

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

English Reception of Felix Mendelssohn as Told Through British Music Histories

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Music

by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must first acknowledge my own mortality. During the course of writing this dissertation, I was diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer which had spread to my spine. I spent weeks in the hospital and months afterward mostly bedridden. So, I owe a debt of gratitude to oncologists Juliet Penn and James Waisman for finding a chemotherapy that fights my tumors while keeping the side effects manageable enough for me to work. A warm thank you to the folks at the Solvang Cancer Center who take care of me during chemo sessions, and thank you also to the people at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, Santa Ynez Valley Cottage Hospital, Lompoc Valley Medical Center, City of Hope, and Sansum Clinic Lompoc. Without them, I would not be around to thank anyone else.

Thank you to my family who helped out during this difficult time, particularly my parents, Carl and Patricia Shaver; my sister-in-law, Andrea Langham; and my niece, Daisy Langham. Thank you also to Ellen and Rich Krasin, Ruth and Steve Marotti, Shirley Shaver, Mary Lou Trocke, Jim and Cindy Gleason, and Ralph Lincoln.

On to the people who helped me with the actual dissertation: Thank you to my advisor, Derek Katz, for challenging me to think messily when necessary. Thank you to the rest of my committee—Dave Paul, whose seminar led me to this topic, and Stefanie Tcharos, whose dissertation workshop showed me how to reach out to others for help. Many thanks to people who read portions of this document and offered valuable feedback: Alejandro Planchart, Alexandra Monchick, John Michael Cooper, William Weber, Byron Adams, and Nicholas Temperley. A special thanks to my colleagues at UCSB who formed a dissertation support system as we all worked together: Sasha Metcalf, Vincent Rone, Emma Parker,

Meghan Tozer, Scott Dirkse, Claire Barbasch, Rachel Short, Luke Hannington, and Emma Levine.

Finally, thank you to my husband, Chris Gleason, for everything.

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ABSTRACT

English Reception of Felix Mendelssohn as Told Through British Music Histories

by

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In this dissertation, I analyze presentations of German composer Felix Mendelssohn in English music history books published between 1850 and 1910 in order to explore the cultural forces affecting English music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By examining different authors' passages on Mendelssohn, I demonstrate how trends in historiography, taste formation, and nationalism affect the reception of an individual composer. Mendelssohn is a thread that weaves through all these discussions; following it provides a provocative view of a tumultuous period in English music history.

The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed many interrelated cultural shifts that affected England's musical culture: a boom in the publication of books on the history of music, a rise in nationalistic sentiment that spurred English writers to tout their country's accomplishments, increased interest in ancient music that led to significant discoveries about music in the Tudor era, new historiographical approaches that rendered previous history books antiquated, and a zeal for educating the wider public about music in the hopes of shedding the stigma of being *das Land ohne Musik*. These decades also coincide with the

peak and decline of “Mendelssohn Mania,” England’s fervent devotion to Mendelssohn that reached its height after his death in 1848 and diminished by the 1880s.

In Chapter 1, I review the available scholarship on Mendelssohn reception and English musical culture during the Victorian era, leading to the English Musical Renaissance. I also provide background information on the authors of the music history books used as sources throughout the dissertation, noting the social networks formed by these historians. Chapter 2 details a major historiographical shift in the nineteenth century which made Mendelssohn less relevant to later histories as they excluded some of his greatest accomplishments. This chapter places five English music history books in a continuum from Carlylean hero worship to Spencerian evolutionary progressions, demonstrating how each author reconciled the two models and the resulting effect on Mendelssohn’s representation. In Chapter 3, I trace various discussions surrounding Mendelssohn’s popularity and how it reflected on the perceived musical taste of the nation. Finally, in Chapter 4, I detail the effects of Mendelssohn reception through writings about subsequent generations of English composers, as they struggled to overcome the perception of being the “Land without Music” and claim a national musical identity comparable to but distinct from the Austro-German hegemony. The chapter examines the reception of three composers from this Dark Age: William Sterndale Bennett, Henry Hugo Pierson, and Arthur Sullivan. As the narrative surrounding the Dark Age and Renaissance coalesces, the ways in which historians portray their relationship to Mendelssohn shifts, as Mendelssohn moves from being a beneficial mentor to English composers to a harmful influence they must discard.

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I. Introduction

A. Preliminaries

The second edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published in the first decade of the twentieth century, contains an article on a topic not covered in the 1880s edition: "Histories of Music." In this entry, A. Hughes-Hughes lists every book on music history then contained within the library of the British Museum, with the addition of a few extra books known to be in process, such as the monumental *Oxford History of Music*. The list is wide-ranging, including books published throughout the world and in several different languages. This article is perhaps the most comprehensive and conveniently catalogued list of pre-twentieth century music history books that a twenty-first century scholar can access.

When examining the section devoted to "General Histories," one sees a marked difference between the two halves of the nineteenth century. The first half of the century lists mainly books in French and German, such as François-Joseph Fétis's *Curiosités historiques de la musique, complément nécessaire de la musique mise à la portée de tout le monde* (1830) and Raphael Georg Kiesewetter's *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unserer heutigen Musik* (1834-46). In the second half of the century, English titles dominate. Although English readers of the first half of the century had been satisfied with translations of Continental history books, later readers demanded that the English take history into their own hands, leading to a boom in music history books.

This boom corresponds to a number of interrelated cultural shifts: a rise in nationalistic sentiment that spurred English writers to tout their country's accomplishments, increased interest in ancient music that led to significant discoveries about music in the Tudor era, new

historiographical approaches that rendered previous history books obsolete (or at the very least antiquated), a zeal for educating the wider public about music in the hopes of shedding the stigma of being *das Land ohne Muisk*. Less broadly, the boom also coincides with the peak and decline of “Mendelssohn Mania,” England’s fervent devotion to German composer Felix Mendelssohn that reached its height after his death in 1848 and diminished by the 1880s.¹

In this dissertation, I argue that the discourse surrounding matters of historiography, taste, and nationalism precipitated the shift away from Mendelssohn, rather than Mendelssohn’s fading relevance being simply inevitable with time. I analyze presentations of Mendelssohn in English music history books published between 1850 and 1910 as a point of departure for exploring the cultural forces affecting English music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By examining different authors’ passages on Mendelssohn, I demonstrate how trends in historiography, taste formation, and nationalism affect the reception of an individual composer, and how a tight focus on a single figure can expose provocative issues in culture and identity. As Mendelssohn is a thread that weaves through all these discussions, following it provides a provocative view of a tumultuous period in English music history.

During his lifetime, Mendelssohn’s fame was bolstered by the ten visits he made to Britain between 1829 and 1848, during which he gave several performances, both public and private, and forged personal relationships with influential members of the country’s musical

¹ Although the composer is more commonly referred to as “Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy” in German scholarship, this dissertation will refer to the composer as “Felix Mendelssohn” or “Mendelssohn,” consistent with English-language traditions. The difference arose when an English concert program listed the composer without the “-Bartholdy” appendage during his first visit, unintentionally establishing a convention.

elite. Mendelssohn's interest in British literature, particularly the works of Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott, flattered the country, as did his fondness for the natural beauty of British landscapes, which he sketched on his journeys. Victorians felt an affinity for Mendelssohn's high moral bearing: his commitment to Protestant Christianity, his devotion to family life, and his emotional restraint. All these factors reinforced already existing links between English and German culture, exemplified by the German heritage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert themselves—both of whom were Mendelssohn admirers.

As well-received as Mendelssohn was during his lifetime, enthusiasm for the composer soared after his death. Newspapers printed rapturous eulogies, which led to the publication of hagiographies. Music publishers dug up previously unpublished compositions to produce “new” Mendelssohn works for decades. Festivals featured his most beloved works, embedding them into the nascent canon, and performances of his oratorio *Elijah* became an annual event in several cities. Mendelssohn Mania saturated the musical discourse of England throughout the nineteenth century.

In the burgeoning musical press, Mendelssohn's posthumous reception sparked debates, some stemming from concerns over Mendelssohn's nationality. Many expressed unease that the most popular composer in England was a German—and one who, unlike Beethoven or Bach, was not universally recognized as a genius. His reputation in Germany plummeted after his death, due to a combination of factors including anti-Semitism and the rising popularity of genres he was not associated with. Writers pondered the significance of Mendelssohn being more popular in England than in his native country. To some, it indicated that England alone understood an underappreciated master—but other authors

feared that Mendelssohn Mania was proof of England's retrogressive tastes, confirming the worst stereotypes about the nation's musical culture.

The discourse surrounding Mendelssohn was just one manifestation of larger discussions about how English national identity could be expressed in music. As the so-called English Musical Renaissance got underway, Mendelssohn became a less central figure in England's musical culture—in the music history books, if not necessarily in the concert hall. Writers after the turn of the twentieth century reached a consensus on Mendelssohn's legacy, incorporating him into a story of England's triumph over German domination. Though this version of Mendelssohn's English reception has been the accepted narrative for about a century, my dissertation reveals that Mendelssohn's relationship to England has historically been much more complicated.

In Chapter 2, I explain how a major historiographical shift in the nineteenth century made Mendelssohn less relevant to later histories as they excluded some of his greatest accomplishments. Romantic ideas of Great Men and Genius became entrenched in English histories of the early 19th century, articulated clearly in Thomas Carlyle's lectures "On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History," published in 1840. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and other evolutionary ideas, particularly those of Herbert Spencer, fundamentally changed the way in which history was perceived. The evolutionary model emphasized teleological progression and the interaction between an organism (or art) and its environment. Music history proved resistant to these historiographical changes. For so long, writers had presented music history as the succession of exceptional individuals, but the new approach demanded continuity and privileged novelty and longevity. Although Mendelssohn had been an appealing figure for the biographical approach to history, aspects

of his compositions were less applicable to a teleological narrative. He worked in genres that seemed to be evolutionary dead ends, and his antiquarian interests put him at a disadvantage in histories that continually point forward. Chapter 2 places five English music history books in a continuum from Carlylean to Spencerian², demonstrating how each author reconciled the two models and the resulting effect on Mendelssohn's representation.

In Chapter 3, I trace various discussions surrounding Mendelssohn's popularity and how it reflected on the perceived musical taste of the nation. Many historians highlighted parallels between Mendelssohn and Handel, another German composer particularly venerated by English audiences. This association was intended to vindicate their faith in Mendelssohn; just as they were correct to praise Handel, history would ultimately show them to be right about Mendelssohn. Older authors credited Mendelssohn with raising the level of musical taste in the country, either through the quality of his music or by personal example, with his performances of older German composers. While nearly everyone acknowledged that Mendelssohn's music was accessible to general audiences, writers debated whether accessibility indicated genius or a lack thereof—Mendelssohn's clarity either demonstrated a profound ability to communicate greatness, or it showed that what he communicated was not truly very great. Finally, later historians expressed dismay that England's obsession with Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* hampered their receptivity to newer styles of music.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I outline the effects of Mendelssohn reception through writings about subsequent generations of English composers, as they struggled to overcome the

² In short, "Carlylean" refers to the historiographical approach of Thomas Carlyle, who held that history was the successive biographies of Heroes. "Spencerian" refers to Herbert Spencer, who wrote that evolutionary principles could be applied to all human endeavors.

perception of being the “Land without Music” and claim a national musical identity comparable to but distinct from the Austro-German hegemony. In the late nineteenth century, the idea of an English Musical Renaissance took hold in the press, relegating most of the century to a newly-identified “Dark Age.” Despite earlier historians’ insistence that Mendelssohn elevated the standards of English music, later writers claimed he was the final example of England’s domination by foreign composers during the Dark Age. The chapter examines the reception of three composers from this Dark Age: William Sterndale Bennett, Henry Hugo Pierson, and Arthur Sullivan. As the narrative surrounding the Dark Age and Renaissance coalesces, the ways in which historians portray their relationship to Mendelssohn shifts, as Mendelssohn moves from being a beneficial mentor to English composers to a harmful influence they must shed.

