A black and white portrait of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, a young man with dark, wavy hair and a high forehead, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a dark coat with a white collar.

A Guide  
to  
Research

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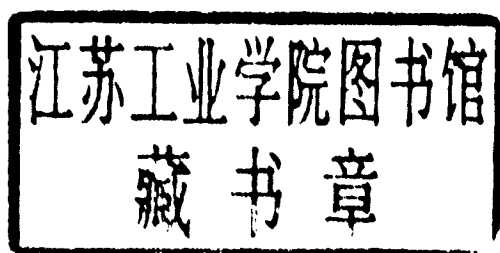
John Michael Cooper

# FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY

## A GUIDE TO RESEACH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH  
CONCERNING FANNY HENSEL

JOHN MICHAEL COOPER



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## **Composer Resource Manuals**

In response to the growing need for bibliographic guidance to the vast literature on significant composers, Routledge is publishing an extensive series of research guides. This ongoing series encompasses more than 50 composers; they represent Western musical tradition from the Renaissance to the present century.

Each research guide offers a selective, annotated list of writings, in all European languages, about one or more composers. There are also lists of works by the composers, unless these are available elsewhere. Biographical sketches and guides to library resources, organizations, and specialists are presented. As appropriate to the individual composer, there are maps, photographs, or other illustrative matter, glossaries, and indexes.

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## Preface

Any reader who has gone so far as to pick up this book probably already has some knowledge of the fundamental reason for its existence: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, although known by name and by a few warhorse compositions to virtually everyone familiar with any classical music, remains one of the most ambivalently represented composers in the world of musical scholarship. As Mendelssohn's reception history has vacillated between excessive adulation and equally excessive dismissals, the elite canon of first-rate research sources has been almost hopelessly outnumbered by a proliferation of biographies and critical essays based on little more than the authors' prejudices and assumptions—often reflecting (but not explicitly articulating) racist agendas that most latter-day readers find untenable, irrelevant, and abhorrent. The result is a bewildering landscape in which some extraordinary fruits of scholarly research exist within a stiffling arid wasteland of music-historical prose. This book endeavors to assist researchers in locating, assessing, and using those sources.

More directly, the book owes its existence to two of the great men of latter-day Mendelssohn scholarship. Donald Mintz, whose seminal dissertation on the manuscripts for three of the composer's major works (no. 926) broke important new ground in enabling Mendelssohn scholarship to escape the quagmire into which it had descended in the first half of the twentieth century, began collecting the data and wrote preliminary annotations for some sources. Professor Mintz was kind enough to share this material with me when I was contracted for the book, and his contributions provided the foundation for the completed project.<sup>1</sup> In addition, R. Larry Todd, my doctoral advisor at Duke University and by consensus one of the deans of modern Mendelssohn scholarship, contributed not only his global knowledge of sources, issues, and ideas, but also the recommendation for taking on this project.

The volume also would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of individuals and institutions. For shepherding the book through the various complexities of production I owe a special debt of gratitude to Richard Carlin (senior music editor), Rachael Shook, and Julie H. Ho at Routledge. These individuals' patience and professionalism made it possible to negotiate some dif-



ficult deadlines and thorny editorial issues that might, in less expert hands, have compromised the book. Likewise, a debt of gratitude is owed to the staffs and interlibrary loan departments at a number of libraries and universities during the preparatory stages of work: the Mary Duke Biddle Music Library at Duke University; the Warren D. Allen Music Library at The Florida State University; the Musikabteilung of the Hessische Landes und Hochschulsbibliothek in Darmstadt; the Heinrich-Heine-Institut in Düsseldorf; the Music and Strozzer Libraries at Illinois Wesleyan University; the Music Division of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the Firestone Library at Princeton University; the Musikabteilung and Mendelssohn-Archiv of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz; the Musikabteilung of the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main; and the Music Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A debt of gratitude also goes to the two fine graduate students who assisted with the proofreading and prepared the indexes for this volume: William McGinney and Aaron West. Finally, I wish to thank the staff of Willis Library at The University of North Texas. Their extraordinary expertise, efficiency, and patience have made the completion of this book a doubly rewarding experience.

John Michael Cooper  
Denton, Texas  
1 December 2000

#### NOTE

1. For some entries Professor Mintz's information has been retained in toto or only slightly modified; these are designated by a "[DM]" or a "[DM/JMC]" at the end of the annotation.

