

FANNY HENSEL AND FELIX MENDELSSOHN
IN CONTEXT

Brimming with fresh insights, this volume offers a comprehensive overview of the personal, cultural, intellectual, professional, political and religious contexts in which immensely gifted sister and brother Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn) and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy lived and worked. Based on the latest research, it explores nineteenth-century musical culture from different yet complementary perspectives, including gender roles, private versus public music-making, cultural institutions and reception history. Thematically organised, concise chapters cover a broad range of topics from family, friends and colleagues, to poetry, art and aesthetics, foreign travel, celebrity and legacy. With contributions from a host of Mendelssohn and Hensel experts as well as leading scholars from disciplines beyond musicology it sheds new light on the environments in which the Mendelssohns moved, promoting a deeper understanding of their music.

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COMPOSERS IN CONTEXT

Understanding and appreciation of musical works is greatly enhanced by knowledge of the context within which their composers lived and worked. Each of these volumes focusses on an individual composer, offering lively, accessible and concise essays by leading scholars on the many contexts – professional, political, intellectual, social and cultural – that have a bearing on his or her work. Biographical and musical influences, performance and publishing history and the creative afterlife of each composer's work are also addressed, providing readers with a multi-faceted view of how the composers' output and careers were shaped by the world around them.

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978-1-009-17275-2 — Fanny Hensel and Felix Mendelssohn in Context
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
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Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009172752

DOI: 10.1017/9781009172769

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009172769

First published 2026

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-17275-2 Hardback

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of Tables</i>	x
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xv

PART I FAMILY AND UPBRINGING

1	Berlin Jews in the Long Eighteenth Century	3
	<i>David Conway</i>	
2	Family Background	11
	<i>Susan Wollenberg</i>	
3	Education	18
	<i>Cornelia Bartsch</i>	
4	The Family Cosmos	26
	<i>Beatrix Borchard</i>	
5	Fanny and Felix’s Personal Relationship	34
	<i>Angela R. Mace</i>	
6	Fanny and Felix’s Musical Relationship	41
	<i>R. Larry Todd</i>	

PART II FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

7	‘Das Rad’: Circles of Friendship	51
	<i>Thomas Schmidt</i>	
8	Adult Friendships	60
	<i>Thomas Schmidt</i>	

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
9	Luminaries <i>John Michael Cooper</i>	67
10	Colleagues (and Friends?) <i>Maximilian Rosenthal</i>	75
11	Critics <i>James Garratt</i>	83
12	Relations with Publishers <i>Maximilian Rosenthal</i>	90
PART III CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL WORLDS		
13	Aesthetics and Philosophy <i>James Garratt</i>	101
14	Theology <i>Laura K. T. Stokes</i>	109
15	Literary Inheritance <i>Lorraine Byrne Bodley</i>	117
16	Politics <i>Sanna Pederson</i>	126
17	Visual Art and Painting <i>Thomas Tolley</i>	133
18	Correspondence <i>Peter Ward Jones</i>	144
PART IV ENVIRONMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS		
19	Berlin's Cultural and Musical Life, c. 1811–32 <i>Jennifer Ronyak</i>	153
20	Leading Music Institutions in Leipzig <i>Stefan Keym and Mirjam Gerber</i>	160
21	The Berlin of Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1840–47) <i>Jason Geary</i>	167
22	The Leipzig Conservatory <i>Ariane Jeßulat</i>	174

	<i>Contents</i>	vii
23	Gendered Journeys <i>Monika Hennemann</i>	182
24	England <i>Peter Ward Jones</i>	191
PART V MUSICAL ACTIVITIES		
25	Professional and Public Music-Making <i>Katharina Uhde</i>	201
26	Private and Amateur Music-Making <i>Jennifer Ronyak</i>	208
27	Publishing and Editing <i>Douglass Seaton</i>	215
28	Constructing a Musical Canon <i>Peter Mercer-Taylor</i>	226
29	The Bach Revival <i>Wolfgang Dinglinger</i>	234
30	Beethoven <i>Benedict Taylor</i>	241
PART VI RECEPTION AND LEGACIES		
31	Interpretations of Jewish Identity <i>Susan Wollenberg</i>	253
32	Felix Mendelssohn's Reception in His Lifetime <i>Sinéad Dempsey-Garratt</i>	260
33	The Curation of the Mendelssohns' Legacy <i>Christiane Wiesenfeldt</i>	268
34	Felix Mendelssohn's Posthumous Reception <i>Barbara Eichner</i>	276
35	Fanny Hensel's Reception and Revival <i>Marian Wilson Kimber</i>	287

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-17275-2 — Fanny Hensel and Felix Mendelssohn in Context
Edited by Thomas Schmidt , Benedict Taylor
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
36	Fanny Hensel’s Modern Legacy <i>Stephen Rodgers</i>	295
	Epilogue: A Future for Mendelssohn and Hensel Studies <i>Benedict Taylor and Thomas Schmidt</i>	302
	<i>Index</i>	309

