013, NewMusicBox, accessed April 09, 2017, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/the-power-list-why-women-arent-equals-in-new-music-leadership-and-innovation/>. This sort of gender bias is alive and well today, as evidenced by author McSweeney through some anecdotes. At the age of fourteen, she was cautioned against the music industry because it would be difficult to raise a family while trying to manage a career. In graduate school, she was humiliated, as her teacher told her she was playing the Glazunov concerto like a woman. In her discussion of Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In, Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, she points out the gender gaps in classical music, such as the severe lack of conductors, or the disparity in male and female writers and critics on classical music. Those in control of the DCASE cultural programming are all men. Sandberg's work helps illuminate the current structural powers that women must work to dismantle.

being underprivileged in education, we see a breadth of skill and sophistication in Fanny's compositions.

Fanny's compositional style is unique from her brother's, although the comparison is made all too often. Her music tends to be more dramatic, text-driven, and harmonically daring.⁵⁴ There is a high level of sophistication and an attention to nuance in much of her work, especially in her *Lieder*. Stephen Rodgers pinpointed three hallmarks of Fanny's *Lied* aesthetic in his analyses of a few of her pieces: an avoidance of tonic harmony, text painting, and the use of accompaniment as commentary.⁵⁵ Her *Lied* "Verlust," which was published under Felix's name in his *Zwölf Lieder*, Op. 9 song collection, defies harmonic tradition in its avoidance of the tonic. The song begins and ends on the dominant, which is in line with the text's overall sentiment of unresolved pain. Interestingly, the tonic D minor does not even appear until seventeen measures into the song. Instead, the music explores harmonies other than the tonic. Modulation to the relative major is used for text painting; an example is how the relative major appears to set the text "zu heilen meinen schmerz," which means "to heal my pain," to invoke healing, giving the singer a break from the minor key. Meanwhile, the piano accompaniment comments on the text, echoing the opening melodic motive twice at the end, which brings the *Lied* back to the unresolved land of the dominant harmony, and thus expressing the text's meaning of never-ending grief.⁵⁶

Much of her music utilizes these three compositional techniques, which define Fanny Hensel's voice as a composer. Her style departs from that of her teachers Berger and Zelter, who adhere to the north German aesthetic, which aims to write music ancillary to the poetry,

⁵⁴ Stephen Rodgers, "Fanny Hensel's *Lied* Aesthetic," *Journal of Musicological Research* 30, no. 3 (2011): 177.

⁵⁵ Stephen Rodgers, "Fanny Hensel's *Lied* Aesthetic," *Journal of Musicological Research* 30, no. 3 (2011): 178.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 180-182.

“[avoiding] through-composed forms, demanding vocal lines, and obtrusive accompaniments.”⁵⁷

Fanny finding her own voice is a testament to her perseverance; although she was barred from furthering her studies, she continued to grow and create her own style.

⁵⁷ Stephen Rodgers, "Fanny Hensel's Lied Aesthetic," *Journal of Musicological Research* 30, no. 3 (2011): 178.

Mixed Messages and Gender Bias

Given the limitations for musical education and access to success for women in the nineteenth century, the support that men gave Clara and Fanny factored into how they attained higher levels of musical skill. Evidence of encouragement can lead to the assumption that these men were egalitarian, and that their progressive feminism was the key for women like Clara and Fanny to become great musicians. The contradictions inherent in their messages, however, go against this conclusion. The broader picture unveils a lack of committed advocacy, and a sense that the men attempted to control women's advancement.

