

**Fanny Mendelssohn: The lost Mendelssohn of the music
canon**

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Abstract

Fanny Mendelssohn has contributed significantly to the classical music repertoire and can be considered a rather virtuosic piano player and composer. However, whenever the name Mendelssohn is brought up, most people would draw attention to her brother, Felix Mendelssohn instead. Despite both Mendelssohn being amazing composers and musicians, it is interesting how differently their lives and legacy turned out.

This paper aims to explore the life trajectory of Fanny Mendelssohn, and the social and familial factors that have affected her professional success and composition. The technical playing skill as well as the composing skill of Fanny Mendelssohn will also be highlighted through her works.

Fanny Mendelssohn serves as a case of many women composers of the past, who have not been given the same opportunities and access as their male counterparts due to societal norms and expectations. And thus, throughout history, we lost many of their works and names, of which many could have contributed groundbreaking or revolutionary works. This paper hopefully serves not to just explore Fanny Mendelssohn's constraints, but for the greater exploration of women composers placed in the same shoes as well.

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*“It must be a sign of talent that I do not give up,
though I can get nobody to take an interest in my efforts”*

~ Fanny Mendelssohn ~

(Werner, 1947, p. 333)

1 Introduction

Mendelssohn. Whenever we hear that family name in a classical music context, most of us assumes the reference to Felix Mendelssohn. But unbeknownst to most of us, the Mendelssohn family had another musician, that was rather influential. Fanny Mendelssohn was her name, and she had an entire catalogue of works behind her. Her works were clearly not of an amateur level, and she clearly displayed competency. However, in this present day and age, we no longer hear much of her name uttered or her works played, while Felix Mendelssohn's legacy continues to live on.

In this paper, it aims to explore the trajectory of Fanny Mendelssohn's life (with regards to music). Firstly, it is important to explore how society viewed women musicians of the past, and how it shaped their careers and opportunities. Though this can be generalized to most women composers of the time, it is highly applicable to highlight the barriers Fanny was facing back then. These social expectations were then somewhat perpetuated by her brother and importantly, her father. Her spouse was on the contrary, more supportive. Though eventually, her brother did grow to become more supportive. Her lack of exposure can be generalized to two main factors at that time: 1) The societal norms at that time with regards to women composers, and 2) Her family expectations of her.

The paper starts of by exploring the early life of Fanny Mendelssohn, to provide context on her exposure to music. A section on social expectations and norms will then follow, to provide context on societal expectations placed on Fanny Mendelssohn and similarly other women composers. Her relations with her spouse, father, and brother will then be explored. How they perpetuated these social norms onto her or broke the toxicity will also be highlighted. We will also discuss works of hers and explore how this ties in with her virtuosity and social restrictions. Lastly, her impact on the musical sphere will be emphasized.

2 The Early Life of Fanny Mendelssohn

Fanny Mendelssohn was born on 14 November 1805 (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (- Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie, n.d.) to parents Abraham Mendelssohn and Lea Mendelssohn. She had 3 other siblings, one of which notably was renowned composer Felix Mendelssohn. The other two were Rebecka Mendelssohn and Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (Abraham Mendelssohn Bartholdy, n.d.). She was the oldest siblings amongst them. The Mendelssohn family set at that time could be said to belong to the upper echelons of society. It is to be noted that the Mendelssohn home was a leading salon for the artistic notables of then. As such, it would be no surprise that the Mendelssohns held traditional views regarding the proper duties of women (Citron, 1984, p. 1), and expect Fanny Mendelssohn to grow up to conform to these societal beliefs of women.



Pictures of Lea Mendelssohn (left) and Abraham Mendelssohn (right)

*Extracted from:
(Lea Salomon, n.d.)*



Pictures of Fanny Mendelssohn (top left), Felix Mendelssohn (top right), Rebecka Mendelssohn (bottom left) and Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (bottom right)

*Extracted from:
(Lea Salomon, n.d.)
(Paul Hermann Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, n.d.)*



At birth, Lea once remarked that Fanny was born with “Bach fugal fingers”, recognizing her potential to be a great player like Bach. Lea was able to sing and play the piano among other talents and was one of the most influential figures in Fanny’s childhood in shaping up her early music education through her teachings. Other influential figures within her family include her great aunts who were involved in the arts (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (- Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie, n.d.).

Fanny Mendelssohn showed great potential when she was young. At the young age of 14, she was able to play Bach’s Preludes and Fugues for her father’s birthday (all 24 of them), which was certainly not an easy feat (Hayman, 2017). Fanny, along with Felix, soon outgrew their

mother's tutelage. Their parents therefore decided to hire Franz Lauska, Marie Bigot, and Ludwig Berger chronologically to teach them piano. Carl Friedrich Zelter was then hired subsequently to teach Fanny counterpoint and composition (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cécilie, n.d.).

