

Introduction

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy lived during the golden age of male choral singing. After an early introduction to the genre by Carl Friedrich Zelter, his teacher and founder of the Berlin Liedertafel (1809), the composer later came to independently form his own connection with the Leipzig Liedertafel societies as a young adult,¹ as well as to maintain contact with numerous other male choral societies over the course of his lifetime. A comprehensive illumination of Mendelssohn's relationship with male choral singing, one defined in equal measure by affection and critical distance, can be found in the introduction to the volume "Songs for Male Voices."²

The 19th century's growing middle class grouped itself into both mixed choral societies (for example, *Singakademien*, oratorio choirs, etc.) and *Liedertafeln*, *Liederkränze*, and *Gesangvereine*, common designations at the time for various all-male choral formations.³ In the 1830s, the initially exclusive circles of the Liedertafel societies, which were comprised of small numbers of select members, gave rise to a veritable mass movement of ensembles with large membership rosters. These choral societies, a primarily German phenomenon, swelled in size at an astonishing rate, quickly began organizing themselves into regional choral associations, and, with their choral festivals, created the opportunity to gather regularly for what amounted to a convivial *mélange* of group singing and socializing.⁴ Apart from the purely musical components of these functions, social-political facets of the turbulent *Vormärz* epoch ("pre-March", the period in German history leading up to the 1848 Revolution), which was characterized by an increasingly nationalistic sense of identity, also played a significant role, a development that continued to escalate after 1848 through the rest of the 19th century.⁵

One byproduct of the ever-larger number of male choral societies and their increased activity was demand for new compositions, especially four-part songs. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was beholden to this trend as well, and thus came to compose works for two tenors and two basses, as well as works for all-male choirs. Three main areas can be delineated within his secular vocal repertoire: a cappella songs, the complex of pieces

written for the theater,⁶ and those festival pieces for male voices and orchestra that are the subject of the present volume. All of the latter are works he was commissioned to write for various prestigious events that took place in the 1820s and 1840s. Two of them, the so-called "Gutenberg Cantata" (1840) and the *Festgesang an die Künstler / To the Sons of Art* (1846), were published during his lifetime, while the other two did not appear in print until the 20th century. The first of these, *Begrüßung* ("Humboldt Cantata"), was conceived of and performed for the opening gala of a scientific conference in 1828, and the second, "Gott segne Sachsenland" / "God Bless Saxony" for the ceremonial unveiling of a statue in 1843.

MWV D 2

Begrüßung ("Humboldt Cantata")

Just a few months after Mendelssohn's *Festmusik* MWV D 1 – his first commission – had been performed in April of 1828 at the Dürer Festival held in Berlin to mark the 300th anniversary of that artist's death,⁷ his second occasional piece followed that September: a work for soloists, men's choir, and small orchestra to welcome German and international natural scientists convening in Berlin. The piece known today as the "Humboldt Cantata" or "Naturforscher-Kantate" ("Natural Scientists' Cantata"), *Begrüßung* MWV D 2, was commissioned by the polymath and privy councilor Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), who, as the chairman of the Gesellschaft der Deutschen Naturforscher und Ärzte (GDNÄ, or Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians), was in charge of organizing that association's 1828 conference. Eduard Devrient (1801–1877), a singer who participated in the event, recalled years later: "In September, we sang a cantata set to a text by Rellstab for the natural scientists' festival, which Alexander von Humboldt was charged by the king to host in the concert hall at the Schauspielhaus. Only one number from the piece really stood out as particularly delightful though, a tenor solo with

1 Ralf Wehner, "... sich den Freuden einer einfachen Tafel und gemeinschaftlichen Gesanges widmen ..." *Die erste Leipziger Liedertafel und Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, in: *Leipzigs Bedeutung für die Geschichte Sachsens*, ed. by Detlef Döring, Leipzig, 2014, pp. 463–491.

2 See Series VII, Volume 4 (2013) of this edition.

3 By contrast, women's choruses remained a merely peripheral phenomenon, despite the fact that composers such as Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms wrote now famous pieces for them.

4 This phenomenon was true of both men's and mixed choirs (music festivals), and was, of course, not limited to Germany, though it did take on a certain pioneering role. The general enthusiasm for singing, which culminated in the music and choral festivals, can be observed in various forms and in different periods of the 19th century in other European countries as well, for example: England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and other neighboring countries. See the relevant material in the anthology: *Musikfeste im Ostseeraum im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert – Rezeption und Kulturtransfer, Intentionen und Inszenierungsformen*, ed. by Martin Loeser and Walter Werbeck, Berlin, 2014 (= Greifswalder Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft; vol. 19) (hereafter: *Musikfeste im Ostseeraum*).

5 See the following article and the secondary literature referenced there: Dietmar Klenke, *Der singende deutsche Mann. Gesangvereine und deutsches Nationalbewusstsein von Napoleon bis Hitler*, Münster, 1998; Friedhelm Brusniak and Dietmar Klenke, *Sängerfeste und die Musikpolitik der deutschen Nationalbewegung*, in: *Die Musikforschung* 52 (1999), issue 1, pp. 29–54; Friedhelm Brusniak, *Die Entwicklung des deutschsprachigen Laienchorwesens vom Ersten Deutschen Sängerbund 1848 bis zum 11. Deutschen Sängerbund 1932*, in: "Die Leute singen mit so viel Feuer ..." *Der Cäcilienchor Frankfurt am Main 1818 bis 2018*, ed. by Daniela Philippi and Ralf-Olivier Schwarz in cooperation with the Cäcilien-Verein, Frankfurt am Main, 2018, pp. 73–85.

6 That was among the large-scale pieces of stage music based on themes of antiquity for the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, that is, the music for *Antigone* op. 55 MWV M 12 and the music for *Oedipus in Kolonos* MWV M 14, as well as a series of smaller stage pieces, see Series V, Volume 11 (2015) of this edition.

7 See Series VII, Volume 2 (2012) of this edition.

choir. After all, occasional music wasn't ever really capable of capturing his [Mendelssohn's] imagination; he simply disposed of it in a hurried style by trading in on his knack for form; they don't belong to his actual body of work."⁸ As in the case of the *Festmusik*, this piece also quickly disappeared from memory due to its close functional association with a specific event. It was not until 1928 that there was any discussion of a repeat performance, this time as plans were being made for the 90th GDNÄ conference held in Hamburg that year. The intent to revive the work on the 100th anniversary of its premiere was ultimately thwarted however by the fact that Mendelssohn's manuscript, the sole surviving source, could not be located.⁹ The search was not entirely in vain though as the work was recovered later that same year from among the volumes belonging to the composer's estate, held since 1878 in the Königliche Bibliothek zu Berlin.¹⁰ It was the Berlin historian and music writer Leopold Hirschberg who was happy to make the discovery, even if the score never had been truly lost.¹¹ And so it became possible after all to revive the work in 1930 on the occasion of the 91st annual conference of the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians held in Königsberg. These events additionally served as the catalyst for Breitkopf & Härtel to publish the score, thus paving the way for the work to be discovered by contemporary audiences.¹²

Origins of the Work – the German Natural Scientists and Physicians 1828 Conference in Berlin

In the fall of 1828, the most elite German natural scientists and physicians, and an impressive number of international sci-

entists, arrived in the Prussian capital city at the invitation of Alexander von Humboldt and Hinrich Lichtenstein (1780–1857) to participate in the 7th conference of the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians held from September 18 through 24. The main purpose of this still young association – founded in Leipzig in 1822 – was, according to its statutes, to afford leading scientists from all of Germany and abroad the opportunity to get to know each other and hold discussions in person by meeting annually in alternating German cities. Beyond this, the gathering was also driven by the explicit ambition to bring together the great minds of the then fractured nation as Alexander von Humboldt himself elucidated: “Elle [the conference] a cependant un côté sérieux c'est une noble manifestation de l'unité scientifique de l'Allemagne; c'est la nation divisée en croyance et en politique qui se révèle à elle-même dans la force de ses facultés intellectuelles.”¹³

By 1828, Berlin had already long been a leading center of scientific inquiry boasting a bevy of various related institutions including the zoo and botanical garden, as well as a variety of collections, research centers, and hospitals. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) founded a university in the Prussian capital in 1810,¹⁴ and young scientists and artists of the city enjoyed the benefits of royal scholarships. Beginning in November of 1827, Alexander von Humboldt began hosting a lecture series in which he presented his 62 so-called “Cosmos Lectures” in a simplified format at 16 public events, including at the hall of the Singakademie, that were attended by members of every social class in Berlin and – remarkably for the time – women as well.¹⁵ The GDNÄ conference therefore presented Berlin with yet another platform for publicly presenting German

8 Eduard Devrient, *Meine Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy und seine Briefe an mich*, Leipzig, 1869, p. 44 (hereafter: Devrient, *Erinnerungen*). The number mentioned here is no. 5 “Jetzt wirken und schaffen verschwisterte Kräfte” for two tenors and choir.

9 “As the business directors of the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians reported in their official conference handbook, all of their efforts to locate Mendelssohn's manuscript were unsuccessful; according to them, their attempts to locate the materials in the Prussian State Library and among the remains of the master's estate were futile. And they further commented that they hope that their report might contribute to the retrieval of the lost work.” Leopold Hirschberg, *Mendelssohns Naturforscher-Kantate. Die verschollene Partitur gefunden. In Alexander von Humboldts Nachlass*, in: *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung* 57 (1928), no. 505 (October 25), Edition for Berlin, 1st insert, p. [1].

10 Concerning the provenance of the estate volumes see Ralf Wehner, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke (MWV). Studien-Ausgabe*, Wiesbaden etc., 2009, pp. XLII–L, especially p. XLIII.

11 Compare the title of Hirschberg's publication, see note 9. Hirschberg further erroneously adds that the work was a part of Humboldt's estate. While it is true that it was in Humboldt's possession for quite some time, it must have been returned to the Mendelssohn family either before his death or from his estate, as it is located among the volumes that Mendelssohn's heirs transferred to the Königliche Bibliothek zu Berlin in 1878.

12 In 1959, the work was performed again in Berlin by the radio choir and orchestra in honor of the 100th anniversary of Alexander von Humboldt's death. On October 17, 2004, the work was premiered in the USA at the City University of New York. Beginning in 2007, the entrance chorus “Willkommen!” has been sung every year at the annual conference of the members of the order *Pour le mérite*. On April 3, 2009, the Polish premiere of the work took place at the *13. Wielkanocny Festiwal Ludwiga van Beethovena* in Warsaw, and Riccardo Chailly also programmed the work for the 2009 concert season at the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

13 Letter of August 10, 1828, from Alexander von Humboldt to Gustav Lejeune Dirichlet, location unknown, transcription in a different handwriting in: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung, *Nachl. Alexander von Humboldt, kl. Kasten 2, Nr. 6a*, fols. 27–28; printed in: *Alexander von Humboldt, Gustav Lejeune Dirichlet. Briefwechsel*, ed. by Kurt-R. Biermann, Berlin, 1982 (= Beiträge zur Alexander-von-Humboldt-Forschung; vol. 7), p. 46, with the following translation on p. 47: “Er [der Kongress] hat indessen eine ernste Seite, das ist eine edle Offenbarung der wissenschaftlichen Einheit Deutschlands, das ist die im Glauben und in der Politik getrennte Nation, die sich in der Stärke ihrer intellektuellen Gaben erneuert.” (“At the same time it [the congress] had a serious side, that being the noble manifestation of the scientific unity of Germany, that religiously and politically fractured nation, which renews itself in the strength of its intellectual gifts.”)

14 Mendelssohn enrolled as a student there in 1827, see: Hans-Günter Klein, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy als Student an der Berliner Universität*, in: *Mendelssohn-Studien* 16 (2009), pp. 101–124.

15 Among them was Fanny Mendelssohn: “[...] did you know that he [Alexander von Humboldt] has begun a second course in the hall at the Singakademie, that everyone can take part in [...] all the way down to this unworthy correspondent?” Letter of December 23–25, 1827, from Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Carl Klingemann, location unknown, quoted from: Sebastian Hensel, *Die Familie Mendelssohn 1729–1847. Nach Briefen und Tagebüchern*, Leipzig, 1879, vol. I (hereafter: *Die Familie Mendelssohn*), pp. 171–175, quotation on p. 173.

researchers' findings and accomplishments. Clearly drawn by the reputation of the prestigious polymath Humboldt, around 466¹⁶ members of the scientific community registered for the 1828 conference, where they were joined by numerous other interested citizens and visitors of Berlin. Among their ranks were such eminent personalities as the Danish physicist Hans Christian Ørsted (1777–1851), the Swedish chemist Jöns Jakob Berzelius (1779–1848), the astronomers Johann Franz Encke (1791–1865) and Johann Heinrich Mädler (1794–1874), the foremost of mathematicians Carl Friedrich Gauß (1777–1855), and his English colleague Charles Babbage (1791–1871).

Mendelssohn's Composition and the Role of Music at GDNÄ Conferences

In his opening address on September 18, 1828, in the hall of the Singakademie, Humboldt extolled “the illuminating power of conversation” and “the growth of personal connections between those who work in the same areas of science”¹⁷ as the main purpose of the gathering. An expedient means to this end, apart from the division of scientific pursuits into more specialized fields that Humboldt initiated, was the sense of community that was purposefully cultivated through the lavish events, various ancillary activities, and accompanying programs that were hosted outside of the lecture hours (10 am to 2 pm), all designed to foster opportunities for participants to informally socialize and exchange ideas. By embracing this model, the GDNÄ consciously departed from the contemporary norm of self-contained academies, which existed solely to mutually share essays and lectures destined to appear in print. The importance of the role music played in this context must not be understated. On September 17, the Singakademie, in whose hall the meet-

ings were set to begin on the following day, gave a performance of George Frideric Handel's *Alexander's Feast* in an explicit effort to set the tone of the conference through invoking the “mysterious force of music” and the inspiring “symbolic concord of several hundred men's and women's voices”.¹⁸ Over the ensuing days, the work's title was overtly associated with Alexander von Humboldt's name.¹⁹ On September 23, both of the Berlin Liedertafel societies, over 70 singers in all, provided entertainment at one of the large luncheons enjoyed daily by the scientists in a hall rebuilt explicitly for that purpose at the new Exerzierhaus at Karlsplatz. The local choral groups' participation was a tradition established at the society's first conference (1822) under the chairmanship of Lorenz Oken,²⁰ and the presence of the Liedertafel, to which many of the natural scientists belonged, and the act of singing together contributed significantly to creating a general atmosphere of enthusiasm and camaraderie.

On the evening of the first conference day, September 18, 1828, a gala organized by Alexander von Humboldt was held in the large concert hall at the Schauspielhaus on Gendarmenmarkt. The purpose of the event, which was larger and more opulent than any of the others associated with the conference, was to bring the most prestigious scientists of the day and Berlin's social elite, the royal family, and even the next generation of scientists (students from all of Berlin's institutions of higher learning) into contact with each other and thus facilitate synergistic connections between them. Here too it was important, for the same reasons named above, that music sound. The commission for a piece of introductory music in the style of a secular cantata was awarded to the then nineteen-year-old Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, whose musical prowess Humboldt, the piece's patron, was familiar with due to the long-established friendship he shared with the family. What is more, just four months earlier, Mendelssohn had already made a splash in this oeuvre with his

16 Information available on the number of participants varies widely. In letters, personal accounts, and newspaper articles, the numbers recorded range between 600 and 900, though these also account for the definitively more heavily trafficked ancillary events such as the lunches, excursions, and the September 18 gala. In a retrospective summary of the event by Lorenz Oken (1779–1851), the founder of the GDNÄ, he recounts there having been 466 registered participants, see: Lorenz Oken, *Versammlung der Naturforscher und Aerzte zu Berlin, im September 1828*, in: *Isis oder Encyclopädische Zeitschrift* XXII (1829), issues III and IV, p. 242 (hereafter: *Isis*). The printed list of names, which was handed out at the beginning of the conference, named 396 participants; however, approximately 50 additional registrants had been added to the roster by the time the opening event took place. In addition, a few people who had initially registered for the event did not attend, whereas yet another subset joined after the conference was already underway; moreover, many guests forgot to sign the visitors' book that had been laid out. Humboldt himself recorded a final tally of 463 Berlin citizens and guests in his *Amtlicher Bericht*: Alexander von Humboldt, Hinrich Lichtenstein, *Amtlicher Bericht über die Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte zu Berlin im September 1828*, Berlin, 1829 (hereafter: Humboldt/Lichtenstein, *Amtlicher Bericht*), p. 17.

17 Humboldt/Lichtenstein, *Amtlicher Bericht* [note 16], p. 15.

18 *Isis* [note 16], col. 252.

19 “[...] the Akademie sings the Alexander's Feast for them; many people understood this to be an allusion to Alexander von Humboldt's festival, which took place on the next day, Sept. 18, to which he invited the king as well as high school students; he served them up a cantata by Felix, after which however the poor child was sick for days, and is still suffering today [...]” Letter of September 29, 1828, from Rebecka Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Carl Klingemann, location unknown, quotation from a photocopy belonging to a previous owner. In the same letter, the writer reports extensively on the conference and the general atmosphere in Berlin: “But what do you say about Berlin? Berlin hasn't mentioned the theater for eight days; natural scientists are the talk of the town, natural scientists on every corner, at all the dinners, in every society, here they dance around Berzelius, somewhere else one honors Steffens, a third troupe worships Oken; in front of the Exerzierhaus, where they get fed, the elegant ladies gather to see the natural scientists emerging. They're not allowed in, the natural scientists lead a monk's life; they did eat with women one time though [...]”

20 Cf. comprehensive paper by Myles W. Jackson, *Harmonious Investigators of Nature: Music and the Persona of the German Naturforscher in the Nineteenth Century*, in: *Science in Context* 16 (2003), issue 1/2, pp. 121–145. Jackson argues: “Oken incorporated Liedertafel evenings in the Association because he believed that by singing and drinking together, investigators of nature would become better acquainted and friendlier. This camaraderie would result, Oken asserted, in scholars discussing their opinions with civility, rather than resentment, and would promote collaborations among German Naturforscher.”, *ibid.*, p. 13.

Festmusik (“Dürer Festival Music”) written for the Dürer Festival. The exact timing of Humboldt’s commission cannot be determined with certainty, and there are no surviving letters of Mendelssohn’s in which he makes any mention of the composition. There is however a personal account recorded by a Berlin intellectual who recalled Mendelssohn having been present at a shared breakfast with Humboldt and the mathematician Charles Babbage on September 3, 1828: “While we were there [breakfast with Humboldt] Felix Mendelssohn dropped by; he [Humboldt] took him into a different room and told me: *il compose une cantate pour ma fête*. The question is – if we’ll all end up dancing?”²¹ Mendelssohn therefore must have already either received the commission by then – or this meeting was the occasion on which that took place. At any rate, little time remained to finish the work. The date of completion written on the autograph is September 12, 1828. Executing this did not however seem to present a problem for the young composer with his “knack for form”²². With its mere seven numbers including choruses, recitatives and smaller solo parts, and a duration of twenty minutes or less, the scope of the cantata was far more moderate than that of the “Dürer Festival Music.” In fact, Mendelssohn not only contained himself here in terms of length but also in his chosen instrumentation. Pertaining to the peculiarity of the orchestration, Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy reported to Carl Klingemann in England: “Do you still remember how back in the Pre-Adamite Period of your time in Germany a society of doctors and natural scientists convened at a different location every year? This year they are pitching their tents in Berlin, Humboldt is their president, Lichtenstein their secretary, and their existence the talk of the town. But that is not all. Humboldt the cosmopolitan, the greatest thinking, most genial, most learned dignitary of his time, is hosting a gala for them, the likes of which this city is certain never to have seen before. The venue is the *Concertsaal* and the number of guests 700, among them the king, six university students, three top-form pupils from every high school, the directors of all the schools, all of the natural scientists *et le reste*. It has been requested of Felix that he write a cantata for their reception (you

can see, he’s coming into fashion) and Rellstab, who fortunately returned from Spandau just in time, composed the verse. Since the paradise of natural scientists is a Mahomedan²³ one devoid of women, it follows that the choir is comprised solely of the best local men’s voices, and because Humboldt, not a strong musician himself, limited his composers to a slim number of hired musicians, the orchestra has taken on a curious shape indeed; namely, the parts will be performed solely by basses and cellos, trumpets, horns and clarinets. Yesterday there was a little rehearsal and apparently the thing works well. The only annoying thing about it all is that we won’t be there.”²⁴

After additionally accounting for the timpani, not mentioned by Fanny Mendelssohn, it is noteworthy that the higher registers are missing from every type of instrument group represented. A letter from Felix’s mother Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy to her cousin Henriette von Pereira-Arnstein (1780–1859) makes it clear, however, that the choice of instruments was indeed made by the composer himself: “Humboldt commissioned Felix to compose some music for it [the celebration honoring the presence of the natural scientists]. Unfortunately, only men will be taking part in the festivities. Felix is therefore limited to just tenors and basses, and since he isn’t being given a formal orchestra, he has devised a self-styled accompaniment, which shouldn’t sound all too paltry in the large venue. He chose 9 celli, 3 contrabasses, and multiple wind instruments. The king accepted H...ts [Humboldt’s] invitation to the event, and to indulge in a little nepotism, Felix has placed his Paulchen [Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy] amongst the chosen cellists so that he can attend the event as well.”²⁵ The limitation placed on the number of performing musicians might have been a cost saving measure,²⁶ but could just as well have been due to the amount of space available in the hall, which, though actually quite large, was expected to be full, and in fact was according to many reports, including the following: “Next up was a soirée Al. Humboldt invited us to attend in the large hall of the Schauspielhaus, which was actually given by the king. It is a pity that even that room was too small and that, at least in the middle, one had to move around the others like the wheels of

21 Letter of September 3, 1828, from Paul Erman to his son Adolf Erman, location unknown, quoted from: Wilhelm Erman, *Paul Erman. Ein Berliner Gelehrtenleben 1764–1851*, Berlin, 1927 (= Schriften des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins; vol. 53), p. 185.

22 See quote from Eduard Devrient in: Devrient, *Erinnerungen* [note 8].

23 Mahomed was used synonymously for Mohammed in the 19th century. With this remark, Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy echoed a widely held 19th century view that women in Islamic cultural circles played no role in scientific pursuits. In point of fact, the natural scientists invited to participate at the Berlin conference were exclusively male, and prominent women natural scientists in Germany were few and far between at the time. The astronomer Caroline Herschel (1760–1848) would have been a possible candidate. She received the Royal Astronomical Society’s gold medal that year, thus becoming the first woman to receive an award of this sort. At the same time, women were not fully excluded from the overall concept of the event. When the Singakademie performed the *Alexander’s Feast* it was with a mixed choir, and it is documented that “women of the first tier” visited the convention as guests, see: Johann Jacob Sachs, *Die Versammlung der deutschen Naturforscher und Ärzte in Berlin i. J. 1828 kritisch beleuchtet*, Leipzig, 1828, p. 13. Beyond that, wives and daughters of the out-of-town guests were also admitted into the enormous meals at the “Exerzierhaus” on Karlsplatz.