Friedrich Wieck trained Clara from the earliest age with unyielding determination to produce an artist. This is unlike the standard that nineteenth century German society set for women, which translated to an amateur level of musicianship, enough to court suitors and entertain guests at home. The accounts on Wieck's intentions for Clara's success suggest that he did not subscribe to these expectations. For example, at no point does he set a cap on her education. Gender was no matter of consequence for him when it came to the development of an artist. In her diaries, he proudly quoted Goethe's remark that she "plays with as much strength as six boys" (similar to Carl Friedrich Zelter's comment to Goethe that Fanny "plays like a man").⁵⁸ He accompanied Clara on her concert tours for many years until she was a young adult, and made little complaint over the strain of travel and management. It was clear that he was invested in her success, and his decisions as parent and manager were, in his mind, made to ensure the best for his young artist. He boasted to his second wife Clementine about the papers that would announce the publication of Clara's collected works, and proudly noted that three publishers bid

⁵⁸ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 55.

for her Op. 8 Variations.⁵⁹ It was not as though Friedrich viewed his child as genderless, nor that he was blind to her difference in gender at all, yet he raised her to be independent in many respects. As he managed her concert tours and budgeted their household, Wieck made sure Clara was not simply passive, and taught her to do many of the things he did for her. As a testament to this, Clara sustained the remainder of her decades-long career as a concert pianist managing herself, being the main or sole breadwinner of her family, and taking responsibility over the household finances, all the while being a mother to several children. One should not underestimate the positive influence this reared in Clara's life.

Although Friedrich Wieck gave Clara a great deal of support throughout her youth, it can be argued that he pushed her too far in hopes that it would greatly benefit her development. The psychological damage that Friedrich put Clara through manifested itself through the rest of her life in lapses of low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. She would experience anxiety before a performance, then would never feel satisfied with her playing, which would result in depression. As common as self-criticism is with any performer, both Robert and Clara acknowledge how extreme Clara's emotional issues were, and how the reactions were solidified from her relationship with her father. While Robert surmised that Friedrich probably encouraged Clara's emotional cycle to establish a learned helplessness in an effort to render him essential, this position was his way of manipulating her into thinking she needed him to do well. Clara confirmed the validity of this observation, and promptly felt ready to perform afterward. Despite her cognizance of this psychological manipulation, Clara continued to experience the same lapses for the rest of her life.⁶⁰ These strategies had lasting impacts, though any psychological

⁵⁹ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 51.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

damage may not have been intentional on Friedrich's part. However, it is difficult to assume innocence and ignorance, considering the proximity with which Friedrich raised Clara. Surely, he could have noticed at least one cycle of anxiety and depression during the numerous tours they went on together. The intention was to raise Clara to be efficient. An emotional breakdown that got in the way of a successful performance would have signaled retraining, a means to dispel those moments of self-doubt. That Clara would go on with her life relying on the encouragement of others highlights faults in her father's support. It calls to question the meaningfulness of the sorts of encouragement that her father showed her. It is also a possibility that if her father was too obtuse to realize the effect his behavior had on his star pupil, then perhaps Clara kept quiet of her performance issues when she was touring with him. Her last Berlin concert was filled to capacity, a great accomplishment for a performer of her age, yet Wieck thought it was unacceptable for her to still be sleeping at 6:30 in the morning the night after.⁶¹ Were he truly concerned for her health, or proud of her accomplishment, he would have let her have some well-deserved rest. On the surface, it seems that Friedrich Wieck was simply an overly supportive father with controlling tendencies, but there are many instances that paint his investment in his daughter's growth as self-serving. Friedrich took credit for Clara's success. He thought it was his pedagogy alone that brought Clara to virtuosic heights and fame. When she was giving concerts as a teen, he would collect the sums she earned from her performances, and would reward her with small amounts of that money when he thought she played particularly well. This allowed him to profit directly from her success, while patting himself on the back for giving her incentivizing rewards.⁶²

⁶¹ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 51.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 32.

When Clara became older, there were jarring moments of his relinquishment of support.

Clara details the ways in which her father abandons her in a letter to Robert:

I will be travelling *alone*, with the French woman. Father can't leave because of his business, and he also said he would *not* go to Paris; and why? Because he considers it his duty not to do anything that could bring me closer to my goal; he surely would be if he went with me because then I would earn more. Father's attitude has hurt me, *deeply* I must say, but I am *sure* that he will come later. (In his own view he is acting quite correctly.)⁶³