Zelter once wrote to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1816: "From his youngest years until the death of his father he [abraham] has freely enjoyed my house. receive him as one of the upright. He has adorable children and his oldest daughter could give you something of Sebastian Bach. This child is really something special [etwas verschniegelt]." Zelter clearly favored then 10 years Fanny over 7 years Felix at that point in time (Conway, 2012). Likewise, Zelter wrote to Goethe in 1831: "I have commanded Fanny to play something considerable for him, for she plays like a man." (Todd, 2010, p. 146). This remark holds significant weight, as at that time, women's musical skill was regarded as inferior and could not be as good as a man. To remark in such a way, in a sense, is remarking that she broke the conventional norm and stereotypes at that time. It could be seen that Zelter held Fanny Mendelssohn in high regard and recognized her virtuosity and potential.

While studying with Berger and Zelter, Fanny had the chance to explore diverse genre and styles. However, she soon found her calling for writing Lied, and this is rather apparent in her catalogue of works (to be discussed in Section 7). Her father did play an influential role in her preference. The diminutive properties of the Liedar were considered to be more appropriate for her gender and class, and with her father's reinforcement of societal norms onto her and to please her father, she grew into the genre. (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cécilie, n.d.).

The latter part of Fanny's life saw her struggling to keep up with social norms, and her father and brother's expectation for her to adhere to these norms. This clashed directly with her desire to compose and publish. As a result, while she did compose, she did not publish much of her works. The following section seeks to explore exactly these two factors, social influence, family influence, and their intersectionality in Fanny's life trajectory.

3 Social Expectations and Norms

Narrowing down to the 19th century (relevant to Fanny's timeline), we can see some of the prevailing social norms with regards to women. Women were encouraged to pick up music (especially piano and voice), which was thought to be able to increase marriage possibilities and to provide entertainment back home. However, those competent and amateurs alike, were not encouraged to pick up music seriously. Fathers and husbands forbade them to give public appearance, publish music, or even do paid teaching. Those who did were seen as reflecting badly on the social status of the family. With men holding these key positions in teaching and publishing, they act as gatekeepers (Pendle, 1991, p. 148), and hence biased societal norms were perpetuated by those in power. In Fanny's case, we can see many of these notions perpetuated by her father and brother, and how she tried to conform to these expectations, knowing her positionality in society.

In terms of education access, they face even more obstacles. Few conservatories accepted female students prior to 1870s, and their classes were separated by sexes, which saw discrimination in some curriculums between the sexes. Access to education resources and opportunities were also limited in some conservatories for women, such as limiting the classes they could take and only allowing women to teach them, along others (Pendle, 1991, pp. 149–150). The lack of quality education compared to their male counterparts meant that many bright students did not get the same access to training and industry connections, severely disadvantaging their potential. Fanny and Felix were largely unaffected by this, as they studied under the direct tutelage of Zelter. However, On Felix's birthday, 3 February 1824, Zelter welcomed Felix as a "journeyman" rather than an "apprentice", signifying the end of his tutelage. However, the same could not be said of Fanny. Felix was and remained the only one who did so in the later years after she finally decided to publish her works (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie, n.d.). Little was known of Zelter's tutelage and opinions of the two, and hence any formation of biasness towards either of them based on their sexes is unknown. However, it is worth noting as stated before that Zelter favored Fanny over Felix at the start.

Chamber music and piano works were considered acceptable genres for women composers. Therefore, we can see traces of chamber music and Lieder written in Fanny's works. On the contrary, women barely ventured into the realm of orchestral music, and for practical reasons back then. Firstly, society deemed symphonies and large works to be masculine forms performed in public concert halls. Secondly, many had the lack of access to education. Lastly, men and women alike needed connections and access to the gatekeepers. Women were less likely to form these connections due to their social circles, and them attempting to break out may be met with disdain by these gatekeepers for not conforming to the societal expectations (Pendle, 1991, pp. 162–164). This can be apparent in Fanny's works; Overture in C is the only purely orchestra work by her. She did however composed concert arias and several oratorios, though these are not pure orchestra works (Burns, 2020).

Fanny's life is evident of women being unable to compete on an equal compositional playing field, due to social prejudices and patriarchal mores, and not that they are naturally not as good as many who share that view claims (Taruskin, 2005, p. 186). In the following sections, we will be exploring the relations between Fanny Mendelssohn and her spouse, father, and brother, and how they perpetuated some of these norms or encouraged her to break away from it.