24 Letter of September 15, 1828, from Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Carl Klingemann, location unknown, quoted from: *Die Familie Mendelssohn* [note 15], pp. 195–196, the quotation *ibid*.

25 Undated letter [September 1828], from Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Henriette Freifrau von Pereira Arnstein, location unknown, copy by Rebecka Dirichlet, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (hereafter: GB-Ob), *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 29*, fol. 61.

26 Humboldt probably financed the gala for the approx. 700 guests himself, along with support from the King’s private coffers. There is no trace of the September 18, 1828 event in the relevant detailed bookkeeping records maintained for the Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinal-Angelegenheiten (Ministry for Spiritual, Educational, and Medical Affairs): *Acta betreffend die in den Jahren 1828 in Berlin stattgefundene Versammlung der Naturforscher und die bei dieser Gelegenheit nöthig gewordenen Geld=Verwendungen*, Berlin, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter: GStA PK), *I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, I. Sekt. 30 Nr. 337*.

a clock's gear train."²⁷ The inclusion of a men's chorus at this event seems like a particularly obvious choice viewed against the – earlier described – backdrop of the traditional appearance of Liedertafel societies in similar settings.

With his chosen instrumentation, Mendelssohn appears to have been attempting to achieve the strongest most suitable match possible for the large choir. Due to the small number of instrumentalists at his disposal, he presumably decided to maximize the use of lower-register string instruments and those wind instruments most capable of imitating the forces of nature. R. Larry Todd speculated that the dark timbre of the chosen instruments “undergirds the male tessitura of the chorus and soloists, and not infrequently presents musical figures of speech that in the culture of the time would have been understood to connote masculine imagery.”²⁸

The text for the work was composed by the Berlin music critic and writer Ludwig Rellstab (1799–1860). His debut novel *Henriette, oder die schöne Sängerin* (Leipzig 1826) had been published just two years before, but he was primarily an author of poems,²⁹ satires, novellas, and historical novels, as well as dramas and opera librettos. He additionally penned numerous song lyrics in his capacity as a founding member of the younger Liedertafel. His activity as a critic began at the *Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*; in 1826, his career further advanced when he was appointed editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, and in 1830, he finally went on to establish his own weekly newspaper, *Iris im Gebiete der Tonkunst*. He was recognized as one of the most influential music critics of his time. In contrast to the “Dürer Festival Music,”³⁰ Mendelssohn and his librettist were already well familiar with each other's work before they began collaborating. As such, Rellstab's commission to provide the text for this piece was a happy circumstance for the composer, a fact evidenced in Fanny Mendelssohn's remarks to Carl Klingemann: “Rellstab, who fortunately returned from Spandau just in time, wrote the verse.”³¹ Spandau was the location of the prison where Rellstab had just finished serving a three-month long sentence.³² Considering the timing of his return, he must have completed his text

in the period immediately preceding the festival and, in part, simultaneously with the music. Rellstab described the chaos of the natural elements at the beginning stages of the world and their transition into a harmonic order as the joint “effect of twin forces.”³³ The development from a chaotic and unruly world to one that is orderly and useful to humankind was based on the classic “Through darkness to light” topos; the introductory chorus however is based on themes of welcome and thanksgiving, which may be understood either as an expression of gratitude to the event's patron, or as a song of praise to God. A description of the “horrible night of chaos” follows, which soon breaks into the “wondrous clarity of light.” In united harmony, the now “twin forces” generate great things. Finally, Rellstab achieves a thematic connection to the natural scientists by linking this development to that of the human spirit. The verses tout the overcoming of the “forces' discord” by invoking the allegorical image of a blessed tree of knowledge, which has branches that swell in every direction but grow from one trunk. Mendelssohn reflected this dramatic arch musically by means of an analogous progression through tonal areas: opening with a celebratory chorus in D major, falling into a darkened G minor, transitioning through D minor to A major followed by a brilliant E major in no. 5,³⁴ before concluding with a return to D major and the “welcome” motif from the beginning.

The little surviving evidence that documents Mendelssohn's progress on the work originates from Alexander von Humboldt. Shortly after his aforementioned breakfast with Charles Babbage he wrote the composer: “Your enchanted tones will ascend straight up to the Olympus of the décor [...]”³⁵ He also casually mentioned that the date of the concert had been moved, evidently against Mendelssohn's wishes: “but now the bad news, the king wants (you can tell he's occupied with your festival even in Liegnitz) he wants the 18th of September instead of the 19th, and if a king wants so must a person be impelled, notwithstanding Nathan the Wise.” In conclusion, he asked the composer to coordinate with the appointed court theater manager and privy councilor Johann Friedrich Esperstedt (1763–1861) con-

27 Letter of September 19, 1828, from Jan Evangelista Purkyně to his wife, Julia Purkyně-Rudolphi, quoted from: Vladislav Kruta, *Eindrücke aus der Berliner Naturforscher-Versammlung (1828) in Briefen eines Teilnehmers (J. E. Purkyně an seine Frau geb. Rudolphi)*, in: *Sudhoffs Archiv* 57 (1973), issue 2 (2nd Quarter), pp. 152–170, quotation on p. 157.

28 R. Larry Todd, *Humboldt, Mendelssohn and Musical Unity*, in: *Alexander von Humboldt. From the Americas to the Cosmos*, ed. by Raymond Erickson, Mauricio A. Font, Brian Schwartz, New York, 2005, pp. 3–11, quotation on p. 7.

29 In 1825, he presented Ludwig van Beethoven with several poems in Vienna; in 1828, seven of those were set to music by Franz Schubert. Those flowed into the posthumously published cycle *Schwanengesang* D 957.

30 The textual source for the “Dürer Festival Music” was generally criticized, among other things for its length; and Mendelssohn had to force himself to set the verse to music at all. The author Konrad Levezow (1770–1835), an elderly archaeologist and hobby poet, was resistant to modifying his texts – especially by shortening them. He saw to it that the original longer text was printed in the accompanying concert program. See the introduction to *Festmusik* MWV D 1, Series VII, Volume 1 (2012) of this edition, pp. XXIV–XXV.

31 Letter of September 15, 1828, from Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Carl Klingemann, see note 24.

32 Rellstab was sentenced to imprisonment in the Spandau Citadel following a year and a half-long trial related to him having satirically caricatured the conditions in Berlin in his first novel, in particular mocking an admirer of the singer Henriette Sontag, the English envoy Lord Clanwilliam, who in turn politicized the matter and sued Rellstab.

33 Joseph Haydn's Oratorio *Die Schöpfung* from the year 1798 is possibly the most significant musical treatment of this subject.

34 See above, Devrient, *Erinnerungen* [note 8].

35 Undated letter [September 5, 1828], from Alexander von Humboldt to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn b. 4*, Green Books I-30; printed in: Alexander von Humboldt, *Familie Mendelssohn. Briefwechsel*, ed. by Sebastian Panwitz and Ingo Schwarz, Berlin, 2011 (= Beiträge zur Alexander-von-Humboldt-Forschung; vol. 34) (hereafter: *Humboldt – Mendelssohn. Briefwechsel*), p. 62, the following two quotations *ibid.*

cerning the configuration of the musicians' performance area: "Do, kindest dearest Felix, go soon to Esperstedt to have everything carpentered, built, and fixed to your specifications." Since Mendelssohn clearly had a say in this aspect of the planning, the instrumentation and size of the choir must have, at least for the most part, already been determined by this point. Not even ten days before the conference was planned to begin Humboldt additionally wrote: "One paints, carpenters, versifies, composes and bakes, and according to the gracious command of the king, the gala has been ordered to take place (not on the 19th) but rather on the 18th at 6 or half past 6 in the evening. I will have the invitations printed for the 18th."³⁶ By this time, the event's host was already busied by the numerous scholars who were beginning to arrive: "I am endlessly plagued by the 400 friends who are already moving in en masse. I will host an opening gala for them (18th Sept) in the large concert hall at the Schauspielhaus: a cantata in celebration of nature, which the graces in the margraviate seek in vain, (beautiful music by Felix Mendelssohn); an illumination, a transparency by Schinkel and Gropius, a radiant starry sky upon which the great names of times past, Kepler, Copernicus, Haller [...] will be lit up next to the splendid verse by Goethe 'es soll sich regen überall ...' [universally it shall stir] alongside the shining name Goethe."³⁷

Alexander von Humboldt's Gala and the Premiere of the *Begrüßung*

As stated in the previously quoted letter by Fanny Mendelssohn, an initial rehearsal took place on September 14 where "the thing worked well."³⁸ The solo tenor parts were sung by two singers from the Königliches Hoftheater (Royal Court Theater), Carl Adam Bader (1789–1870) and Heinrich Stümer (1789–1857). Eduard Devrient who, according to his recollections, also participated, most likely sang the solo bass part. The choral singers were members of the Singakademie and presumably also the Liedertafel societies, as well as a contingent of volunteer singers who had been recruited by the event's organizers at a breakfast held at *Café Royal*.³⁹ The premiere took place just four days after the first rehearsal. The concert hall at the Königliches Schauspielhaus was the second largest space in the house after the theater itself. The platform for the orchestra was located at one end of the hall. Above the platform, where a gallery was divided from the hall by multiple columns, hung large blue parchments on which the names of prominent deceased natural scientists

were listed in gold and silver letters, emblematically surrounded by a ring of stars.⁴⁰ Thus the meaning of Humboldt's words to Mendelssohn in the previously quoted letter, "your enchanted tones will ascend straight up to the Olympus of the décor," becomes clearer.⁴¹ Quotes by Goethe and Schiller were placed to the left and right of center, with the Schiller distich essentially reading as a "concentration of that which Rellstab presented in full cantata length:"⁴² "– in a fiery struggle, striving forces erupt, great is the effect of their discord, greater still that of their union."⁴³ Reports on the proceedings of the celebration, which was attended by Friedrich Wilhelm III and his court, amongst them the Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, were published in various newspapers, some even far beyond Berlin, including for example the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in Munich: "Following a sumptuous luncheon, the official commencement of the event began at six o'clock in the concert hall at the Schauspielhaus, where Herr Alexander v. Humboldt invited members of the society and a great number of the most distinguished people from the local area. Anyone who arrived expecting the grandest of receptions and the most wondrous of catering however was in for a surprise. The point of the event was proclaimed most lucidly by the tasteful display of the great names of German science shining in gold script in the upper expanse of the columned hall, a monument to the glory of the Fatherland. And as the guests milled about in undulating currents beneath the gaze of His Majesty and many of the highest ranking members of the court, from time to time singers' voices burst forth and lifted the spirits of everyone in attendance with excellent songs composed by Felix Mendelssohn, Zelter, and others, among them Flemming's *Integer vitae*, which rang out to the delight of all listening."⁴⁴ While the Munich press' readership heard no mention of Mendelssohn's *Begrüßung*, the composition was the first point of discussion in the *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen*: "The celebration began with a cantata set to music by Mr. F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy with alternating choruses, recitatives etc., which were sung by members of the Singakademie with the royal singers Messrs. Stümer and Bader performing the solo parts. Following that, at well-timed intervals, came multiple songs written for male voices without instrumental accompaniment (also performed by members of the Singakademie), of which Rungenhagen's powerful: *Domine salvum fac regem!* and Flemming's *integer vitae* particularly stood out. This musical entertainment enlivened, in a most apt way, the celebration, which through the genial participation of so many, all of whom belong to scientific fields or were there to honor

36 Letter of September 7, 1828, from Alexander von Humboldt to the Prussian general Job von Witzleben, Berlin, GStA PK, VI. HA, NI Witzleben, Nr. 98 B, sheet 52, quoted from: *Humboldt – Mendelssohn. Briefwechsel* [note 35], p. 62, note 1.

37 Letter of September 5, 1828, from Alexander von Humboldt to the Chancellor Friedrich von Müller, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv (hereafter: D-WRGs), GSA 68/205 a, quoted from: *Humboldt – Mendelssohn. Briefwechsel* [note 35], p. 62, note 2.

38 Letter of September 15, 1828, from Fanny Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Carl Klingemann, see note 24.

39 "Just eight days before the conference the business directors and the Berlin members ate together in the so-called Café Royal, the society's restaurant of choice, to go over everything together, and to recruit the volunteer singers [...]" *Isis* [note 16], col. 240.

40 The list of names is found in: *Eröffnungsfeier der Versammlung der deutschen Naturforscher und Ärzte in Berlin. Fest im Concertsaale des Königlichen Schauspielhauses, am 18. September 1828*, Berlin, [1828] (hereafter: *Eröffnungsfeier*), pp. 12–14.

41 Undated letter [September 5, 1828], from Alexander von Humboldt to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, see note 35.

42 Bettina Heyl, *Das Ganze der Natur und die Differenzierung des Wissens. Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur und Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin, 2007, p. 382.

43 Quoted from: *Eröffnungsfeier* [note 40], p. 15. The lines can be traced back to the poem *Der Spaziergang*, printed in: Friedrich Schiller, *Gedichte. Erster Theil*, 2nd Edition, Leipzig, 1804, pp. 49–65, quotation on p. 55.

44 *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* [Munich], no. 269 of September 25, 1828, p. 1074.

them (their number must have run between 7–800) took on the liveliest of atmospheres.”⁴⁵ One critic applauded Mendelssohn’s composition as “Work of the Moment” and praised the “talented” composer.⁴⁶

The *Amtlicher Bericht über die Versammlung der Naturforscher* reported: “The following cantata, the text of which was composed by L. Rellstab and the music by Mr. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, was performed by a men’s choir comprised of a union of the most excellent royal singers and a number of practiced members of the Sing-Akademie, of whom no small number were also doctors and scientists belonging to the society. Welcome! We gladly call to you [...]”⁴⁷

Rellstab’s *Isis* offered the following description of the elaborately decorated hall: “The hall was tastefully ornamented by theater-superintendent C. Gropius as per directions given by head government building officer Schinkel. In the foreground, the names of the most famous natural scientists and physicians in history shone against the sky blue wall in multiple rows between the columns as a memorial to the glory of the Fatherland. [...] The King, along with his court, the Crown Prince and Prince Albrecht, the Duke of Cumberland, and numerous princesses honored the event with their presence. Vocal pieces featuring many men’s voices alternated with refreshments of all sorts, which were either circulated around the room or could be taken from bar counters at the edges during the intervening periods. A selection of the best musicians in Berlin were united under the leadership of Zelter and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in order to entertain those present with music and verse that was the most meaningful, cheerful, and befitting of the event that German countries have to offer. One cantata written by L. Rellstab and set to music by F. M. Bartholdy proclaimed ‘Welcome! We gladly call to you’ [...] Herr v. Humboldt invited nine hundred people of all ranks, including even accomplished university students and pupils from all of the secondary schools and military schools (80 in all) to his gala. The celebration lasted from 7 until 10 o’clock, at which point everyone, invigorated by the King and his court’s applause, and stirred by gratitude to the ingenious benefactor of all these joys, went their separate ways, their reconvening the following morning now ensured to be as one between old friends.”⁴⁸

Similar to the performance of the “Dürer Festival Music,” Zelter and Mendelssohn shared the directing duties for the evening.

And, as is the case with Mendelssohn, there are no known references to the “Humboldt Cantata” in any of Zelter’s correspondence. Even in his letters to Goethe in Weimar, who wanted to be informed about every detail of the natural scientists’ convention (though invited by Humboldt, he was prevented by health problems from traveling to Berlin), Zelter remained silent on the subject of the cantata:

“As for me, I too wanted to do something to delight the guests. On the day before the meetings began, the Singakademie performed Handel’s *Alexander’s Feast*, despite having only had a single fragmentary rehearsal with two missing soloists beforehand. Nonetheless, our choirs are in good form leaving me nothing to criticize. When everything goes well they are as one. We then served the guests from home and abroad a Liedertafel for lunch [September 23, 1828] to earn our keep. There were between 7– and 800 table mates altogether. Both of the Berlin Liedertafel societies joined forces [73 people],⁴⁹ and since the space in the new Exerzierhaus is wide and high enough everything exceeded even my expectations. The 70 well-practiced men’s voices were such a force that even people outside of the building were able to clearly hear some of the words, and many of our foreign guests assured us they had never heard the likes of it before in their lives, which was unlikely to have been empty flattery considering the fact that it was but one ensemble after all.”⁵⁰

After the performance, Mendelssohn entrusted the manuscript of the cantata to its patron, Alexander von Humboldt. He did not undertake any further revisions of the work and made no efforts to have it published. The next and last time it was mentioned in the family’s correspondence was much later, in 1859. Paul Mendelssohn wrote to Alexander von Humboldt in the course of preparing a chronological catalogue of his brother’s compositions:⁵¹ “Your Excellency, enclosed here I am sending back to you with deepest gratitude my brother’s manuscript with which I was entrusted, and am taking the liberty of posing the question of whether Your Excellency might be able to inform me concerning the date on which the natural scientists’ festival, for which the music was written, commenced[.] The matter at hand is namely the preparation of a chronological catalogue of my brother’s works, and I hope that, considering the purpose, Your Excellency will be inclined to pardon the extensive effort involved! In utmost admiration of Your Excellency, your most obedient Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.”⁵²

45 *Berlinische Nachrichten von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen* [Haude- und Spenersche Zeitung], no. 221 of September 20, 1828, pp. [5–6].

46 *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, no. 197 of October 7, 1828, col. 1573.

47 Humboldt/Lichtenstein, *Amtlicher Bericht* [note 16], p. 20. The entire text of the *Begrüßung* was printed as well, along with that of the songs sung a cappella that evening.

48 *Isis* [note 16], cols. 271–278.

49 See the Berlin Liedertafel meeting minutes in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv (hereafter: D-B), *N. Mus. SA 283*, fols. 127^r–128^v.

50 Letter of mid-October through October 19, 1828, from Carl Friedrich Zelter to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, D-WRgs, *GSA 28/1023*, quoted from: *Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens. Münchner Ausgabe. Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter in den Jahren 1799 bis 1832*, ed. by Edith Zehm and Sabine Schäfer in cooperation with Jürgen Gruß and Wolfgang Ritschel, vol. 20.2, Munich, 1998, no. 635, pp. 1165–1167, quotation on pp. 1165–1166.

51 Julius Rietz, *Verzeichniß der sämtlichen musikalischen Compositionen von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, ed. by Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Leipzig, 1863, pp. 499–520.

52 Letter of September 5, 1857, from Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy to Alexander von Humboldt, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung, Sammlung Darmstaedter, *2g 1850: Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Paul*, quoted from: *Humboldt – Mendelssohn. Briefwechsel* [note 35], pp. 320–321. Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s question concerning the date of the performance presumably remained unanswered; There is no evidence of any correspondence from Humboldt, and not only is the date of the performance missing in the mentioned catalogue [note 51], the year is also erroneously entered as 1827.

MWV D 4

Festgesang (“Gutenberg Cantata”)

In 1840, Mendelssohn composed the *Festgesang* to be performed by an all-male choir and two brass ensembles at the Leipzig Gutenberg Festival. The circumstances and events of the festival are well documented and extensively interpreted in numerous historical publications⁵³ and works of contemporary research.⁵⁴ With this festival, held from June 24–26, 1840, the city of Leipzig sought not only to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the movable-type printing press, and the handheld device necessary for pouring metal letters, in the narrowest sense, but also, even more saliently, the city’s status as the unrivaled center of the German book and music printing industry. For it, a planning committee was formed a whole four years beforehand⁵⁵ that was ultimately comprised of twenty-two people, amongst them booksellers, the owners of printing houses and type foundries, and seven printing house and bookseller assistants. The head of the committee was Raymund Härtel, co-owner of Breitkopf & Härtel, a Leipzig-based company founded in 1719, and publisher of Mendelssohn’s works. Around 1840, Leipzig was home to 23 printing houses with a total of 208 rapid presses, six type foundries, and 116 book, art, and music stores.⁵⁶ The printing houses worked for the publishing companies Teubner, Tauchnitz, Göschen, Reclam, as

well as that founded by Arnold Brockhaus in 1806, the largest publisher anywhere in Germany at the time, and also the first to introduce “inking rollers, rapid presses, steam engines, and industrial bookbinding”⁵⁷ into the graphic industry.

The relatively early formation of the committee⁵⁸ speaks for how seriously the organization of an event of this kind was taken. Mendelssohn must have agreed to contribute something for the festival by the end of 1839 because on New Year’s Day, 1840, Raymund Härtel thanked him in a letter “for the exceptional willingness [...] with which you take on the direction of the *Concert spirituel* intended for the second day of the festival, and especially for the gracious promise to perform a new larger work of your own composition then.”⁵⁹ It was for the gala concert in the Thomaskirche (June 25, 1840) that the *Lobgesang / Hymn of Praise* op. 52 MWV A 18 ultimately came into being; *Eine Symphonie-Cantate nach Worten der heiligen Schrift* (A Symphony-Cantata on words of the Holy Bible). Additional to this, a further event was planned for June 24, St. John’s Eve,⁶⁰ at which a statue of Gutenberg⁶¹ was to be unveiled at the Alter Markt (Old Market Square), accompanied by music tailored to the occasion. It was for this open-air event that, after what was to prove to become a laborious developmental process, the *Festgesang* MWV D 4 came into being. Both works, the *Lobgesang* and the *Festgesang*, incorporated the light metaphor that was the theme of the entire festival, underscoring the idea that

53 For example: Ludwig Flathe, *Die vierte Säcularfeier der Erfindung Gutenbergs in Dresden und Leipzig*, Leipzig, 1840; Friedrich Christian August Hasse, *Kurze Geschichte der Leipziger Buchdruckerkunst im Verlaufe ihres vierten Jahrhunderts. Einladungsschrift der Universität Leipzig zu der bei der vierten Säcularfeier der Buchdruckerkunst von ihr veranstalteten Feierlichkeit*, Leipzig, 1840; *Beschreibung aller bei der vierten Säcularfeier der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst am 24. 25. und 26. Juni 1840 in Leipzig stattgefundenen Feierlichkeiten. Ein Denkmal für die Mit- und Nachwelt*, Leipzig, 1840 (hereafter: *Beschreibung Säcularfeier*); Emil Kade, *Die vierte Säcularfeier zu Leipzig am 24. 25. 26. Juni 1840. Eine Denkschrift im Auftrage des Comité zur Feier der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst*, Leipzig, 1841 (hereafter: Kade, *Säcularfeier*). Additionally informative is the *Programm der Vierten Säcularfeier der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst* that is dated June 17, 1840, and was handed out at the event. A larger report was also printed soon after in a supplement to the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 179 (June 27, 1840), pp. 1949–1952, no. 180 (June 28, 1840), pp. 1961–1964 and no. 182 (June 30, 1840), pp. 1981–1982.