# Introduction. Problems and Potentials of Mendelssohn Scholarship

Mendelssohn scholarship has experienced prodigious growth, both in volume and in quality, since the Second World War. One might even suggest that the state of Mendelssohn research has not only regained much of the territory lost during the nadir of the second third of this century, but has opened up new horizons that probably were unforeseeable in the prewar period. Such optimistic observations seem to be corroborated by the slowly but steadily increasing presence of the names of Felix Mendelssohn and his older sister, Fanny Hensel,<sup>1</sup> in concert and recital programs, recordings, and general music-historical literature.

This book, like all volumes in the *Composer Resource Manuals* series, documents the principal achievements of Mendelssohn scholarship. In so doing, it reveals that much remains to be done before the general body of knowledge and information concerning these two important nineteenth-century composers can begin to rival the general quality of scholarship concerning many of their contemporaries. More importantly, it facilitates an overview of the enormous qualitative vacillations that have characterized scholarship concerning the musical prodigies of the Mendelssohn family—and thereby underscores the need for researchers to approach any given source with a critical understanding of how that source fits into these vacillations. The following is a brief sketch of the dynamics of this convoluted scholarly reception history.<sup>2</sup>

## Scholarship and Reception History Concerning the Musical Mendelssohns: A Brief Review

For the eldest siblings of the Mendelssohn family,<sup>3</sup> fame during one's own time was both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, Felix's international notoriety as composer and conductor and the widespread attention commanded by Fanny Hensel's presence as the organizer of Berlin's leading salon led contemporaries to approach their lives and works with an unusually high level of scholarly rigor and thoroughness. Both composers were the subject of brief and generally accu-

rate biographical sketches in contemporary periodicals in Germany and England, and by 1847 no fewer than three catalogs of Felix's compositions had appeared in print (see chapter 4, p. 119–21). Few other composers of their generation achieved a level of virtually unanimously granted fame that justified such scholarly attention before 1847.

On the other hand, the success both siblings achieved during the *Vormärz*; and the fact that both died before the wave of revolutions that swept the continent in 1848–49 resulted in a highly polarized posthumous reception history. In England, where the Mendelssohn cult had grown to virtual idolatry in the mid- and late 1840s,<sup>4</sup> and in many quarters within Germany and France, admirers of Felix Mendelssohn's music treated his memory with the sort of reverence generally accorded a fallen hero. As it became known in the years 1848–70 that Mendelssohn had left a sizable number of his works unpublished, his admirers' assertions that those works, like his memory, belonged to "the world"<sup>5</sup> led initially to the posthumous publication of a number of compositions he had suppressed (all works with opus numbers higher than 72), and then to the so-called *Gesamtausgabe* published by Breitkopf & Härtel under the general editorship of Julius Rietz in 1871–74. These posthumous publications—which presented many of the composer's youthful compositions with misleadingly high opus and serial numbers to a public that wanted to see more of his mature style—combined with the highly charged and increasingly anti-Semitic political atmosphere to produce a strong consensus that Schumann's frequent descriptions of Mendelssohn as "modern" had been wrong; that this music belonged to the past rather than the future; that while it was perhaps adequate for the (perceived) tranquility of pre-revolutionary Europe,<sup>6</sup> it no longer met the challenges of the present.

This transformation in reception history soon engendered one of the most notorious chapters in music history. A number of highly polemical and pseudo-scholarly essays—including Wagner's and Liszt's writings on Jews in music (nos. 394 and 386)—along with a number of similar writings that are less familiar today, but were equally widely circulated and influential at the time—asserted, in concurrence with contemporary racial and evolutionary theories, that the composer's Jewish heritage had led ineluctably to recidivist and atavistic traits after the mid-1830s.<sup>7</sup> In this view, Mendelssohn had devolved rather than evolved after completing his early masterpieces (including the Octet for Strings, the *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, and the posthumously published "Italian" Symphony). The political and personal attacks leveled by composers who had been unable to fully challenge his fame or integrity during his lifetime thus found ostensible validation in the anti-Semitic pseudo-science of the day, and the supposed scholarly authority of these writings led to the incorporation of these judgments in a number of general histories of music. (Indeed, the notion of

his compositional decline remains intact—albeit without the original anti-Semitic rationalizations—in a number of scholarly and general musicological writings even today.)<sup>8</sup>

The descent from plausible scholarship to ludicrous lionization and polemical pseudo-research did not go unnoticed. As early as 1865 the great patron of English musical lexicography, Sir George Grove, pointed out that Mendelssohn was ill-served by the bowdlerized but widely disseminated editions of his correspondence that had appeared in print under the editorship of his brother and his nephew; Philipp Spitta and others voiced similar criticisms in the 1880s.<sup>9</sup>

Grove also extensively researched the available primary sources—episodary as well as musical—and published a number of insightful essays and reviews of important familiar and unknown compositions by Mendelssohn.