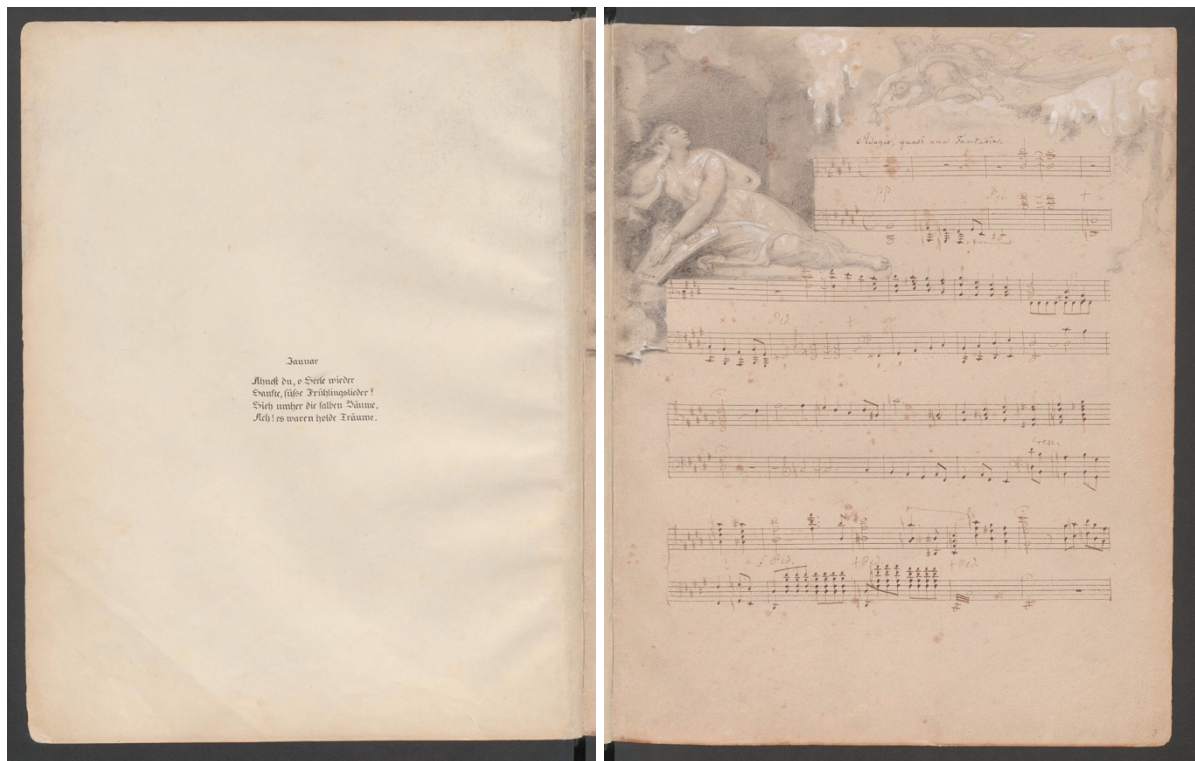
4 Relations with Wilhelm Hensel

Fanny first met Wilhelm Hensel back in 1821 when she was 16, when he was an upcoming painter. In 1822, Wilhelm started to court Fanny, and Fanny was setting some of his poems to music. Her parents were not very supportive of the relationship, due to Wilhelm's age (11 years older) and religious connections (his sister was a Catholic mystic). Wilhelm left in 1823 to study painting in Italy, and Fanny wrote songs to him (her mother forbade letters). Wilhelm returned in 1828 to work in the Royal Academy of Art in Berlin as a court painter. This gave him legitimacy and grounds to ask Fanny for marriage, and they married on 3 October 1829 ('The Marriage of Fanny Mendelssohn and Wilhelm Hensel', 2019).

The relations of Wilhelm and Fanny go beyond their romantic interest, or Fanny setting his poems. Wilhelm played two additional roles in Fanny's composing interests, as a source of support, and illustrating her works.

Wilhelm was very much encouraging of Fanny's salon concerts, composing, and publishing. While Wilhelm was able to provide much support to Fanny, Felix was still ultimately who Fanny turned to and was most influential in her life, at least in terms of composing ((Kimber, 2002, p. 116). They both complemented each other's life well. They respected each other's boundaries and had their own separate work rooms to pursue on their individual interests. Fanny continued setting Hensel's poetry to music, while Wilhelm illustrated her works ('The Marriage of Fanny Mendelssohn and Wilhelm Hensel', 2019).

We can see the interjection of Wilhelm's artwork on Fanny's *Das Jahr* (transl. *The Year*). She wrote it for Wilhelm as a Christmas present. It is a cycle of thirteen short pieces for piano, and each cycle corresponds to each month of a year, with the last corresponding to a postlude. There was space left at the top of each movement for Wilhelm to add illustrations. Fanny also selected quotations from German poets to precede each movement. *Das Jahr* is a set of character pieces, a popular nineteenth-century genre. Character pieces are short works, often for piano and or with programmatic content, to tell a story or paint a picture. The texts and pictures added to the composition is a unique and refreshing way of presenting the idea that Fanny is trying to convey through her music (*The Hensels' Year in Music*, n.d.).