B. Previous Scholarship

1. Mendelssohn Reception

Overall, as a sub-topic of Mendelssohn reception, his relationship to England is familiar enough that several scholars mention it, yet its depth remains unexplored. More pressing to Mendelssohn scholars has been the examination and debunking of the damaging stereotypes that are the legacy of Mendelssohn’s negative German reception in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Comments that Mendelssohn’s music is formally sound but artistically lacking can be found, unquestioned, in music appreciation books into the twenty-first century. These seemingly innocent observations belie systematic oppression of Jewish artists, denying them the humanity necessary to create great art. The boom in Mendelssohn scholarship that began in the 1990s, leading to more thorough analyses of Mendelssohn’s

compositions and meditations on his reception, has made great strides in restoring his reputation.³ When examining his English reception, as I do in this dissertation, a different approach is necessary because it more frequently involves problems of over-appreciation rather than under-appreciation.

The most comprehensive examination of Mendelssohn's unique relationship with England is Colin Timothy Eatock's monograph *Mendelssohn in Victorian England* (2009).⁴ Eatock argues that Mendelssohn's popularity hinged on a number of cultural factors that made Mendelssohn a particularly appealing figure to the English public. The book thoroughly traces Mendelssohn's activities in England throughout his lifetime, but only devotes one chapter to his posthumous reception. He explains that English society drifted away from the values that had originally made Mendelssohn so appealing; in the twentieth century, Mendelssohn was considered old fashioned because he was intrinsically tied to Victorianism itself, a past England was attempting to leave behind. While I agree with Eatock's conclusion, a single chapter cannot fully unpack all the forces at play in Mendelssohn's fall in popularity. This dissertation refracts Eatock's line of inquiry; whereas he asks what English enthusiasm means for our understanding of Mendelssohn, I ponder what their enthusiasm for Mendelssohn says about England.

³ John Michael Cooper outlines trends in Mendelssohn scholarship in his essay, "Mendelssohn Received," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Jameson Mercer-Taylor, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233–50. More comprehensive and updated coverage can be found in John Michael Cooper and Angela R. Mace, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: A Research and Information Guide*, 2nd ed, Routledge Music Bibliographies (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁴ Colin Eatock, *Mendelssohn and Victorian England*, Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

Other scholars have mentioned English reception in the context of other facets of Mendelssohn's overall reception. Marion Wilson Kimber's chapter "The Composer as Other: Gender and Race in the Biography of Felix Mendelssohn" discusses Victorian constructions of masculinity.⁵ She argues that although Mendelssohn fit nineteenth-century concepts of masculinity, restraint and earnestness being paramount, he did not fit with turn-of-the-century ideals of passion, aggression, physicality. Kimber presents several physical descriptions, portraits, and caricatures of the composer, English and non-English, to demonstrate how Mendelssohn became increasingly feminized over time. She ties this trend to anti-Semitism, as Jewishness was also coded as effeminate and physically frail. Her work informs my analysis of the specific phrases used by the various authors throughout this dissertation, revealing hidden meanings that would have been understood by contemporary readers.

John Michael Cooper's chapter "Mendelssohn Received" takes a long view of Mendelssohn reception, from his lifetime up to the early twenty-first century.⁶ Cooper raises an issue that forms the basis of chapter 2 of this dissertation: historiographical shifts. Mendelssohn fell out of favor, Cooper notes, as music history writers began to favor more "scientific" approaches to history. The type of enthusiasm Mendelssohn engendered in his advocates was often related in spiritual and religious terms, the mode of experience that came to be distrusted in the later attempt for objectivity. As Cooper points out, even Mendelssohn's choice of genres—oratorio, piano music—was out of step with the tastes of

⁵ Marian Wilson Kimber, "The Composer as Other: Gender and Race in the Biography of Felix Mendelssohn," in *The Mendelssohns: Their Music in History*, ed. John Michael Cooper and Julie D. Prandi (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 335–51.

⁶ Cooper, "Mendelssohn Received."

the late Romantics, rendering his music irrelevant. Additionally, Cooper asserts, Mendelssohn's interest in the past was at cross-purposes with subsequent trends toward futurism and modernism. Cooper explains why Mendelssohn fell from grace so quickly, particularly in Germany. My dissertation follows the parallel trend in England, which occurred decades later based on slightly different cultural concerns.

In Robert Bledsoe's "Mendelssohn's Canonical Status in England, the Revolutions of 1848, and H.F. Chorley's 'Retrogressive' Ideology of Artistic Genius,"⁷ the author examines Mendelssohn's English reception through the very narrow lens of one particular writer, Henry Fothergill Chorley. Bledsoe argues that Chorley's policy to present Mendelssohn as a "retrogressive" was successful in endearing the composer to the English public, for a limited time. Chorley's justification of Mendelssohn's genius through his ties to older traditions swayed antiquarian music lovers, but as the culture became more progressive, this association doomed Mendelssohn to irrelevance. Bledsoe's chapter teases out one of the many threads woven through the composer's English reception and demonstrates how a narrow focus on music writers of this period can yield insight into the larger picture of musical society. This dissertation applies a similar scrutiny to several different writers of the time period, illuminating several topical threads and their connections.

2. English Music in the Nineteenth Century

Mendelssohn's influence on English music seemed so obvious to historians that it remained a dictum unquestioned for decades, until Nicholas Temperley took it upon himself to

⁷ Robert T. Bledsoe, "Mendelssohn's Canonical Status in England, the Revolutions of 1848, and H.F. Chorley's 'Retrogressive' Ideology of Artistic Genius," in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, ed. Dibble, Jeremy and Zon, Bennett, (Ed.), vol. II (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2002), 139–53.

determine what, exactly, was “Mendelssohnian” about the English sound. In his 1962 article, “Mendelssohn’s Influence on English Music,” Temperley argues that many of the features often cited as “Mendelssohnian”—he specifies: “over-use of the dominant seventh, indulgence in appoggiaturas and feminine endings for the sake of mere prettiness, too great reliance on four-bar and eight-bar phrases, and neglect of verbal rhythms”—actually pre-date Mendelssohn.⁸ They were instead attempts to mimic Mozart’s instrumental music. Temperley argues that Mendelssohn was less influential than his detractors feared; rather than being the cause of the perceived weaknesses of English music, in some cases he altered his own style to accommodate English tastes. Temperley’s article uses musical analysis to settle the matter of Mendelssohn’s dominance over England. Rather than seeking an objective measurement of the extent of his influence, I instead question what was at stake for English writers as they applied or avoided the Mendelssohnian label. For my purposes, musical analysis in this vein is irrelevant.

Temperley broadens the scope of his inquiry into foreign influence in his chapter “Xenophilia in British Music History.”⁹ He points out that the fervor for Mendelssohn was not a unique phenomenon; for centuries, the English had expressed preference for Continental composers over native ones. Temperley critically examines the background of two prevalent beliefs: that England was *Land ohne Musik*, and that there was a “Dark Age of British Music.” These ideas contradict; the former reinforces the belief that the English are

⁸ Nicholas Temperley, “Mendelssohn’s Influence on English Music,” *Music and Letters* 43, no. 3 (July 1, 1962): 225, doi:10.1093/ml/43.3.224.

⁹ Nicholas Temperley, “Xenophilia in British Musical History,” in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, ed. Bennett Zon, vol. I, Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 1999), 3–19.

fundamentally unmusical and were incapable of producing native composers, whereas the latter phrase implies that there was an earlier period of musical production and a promised later one. Temperley conducts a historiographical survey of texts in which writers describe this purported dark age and find that there was little consensus as to the reasons for this apparent lack of composers (explanations ranged from mere luck, to phlegm, to influence of the Puritans, to Handel). He also finds that writers disagreed as to what dates, exactly, the dark age took place, though all agreed that it included the mid-nineteenth century. Though contemporary writers blamed the imitation of Handel and Mendelssohn as the source of England's musical problems, Temperley posits that it was merely another symptom, not the cause. He argues that the emergence of Germany and the United States as political and economic powers led not only to increased support of English composers but to the shift in self-image from an unmusical nation to one that needed to reclaim its past glory. These issues factor heavily into this dissertation, particularly in chapter 4, where I discuss the effect of Mendelssohn's legacy on English composers.

Also in the vein of historiographical studies is Bennett Zon's essay "Histories of British Music and the Land Without Music: National Identity and the Idea of the Hero."¹⁰ Like the second chapter of this dissertation, Zon discusses the role of the Carlylean hero in music history books in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though he comes to a different conclusion than I do. Whereas I perceive a shift away from the Carlylean model in favor of more evolutionary narratives, Zon argues that the notion of the composer as hero persists

¹⁰ Bennett Zon, "Histories of British Music and the Land without Music: National Identity and the Idea of the Hero," in *Essays on the History of English Music in Honour of John Caldwell: Sources, Style, Performance, Historiography*, ed. Emma Hornby and David Maw (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2010), 311–24.

into the twentieth century, but it is adjusted to accommodate post-Victorian values and champion young, native composers. He points out the prevalence of British exceptionalism in music history writing, detailing ways in which nationalism is inseparable from the notion of history during this period. Zon has published several works on historiography in this period, including a thorough examination of Hubert Parry's *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, a book that figures prominently in chapter 2 of this dissertation as I focus the discussion on one particular composer.

All historiographies in the realm of music history owe a debt to Warren Dwight Allen's *Philosophies of Music History*, first published in 1939 and updated in 1962.¹¹ This pioneering work surveyed music history books from antiquity to present day, tracing the underlying philosophies that shaped them. Allen notes the influence of Romanticism upon the histories written in the nineteenth century, tying the Great Man model to larger trends in spiritualism. These men were assumed to exhibit genius, a divinely bestowed gift. The late nineteenth century was a revolutionary period, Allen observes, and writers grew to accept the idea that music history was influenced by political movements and current events rather than being protected within a separated, spiritual realm of Great Art. Once writers acknowledged that music history could be influenced by outside forces, evolutionary concepts gained relevance, as writers began to see music as adapting to its environments. Allen suggests that England was particularly receptive to notions of evolution due to the popularity of Darwin. Allen's work provided the foundation of chapter 2 of this dissertation; whereas he speaks of music history books generally to show their methodological

¹¹ Warren Dwight Allen, *Philosophies of Music History* (New York: American Book Company, 1939).

approaches, I analyze how those approaches affect the ways in which the authors frame their discussions of particular composers, especially Mendelssohn.

The concept of the English Musical Renaissance came under scrutiny of two historians in the controversial *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* by Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes.¹² Challenging the musicological consensus of their time, they took an antagonistic stance toward the EMR, arguing that it was a calculated effort by music promoters to raise the profile of certain English composers at the expense of others. The second edition of their book extends the roots of the EMR all the way back to Mendelssohn's support of English composers, countering the prevailing narrative that the English were responsible for their own musical rebirth through self-determination and the rediscovery of folk music. Their book garnered a lot of criticism from the musicological community not only due to their lack of musical analysis but for their perceived disregard for the power of the "music itself." Stradling and Hughes dismissed the idea that the music of post-EMR composers (such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst) was somehow objectively better than the music of pre-EMR composers (such as William Sterndale Bennett and Arthur Sullivan), and that this improvement in quality was responsible for the increased prestige of English music. Rather, they argue, it was the way in which the music was framed by English music critics that made it integral to the national identity and appealing to international listeners. Though Stradling and Hughes note the resistance with which their ideas were met in the 1990s, by the turn of the twenty-first

¹² Meirion Hughes and R. A. Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music*, 2nd ed, Music and Society (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

century, their adversarial stance prompted a widespread reevaluation of nineteenth century English music and its reception. While their book—and Hughes’s ensuing project, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*,¹³ focuses mainly on periodicals and music criticism, my dissertation examines music history books, some of which were written by people that Stradling and Hughes discuss.

Matters of public taste and concert culture form the basis of William Weber’s *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*.¹⁴ Weber discusses the development of the classical canon during the nineteenth century, a phenomenon that Mendelssohn anticipated with his promotion of older music and eventually came to benefit from, as his music continued to be performed after his death. Weber notes a change in the expectations of audience members, as they needed to become educated listeners who were familiar with repertoire before they attended a concert. The boom in music history books, which makes this dissertation possible, is evidence of this increased demand for literature that explained music to the masses. Weber’s research provides context for chapter 3 of this dissertation, explaining the shifting perception of the role of the musical public, as I trace its effects on the acceptance of Mendelssohn.