The culmination of these efforts was Grove's essay on Mendelssohn for the first edition of his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, first published in 1880 (no. 36 in this volume). Although some of the information contained in it is now dated, this essay still stands as one of the finest achievements of Mendelssohn scholarship and of musical scholarship in general: it draws extensively and accurately on a wide variety of sources; offers detailed biographical information and correlates the compositions with contemporaneous events; and provides an overview of the composer's contemporary and posthumous reception. It was revised for the second edition of the *Dictionary* and reprinted, with minor modifications, for Grove's widely disseminated book *Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn* (no. 37).

The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth were in many ways a high point for Mendelssohn scholarship. In addition to Grove's numerous other contributions, these years witnessed the appearance of several more reliable collections of correspondence,<sup>10</sup> as well as the biography by Ernst Wolff (no. 98)—a document that, while dated in some particulars, remains largely unsurpassed in the biographical literature. Because of these and other, smaller publications, the quality of Mendelssohn scholarship at the centennial of the composer's birth was generally on a par with scholarship concerning other composers, and generally representative of musical scholarship as a whole.

It is worth noting that the late nineteenth century was also a flowering period for research concerning Fanny Hensel. Although the volume and overall quality of research devoted to Fanny never rivaled that of Felix, the last years of the century—which, after all, were precisely the years in which the concept of feminism as we now understand it emerged and gained a widespread foothold in society<sup>11</sup>—witnessed a proliferation of surprisingly substantive scholarly examinations and critical writings, as well as performances of her music. It is no exag-

generation to state that general knowledge of Hensel and familiarity with her works in 1900 was at a level appreciably higher than in 1970, when the modern Hensel revival began.

But the period 1914–45 witnessed a precipitous decline. The heyday of Wagnerism, rampant anti-Semitism inside and outside Western Europe, and the ascendancy of nationalistic musicology<sup>12</sup> left the German-Jewish Mendelssohns vulnerable to ceaseless tropes on the vitriolic dismissals of the New German School. Monuments and important scholarly documents<sup>13</sup> concerning Felix Mendelssohn were destroyed throughout Germany and elsewhere; his music was banned in Germany and his presence in the concert repertoire diminished to only a few pieces; and venerable scholars succumbed to the condescending negative generalizations of Wagner and Liszt, often in verbiage remarkably similar to their overtly anti-Semitic writings.<sup>14</sup> This period did produce some important documents—such as Köffler's dissertation (which has since been destroyed) and Rudolf Werner's important study of Mendelssohn's sacred works (which fortunately survives; see no. 905 in this book)—but on the whole these years represent a considerable retreat from the level of scholarship attained in the early years of the century. Historians seemed uninterested in a critical evaluation of mid- and late-nineteenth-century polemics, the concert-going public had little repertoire upon which to formulate any more substantive views, and the general trajectory of musicological inquiry discouraged serious research on “homeless Jews” *cum* cosmopolitan composers such as Felix Mendelssohn and Fanny Hensel.

After the Second World War, the growing awareness of the transgressions of the recent past gradually began to encourage a reappraisal of pre-war verdicts on Felix Mendelssohn. Initially, progress was slow—the most far-reaching scholarly achievements were two new, more critical editions of the letters from the composer's Italian sojourn of 1830–31 (nos. 328 and 329)—but the sesquicentennial of his birth generated considerable momentum. A flurry of scholarly articles on a variety of topics, together with the initiation of a new critical edition of his complete works in 1960 (see Appendix B), was supplemented by Donald Mintz's seminal dissertation in 1960 (no. 930 in this volume), as well as the first version of Eric Werner's important biography in 1963 (no. 96), the founding of the Mendelssohn-Gesellschaft in 1967, Susanna Großmann-Vendrey's important dissertation on the organ sonatas in 1965 (no. 707), and her important book and essay on Mendelssohn's relationship to the musical past in 1969 (nos. 822 and 823). In brief, these years signaled a new and committed attempt to come to grips with the nature and consequences of the scholarly abyss into which Mendelssohn scholarship had descended since 1914—and, more importantly, with Mendelssohn's life, works, and influence.