Quote, artwork by Wilhelm, and score. Fanny Hensel's Das Jahr 1st piece. This format is replicated for all 13 pieces.

Extracted from: (Das Jahr, n.d.)

We can see that Fanny was close to Wilhelm, and that he was rather influential in her life and encouraging. However, despite the encouragement from Wilhelm, she still largely respected Felix's opinion against her publishing. Hence, while Wilhelm did serve against her father and brother's dominant opinion, it was not enough to push Fanny to pursue her ideals.

5 Relations with her Abraham Mendelssohn

Abraham Mendelssohn was Fanny's father. He took a rather strong stance against Fanny publishing her music, or even taking composition up as a career. There are various examples below that highlight the stance of her father.

Her father once said to her in 1820 with regards to her ambitions:

“What you wrote to me about your musical occupations with reference to and in comparison with Felix was both rightly thought and expressed. Music will perhaps become his profession, whilst for you it can and must only be an ornament, never the root of your being and doing. We may therefore pardon him some ambition and desire to be acknowledged in a pursuit which appears very important to him, because he feels a vocation for it, whilst it does you credit that you have always shown yourself good and sensible in these matters; and your very joy at the praise he earns proves that you might, in his place, have merited equal approval. Remain true to these sentiments and to this line of conduct; they are feminine, and only what is truly feminine is an ornament to your sex.”

(Hensel et al., 2013, p. 82)

Right from this lengthy but detailed quote, it highlights some of the expectations that her father had of her. Her father made it clear that there are grounds for justification for Felix to pursue composition as a career, but due to Fanny's sex orientation, she should conform to her roles in society, and not be pursuing this endeavour. It is not on an unfounded basis, for we can see Abraham's belief of these social norms for the sexes persisting till the later years. Abraham told Fanny on her birthday eight years later: “You must prepare more earnestly and eagerly for your real calling, the only calling of a young woman - I mean the state of a housewife.”, insinuating her role in society as a woman.

But it is rather unsurprising that her father shared the beliefs of these social norms. After all, their home was a leading salon for the artistic notables of the day, and hence the Mendelssohns held traditional views regarding the proper duties of women to upkeep their image (Citron, 1984, pp. 9–10).

It is to be noted that Fanny never published her music prior to her father's death, presumably due to his strong opinions, and her unwillingness to go against the grain and undertake such a huge step while he was alive (Citron, 1984, p. 13).

6 Relations with Felix Mendelssohn

Fanny's relations with Felix would be much more involved than that of her father or spouse. Beyond brothers and sisters, they played significant roles in each other's musical pursuits. Fanny highly respected his opinions and would discuss her works with Felix. Felix likewise adored Fanny's abilities, and would always consult her for his compositions.

Correspondence between Fanny and Felix can be seen below, where they exchanged opinions and thoughts about each other's pieces, and how they took each other's remarks seriously. Felix therefore has significant influence on how Fanny's music would turn out and her editorial decisions.

"I'm again looking with the greatest pleasure at the piano pieces that Paul and Albertine brought me. There are some excellent ones among them and I thank you very much for the great joy I've derived from them. It's seldom that a piece of new music is so thoroughly pleasing. "

- Felix on Fanny sending him her compositions

"You can imagine how happy I am that you like my piano pieces, which leads me to believe that I haven't totally gone downhill in music."

- Fanny after Felix aforementioned letter

"I am therefore hurt-although not out of wounded pride-that you haven't liked my pieces for such a long time. Did I really compose better in the old days, or were you merely easier to satisfy?"

- Fanny to Felix after sending him her compositions

"But you're totally wrong if you think that I consider your newer pieces somehow inferior to the earlier ones. I know of no better lied of yours than the one in g minor, or the close of the Liederkreis, and so many other recent ones."

- Felix after Fanny aforementioned letter

(Citron, 1984, p. 12)

Fanny likewise provided a substantial amount of input into Felix compositions. Felix almost always took her advice to heart and modified based on her comments. Felix even nicknamed her "Minerva," after the Roman goddess of wisdom, for her highly developed musical and intellectual insight (Padua, 2010).