¹³ Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press, 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*, Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2002).

¹⁴ William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

C. Considering Primary Sources

When selecting the primary sources for this dissertation, I began with the aforementioned “Histories of Music” entry in the second edition of *Grove’s Dictionary*.¹⁵ Although I extended my research beyond those listed in the article, consulting Allen’s *Philosophies of Music History* and doing my own library searches, almost all of the primary sources that form the core of this dissertation were included on that original list, the sole exception being Haweis’s *Music and Morals*. For the purposes of this project, I limited my research to histories published in English, whether originally or in translation, and in Britain.

By necessity, I was limited to books that were available in the present day, accessible through library visits, interlibrary loan, and digital archives. In this respect, my project got easier as time went on—a few sources (such as Rockstro’s *General History of Music*) were only available in physical form when I started this project in 2009; by 2016, they had been scanned into Google Books, with their texts easily searchable.¹⁶ For the most part, the texts that have survived into the twenty-first century were the most impactful, so I had access to the major lines of thought from the Victorian era. Nevertheless, it would have been beneficial to have seen the ephemeral sources; perhaps they contained long-forgotten perspectives.

¹⁵ A. Hughes-Hughes, “Histories of Music,” ed. John A. Fuller Maitland, *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910).

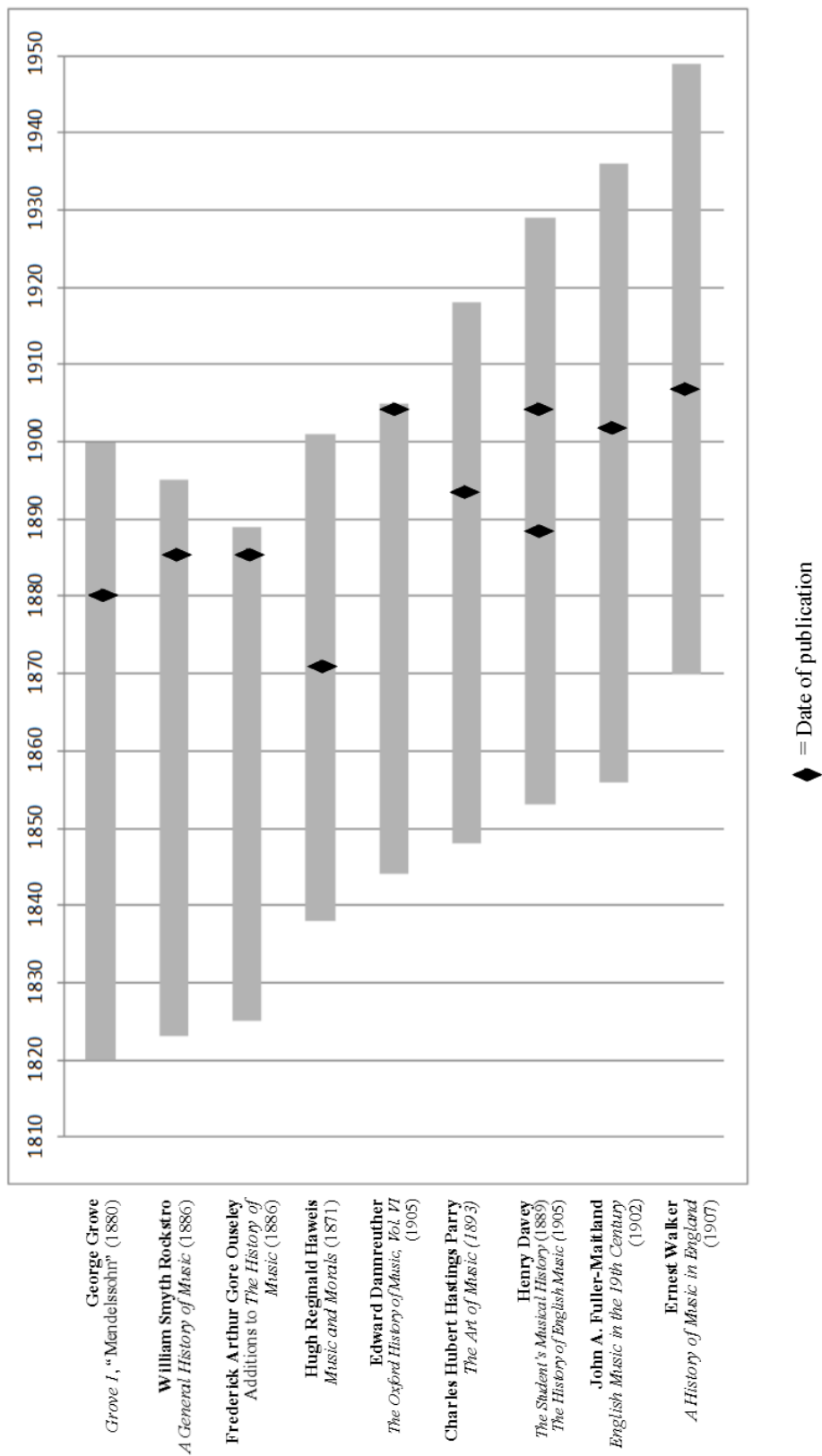
¹⁶ For more on recent improvement in the accessibility of these sources, see Paula Findlen, “How Google Rediscovered the 19th Century,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education Blogs: The Conversation*, July 22, 2013, <http://chronicle.com/blogs/conversation/2013/07/22/how-google-rediscovered-the-19th-century/>.

The perspectives that have endured come from a narrow demographic segment: that of educated, white, upper-class men. Three of them were knighted, a testament to their similar devotion to public service and the nation. They tended to be socially well-connected, which contributed to their abilities to secure the positions of authority necessary to write history books as well as the means by which to publish them. As a result, most of these authors knew each other personally, forging social networks and determining who, exactly, made up the musical establishment. The “in” crowd had connections to the Royal College of Music (RCM), founded in 1883—George Grove was its first director; John A. Fuller Maitland served on its board; and William S. Rockstro, Hubert Parry, and Edward Dannreuther all taught there. Even the authors who I consider “outsiders” from this crowd—Hugh Reginald Haweis and Henry Davey, in particular—still have many connections to the musical life of England and greater Europe. The strong link between England and Leipzig, forged by Mendelssohn himself with his invitations to English composers to study at the Conservatory and later bolstered by the Mendelssohn Scholarship, can also be seen in the biographies of these authors, as many of them either studied there or learned from teachers who studied there.

While the bulk of this dissertation focuses on authors’ approaches to music history and their framing of Mendelssohn, this introduction provides basic background on the authors themselves as a matter of convenience, so that this information does not need to be repeated in every chapter. The nine authors I discuss here are the ones who appear in multiple chapters; throughout this dissertation, I also include quotes from additional books when they are particularly evocative, though I do not include their authors in this chapter. Though this list is not comprehensive, it is representative—together, they demonstrate the breadth of

music history writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I list them here in birth order rather than in chronological order of their publications, as the generation to which an author is born has the greatest bearing on his ideological stance. For example, Rockstro's *A General History of Music* (1886) and Davey's *The Student's Musical History* (1889) were published only three years apart, but the former was the work of a 63-year-old man and the latter that of a 36-year-old, and as such, the views expressed in the books are quite different. **Figure 1** illustrates the lifespans of the authors as well as the publication dates of their works. Although the books are tightly clustered, the authors' lives span over a century.

Figure 1: Life Spans of Authors and Dates of Publications



1. Sir George Grove (1820-1900)

The first author under discussion is inarguably the most famous, as his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* continues to be edited and updated in the present day. Interestingly, George Grove was not a musician; born in London, he received training as a civil engineer. He was a man of many interests, not the least of which was music. He helped organize the concerts at the Crystal Palace, for which he wrote program notes. In the 1860s, he was the assistant editor of *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, learning how to conduct original research and becoming versed in the dictionary format. In 1873 he joined the staff of the publishing firm Macmillan and Co., editing their *Macmillan's Magazine*—this was the company that would publish his music dictionary throughout the 1880s.

In writing his program notes, Grove perceived the lack of a reliable reference book that would contain all the information of interest to a music lover, in language directed at amateurs. He imagined his audience to be very much like himself, and wrote accordingly. The resulting *Dictionary* is not strictly a music history book, though it contains a lot of historical narrative. It also includes biographies of composers, librettists, and musicians; descriptions of instruments from around the world; articles about techniques; and so on. Grove drew from his vast network of social contacts to commission articles from many musical experts, and he also wrote many of the entries himself. He originally envisioned the *Dictionary* as being in two volumes; the first edition ended up comprising four volumes. This expansion occurred as the *Dictionary* was being published—that is, the project grew in scope even after the first volume was already in print. This unexpected broadening necessitated an appendix in the last volume of articles that should have appeared earlier in the alphabet but had not been written when the relevant letters had been published. The

dramatic expansion of the project *in media res* also compelled the publication of a second edition soon afterward. Grove died in 1900, so the second edition was edited by John A. Fuller Maitland, who had also edited the first edition's appendix. To commemorate the thoroughness of Grove's original entries on Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schubert, which involved original research, Maitland kept these "monumental" entries virtually unchanged in the second edition.¹⁷

2. William Smith Rockstro (1823-1895)

William Smith Rockstro (born William Smyth Rackstraw in Surrey, England) began his music career as a pianist, organist, and composer, though his reputation as a music historian and theorist far surpassed his work as a composer. He studied piano with William Sterndale Bennett, who then recommended that he continue his studies with Felix Mendelssohn. Rockstro attended the Leipzig Conservatory from 1845-6; he held Mendelssohn in particularly high regard, as one can read in his hagiographic biography of the composer, written in 1884. Rockstro also wrote a biography of Handel and two books on Jenny Lind. He delved into music theory, writing books on harmony and counterpoint, offshoots of his interest in early music. His magnum opus was *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, published in 1886, in which he attempted to cover all of music history in a single narrative. Historiographer Warren D. Allen considers it to be the second most "serious Victorian history of music" (after Hubert Parry's).¹⁸ Rockstro

¹⁷ John A. Fuller Maitland, "Preface," in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. John A. Fuller Maitland, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: MacMillan and Co., 1904), v.

¹⁸ Allen, *Philosophies of Music History*, 125.

had difficulty reconciling the biographical approach to music history with new expectations of cultural relevance and evolution.

Like so many of the authors discussed in this dissertation, Rockstro was well-connected within England's musical community. He taught at both the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music. Together with John A. Fuller Maitland, a student of his, he assembled the collection *English Carols of the 15th Century*. Rockstro contributed 240 articles to the first edition of George Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, including the extensive "Schools of Composition" entry, which also attempted to present all of music history in a comprehensible manner. However, this entry, as well as several others by Rockstro, were removed or replaced in the second edition of the *Dictionary*. Maitland, the editor, explained in his entry on Rockstro,

In the present day, musical research had been sedulously carried on in other countries, and it is inevitable that some of his conclusions should have been controverted, if not disproved; but considering the state of musical education at the time he wrote, the value of his contributions to such subjects as the music of the period which closed in 1600, can hardly be exaggerated. He was too ardent a partisan to be an ideal historian.¹⁹

As Maitland suggests, Rockstro did much to advance historical knowledge and encourage interest in a time period that was unexplored in his own time, but his methods and style of writing quickly fell out of fashion. His writings felt dated not too long after he published them. For the purposes of this dissertation, his books and articles offer examples of the conservative mindset that younger generations rebelled against.

¹⁹ John A. Fuller Maitland, "Rockstro (originally Rackstraw), William Smith," ed. John A. Fuller Maitland, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910).