Her letter to Robert shows that Clara and her father were at odds with one another concerning his training. On the one hand, Wieck pushes Clara to be the best pianist she can be, yet on the other hand, Clara claims that he is not bringing her closer to her goal. Friedrich exhibited harmful behavior to his daughter in this instant, and she was not parsing words when she shared her opinion. Setting aside the exaggeration, she notes how prohibitive his attitude was, and even brought to light the point of monetary benefit on which he did not capitalize. She unveils that his slight to her is two-pronged: emotional distress, and an attack on her income. The issue provides some insight into Friedrich's motivation to support his daughter. It seemed that he was willing to let his personal feelings and ego undermine Clara's career. This goes to show how he would only support her career if he was able to exercise complete control over her. In essence, he believed this career was about him, and not about her. His behavior subverts the idea that Friedrich was a forward-thinking figure with modern ideas of gender, for it is not in line with feminist ideals to control a woman's personal choices, especially if it was to her detriment. Clara sent this letter to Robert when she was nearly twenty years old. She was old enough to handle her own career, although society still made it necessary for her to travel with companions. At this point, she had gained more independence, and her relationship with Robert was maturing. As is well known,

⁶³ Robert Schumann and Clara Schumann, *The Complete Correspondence of Clara and Robert Schumann: Critical Edition. Volume II Edited by Eva Weissweiler Translated by Hildegard Fritsch and Ronald L. Crawford*, New York: Lang, Peter, Publishing, 1996, 6.

Friedrich was always particularly against their relationship and grew spiteful toward them both, despite the fact that Robert was previously one of his students. Regardless of the reproachable behavior, Clara maintains that her father will come around. This showcases the long-term damage that her hostile relationship with her father had caused. There is enough trust built in, despite clear acts of betrayal. The manipulative nature of her father's attitudes manifests itself in the moments in which she permits this sort of behavior.

This attack on Clara's career is not an isolated incident. When Clara was insistent on marrying Robert, Friedrich decided yet again to compromise her concert series, this time in Berlin and Hamburg. He had defamatory letters circulate in the area, reaching influential musicians and listeners, calling her "a demoralized shameless girl who has opposed her father in the most unnatural and shocking manner" and warned that she might "poison" their girls.⁶⁴ This statement reveals the sexist rhetoric that Wieck internalized in his mind. It provides evidence that not only does he find it immoral for women to have agency, but he also sees women as easily susceptible to suggestion, or corruptible, as though they are not free-thinkers themselves. There is a world of difference between characterizing someone as disrespectful and as immoral. He also addresses this letter to the parents, not to the women, which is infantile to say the least. Furthermore, this vengeful course of action demonstrates a much higher level of severity than refusing to accompany his daughter on her tours. Seeking to destroy her image among musicians and audiences of high status compromises her entire career, not only the income of a single tour.

Understandably Friedrich's disapproval of their marriage was in line with the legal and societal restrictions for marriage in his time. In nineteenth century Germany, the common

⁶⁴ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 15.

qualifier for a marriage was dependent on financial stability to allow for successful childrearing and the general financial benefit of a community. The states' aim was to decrease the population of those growing up in poverty, particularly due to dependence of the state and the low income in agriculture in those communities. However, the defamation goes beyond the boundaries of overprotective parental instinct. These actions compromise the image of Friedrich Wieck as a modern feminist, for his support to Clara was in fact conditional, and many of his assaults to her character pertained to her gender.

Once the break from her father was complete, Clara turned to Robert for support. He became a very important proponent of Clara's life in composing. Clara was often deathly afraid of even the prospect of being a composer. Her shame was so alarmingly deep, that it seemed as though with every instance she debuted her pieces to her husband, she followed and preceded it with disclaimers and apologies.⁶⁵ Perhaps her guarded detractions were a result of the upbringing that provided inconsistent support, thus programming an automatic preconception of failure as the first judgment. It also signals an internalized insecurity, embedded from childhood or through societal notions, considering that Clara was not lacking in success and praise from critics and fans. A few years before their marriage, publishers were competing to get her work published.⁶⁶ Given her previous success and support from music publishers, her insecurity with composition seems rooted in a learned sense of mediocrity.

