

FANNY MENDELSSOHN (HENSEL) 1805-1847

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Fanny Mendelssohn was born on November 14, 1805 in Hamburg, Germany. She was the oldest of the four children of Leah and Abraham Mendelssohn, a banker. In 1812, the family moved to Berlin where Fanny received her first piano lessons from her mother. She later studied with the well-known performer and teacher Marie Bigot. Along with her brother Felix, she began a course of musical study with various teachers. Because her father was opposed to her further education, the thorough training she was receiving along with her brother was eventually discontinued. He remained firmly against Fanny's musical career, believing that women were to remain an ornament to her husband and family.

In 1823, the Mendelssohns began to hold Sunday concerts which took place in the Mendelssohn's garden house performed by members of the court orchestra. Fanny took a large part in the organization of these Sunday concerts, serving as pianist, planning the programs, inviting the artists, and conducting the choir. After a five-year courtship, Fanny married the Prussian court painter Wilhelm Hensel in 1829. In 1830, her son Sebastian was born.

Fanny was regarded by their parents as more talented than Felix. She remained his mentor and model throughout her life. To the very end, he valued her criticism above all others. Even though he greatly admired his sister, Felix shared his father's belief that music to a woman could be only "an adornment, never a basis for a career." He was generous in his praise of her, but refused to allow the publication of her music or her appearance as a professional pianist. After she married, her husband encouraged her to publish her works, but she felt compelled to seek the approval of her family, which, of course, she never received.

Felix's views of women did not, however prevent him from including six of Fanny's *Lieder* under his own name, or playing her piano works at his recitals. In 1846, Fanny again sought Felix's approval for having her works published. This time he approved, giving permission for her professional career. It was, unfortunately, a short-lived blessing, for Fanny died of a stroke on May 14, 1847, during the rehearsal of one of her brother's works.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Prelude has the character of a vigorous march with wide-spaced chords and prominent pedal line. The various sections contrast melodic elements with chords. The Prelude shows Fanny's admiration for Bach's works in its use of the title of Prelude and in its idiomatic writing for the organ. All dynamic, articulation, and tempo marks are suggestions of the editor. A recording of this work by Barbara Harbach was available on the Gasparo label (GSCD 294), and is now available through Harbach Music Publishing.

Prelude for Organ

FANNY MENDELSSOHN (1805-1847)

Edited by Barbara Harbach

Andante ($\text{♩} = 60$)

ORGAN

Manual I *ff*

ff

f Manual II

12