It was in the wake of this renewal of serious inquiry that Mendelssohn

research, in the early 1970s, entered the ongoing phase of high-quality scholarship that continues today. In 1972 the first issue of the Berlin *Mendelssohn-Studien* (no. 9) appeared, a journal that has functioned as a clearing house for research of all aspects of the Mendelssohn family's illustrious history. Also in 1972, Carl Dahlhaus directed a symposium on the subject of "*Das Problem Mendelssohn*" in Berlin, and the papers from this conference were published two years later in Dahlhaus's important volume by the same title (no. 3). The late 1970s brought a host of small-scale but substantive inquiries, as well as two important dissertations on Felix's compositional process (nos. 931 and 934), followed in the 1980s by Karl-Heinz Köhler's Mendelssohn article in the *New Grove* (no. 46), the revised version of Werner's biography (no. 97), a flurry of studies on the life and works of Fanny Hensel, the first major published edition of Hensel's correspondence (no. 951), and a number of style-studies of specific genres within both composers' *oeuvres*. In the 1990s these trends continued, accelerating toward the sesquicentennial of both siblings' deaths in 1997; but the decade also witnessed the appearance of a number of collections of essays, many of which attempted—for the first time in the history of Mendelssohn scholarship—to address "the Mendelssohn problem" in terms of *both* Felix and Fanny. The revival of the new Gesamtausgabe of Felix's works, the first publications of a number of compositions by Fanny, and the appearance of a separate set of critical editions of Felix's complete sacred music (see Appendix B) provided further impetus for a revival of the composers' music in concert life.

Because of this ongoing *accelerando* in scholarship concerning Felix and Fanny, it is possible to report—gladly—that this book may well be dated soon after its appearance. Plans are already in the works for a number of substantial scholarly contributions that proceed from traditional lines of musicological inquiry: a complete and reliable thematic catalog with source information; a complete critical edition of his ca. 3,000 surviving outgoing letters (only about 400 of which have been published so far); a catalog of first editions and dedications; and so on. In addition to the much-needed flow of these contributions, new scholarly approaches are steadily appearing, opening up fresh avenues as the reappraisal gains momentum and Mendelssohn research gains pace with other lines of musicological scholarship of the last few decades.<sup>15</sup>

## About this Book

This volume is organized with an eye to an optimal balance between user-friendliness and a sufficiently comprehensive coverage to convey the most important low and high points of literature concerning the Mendelssohns. To the former end, the overall organization draws upon arrangements represented in several important previous Mendelssohn bibliographies: that of the *New Grove* and its

revised and updated counterpart in *The New Grove Early Romantic Masters 2*; that of Ralf Wehner's important study of the early sacred works (no. 903); and that included in the congress report based on the Berlin Mendelssohn Symposium held in 1994 (no. 12). Because many items might fit equally well into two or more of these content-units, the reader is encouraged to consult the indexes closely. Reviews are mentioned selectively in instances in which the importance or controversiality of a book warrants their inclusion, when the reviews contribute substantively to the information given in the book, or when they provide a perspective on the item that is contrary or complementary to its stated purpose.

The citations generally follow the guidelines of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993). For items that have appeared in multiple editions, the page-count is provided after the bibliographic information that applies to the edition most directly discussed. ISBN numbers are provided when the primary bibliographic entry is for a book to which an ISBN has been applied; as with information concerning the page-count in books, the ISBN numbers apply to the editions immediately preceding. ISSN numbers are not provided. When the main entry is for an item available in the Library of Congress, the LC call number is provided. In the interest of space, items that were not available for examination, and items whose titles are sufficiently self-explanatory, are not annotated.

The chapters are organized as follows:

**Chapter 1. *Life-and-Works Studies*** This chapter surveys three principal types of sources: (1) collections of specialized essays; (2) general surveys of Mendelssohn's life and works; and (3) studies of special aspects of Mendelssohn's biography (including Mendelssohn's relationships with specific persons, places, and contemporary topics).

**Chapter 2. *Memoirs, Recollections, and Editions of Letters*** The primary criteria for inclusion of a given source in this chapter are (1) that it is written or compiled by a first-hand acquaintance of Felix Mendelssohn; and (2) that its emphasis is on summarizing or reproducing documents and events from a first-hand perspective. By nature, of course, many of these sources are also biographical; indeed, some biographies draw heavily upon primary sources and first-hand anecdotes. In such ambivalent cases I have situated the sources according to my assessment of their primary focus.