54 Concerning various aspects of festival culture in general, the Leipzig festival in the context of German Gutenberg celebrations nationwide, and the subject of growing politicization during the pre-March era see Jürgen Steen, *Vormärzliche Gutenbergfeste (1837–1840)*, in: *Öffentliche Festkultur. Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Dieter Düding et al., Reinbek, 1988, pp. 147–165; Paul Raabe, *Gutenbergfeiern 1840. Zu den Feiern in Leipzig und Braunschweig*, in: id., *Gutenberg. 550 Jahre Buchdruck in Europa*, Weinheim, 1990 (= Ausstellungskataloge der Herzog August Bibliothek; no. 62), pp. 211–236; Helmut Zwahr, *Zur Entstehung eines nationalen Gedächtnisses. Die Leipziger Jahrhundertfeiern zum Gedenken an die Erfindung des Buchdrucks mit beweglichen Lettern*, in: *Feste und Feiern. Zum Wandel städtischer Festkultur in Leipzig*, ed. by Katrin Keller, Leipzig, 1994, pp. 117–135; Monika Estermann, “O werthe Druckerkunst / Du Mutter aller Kunst.” *Gutenbergfeiern im Laufe der Jahrhunderte*, Mainz, 1999 [exhibition catalogue]; Sebastian Nickel, *Männerchorgesang und bürgerliche Bewegung 1815–1848 in Mitteldeutschland*, Cologne etc., 2013 (= Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Thüringen, Kleine Reihe; vol. 37) (hereafter: Nickel, *Männerchorgesang*), relating especially to the *Festgesang* pp. 272–292.

55 The initiative first emerged at a general assembly of the Leipzig book printing guild on Easter 1836, see Kade, *Säcularfeier* [note 53], p. 17: “Considering the significance Leipzig has attained as the German center for typography, type foundries, and the book trade so closely connected with them, as well the expansion these businesses have achieved here, an idea such as this could not be met with anything less than the most lively support from all present [...]”

56 According to: Karl Preusker, *Gutenberg und Franklin. Eine Festgabe zum vierten Jubiläum der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst; zugleich mit Antrag zur Gründung von Stadt- und Dorf-Bibliotheken*, Leipzig, 1840, p. 14.

57 *Neues Leipzigisches Geschicht-Buch*, commissioned by the Leipzig City Council to be printed by the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig on the occasion of the 825th anniversary of the establishment of Leipzig as a trade fair city, Leipzig, 1990, p. 147.

58 One year later, in 1837, the Braunschweig publisher and book printer Johannes Heinrich Meyer (1812–1863) publicly launched a corresponding initiative to celebrate the fourth such secular festival held in Germany, see: Nickel, *Männerchorgesang* [note 54], p. 280.

59 Letter of January 1, 1840, from Raymund Härtel to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 37*, Green Books XI-3. On this day, the committee finalized an “initial report”, which sketched an outline for the planned festival events, see: *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, no. 10 of January 10, 1840, pp. 69–70.

60 Even centuries earlier, this date was traditionally associated with festivals celebrating Johannes Gutenberg.

61 This colossal statue, which was only set up temporarily, was a reproduction of the Gutenberg memorial made by Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844), which had been erected in Mainz in 1837. It was made by the Leipzig sculptor Johann Friedrich Funk (1804–1882).

the invention of typography and its significance for humankind could, in a figurative sense, be interpreted as comparable to the transition from night to day.⁶² Musical similarities connect the two works, for example, the use of the chorale “Nun danket alle Gott.”

The commission for the work,⁶³ or more precisely, Mendelssohn’s acceptance of it, brought with it a long period of ambivalence concerning its conception. In early February of 1840, it was at the very least clear that, “a lot of music⁶⁴ would be needed for the festival, among other things, a cantata to be sung under the open sky on the market square.”⁶⁵ By the end of that same month though, Mendelssohn admitted: “I am however composing something for the 24th of June: what exactly, only God knows while I remain in the dark; I have outlines for two larger pieces, but don’t know yet towards which of the two I should turn my attention.”⁶⁶ In the same letter, Mendelssohn also mentioned the piece that was to become the *Lobgesang*, raising the question of whether he “would compose some sort of smaller oratorio or a larger Psalm.”⁶⁷ This larger and decisively more demanding work was destined – according to the numerous references made to it in the following months – to dominate Mendelssohn’s complete attention. By comparison, few written remarks survive concerning the completion of the *Festgesang*, the preparation of its piano-vocal score, and the printing of the work by Breitkopf & Härtel. Presumably, the majority of those negotiations and arrangements occurred verbally in Leipzig. One such discussion pertained to the textual source, with which Mendelssohn was initially dissatisfied. According to Wilhelm Adolf Lampadius, a contemporary witness and Mendelssohn’s first biographer, the original idea was “to choose the most folk-like and appealing song text from the great number submitted for the unveiling of the Gutenberg statue to be erected in the market square, and to set that text to music. The song chosen

was by Adolf Prölß, a religion teacher at the secondary school in Freiberg, and it did indeed unite a tasteful folk-like pattern of speech with a melodious inflection.”⁶⁸ The same Adolf Eduard Prölß (1803–1882), a philologist, theologian, and poet had held a teaching position in Freiberg (Saxony) since 1835, before which he had studied in Leipzig and worked as a private tutor for the Härtel family, a dynasty within the music publishing industry, for four years. This biographical connection led to a close friendship and strong basis of trust with Raymund Härtel, who, as chairman of the “Committee for the Celebration of the Invention of Typography,” is likely to have had no small influence over the selection of texts. A revealing letter of early May that Härtel sent Mendelssohn along with the definitive text suggests that the composer had already announced some ideas he had for the work, even naming the chorales⁶⁹ he wanted to use: “Finally I’m sending you another text for the men’s choir cantata. It is an attempt to comply with your wishes, as you are sure to immediately recognize, since the beginning and final chorales are arranged with the melodies of your choice. If you do find it usable, that would make me happy too. Incidentally, I am also enclosing the text you have already seen, noting in both cases that you shall feel free to exercise your own discretion concerning any changes you might want to make to them.”⁷⁰ A mere few days after receiving this letter, Mendelssohn wrote from Berlin to announce that he anticipated completing the composition imminently: “Late next week, I think I’ll also be sending along a score for the men’s choral work to be sung at the market.”⁷¹ It is unknown whether this delivery was made by mail or if Mendelssohn handed over the required materials himself after returning to Leipzig.⁷² At any rate, the four-movement work must have been composed in a matter of days in mid-May of 1840. Accordingly, around four weeks remained at that point before the work’s June 24 premiere.

62 The words “Aus Nacht zum Licht” (“out of night into light”), formed with sugar frosting, even decorated an enormous cake that the bakers’ guild presented to the committee as a gift. *Beschreibung Säcularfeier* [note 53], p. 73.

63 According to his personal financial records, Mendelssohn received 100 ducats and 316 talers from the book printers’ committee, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn f. 6*, fol. 48^v, entry for July 1, 1840.

64 An omnibus review provides an overview of the various musical pieces, especially polyphonic vocal works, see: G[ottfried] W[ilhelm] Fink, *Musik zur Sekularfeier der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst*, in: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 42 (1840), no. 30 (July 22), pp. 609–616 (hereafter: Fink, *Musik zur Sekularfeier*). The most significant work to be premiered apart from Mendelssohn’s *Lobgesang* was the festival opera *Hans Sachs* by Albert Lortzing, which was performed the evening before (June 23).

65 Letter of February 4, 1840, to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (hereafter: US-NYP), *MNY++ Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, family letters, no. 430, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7, ed. and with comments by Ingrid Jach and Lucian Schiwietz in cooperation with Benedikt Leßmann and Wolfgang Seifert, Kassel etc., 2013 (hereafter: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7), pp. 147–149, quotation on p. 148.

66 Letter of February 21, 1840, to Fanny Hensel, D-B, *MA Ep. 103*, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7 [note 65], pp. 167–170, quotation on p. 168.

67 Letter of February 16, 1840, to Carl Klingemann, privately owned, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7 [note 65], pp. 162–164, quotation on p. 164.

68 Wilhelm Adolf Lampadius, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Ein Denkmal für seine Freunde*, Leipzig, 1848 [published Christmas of 1847] (hereafter: Lampadius, *Denkmal*), p. 94.

69 Along with “Nun danket alle Gott” the chorale “Es ist das Heil uns kommen her” was also used.

70 Letter of May 5, 1840, from Raymund Härtel to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 37*, Green Books XI-145, the first printing of this passage in: Armin Koch, *Choräle und Choralhaftes im Werk von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, Göttingen, 2003 (= *Abhandlungen zur Musikgeschichte*; vol. 12), p. 166.

71 Letter of May 9, 1840, to Raymund Härtel, D-B, *N. Mus. ep. 3307*, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7 [note 65], pp. 234–235, quotation on p. 235. The formulation “also” refers to some sections of the *Lobgesang* he had additionally mentioned in the same letter.

72 The family arrived in Leipzig on the evening of May 19, “at half til ten” according to the letter of May 21, 1840, from Cécile and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, US-NYP, *MNY++ Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, family letters, no. 522, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7 [note 65], pp. 237–238, quotation on p. 237.

In contrast to the large choral festivals of the 19th century, for which hundreds or even thousands of male choral enthusiasts would travel to a specified location,⁷³ the Leipzig Gutenberg Festival had a different character owing to its particular historical background. As a result, despite the large number of guests expected, it could not be assumed that an exceedingly large group of experienced singers would be among them and, as such, other avenues had to be explored for generating the critical mass of choral singers necessary to carry off an open-air performance.

One good method at the time for reaching and organizing a large number of singers was to place announcements in the daily newspapers, which is indeed how the preparation committee extended an open invitation to the first rehearsal: “Apart from the large performance at the Thomaskirche on June 25, we are additionally planning a performance of an all-male choral cantata, which was likewise composed by Dr. Felix Mendelssohn=Bartholdy and is to be sung during the grand pageant at the town market square.

As it is desirable that the choir be as strong in number as possible, we are hereby taking the liberty of sincerely inviting all choral societies, local and out-of-town artists and dilettantes to participate, and request the same to kindly appear at the rehearsal for those events scheduled by Dr. Mendelssohn for June 15 at 8 o’clock in the hall of the Gewandhaus.”⁷⁴

Three further public rehearsals are documented in corresponding newspaper advertisements from June 18, 19, and 23, 1840.⁷⁵ Not all of these were held in the Gewandhaus hall however as one of the main logistical problems of preparing the work was the fact that rehearsals could not be conducted at the location of the work’s premiere, Leipzig’s Market Square. It was therefore necessary to find a comparable site, the solution for which was found in the “Schützenhaus,” a marksmen’s clubhouse located just outside the city gates. Lampadius reported of one such rehearsal: “It was a jovial occasion, the way the rehearsals continued in the garden of the Schützenhaus in order to find out how the music would fare in the outdoors, and how far apart the choir and the trombones should stand from each other, for which the Master himself and his loyal artistic companion were climbing around, even on tables and benches, until the right position was determined.”⁷⁶

Mendelssohn’s work was conceived of for a single brass and choral ensemble unit augmented by a second orchestra posi-

tioned some distance away in order to create an echo effect in two of the movements. Ferdinand David conducted the second, smaller orchestra from its position “up on the corner of Grimmaische Gasse.”⁷⁷ A letter to Mendelssohn’s mother reveals that the instruments called for in the score were employed in multiples in some cases. Two days before the premiere, Mendelssohn reported to Berlin: “[...] yesterday the bustle of strangers on the street was already beginning. The first big event will take place Wednesday morning at the Market Square, where I’ll be stationed at the lantern post directing my men’s choir – and David, 130 steps away, the 2nd orchestra. We recently had a rehearsal outdoors, and will have a second tomorrow; it’s a sensational business – over 200 men,⁷⁸ 20 trombones, 16 trumpets, &c. &c.”⁷⁹

Despite all the preparations and seemingly large forces involved, the premiere ultimately left something to be desired. Even the well-disposed Lampadius was forced to admit: “By the way, the impression the music made at the actual celebration was hardly as powerful as expected considering the greatness of the composition’s conception. The sound, especially of the singing, was far too lost in the wide open space.”⁸⁰ Robert Schumann also wrote of the acoustic difficulties encountered during the performance: “For the actual celebration, the unveiling of the memorial for Gutenberg and the working press [...] Doctor Felix Mendelssohn=Bartholdy composed a cantata for two [sic] men’s choirs accompanied by trombones &c., based on a text by the Herr M. Prölß in Freiberg, which was sung Wednesday morning on the open market square. The initially threatening sky cleared up, an uplifting sight. One of the choirs was directed by Dr. Mendelssohn and the other by Concertmeister David. Everyone knows how hard it is to perform music outdoors. A hundred voices, give or take, produce little more than a soupçon or so of sound. The composition, joyful and characteristic in and of itself, would have to have come from a thousand windpipes in such a space. But these are audacious wishes, which can, at most, be spoken of but not demanded. Just at the point the music would have been the most compelling though, the moment right after the unveiling, it was in fact missing [...]”⁸¹

Available historical documents do not reveal anything about the material the numerous men used to sing from. It is clear that the piano-vocal score of the work, the title page of which pointedly references the occasion that prompted the work’s cre-

73 Concerning this topic, see the chapter *Festgesang an die Künstler* op. 68 / *To the Sons of Art*.

74 *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, no. 167 of June 15, 1840, p. 1344.

75 Documented by announcements of the respective rehearsal days in the *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*.

76 Lampadius, *Denkmal* [note 68], p. 95, the loyal artistic companion referred to here was Ferdinand David.

77 *Beschreibung der vierten Säcularfeier der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst, wie solche in Leipzig den 24. 25. u. 26. Juni gefeiert wurde*, Leipzig, 1840, p. 6; according to Fink, *Musik zur Sekularfeier* [note 64], col. 611, the “echo was positioned on the flat roof of the entrance to the town hall.” A further description mentions “David, who took his place with the echo over the so-called stage (a store on the market, running along the front of the town hall)”, *Beschreibung Säcularfeier* [note 53], p. 19.

78 There are diverging accounts of how many people participated. Fink, *Musik zur Sekularfeier* [note 64], col. 611, mentions “more than 300 practiced singers and all of the good musical brass of our tone-dense city”; Emil Kade even speaks of a “vocal choir of approximately 500 people”, Kade, *Säcularfeier* [note 53], p. 31. The *Beschreibung Säcularfeier* [note 53], p. 19 documents the “cantata set to music, presented by 500 singers and musicians.”

79 Letter of June 22, 1840, to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, US-NYp, *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, family letters, no. 438, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 7 [note 65], pp. 248–251, quotation on p. 249.

80 Lampadius, *Denkmal* [note 68], p. 96.

81 12. [Pseudonym for Robert Schumann], *Gutenbergfest in Leipzig*, in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 7 (1840), vol. 13, no. 2 (July 4), pp. 7–8, quoted from: Robert Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, vol. 3, Leipzig, 1854, Reprint Leipzig, 1985, pp. 243–246, quotation on p. 244.

ation,⁸² was not deliverable until two days after the premiere, though still within the timeframe of the festival such that it was possible for out-of-town visitors to purchase it as a musical souvenir of their time in Leipzig.⁸³ There must therefore have been some other kind of parts, possibly lithographically reproduced, used for the performance itself.⁸⁴ By contrast, the orchestral parts were copied by hand and were – like the score – not subsequently printed⁸⁵ but rather made available by the publisher to be rented for performances. In 1846, Mendelssohn was approached about two pieces (*Festgesang* and music for *Antigone*) for a performance planned in Prague. He responded: “The first however is composed for brass instruments only (for outdoor performances actually), and I’m not sure how well the brass orchestra could restrain itself in a concert hall. Should you nevertheless still wish to have the score though, you can rent it from the Breitkopf & Härtel gentlemen (in whose possession it lies) and thus not even have to pay any copyists’ fees.”⁸⁶ A further statement of Mendelssohn’s indicates that the composer personally gave the publisher the original score as a gift: “The Score of that Guttenberg-music [sic] is not in my hands, I gave the only manuscript which I had of it to Mr. Raymund Härtel (of Breitkopf & Härtel) not for publication but as a gift, and he must therefore still have it [...]”⁸⁷ The score was no longer to be found in the publisher’s possession when the archivist at Breitkopf & Härtel created a catalogue of the company’s holdings in the 1920s.⁸⁸

The Struggle to Produce an English Version of the Text – 1843

Three years after the *Festgesang* was composed, Mendelssohn unexpectedly had to refocus his attention on the work when

his new publisher, Edward Buxton,⁸⁹ decided he wanted to print the piece in England, thus prompting an in-depth correspondence with William Bartholomew (1793–1867). The man who later became Mendelssohn’s primary translator appears to have been a multi-talented contemporary, “a man of many accomplishments – Chemist, violin player, and excellent flower painter,”⁹⁰ as well as being an active poet and translator. Bartholomew achieved notoriety first and foremost with his adaptation of Psalm 55 (*Hear my prayer*) and the English version of the text for *Elias (Elijah)*, which he created in close cooperation with Mendelssohn. Beyond those works, he also translated many songs, psalms, all four of the large pieces of stage music, the *Lauda Sion*, and several of Mendelssohn’s posthumously published works. Over forty letters to Mendelssohn and most of the corresponding responses have survived, serving as a testament to the intense work relationship that existed between the composer and his translator. Their first exchange took place in 1841 when Bartholomew sent him the libretto *Titania or the Christmas night’s dream*,⁹¹ in which Mendelssohn found “so many and so striking poetical beauties that I really can not sufficiently express to you my admiration and my sincere gratitude for it.”⁹² Despite his enthusiasm for the libretto, Mendelssohn did not ever actually create a musical setting for either it or a later one titled *Sappho*.⁹³ The two men did however write each other numerous letters in connection with both of the projects, a correspondence which ultimately forged a certain basis of trust between them. The first of Mendelssohn’s texts Bartholomew translated was the music for *Antigone* MWV M 12 in the fall of 1842. Mendelssohn thanked him with the words: “I do not know how to express sufficiently the admiration for the wonderful task you have performed, & the gratitude I feel for the most valuable assistance which

82 See facsimile IV on page 194.

83 “Festival-Music. [...] To be released on Friday, June 26: Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, *Festgesang für Männerchor zur Eröffnung der am ersten Tage der Säcularfeier der Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst auf dem Markte zu Leipzig stattfindenden Feierlichkeiten*. Piano-vocal score. Price 1 Taler. Leipzig, June 22, 1840. Breitkopf & Härtel”, *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, no. 175 of June 23, 1840, p. 1426, choral parts are not mentioned here. An ad printed on June 25, 1840, stated however: “The four vocal parts for it Price 16 Groschen”, *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, no. 178 of June 26, 1840, p. 1453 as well as no. 179 of June 27, 1840, p. 1459.

84 See comparable material in *Festgesang an die Künstler*, Critical Report, Sources [I] and J. It is however also possible that preliminary copies of the edition that was printed later (see previous comment) were distributed at the rehearsals.

85 See also the letter of April 30, 1843, to Buxton, quoted in the following section, documentation in note 103.

86 Letter of October 7, 1846, to Josef Krejčí, organist at the collegiate church of the Order of Knights of the Cross in Prague, location unknown, quoted from: *Musiker-Briefe. Eine Sammlung Briefe von C. W. von Gluck, Ph. E. Bach, Jos. Haydn, Carl Maria von Weber und Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy*. Reproduction of the original published by Ludwig Nohl, Leipzig, [1867], pp. 343–344, quotation on p. 343.

87 Letter of August 11, 1844, to Edward Buxton, Washington, D.C., The Library of Congress, Music Division (hereafter: US-Wc), Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation Collection, Mendelssohn Collection, *ML 30.8j*, box 6, folder 22, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 10, ed. and with commentary by Uta Wald, Kassel etc., 2016, p. 232.

88 *Katalog des Archivs von Breitkopf & Härtel Leipzig*, commissioned by the company, published by Wilhelm Hitzig, Leipzig, 1925.

89 Buxton was the director of the publishing house J. J. Ewer & Co. and established himself as Mendelssohn’s main English publisher in the 1840s. The first work of Mendelssohn’s that he published was the Piano Trio no. 1 in D Minor op. 49 MWV Q 29 in 1840.

90 F. G. Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn’s Oratorio ‘Elijah’*, London & New York, 1896 (hereafter: Edwards, *The History*), p. 48.

91 Letter of September 21, 1841, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 40*, Green Books XIV-87.

92 Letter of October 4, 1841, to William Bartholomew, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 42*, fols. 89–90, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 8, ed. and with commentary by Susanne Tomković, Christoph Koop and Sebastian Schmideler, Kassel etc., 2013, pp. 210–211, quotation on p. 210.

93 Sent with letter of January 4, 1842, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 41*, Green Books XV-6.

you have given to the cause of my music.”⁹⁴ By that November, Mendelssohn was already singing the translator’s praises to Buxton concerning the first chorus: “Indeed I would never have thought it possible to translate these words so faithful to the Original and to the music, had I not read it.”⁹⁵ Consequently, there was no question as to whether Bartholomew should be the one to translate the next project – the *Festgesang* – into English as well.

A lengthy exchange of letters ensued, primarily conducted in English, revolving around this work. Five letters of Bartholomew’s and Mendelssohn’s responses document their arduous struggle to create an English version of the text, the content of which turned out to present unexpected difficulties. Because such lines as “Gutenberg, the German man, ignited the flame” could not be expected to resonate deeply in England, Bartholomew deliberately chose more freely interpreted wording with the end effect of shifting the focal point of the content. This led to unease on the part of the composer, subsequent related complaints, and further changes to the text.