Figures

- | | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 7.1 | Wilhelm Hensel, 'Das Rad' ('The Wheel'), 1829, drawing, <i>page</i> 54
watercolour, pencil, gold, bronze. Mendelssohn-Archiv,
Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. | |
| 17.1 | Raphael, <i>Ecstasy of St Cecilia</i> (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint_Cecilia_by_Raphael.jpg). | 136 |
| 17.2 | Titian, <i>Assumption of the Virgin</i> (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tizian_041.jpg). | 139 |
| 23.1 | Wilhelm Hensel, 'Georges Bousquet, Charles Gounod und Charles Dugasseau in Rom', pencil drawing, 1840. <i>Staatliche Museen zu Berlin</i> , Kupferstichkabinett 15/24 (https://id.smb.museum/object/1025222/georges-bousquet%2C-charles-gounod-und-charles-dugasseau-in-rom). | 188 |
| 34.1 | 'Leichenfeier Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's in der Paulinerkirche in Leipzig', <i>Illustrierte Zeitung</i> , 9/229 (20 November 1847), 321. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, 2 Per. 26–8/9 (www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb10498701?page=324,325). | 278 |

Tables

27.1	Dates and opus numbers of Mendelssohn’s works published 1835–47.	<i>page</i> 217
27.2	Mendelssohn’s most important publishers.	219

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Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

xii

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Preface

Combining the figures of Fanny Hensel and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy in a ‘Composers in Context’ volume requires virtually no justification – in fact it would be impossible to imagine two separate volumes. As the only brother–sister pair in music history where both siblings can lay claim to be amongst the most important musicians and composers of their epoch, they represent a fascinating case study where two individuals emerge quite literally from the same historical, social, cultural and indeed genetic context, yet where their gender determined their ambitions, lives and careers in tellingly different ways. The implications of this social bifurcation became apparent when we, as editors, began to think about the most appropriate title for the book: all the siblings were of course originally named Mendelssohn, not officially adding the surname ‘Bartholdy’ until 1822 (a decision hotly debated within the family and never adopted by the children as more than an addition to the family name). Fanny, however, changed her name upon her marriage to the Prussian court painter Wilhelm Hensel in 1829, and it is by that name that she is most commonly referred to in the literature – presumably to distinguish her clearly from her brother, but the fact remains that she was ‘Fanny Mendelssohn (Bartholdy)’ for more than half her life, and also roughly half her surviving compositions predate her marriage. To try to reflect this transition either in the title of the volume or the text of the chapters would have resulted in – ultimately unnecessary – confusion, and so the decision was taken to conform to what has become common usage and to refer to Fanny consistently by her married name (not unlike Clara Schumann where a comparable dilemma applies), rather than to both together as ‘the Mendelssohns’, which additionally implies a uniformly shared context that this volume, if anything, attempts to dispel rather than encourage.

That said, much of the social and familial background, especially in the years before 1833 when Felix left Berlin for good, is of course shared, which means it makes sense to have the two siblings also share this volume where

two separate volumes would have resulted in an enormous amount of duplication, and no justification could have been offered on having a volume on one but not the other. Indeed, almost every single chapter is designed to use this juxtaposition as an opportunity to assess similarities as much as differences in how Felix and Fanny managed the world in which they lived and acted, and the epilogue will return to this and offer some final thoughts on precisely this question. The chapters as such are grouped in six sections of six chapters each, progressing in concentric contextual circles from the immediate family context to the individuals, institutions and cultural circumstances amongst which the two siblings grew up, followed by wider questions of musical history and musical life and finally reception and legacy.

Any multi-authored volume such as this would be impossible without the assistance of many individuals and institutions. First and foremost, our gratitude goes to all the authors who willingly submitted to the Procrustean task of addressing often quite weighty issues in the space of no more than 3,000 words. The editors would like to thank in particular the institutions owning the images in the book for their permission to reproduce; Alessandra Palidda for preparing the index; and finally Kate Brett for providing, as commissioning editor, just the right balance of patience and encouragement to bring the project to a successful completion.

Abbreviations

<i>H-U</i>	Renate Hellwig-Unruh, <i>Fanny Hensel: Thematisches Verzeichnis der Kompositionen</i> (Adliswil: Kunzelmann, 2000). [Numbers following the abbreviation H-U refer to the individual work catalogued in this volume.]
Hensel, <i>Letters</i>	<i>The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn</i> . Collected, edited and translated with introductory essays and notes by Marcia Citron (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1987).
Hensel, <i>Tagebücher</i>	Fanny Hensel, <i>Tagebücher</i> , ed. Hans-Günter Klein and Rudolf Elvers (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2002).
S. Hensel, <i>FM</i>	Sebastian Hensel, <i>Die Familie Mendelssohn 1729–1847: Nach Briefen und Tagebüchern</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin: B. Behr, 1879).
S. Hensel, <i>MF</i>	Sebastian Hensel, <i>The Mendelssohn Family, from Letters and Journals</i> , trans. Carl Klingemann, 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1881).
Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, <i>Briefe</i>	Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, <i>Ewig die deine. Briefe an</i>

xvi	<i>List of Abbreviations</i>
	<i>Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein</i> , ed. Wolfgang Dinglinger and Rudolf Elvers (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2010).
<i>MWV</i>	Ralf Wehner, <i>Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Thematisch- systema- tisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke</i> (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 2009).
<i>SB</i>	Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , ed. Helmut Loos, Wilhelm Seidel, et al., 12 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008– 2017).
Todd, <i>Fanny Hensel</i>	R. Larry Todd, <i>Fanny Hensel: The Other Mendelssohn</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
Todd, <i>Mendelssohn</i>	R. Larry Todd, <i>Mendelssohn: A Life in Music</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).