**Chapter 3. *Sociological and Cultural Studies*** This chapter too, entails a certain ambivalence, since many biographical studies also deal extensively with related sociological and cultural issues. Nevertheless, I have included here three princi-

pal varieties of study. The first of these, studies of the Mendelssohn family, includes general overviews of the family history, as well as studies specifically devoted to the musical and/or biographical relationship between Felix and Fanny. The second group, broadly described as “studies of Jewish issues,” includes inquiries that take Felix Mendelssohn’s Jewish heritage as their primary point of departure. Obviously, many of these sources might equally well be classified as studies of Mendelssohn’s musical style and aesthetics, while many others are also important contributions to biographical scholarship. These ambivalent sources are placed in this chapter because the composer’s Jewishness is their central concern. Finally, there is a section devoted to studies of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Most of these sources relate to consistencies and disparities between the composer’s contemporary and posthumous reception, and attempt to use these issues as vantage points for observations regarding his musical style.

**Chapter 4. Documentary Studies** Sources included in this chapter may be broadly described as source-inventories: they document the existence of music manuscripts and other music and papers.

**Chapter 5. Studies of Individual Works and Repertoires** This chapter is organized primarily along the division of secular vs. sacred works. In accordance with the organization of my philological essay and work-list for Douglass Seaton’s forthcoming *Mendelssohn Companion* (no. 14), the secular works are organized according to the following categories: stage works (including incidental music), orchestral works (including symphonies, overtures, and concertos), accompanied secular choral works, concert arias, choral songs, songs and vocal duets, chamber music, music for piano alone, and organ works. The sacred works are grouped into studies of the oratorios, studies of the chorale cantatas, studies of the psalm settings, studies of other accompanied sacred choral works, and studies of other unaccompanied sacred choral works. Finally, a section is included dealing with studies of Mendelssohn’s arrangements and editions of other composers’ works.

**Chapter 6. General Studies of the Music of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy** Sources included in this chapter deal with a variety of issues and with groups of works from two or more genres. They deal with the composer’s aesthetics, musical style, or compositional process, or with issues of performance practice as they relate to one or more of these topics.

**Appendix A.** This is an introduction to research concerning Fanny Hensel—a composer of considerable merit to whom no CRM or other comparable volume



has yet been dedicated. Because Hensel is not the primary subject of this volume, this inventory is treated as simply that: a selective bibliographical survey of some important scholarly achievements concerning her life, music, and influence. Since annotations for these items unfortunately would exceed the limits of this book, an annotated Hensel Guide to Research must await a future undertaking.

**Appendix B.** This appendix is an overview of Mendelssohn's works and an inventory of their publication statuses; it identifies many of the numerous scholarly and critical editions of Felix Mendelssohn's works that have appeared since the release of the old *Gesamtausgabe*. I hope this appendix will be useful as a guide to more reliable and complete editions of Mendelssohn's works as alternatives to the conspicuously incomplete and deeply flawed editions originally included in the Breitkopf & Härtel editions of 1871–74 (especially since those editions served as the basis for many subsequent ones, and continue to be treated in many quarters as sources possessed of greater authority than they actually warrant).

For convenience, non-bibliographic references to Felix Mendelssohn are given simply as the abbreviation "FMB"; those to Fanny Hensel, as "FH." When a work appeared in more than one edition, the citations give the standard information for the first edition and any other salient information (such as modified title or orthography) for those subsequent editions that appear to be most readily available. Duplicate references have been kept to a minimum.

Finally, it should be noted that while this volume attempts to be thorough and comprehensive, it cannot be complete. Sources that are generally inaccessible or are too derivative or insignificant to warrant the term "research" are tacitly omitted; the same is true of general period-histories and general histories of music, even though such sources may include useful information, and often function as important documents of reception history. Coverage is limited to materials available in English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish.<sup>16</sup> Titles of Mendelssohn's works cited in book or article titles have not been regularized. Where possible and appropriate, the citations for some reviews of major book-length contributions are provided. The manuscript was submitted belatedly in order to facilitate inclusion of items released in 1999 or slated for release in 2000, but the exigencies of temporal duress and lag-time in indexing and publicizing will inevitably result in some important items from these years being overlooked. Undoubtedly, other omissions will occur as well—and for these I can only ask the reader's forgiveness.