3. Sir Frederick Arthur Gore Ouseley (1825-1889)

Frederick Ouseley was born in London to an aristocratic family; his father served as ambassador to Persia and to Russia. The younger Ouseley's interests were not considered acceptable activities for someone of his social stature, however. He showed an early talent for music composition, which was regarded with some suspicion among the English upper classes. Moreover, he was fascinated not by Continental art music, but by Anglican church music, which was considered less sophisticated. He studied at Christ Church at Oxford and was ordained in 1849; in 1850, he earned a music degree from Oxford as well. He would go on to become a professor of music at Oxford from 1855 to 1889, writing treatises on composition and composing in sacred genres. He was a fierce defender of Anglican traditions, concerned with protecting church music from popular influences and urging composers to use classical models.

Ouseley was instrumental in making what is now considered “musicology” a legitimate field of study in England, a crusade aided by his high social standing. He was the first president of the Royal Musical Association, founded in 1874 (as just the “Musical Association”). His knowledge of English musical history made him the ideal choice to supplement the English translation of Emil Naumann's *Illustrierte Musikgeschichte*, originally published in German from 1880-5, then as *The History of Music* in 1886. Naumann (1827-1888), born in Berlin to a musical family, studied composition at the Leipzig Conservatory with Mendelssohn and taught at the Conservatory of Music in Dresden. His history book distinguished itself through the use of illustrations, but it ignored musical developments in England. This oversight was common in German music histories, but it was becoming less acceptable to British readers as pride and knowledge of English

music grew. The second edition of Grove's *Dictionary* considers Ouseley's supplement to Naumann's history to be "perhaps...the best History of English Music" at the time of its publication.²⁰

4. Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis (1838-1901)

Another man of the cloth, Hugh Reginald Haweis was born in Surrey and educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. Though not a professional musician, Haweis was an avid concert-goer and socialized with many musicians. He authored several theological books, as well as *My Musical Life* (1884), which combined his loves of music and travel. His most popular book, however, was *Music and Morals*, first published in 1871. It went through nineteen different editions within his lifetime, a testament to its popularity. Whereas many music history books of the period were aimed to educate people who already possessed some knowledge of music and took its cultural value as an assumption, Haweis's book speaks to a wider audience, justifying the value of classical music on moral grounds. Haweis employs many historical examples, drawing his knowledge from the lectures of John Hullah, but he does so in support of a thesis that, among the arts, music exerts the most influence over a person's morals, and therefore "good" music can elevate a person's soul. This argument resonated with its Victorian readership, confronting a pervasive distrust of music as morally degenerate.

Haweis divides *Music and Morals* into four sections: Philosophical, Biographical, Instrumental, and Critical. In the philosophical section, he outlines the theological basis for his aesthetic beliefs. In the biographical section, he imparts the histories of exemplary

²⁰ Hughes-Hughes, "Histories of Music," 410.

composers who lived good lives and therefore produced good music—Mendelssohn is a prominent figure. In the instrumental section, Haweis determines which instruments are the best to play from a moral standpoint. Finally, the critical section delves into behavior at various musical venues, including concerts, festivals, salons, and private performances. Haweis is particularly witty in this final section, satirizing amateur performances by aristocrats with little talent and their fawning audiences. He writes with contagious enthusiasm and religious conviction, an appealing combination for middle-class Victorians.

5. Edward Dannreuther (1844-1905)

Unlike most of the writers discussed in this dissertation, Dannreuther did not begin life as an Englishman. He was born in Strasbourg to German parents, and his family moved to Cincinnati, Ohio when he was a young child. Although his father wanted him to become a banker, Dannreuther went to Leipzig as a teenager and enrolled at the Conservatory. There he took piano lessons from Ignaz Moscheles and befriended fellow student Arthur Sullivan. In this environment, Dannreuther grew to love the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, but he became particularly enraptured by the music of Wagner. In 1863, he was asked to play piano at the Crystal Palace, and Dannreuther ended up living in England for the rest of his life. He founded the London Wagner Society in 1872, which allowed him to meet and befriend his favorite composer.

Dannreuther entered England's musical elite through his friendship with Henry Chorley, who introduced him to George Grove. Dannreuther wrote the entry on Wagner for the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary*. He became a professor of piano at the Royal College of Music in 1895, and John A. Fuller Maitland was one of his students. In the early twentieth century, he was recruited to write for the *Oxford History of Music*, edited by William Henry

Hadow. The *Oxford History* was broken into six volumes, covered by five different authors (including Hadow and Maitland). Dannreuther wrote the final volume, which was on Romantic music. The whole series was intended to provide an alternative to the biographical method of music history, instead showing the development of the art. Dannreuther approached his book as the development of the Romantic idea in music, culminating (not coincidentally) in the works of his heroes, Wagner and Strauss.

6. Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918)

Of the authors discussed in this dissertation, Hubert Parry had perhaps the most direct influence on the English music sound that emerged in the early twentieth century due to his activities as a composer and teacher at the Royal College of Music. Born in Bournemouth, Parry received a Bachelor's of Music at Eaton; because his father did not want him to become a professional musician, Parry went on to study law and history at Exeter College, Oxford. His passion for music could not be extinguished, and during the summer he traveled to Stuttgart to study with English composer Henry Hugo Pierson. After graduating, Parry set out on a career in the insurance industry, but he continued his musical studies with William Sterndale Bennett and Edward Dannreuther. Dannreuther imparted to Parry his love of Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, and especially Wagner, which affected Parry's compositions as well as his interests in music history.

Parry enjoyed great success as a composer; his most enduring composition is his setting of William Blake's poem "Jerusalem," often heard in the twenty-first century at English sporting matches. According to John A. Fuller Maitland, Parry's cantata *Prometheus Unbound* marked the beginning of the English Musical Renaissance in 1880. Many of his compositions have since fallen into obscurity; today, his legacy rests on his

accomplishments as a teacher. George Grove appointed him professor of composition and music history at the RCM in 1883. He succeeded Grove as the Director of the RCM in 1895; his students there included Ralph Vaughan Williams, Frank Bridge, Gustav Holst, Arthur Bliss, and Herbert Howells. According to the current edition of *Grove's Dictionary*, Parry imparted to his pupils a commitment to public service and belief in the composers' obligation to society.²¹

As a historian, Parry wrote several books, the most comprehensive being *The Art of Music* (1893). Historiographer Warren Dwight Allen referred to it as the most "serious" Victorian history; it was the most successful attempt of its time to reconcile music history with an evolutionary methodology.²² Subsequent editions of Parry's history reflect this aim with a slightly altered title: *The Evolution of the Art of Music*. Parry was also a sub-editor of the first edition of *Grove's Dictionary*, contributing over one hundred articles, including ones on the significant subjects of the Sonata and the Symphony. He wrote the third volume of the *Oxford History of Music*, covering the seventeenth century. His views on music history, transmitted through his books and his students, influenced several generations of English scholars.

7. Henry Davey (1853-1929)

Though many discussed in this dissertation belong to the same influential social group, Henry Davey should be considered an "outsider." Born in Brighton, Davey did not have as many social connections to London as the other authors. Although he did travel to London

²¹ Jeremy Dibble, "Parry, Sir Hubert," *Grove Music Online*, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20949>.

²² Allen, *Philosophies of Music History*, 125.

for some work at the Royal Academy of Music, he did not live there, and he was not part of the crowd connected to the Royal College of Music. He even lobbed some criticism toward Grove's vaunted *Dictionary*, saying it "afford[s] the strongest contrasts of careful scholarly research side-by-side with careless hackwork."²³ In his *History of English Music*, Davey complains, "The articles on English music, especially of the earlier periods, are unfortunately among the least valuable parts of Grove's Dictionary."²⁴ The second edition of *Grove's Dictionary* fights back, dismissing Davey's history as being not of "permanent value,"²⁵ though the current edition of *Grove* praises the same book for its thoroughness and depth of original research.²⁶ Davey's most significant contribution to English music history was his co-discovery of Purcell's manuscript of *The Fairy Queen*, found when he was cataloguing the library at the RAM. In any case, Davey was not beholden to the RCM crowd, allowing him the potential to express opinions that did not agree with the consensus.

Like many English musicians of the generation before him, Davey studied in Leipzig; he attended the Conservatory from 1874 to 1877. When he returned to Brighton, he worked as a journalist and a teacher there until 1903. His time outside the capital gave him a different perspective of English musical life than his London counterparts; whereas they were proud to point out the vibrancy of concert culture and the growing sophistication of audiences, Davey saw a general populace that was less enthusiastic about art music and did

²³ Henry Davey, *History of English Music*, 2nd ed., Da Capo Press Music Reprint Series (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 489.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Hughes-Hughes, "Histories of Music," 410.

²⁶ Ruth Smith and Stanley Sadie, "Davey, Henry," *Grove Music Online*, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07266>.

not have the institutions to support new, unfamiliar works. The two books mentioned in this dissertation both strike a corrective tone—in *The Student's Musical History* (1889), Davey seeks to remediate English students' unsatisfactory knowledge of music, offering the examples of Continental composers as models to inspire students to greatness. In *The History of English Music* (1895), Davey points to lesser-known accomplishments of English musicians as a source of national pride. In both books, he constantly compares England to Germany, bemoaning their comparative lack of opportunities to hear great music while warning young composers not to become *too* swayed by German styles, lest they become derivative. The books make bold claims using inflammatory rhetoric, explicitly intended to provoke the emotions.

8. John Alexander Fuller Maitland²⁷ (1856-1936)

The self-described “Doorkeeper of Music,” John Alexander Fuller Maitland was the most influential music critic and historian of his generation. Born in London, Maitland studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he met Charles Villiers Stanford (who, with Hubert Parry, would be the two composers promoted at the forefront of the English Musical Renaissance). After leaving Cambridge, Maitland came into George Grove's network of contacts. He studied music history with William Smith Rockstro and piano with Edward Dannreuther, and he became one of the youngest contributors to the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary*. Maitland edited the appendix to the first edition, and after Grove's death in

²⁷ John A. Fuller Maitland's is occasionally hyphenated as “Fuller-Maitland.” This dissertation opts for the non-hyphenated usage, matching the current editorial policy of *Grove Online*. Also, when referring to him by surname alone in the body of this dissertation, I opt to call him “Maitland” because he signed his editorial comments “M.” In footnotes and the bibliography, however, he is listed as “Fuller Maitland.”

1900, succeeded him as the editor of the second edition. His primary research interest was English music of the 16th and 17th centuries. He was a member of the editorial board of the Purcell Society, and he published an edition of the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*.

In addition to his scholarly activity, Maitland was a prolific music critic. He wrote for the *Times* from 1889-1911, becoming England's foremost tastemaker. In describing his career, historian Meirion Hughes wrote, "He brought to his vocation a high-minded morality, patrician arrogance and snobbery which permeated, and sometimes suffocated, his journalism."²⁸ Maitland pronounced his judgments with an absolute tone, making and breaking careers. He promoted composers not only for their musical talent but details of their personal lives, determining who was suitable to represent the English Musical Renaissance. It was not enough for a composer to be successful—he rejected Edward Elgar (too lower-class, too uneducated, too Catholic), Arthur Sullivan (too preoccupied with popular, "light" music), and Frederick Delius (too German). Instead, he extolled the works of Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford—not coincidentally, two professors at the Royal College of Music. Maitland cemented the idea of the English Musical Renaissance with his 1902 book *English Music of the XIXth Century*, which drew more from his opinions as a critic than his research as a historian. In his book, Maitland advances the idea of a Dark Age in which England is subject to centuries of foreign domination, finally overcome by his favored composers of the EMR. It is overtly propagandistic; as Hughes explains, the two aims of the book are "first, to project and celebrate the RCM's contribution to the national music revival; and second, to rally future support for the Renaissance."²⁹ Maitland's

²⁸ Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press, 1850-1914*, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

narrative framed English composers in ways that continue to affect their reception into the twenty-first century.

9. Ernest Walker (1870-1949)

Ernest Walker, a composer, pianist, organist, and writer, was another advocate of the English Musical Renaissance in the same vein as Maitland, though he was not immediately connected to the Royal College of Music. Born in Bombay, he and his wealthy merchant family moved to England when he was an infant. He earned a Doctorate of Music from Oxford in 1898 and remained based in Oxford for the rest of his life. He was the director of music at Balliol College, Oxford from 1901 to 1925 and organized Sunday concerts at the college, featuring world-famous musicians and offering a venue for several notable English premieres, including some of Brahms's late piano works. His taste in music was more eclectic than the other authors of this dissertation; in addition to German composers such as Brahms, he also championed Debussy, Scriabin, and Rachmaninoff. He promoted native English composers as well, though—like Maitland—he did not approve of Arthur Sullivan.