In mid-March of 1843, Mendelssohn received an initial letter by post from England in which the translator shared his first draft of the text for the third movement, “Light,”⁹⁶ and articulated the trouble he had had with the literal translation. Instead of addressing these content issues, Mendelssohn initially expressed surprise that an English translation of the work was planned. He also apologized for the hurry with which it was written in 1840: “Indeed the whole thing looks so, & shows the hurry & the trouble in which it was written at the time, & it is a great and rather undeserved honor to have it turned into English verses by you.”⁹⁷ In response to a related question, he emphasized that in the event that a version be arranged for mixed choir only a few notes would need to be changed: “[...] of course Soprano’s would be very desirable, & it would only be necessary [sic] to alter a few notes here and there, which might very easily be done.”⁹⁸

Three weeks later Mendelssohn received a German piano-vocal score from England in which Bartholomew had entered the English text, in some cases suggesting multiple variations. In the accompanying letter, the publisher, Buxton, expressed his desire that a version for mixed choir also be arranged: “If you will be so good to alter them for Sop Alt Ten & Baß I should

like to publish them & I shall be happy to give you what you think proper for them. If you do not see any objection I should like to call the accompaniment Pfte or Organ.”⁹⁹

With the new adaptations to the piano-vocal score, Mendelssohn was then able to familiarize himself with the entire English text, which in turn became now the subject of critiques, in particular concerning the transcription of the second movement, the *Lied* “Vaterland in deinen Gauen.” In response to Bartholomew, he went on to elaborate on the rationale underlying his original conception: “I like your words very much; but there is one thing which strikes me: the words of the Lied No. 2 (which is No. 3 with you) seems to me much too pathetic, and indeed I think the whole loses its intended character if this Lied is not a patriotic (rather jolly & cheerful) affair. The creation of man I would never have composed in such a gay & soldierlike strain. This Lied was, as I wrote already to you, the chief feature of the whole thing, and just its coming in immediately after the Chorale enhanced its effect. I should not like its coming after the great Chorus, as well for its sake as for the Lied’s. But above all I should like to have the English words more congenial to the solemnly: gay Character of the German. It has been sung (I mean the Lied only) here & there in this country at solemn Occasions, & they have of course written different words to it, but they always kept that Character of patriotism & liberty, which I also wish to see preserved in the English version. Why could it not be a song to Guttenberg as well as in German? or to any other great man more familiar to English ears?”¹⁰⁰

Bartholomew responded to this letter with regret and elaborated on his views concerning the translation. He also posed the question of whether Gutenberg was truly due the honor since similar printing techniques had already existed in China centuries before: “I am sorry the words I wrote to your Festgesang Choruses have failed to please you. Music, in my humble opinion, is but a colour for words, which are as definite forms in a picture. The Suitability of words and music varies as the minds of the hearers. [...] I have no objection to praise Guttenburg [sic], or any man who merits it, but if the originator of printing is to be extolled, we must seek his name in the Chinese Empire – where, I believe [sic] Centuries before Guttenburg was born, letters were cut and multiplied on wooden blocks.”¹⁰¹ Whether this piece of advice was meant in

94 Letter of January 3, 1843, to William Bartholomew, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 42*, fol. 100, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9, ed. and with commentary by Stefan Münnich, Lucian Schiwietz and Uta Wald in cooperation with Ingrid Jach, Kassel etc., 2015 (hereafter *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9), p. 138. The translation appeared in the piano-vocal score of the work published by J. J. Ewer in 1843: *Chorusses of Sophocles’ Antigone. The words written and adapted by W. Bartholomew* and as a separate text booklet in 1845 by J. Mallet as *Antigone, a Poem by Sophocles. The Imitative English Version by W. Bartholomew, Esq. The Music by Mendelssohn*.

95 Letter of November 30, 1842, to Edward Buxton, US-Wc, Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation Collection, Mendelssohn Collection, *ML 30.8j*, box 5, folder 11, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], pp. 109–110, quotation on p. 110.

96 Letter of March 14, 1843, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43*, Green Books XVII-137.

97 Letter of March 24, 1843, to William Bartholomew, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 42*, fols. 101–102, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], pp. 245–246, quotation on *ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*, the quotation on p. 245.

99 Letter of April 13, 1843, from Edward Buxton to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43*, Green Books XVII-197. See in addition the description of source [G] in the Critical Report.

100 Letter of April 18, 1843, to William Bartholomew, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 42*, fols. 103–104, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], pp. 283–284, quotation on *ibid.*

101 Letter of May 2, 1843, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43*, Green Books XVII-233.

all seriousness or was more an expression of British humor remains open to interpretation.

As Bartholomew wrote this letter, a package addressed to the publisher, containing the corrected piano-vocal score and the version for mixed choir Mendelssohn had finished just days before, was already en route to England. The latter item was prepared on a double-sized sheet of paper, on which Mendelssohn had notated the vocal parts of the first, third, and fourth movements without any text. For the second movement, the Lied, he simply made a note as to which lines from the original men's choir version should be covered by which voices in the mixed choir.¹⁰² The accompanying letter clarifies questions concerning the work's arrangement, and illuminates fundamental aspects of Mendelssohn's own understanding of the work. On the whole (with the exception of the problematic second chorus), the composer appears to have come to feel that the English translation of the other three movements was almost superior even to the original German verse: "You will receive with these lines the copy of my 'Festgesang' in which I have made a few remarks, in those passages in which Mr. Bartholomew has two different versions, and also the arrangement of the whole for a Chorus with female voices. I think it will do well in this shape and have no objection to your publishing it as I am to fix a price I would say four guinea's. The orchestral parts are not published, but if you want to have them I shall send you a Copy of them immediately. They are, as you presumed, for brass instrument^s only: 6 Trumpets, 6 Horns, 6 Trombones and Ophicleide (being two Orchestras, the smaller of which consists of 2 Tr., 2 Horns and 3 Trombone's, & has to play the Echo in the passages marked thus *.) I should not like the accompaniment to be called Pianoforte or Organ, as if it had been originally intended for those instruments; but if you should like to say, 'adapted for Pianof. or Organ by the composer' you are very welcome to do so, as it is the truth. The same you may say about the arrangement for Soprano & Alto. I Only would wish to have on the title some allusion to its original shape, at least nothing which goes against it. Then I must repeat the wish, I already expressed in my letter to Mr. Bartholomew: I think there ought to be other words to no. 2 the 'Lied'. If the right ones are hit at, I am sure that piece will be liked very well by the singers and the hearers – but it will never do to sacred words. There must be a national and merry subject found out, something to which the soldierlike and buxom motion of the piece has some relation, and the words must express something gay and popular, as the music tries to do it. Guttenberg would not do in England I dare say; but if not I wish Mr. Bartholomew would try to find some other subject of the kind – the Creation, & the Creation of man is not what this music can express to my opinion. The translation of all the rest, I like very much and it sings as well or better than the German[.]"¹⁰³

On May 9th, Buxton announced the arrival of the package, promised to pay special attention to the changes in No. 2,¹⁰⁴ and delivered the materials to Bartholomew. It was not however until two further translation drafts and corresponding feedback had been exchanged that Mendelssohn was finally satisfied. The extensive discussions and text drafts cannot be presented in their entirety here. In essence though, they consistently revolved around the question of whether the nationalistic, patriotically-tinged original could not be coaxed in a more religious direction, as per the translator's proposals. On May 11th, Bartholomew initially admitted: "On looking again at the Lied I feel that your objection to the words was well founded: they are, as you say too pathetic, or rather, they are not the thing, never mind why – there are feelings excited in the mind by words and sounds; and when they are united, they should assimilate. I have therefore taken up my pen and tried again; what results, I send for your approbation – if you still dislike let me know and I will yet try again to please you, for you deserve it for the sake of the beautiful music you give the world."¹⁰⁵ The new translation more accurately encompassed the character of the original text than his previous attempts. In the "Proposed alteration for Lied No 2" the first verse now read:

"Let our Praise to heaven ascending,
Fly in music's holy strain
Soaring through the starry main
Blent with echos never ending
Heaven inspired the wondrous man
Who devised the graphic plan,
Heaven inspired the hand that wrought
Signs that first embodied thought."

The last verse ends with the lines: "Gutenberg [sic], with art divine, | Stamp'd the first metallic line, – | Gutenberg the wondrous man, | Thus improved the graphic plan!"

Due to the intense professional demands he was facing, Mendelssohn was not able to respond until a number of weeks later: "I cannot as yet agree to the version of the 'Lied' in the 'Festgesang.' Pray do not be very angry with me! I even liked your first version better than the one you last sent. This last is a mixture of both, which I do not think effective, and indeed your introduction of Guttemberg [sic], and of the art of printing in English verse, makes me aware that the difficulty is greater than I thought at first. I am almost sure now that Guttemberg and the graphic pen and all that is not the thing, and that nothing of the kind should be mentioned in the poem. – But what then? you will say. I answer with the French proverb, criticizing [sic] is easy, but the art is difficult. I do not know; but I neither wish the creation of man, nor the creation of typography, and yet I wish for something national, popular, & lofty at the same time.

102 See Critical Report, Source Description, Source **H**.

103 Letter of April 30, 1843, to Edward Buxton, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Frederick R. Koch Collection, *Gen Mss 601*, box 327, folder 1810, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], pp. 288–289, quotation on *ibid*.

104 Letter of May 9, 1843, from Edward Buxton to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43*, Green Books XVII-121.

105 Letter of May 11, 1843, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43*, Green Books XVII-251, the following three unmarked quotations from the same letter.

I am sure you would wish I was in the Pepper=Country (as we say in Germany.)”¹⁰⁶

Bartholomew responded yet again with remarkable patience and imagination, first seizing upon the “Pepper=Country”¹⁰⁷ wordplay, wittily beginning the letter: “Not in the pepper but the paper country, – here, in England – in London, where paper is money, and money is paper – here, where your notes of hand are duly honoured, being all notes of admiration!! here, I wish you, and no where else – not even in heaven yet.”¹⁰⁸ He proceeded, both explaining himself and posing new questions, to thoroughly address the points Mendelssohn had raised, before ending with a fresh proposal, including another complete transcription of the text. This time he had an entirely new idea for the Lied; it was to be titled “Jubilate,” with the first verses reading as follows:

“No 2 (Jubilate.)
Mortals, all your voices blending,
Sound His praise
In joyous lays!
Let the song to heav’n ascending
Waking echos never ending
Praise the Lord! let all the earth
Sound his praise in strains of mirth!”¹⁰⁹

Mendelssohn’s patience must have been tried as well when he first read this, by that time, third draft of the verse. In mid-July, he made one last attempt at clarifying his intentions and simultaneously introduced yet another new idea: “Many thanks for your kindness, for your last letter, for the new translation, for everything! Of course I like your Verses very much, but you must not be angry, if I still am as stubborn as an old post: the idea of a Jubilate, of praise the Lord &c. to that song of mine has something in itself which hurts me. This is not the strain in which I would sing a Jubilate, a ‘praise the Lord.’ While I read it just now again & again, an idea struck me: could you not adhere to the first word of the German verses, and make this eternal no. 2 instead of a Jubilate, a song in honour to your country, to your ‘Vaterland’? That is the sense of my music; if

it is ‘praise the land’ instead of the ‘Lord’, then my music is right; or perhaps ‘happy land’ or ‘happy thou’ or &c. Really the more I think of it, the more I think it could and should be done so! The first two stanza’s in praise of your English ‘Vaterland’ and the third where the G minor commences, speaking of darkness, of bad times which may surround that countries horizon for a little while, but which must soon vanish before the sun, and ending with that same ‘happy land’ or ‘happy anything’ as the others. This national feeling is at least the only thing which to my idea the music can truly express; sacred it will never be, and the more sacred the words are, the less my notes will seem so.

If you approve of this idea, it would involve indeed a general alteration, & the whole would become much more of an hymn to God, the Creator of England, than to him the Creator of the world – but so much the better.”¹¹⁰

The astounding doggedness with which Mendelssohn worked on the formulation of the text for the Lied No. 2 did not lead to any lasting bad feelings between the two men, a fact evidenced by the many works mentioned above that Bartholomew later went on to translate. When Ewer finally released the work in 1844, bearing the title *Fest Gesang. Hymns of Praise*,¹¹¹ No. 2 in particular had yet another text formulation, about which nothing is known concerning Mendelssohn’s final authorization (see the edition in the present volume).

Admittedly, it is something of a tragedy that a posthumous version of the piece that persists in popular consciousness up through the present day came about in contradiction to Mendelssohn’s explicit wish that music not be set to any kind of religious text (“it will never do to sacred words”¹¹²). William Hayman Cummings (1831–1915), who had sung *Elias* as a young man in 1847, under Mendelssohn’s direction, arranged the No. 2 of the *Festgesang* with a text first published by Charles Wesley in 1739.¹¹³ “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing.” Cummings’ adaptation of Mendelssohn’s melody, which was published by Ewer in 1856,¹¹⁴ proved to have remarkable staying power. It rapidly gained popularity and broad dissemination, both as a work unto itself and in countless adaptations, even finding its way into English hymn books.¹¹⁵ In spite of the fact that Mendelssohn

106 Letter of June 12, 1843, to William Bartholomew, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 42*, fols. 105–106, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], p. 316.

107 Certainly in the sense of the German dictum “where the pepper grows”, at this time in history when places where spices were grown were inaccessibly distant for most people, a way of saying “go as far away as possible” or, perhaps more comparably, “get lost”.

108 Letter of June 26, 1843, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43*, Green Books XVII-285.

109 Ibid.

110 Letter of July 17, 1843, to William Bartholomew, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c. 42*, fol. 107, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], pp. 340–341, quotation on *ibid.*

111 In October of 1844, Mendelssohn made a note in his personal financial records that he had received 21 talers “from Buxton for the subsequently arranged 3 Gutenberg pieces,” GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn f. 7*, fol. 31^v.

112 Letter of April 30, 1843, to Edward Buxton, documentation in note 103.

113 *Hymn for Christmas-Day*, in: John und Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, London, 1739, pp. 206–208; in the 1743 edition, Part II, pp. 142–143; Beginning of the text here: “Hark how all the welkin rings”. This text was then changed by George Whitefield (1714–1770) to the version known today, see *A Collection of Hymns for Social Worship*, London, 1753, p. 24. Even in the 19th century, this collection was widely distributed in many reprints.

114 Anonymous [most probably F. G. Edwards], ‘Hark! The Herald Angels Sing’, in: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 38 (1897), no. 658 (December 1), p. 810.

115 “Its earliest appearance in a hymnal was, we believe, in ‘Hymns Ancient and Modern’ (1861), where, as Mr. Cummings justly says, an unwarrantable alteration has been made in the melody by the introduction of a B at the third beat of bar twelve which Mendelssohn did not write.” *Ibid.*

had nothing to do with the piece apart from the melody, and very likely would have disapproved of it, it was, ironically, this work that ultimately advanced in the second half of the 19th century to become one of the best-loved Christmas songs in the Anglican Church, a status it still enjoys today. Meanwhile, these developments came to obscure all awareness of the original connection between that well-known melody and the *Festgesang* written for the 1840 Gutenberg Festival in Leipzig.

MWV D 5

Bei Enthüllung der Statue Friedrich Augusts von Sachsen “Gott segne Sachsenland” / *At the Unveiling of the Statue of Friedrich August of Saxony* “God Bless Saxony”

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was commissioned by the Saxon King Friedrich August II (1797–1854) to compose the festival cantata *Bei Enthüllung der Statue Friedrich Augusts von Sachsen* „Gott segne Sachsenland“ MWV D 5. The purpose of the celebratory song was to accompany the unveiling of a memorial designed by Ernst Rietschel (1804–1861) to honor the preceding monarch, Friedrich August I (1750–1827), an event planned for June 7, 1843, in Dresden. Mendelssohn chose to write the piece for two all-male choirs led in unison, each bolstered by a brass ensemble. The distinctive feature of this arrangement was its pairing of one very large choir and proportionally large instrumental ensemble with another significantly smaller choir and instrumental ensemble positioned across from it. The larger choir (“The Singers’ Choir”) intoned the newly composed song, set to verse written for the occasion by Christoph Christian Hohlfeldt (1776–1849), while the smaller choir (“The People’s Choir”) simultaneously sang the so-called *Sachsenlied*, also known as the Saxon anthem “Gott segne Sachsenland” (“God Bless Saxony”) to the melody of the British national anthem “God Save the King.” This piece of occasional music swiftly came into being at the end of May / beginning of June 1843 (date of completion: June 2, 1843), a mere sixty-four measures in length. No consideration was given to having it published during Mendelssohn’s lifetime and – given the quickly obsolete and very specific use that prompted its composition – it was never revised following its premiere. While the *Festgesang an*

die Künstler MWV D 6 did get printed and performed later at dedication ceremonies¹¹⁶ for various monuments, the Dresden commission is a recent discovery.¹¹⁷

Historical Background and Composition Commission

The Saxon King Friedrich August II’s efforts to bind Mendelssohn to Saxony began as early as 1840. Concurrently, the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who was crowned in July of 1840, also approached Mendelssohn with a proposition of steady employment in Berlin. The subsequent courses of action the two monarchs took to tie the composer to their respective royal capitals thus came to emulate a tough and, for all sides, highly suspenseful game of patience. While the contest initially played out repeatedly in favor of the Prussian monarch, it was ultimately the Saxon king Mendelssohn decided to serve in 1845, just a brief two years before his untimely death.¹¹⁸ It was much earlier though, on July 1, 1841, that Friedrich August II first endowed the renowned composer with the title Königlich Sächsischer Kapellmeister (Royal Saxon Director of Music) – albeit without any official duties or salary.¹¹⁹ Despite that, the tactical step still brought with it a certain moral obligation to the Saxon court,¹²⁰ and Mendelssohn was expected to occasionally direct concerts and perform at the King’s pleasure. One such event was the performance of *Paulus* (“St. Paul”), which took place on Palm Sunday, April 10, 1843. Around the same time, in February of 1843, a different Kapellmeister, who, by contrast, did have official duties, was also newly appointed in Dresden: As second in line after Carl Gottlieb Reissiger, Richard Wagner was freshly embarking on his tenure presiding over the Dresdner Hofkapelle (Dresden Court Orchestra). Given those circumstances, Mendelssohn’s direction of the 1843 Palm Sunday concert was not viewed with solely warm approval. Both of the resident Dresden Kapellmeisters, Reissiger and Wagner, were forced to suffer through the fact that the king’s favor had to be shared with this third “Titularkapellmeister” or “nominal music director,”¹²¹ Mendelssohn, who spent his time flitting back and forth between Leipzig and Berlin. What is more, the latter’s special status was put on further display when he received a royal commission to write a

116 For example, at the dedication of the Friedrich Schiller Monument in Vienna in 1876, the Louis Spohr Monument in Kassel in 1883, the Friedrich Rückert Monument in Schweinfurt in 1890, the Justus Liebig Monument in Gießen in 1890, and the Schiller Monument at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco in 1901.

117 Prompted by the release of the first printed edition of the work in connection with the Richard Wagner Gesamtausgabe: Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 16 *Chorwerke*, ed. by Reinhard Kapp, Mainz, 1993.

118 For the entire causal context, see in particular: Klaus Häfner, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und König Friedrich August II.*, in: *Mendelssohn-Studien* 7 (1990) (hereafter: Häfner, *Mendelssohn-Studien*), pp. 219–268.

119 The letter of appointment has been preserved, D-B, *MA Ep.* 375.

120 This would, above all, have been associated with the certain assumption that, upon his return from Berlin in the summer of 1842, Mendelssohn would be employed by the state of Saxony as director of the music conservatory in Leipzig, an institution that had been established at his initiative. See the related documents, especially the letter of July 3, 1841, from the king’s private secretary, Albert Zenker, to the district manager Johann Paul von Falkenstein, location unknown, transcription record in: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (hereafter: D-Dla), *11125 Ministerium des Kultus und öffentlichen Unterrichts*, Nr. 19478, fol. 119f.

121 This disparaging label was coined by Carl Gottlieb Reissiger in a letter to Friedrich Schneider and makes it clear that Mendelssohn’s ambiguous situation in Dresden was a source of acrimony, especially among the other Kapellmeister and the orchestra itself. Letter of April 20, 1843, from Carl Gottlieb Reissiger to Friedrich Schneider, Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (hereafter: D-Dl), *Mscr. Dresd. App.* 292, 203u.

celebratory vocal piece for a court event as prestigious as the planned dedication of the monument honoring the beloved monarch Friedrich August I.¹²² The statue of the first Saxon king, who had died in 1827, already had a lengthy backstory that played out over many years.¹²³ Despite the losses Saxony suffered in 1815 after its defeat in the War of Liberation, Friedrich August I was celebrated by his people as “The Just,” and greeted by an outright jubilee when he returned to Dresden on June 7, 1815, upon his release from Prussian imprisonment. It was therefore no coincidence that the committee planning the monument’s dedication chose the same calendar day, June 7, for its unveiling. The monument was commissioned from the most renowned German sculptor of the time, Christian Daniel Rauch (1777–1857), who, while remaining engaged in the design process, also involved his still-young student Ernst Rietschel, a Saxon by birth. Both Mendelssohn and the Dresden Kapellmeister Richard Wagner were charged with contributing celebratory vocal pieces for the impending dedication, the latter also engaged to conduct the works. Unsurprisingly, this situation served to create a heightened competitive dynamic between the two, at least from the perspective of the *Rienzi* composer, who had, in a letter written just a few weeks before, aired his grievances concerning Mendelssohn’s alleged rejection of his opera as well as his suspicion that his rival was anonymously pulling strings at the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*.¹²⁴ The Minister Bernhard August von Lindenau was tasked with conveying the king’s wishes to the two composers,¹²⁵ and Friedrich August II had a very clear notion of what he expected from Mendelssohn. The choir should be all-male, and as Wagner recollected later: “the more complicated assignment fell to *Mendelssohn* [...], that of weaving *God save the King*, in the Saxon dialect, into a chorus for men of his own composition [...]”¹²⁶ Mendelssohn’s response to the Saxon minister reveals the urgency with which he desired to honor the royal request to every specification. Because that letter was only recently located in the Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Saxon State Capital Archives) in Dresden, it is repeated here in full:

“Your Excellency,

I thank you most sincerely for the letter, with which you honored me, and I will set about accomplishing the task His Majesty has set out for me to the best of my abilities and with

much joy. The words you shared clearly communicate the idea the king wishes for the music to be based on, and I will strive to honor it to the greatest extent possible. While I would of course far prefer to accept the invitation Your Excellency was kind enough to extend, that I travel to Dresden to discuss everything in person, alas, it is impossible for me, as I must leave tomorrow to spend a number of days in Berlin, and the festival date is approaching too quickly for me to be able to make the trip to Dresden after my return. Would Your Excellency perhaps have the benevolence to let me know when the composition is needed in Dresden by sending word to me <there>\in Berlin/ at the address Mendelssohn & Co.? At the same time, I would request to be told with whom I should be in touch concerning numerous technical details, with which I dare not importune Your Excellency, i.e. the size and allocation of the orchestra, how the same is to be positioned, the number and length of the rehearsals, and more of the like. In repeating my most sincere gratitude for Your Excellency’s kind letter, I remain in consummate veneration

Leipzig May 24,
1843.

Your Excellency’s
most obedient
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.”¹²⁷

In his response of May 27, 1843, Lindenau elaborated on various musical parameters that were to be observed, including the information that 150–160 men would be available to sing, and that, in contrast to “Gott segne Sachsenland,” Mendelssohn’s new choral composition should be performed without any instrumental music. The minister also mentioned that Richard Wagner, who had been assigned to rehearse the piece, expected the work to arrive no later than June 2, 1843.¹²⁸ The verse for the work was written specifically for the occasion by the Dresden lawyer Christoph Christian Hohlfeldt, who also penned the text “Der Tag erscheint” for the men’s choral piece Wagner composed.¹²⁹ Hohlfeldt’s poem describes, among other things, the situation of the unveiling and the outward appearance of the monument, the pose, the attire, and even the allegories that ornamented the pedestal. One line is of particular interest: “The hand he raised in force on our behalf, is lifted yet to bless us.” Although this raised hand is not a feature of the surviving monument, it can be seen in one of Ernst Rietschel’s sketches

122 The commission was sent along with the letter of May 21, 1843, from Minister Bernhard August von Lindenau to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, location unknown, implied by von Lindenau’s letter of May 21, 1843, to Friedrich August II: “Your Majesty, in utmost humility I announce the receipt of your Highness’ correspondence of yesterday – concerning the Festgesang and its composition – [...] and I will speak with Herr Capellmeister Wagner and write to Hr. Cpm. Mendelssohn this morning accordingly.” Location unknown, transcription in: D-Dla, 10697 *Gesamtministerium*, Nr. 791, fol. 79^r, as well as in Mendelssohn’s personal records dated May 22, 1843: “22 [1 letter] from Dresden (Lindenau)”, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn f.* 7, fol. 46^r.