Felix was approving and encouraging of Fanny composing but was opposed to the thought of her publishing. A quote from Felix on 24 June 1837 is as follows, in regards to Lea persuading Felix to convince Fanny to publish (given his extensive influence on her):

"You write about Fanny's new pieces and tell me that I should persuade her to publish them. You praise her new compositions to me, which really isn't necessary ... for I think they're splendid and lovely. In addition, I hope I don't need to say that if she decides to publish any-

thing, I will help her all I can and alleviate any difficulties arising from it. But I cannot persuade her to publish anything, because it is against my views and convictions. We have previously spoken a great deal about it, and I still hold the same opinion. I consider publishing something serious (it should at least be that) and believe that one should do it only if one wants to appear as an author one's entire life and stick to it. But that necessitates a series of works, one after the other . . . Fanny, as I know her, possesses neither the inclination nor calling for authorship. She is too much a woman for that, as is proper, and looks after her house and thinks neither about the public nor the musical world, unless that primary occupation is accomplished. Publishing would only disturb her in these duties, and I cannot reconcile myself to it. If she decides on her own to publish, or to please Hensel, I am, as I said, ready to be helpful as much as possible, but to encourage her towards something I don't consider right is what I cannot do."

(Citron, 1984, pp. 13 - 15)

This further highlights Felix's views on Fanny publishing. While he does not actively try to stop her, he doesn't champion the idea of her publishing nor will push for it. He believes she will be better suited for her traditional role of a woman (housewife, wife, etc.) than to take it up as a profession. However, he did state that should she choose to do so independently, he would support her and provide the necessary support. Regardless, he actively made it clear that he would not push her in that direction lest she choose to pursue it herself.

Given how close they are, and Fanny's desire to maintain her reputation in Felix's eyes, it is likely that Fanny chooses not to publish knowing her brother's opinions. Indeed, Fanny made it clear to Felix that she did not actively look for publishers, but was only passively receiving offers from them, which aligned better with Felix's expectation of her (Citron, 1984, p. 15). While Citron does argue that Felix was against Fanny publishing due to remnant of his father's influence and beliefs, as well as his personal belief of Fanny's feminine role, Marion seems to suggest taking a softer approach. Kimber argues that unpublished private letters indicate Felix did not want Fanny to publish due to her poor health. He believed that publishing would induce unnecessary stress onto Fanny worsening her health. His wishes for her to conform to the roles were as much her social status as her gender (Kimber, 2002, p. 118). Nonetheless, we could see that Fanny highly respected the wishes and validation of her brother (regardless of the underlying reasons) and did not venture much into publishing as such. The respect Fanny had for Felix could be seen from her letter to Felix on 18 July 1836, where she clearly stated she would respect whatever Felix wishes for her future.

"I don't know what Goethe means by the demonic influence, but it's clear that if it exists, you exert it on me. If you seriously suggested that I become a good mathematician, I wouldn't have any special difficulty in doing it; if you thought that I was no longer any good at music then I'd give it up tomorrow."

(Citron, 1984, p. 11)

It is also widely known that Fanny published 6 of her songs under Felix Op. 8 and 9, though the reason for doing so is relatively unestablished. However, it was commonplace for women to publish anonymously or by the designation "by a lady". Felix was also rather open about Fanny's contributions. In his visit to Queen Victoria, she chooses one of Fanny's Lieder to sing to him, and he openly confessed that it was written by Fanny (Kimber, 2002, p. 119).

When Fanny finally decided to publish again in 1846, Felix did congratulate her, have his blessings, and welcome her into the profession. Felix did take a softer stance towards Fanny's publishing activities after her publication (Citron, 1984, p. 15).

7 The Works of Fanny Mendelssohn

This section aims to explore 2 things. The first would be to explore how the social constraints placed upon her and her positionality led to the genres she delved into, and what are the implications on her music; whether she conformed to them. The second would be to highlight her virtuosity. It is crucial to highlight her virtuosity as it meant that she had the technical capability and knowledge to succeed as a composer; it was just that the circumstances she was dealt with hindered her success.

Looking at her catalogue of works, she wrote at least 250 lieder, songs, for voice and piano, at least 125 piano works, 28 choral works, 1 orchestral work, 7 chamber works, 2 organ works, and 1 dramatic scene work (Judith , 2005, pp. 26–29). While she did work on larger works, they pale in comparison with respect to her lieder and piano works.

Apart from her father and family influence pushing her towards “more feminine” Lieder, the reason for the lack of large works could also be linked back to societal constraints. Knowing that her works are likely not going to be played in public or published and is likely to be played at her family’s Sunday musicals or *Sonntagsmusiken* only (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie, n.d.), there would be little point for her to be composing large works that will not be played.

We would be exploring her Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11 mainly, which is sufficient to bring the point across. We would be able to see that she had an in-depth understanding of what she was composing and had amazing technical ability.

Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11 features a piano, cello and violin, a very conventional setup for a piano trio. The piano trio consists of 4 movements as follows:

Movement One: Allegro molto vivace
Movement Two: Andante espressivo
Movement Three: Lied. Allegretto
Movement Four: Finale. Allegro moderato

In the context of our discussion and analysis, we will be looking at the first and fourth movement. The first movement is written in sonata-allegro form, in the key of D minor. It can be characterised as a large scale movement, with a fast tempo and dramatic drive. The fourth movement starts in D minor, but ends in D major. An improvisatory fantasia-like piano introduction starts off the last movement (Judith , 2005, p. 47).

“Different atmospheres and a variety of colors, including lyricism, melancholy, agitation, drive, and playfulness characterize this hybrid sonata- rondo form movement. Foreshadowing the late nineteenth-century cyclic form, the work is unified by a quotation from the first movement in the Finale.”

- Description of the 4th movement by Judith (Judith , 2005, p. 47)

Right at the start of the first movement, fast running semiquaver notes are played, running up and down in a similar fashion that of a scale. Chords follow in soon after in the second bar. The running semiquaver notes continue throughout the rest of movement. We can also see the injection of arpeggios at the start of each short phrase before the melody is continued by the

violin part. The initialization of the movement with fast semiquaver notes running, marks a serious and grand opening, unlike that one would expect to hear from domestic music. And this runs contrary to the notion that Fanny was writing this in a domestic setting. Knowing that she would be playing in a domestic setting and likely only so for the rest of her life, she chose to write her piece's opening in a concert like fashion, which showed that societal influences and expectations did not affect the way she chose to write, but rather only on her getting her name out there or in the musical canon. Additionally, the fast-paced notes and arpeggiation require quite the technical ability to execute well and stamina to sustain it, something expected of an experienced player. This small section just highlights the technical skill Fanny possessed on the piano, given that she was the one playing the piano in her piano trio at her *Sonntagsmusiken* (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie, n.d.).

TRIO.

F. Mendelssohn - Hensel, op. 11

Allegro molto vivace.

Violino.

Violoncello.

Pianoforte.

Allegro molto vivace.

Published 1984 by Verlag Walter Wollenweber, München

First page of the piano trio (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11, 1984)

In the transition to the second thematic interest, we can see the sheer amount of chords and leaps required, as well as the recurring tremolo. Once again, high technical ability is required to execute this in a musically sound format.

5

molto cresc e brillante

ff

f p *f animato*

cresc. *f* *dim.*

p *f*

WW 95

5th page of the piano trio, transition to 2nd theme (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11 , 1984)

In the second theme, the tremolo continues, and a 18 bar theme is introduced by the cello and then the violin, with the other instruments supporting the melody. Beginning in bar 76, both the violin and piano repeats the same theme an octave higher, with the piano playing octaves, while the cello plays the supporting role now. In the 2nd thematic focus, we can see that Fanny understands the interaction between instruments, in that the parts are passed around each of the instruments well. We can see the implementation of imitation and interaction in her composition, which shows her technical knowledge of compositional techniques.

The image displays a musical score for the 6th page of a piano trio, specifically the 2nd theme from the Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11, No. 3, by Frédéric Chopin. The score is written for three staves: two for the piano (treble and bass clefs) and one for the violin (treble clef). The key signature is D minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the theme with dynamics 'dim.' and 'p'. The second system includes the instruction 'cantabile' and 'Rec. p' for the piano part. The third system continues the theme with dynamics 'f' and 'dim.'.

WW 95

6th page of the piano trio, 2nd theme (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11, 1984)

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line, with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. The bottom two staves are for the piano accompaniment, also marked *mf* and *animato*. The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more melodic line in the left hand.

The second system continues the musical score with four staves. The vocal line remains in the top two staves, and the piano accompaniment continues in the bottom two staves. The piano part maintains its rhythmic and melodic patterns, with some changes in chord voicings.

The third system of the musical score consists of four staves. The vocal line is in the top two staves, and the piano accompaniment is in the bottom two staves. The piano part features a more complex rhythmic pattern with some sixteenth notes and a dynamic marking of *8* (likely indicating a forte dynamic). The system concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to three flats.

WW 95

7th page of the piano trio, 2nd theme (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11, 1984)

The third theme begins at bar 96. Immediately the piano part is greeted by chords and octaves, following by leaps every few bars, which is highly technical. There is also the use of countermelody within this theme.

8

The image displays a page of musical notation for a piano trio, specifically the 8th page of the 3rd theme from the Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11, No. 3, by Dmitri Shostakovich. The score is arranged in two systems, each containing two staves. The top staff of each system is for the Violin, and the bottom staff is for the Piano. The music is in D minor, as indicated by the key signature of two flats. The tempo and dynamics are marked as *f* *animato*. The piano part features complex textures, including dense chords, octaves, and triplets. A *pizz* (pizzicato) marking is present in the second system. The score concludes with a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking. The page number '8' is located at the top left, and the publisher's code 'WW 95' is centered at the bottom.