Walker wrote about music prolifically, editing the *Musical Gazette* and writing reviews for the *Times*. He contributed articles to the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary*, including the entries on Oratorio (replacing the original entry by William Smith Rockstro) and Debussy. His book, *A History of Music in England* (1907), reinforced many of the ideas advanced by Maitland in *English Music of the XIXth Century*. Both authors write about the foreign domination of English music and the Renaissance which flourished at the end of the nineteenth century. The two books differ in tone; whereas Maitland writes from an aloof, omnipotent perspective, Walker's rhetoric is charged with passion. His book reads as a call to action, a direct appeal to continue the cause of England's national music.

D. Conclusion

Even though these history books represent a sliver of England's musical culture, as their authors generally come from similar backgrounds of wealth and education, they nevertheless reveal major shifts occurring in Mendelssohn reception, musical practices, and English culture at large. Each author's history is influenced by his motives, whether he exaggerates English audience's faults to shame them into behaving better, or makes broad claims of English superiority to stoke the flames of national pride. Mendelssohn becomes whatever the author needs him to be: an admirable blend of artist and gentleman, a rigorous mentor, a sentimental antiquarian, an insidious intruder, a ghost who proves difficult to expel. Tracing these different versions of Mendelssohn takes us along a path that reveals England's highest aspirations and deepest anxieties.

II. Mendelssohn in Music History Writ Large

A. Introduction

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic increase in the number of books written on music history, particularly in Germany and England. This surge came after a period which historiographer Warren Dwight Allen characterized as “comparatively sterile”³⁰ yet significant, as Romantic ideas of genius and great men became entrenched in historical thinking. In 1840, historian and philosopher Thomas Carlyle published a series of lectures titled, “On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History,” asserting that “Universal History consists essentially of [Heroes’] united Biographies.”³¹ This Great Man approach suited the discussion of music history in the mid-nineteenth century, allowing composers to become Carlylean Heroes. However, in 1859, another publication shook people’s perception of history and altered the ways in which all histories, including music history, were written: Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. Although Darwin was not the first person to conceive of evolution, his book made the deepest impact on historical thought as historians began to theorize that history was not directed by great individuals but instead unfolded according to natural laws. This biological approach carried the legitimacy of scientific authority rather than the nebulous spirituality surrounding heroism. In the case of music history, writers found it useful to treat musical forms as organisms, tracking their

³⁰ Allen, *Philosophies of Music History*, 101.

³¹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (Chapman and Hall, 1840), 291.

evolution over time. This model allowed for music history narratives to demonstrate continuity, linking each period to the next.

As several musicologists have pointed out, however, the strain of evolutionary thought that found its way into music history was not Darwinian, but rather Spencerian.³² Herbert Spencer, who originated the phrase “survival of the fittest,” argued that the Lamarkian theory of use-inheritance—in which organisms pass on traits according to use or disuse—applied to whole societies and, by extension, all human endeavors.³³ One major distinction between Darwinian and Spencerian concepts is that Darwin stated that evolution is not directed and occurs gradually, whereas Spencer posited that species improved until they reached their best possible, “most evolved” state. These proposed points of stability are similar to what paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould would in 1972 call “punctuated equilibria.”³⁴ As it applies to music, Spencer’s teleological approach encouraged historians to place all music from various cultures into a single continuum of development, which could then be discussed in terms of “more” or “less evolved.” Spencer himself wrote about music and stated that the music of the Chinese and “Hindoos” had not evolved as

³² John Offer, “An Examination of Spencer’s Sociology of Music and Its Impact on Music Historiography in Britain,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 14, no. 1 (June 1, 1983): 33–52; Bennett Zon, “C. Hubert H. Parry, The Evolution of the Art of Music (1893/96),” *Victorian Review* 35, no. 1 (April 1, 2009): 68–72; Rachel Mundy, “Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 3 (December 1, 2014): 735–68.

³³ “Spencer, Herbert,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed January 27, 2015, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/spencer/>.

³⁴ Niles Eldredge and Stephen J. Gould, “Punctuated Equilibria: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism,” in *Models in Paleobiology*, ed. TJM Schopf (San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper & Co, 1972), 82–115, <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ridley/classic texts/eldredge.pdf>.

much as European music.³⁵ Spencerian evolution also tended to give rise to progress narratives, in which, along a particular evolutionary path, the present was seen as an improvement on the past by virtue of occurring later. This model runs contrary to Golden Age narratives, in which the present is viewed as decay from an ideal past.

Although the Spencerian evolution model offered an alternative to the Carlylean hero narrative, in practice, music history writers found it difficult to abandon the Great Man paradigm. Some authors borrowed biological analogies and the authoritative language of science to reinforce the idea of musical masters. Several music histories published in Britain between 1860 and 1905 occupy points in the space between the Carlylean and Spencerian extremes. Most historiographies that examine this issue concentrate on the writers' presentation of the origins of music and their treatment of non-Western musics. Focusing on authors' approaches to Mendelssohn demonstrates the implications of these methodologies as they play out and affect the treatment of later composers in the narrative.

As the authors' methodologies changed, their interest in Mendelssohn also shifted. Authors who were more committed to the Great Man model debated whether Mendelssohn should be considered a "master" or a "genius" and sought justification for their answers in biographical details as well as musical examples. As such, these histories devoted attention to a wider swath of Mendelssohn's activities, including his conducting, performing, and teaching. As the evolutionary model became prevalent, authors became more concerned with placing Mendelssohn within a continuum of composers rather than assessing greatness on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, the emphasis on defining Mendelssohn's original

³⁵ Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative. Library Edition, Containing Seven Essays Not before Republished, and Various Other Additions*, vol. 2 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), 416, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/336>.

contributions to the development of music narrowed writers' focus to his compositions, emphasizing his oratorios and *Lieder ohne Worte* to the exclusion of many of his other works. Mendelssohn's oratorios posed a particular problem for the Spencerian model, as his successful revival of a genre thought to have been perfected in the past challenges the assumption of forward progress through history. Because Mendelssohn's oratorios were central to his British reception, authors could not ignore them and therefore had to develop strategies to address their place in history.

This chapter examines passages about Mendelssohn in five music history books written in the latter half of the long 19th century, books that are representative of the ways in which music historians grappled with the changing expectations of history writing. They are organized from books that are completely within the Carlylean hero paradigm to ones that embrace the Spencerian evolutionary approach:

- Hugh Reginald Haweis, *Music and Morals* (1871)
- William Smyth Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period* (1886)
- Emil Naumann, *The History of Music* (1880-5, English trans. 1886)
- Edward Dannreuther, *The Oxford History of Music: The Romantic Period* (1905)
- Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, *The Art of Music* (1893)

As they are ordered along this spectrum, they are not arranged in chronological order according to publication date. However, they are nearly in chronological order according to the date of birth of the authors, revealing that the authors' generations are more indicative of

their perspective than the year in which they wrote.³⁶ For each book, I discuss the authors' methodologies as described in their books' prefaces, then critique how faithfully they realized their stated intents, then finally how their approaches affected their treatment of Mendelssohn. These five books do not form a comprehensive list of every general music history book published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; by necessity, this chapter omits books that do not cover music history up to the time of Mendelssohn, among them Henry Tipper's *The Growth and Influence of Music in Relation to Civilization* of 1898. I also include a book by a German author, Emil Naumann, which was widely read in English translation and featured a strong, English editorial presence.³⁷ Given Mendelssohn's pedigree and antiquarian interests, comparing the author's appraisals of him allows one to see multiple theories of how history bears upon a near-contemporary composer. Taken together, these books form a representative sample of various strategies employed by music historians when using the past to explain the present.

B. Fully embracing the Carlylean Hero: Hugh Reginald Haweis, Music and Morals (1871)

Hugh Reginald Haweis (1838-1901) covered quite a bit of music history in support of a theological argument in his *Music and Morals*. First published in 1871, *Music and Morals* went through nineteen editions within Haweis's lifetime, influencing many readers'

³⁶ The one outlier in this trend is Haweis, who was born after Naumann and before Dannreuther. Because he was not a historian by profession, one might surmise that he did not keep abreast of disciplinary trends as closely as the others did.

³⁷ Edward Dannreuther was also born in Germany, but he settled in England for more than three decades before publishing his volume of the *Oxford History of Music*.

perceptions of music history. Haweis himself was not a historian, but rather a cleric; he cited the lectures of music teacher John Hullah, delivered in 1861 and first published in that year, as the source of his information on early music history.³⁸ As such, it is unsurprising that the historical portions of his book do not reflect the newest historiographical trends of his era, including the tendency toward biological analogy and progress narratives. Such ideas are irrelevant to the purpose of his book: to demonstrate that music is affected by and can affect the morality of individuals and society. This point does not require the continuity and culmination of a developmental model of history; instead, Haweis uses a succession of examples to illustrate his argument.

By presenting composers as moral examples, Haweis fulfills the Carlylean model of history. Carlyle asserted that “all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world’s history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these.”³⁹ According to Haweis, the composers he discussed were definitely Great Men:

The Composer lives in a world apart, into which only those who have the golden key are admitted. The golden key is not the sense of hearing, but what is called an “Ear for Music.” Even then half the treasures of the composer’s world may be as dead letters to the vulgar or untrained, just as a village school-boy who can read fluently might roam, with an unappreciative gape, through the library of the British Museum. The composer’s world is the world of emotion, full of delicate elations and depressions, which, like the hum of minute insects, hardly arrest the uncultivated

³⁸ H. R. Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 16th ed. (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1892), 126, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433033154869>.

³⁹ Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, 3.

ear—full of melodious thunder, and rolling waters, and the voice of the south wind—without charm for the many who pass by.⁴⁰

Haweis stated that the composer is separated from the mundane society by inherent abilities, the implication being that they are divine gifts and not the result of natural progression. This position does not present composers as part of continuous development; rather, the composers themselves are points of discontinuity within their society.

After a brief outline of early Church music, Haweis selected eight great men to complete the biographical section of his book: Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Schubert, Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. Haweis curiously did not arrange his subjects in chronological order, and he apologized to his reader for not including Bach, whom he said would be “most aptly considered whenever a detailed biography of Mendelssohn comes to be written,”⁴¹ underscoring the importance of Mendelssohn to Haweis’s endeavor. He explained, “The present volume should be taken, not as a complete survey of musical art, but merely as a serious tribute to its importance combined with a group of biographies, suggestive of a few great landmarks in the rise and development of modern music.”⁴² For Haweis’s theological argument, the development of music was largely irrelevant, secondary to the moral characters of the men who produced history.

Haweis’s biography of Mendelssohn is rhapsodic, speaking more to the composer’s personality than his musical output in order to offer him up as a role model:

⁴⁰ Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 51.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁴² *Ibid.*

That keen piercing intellect, flashing with the summer lightning of sensibility and wit, that full, generous heart, that great and child-like simplicity of manners, that sweet humanity, and absolute devotion to all that was true and noble, coupled with an instinctive shrinking from all that was mean; that fierce scorn of a lie, that strong hatred of hypocrisy, that gentle, unassuming goodness.⁴³

Haweis continued his praises for Mendelssohn by separating him from his society:

In this age of mercenary musical manufacture and art degradation, Mendelssohn towers above his contemporaries [sic] like a moral lighthouse in the midst of a dark and troubled sea....In a lying generation he was true, and in an adulterous generation he was pure—and not popularity nor gain could tempt him to sully the pages of his spotless inspiration with one meretricious effect or one impure association.⁴⁴

Haweis's comments ran counter to the evolutionary model of history—rather than being a product of his environment, Mendelssohn became a notable exception. To Haweis, his music was the realization of divine intervention, and because Mendelssohn was a moral person, his compositions imparted this inspiration in its truest form. Drawing upon a larger Victorian trend of linking the arts to spiritual fitness, Haweis appointed Mendelssohn as a pure man producing pure music.