123 This is well-reconstructed, above all with great detail in: Christiane Theiselmann, *Das Denkmal Friedrich Augusts I. von Sachsen von Ernst Rietschel*, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 57, issue 1 (1990), pp. 1–24.

124 C.f. letter of April 7, 1843, from Richard Wagner to Samuel Lehrs, location unknown, printed in: Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Briefe*, ed. by Gertrud Strobel and Werner Wolf at the behest of the Richard-Wagner-Familienarchiv Bayreuth, vol. II, Leipzig, 1970 (hereafter: SBr 2), pp. 231–235, especially p. 234.

125 See letter of May 21, 1843, from Bernhard August von Lindenau to the Saxon King Friedrich August II [note 122].

126 Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben*, ed. by Martin Gregor-Dellin, Munich, 1963, p. 270 (hereafter: Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben*).

127 Letter of May 24, 1843, to Bernhard August von Lindenau, D-Dla, 10697 *Gesamtministerium*, Nr. 791, fols. 81 and 84. The word in the angle brackets is crossed out, words that were later added are indicated thusly \ /.

128 Letter of May 27, 1843, from Bernhard August von Lindenau to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, D-B, *MA Depos. MG 49*.

129 *Festgesang zur Enthüllung des Friedrich August-Monuments in Dresden* WWV 68.

from the year 1830.¹³⁰ The pose in that image resembles that of a statue of Maximilian I Joseph von Bayern, which was constructed around the same time in Munich by Rietschel's teacher, Christian Daniel Rauch. It was not until May 12, 1843, that the ministry reached the decision to commission Hohlfeldt to compose the verse, that is, quite shortly before the unveiling was to take place, and just nine days before the composer was commissioned to set those same words to music. He had, however, already authored a comparable poem of homage¹³¹ in 1815 for the celebration of Friedrich August I's return to Dresden, and the Minister von Lindenau considered him as suitable for recommending to the king on this occasion as well.¹³² In addition to Hohlfeldt's poem, Mendelssohn also received copies of the texts for the Saxon anthems – “Den König segne Gott,” “Gott segne Sachsenland,” and “Heil Dir im Siegerkranz”¹³³ – from which he was clearly expected to make a selection. Ultimately, he chose to combine the first three stanzas of “Gott segne Sachsenland” with the first stanza of “Den König segne Gott.”

History of the *Sachsenlied*

The origins and dissemination of the so-called *Sachsenlied* – the melody of which originated with the British national anthem “God save the Queen” (at the time “God save the King”), and began its ascent to world-wide fame in countless variations in the late 18th century – are only sparsely documented.¹³⁴ The Saxon variation with the text “Den Fürsten segne Gott” (“God bless the Prince”) and – once Saxony had been proclaimed a sovereign kingdom in 1806 – “Den König segne Gott” (“God bless the King”) was likewise familiar to everyone by the end of the 18th century.¹³⁵ The population enthusiastically sang “das schöne Sachsenlied”¹³⁶ or the “Volkslied”¹³⁷ at various celebrations, most notably upon Friedrich August I's feted return in June 1815. Although the attribution of the text to Georg Karl Alexander von Richter (1760–1806) of Dresden cannot be proven beyond a doubt, it does seem plausible. It was first proposed by the historian Otto Richter, who had access to a

publication from the year 1822,¹³⁸ in which the “Commerzien-Assistenzrath [Commerce-Assistance Counselor] Richter, a young, prematurely withered genius,”¹³⁹ was named as the author of what is likely the first Saxon text variation. With this discovery, Otto Richter corrected the commonly held, but erroneous late-19th-century belief that it was Siegfried August Mahlmann (1771–1826), author of the “Gott segne Sachsenland” text, who had first composed the verse. The version of the text by Georg Karl Alexander still bore the title “Den Fürsten segne Gott” (“God bless the Prince”), due to the fact that, having died in April of 1806, he did not live to see the proclamation of the Kingdom of Saxony.¹⁴⁰ The transmission of Mahlmann's *Sachsenlied* – popular as it was, never the official state anthem of Saxony – is easier to track. It was written specifically to celebrate Friedrich August I's return from Prussia in 1815. On November 7 of that year, the royal couple made an appearance in Leipzig, where they were universally welcomed with a great deal of pomp and circumstance. While there, Their Majesties attended a concert hosted by the local choral societies, where, at the conclusion of the program, the Privy Councilor Mahlmann's verse was sung for the first time to the melody of “God save the King.”¹⁴¹ Although both versions of the song's text coexisted for a period, it was Mahlmann's *Sachsenlied* that endured into the period of the Weimar Republic (albeit with changes to the verse referencing the king) and even received consideration as a possible state anthem when Saxony was reestablished as a free state following German reunification in 1990.

Composition and Premiere of the Work

Mendelssohn only had a few days to complete the work once he had accepted the commission; moreover, the above quoted letter from Minister von Lindenau of May 27, 1843, presented an unexpected dilemma with its instruction “that the vocals, without any instrumental music, will be performed by only 150–160 men.”¹⁴² Mendelssohn anticipated that this would create acoustic issues he wanted to avoid at all costs, and there-

130 Draft for the pedestal of the monument for Friedrich August I. von Sachsen, front and side view, 1830, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Inventarnummer C 1936-3.

131 Christoph Christian Hohlfeldt, *Volkslied der Sachsen auf die Rückkehr ihres Königs Friedrich Augusts des Gerechten in seine Residenzstadt*, Dresden, 1815.

132 “[...] I therefore take the liberty of naming Herr Winkler and Advocat Hohlfeld as those persons to whom the commission could possibly be given.” Letter of April 27, 1843, from Bernhard August von Lindenau to Friedrich August II, transcription in his own handwriting in: D-Dla, 10697 *Gesamtministerium*, Nr. 791, fol. 43^r.

133 All three texts in: GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 44*, Green Books XVIII-314–316.

134 Two older essays, the later of which is based on the earlier, are presumably the main sources of much of the information that exists on this work: Otto Richter, *Ursprung der Sachsenhymne*, in: *Dresdner Geschichtsblätter* III (1894), no. 3, pp. 147–148, as well as Johann Christian Hasche, *Diplomatische Geschichte Dresdens – von seiner Entstehung bis auf unsere Tage*, Part 5, Dept. 2: *Dresdens neunzehntes Jahrhundert*, Dresden, 1822 (hereafter: *Diplomatische Geschichte*), p. 142.

135 The versions of the text varied from region to region however. See for example the variant from the Lausitz in: *Deutsche Zeitung* 11 (1794), no. 26 (June 26), col. 452.

136 *Des Königs Friedrich August des Gerechten Heimkehr und Empfang am 7. Juni 1815*, Dresden, 1815, p. 9.

137 *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* (1815), no. 116 (June 15), col. 921.

138 *Diplomatische Geschichte* [note 134].

139 *Ibid.*, p. 142, note 2.

140 Otto Richter expressed this conjecture as well in 1894, see note 134. A description of the celebration a small Saxon town put on to greet the king in February of 1807 documents both the level of general awareness there was of the song in 1807 and the alteration of the text from “God Bless the Prince” to “God Bless the King.” *Bildungs-Blätter. Zeitung für die Jugend* (1807), no. 42 (April 7), pp. 331–332.

141 The text was first printed in: *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* (1815), no. 228 (November 18), col. 1824.

142 Letter of May 27, 1843, from Bernhard August von Lindenau to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, see note 128.

fore hastily explained his misgivings to the minister, making a point of mentioning that he had yet to commit a single note to paper.¹⁴³ As this previously unprinted letter of May 30, 1843, was also found in the course of preparing this edition, it too is reproduced here in its entirety:

“Your Excellency

While I owe my deepest gratitude to you for the letter I received yesterday, I must at the same time, before I begin with the desired composition, hurry to inquire about a point Your Excellency made in that letter that presents me with a dilemma. Your Excellency says that the vocal parts should be performed without any instrumental music, which in and of itself naturally shouldn't be a matter of any difficulty. It does however appear impossible to me to reconcile this requirement with that expressed by His Majesty the King. If namely the Lied “God bless the King” is played by wind instruments, especially brass instruments, and the following Lied (which I am to compose) are to be performed one after the other, with one in a sense setting up the next (as was the idea of His Majesty), I must then also use the same orchestra that plays that Lied for the new composition as well, as the desired blend will otherwise remain unachievable.

I therefore request Your Excellency, before I write down the new Lied, to please dispatch a few lines to my usual address in Leipzig informing me of whether I can stay true to the King's idea and use an orchestra of brass instruments in my composition. I hope to receive an answer from Your Excellency on June 1st, and will immediately set about hurrying to deliver the music.

With deepest reverence

Your Excellency's
most sincere

Berlin May 30, 1843 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.¹⁴⁴

To his relief, Mendelssohn received the answer, “that the male choir in the stanzas you are to compose will be accompanied by wind (brass) instruments [...] the accompaniment will be comprised of 30 wind instruments.”¹⁴⁵ At the conclusion of the letter, Mendelssohn was however confronted with the fact that he was expected to be finished with the instrumental writing in just one day's time: “just now, Capellmeister Wagner approached me with the wish that, if possible, he receive your composition by tomorrow evening.” Mendelssohn indeed finished his composition the next day, June 2, 1843, and did send it immediately to Dresden where it made it into Wagner's hands on June 3.

Presumably, when Mendelssohn received von Lindenau's letter he had – as was his practice – already been working out the piece's external musical form in his head, that is: the division of the choir into two groups of men (each singing in unison), the underpinning of an, at that time, still undetermined orchestral accompaniment and its distribution, as well as a strategy for blending the new material with a well-known folk melody. What

is certain is that he wrote the composition down in a single day, having first been informed of the specifics of which instrumental forces were at his disposal in the letter of June 1.

This was not the first time Mendelssohn had engaged in the exercise of “weaving” the *Sachsenlied* “in” to another melody. One sociable September evening in 1842, at the Frankfurt-on-the-Main home of Franz Bernus-Dufay (1808–1884), he sketched a little score beneath a caricature drawn by Philipp Veit (1793–1877) of Friedrich Wilhelm IV and Archbishop Johannes von Geissel, combining the first few measures of the well-known anthem – in this case, with the Prussian text “Hail &c [to Thee in Victor's Crown]” – with a motif from Gioachino Rossini's opera *Semiramide* written in as the treble part.¹⁴⁶ In the case of the Dresden commission, the composer was most concerned with creating a clear juxtaposition between the new and unknown chorus “Seht, die Hülle ist gefallen” (“See, the veil has fallen”) and the universally recognizable anthem melody. He therefore marked the manuscript with the following performance instructions for Wagner: “The instrumentalists for the 2nd chorus [the People's Choir] should play just one to a part, whereas for the 1st chorus [the Singers' Choir], there should be as many as players as possible. A part of the Singers' Choir can sing the melody along with the People's Choir, but the latter must be set up some distance from the Singers' Choir, and the Singers' Choir must be the stronger of the two.”¹⁴⁷

As the newly appointed director of the Dresden Liedertafel, Wagner had far more singers at his disposal than the 150–160 singers von Lindenau had mentioned. For the premiere, he united members from various Dresden choral societies, among them the men's choirs *Orpheus* and the Dresden Liedertafel. Beyond that, he also had access to a brass ensemble of military musicians, comprised of considerably more instrumentalists than the 30 the minister had referenced. The Dresden Kapellmeister was skeptical of Mendelssohn's specifications concerning the staging of the choirs, questioning the practicality of implementing it at the performance. He immediately wrote the composer: “Your composition was just delivered to me; as regards your instructions in terms of the lineup and positioning of the necessary musical forces, I am taking the liberty of requesting that you kindly explain if it is most definitely your will that the second musical corps, consisting of an orchestra of 4 horns and 3 trombones, play only one to a part, while the first, with trumpets and the whole Singers' Choir, perform with as many musicians as possible? I would secure a disposition for the first corps of at least 12 trumpets, 12 horns, 12 trombones, and 6 ophicleides, along with a choir of 200 men; if I then also wanted, as is stipulated in the plans you shared, to take 50 voices away from that men's choir in order to have them sing the national anthem, then the effect of this second one, positioned 50 or 60 steps away from the first corps, would, in my humble opinion, necessarily all but vanish. If you were reckoning with

143 Apart from the 27-measure sketch, in which he first attempted to combine the Saxon anthem with his newly composed melody. See facsimile V on p. 195.

144 Letter of May 30, 1843, to Bernhard August von Lindenau, D-Dla, 10697 *Gesamtministerium*, Nr. 791, fols. 82–83.

145 Letter of June 1, 1843, from Bernhard August von Lindenau to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, D-Dl, *Mscr. Dresd. App.* 198, 51n.

146 D-B, *MA Depos. MG 20*, facsimile in: *Mendelssohn-Studien* 6 (1986), p. 113.

147 See the Critical Report, Source Description for Source B.

the crowd spontaneously joining in, the concern exists that you might be setting yourself up for disappointment, and either way it would remain difficult to establish rhythmic stability. I well understand that the first corps should consist of stronger forces than the second, since they are responsible for ensuring that the new, so-far-unfamiliar, melody is heard; but at the same time, I am afraid that the nice doubling effect that is intended might be lost, if the anthem isn't reinforced at least a little bit more. – You are far more experienced than I though, and if you repeat your initial instructions after taking these thoughts of mine into account, then it goes without saying that I will consider your view on the matter the more correct one. I therefore ask that you not take any offense at my inquiries, since they are purely meant in the spirit of furthering the best interest of this endeavor. Whatever your instructions are, I will strive to follow them with the utmost of diligence. Hoping for a swift reply, I remain in truest admiration Your most sincere Richard Wagner.”¹⁴⁸

Mendelssohn reasserted the instructions he had already given, further clarifying his wishes with the following words: “[...] As you so accurately and immediately perceived, even upon first perusal [...] the as yet unfamiliar melody must [...] sound stronger than the Volkslied, though the anthem for its part must of course make a clear and powerful impression nonetheless [...]. The first Lied and the first choir must reign supreme at all times; at the same time however, the Volksmelodie must indeed come as distinctly to the fore as, for instance, a chorale being played on an organ does when it is woven in using other stops on a different manual. The strength and number of this register, that is, whether there should be 50 or 100 voices, six or nine trombones, &c, I leave to your discretion based on the requirements of the location. The distance of 50–60 paces between the two orchestras seems a bit too great to me; I really would not like for it to happen that any given portion of the listeners only hear God save the king and nothing else; however, with a distance like that, that would indeed be the case for all of those standing next to the 2nd orchestra. Ideally, I would like to have both in the same orchestra, with a long narrow aisle between them, separating the two from each other; then they

would be far enough apart, and would nevertheless blend, and no one would only hear God save all by itself, which I would very much like to avoid. That is to say, if possible, there should be a much shorter distance! One request yet: the Volkslied must begin at the exact moment of the unveiling. The requests and remarks are lengthier than the music. Please excuse that. And thank you very very much for your friendly letter, and do what you think is right and what sounds good to you, as that it is the best possible thing you do for the cause and for me.”¹⁴⁹

Despite having been formally determined long before, the staging of the orchestra and choir was not ultimately executed according to Mendelssohn's wishes after all.¹⁵⁰ The ministry decided to erect two platforms (“perrons”), which instead of holding one “orchestra” (mixed vocal and instrumental group) each, rather divided all the instrumentalists and the entire men's choir into two entirely separate groups.¹⁵¹ As one of the platforms was positioned in front of the “Mathematical Salon” and the other in front of the “Elgin Exhibition” (now the French Pavilion), that is, to the left and right of the Wall Pavilion, they were in fact spaced at the very distance that Mendelssohn had judged unsuitable for the whole enterprise. The monument itself stood with its back to the Wall Pavilion, shifted slightly forward from the geographic center of the Dresden Zwinger. The idea of placing it dead-center had been rejected in favor of preserving an unobstructed visual axis between the Elbe side of the courtyard and the Crown Gate. The sculpture portrayed Friedrich August I sitting on a throne in his coronation robe, resting on a pedestal designed by Gottfried Semper, flanked by allegorical figures, representing the royal virtues of fairness, piety, clemency, and wisdom, all designed by Ernst Rietschel. The monument has been moved multiple times since, and is currently located at the Dresden Schlossplatz (Palace Square) where it was rededicated in 2008 following extensive restoration.

The festivities surrounding the 1843 unveiling took place in the morning hours of June 7 at the Dresden Zwinger, and the formal order of events was outlined in multiple contemporary publications.¹⁵² One summary provides a retrospective report given by a citizen of Dresden: “The festivities began at 11 in the morning.

148 Letter of June 3, 1843, from Richard Wagner to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, privately owned, quoted from: Georg Büttner, *Ein Mozart- und ein Wagnerbrief. Die Geschenke der Reichsmusikkammer für Richard Strauß*, in: *Musik im Zeitbewußtsein. Amtliche Zeitschrift des Fachverbandes Reichsmusikerschaft* 2 (1934), no. 27, p. 6, with facsimile on p. 7.

149 Letter of June 4, 1843, to Richard Wagner, privately owned, quoted from a partial facsimile in: Hartung & Hartung, Munich, Catalog 112 *Wertvolle Bücher, Manuskripte, Autographen, Grafik* (November 8–10, 2005), no. 2423, p. 570 as well as from the print in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 9 [note 94], pp. 314–315.

150 Transcription of minutes from a meeting held by the “Gesamtministerium” (leaders of government) on August 27, 1842, D-Dla, 10697 *Gesamtministerium, Nr. 791*, fols. 7–18, among them fol. 9^v under “III. Art der Feierlichkeit”: “One held the raised dais – perron – on both pavilions to be the most fitting place to position the music and the choirs, thereby negating the need for any other provision to be made for this purpose”; minutes from a further meeting on August 29, 1842, (fols. 36–39) reveal that two “perrons” for the musicians were planned, one “in front of the entrance to the historical museum” with “20 trumpet players” and one “below the Mathematical Salon”, which would serve to accommodate “a large number of singers.”

151 A “disposition” of May 21, 1843, that was drawn up immediately before the celebration to facilitate distributing the visitors' entrance tickets contains the following information: “D. perron at the historical museum |:mathemati. Salon:| Singers' corps from the Liedertafel, and entry tickets, 60 gray cards.” as well as “E. Perron at the historical museum |:Elgin Exposition:| trumpet and timpani corps, invitation cards for the gentlemen of the Vth Class in the Court-Ranking. 100 green cards.” D-Dla, 10697 *Gesamtministerium, Nr. 791*, fol. 78, quotation on fol. 78^v.

152 For instance: Ewald Christian Victorin Dietrich, *Das Friedrich August-Monument in Dresden und seine feierliche Enthüllung am 7. Juni 1843. Eine Beschreibung des Monumentes und der bei dessen Enthüllung stattgefundenen Feierlichkeiten*, Dresden, 1843. In Karl Julius Hofmann's, *Lebensgemälde Friedrich August's des Gerechten, Königs von Sachsen, und Beschreibung seines Ehrendenkmal im Zwinger zu Dresden und seiner Weihe am 7. Juni 1843*, Dresden, 1843 (hereafter: Hofmann, *Lebensgemälde*), pp. 10–11 it is recounted: “The dedication was finished; the thunder of 36 cannon shots and the all of the bells ringing again announced it. Bringing everything to a close was a final song *) from the men's choir, which went as follows: ‘See, the veil has fallen [...]’ *) the verse written by Hohlfeld and the music by Mendelssohn-Bartholdy [sic].”

There were three stands set up across from the monument; the middle one designated for the most- and utmost-highly ranking parties [...]. The participating guilds moved together in a procession from the Gewandhaus, continuing along Augustusstraße, passing the balcony of the royal palace at 10 o'clock, where Their Royal Majesties stood, before finally taking their allocated places at the Zwinger. The King and the Queen dispatched themselves from the palace at 11 o'clock moving towards the Zwinger through columns of infantry and municipal guards; twelve cannon shots signaled their departure from the palace. Upon their arrival at the Zwinger, fanfares and timpani sounded until Their Royal Majesties had taken their place in the stands. The committee responsible for the construction of the monument stood in front of it, across from the stands. Fifty-eight resident maidens of the royal seat dressed in white with green sashes slung over breast and shoulder surrounded the monument to adorn it with wreaths upon its unveiling. As soon as the fanfares had silenced, a men's choir positioned on the open staircase in front of the historical museum sang three stanzas, after which the Minister of the Interior von Nostitz and Jänkerndorf [sic] gave the ceremonial address concluded by the monument's unveiling. Thirty-six canon shots, the ringing of all the bells, and a second song from the men's choir heralded the dedication of the monument and the completion of the celebration. After the last stanza of the song, Their Royal Majesties turned back to the castle, accompanied by the sound of cannon shots.¹⁵³

While the descriptions of the celebration in the relevant journals and newspapers did make mention of Wagner and Mendelssohn's choruses,¹⁵⁴ they apparently did not deem them worthy of further discussion. As such, all we know about the performance is what Richard Wagner reported – rather subjectively, to be sure – in a few letters to his friends and family. For instance, he wrote to his elder brother Albert Wagner (1799–1874): “My vocal piece was decisively the victorious one as it was, quite simple, uplifting and compelling, while the Mendelssohnian one came out overblown and feeble”¹⁵⁵, and to his half-sister Cäcilie Avenarius (1815–1893): “[...] only one opinion reigned supreme, that my composition, which was simple and uplifting, completely defeated the Mendelssohnian one, which was complicated and artificial.”¹⁵⁶

Personal biases notwithstanding, Wagner did substantiate his criticism based on the work's content. According to his statements, it appears that his opinion that the performance had

been weak was primarily a reaction to the brass instruments having overpowered the singers: “[...] the chorus sang in unison the entire time, and in the low bass range at that, so that the tenors were essentially for naught and could hardly sing along: the effect was therefore, at most points, that only the brass instruments could be heard, the choir hardly at all, and since everything sounded like ‘Den König segne Gott,’ no one could make sense of what was actually going on.”¹⁵⁷ And in his *Lebenserinnerungen* he recounted: “He [Mendelssohn] had construed a contrapuntal work of art whereby eight bars into his original melody a brass ensemble began blowing the Anglo-Saxon national anthem. [...] I was given to understand that the effect of this daring Mendelssohnian combination was utterly lost on people, since no one could comprehend why the singers did not sing the same thing the brass instruments played.”¹⁵⁸ In view of the previously described unfavorable positioning of the musicians, especially the fact that the perrons also held up to 100 spectators each,¹⁵⁹ it is highly likely indeed that at least one particular part of the audience – namely those 100 people, who stood directly next to the immense contingent of brass players – heard little-to-nothing of the men's choir. Mendelssohn, on the other hand, who was present in Dresden for the performance, did not seem to be dissatisfied with the execution – if Wagner is to be believed: “*Mendelssohn*, however, who was present in person, left a written demonstration of his gratitude for the carefully prepared performance of his composition.”¹⁶⁰ This remark refers to a now lost greeting card, which Mendelssohn left behind after unsuccessfully attempting to personally pay Wagner a visit at his home before embarking on his return to Leipzig. Wagner responded the next day, also returning the score he had used: “[...] unfortunately, I did not find your card until late yesterday evening, as I was out of the house all day; thus I was robbed the pleasure of being able to see and speak with you in Dresden, making it impossible for me to return your score to you any earlier than now. I've been assured that the intention of your Lied was absolutely clear and generally understood: I only regretted that, despite the strong number of singers, nearly half of the choir – the tenors – were hampered from fully singing along due to the low register of the unison writing, thus possibly keeping the overall sound of the choir from emerging strongly enough. If, remaining benevolently disposed in the face of this evil, you were still more or less satisfied with the performance, that would be a source of great joy for me.”¹⁶¹

153 David August Taggesell with a foreword by Gustav Klemm, *Tagebuch eines Dresdner Bürgers; oder Niederschreibung der Ereignisse eines jeden Tages, soweit solche vom Jahre 1806 bis 1851 für Dresden und dessen Bewohner von geschichtlichem, gewerblichem oder örtlichem Interesse waren*, Dresden, [1854], pp. 823–824.