This lack of self-confidence translated into a constant need for external sources of encouragement. Robert was that source, and often, he urged her to write pieces for him:

⁶⁵ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 217. Clara would send her husband her work with inscriptions on the cover pages, saying "Composed and dedicated to her ardently beloved Robert with the *deepest modesty* from his Clara on Christmas 1840." She would describe her compositions as weak, yet would also be defensive of her work when she was served criticism.

⁶⁶ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 57.

“Clarchen, do you perhaps have something for my supplement...Do compose a song! Once you begin, you must not leave it. It is far too seductive.”⁶⁷ As further evidence of his support, he developed in Clara the habit of preserving her autographs, and cataloguing her work. Robert also wrote to publishers on her behalf and had them publish nearly every one of Clara’s compositions. The necessity for his support in publishing was not simply an indication of sexism in the industry, as she was given offers before and is therefore often considered an exception, but even more so an indication of her lack of faith in herself.⁶⁸ Though he offered seemingly endless outpour of support and love for Clara, there is evidence that Robert was not entirely on board with her role as a composer.

When Clara did have the time to play her own compositions, she still could not escape her identity as a woman. Her reviews included backhanded sexist criticism. One critic from *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* penned: “Women rarely attempt more mature forms because such works assume a certain abstract strength that is overwhelmingly given to men...Clara Schumann, however, is truly one of the few women who has mastered this strength.”⁶⁹ This statement is problematic in two ways: it suggests (1) that her gender had any influence on her abilities and (2) that men somehow had ownership of musical composition. Even esteemed friends, like Joseph Joachim, were in disbelief of her compositions because of her gender. Mendelssohn once laughed at Joachim because he did not believe a woman “could compose something so sound and serious.”⁷⁰ These criticisms, while enveloped with sexist prejudice, still

⁶⁷ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 219.

⁶⁸ When Clara was given these publishing offers, she did not really give them that much thought. She was consumed with the notion of being Robert’s, and being with him. One can assume that Friedrich noticed how much attention Clara took to Robert, that he took it as a threat to her focus in her artistic career, yet Friedrich also endangered her professional life when it suited him. The conflict was essentially a power struggle on who could maintain control.

⁶⁹ As cited in Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 312.

⁷⁰ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 216.

praise Clara's abilities and compositions, noting how she breaks from the stereotype that women are not fit to be composers. While it was possible for Clara to break the glass ceiling in her lifetime, she had to be a premier pianist in order to garner respect from many people. Meanwhile, her husband, an injured pianist with far less recognition and financial success, did not have his gender put into question before anyone could deem him a composer.

Clara's hesitation in composition and rejection of her identity as composer is very much a mirror of the nineteenth century narrative. Although she received the stamp of approval from highly regarded colleagues, she allowed this narrative to corrupt her perception of herself. She did not include her trios with which Joachim was so impressed in her concert programs; she much preferred to play her husband's works.⁷¹ This fed into the nineteenth century concept of what constituted as women's work, which included copying a husband's work. Yet there are numerous occasions on which she expresses only utter joy in composing, stating that "there is really no greater pleasure than having composed something and then to hear it."⁷² Time and time again, Clara's voice is overpowered by the voices of men on the personal level and on the societal level. Despite the many obstacles she faced as a woman, she managed to earn her place in the world of musical performance and composition in her lifetime. Perhaps if the narrative of female inferiority was not drilled into her, she may have actually been even more successful as a composer.

Fanny composed a huge collection of music throughout her life, both vocal and instrumental pieces. She is known to have composed over 450 works. This drive was truly born only from a love of composing. Her brother was one of her greatest external sources of support.

⁷¹ Reich, *Clara Schumann, the Artist and the Woman*, 216.

⁷² Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life, Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 1.