When Haweis got beyond writing about Mendelssohn's personality to discuss his music, his descriptions were non-technical, as in this passage describing an excerpt from *Elijah*: “The melody flows on in the clear and silvery key of E major: it passes like the sweeping by of a soft and balmy wind, never rising, never falling, but gentle, and strong, and pulseless, coming we know not whence, and passing with the ‘tides of music’s golden sea’ into eternity.”⁴⁵ Though evocative, this passage is far from the objective tone adopted by other

⁴³ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90–1.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 358.

authors discussed in this chapter. As Haweis attempted to give credence to a religious principle rather than a scientific theory, his tone suited his aim.

Writers whose histories follow the Carlylean model tended to fixate on Mendelssohn's early death at age thirty-eight. Haweis used this biographical fact to confirm *Elijah* as a perfect work of art: "The *Elijah* destroyed Mendelssohn. ...[T]here can be little doubt that the excitement and incessant toil incident upon so great an undertaking, largely helped to shatter a frame already enfeebled by excessive mental exertion."⁴⁶ Haweis's reference to "excessive mental exertion" has associations with anti-Semitic stereotypes, as musicologist Marian Wilson Kimber has pointed out.⁴⁷ While overall Haweis's presentation of Mendelssohn should not be considered anti-Semitic—indeed, most of his argument rested on Mendelssohn being a devoted Christian—such a phrase demonstrates the extent to which Jewish stereotypes pervaded Mendelssohn's legacy. In this case, Haweis used the idea to suggest that *Elijah* was more than a human undertaking, as Mendelssohn died for his art. Haweis's language points to supernatural explanations more readily than natural ones.

Music and Morals demonstrates that the older styles of history were still circulating in the late nineteenth century; scientific language had not entirely supplanted them. The Great Man approach lends itself more readily to divine explanations than biology, making it suited to Haweis's particular goal. Because Haweis's history is a holdout, it provides a demonstration of how Mendelssohn fares under such treatment. Due to his fastidiously moral image, Mendelssohn holds a prominent position in Haweis's book, a stature gained

⁴⁶ Ibid., 363.

⁴⁷ Wilson Kimber, "The Composer as Other: Gender and Race in the Biography of Felix Mendelssohn," 335–51.

more for reasons of biography than music. Readers of Haweis's book were likely already familiar enough with *Elijah* that they needed no justification that it was a great work, so the book focuses on ways in which Mendelssohn as a person provides an admirable role model.

C. Tinges of Evolutionary Language: William Smyth Rockstro, A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period (1886)

A prolific writer, William Smyth Rockstro (1823-1932) authored several books on music, from harmony and counterpoint to biographies of eminent composers. He also wrote several articles in the first edition of George Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, including a fifty-seven-page entry on "Schools of Composition" which attempted to summarize all major events in music history. *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, published in 1886, likewise spans the entirety of music history. Although Rockstro's language indicates that he was aware of the historiographical trend toward development narratives, the sextugenarian was ultimately unable to adjust his methodology and presented a Great Man narrative that nodded toward evolution but did not incorporate the idea into its approach. As a result, Rockstro's history resembles Haweis's in its presentation of Mendelssohn. Once again, Mendelssohn is a prominent figure for reasons pertaining to his personality as much as his compositions.

In the preface, Rockstro reveals the difficulty in reconciling a history that celebrates the singular achievements of individuals with the growing desire for continuity. He stated, "Side by side with the exoteric history of Art, as set forth in the achievements of the Men of Genius who have devoted themselves to its culture, runs the esoteric record of its technical

development.”⁴⁸ The middle of the sentence is purely Carlylean—the idea that history is “the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world.”⁴⁹ But the end of the sentence exhibits the need for an overarching narrative of progress and development in order to lend coherence to such a wide-ranging project. Because Haweis attempted no such coherence, he had no need for development as an organizational strategy. Rockstro, however, understood the potential of an organic, even evolutionary, analogy. Nevertheless, the very structure of the sentence itself reveals the difficulty Rockstro had in reconciling these two impulses, as he declared that they operate “side by side.” The chapter titles also demonstrate this failure of integration, as some pertained to Great Men (“Chapter XIX: The Seven Lamps”) and others to development (“Chapter XXVI: The Development of the Piano-Forte”).

His discussion of the “Seven Lamps”—a designation that indicates the extent to which Rockstro ascribed to the Great Man approach—demonstrates the tension between Carlylean and Spencerian ideas. Rockstro focused on seven figures in music history: Palestrina, Handel, Bach, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, extolling, “They wrought perfection out of an already-existing style, starting from an entirely new point of departure, having been fully developed—developed to its culminating point of excellence—by the genius who first adopted it as the basis of his operations.”⁵⁰ The idea of something developing to a culminating point accords with Spencer’s teleological view of evolution, but the rest of

⁴⁸ William Smith Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, 1st ed (London: Searle & Rivington, 1886), vii.

⁴⁹ Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, 3.

⁵⁰ Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, 218.

Rockstro's statement challenges this model. As the histories discussed later in this chapter demonstrate, evolutionary approaches to music history place emphasis on continuity, whereas Rockstro describes a discontinuous process. Once a style had been developed to perfection, the Lamps found a new point of departure to work their genius, thus creating a new style.

Rockstro made his critique of evolution-based histories more directly when he proclaimed, "The only test of true greatness—greatness of the highest order—is, immortality. Originality cannot be admitted as a proof of it."⁵¹ Were Rockstro speaking of immortality in terms of influence, then it might be compatible with a biological analogy, as subsequent works could be seen as descendants. In context, however, Rockstro wrote of immortality as a quality of the composition itself, a value judgment difficult to quantify. His specification that originality could not prove greatness was a direct criticism of histories following the evolutionary model, which placed emphasis on the first appearance of features (as we shall see in the discussion of Naumann's history below).

Rockstro considered Mendelssohn one of the "Seven Lesser Lamps," a designation that ran counter to the teleological imperative of progress through time. Together with Schubert, Weber, Spohr, Schumann, and Cimarosa, Mendelssohn is a member of a group that Rockstro regarded highly, but not quite as highly as the earlier seven Lamps. Rather than presenting the later composers as improving upon the old masters, Rockstro suggested that they are unable to recapture the perfection of yesteryear. Rather than a progress toward perfection, Rockstro presented a departure from a past Golden Age.

⁵¹ Ibid., 215.

Despite considering Mendelssohn unequal to the seven Lamps, Rockstro lavished praise on the composer. Mendelssohn takes up a large portion of Rockstro's book: twenty pages, while the next largest section devoted to a single composer is Handel at seventeen pages. This disproportionate length is mostly due to the inclusion of extended passages from Rockstro's previously published *The Life of Mendelssohn*. Rockstro's treatment of Mendelssohn is hagiographic; he extolled how Mendelssohn was marked for greatness at a young age, saying that his childhood letters were written "in language glowing with natural eloquence, and betraying a power of observation scarcely less than miraculous in a boy not yet thirteen years old."⁵² In Rockstro's treatment, Mendelssohn carried these singular gifts throughout his illustrious career—as a conductor, performer, and teacher as well as a composer. Rockstro used the high level of personal detail to reinforce the claim that Mendelssohn was a tremendous historical figure; in more evolutionary narratives, these details would be perceived as superfluous to the development of musical styles and were therefore absent. Like Haweis, Rockstro portrayed Mendelssohn's early death as being consumed by his devotion to the spiritual calling of Art:

[T]hose who knew him and loved him best saw, clearly enough, that he was working far beyond his strength; and, in truth, his duties at Berlin, the conscientious fulfillment of which was rendered almost impossible, by the meanness of intriguing Courtiers, and the blundering fatuity of jealous and unsympathizing officials, but surely, preparing the premature grave in which he was so soon destined to find rest, denied to him, on earth, by the intensity of his devotion to the Art he so passionately loved.⁵³

⁵² Ibid., 349–50.

⁵³ Ibid., 365.

Unlike Haweis, Rockstro did not present this consumption as the result of a single composition. Rather, Rockstro presented Mendelssohn as dying from the incompatibility between his duty to Art and the petty behavior of other humans. Haweis's version placed emphasis on the work *Elijah* as having special, otherworldly status, whereas Rockstro shifted that emphasis to Mendelssohn himself.

Rockstro cited his personal contact with Mendelssohn as a form of authority when writing his biography. For example, he invoked his personal experience to issue corrections: "It is not true that [William Sterndale] Bennett was a pupil of Mendelssohn. They were friends; but nothing more. The strongly-marked difference in their styles of composition ought, alone, to suffice for the correction of the prevalent mistake, which the author is able positively to contradict."⁵⁴ Whereas other music historians of this period asserted objectivity by claiming a "single lofty point of view,"⁵⁵ Rockstro maintained just the opposite position, as befits his approach to history. As he focused on the personalities of the Great Men he discussed, personal contact allowed him to verify traits that eluded recordkeeping. For those who take a more evolutionary approach, however, such contact was viewed with suspicion, as Rockstro was considered too close to his subject to be objective.

Even the chapters Rockstro devoted to developments in music abide by the Carlylean model of history more than the Spencerian model. Rather than discussing compositions as a fossil record, Rockstro used these sections to reaffirm the greatness of his chosen geniuses. For example, in the chapter on "The Development of the Piano-Forte," Rockstro described the rise of

⁵⁴ Ibid., 442–3, footnote.

⁵⁵ Allen, *Philosophies of Music History*, xxvi.

a School in which Ignaz Moscheles and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy shone with a lustre peculiarly their own, each following the bent of their own peculiar genius, always making the most of their Instrument, and displaying its qualities to the utmost possible advantage, yet never sacrificing the claims of Art to the demand for brilliant execution, though the perfection of their *technique* permitted them to set all thought of difficulty at defiance.⁵⁶

This language makes Moscheles and Mendelssohn sound heroic, staunchly refusing to compromise their principles. This is not a passage explaining how these two men fit into the continuous development of piano-forte genres; instead, it is yet another unsubstantiated claim to greatness.

As a music historian operating in the second half of the nineteenth century, Rockstro was aware of the trend toward evolutionary metaphor and its utility in making one coherent narrative for music history. Although he made reference to the biological approach, ultimately he was unable to let go of the more biographical approach to music history that justifies the composers as historical heroes. In the case of Mendelssohn, Rockstro was particularly invested in defending the composer as a towering historical figure, as he was one with whom Rockstro had personal contact. Though prolific, Rockstro's style of writing and approach to history were ebbing in influence. Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of Rockstro's decline can be seen in the first two editions of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*: Rockstro wrote several substantial articles for the first edition, but many of them were removed or replaced in the second edition. As John A. Fuller Maitland, the editor of the second edition of the *Dictionary*, wrote in his entry on Rockstro, "He was too ardent a

⁵⁶ Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, 288.

partisan to be an ideal historian.”⁵⁷ To the later generation of historians (including Maitland), Rockstro’s passionate prose worked against him, as it made his history less trustworthy.

D. Employing the “Comparative Method”: Emil Naumann, The History of Music (1880-5, English translation 1886)

A music history book written by a German and translated into English, Emil Naumann’s *Illustrierte Musikgeschichte* distinguished itself from its predecessors in its use of illustrations. In 1886, it was published in English as *The History of Music*, having been translated by Ferdinand Praeger and edited by Frederick Arthur Gore Ouseley, a professor of music at Oxford. Ouseley exercised a heavy editorial hand, inserting comments into Naumann’s text to correct perceived errors and oversights. Ouseley also supplemented Naumann’s book with an entire section on English music, which he believed Naumann neglected in his original text. Because it included the most thorough treatment of English music up to that time, the translation of *The History of Music* proved very popular. For this dissertation, it should be viewed as reflecting the historiographic conditions of both Naumann in Germany and Ouseley in England; although the word choices are that of the translator and may not always precisely communicate Naumann’s exact intent, the translation shaped its reception among the English-speaking audience.