154 *Dresdner Abend-Zeitung* (1843), no. 135 (June 7), cols. 1073–1080; *Leipziger Tageblatt und Anzeiger* (1843), no. 163 (June 12), p. 1507; *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (1843), no. 70 (June 9), pp. 674–675; *Königl. Sächs. Pirnaischer Oeconom. Haushaltungs-Kalender* 1844, Pirna, pp. 35–40.

155 Letter of June 14, 1843, from Richard Wagner to Albert Wagner, location unknown, quoted from: SBr 2 [note 124], pp. 275–278, quotation on p. 277.

156 Letter of July 13, 1843, from Richard Wagner to Cäcilie Avenarius, privately owned, quoted from facsimile in: Galerie Bassenge, Berlin, auction 111, *Autographen* (April 18, 2018), lot 2412, printed in: SBr 2 [note 124], pp. 296–302, quotation on p. 297.

157 Letter of June 14, 1843, from Richard Wagner to Minna Wagner, Richard Wagner Museum mit Nationalarchiv und Forschungsstätte der Richard-Wagner-Stiftung Bayreuth, I A 74, Nr. 8, quoted from: SBr 2 [note 124], pp. 278–282, quotation on p. 280.

158 Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben* [note 126], p. 270.

159 See note 151.

160 Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben* [note 126], p. 270.

161 Letter of June 8, 1843, from Richard Wagner to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Gb-Ob, Ms. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 43, Green Books XVII-289, printed in: Häfner, *Mendelssohn-Studien* [note 118], p. 248, note 56.

By contrast, Christian Daniel Rauch, who was also among those present in Dresden, recorded a favorable overall impression of the celebration, making no indication that the performance of the piece was incomprehensible or unsuccessful: “[...] the celebration of which, abetted by the most clement weather, was beautiful and dignified, took place on the 7th of June.”¹⁶² This verdict is consonant with an additional report in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung* that stated concisely, “a second work performed by the men’s choir brought the event to a dignified conclusion.”¹⁶³ Prince Johann von Sachsen, who was particularly invested in the dedication ceremony as a member of the “Kommission zur Denkmalaufstellung” (Commission for the Raising of the Monument), remembered it even many years later as a very successful event, whereby the only discordant element he described had nothing to do with the music: “Festive songs were performed before and after the address, one set to music by Richard Wagner, [...] and the other by Mendelssohn-Bartholdi [...]. The celebration was very beautiful, even though the monument itself left something to be desired.”¹⁶⁴ Finally, Karl Julius Hofmann conveyed another decidedly positive impression of the music in his above-mentioned summary of the events, which begins with the words “When celebratory sounds ring out most festively [...]”¹⁶⁵

A more in-depth discussion of Mendelssohn’s work – this time completely impartial – did not occur until 1906, interestingly, in the English and French press,¹⁶⁶ within the context of the first printing of Wagner’s *Weihgruß* (Bote & Bock, Berlin, 1906). *The Musical Times* even provided a reproduction of the final measures of Mendelssohn’s composition summarized in notation for the piano. To do so, the editorial staff (in all likelihood, the journal’s director at the time, Frederick George Edwards) requested the Königliche Bibliothek in Berlin to send a transcript of the autograph, material for which there is no longer any known surviving evidence.

MWV D 6

Festgesang an die Künstler op. 68 / *To the Sons of Art*

In April of 1846, Mendelssohn wrote the last composition of this group of works, the *Festgesang an die Künstler*, for the inaugural

German-Flemish Choral Festival, when 2,300 participants converged to sing in Cologne on June 14 and 15 of 1846. As with every other piece presented in this volume, it too was a commissioned work. In contrast to the previous two works (“Gutenberg Cantata” and “God Bless Saxony”) however, the *Festgesang an die Künstler* was not conceived for outdoor performance, despite its also featuring brass ensemble accompaniment.¹⁶⁷ The piece’s distinctiveness and the circumstances surrounding its premiere led to a seemingly infinite abundance of references in contemporary newspapers and secondary literature. Two authors in particular, to whom an extraordinary debt of gratitude is owed by the writer of these lines, have recently engaged in a knowledgeable and meticulous examination of the *Festgesang an die Künstler* based on intensive research in literature and historical documents. The first of them, Armin Koch, wrote an article on this subject in 2005 that was published in 2007.¹⁶⁸ This essay, which published Mendelssohn’s letters to the Central Committee of the German-Flemish Choral Society in an appendix, has even more significance now, as its author was among the last people to view and reproduce the original letters before access to them was rendered impossible for an extensive period of time following the 2009 collapse of the City of Cologne’s historic archive building, where they had been stored on behalf of the Kölner Männer-Gesang-Verein. Shortly thereafter, Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller discovered an important source pertaining to the premiere of the work. In an essay on the subject,¹⁶⁹ he further examined the founding of the choral society, the preparations for the festival, and the complicated mental and organizational interconnections that existed between the involved parties. He also provided insight into the association’s further activities (choral festivals in Brussels in 1846 and Ghent in 1847) as well the end of the German-Flemish Choral Society in 1848.

Beyond the questions concerning its origins that are of particular interest here, the *Festgesang an die Künstler* has also been the subject of great fascination in modern secondary literature, principally due to its social-political context in the framework of the flourishing 19th century all-male choir movement. In particular, its polarizing position in the pre-March nationalist movement, a subject outside the scope of our present source-based philologically-oriented analysis, has repeatedly been the focus of scholarly scrutiny.¹⁷⁰ In the case of the Cologne fes-

162 Journal entry of Rauch’s, quoted from: Karl Eggers (ed.), *Briefwechsel zwischen Rauch und Rietschel*, Berlin, 1891, vol. 2, p. 106.

163 *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (1843), no. 70 (June 9), pp. 674–675, quotation on p. 675.

164 *Lebenserinnerungen des Königs Johann von Sachsen*, ed. by Hellmut Kretzschmar, in: *Deutsche Geschichtsquellen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 42, Göttingen, 1958, pp. 166–167.

165 Karl Julius Hofmann, *Lebensgemälde* [note 152].

166 *Le Menestrel* 72 (1906), no. 14 (April 8), p. 110; *The Athenaeum* from April 14, 1906, no. 4094, p. 459, *The Musical Times* 47 (1906), no. 760 (June 1), pp. 385–386.

167 The tuba, a relatively new instrument at the time, was included here for the first and only time in Mendelssohn’s works. Concerning Mendelssohn’s use of rare brass instruments in general, see the introduction to Series I, Volume 10 (2019) of this edition pp. XLVI–XLIX.

168 Armin Koch, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys ‘Festgesang an die Künstler’ op. 68*, in: *Schiller und die Musik*, ed. by Helen Geyer and Wolfgang Osthoff, Cologne etc., 2007, pp. 247–266 (hereafter: Koch, *Festgesang*).

169 Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller, *Das Sängerefest des Deutsch-flämischen Sängerbundes 1846 in Köln unter Leitung von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und Franz Weber. Die Chorpartitur der Gesänge und das Festprogramm im Kontext der Mitwirkenden*, in: *Mitteilungen der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für rheinische Musikgeschichte e. V.*, no. 96 (July 2016), pp. 15–36 (hereafter: Niemöller, *Sängerefest*).

170 Along with the literature listed at the beginning of note 5, which was merely representative, in specific relation to the festival see: Dieter Düding, *Politische Opposition im Vormärz. Das deutsch-flämische Sängerefest 1846 in Köln*, in: *Geschichte im Westen* 3 (1988), pp. 7–18 (hereafter: Düding, *Opposition*) as well as Tilman Gruhn, *Bürgerliches Musikfest oder oppositionelle Kundgebung? Das deutsch-flämische Sängerefest 1846 in Köln*, in: *Geschichte in Köln. Zeitschrift für Stadt- und Regionalgeschichte* 54 (2007), pp. 127–151.

tival of 1846, social historians have specifically highlighted a tension that existed between a “double national” concept and German-nationalistic tendencies.¹⁷¹

Commission and Composition

On January 15, 1846, a German-Flemish Choral Society was established in Brussels, which was run by multiple Belgian choirs¹⁷² and, on the German side, significantly, the Cologne Männergesang-Verein, a choral society that had been founded just a few years before in 1842.¹⁷³ Soon thereafter on February 20, 1846, they adopted their charter. In paragraph 1 it states: “The purpose of the German-Flemish Choral Society is to perform good pieces of music, mainly choral works for male voices in High and Low German, at larger choral festivals. Vocal solos, sacred music, and pieces of music with organ or orchestral accompaniment or symphonies are not excluded.”¹⁷⁴ On the same day, an invitation for an inaugural choral festival planned for June 21 and 22, 1846, was sent to Mendelssohn with the request that he “produce a composition of his own making as an opening or closing chorus, and if at all possible, direct the same in person.”¹⁷⁵ Though Mendelssohn’s response was positive in principle, he was initially hesitant to commit, naming other prior obligations and engagements as potential hindrances: “I have received the kind and very gracious invitation of a highly esteemed committee, and it is my most ardent wish to accept it. Although I cannot compose a new larger piece by then, being incessantly occupied with a different project,¹⁷⁶ I will nevertheless try to find an earlier manuscript or something new but shorter to avoid showing up empty-handed. The only question is whether I can be absent from here for the length of time necessary for me to stay in your area from the days preceding the Aachen Music Festival until the 22nd of June. As I said, it’s not for a lack of desire on my part, certainly not; if it’s important for you to have a firm commitment, then please tell me so and

also, at the same time, name the last possible date by which you need to have such a confirmation; I will then immediately take whatever steps are necessary. If you do not need such an affirmation quite yet then I will proceed to dedicating myself to the hope that things will fall into place in the meantime such that it will become possible for me to be absent for a longer period, and that I will thereby have the opportunity to extend my most heartfelt thanks in person for the honor you have bestowed on me and for your kind invitation.”¹⁷⁷

The primary difficulty was that Mendelssohn had already committed to participate in the Twenty-eighth Lower Rhine Music Festival planned for the end of May through the beginning of June 1846 in Aachen. What is more, on June 11, 1846, the composer was further engaged to be present in Liege (Belgium) for the premiere of his work *Lauda Sion* MWV A 24.¹⁷⁸ The Central Committee thus decided to accommodate Mendelssohn and, without further ado, rescheduled the planned festival to be held a week earlier. This decision was communicated to the composer on March 20, 1846.¹⁷⁹ They also emphasized that “the news of your kind acceptance [...] has stirred such a joyful sensation that one can hardly await the moment here when the Master of Musical Art, whose memory lives on so very vividly in so many hearts, can be greeted within our walls. [...] We are likewise utterly delighted that we may be able to count on a new work of any kind from the quill of the proven master, and yearn for the moment when we are in possession of this piece of music and can reproduce the necessary number of parts in order to send them to the choral societies that are already registered for the festival so they can begin practicing.”¹⁸⁰ Considering the extent to which the committee was willing to adapt to his restrictions, Mendelssohn could hardly turn them down, and so it followed that he accepted their invitation on March 25, 1846, with these words: “I was especially pleased by the news in the letter I received yesterday that the choral festival has been rescheduled for a week earlier; without that, I would have been, despite my own wishes, quite hard pressed to make my way

171 Düding, *Opposition*, *ibid.*, pp. 13–17.

172 See: Niemöller, *Sängerfest* [note. 169], p. 21, for Belgian literature on this subject see p. 16.

173 Franz Carl Eisen, *Der Kölner Männer-Gesang-Verein unter Leitung des Königlichen Musik=Direktors Herrn Franz Weber. Andeutungen in chronologischer Folge über Entstehen und Fortschreiten, Zweck, Wirksamkeit, Beziehungen und Erinnerungen des Vereins während des Zeitraumes vom 27. April 1842 bis zum 27. April 1852*, Cologne, 1852 (hereafter: Eisen, *Kölner Männer-Gesang-Verein*), p. 40. See also the chronicle: Caspar Krahe, *Der Kölner Männergesang-Verein unter Leitung des königlichen Musik=Directors Herrn Franz Weber, Biographische Notizen in chronologischer Folge über Entstehen, Zweck, Fortschritt, Entwicklung, Wirksamkeit, Beziehungen und Erinnerungen des Vereins während seines bisherigen 25jährigen Bestehens*, Cologne, 1867 (hereafter: Krahe, *Kölner Männergesang=Verein*).

174 Printed *Satzungen des deutsch-vlaemischen Sängerbundes*, enclosed with letter of February 20, 1846, see the following note.

175 Letter of February 20, 1846, from the Central Committee of the German-Flemish Choral Society to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49*, Green Books XXIII-114, the charter and a printed copy of *Project zur Stiftung eines deutsch-vlaemischen Sängerbundes* were enclosed with the letter.

176 Mendelssohn was fully occupied with the oratorio *Elias* during this time.

177 Letter of March 11, 1846, to the Central Committee of the German-Flemish Choral Society, location unknown, quoted from: Koch, *Festgesang* [note 168], pp. 262–263, quotation on p. 262.

178 See Series VI, Volume 6 (2014) of this edition.

179 The “first of the committee meetings leading up to the festival” held in “the large assembly room at the town hall” took place on this day. On the agenda was “discussion of the festival schedule, allocation of tasks. Request of Herr General=Musik=Direktor, Dr. Felix Mendelssohn=Bartholdy of Berlin that he compose a new work and conduct the concerts, as well as the same of Herr Musik=Direktor Franz Weber.” Eisen, *Kölner Männer-Gesang-Verein* [note 173], p. 43. Mendelssohn’s oratorio *Paul* had been performed in Cologne the day before, on March 19, 1846.

180 Letter of March 20, 1846, from the Central Committee of the German-Flemish Choral Society to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49*, Green Books XXIII-170.

there; because it is now taking place on the 14th and 15th of June though, I can already firmly commit to taking part today, and am sincerely happy that I can. It is with many thanks that I accept your kind and gracious invitation; and while it remains true that I have promised to make yet another small journey immediately after the Aachen Musikfest,¹⁸¹ I will still be able to be in Cologne on the morning of the 13th, and that is early enough. My pursuits are so very numerous currently that I can't say anything definitive about a new piece; if it is at all possible for me I'll send it in the course of the next few months."¹⁸²

With Mendelssohn's commitment secured, invitations could now be sent to the choral societies.¹⁸³ These fell on fertile ground among the singing-enthused and seasoned festival-going circles of the men's choir world. Within seven weeks "roughly seventeen to eighteen hundred singers had registered to participate."¹⁸⁴

Parallel to the general upswing music festivals (for mixed choirs) were experiencing in the first half of the 19th century, singing festivals organized for mass participation by Liedertafeln and male-only choral societies were also coming into fashion.¹⁸⁵ Attendance figures well exceeding 1,000 had practically become the norm. Some representative examples from the early 1840s are for instance: the thirteenth general Württemberg Choral Festival in Ludwigsburg (1841) with 2,300 singers, the second Saxon men's choral festival in Dresden (1843), for which Richard Wagner wrote his *Liebesmahl der Apostel*, and finally the first General German Choral Festival in Würzburg (1845), where some pieces were performed that were also sung one year later in Cologne.¹⁸⁶ Associated with the virtually explosive increase in music and choral festivals in the 1840s was an expansion in the coverage of such events in the general press and music journals,¹⁸⁷ a phenomenon that provides a useful context now for viewing Mendelssohn's *Festgesang an die Künstler*. The main work of composing the piece took place in mid-April of 1846.

Mendelssohn informed his older sister: "I've composed the conclusion of Schiller's poem 'an die Künstler' 'Der Menschheit Würde ist in Eure Hand gegeben; bewahret sie! &c.' [Man's dignity to you is given; Preserve it man! &c.]. I think that is fitting for the society in question and it should sound serious enough with 4 trombones and 4 trumpets."¹⁸⁸ One day later on April 19, 1846, he finished the score, and one week later he sent it – probably in the form of a copy – to Cologne. The accompanying letter of April 26, 1846, is lost but the Central Committee confirmed its arrival on May 3, 1846, with the following words: "[...] your most gracious letter of the 26th of the month, along with the splendid composition intended for the grand choral festival, was delivered to us at the very moment the choral society's general assembly was convening; in response to the announcement of that honor being visited upon us, a thunderous cheer went up for the celebrated master, who granted our request with such infinite graciousness. –

It is a sacred obligation for us to express our warmest gratitude to you for the beautiful work, and we believe there is no better way to pay tribute to you for it than by striving to perform your work as perfectly as can be achieved, the necessary fervor and enthusiasm for which your presence is well-suited to incite, and which will certainly not be found lacking, and thus we hope to succeed in proclaiming in musical tones what you have so beautifully and splendidly imagined."¹⁸⁹

The committee notified the public as follows: "It is with the greatest pleasure we can now announce that the work Herr General-Musikdirector D. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy from Leipzig composed specifically for the grand choral festival has just arrived, and that the process of reproducing the parts began immediately."¹⁹⁰ The reproduction and mailing of the parts to the registered choirs thus underway, the actual work of rehearsing the piece could then commence.

181 Excursion to Lüttich for a gala concert on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the adoption into the liturgical calendar of the Corpus Christi festival, for which the *Lauda Sion* had been written.

182 Letter of March 25, 1846, to the Central Committee of the German-Flemish Choral Society, location unknown, quoted from: Koch, *Festgesang* [note 168], pp. 263–264, quotation on p. 263. Mendelssohn also touches on other pieces on the program over the course of the rest of the letter.

183 Copy of the written invitation beneath the headline *Großes Sängerefest in Köln*, in: Supplement to no. 97 of the *Kölnische Zeitung* from April 7, 1846, p. 2. According to Krahe, *Kölner Männergesang-Verein* [note 173], p. 5, the invitations were sent on March 30, and free passage for the singers on all the railways and steamship lines had been arranged with the respective companies.

184 First supplement to no. 144 of the *Kölnische Zeitung* from May 24, 1846. The *Fest-Ordnung* (festival schedule) was also printed in that article dated May 23.

185 In 1847, a contemporary *Verzeichnis deutscher Musik- und Gesang-Feste*, Schweinfurt, 1847, offered a 22-page-long list of festivals that had taken place between 1786 and 1847. Especially striking is a considerable increase beginning in the 1830s and yet another intensification of the trend in the early 1840s. See the compilation *Sänger-, Lieder- und Gesangsfeste in Mitteldeutschland bis 1848*, in: Nickel, *Männerchorgesang* [note 54], pp. 329–333.

186 *Erinnerungsbuch an das erste deutsche Gesangsfest zu Würzburg am 4., 5. und 6. August 1845*, ed. by Georg Opper, Würzburg, 1845. For more on the significance of the Würzburg festival for the programming in Cologne, see Niemöller, *Sängerefest* [note 169], pp. 21 and 25.

187 Samuel Weibel, *Die deutschen Musikfeste des 19. Jahrhunderts im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen musikalischen Fachpresse*, Kassel, 2006 (= Beiträge zur rheinischen Musikgeschichte; vol. 168).

188 Letter of April 18, 1846, to Fanny Hensel, D-B, *MA Ep. 113*, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 11, ed. and with commentary by Susanne Tomkovič, Christoph Koop and Janina Müller in cooperation with Uta Wald, Kassel etc., 2016 (hereafter: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 11), pp. 267–268, quotation on p. 268. Concerning the choice of text see Koch, *Festgesang* [note 168], pp. 250–253. The committee did not stipulate the use of a specific text. The most conspicuous divergence from Schiller's text is in the fourth line, in which Mendelssohn changed the original "Der Dichtung heilige Magie" to "der Künste heilige Magie", thus serving to broaden the meaning.

189 Letter of May 3, 1846, from the Central Committee of the German-Flemish Choral Society to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49*, Green Books XXIII-249.

190 First supplement to no. 128 of the *Kölnische Zeitung* from May 8, 1846, report is dated "Early May 1846".

The Cologne Premiere

The festival was planned to take place over multiple days,¹⁹¹ with Mendelssohn's new composition slated for the first day of concerts, June 14, 1846. The Central Committee regularly published organizational notices in order to ensure the smooth execution of their proceedings. Shortly before the festival began, an updated summary of the event's schedule, naming the activities planned for each of the days, was compiled including a "Welcoming of the singers via delegations at the train stations [...] and the landing dock of the Cologne steamships"¹⁹² on June 13, an excursion (the "Liederfahrt") to Godesberg and Königswinter (with a hike up the Drachenfels) on June 16, and a formal farewell on the final day. The festival schedule is also relevant to our current subject matter because of the specifics pertaining to Mendelssohn's activities it documents: Saturday (June 13), 6 pm first rehearsal, Sunday morning "at precisely 7, dress rehearsal in the GÜRZENICH hall [...] at precisely 6 in the afternoon, beginning of the first main performance."¹⁹³ For the festival itself, a commemorative medallion¹⁹⁴ was minted, and a comprehensive festival album¹⁹⁵ published, which, along with the full version of the concert program,¹⁹⁶ also included a somewhat earlier version of the festival schedule (dated May 15), the texts of all of the songs, and – on pages 34 through 49 – a *Verzeichniß der Mitwirkenden*, or directory listing the names of all of the participating choirs and their individual members. At the end of the album, a registry of 2,304 performers¹⁹⁷ is printed, among them: 1,730 participants from Germany, 482 singers from Belgium, and 90 orchestral musicians.

The concert Mendelssohn directed was frenetically celebrated (see the "Media Coverage" section). Somewhat later the composer reported to his sister: "That evening, the first rehearsal was held at the Gürzenich in Cologne, where I heard and directed my Schillerian ode for the first time. It sounded quite lively.