However, this relationship both encouraged and undermined her pursuits in artistic creativity. In their letters, the siblings exchanged commentary upon their works and those of others. It was not as though Fanny's composing was a secret she kept only in the confines of her diaries. Felix expressed much joy in hearing her works, and hearing in her letters that she was composing at all. Although his support was readily available to her with regard to composing, when it came to publishing, this was not the case. He wrote his mother Lea and confided in her on the matter, stating that he would support Fanny, should she decide to publish her works, but noted that he "regard[s] publishing as something serious (it should at least be that) and believe[s] one should do it only if one is willing to appear and remain an author for one's life...Fanny," he told her, "has neither enthusiasm nor calling for authorship...she is too much a Frau, as is proper, raises Sebastian and cares for her home, and thinks neither of the public nor the musical world, nor even of music, except when she has fulfilled her primary occupation."⁷³ This mirrors Robert Schumann's views on Clara's contentment with domestic life. In both cases, the men presume to speak for the women.

Felix, despite his personal reservations over Fanny's pursuit in publishing, was often a door through which her works could be published. At sixteen, he began to publish some of his works, such as his piano quartets, sonatas, and the lieder sets Opus 8, and 9, both of which contained twelve lieder. Three of these lieder in each set were actually Fanny's compositions. He wrote to Fanny years later, in July of 1842, about his visit with Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace, during which the Queen had come across his first volume of lieder. He then asked her to sing one of the lieder, and out of all of them, she chose Fanny's *Schöner und schöner schmückt* and sang it quite well. Felix then had to admit that his sister actually wrote the lied, and finally

⁷³ Todd, *Fanny Hensel: the Other Mendelssohn*, 315.

he asked The Queen to sing a lied that was truly his. He told Fanny in his letter “this was hard for me! But pride must suffer some constraint,” which charmingly characterizes their relationship. The two were always competing with each other since childhood, yet loved each other enough to exchange praise and encouragement. Felix’s publishing of Fanny’s work was an admission of her excellence, and a sign of approval of her work. At the same time, publishing her work was predicated on deceit, considering that he benefited from her work for years, and even more so that he even complains about having to swallow his pride in front of the Queen. A better ally would not have been so ashamed to admit this outright. For him to have to admit to the Queen, one of the most powerful women of her time, that one of his published works was not actually his, and was written by a woman, is both a comical embarrassment and a radical step forward in the progression of female composers. Through Felix, Fanny’s work not only reached the public, but also none other than the Queen herself, and this time, under the real identity of Fanny Mendelssohn.⁷⁴

As a wife and mother, she underwent the droughts of music-making typical of a woman taking up the responsibilities of the household, although she received much support from Wilhelm in continuing with her art. He was always working in his art studio, and encouraged Fanny to work at the same time. He made a point of having her sit at the piano every morning, with the intention of having a constant exchange of artistry.⁷⁵ They also had an interesting sort of marriage diary, but instead of writing to each other, they wrote down their art. Wilhelm would include sketches and poems, and this would alternate with Fanny’s music, consisting of fragments and phrases. From her letters to Felix, it was evident that Fanny’s life with Wilhelm

⁷⁴ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 129-130.

⁷⁵ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 194.

was blissful and full of art. She could not have been in a more wonderful environment conducive to music-making. This, we can contrast with Clara and Robert's home life, wherein neither could really play or compose while the other practiced.

Prior to her wedding, Fanny wrote to Felix once again with relief that being engaged "has not hurt [her] music." She told him she will be relieved once she composes after she is married. This certainly reveals Fanny's ambitions, making clear her full intentions of composing, and her drive to keep her dreams alive. Yet, later on in their marriage, she wrote to her husband about wishing to stop composing. What is most revealing in her letter was a quote of Jean Paul Richter that read, "art is not for women, only for maidens; on the threshold of my new life I will take leave of the child's playmate."⁷⁶ Though Fanny was lucky to have Wilhelm, a man who would subscribe to no such limitations to his lady's creativity, it is unfortunate to witness Fanny entertaining the idea of letting go of the art that is so deeply rooted in her soul. While she did compose after they married, Fanny's statement is a sad reflection of how she internalized the limitations that her family put on her.

Even though she was making strides with the *Sontaggsmusik*, the talented *Frau* herself had ingrained notions of what her limitations were. On presenting her compositions and on entertaining the notion of publishing them, she exhibited deep embarrassment and nervousness, and often apologized for her work. "I'm beginning to publish," she wrote Felix, "And if I've done it of my own free will and cannot blame anyone in my family if aggravation results from it....then I can console myself...I hope I won't disgrace all of you through my publishing."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Todd, *Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2009), 127.