For the history within the text, Naumann aligned himself with the evolutionary approach, as seen in the borrowed biological language in the explanation of his method in the introduction: “The *comparative method* has been adopted, since it inquires into the laws

⁵⁷ Fuller Maitland, “Rockstro (originally Rackstraw), William Smith,” 116.

of organic and formal development, which in art reign completely, and these have been applied strictly to all arguments advanced.”⁵⁸ Naumann ascribed to the Spencerian belief that evolution applies to human endeavors as well as life forms, and he emphasized the continuity of development above all else. Each composer had their place in a continuous line of succession. This progression also reflects a growing concern in German histories for providing coherence for the entirety of history of an art—evolution proved a useful tool for connecting each epoch to its neighbors. Continuing the analogy, the fossils in Naumann’s record were still composers, not individual compositions, demonstrating that the Great Man method had not yet been completely eliminated.

As a result, Naumann focused a lot of attention on comparing one composer to the next, as is evident in his juxtaposition of Mendelssohn and Schumann. He mused, “We are entitled to treat Mendelssohn and Schumann as twin talents, as we have many of their predecessors belonging to the same period, since they possess many mental qualities in common, and their points of difference are such that each supplies what is wanting in his fellow.”⁵⁹ For Naumann, Mendelssohn and Schumann fell into a convenient “twin” pattern that the author admitted to applying to other pairs of composers. Like any other pattern that applies to multiple cases, this strategy forced Naumann to emphasize some aspects and ignore others in order for the composers to fit into the established standard. The composers were treated in the abstract—although Naumann, like Rockstro, studied with Mendelssohn in Leipzig and had opportunity to interact with both him and Schumann, he did not discuss

⁵⁸ Emil Naumann, *The History of Music*, trans. Ferdinand Praeger, vol. 2 (London, New York [etc.]: Cassell & company, limited, 1886), v. Emphasis in the translated edition.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:1007.

any observations from personal contact with either man. This reserve is markedly different from Rockstro's approach; although Naumann had firsthand experience with both composers, he adopted the "lofty point of view" to lend an air of objectivity to his history. Moreover, even though Naumann maintained that "each supplies what is wanting in his fellow," he meant it in an abstract sense, not a description of the personal interaction between the two composers. The abstraction becomes clearer when reading a passage from another history book, Joseph Schlüter's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, as a point of contrast: "It is highly probable that Mendelssohn's example...contributed to the wonderful improvement on [Schumann's] earlier compositions observable in the [compositions of 1841-1846]." ⁶⁰ Schlüter admitted that the two composers had a direct influence on each other (or at least, Mendelssohn influenced Schumann). As Naumann discussed the composers, one might never suspect that the men knew each other at all.

Naumann exaggerated the differences between Mendelssohn and Schumann by establishing a dichotomy. He summarized his overarching theme: "The distinction between Schumann and Mendelssohn is, in short, that the latter is more entirely classical, whilst the former, like Mozart and Beethoven, exhibits a classical and a romantic side." ⁶¹ Having applied the "Classical" and "Romantic" labels, Naumann unpacked this dichotomy by attributing qualities to his examples: "Mendelssohn, notwithstanding much that is charming and skillfully finished, cannot be compared with his contemporary Schumann as regards

⁶⁰ Joseph Schlüter, *A General History of Music*, trans. Mrs. Robert Tubbs (R. Bentley, 1865), 331–2, <http://books.google.com/books?id=nxQvAQAAIAAJ>.

⁶¹ Naumann, *The History of Music*, 2:1011.

inventive power and passion.”⁶² Although the composers were contemporaries, Naumann placed Schumann further along the scale of development. Naumann relied on familiar descriptions of Mendelssohn as having technical skill but lacking depth, a trope he employed again when comparing the composers’ piano works:

Mendelssohn’s pianoforte compositions are glimpses of an artistic imagination, which never reveal the sentiment of the innermost soul, and in their composition the master has not neglected the opportunities for brilliant execution. Schumann’s instrument was the companion to whom he freely confided his innermost feelings.⁶³

Yet again, Mendelssohn was described in terms of technical proficiency without profundity, whereas Schumann supplies the depth that Mendelssohn was said to lack.

Although Mendelssohn’s Classicism serves to differentiate him from the more Romantic Schumann, his antiquarian interests posed a problem when comparing Mendelssohn to his predecessors. In order for Mendelssohn to be included in the narrative of continuous development through time, Naumann had to reconcile his use of old-fashioned techniques with a presumption of advancement. He did so by championing Mendelssohn’s interest in the past as a form of progress:

To the master’s great merits we must add...the enthusiasm and persistence which he displayed as the champion of Handel and Bach in the first half of the nineteenth century. Mendelssohn, in opposition to the modern school which underrates the music of the past, was convinced that the development of the mind proceeds as little by skips as does nature, and that real progress advances by consecutive gradations. However, Mendelssohn was far from wishing to reduce the musicians of the present time to mere imitators of the great masters of the past, and in *St. Paul* and *Elijah* he has clearly shown what he understands by following the classical writers. Instead of

⁶² Ibid., 2:1009.

⁶³ Ibid., 2:1009–10.

producing a mere imitation of the old masters in his oratorios, Mendelssohn has modernised the style of Bach and Handel.⁶⁴

In this passage, Naumann attributed some evolutionary concepts to Mendelssohn himself, saying that the *composer* viewed history in terms of development and continuity. This justified Mendelssohn's oratorios in that they should not be considered a later composer stepping backward to an older genre thought to have been brought to perfection by Handel, but rather the older genre finding new life in a later era. For this reason, Naumann stressed the novelty and originality of Mendelssohn's oratorios: "These works are not mere copies of the productions of the earlier masters, for their spirit is thoroughly modern, and they show everywhere the characteristic features of the composer."⁶⁵ In both passages, Naumann assured the reader that they are not mere imitations or copies, demonstrating the importance of originality to Naumann's approach.

Because originality is a primary concern when demonstrating the continuous development of music over time, Naumann took care to document when particular features first appeared in music, an undertaking continued by Ouseley, his English editor. This task involved correcting popular misconceptions so that the proper composer might be credited with the development. The more original developments a composer can claim, the greater his importance in music history, according to this approach. For example, Naumann wrote that Mendelssohn was often credited with the invention of the fantasy element, but that Carl

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2:1016.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2:1012.

Maria von Weber is the true originator.⁶⁶ This removed an accomplishment from Mendelssohn and made Weber more compelling than he might otherwise be. In the section on Mendelssohn, Ouseley corrected Naumann twice in a similar manner, both times shifting accomplishments thought to belong to Mendelssohn to other composers. Naumann claimed, “To Mendelssohn we owe the introduction of ‘songs without words’,”⁶⁷ but Ouseley added in a footnote, “This must be taken with some reservation, as it may well be contended that John Field in his ‘Nocturnes’ had in a great measure forestalled Mendelssohn in this particular.”⁶⁸ This claim is important because the *Songs without Words* were extremely popular in English parlor culture. Mendelssohn’s songs continued to be played by generations of amateur pianists, and several English composers followed his lead in the genre. The editor’s note shifts credit for the original concept to Field—an Irishman, which has the additional effect of making a German accomplishment into one for the British Isles. Further along, Naumann wrote, “Mendelssohn was the first to attempt, and to succeed in producing without poetical and vocal aid, grand pictures of nature.”⁶⁹ A footnote added, “The Editor feels bound to demur to this statement, remembering Beethoven’s symphonies, especially the ‘Pastoral Symphony,’ No. 6.”⁷⁰ All of these cases emphasize originality; when the primary concern of the historian is which composer did something first, each claim that is reassigned away from Mendelssohn diminishes his standing in Naumann’s history.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2:1014.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2:1008.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2:1008 note.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2:1015.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2:1015 note.

Ouseley's comments extended Naumann's documentation of innovation. Though pinpointing new developments is not exclusive to evolutionary narratives, such an approach prioritizes originality over other factors, such as Rockstro's nebulously defined "immortality."

Naumann's history demonstrates how some music historians found the evolutionary model useful for organizing history, but they still clung to the composer as the primary consideration. By condensing a composer's entire output into a single slot in the continuous spectrum of progressive development across time, Naumann relied upon generalizations. Biographical details that did not fit the "Mendelssohn the Classicist" story were omitted, leaving a less complete impression of Mendelssohn's activities than any of the previously discussed authors—somewhat surprisingly, considering that Naumann was one of the authors in this chapter who knew Mendelssohn personally.

E. Emphasis on Continuity: Edward Dannreuther, The Oxford History of Music: The Romantic Period (1905)

Overall, the six volumes of the first edition of *The Oxford History of Music*, edited by William Henry Hadow, applied the evolutionary model to music history. In Hadow's preface to the first volume, he acknowledged the precedent for biography-based music histories and explained their limitations:

The histories of music in current use have for the most part adopted a method which is frankly and ostensibly biographical. Their spirit has been largely that of the Saga or the Epic, rousing our admiration for the achievements of princes and heroes, but leaving us uninformed, and indeed unconcerned, as to the general government of the kingdom or the general fortunes of the host. ...[I]t is liable to two attendant dangers:

first, that of ignoring the work done by lesser men; second, that of placing genius itself in a false perspective.⁷¹

Having identified the weaknesses of histories in the Carlylean mold, Hadow made a case for the evolutionary approach:

The history of an art, like the history of a nation, is something more than a record of personal prowess and renown. Tendencies arise from small beginnings; they gather strength imperceptibly as they proceed; they develop, almost by natural growth, to important issues... More especially is this true of music, which among all the arts has exhibited the most continuous evolution.⁷²

In sustaining the case that music exhibits the most continuous evolution, the authors of the six volumes of the *Oxford History of Music* had to smooth over rough edges. By claiming to “deal with the art rather than the artist,”⁷³ Hadow assured the reader that, “[T]he whole ground has been surveyed afresh, and the facts interpreted with as little as may be of prejudice or prepossession.”⁷⁴ This statement claims authority through a purported objectivity gained by distance between the authors and their subjects; again, histories based more on biography tended to value personal contact with their subjects.

With a Spencerian take on music history, the *Oxford History* has an implied teleology, leading up to the final book in the series, Edward Dannreuther’s *The Romantic Period*, published in 1905. Dannreuther brought closure to the series by demonstrating that all of history had been leading to the late-Romantic German composers—the very composers he was dedicated to promoting in England. Dannreuther set out to demonstrate the development

⁷¹ William Henry Hadow, *The Oxford History of Music* (Clarendon Press, 1901), v.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vi.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

of the “romantic element” in music, which he defined as, “[A]n unconscious tendency towards the relaxation of the laws of structure in favour of characteristic details, an almost total rejection of organic design on self-contained lines, and, step by step, an approach to a sketchy sort of impressionism and a kind of scene painting—a huge piling up of means for purposes of illustration.”⁷⁵ Although Dannreuther described the *music* as rejecting organic design by incorporating extramusical elements and not relying on purely musical, self-contained ideas, his comment that the romantic tendency is “unconscious,” therefore not intended by composers, does suggest an organic development in history. He also emphasized that the changes occurred “step by step,” implying continuity.

Reiterating the importance of continuity, Dannreuther sketched out a few branches of the tree in the introduction, naming familiar composers as sign posts:

From Weber’s time, about 1820, a new spirit was in the air and an increasingly rapid process of change and expansion resulted from its appearance. It can be traced from Spohr and Weber to Mendelssohn, Schumann, Gade, Sterndale-Bennett, Rubinstein, and Tchaikovsky; from Berlioz to Liszt; and from Schumann, Liszt, and Berlioz to the ingenious Neo-Russians such as Balakirev, Borodine [sic.], Cui, and Rimsky Korsakov; and again from Wagner, Berlioz, and Liszt to Anton Bruckner, and, *mutatis mutandis*, to Richard Strauss.⁷⁶

Dannreuther’s detailed lines of transmission left no gaps, moving from composer to composer. Like Naumann, Dannreuther often compared adjacent composers in order to justify their position in the lineage. The barrage of names in the introduction used the names of composers as shorthand for the ideas that the reader associated with those composers.