The next day the 2000 arrived. What that sounds like? No more sharply strong than any other choir (and that always surprises people), but any practiced ear can hear a certain whirring and whooshing that sets it apart – just as 30 violins don't exactly sound stronger than 10, but different, more penetrating, and more immense. I was utterly delighted."¹⁹⁸ The first rehearsal directly impacted the composition of the piece as it was then that Mendelssohn spontaneously decided to write an organ part, as well as four additional instrumental parts (horns), all with the intention of reinforcing the instrumental ensemble and thus providing the singers with a better orientation. According to the festival album, the orchestra was "an amalgam of the complete Musik-Corps des Königl. hochlöbl. 28. Infanterie-Regiment [Music Corps of the Royal Highly Commendable 28th Infantry Regiment], a subset of the Königl. hochlöbl. 4. Dragoner-Regiment [Royal Highly Commendable 4th Dragoon Regiment], and an ensemble of brass and string players from Cologne directed by Herr Capellmeister Kelch."¹⁹⁹ The brass instruments used in Mendelssohn's piece were: eight horns and trumpets each, four keyed trumpets, six trombones, a tuba, and an ophicleide.²⁰⁰ The use of the organ in particular, a feature directly resulting from the special circumstances and location of the performance, later became a point of much discussion between Mendelssohn and his publisher Simrock (see the section "The German First Edition" below).

Media Coverage

Reports of the event received a great deal of attention in the local and national press.

The *Kölnische Zeitung* dedicated a lengthy article to the festival daily; other newspapers reprinted those reports or sent their own correspondents; and multiple summarizing articles

191 The festival was planned to last a total of five days encompassing: all of the ancillary events (see below) held from June 14 through 17, the concert performances at the Gürzenich on June 14 and 15, and the planned arrival day, June 13.

192 *Spezielle Fest-Ordnung für das erste deutsch-vlaemische Sängerefest in Köln am 14., 15., 16. und 17. Juni 1846*, dated June 12, 1846, (length: 2 pages). Mendelssohn's copy in GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49*, Green Books XXIII, catalogued between no. 174 and 175.

193 *Ibid.* The *Fest-Ordnung* (festival schedule) included for Monday, June 15: "At 11 o'clock in the evening, a large serenade and parade by torchlight for the Königlichen General-Musik-Direktor Dr. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy."

194 The medallion, the front side of which depicted a partial view of the incomplete Cologne Cathedral, was distributed on June 15. Mendelssohn received a special version in gold, while those for the normal participants were made of bronze, see: Krahe, *Kölner Männergesang-Verein* [note 173], p. 6. An image is found in: *Illustrierte Zeitung* 7 (1846), p. 88, along with one of the cast iron pendant, that every singer was expected to wear on a red and white ribbon (red and white being the city colors of Cologne). The certificate produced in fine calligraphy that accompanied the golden commemorative medallion Mendelssohn was presented with was preserved in his estate, GB-Ob, in: *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn a. 1.*

195 *Erstes großes Sängerefest in Köln am 14. und 15. Juni 1846 auf dem Saale Gürzenich*, Cologne, 1846 (hereafter: *Festbuch 1846*), length: 51 pages, copy in: Universitätsbibliothek Köln, *RHK 1321*, reproduction of the title page in Niemöller, *Sängerefest* [note 169], p. 19.

196 Concerning the order of the program see Niemöller, *Sängerefest* [note 169], pp. 27–30. The program, including complete information about all the works, was published in: *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 158 from June 7, 1846, p. 4, with multiple repetitions in the same newspaper starting on June 12, 1846, as well as in other newspapers in the region, e.g. *Aachener Zeitung*, no. 162 from June 11, 1846.

197 It should be kept in mind that this number refers to the number of officially registered participants.

198 Letter of June 27, 1846, to Fanny Hensel, D-B, *MA Ep. 108*, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 11 [note 188], pp. 319–323, quotation on p. 322; *ibid.* Mendelssohn reported: "The Fest-Gesang by Schiller is getting printed."

199 *Festbuch 1846* [note 195], p. 49.

200 This instrumentation implies that – with the exception of the tuba and the ophicleide – the individual wind parts for the *Festgesang* were played by two or more players.

appeared in music journals,²⁰¹ reflecting varying assessments of the event.²⁰² One extensive report published in the *Illustrierte Zeitung* achieved particular significance as the source of the only known visual depiction of the decorated Gürzenich Hall during the musical performances.²⁰³

A few examples, quoted in length, must suffice to give an impression of the festival and its reception. The *Kölnische Zeitung* delivered a particularly vivid description of the goings-on and the general enthusiasm surrounding them: “Gaiety and joy everywhere; the entire city had a truly festive appearance yesterday. One could see and feel that it was no ordinary festival Cologne was encountering within its walls, that the joy was overflowing its fountain source, the only one from which true joy can spring, that is – the heart. That the German spirit and German disposition be manifested at the fine celebration was the appeal the tribal compatriots of the German nation made, and these were evidenced in every aspect of the festival in the most sincere and dignified manner. The fellow festival-goers honored the event and themselves with the manner in which they celebrated! For this, we may already applaud our dear guests, even on this first day. Even those intrepid visitors, who had never seen the Rhine, who had never seen Cologne, soon began to feel at home with the Rhine ways, as warm congeniality is the fundamental quality of the true German character, and thereby also that of the Rhinelander. One could apply the old saying: ‘of one heart and one mind!’ in the best sense of the expression to the present singing brethren. [...] After the rehearsal led by D. Mendelssohn=Bartholdy, Capellmeister Fischer, and Musik=Director Weber, most of the singers took part in a procession to the cathedral. The first concert began at 6 o’clock. At five, the large space of the Gürzenich hall had already filled with audience members. The hall itself was simple, but decorated in a manner worthy of the event. On the west side, the singers’ stage held six levels of risers, which occupied a third of the hall and were calculated to accommodate 2,000 singers, not including the orchestra, which was comprised of ninety musicians, including 22 violoncellos and 14 contrabasses. On the left side, behind the singers’ stage, towered the organ. Above the conductor’s seat, the name: ‘Deutsch=vlaemischer Sängerbund’ hung resplendent in diamond script, and in front of the chair shone a lyre. Coordinating with the fireplaces and the overall style of the hall, an opulent carpet-like tapestry hung from the walls

in heavy folds. On the knobs that held the carpet, someone had hung large wreaths of greenery with the names of the cities that had sent their singers to the grand German festival. Garlands of greenery also hung from the ceiling, making for quite a lively embellishment of the Gothic chandeliers. In addition to the described furnishings, the hall could accommodate over two thousand audience members. The view from the east side was a grand and magnificent sight, the men’s choir rising up, some two-thousand strong, in horseshoe-shaped rows around the directing master’s seat, all creating a most impressive effect [...]. The concert itself may be considered a success in every respect. We heard how the energy of an ingenious master can overcome even a large number and inspire them to the most timely and fiery participation.”²⁰⁴ In addition to his *Festgesang an die Künstler*, Mendelssohn also conducted a work by Friedrich Schneider, a *Te deum* by Bernhard Klein, and as the finale, the Bacchus chorus from the Music for *Antigone* MWV M 12. “D. Felix Mendelssohn=Bartholdy came on stage, greeted with the loudest of cheers by both the entire audience and the throng of singers so enthused by the great master. The cantata by D. Fr. Schneider: ‘Jehova, dir frohlockt der König!’ was executed successfully, as was to be expected considering the energy with which it was directed and the level of enthusiasm among the singers. The soli were [...] performed, and everything, even the most difficult fugues, fit together so well that it could not fail to incite the loudest applause. A short intermission followed the first part of the concert. The second part then began with the actual festival cantata, composed specifically for the choral festival by D. Mendelssohn=Bartholdy, who directed his musical creation himself, and was surely satisfied with its performance. He, quite fittingly, chose the passage from Schiller’s ‘Künstler,’ ‘Der Menschheit Würde ist in eure Hand gegeben etc.’ for his composition in which he realized the full potential of his power and the clarity of his fine understanding of the poetry. The singers participated wholeheartedly, and upon unanimous insistence that the lengthy piece be repeated, that was carried out with true exuberance, followed by passionate applause for the composer and the singers.”²⁰⁵ The excitement at the end of the concert was boundless: “It all culminated with the final piece, the glorious, powerfully resounding double choir: ‘Hymne an Baccheus’, from Sophocles’ ‘Antigone’, composed by D. Mendelssohn=Bartholdy, who conducted it

201 *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung* 3 (1846), no. 26 (June 27), p. [4]; Diamond [Pseudonym for Anton Wilhelm von Zuccalmaglio], *Das große Gesangsfest in Köln*, in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 13 (1846), vol. 25, no. 2 (July 5), pp. 6–8 and no. 3 (July 8), pp. 10–12; Anon., *Das erste deutsch-flämische Sängersfest in Cöln*, in: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 48 (1846), no. 28 (July 15), cols. 473–476; Ferdinand Rahles, *Deutsch-vlämischer Sängerbund. Grosses Sängersfest zu Köln am 14. und 15. Juni 1846*, in: *Teutonia. Literarisch-kritische Blätter für den deutschen Männergesang* 1 (1846), no. 15, pp. 227–239 and no. 17, pp. 259–264.

202 See: Harald Kümmerling, *Die Gesänge und der Gesang bei dem ersten Gesangsfest des deutsch-flämischen Sängerbundes am 14. und 15. Juni 1846 in Köln*, in: *Studien zur Musikgeschichte des Rheinlandes* IV, ed. by Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller, Köln 1975, pp. 7–11; Dietmar Klenke, *Deutsche Sängersfeste des 19. Jahrhunderts im Spiegel der Medienwelt – politische Funktionalität oder Gesangsästhetik?*, in: *Musikfeste im Ostseeraum* [note 4], pp. 9–40 (especially pp. 20–26).

203 M. Brühl, *Das erste deutsch-vlämische Gesangsfest in Cöln*, in: *Illustrierte Zeitung* 7 (1846), no. 162 (August 8), pp. 88–90. The wood engraving (Xylography) by Georg Osterwald, reproduced on p. 89, the only known image of the festival, has been frequently reproduced, also in Koch, *Festgesang* [note 168], p. 266; Niemöller, *Sängersfest* [note 169], p. 31 among others. The newspaper article also included images of multiple objects associated with the festival, for example, the honorary goblet that Eberhard Graf zu Erbach-Erbach donated to the choral society. For more on the commemorative medalion, see note 194.

204 *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 167 of June 16, 1846, title page. The report was also printed in the *Frankfurter Oberpostamts-Zeitung*, no. 166 of June 18, 1846, pp. 2–3.

205 Ibid.

with his whole soul and true vigor. One saw and felt his satisfaction with the singers, for them a sweet reward that was doubled by the infinite cheering, which crowned this piece.”²⁰⁶

Another commentator recounted: “Having just returned from the Gürzenich, still enraptured by the tremendous harmonies, I want to attempt to relay the impression the magnificent festival made on me. The singers had come from nearly every German territory, over 1,700 in number; they were joined by their brethren in song from Belgium, over 480 of them, and if one counts the orchestra as well, comprised of more than 90 members, the number of those who exalted the day rose to 2,300; indeed, a cooperation of forces, the likes of which one will seldom find united again! [...] Everything about the festival carried the stamp of exaltation and dignity. The large Gürzenich hall, which holds 5,000 at full capacity, was decked in a cloak of greenery, and the luster of numerous chandeliers cast all those assembled in a magical glow. [...] Should I now attempt to summarize the overall impression that the celebration indisputably made on every person at that illustrious gathering, then I would like to describe it as a triumph of music and of vocal artistry, which sowed a fertile seed for new triumphs. The German Lied and the German way of singing have received a recognition and honor that has not been awarded those creative inventions uniting music and poetry [*verbündete Doppelpoesie*] on the banks of the green Rhine River and in the German fatherland since the days of the *minnelieder*.”²⁰⁷

Given the level of enthusiasm with which the most diverse array of reports described the event, it must not be overlooked that negative sentiments were voiced as well. These primarily focused on the logistical aspects of the event though, such as the guests’ accommodations, financial incongruences, and organizational glitches, which, considering the massive number of people involved and the inevitable confusion associated with crowds of that size, must have been hardly avoidable.²⁰⁸ The *Kölnische Zeitung*’s exceedingly positive tone in portraying the event was judged by contemporaries as an exaggerated gesture of deference towards the Central Committee.²⁰⁹ One critic who focused first and foremost on the music considered his opinion validated, “that all-male choral music simply isn’t adequate for producing a musical performance of true greatness. It is incapable of shedding the most boring monotony in the concert hall; the voices lie too closely together, the upward momentum is missing. The old tried and true Classical masters understood this well, and this is probably the reason why they did not create works in this genre. So let us honor the judgment of these old

gents, as they obviously knew what they were doing; Mendelssohn, certain to have fully recognized the flaw, attempted to compensate for it (with typical adroitness) by employing higher-register brass instruments; [...] but how much help is that really? In the solos, and even more so in the choruses, the wonderful, yes, irreplaceable soprano and alto voices were utterly absent throughout, despite the brilliant timbres in the orchestra, while the surrogates remained, quite simply, unappetizing, it just tastes – different. Viva all-male singing at the table, for serenades, in the great outdoors &c., but the stuff of a proper music festival it is not! [...] As far as the use of the organ is concerned, we must declare ourselves in even greater disagreement, since we have become accustomed to much more skillful treatment of the instrument by Mendelssohn on previous occasions (presumably time was too short) [...] the orchestra isn’t even worth mentioning since, as far as we are concerned, it offered no more than – a dubious trove of unpleasant experiences. We conclude therefore, in all seriousness, with the invocation of the recent scoffer: ‘May the likes of this never occur again!’”²¹⁰

Ludwig Bischoff (1794–1864), director of the secondary school in Wesel and music writer, set about defending Mendelssohn’s piece, likewise in the *Kölnische Zeitung*, drawing on his demonstrably extensive knowledge of the composer’s repertoire: “And who of the thousands in attendance at the Gürzenich in Cologne on June 14th would not gladly want – moved by the memory of the impression Felix Mendelssohn=Bartholdy’s choral piece set to Schiller’s ‘An die Künstler’ made on them – to return there in their minds to offer the German master a wreath for that exquisite composition? Mendelssohn proved with his most recent choral composition that he understands the spirit of this century; a genius knows how to appropriate all of the finest elements of their time, his good instincts and noble aesthetic cultivation safeguard him from fumbling in the choice of his texts and allow him to easily find those most felicitous and meaningful such that they serve, not merely as bare scaffolding or a spindly framework, but rather as an edifice, the architectural contour of which expresses the unity of an idea, which he then clothes in splendid robes of sound. His *Walpurgisnacht* [*The First Walpurgis Night*] (‘Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch, dein Licht, wer will es rauben?’), his *Lobgesang* (‘Hüter! ist die Nacht bald hin? Die Nacht ist vergangen; So laßt uns ablegen die Werke der Finsterniß und ergreifen die Waffen des Lichts!’), and now his newest work, *An die Künstler*: ‘Der Menschheit Würde ist in eure Hand gegeben – bewahret sie!’ – are shining examples of the point just made,

206 Ibid.

207 Anon., *Deutsch=vlaemischer Sängerbund*, in: *Bonner Wochenblatt* 38 (1846), no. 165 (June 17), pp. 1–2. The report was a reprint from the newspaper *Rheinischer Beobachter* and was run in other publications as well, e.g. *Didaskalia. Blätter für Geist, Gemüth und Publizität*, no. 166 from June 18, 1846, pp. 3–4, or *Euterpe* 6 (1846), no. 6 (June), pp. 95–98.

208 See for example the negative report from Leo Att, *Das deutsch=flämische Sängerfest in Köln*, in: *Die Grenzboten* 5 (1846), I. Semester, vol. II, pp. 541–544 (hereafter: *Grenzboten*).

209 “The written reports that reached us afterwards and the verbal accounts of the Cologne choral festival given by singers who have since returned are not positive. Unanimously, it was relayed that expectations were betrayed, that one was affronted with the most shameless conditions in Cologne, that the people of Cologne showed no interest and did nothing to show the singers a warm welcome. [...] The trumpeting tones of the Cologne newspaper contrast too starkly with the truth, compelling one to resist [...]” *Kemptner Zeitung*, no. 101 of June 26, 1846, pp. 415–416, with a reprint of an article from the *Frankfurter Journal*.

210 *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 186 of July 5, 1846, the article is signed “r—z”.

of the modern direction of his artistic genius; and if we also justifiably bring the magnificent chorus ‘Mache dich auf, werde Licht!’ from his *Paulus* into this, then we can conclusively assert that this genius’ pinions unfurl most majestically on the updraft of ideas such as these. This was also revealed by the composition written for the Cologne festival, which kindled a true fervor at its performance. It is a song for men, in which ‘Eternal Truth, tho’ oft rejected’ appears in the truest sense of the word ‘Mighty when veil’d in mystic story,’ but also in the form as well, the technical construction of which corresponds to the spirit of the text. The soli do not emerge, as per usual, in any particularly ceremonial way, for example, announced by a fermata or a ritornello, rather they fly suddenly upward out of the throng, disappear back into it, or weave themselves through it like rays of sunlight shooting through the darker clouds; and how does the entire force of the words and music finally pierce you – is it poetry, is it truth, is it art, is it life? You do not know – you see it ‘while you her thousand paths are tracing,’ ever more ranks close in, to ‘come together all embracing,’ they draw you along, you are swept up, no one is left alone, you feel it, what it is to become human among humans, and rejoice with all ‘before the Throne where paths unite!’

To what genre does a piece of music like that actually belong then? And if a note-parsing Classicist snuffles, it’s not a song, it’s not a motet, and it’s certainly no cantata, it’s much too theatrical for that! – Then we will respond to him, what? do you not have this species in your index? Just confidently write it in at the very bottom: New Genre, German Male Choral Singing from eighteen-hundred-forty-six.”²¹¹

While certain reports appear, depending on the author’s standpoint, to have been shaped by rivalries between other host cities and locations of choral festivals, and were thus predisposed to cast aspersions on Cologne and its denizens,²¹² the decidedly critical perspective of one particular outsider shows that, given the circumstances of such a large-scale event, exacting artistic standards did indeed have to be set aside from time to time. In one amusing personal account, the Englishman Henry F. Chorley summarizes his impressions as follows: “The better developed *Cantata* by Mendelssohn, written for Cologne, – ‘The Sons of Art,’ from Schiller’s poem, – was more integral, solid, and sterling as a piece of music; but in this the composer, calculating for a huge room and a heavy mass of voices, called in the aid of all that the coarse and poignant orchestra could do by way of accompaniment, and wrote not a song so much as a chorus, in which the massive chords and plainly grave progressions would have lost effect had they not been supported, and had they not been sung by a throng in place of a few vocalists. But a concert, made up of even works like this, must be ponderous and monotonous – the origin, in fine, of this *liedertafel* music being social pleasure, not artistic exhibition, and the thing los-

ing proportion, significance, and spirit, when from one to the other use.”²¹³

The German First Edition

There are numerous documents that enable a nearly seamless reconstruction of the publication history of *Festgesang an die Künstler*, which the self-critical Mendelssohn did notably allow Simrock to release with an opus number in Bonn. Beyond questions specific to the material production process, there are a number of interesting content-related subjects broached in their correspondence that warrant closer examination. Following is an overview of the relevant documents, their sources, and where they can be found in print. The letters will be cited in abbreviated form (by date only) from here on out in order to streamline the footnotes. Following is a list of available letters directly related to the publication of the *Festgesang an die Künstler*:

Date	Letter writer, Recipient	Location, Publication
06-16-1846	Mendelssohn to Simrock	Privately owned; <i>Verlegerbriefe</i> ²¹⁴ no. 283; <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , vol. 11, no. 5321
06-18-1846	Simrock to Mendelssohn	GB-Ob, <i>MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49</i> , Green Books XXIII-318
06-26-1846	Mendelssohn to Simrock	Privately owned; <i>Verlegerbriefe</i> , no. 284; <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , vol. 11, no. 5327
07-07-1846	Simrock to Mendelssohn	GB-Ob, <i>MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49</i> , Green Books XXIII-344
07-11-1846	Simrock to Mendelssohn	GB-Ob, <i>MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49</i> , Green Books XXIII-345
07-18-1846	Mendelssohn to Simrock	Bonn, Stadtarchiv und Wissenschaftliche Stadtbibliothek, <i>Nachl. Karl Simrock IV 1 a/10</i> ; <i>Verlegerbriefe</i> , no. 285 (Excerpt); <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , vol. 11, no. 5346
07-24-1846	Simrock to Mendelssohn	GB-Ob, <i>MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 49</i> , Green Books XXIII-370
07-29-1846	Mendelssohn to Simrock	Privately owned; <i>Verlegerbriefe</i> , no. 286; <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , vol. 11, no. 5357
07-30-1846	Mendelssohn to Simrock	Privately owned; <i>Verlegerbriefe</i> , Nr. 287; <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , vol. 11, no. 5357
08-13-1846	Simrock to Mendelssohn	GB-Ob, <i>MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 50</i> , Green Books XXIV-7
08-16-1846	Mendelssohn to Simrock	Privately owned; <i>Verlegerbriefe</i> , no. 288; <i>Sämtliche Briefe</i> , vol. 11, no. 5376

Just two days after the piece was premiered in mid-June 1846, Mendelssohn initiated the correspondence: “Since you want to

211 L. Bischoff, *Die diesjährigen Musikfeste am Niederrhein. Dritter Artikel*, in: *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 192 of July 11, 1846.

212 One complaint, for example, concerned what was “by everyone’s standards, the overweening coldness of Cologne’s inhabitants, who simply gawked at the visitors when they arrived instead of welcoming them [...]” *Grenzboten* [note 208], p. 544. A contemporary image of one such “Arrival of the Singers” reproduced – without any further source documentation – Düding, *Opposition* [note 170], p. 11.

213 Henry F. Chorley, *Modern German Music*, London, 1854, pp. 327–350, quotation on pp. 338–339.

214 *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Briefe an deutsche Verleger*, ed. by Rudolf Elvers, Berlin, 1968 (hereafter: *Verlegerbriefe*).

publish the *Gesang an die Künstler* [sic], it would be best if it were released quite soon. If you are of the same opinion, then go ahead and have one of the committee members send you copies of the 4 vocal parts so that they can be engraved right away. I am certain I will not be making any meaningful changes to them, and a few odds and ends can be fixed in the proofs. The score will have to wait though until I can send it from Leipzig, as I want to carefully proofread it and have it copied first. Even so, I think I will be able to get it to you quite quickly as well. Perhaps it would be safest if you wait until then to copy the vocal parts out at your own expense, and do not print them until then — but, do as you please. As for my fee, I would request 40 Friedrichsd'or. If you would like to publish a piano-vocal score, then I would ask that you have it made there and send me the manuscript to review; my time is far too limited now to make it myself. If however you do not want to publish the piece, I ask that you please tell me so very bluntly and immediately in a few lines addressed to Leipzig. I will be departing for there in an hour." (June 16, 1846)

The publisher agreed to the demanded fee, called the piece "a most excellent work of your composition" and announced: "In order to curtail the occurrence of any delays in publication I have, pursuant to the permission you granted, already given the choir parts over to be engraved, based on copies available from Cologne, and I agree that any changes you might want to make can be done so in the proofs and sent back later. After I have received those, I will have a piano-vocal score made and delivered to you for your obliging review." (June 18, 1846) In the meantime, Mendelssohn had returned to Leipzig, where, in a matter of days, he commissioned a transcription, reviewed it, and sent it on to Bonn as an engraver's copy accompanied by the following remarks: "Enclosed is the score for the *Fest-Gesang*. Please have the choral parts checked exactly against this score; while I made most of the changes with a red pen to make them stand out more, there are a few places where I did not. In particular, I ask that you take note of the change at the beginning of the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter and the lack of the fermata preceding it — I pointed both of those things out verbally to the singers in Cologne; it's better though if it is properly printed in the parts." (June 26, 1846) In the same letter, he also designated the title and opus number of his choice: "I would like to use the following title:

Fest-Gesang / Cantata
(nach Schillers Gedicht an die Künstler) / (from Schiller's
Poem To the Sons of Art)
[crossed out: componirt / composed]
für das erste Deutsch=Vlaemische Sängerkfest in Cöln /
written for the first meeting of the Vocal Choirs of Germany
& Flanders at Cologne
componirt von / by
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
op. 68."