⁷⁷ Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and Felix Bartholdy, *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, edited by Marcia J. Citron (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1987), 349-350.

Here, most evidently, Fanny relinquished her voice to society's thinking. She only much later truly made conscious her desires to become a composer in every public sense of the word. As a daughter and a sister, she worried all too much about the opinions of her family—worrying that she had wiggled out of the mold in which they so decidedly bound her.

One of the people that pushed her to publish was Robert von Keudell, a wealthy diplomat with extensive musical knowledge and talent. He spent two years in frequent contact with Fanny Mendelssohn, almost on a day-to-day basis, furthering his understanding of music, and his encouragement of his talented friend. Two publishing houses, Bote und Bock, and Schlesinger, made her great offers to publish some of her works.⁷⁸ At this point in her life, her father had already passed ten years prior, and with great embarrassment and fear, she wanted to pursue publishing at the age of forty. She told Felix that friends and acquaintances had been urging her to try for quite some time, but also disclaims that she “in no way sought out or occasioned the kind of musical reputation” that brought her such offers.⁷⁹ She had expected that Felix would be angry with her ahead of time, and sure enough, Felix took two months to reply to his sister—quite an unusually long period for their correspondence. Her hesitation to move forward with such an act was understandable, given the upbringing she experienced, and the outright protestation of this exact sort of professional move. She had waited long after her father's death to formally make the decision, perhaps allowing her some separation by virtue of time, and the courage to finally pursue her heart's desires. Felix returned her correspondence on August 12, 1846, with encouragement:

⁷⁸ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 324. She told Felix in her letter dated July 9, 1846, that Herr Bock sincerely professed his affection for her lieder.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 325.

I, [your] hard-hearted brother... give you my professional blessing upon your decision to enter our guild... May you know only the pleasures of being a composer, and none of the miseries; may the public only send you roses and never sand... Why did I not wish you this before?⁸⁰

Felix's blessing meant very much to Fanny, who depended on him, as she did with her father, for approval in many things in her life. She knew that deep down, he did not approve, but was delighted that he granted her his blessing anyway.

The time came for Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel to finally debut her identity as a composer and her music. Though this time was short-lived, and Fanny did not live to see more of her compositions performed, it was a triumph for Fanny and for women in music nonetheless. Unsurprisingly, the reviews for her music were critical and riddled with undertones of condescension. One review of some of her lieder came from Robert Schumann's paper in Leipzig, *Neue Zeitschrift Musik*. A reviewer claimed that "Of the four lieder presented here, whose outward appearance does not at all betray a woman's hand, but suggests an artistic study of masculine seriousness, it seems to us that the final one is the freest and the most profound, whereas the others lack either a commanding individual idea, or else clear phrasing."⁸¹ Two months later, another *Neue Zeitschrift* critic reviewed her Opus 4: "The invention is neither striking nor new, but tasteful, pleasing, and free of that superabundance of feeling which is seemingly the dominant characteristic of our modern composers, though not when they are women."⁸² Her identity as a composer is lost in these reviews, which chose to focus on gender as the cause of its quality, or lack thereof. The critics seemed unable to offer more objectivity to Fanny, whose only sin was the inability to shed her identity as a woman. Surely one could

⁸⁰ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 324.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 331.

imagine a more serious review had Fanny's music been presented by a man. Most reviews of men's work fail to even acknowledge gender at all. This hyper-visibility of gender is undoubtedly caused by the otherness of Fanny's identity, which is a large factor in how some of her music has been misappropriated as her brother's.

Credit where credit is due

In 2010, Duke University graduate student Angela Mace tracked down an original Mendelssohn score of the Easter Sonata in the home of a French private collector, Henri-Jacques Coudert. The piece was considered lost for 140 years until Coudert found what he believed was an undiscovered Felix Mendelssohn piece in a French bookshop in 1970. Reading the manuscript, signed “F. Mendelssohn,” Coudert attributed the work to Felix Mendelssohn. He later asked French pianist Eric Hiedsieck to make the first known recording of the Easter Sonata in 1973. When Mace paid him a visit, she created photocopies of the original manuscript and transcribed the music through music notation software. Two main indicators helped Mace properly credit the piece: Fanny’s handwriting matched a known manuscript attributed to Fanny, and the page numbers of the score Mace found match those pages missing from this manuscript.