WW 95

8th page of the piano trio, 3rd theme (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11 , 1984)

The piece then moves to the development section, where fast arpeggiation, scales, large chords, octaves, and leaps are featured in the piano part. Double stops can also be found in the strings. It can be seen that this section is rather technically challenging.

13

The musical score is presented in four systems. Each system contains staves for the first violin, second violin, and piano. The piano part is highly technically demanding, featuring rapid arpeggiated figures, wide intervals, and dense chordal textures. The string parts are marked *sempre ff* and include double stops. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. The first system shows the beginning of the development section with a *sempre ff* marking. The second system continues the complex piano part. The third system shows the piano part with dense arpeggiation and the strings with double stops. The fourth system concludes the page with further complex piano textures and string accompaniment. The score is marked with 'WW 95' at the bottom.

14th page of the piano trio, development (*Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11*, 1984)

Recapitulation happens at bar 253. The piano reinstates the first theme in the exposition, and this time, the piano plays the melody while the strings plays the runs, contrary to the exposition. Additionally, it is played with chords and with the dynamic *ff*. This is a very effective way to bring listeners back to the thematic interest. The rest of the exposition is closely mimicked, with some variation.

15

ww 95

15th page of the piano trio, recapitulation (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11 , 1984)

The drop to *pp* at the final 13th bar, followed by a large crescendo to the end of the piece (for the last 12 bars), combined with the intensity of the 4 repeated semiquaver rhythm, and some remnants of the starting melody, beautifully ends off the first movement.

23

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a *pp* dynamic and a *cresc.* marking. The piano accompaniment features a complex semiquaver rhythm. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with a *f poco* dynamic marking. The third system shows the final bars of the piece, including a *ff* dynamic marking and a *ff Red.* marking. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

WW 95

23rd page of the piano trio, ending (Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 11, 1984)

From the first movement, we can see the sheer amount of technical details and skill needed to execute the movement in a coherent and expressive manner, signifying her as a virtuosic pianist. In addition, the details in her work, instrumentation, musical interaction, and the overall sound of the piece marks her as a competent and amazing composer.

Looking through the fourth movement, we can start to see the similarities in her compositional style. The fourth movement features a few themes, which will be briefly explored. In the first theme, we can see the left hand playing an octave, followed by hemidemisemiquavers quickly, repeated every bar. The right hand also plays part to the run, while having to juggle the melody. This requires a high level of technical ability, and most certainly would not be played by the amateur musician. The second theme features countermelody, continuous triplets in the piano part, as well as chords. The sheer complexity of this part makes it difficult to play and organise. The third theme features leaps in the left hand piano part, from octaves to chords. These themes are then further developed, with a strong ending having all the instruments playing together.

From her piano trio, we can pick up the high technical ability she possessed to execute the piece, and her in-depth understanding of orchestration concepts and instrumentation, making her a virtuosic pianist and composer. Additionally, her piece is written to be rich, intense, distinct and played with vigour, clearly reflecting that this is a professional work of art, meant to be serious music, instead of the domestic music which her sex was expected to produce. From here, we can see that she was rather serious about composing and performance, and had the capability to do so. If she had the chance to publish, perform publicly, and join the musical canon, she could very well have matched the likes and capabilities of other great composer in composing and performing great works. It goes to show her constraints arose from societal and family beliefs, rather than her technical ability. Her Overture in C and *Das Jahr* likewise do her justice by showcasing her orchestration and technical capabilities respectively, along with her other works.

8 Other Relations, Society, and Personal Development

Fanny's aunt did sort of shape some ideologies between her and Felix early on as well. When Fanny was 14 (and Felix 10), their aunt sent them gifts from Paris. Fanny received a necklace of Scottish jewels, while Felix got writing implements for composition ('The Marriage of Fanny Mendelssohn and Wilhelm Hensel', 2019). In a way, her aunt's expectation of the two of them were quite distinct. She clearly intended Felix to pursue his interest in composition, while Fanny was to care more about "beauty" and "feminine characteristics" than to work on composition. How much of an influence this had on her awareness of social conformity is debatable, given her young age, and the fact that the difference could just have been an innocent gesture. Nonetheless, we could see how some of the societal beliefs reigned in the family.