Mendelssohn also gave further instructions concerning some discrepancies with the Cologne version, named his English publisher of choice, and explained why the original parts from Cologne were unsuitable for publishing: "The instrumental parts, in which various things have been changed, can no longer be engraved based on the Cologne parts. It would be best if you copy them quite precisely from the score first, and then have them engraved. If it is all the same to you, for my part, it would be preferable to print just the instrumental parts, without the score; the instrumentation is so simple that anyone could conduct from the piano-vocal score. I do ask however that the proofs for

the latter and all the parts be sent to me here; even the one for the title page! And once those have been made, I request that you send a copy of all of the plates to Mr. Ewer in London, and that you communicate with him concerning the timing of the release. Whatever you arrange with him is fine by me." (Ibid.) Simrock promised to immediately begin production of the title: "[...] the *Festgesang*, which was received along with your most honorable letter of June 26, has immediately gotten underway, your remarks concerning it have been taken into account, and I hope to be able to send you the orchestral and vocal parts quite soon for your obliging review. [...] Since you do not wish to have the score engraved, I will refrain from publishing it [...]" (July 7, 1846) Simrock even had a few individual parts completed: "I am already enclosing the choral parts today — and several instrumental parts, which have just been finished; the rest will follow in 4 to 5 days time." (ibid.). The publisher remained eager to fulfill the composer's wishes in the subsequent production process as well, as his words from the final phase illustrate: "I will keep a careful eye on the revisions made in all of the parts, as well as any you may still want to mark in the score. As soon as that is done, I will begin with the printing." (August 13, 1846) Certain themes crystallized in the course of this correspondence, among them, the inclusion of the organ, the question of whether or not the score should be printed, details of the piano-vocal score, and the layout of the printed solo parts.

Score and Organ Part

In the related passages of letters, it becomes clear that Mendelssohn vehemently rejected the idea of printing the organ part. As he saw it, the point of the part — which he had written specifically for the organ at the Gürzenich (along with those for four additional horns) immediately after the first rehearsal in Cologne — was to ensure a better acoustic balance between the masses of male choristers and the wind instruments. As such, it was far more a response to the idiosyncratic circumstances of the premiere than it was an integral element of the piece intended for posterity. It was Simrock who broached the topic: "As there are only a few good organs to be found in some cities, would you perhaps allow for an 'ad libit' or some other such annotation to be inserted in the score's organ part communicating that, while it certainly enhances the work, it is not indispensable for its performance?" (July 7, 1846) In direct language, the composer answered: "It is precisely because of the organ that I thought you would prefer not to engrave the score — and as I simply hate the word *ad libitum* far too much, I cannot agree to it — but, if the organ part is just bundled up along with the rest of the parts, people will see for themselves that it is not obligatory. If you do wish to engrave the score, naturally, I am not at all opposed; in that case I would indeed attempt to dress up some form of remark about the organ. Just not *ad libitum*!" (July 18, 1846) Simrock expressed his satisfaction with the composer's permission to engrave the score: "I will seek to follow your obliging suggestions to the letter when I have the piano-vocal score arranged, and will do the same for the score — if it may be engraved — including, if you like, a note indicating that the organ is not obligatory; although it would, in my opinion, make the work more easily accessible, and thus more likely to be performed. If you do permit the score to be engraved, I would be delighted, as that would make performing the piece much easier later on." (July 24, 1846) Mendelssohn explained his reasoning again for omitting the organ part, simultaneously expressing his pleasure that the score

would be published: “It goes without saying that I am not opposed, on the contrary, I am all for it if you want to engrave the score. I thought it would be more agreeable for you not to. As that is not the case then, yes, let’s remain with publishing it. And as far as the organ is concerned, I have found the best way out of that, namely, by returning to my original intent, that of leaving it completely out of the score (as well as the parts), as everything was to begin with. The organ part was added shortly before the festival, solely at the wish of Herr p.p. Weber, and then only so that all of the available forces could be put to good use, considering the large mass of singers participating there. And so it is actually better if it is left out of the score, and the same contains nothing but the male vocal parts and the brass instruments. Because I am not entirely sure though anymore if I made any changes to the instrumental parts on account of the organ, I do request that you please wait to engrave the score until I’ve touched the Rhine again on my way to England, which will be in about 14 days.” (July 29, 1846)

In the same letter, he asked that the score be returned to him for one final review: “Please be so kind as to send the written score to Cologne (Herr Stdr. Seydlitz) by something like the 14th of August. I’ll go over it then and send it on right away [...]” (ibid.) The next day, Mendelssohn wrote again adding the following clear instruction: “The organ part must, in conformance with yesterday’s letter, be retracted. Naturally, I request that you not print the instrumental parts until I have reviewed the score, as I wrote you yesterday. My hope though is that there will not be any places that need correcting.” (July 30, 1846)

Mendelssohn remained in Leipzig until August 12, 1846, when he departed for England to attend the Birmingham Festival, a journey that took him through Frankfurt and Cologne, where a package from Simrock containing the – presumably handwritten – score and the galley proofs of several parts awaited him. There, on August 16, 1846, the composer reviewed the material and conveyed final instructions, among them his wishes concerning the title:

“Enclosed are the proof and the score. Some significant mistakes remained in the first; although I was only able to skim through them, I hope they’ll nevertheless be correct once everything I marked has been painstakingly improved. I also looked through the score; it can remain as is even without the organ, that is, the entire organ part is to be omitted, both in the score and in the parts.

I would like the title to read the same way in the score and the piano-vocal score. That is:

Festgesang an die Künstler / To the Sons of Art
nach Schillers Gedicht / from Schiller’s Poem
Für Männer=Chor ud. Blechinstrumente / Composed for
Male Voices and Brass Instruments
Zur Eröffnung des ersten Deutsch=Vlaemischen Sängerfestes
in Cöln / written for the first meeting of the Vocal Choirs of
Germany & Flanders at Cologne
componirt von / by
FMB
(Partitur) oder (Clav. Ausz.) / (Score) or (Piano-Vocal Score)”

Solo Parts

One problem confronting Mendelssohn had more to do with presentation than it did with content, namely the visual layout of the vocal soloists’ parts. The issue was first brought up in a comment the publisher made in the handwritten score sent as

the engraver’s copy; he observed: “I see that on the first 5 pages of the score the vocal solo parts are crossed out [...]” (July 7, 1846) Mendelssohn explained as follows: “I am only writing today because you asked about the crossed out solo parts (crossed out in the score); they should indeed first enter at the solo (that is, as solos); but in every solo part (in every piece), the tutti parts must, if I am to be pleased with them, be printed as well, such that the soloists can sing or, at least follow, along. At the same time, I do not love having pointless staves in the score, which is why I crossed the solo parts out, and wanted to have them first appear in their own staves where the solo starts. That was not at the beginning of a stave though, hence the *Col tutti*, which quite rightly stood out to you. Of course it would be ideal if it were possible to arrange for this solo passage to line up with the beginning of a new stave in the piano-vocal score and elsewhere. Then the solo part would enter there, and in the (written out, or rather, printed) solo parts, the tutti must be situated alongside it.” (July 18, 1846) Simrock understood the problem and voiced his willingness to have some of the parts set again: “Please accept my most binding gratitude for the trouble I put you to by asking that you clarify your intentions concerning the solo parts; – now I know how you want to have it, and will gladly make a note of it for the future – for, even publishers can always learn something from you! I will immediately have the first plate of the solo parts engraved again, begin with the tutti, and send them to you.” (July 24, 1846) Mendelssohn was uneasy with this accommodation however: “I am very sorry that you are going through so much trouble with the solo parts, and, as you mentioned in your letter today, are having the first page engraved again; if it hasn’t happened already, then I ask that you please not do it, since things would have worked perfectly well with the solo parts I have already received, and since the utterance I made was actually just an idle comment on a matter of principle, not one reflecting any practical preferences concerning this particular piece.” (July 29, 1846) Meanwhile, Simrock had already made good on his intentions and sent a second proof to Mendelssohn in Leipzig. “Since the newly engraved first page of the solo parts with complete tuttis has hopefully reached you in Leipzig by now, may I presently expect your obliging instruction?, whether the new or the old plate should be used.” (August 13, 1846) The composer had already left the city however, and was ultimately satisfied with the new solution Simrock had implemented: “The first engraved page of the solo parts did not reach me in Leipzig. Because I meticulously reviewed the other one though, I do not object to it being engraved as soon as you are convinced that they correspond perfectly with the tutti parts I reviewed as well as with the same solo parts.” (August 16, 1846)

Piano-Vocal Score

As he made clear in the letter quoted above, Mendelssohn rejected the idea of arranging the piano-vocal score himself, due to his time resources being, as he put it, “far too limited now” (June 16, 1846). This seems more than justified considering the work he was doing to prepare for the *Elias* premiere on August 26, 1846. Simrock therefore commissioned a now anonymous person to accomplish the task. Mendelssohn received the piano-vocal score “for his obliging review” with Simrock’s letter of July 7, 1846, and soon found time to look through it: “I’ve corrected the piano-vocal score with pencil or, more accurately, I’ve pointed out the corrections in it, such as, for example, the passages where *8va bassa* is written, but naturally should not be

engraved; rather the actual low note should be printed instead; the Bass clef will therefore frequently also be needed for notes played by the right hand, or rather, for crossing over to the notes in the left hand's stave. Perhaps I can already receive a copy of the piano-vocal score in Cologne (along with the written score) in 14 days; I will find the time there to look through it so that the piece can be released as soon as possible. [...] I would like for the title page of the piano-vocal score to read: *Fest=Gesang &c. für Männer=Chor und Blechinstrumente* componirt von FMB [Festival Song etc. for Male Choir and Brass Instruments composed by FMB]. I ask that you please not forget this on the title page of the same. It is necessary, otherwise the piano-vocal score will be falsely understood." (July 30, 1846)

Further production was however initially delayed due to Simrock not having received the final delivery in time: "Unfortunately, I did not receive your shipment of July 30 until the evening of Saturday, the 8th of the month, since, due to an oversight of B. Hermann's Commis, the package was sent from Leipzig on the 5th instead of the 1st of August, and I was therefore unable to start engraving until the 10th. Hence, no matter how concerted our efforts, it will not be possible to send the copy of the piano-vocal score off to you before midday tomorrow, hopefully though, it will nevertheless arrive in time for you to be able to look over it before you depart for England.

The title will now be, if I understand correctly, the following:

für den Clavierauszug / for the piano-vocal score
Festgesang an die Künstler / To the Sons of Art
nach Schillers Gedichte / from Schiller's Poem
für Männerchor und Blechinstrumente / composed for Male
Voices and Brass Instruments
componirt von / by
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
Clavierauszug / Piano-Vocal Score

[...] or would you like to add: *für das Deutsch=Vlaemische Sängerkunst in Cöln* [written for the meeting of the Vocal Choirs of Germany & Flanders at Cologne] to the title page of the piano-vocal score?" (August 13, 1846)

The response to this question was sent – from Cologne – on August 16, 1846 (see the end of the section "Score and Organ Part" above).

The English First Edition

The production of the first English edition began as a somewhat ill-starred enterprise. As a rule, it is difficult to reconstruct the pa-

per trails between Mendelssohn's German and foreign publishers due to the fragmentary nature of surviving archival records. In the case of the present work however, there is a surviving copy book of Simrock's from the period of time in question, which serves as a valuable source for understanding the necessary steps and sequence of events that were typically involved in producing parallel editions.²¹⁵ Along with the question of which engraver's copy the – in this case – English publisher received, the first thing that needed to be determined was the publication date on which the edition was to be released for sale. This stemmed from legal regulations of that time that did not permit for works printed in Germany to simply be delivered to England and sold there, but rather required that an English publisher be found, who would adopt the work into their catalogue and release their own edition of it; what is more, both the German and the English publishers' editions had to be released on the same day.²¹⁶ On July 26, 1846, Mendelssohn asked Simrock to get in touch with Edward Buxton (J. J. Ewer & Co.), Mendelssohn's primary English publisher by that time, and to send him the requisite materials. This occurred on August 21 with the following lines: "At Herr Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's behest, I hereby have the pleasure of sending you completely accurate copies from his new work: *Festgesang an die Künstler* of

1^o the piano-vocal score

2^o the instrumental parts

3^o the choir and solo parts,

with the sincere request that you obligingly inform us: by when, and on what exact day you could achieve their publication, and thereby simultaneously allow them to see the light of day in Germany as well.

As, in the interest of the work, I am eager to release it soon, it is my hope that you will set a release date that is not in the too far distant future.

I will be publishing the score as well and am currently working on the engraving; since you are probably not planning to publish this in England, perhaps you might be interested in ordering a sample of that material.²¹⁷ The last passage is interesting insofar as it reveals that it was apparently possible to directly distribute at least certain parts of a German edition – in this case, the score – in England. Because Simrock's score only contained the German text however, it remains likely that most of the performances there would have been executed with the piano-vocal score containing Ewer's English translation.²¹⁸

The company Pluygers & Hauck of Rotterdam were contracted to deliver the engraver's copy with instructions to "further transport the accompanying package with the first possible ship to the Music Dealer J. J. Ewer & Co in London N^o 69 Newgate Street".²¹⁹ Because Ewer did not reply, Simrock approached him

215 Copy book, in which Simrock made an additional note of the outgoing mail for his records, labeled on the binding *Brief=Buch | 1846*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, *Mus. Hs. 36.601/6* (hereafter: Simrock copy book).

216 See: Brigitte Lindner, *Rechtsvergleichender Überblick über die vertraglichen Beziehungen zwischen Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und seinen europäischen Verlegern*, in: *UFITA. Archiv für Urheber-, Film-, Funk- und Theaterrecht*, Bern, 1998, vol. 136, pp. 233–255 as well as the chapter "The Publication of the Works" in the introduction to the Mendelssohn-Werkverzeichnis, pp. L–LX.

217 Letter of August 21, 1846, from Simrock to Ewer, location unknown, transcription in: Simrock copy book [note 215], fol. 74^r.

218 Mendelssohn himself proposed the idea of conducting from the piano score to Simrock (v.s. letter of June 26, 1846).

219 Letter of August 21, 1846, from Simrock to Pluygers & Hauck, location unknown, transcription in: Simrock copy book [note 215], fol. 74^r.

again four weeks later suggesting a new release date: “[...] as of today, I am unfortunately still missing your response, and so must now kindly request of you again that the day of the publication be set, my recommendation being the 15th of October. I look forward to your swift reply.”²²⁰ It was not until mid-October that it became clear why it had been impossible for Ewer to respond: the materials were still in transit due to an unforeseen delay en route. “The copies of ‘Mendelssohn Festgesang, Clav: Ausz: Orchester- Chor und Solostimmen’ sent to you on August 21 were accidentally held up in Rotterdam. According to a notification I received from there, these items were finally dispatched to you on the 3rd of this month, and I may now believe with confidence that they will be in your hands within 10–11 days. As things have gotten this far in the absence of any word from you, and Herr Mendelssohn has informed me of his urgent wish that this work be released as soon as at all possible, I am now taking the liberty of requesting that you do everything in your power to have the work ready to be released within the month, and I look forward to your obliging immediate reply wherewith you most kindly inform me of the fast approaching publication date so that I can immediately notify Herr Mendelssohn of it.”²²¹

William Bartholomew, who had translated a number of Mendelssohn’s works by then,²²² and had been in close touch with the composer for many months concerning *Elias*, was entrusted with translating this piece into English as well. In contrast to the oratorio, which led to an intense exchange of letters between the two,²²³ the *Festgesang an die Künstler* remained too peripheral for Mendelssohn to get involved with its translation. Nonetheless, one letter from Bartholomew, in which he characterized “Your ‘Artist’s choral song’” as “a noble thing” does document that work on the project was underway in London by October 20.²²⁴ In that letter, Bartholomew also shared his translation with Mendelssohn and pointed out the difficulties he had experienced with the text. The first lines of his version read: “O Sons of Art, man’s dignity to you is given:

Preserve it, man!”²²⁵ In the meantime, Simrock received a response from Ewer proposing November 10, 1846, as the release date, and was able to notify Mendelssohn of the shipment of the score and piano-vocal score.²²⁶ By October 27, 1846, Mendelssohn was in possession of the author’s copies, one of which he sent the next day to his sister in Berlin.²²⁷ Simrock proceeded to hold up his end of his agreement with Ewer, naming November 10, 1846, as the official publication date in a related inquiry.²²⁸ Misfortune seemed however to hound Ewer, who, though managing to submit the work’s title at Stationer’s Hall in time to officially register the edition,²²⁹ was not ultimately able to meet the deadline. On the day of the planned release, Buxton wrote a letter²³⁰ and sent Mendelssohn an author’s copy²³¹ of the edition – as it happened, without a title page, as the engraver had fallen ill and was unable to finish it. By that time, Mendelssohn was so thoroughly occupied with revising *Elias* that he could hardly be bothered with the details of the English translation of his *Festgesang an die Künstler*. Also notable in this context are the composer’s words of gratitude to the translator for his work on the piece, lines which rather candidly reveal his skepticism about whether the *Festgesang an die Künstler* of Cologne could ever be truly compelling in a different context or language: “And many, many thanks for the trouble you have taken with the Sons of Art. I am afraid the thing is only fit for a German musical men-festival and that it is impossible to give it any effect in another language and at other occasions; but whatever can be done with it has indeed been done by you.”²³²

As far as foreign editions are concerned, it should not be omitted that Simrock also approached a French publisher about printing the work. In early July of 1846, that is relatively early on, even before he contacted Ewer, Simrock got in touch with Henry Lemoine in Paris concerning a “Hymne d’après le poeme de Schiller: Aux artistes composé pour le 1^e Festival allemand belge vlaemisch”.²³³ That publishing house did not print the work however. Instead, sometime around 1847/1848, an

220 Letter of September 23, 1846, from Simrock to Ewer, location unknown, transcription in: Simrock copy book [note 215], fol. 82^r.

221 Letter of October 17, 1846, from Simrock to Ewer, location unknown, transcription in: Simrock copy book [note 215], fol. 92^r.

222 See the section “The Struggle to Produce an English Version of the Text – 1843” in the chapter on the *Festgesang* MWV D 4.

223 See chapter “The English Translation” in: Edwards, *The History* [note 90], pp. 48–75.

224 Letter of October 20, 1846, from William Bartholomew to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 50*, Green Books XXIV-98. Buxton was in Scotland when the package arrived, resulting in the translation being delayed until his return.

225 Here in the orthography of the English piano score, see Critical Report, Source Description, Source X.

226 Letter of October 21, 1846, from Simrock to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 50*, Green Books XXIV-100. Simrock promised to send author’s copies of the score and piano score to Mendelssohn the next day.

227 “Eigendorf will bring along the Cologne Festgesang an die Künstler, the rehearsal copies of which arrived yesterday from Bonn.” Letter of October 28, 1846, to Fanny Hensel, D-B, *MA Ep. 257*, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 11 [note 188], pp. 409–411, quotation on p. 410.

228 See letter of October 21, 1846, from Simrock to A[lbertus] Hempenius in Zwolle, location unknown, transcription in: Simrock copy book [note 215], fol. 93^v.

229 The National Archives, Kew, *COPY 3/3*, p. 271. The entry in the registry at Stationers’ Hall was made on November 13, 1846, the publication date specified there was November 10, 1846.

230 Letter of November 10, 1846, from Edward Buxton to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, GB-Ob, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 50*, Green Books XXIV-130.

231 The copy from Mendelssohn’s possessions has been preserved: GB-Ob, *Deneke 94*.

232 Letter of December 30, 1846, to William Bartholomew, London, The British Library, *Add. Ms. 47859A*, fols. 4–5, printed in: *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 11 [note 188], pp. 458–460, quotation on p. 460.

233 Letter of July 6, 1846, from Simrock to H. Lemoine, location unknown, transcription in: Simrock copy book [note 215], fol. 56^v.

unauthorized imprint was released by a publisher infamous for producing pirated editions, S. Richault, under the title *Aux amis des arts. Chant de fête*.²³⁴ The translation was by Jules Forest (1796–1868).

In the preparation of the present volume, Birgit Müller was responsible for the works that were not published in Mendelssohn's lifetime, and Ralf Wehner covered the pieces that were. Both editors received a tremendous amount of support in this effort. Thanks are due first and foremost to those libraries, which permitted the viewing and analysis of their collections as well as the reproduction of select pages. Taken together, the manuscripts that were used here – including those documents quoted in the introduction – are held in libraries and archives located in 18 places in six countries: Berlin (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv; Handschriftenabteilung; Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz); Bonn (Stadtarchiv und Wissenschaftliche Stadtbibliothek); Cambridge (University Library); Dresden (Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden); Dusseldorf (Heinrich-Heine-Institut); Kew (The National Archives); Cologne (Musikwissenschaftliches Institut der Universität, Bibliothek; Universitätsbibliothek); Cracow

(Biblioteka Jagiellońska); Leeds (University of Leeds, Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection); Leipzig (Mendelssohn-Haus Leipzig; Stadtarchiv; Stadtgeschichtliches Museum; Städtische Bibliotheken); London (The British Library); New Haven, Connecticut (Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library); New York (Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations); Oxford (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford); Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France); Rudolstadt (Thüringisches Staatsarchiv); Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek); Washington, D.C. (The Library of Congress, Music Division). The following people additionally contributed to the editing of and commentary on individual works through personal correspondence and the provision of unpublished or out of print research results: Ingo Schwarz (Berlin) concerning the *Begrüßung* (“Humboldt Cantata”), Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller (Cologne) and Armin Koch (Leipzig) in relation to the *Festgesang an die Künstler*, and Sebastian Nickel (Erfurt) and Peter Ward Jones (Oxford) in reference to the “Gutenberg Cantata.” Beyond that, Christian Martin Schmidt and Clemens Harasim further contributed to the success of this volume in their characteristically trustworthy and constructive fashion. They are all due the most heartfelt thanks.

Leipzig, November 15, 2018 Birgit Müller and Ralf Wehner
(Translation: Amber McPherson)

234 Piano-vocal score, plate-number 9794.R., copy in: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, VM7.8511.