The Easter Sonata comprises four movements. The first, *Allegro assai moderato*, is a Sonata-Allegro form in A major. It has a clear relationship with Beethoven’s Sonata in A major Op. 101 and Sonata in E major Op. 109. The opening theme uses turn motives and recalls both Beethoven sonatas, with lush harmonies playing underneath. The second movement, *Largo e molto espressivo*, is a pensive Prelude and Fugue in E minor reminiscent of Bach. This movement, marked with heavy chromaticism, draws parallels to the agony of Jesus in the Passion story—a connection made based on the title of the piece, as well as Fanny and Felix’s work with the *St. Matthew Passion*. The piece moves away from the dark introspective sound to the *Allegretto-Scherzo* movement, which is a Scherzo in the form of Sonata-Allegro/Rondo in E major. The movement is virtuosic, showcasing the three-hand technique and parallel octave passages, while modal mixture gives the lively movement a dark undertone. Finally, the *Allegro con Strepito* in A major and A minor is a finale and chorale fantasy on “Christe, du Lamm

Gottes.” It uses tremolos in the bass to depict the earthquake that occurs upon Jesus’s death on the cross.⁸³ The Easter Sonata is an incredible piece that not only speaks to Fanny’s virtuosic piano abilities, but also to her compositional prowess and keen familiarity with the music of Beethoven and Bach.

On September 7, 2012, Andrea Lam premiered the piece at Duke University. Mace hoped that her research could bring Fanny back into performances, and re-establish Fanny as one of the great composers of the nineteenth century, alongside her brother. Surely enough on March 8, 2017, International Women’s Day, the first female winner of the Leeds Piano Competition Sofya Gulyak premiered the Easter Sonata as Fanny Mendelssohn’s piece for the first time in a public concert hall at the Royal College of Music.

Of course, with any great discovery, there will always be skeptics, and this one was no exception. When Mace suspected the piece was Fanny’s work, Coudert automatically rejected the idea, “It can’t be Fanny, it’s a masterpiece ... very masculine. Very violent.”⁸⁴ Coudert’s ear was likely hearing Fanny’s earthquake music and chromatic writing in the second and fourth movements. It is also possible that the second movement’s likeness to Bach can lead one to hear the piece as Felix’s. After all, Felix is credited for the revival of Bach’s music.⁸⁵ Mace also notes the qualities of the third movement that are similar to Felix’s style, specifically the use of the same type of Scherzo style that Felix is known for from works like his *Overture to A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.⁸⁶ However, Fanny and Felix were both educated in Bach’s music, making it just

⁸³ Angela Mace, “*Fanny Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and the Formation of the Mendelssohnian Style*,” Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2013, 58-75.

⁸⁴ Sheila Hayman, “A Fanny Mendelssohn masterpiece finally gets its due,” *The Guardian*, March 8, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/mar/08/fanny-mendelssohn-easter-sonata-premiere-sheila-hayman>.

⁸⁵ *Felix Mendelssohn: Reviving the Works of J.S. Bach*, Online Text, Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200156436/>. (Accessed May 07, 2017.)

⁸⁶ Angela Mace, “*Fanny Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and the Formation of the Mendelssohnian Style*,” Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2013, 71-72.