Despite facing many restrictions, Fanny still had opportunities to share and explore her creative arts. For one, not much is said against her privately composing. Pain points were against her publishing and picking it up as a career. She started her *Sonntagsmusiken*, like the Mendelssohn family's Sunday musicals she used to play at. This provided her the opportunity to perform her Lieder and oratorios of her brother, alongside many other genres. In a sense, she was able to bridge between the public and private sphere by performing to a wider audience. And this did not spark any outrage in the Mendelssohn family, for there were no critics and it was by invitation only. It meant it was socially acceptable as it was considered private (Hensel [Née Mendelssohn (-Bartholdy)], Fanny Cäcilie, n.d.). Fanny was still able to share her works to the wider audience, though limited in reach, despite the restrictions she faced at the time.

Having explored her relations and social beliefs in the earlier sections, we now paint a clearer picture of the why and how. Social expectations of women to be wives and mothers, to treat music as a hobby over a serious career, and lack of access was a good starting point. Her father (and possibly aunt) perpetuated these social beliefs and imposed them onto her, and she obliged by her father's views. Her close relationship with her brother meant that she shared his views that she should not go into publishing, though the reasons for his attitude were not well established. Her spouse was rather encouraging, but face with these social norms and family beliefs, it was not strong enough to push her to publish. She only published in the later years after her father died and that she was nearing her death. She did however, continue to compose in private, for which no one really opposed. She had only performed publicly once, a concerto by Felix at a charity event in 1838, and only after her father's death (Taruskin, 2005, p. 185). The lack of public exposure to her works could be seen distinctly here.

From her early childhood, Zelter's remarks, as well as her subsequent compositions, we can infer that Fanny was clearly a very talented individual, with skills and aptitude in composition and piano. It is indeed tragic that social and familial conformity led her to not publish her works, lest it could have gotten more traction. Nonetheless, her works have started to gain traction with better documentation and digitalisation, and her voice is getting heard, too late but better than never. One could wonder, had she been the opposite sex in society at that point in time, could her life have turned out drastically? Will it follow a similar or advanced trajectory of Felix's? Alas, that is a question that we will never find out, but at least now we have a living memory of Fanny and her works.

9 Conclusion

At the end of the day, it is crucial that we do not take a linear approach when dealing with Fanny Mendelssohn's troubled interaction with society and family. While social norms and family ideals played a crucial role in Fanny's decision to not publish and pursue music professionally, we should also consider how much of it stemmed from Fanny's personal decisions. After all, given the social conventions at that time, it would not have been wise for Fanny to go down the path of music, and it was likely that she had some awareness of this. It is not clear, but we should also try to consider where Fanny drew this thin line for herself.

When it comes to her father and brother's views, it is also important to consider how much of it was family image and social norms, while how much of it was their belief that it was best for Fanny to conform to these norms. Indeed, it might have been possible for Fanny to go against the social conventions and their views. But how much would it have benefitted Fanny? After all, she seemed to be rather content with Wilhelm and her family, while maintaining an active composing lifestyle. She might very well have been content with conforming to these norms and have no fixation on wanting to publish. But once again, these are questions with great ambiguity, and it is impossible to get a clear quantitative answer.

Fanny's works contributed greatly to the classical music catalogue, especially her vast number of lieder and solo piano works. Beyond her own works, she had significant influence in the making of Felix Mendelssohn's music. For one, she had significant input in how his music would turn out due to her well respected remarks. The genre "Song without Words" (original naming *Lieder ohne Worte*) by Felix originated from Fanny's "Songs for Piano" (original naming *Lieder für das Pianoforte*) (Taruskin, 2005, p. 184). Fanny Hensel unfortunately died in 1947 due to complications of a stroke (age 41), while rehearsing one of her brother's oratorios, *The First Walpurgis Night* ('Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel', n.d.).

Fanny Hensel did leave a legacy, and her works and interactions are still being discovered and appreciated. The Music Room of Fanny Hensel painted by Julius Helfft (1849), is being held in Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (Drawing, the Music Room of Fanny Hensel (Née Mendelssohn), n.d.). *The Mendelssohn Family (1729–1847) From Letters and Journals Volume 1 and 2* is also published in 2013, which details some of Fanny's interactions with the others, thereby capturing transients in her life (*The Mendelssohn Family (1729–1847) | Nineteenth-Century Music*, n.d.). A large wealth of academic texts has also sprung up exploring Fanny's life, relations, and works.



Drawing, The Music Room of Fanny Hensel. Held in Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

Source: (Drawing, the Music Room of Fanny Hensel(Née Mendelssohn), n.d.).

Beyond these, the Fanny & Felix Mendelssohn Museum opened which showcases and preserves snapshots and exchanges of Fanny's life (deutschlandfunk.de, n.d.). It is indeed heartwarming to see that many years later in our contemporary society, Fanny started to grow in popularity and recognition. Fanny Hensel chapter is long over, but it is paramount that we flip back and commemorate her intellect and contributions, and to end her chapter on a good note.

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