as likely for Fanny to have produced something Bach-like. Furthermore, the two played each other's music often, and it is unsurprising to see Felix's influence reflected in Fanny's work. Despite Mace's findings, Coudert still maintains his opposition to the notion that Felix did not write this piece. His response is reflective of our gendered view of musicians in general. We have a severe lack of education on female composers right now in 2017, let alone in the 1970s, which makes it unsurprising for Coudert to reject the idea that it could have been Fanny's work. She is, even now, still more widely regarded as Felix Mendelssohn's sister, rather than as a nineteenth-century composer. Perhaps it is because of this that he refuses to believe Fanny could be a composer, let alone a great one who could compose a masterpiece such as the Easter Sonata. However, it is difficult to give Coudert the benefit of the doubt, when he says that the piece is "very masculine" or "too violent." Those words are indicative of his perception of a composer's capabilities or styles based on their gender. When people perceive femininity in Chopin, the question arises from the perceived absence of masculinity. Therefore, the issue with feminine characteristics is not based solely on the person whose gender or sex is that of a woman, but rather to any person possessing any feminine qualities. One can then call to question the validity of this sort of criticism. Furthermore, perceiving femininity in Chopin did not marginalize him as a composer in the same way that female composers who were perceived as too masculine were. Therefore, the lack of masculinity equates to deficiency or incapability.

Coudert's refusal to accept the piece as Fanny Mendelssohn's is all the more baffling, given the evidence. There are personal accounts of Fanny referencing her Easter Sonata in her diaries; she details the moment she plays her Easter Sonata. Her friend Johann Gustav Droysen, a poet, consoles Fanny upon Felix's departure with a poem about him which put her "in a very good mood because the melody came immediately to my mind." She said, "I play my Easter

Sonata.”⁸⁷ In this account, there is an unquestionable declaration of ownership. She does not reference it as *the* Easter Sonata, but *my* Easter Sonata. Likewise, other individuals acknowledge her ownership. In a letter to Fanny, Karl Klingemann told her that Felix played him “some of the first movement of your Easter Sonata...of which I had heard only talk until now.”⁸⁸ At this point, Fanny was only twenty-two, uneducated and yet undeterred from composing a sonata over twenty minutes long. Surely Klingemann and her brother were aware of what a feat this would be for her. The end of Klingemann’s statement reveals that they had been talking about Fanny’s composition somehow in the past. It also hints that perhaps this was something of which she was particularly proud, considering it was at all a point of discussion. Furthermore, there is less motivation for Felix to copy the Easter Sonata by hand, bring it with him in his travels, and play it for their friend, if this piece were nothing of note to them. Despite existing evidence of not only Fanny declaring the piece to be hers, but also two men crediting the piece to her, Coudert remains unconvinced. The dissent on this discovery illustrates larger issues that plague female composers of previous centuries, which are the unavoidable skepticism and inability to credit any large form of accomplishment to women, simply because of their gender. It is doubtful that there would be any hesitation, one could imagine, to ascribe a newfound piece to a male composer.

⁸⁷ Tillard, *Fanny Mendelssohn*, 154.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 35.

Conclusion

The male identity in music remains, for the most part, invisible. That is, when a man presents his music, he is titled as a performer, a musician, a composer. Once a woman apologetically reveals her music, however, she is labeled a *female* performer, a *female* musician, a *female* composer. As modern students of music, we have unconsciously assimilated these concepts as titles identified with men. No one accommodated these concepts to students, to associate them with women as well, in order to create a neutrality with regard to the gender of these titles. While one might argue that perhaps women were simply not composing in the nineteenth century backward and onward, there is indisputable evidence to refute that statement. The patriarchal society that silenced the voices of women, barred them from an equal education or equal opportunity to that of men is the cause for the underrepresentation of women in western classical music. Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn were only the tip of the iceberg; their names were made known to students of this era by association instead of merit. In a way, this was a bit of a mixed blessing; it gave them the fame, but overshadowed their accomplishments. As society moves farther and farther away from archaic gender roles, it is imperative for educators and musicians to regard women in the past, present, and future of music with the same level of respect, scholarship, and performance as men. Curricula must include female composers throughout the different eras, making sure to contextualize them within the sociopolitical background of the time period, and properly discuss the nuance behind the contradictory narrative in their suppression—that it was not a black and white story, but rather a constant battle between internal and external impulses and expectations. Hopefully composers like Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn will be brought out of the shadows. May people learn from

their struggles, and be inspired by their perseverance, working to create an environment that no longer prohibits women, but rather, offers them their rightful seat at the table.

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