⁷⁵ Edward Dannreuther, *The Romantic Period*, ed. William Henry Hadow, vol. 6, *The Oxford History of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 7, <http://books.google.com/books?id=fvYLAQAIAAJ>.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

This set up implied that Dannreuther will encounter the same problems Naumann faced—having to keep a consistent image of the composer across several genres, reducing the person to a stereotype in order to make him fit. However, within the book itself, Dannreuther organized the chapters by genre and focused on musical works to form his fossil record. This strategy allowed him to describe a composer’s output in different ways when dealing with different genres without running the risk of being inconsistent. Nevertheless, within the discussions of particular genres, Dannreuther lapsed into convenient characterizations and stereotypes.

Like Naumann, Dannreuther compared Mendelssohn most often to Schumann, whom he positioned as more Romantic than Mendelssohn. Dannreuther linked the composers together as they represented a particular stage in the evolution of the Romantic element in music: “With Mendelssohn and Schumann, conscious poetical intentions, admittedly present in many instances, appear on the second or third plane—as it were by implication only—and do not directly touch the musical design.”⁷⁷ Dannreuther’s wording makes it clear that they were merely on the way to something more, and that their successors would find ways to bring the poetical intentions to the forefront, as though this emergence was inevitable. As Dannreuther distinguished between the two composers, he did not use Naumann’s Classicist/Romantic dichotomy. Instead, he presented them in terms of exteriority and interiority, with Mendelssohn a less developed Romantic because he was less inward-looking. This is yet another spin on the perceived lack of depth in Mendelssohn mentioned by other authors.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6:7–8.

Dannreuther's comparison of the artistic value of Mendelssohn and Schumann was consistent across most of the genres he discusses, with the exception of the oratorio. When writing about overtures, Dannreuther claimed, "Schumann, more introspective than Mendelssohn, more of a mystic and an intellectualist, and less open to external impressions, sought to express his personal desires."⁷⁸ He expanded this description in the passage on symphonies:

Schumann's disposition always prompted him to deal directly with passion, and strongly to emphasize the human element; whereas Mendelssohn preferred to depict moods which are, more or less directly, the results of external impressions. In other words, Mendelssohn in his leading symphonies, and almost as much in his best overtures, reveals himself as one who chooses to express, in musical terms, the moods of a 'landscape' or 'genre' painter.⁷⁹

Dannreuther's comment about Mendelssohn as a "landscape" painter was a direct reference to a remark Richard Wagner made about Mendelssohn, which Dannreuther mentioned earlier in the book.⁸⁰ Wagner's context was disparaging and anti-Semitic: Cosima's diary records him as saying, "Such an enormous talent as Mendelssohn's is frightening. He has nothing to do with our musical development. A landscape painter, unable to represent humans."⁸¹ Like Wagner, Dannreuther's characterization of Mendelssohn as being too susceptible to external impressions diminishes his humanity. By implying that he has no

⁷⁸ Ibid., 6:90.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 6: 105.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6: 83.

⁸¹ "[S]olch ein enormes Talent wie Mendelssohn ist beängstigend, hat in unserer Entwicklung der Musik nichts zu tun. Landschaftsmaler, unfähig einen Menschen darzustellen." Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher, Band I: 1869-1877*, ed. Martin Gergor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (München: R. Piper & Co., 1976), 176.

internal depths to express and reducing him to having to borrow or steal inspiration from others, Dannreuther draws on unflattering stereotypes of Jews. As in the case with Haweis, Dannreuther himself may not have intended the remark to be anti-Semitic, but its attachment to Mendelssohn reveals the legacy of anti-Semitism in his reception. One can even see it in his description of Mendelssohn's songs, of which he wrote, "Always facile, graceful, delicately refined, the music seems to stand aloof from the verse, and in many cases it appears as though either the words or the tune might be other than they are. This severance of verse and music marks Mendelssohn's songs as distinctly inferior to Schumann's..."⁸² Dannreuther's description implies that Mendelssohn's songs lack deep understanding of the text and seem false – again, hinting at deception.

Like Naumann, Dannreuther confronted the challenge posed by the nineteenth-century resurgence of the oratorio. As committed as Dannreuther was to his evolutionary approach, he still looked to biography to explain Mendelssohn's success in the oratorio. He explained,

Mendelssohn's strength in oratorio and cantata lies in the mastery of polyphonic choral technique which he had acquired by the study of Bach and Handel, in his facile gift of melody, and in his command of instrumentation. To this may be added a marked inclination towards the formal side of musical art; an instinctive love of form for its own sake; and also, perhaps, the influence of individual temperament, of hereditary bias and the love of religious emotion.⁸³

The phrase "hereditary bias" is one that sounds very scientific and therefore appealed to readers at the turn of the twentieth century. Otherwise, the passage is full of the usual Mendelssohn stereotypes—an emphasis on form and an interest in music of the past.

⁸² Ibid., 6: 274.

⁸³ Ibid., 6, 156–7.

Dannreuther confronted the challenge posed by Mendelssohn's success in a genre thought to have already been fully evolved by the Baroque period. Whereas Naumann stressed the novelty of modernizing the genre, Dannreuther treated Mendelssohn's oratorios as a completely different strain. Echoing Spencerian ideas of culmination, Dannreuther wrote, "The use of the oratorio and the cantata for concert rather than church purposes...reached a climax when Mendelssohn produced his cantata *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* and the oratorios *St. Paul* and *Elijah*."⁸⁴ Dannreuther traced this particular strain of oratorio and cantata through Haydn and Beethoven. This splitting of hairs allowed him to present Handel and Bach as the culmination of the sacred oratorio and cantata, respectively. It reconciled Mendelssohn's success in these genres with an evolutionary model that allowed each type of music to only flourish once.

The oratorio and cantata are the only genres in which Dannreuther pronounced Mendelssohn as superior to his implied successor Schumann, yet Dannreuther framed even this discussion as evidence of Schumann's greater progress toward realization of the Romantic element. After praising Mendelssohn's technique in these genres, he called Schumann's choral technique "often inept, inefficient, and trying to the voices."⁸⁵ Despite these problems, Dannreuther claimed, "Much more than in Mendelssohn's oratorios, the spirit of Romanticism with its innocent striving after emotional expression pervades Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*, *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt*, and other choral works for

⁸⁴ Ibid., 6, 11.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 6:163.

the concert room. The presence of romantic emotion is felt throughout.”⁸⁶ Moreover, Dannreuther presented Schumann’s failures themselves as evidence of Romanticism, as he described *Das Paradies* as “Novel in style, romantic and sentimental in spirit.”⁸⁷ To Dannreuther, Mendelssohn made the older genres *sound* Romantic through his instrumentation and solid choral technique, but Schumann’s efforts were truly romantic though his novelty. Once again, Dannreuther aligned Mendelssohn with externality and Schumann with interiority. In fact, Dannreuther characterized Mendelssohn as naturally un-innovative, writing, “The steadily increasing tendency towards closeness of characterization, which forms the distinguishing feature of the romantic period, is apparent even in the work of Mendelssohn, who was by nature and training averse to innovation or experiment.”⁸⁸ Here, Dannreuther used Mendelssohn as proof of the inescapability of Romanticism, if even someone so disinclined to it was not immune to it.

Overall, Dannreuther’s history bears a lot of resemblance to Naumann’s, with the intervening decades further cementing biological language in music history writing. By setting out to prove the evolution of the romantic element, Dannreuther wrote a more teleological history, forcing him to explain how earlier composers can show strength in areas that later ones do not. In the case of Mendelssohn, Dannreuther framed the hints of Romanticism as aberrations in Mendelssohn’s oeuvre, evidence that Romanticism was unavoidable and thus inevitable.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 6:162.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 6:163.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 6:156.

F. Fullest Realization of Spencer's Evolutionary Model Applied to Music History:

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, The Art of Music (1893)

So far, this chapter has determined the position of each history book on a continuum from Carlylean biographical approaches to Spencerian evolutionary approaches based upon how the author presented his information, not investigating whether the authors themselves were familiar with the works of Carlyle or Spencer. In the case of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, however, he was an admitted admirer of Spencer and corresponded with him directly on matters of music. Several musicologists have written about the effect of Spencer's thoughts upon Parry's approach to music history.⁸⁹ These studies tend to focus on Parry's discussion of the origins of music, not the implications of this evolutionary approach for composers closer to the date of publication. More so than any other book discussed in this chapter, Parry's *The Art of Music* (retitled in subsequent editions *The Evolution of the Art of Music*) avoided composer biography, citing specific compositions rather than composers. As a result, there is little to be said about "Parry's Mendelssohn" as revealed in this book, other than Parry's reliance on familiar Mendelssohn tropes. In a history that fully embraces an evolutionary model to show the development of form, composer biography is irrelevant.

True to the Spencerian model, Parry's conception of evolution is teleological and continuous. In the "Summary and Conclusion" portion of *The Art of Music*, Parry stated, "The long story of the development of music is a continuous and unbroken record of human effort to extend and enhance the possibilities of effects of sound upon human sensibilities, as

⁸⁹ See, for example, Allen, *Philosophies of Music History*, 112; Offer, "An Examination of Spencer's Sociology of Music and Its Impact on Music Historiography in Britain"; and Zon, "C. Hubert H. Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1893/96)."

representing in a formal or a direct manner the expression of man's inner being."⁹⁰ Like Dannreuther's volume of *The Oxford History of Music*, Parry identified "expression" as the *telos* of musical development. Although Parry's book was published twelve years before Dannreuther's, it should be considered further from Great Man concepts because, unlike Dannreuther, Parry did not seek biographical explanations for composer tendencies. Other significant differences between their books stem from the fact that Dannreuther was tasked only with tracing the "romantic element" through a century, whereas Parry sought a unifying thread throughout all music history. Unsurprisingly, the thread he found reflected the concerns of his own era and the Germanic composers he was most interested in.

In order to comment upon Parry's presentation of Mendelssohn, one must look through each genre discussed in his era in order to detect patterns. In theory, Parry's organization freed him from the compulsion to reconcile a composer's entire output with the particular image of the composer the author wishes to advance—a tendency noted earlier in Naumann's history. In practice, Parry still relied upon familiar biographical stereotypes, albeit much less often than the other authors. The "Mendelssohn as classical" trope appeared repeatedly, for example. Moreover, while Parry did not have to fit information into biographical pigeon holes, his approach did commit him to demonstrating continuity of development.

Parry's organizational scheme reduced Mendelssohn's presence, as compared to biographical histories. Parry only discussed Mendelssohn in detail in the sections on oratorio and piano music; he was mentioned in passing as Parry discussed symphonies and Beethoven's scherzos. Even though Mendelssohn does not occupy much space in Parry's

⁹⁰ Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, *The Art of Music* (D. Appleton, 1893), 364.

book, a few patterns emerge. Like Dannreuther, Parry presented Mendelssohn as someone who would not naturally be Romantic but could not help but be swept up in the imperative of the era. Parry called him “ultra-classical by nature,” then pointed out that even he gave names to some of his symphonies.⁹¹ This characterization seeps into Parry’s other comments on Mendelssohn, sometimes subtly. For example, when examining Beethoven’s scherzos, Parry commented:

In ranging wide and free among human characteristics this apparent independence of regularity and rule was just perfectly apposite; and it is interesting to note that Mendelssohn's keen insight divined this point, and that he struck out an equally informal line in his scherzos with much success; for the genuine “scherzo” impulse had a very happy and wholesome effect upon his disposition. But of course he cannot be compared with Beethoven either for variety or scope.⁹²

When Parry wrote, “interesting,” he implied “unexpected,” as Mendelssohn was so closely associated with formal perfection and adherence to rules that the idea of informality and flexibility would strike the reader as unusual; therefore, Parry prepared the reader. This passage demonstrates how Parry presented information that does not necessarily sit well with the stereotypes associated with composers, and he did so by addressing the readers’ assumptions. In order to make the information more acceptable, however, Parry drew upon the limiting “Happy Felix” trope instead.

Parry’s comments on Mendelssohn’s *Songs without Words* reveal where Parry positioned the composer in that branch of musical development. He presented the songs as a major departure from the sonata and a step toward greater expression in pianoforte music, but then he hedged: “Mendelssohn, however, as was natural in his days, rather emphasised

⁹¹ Ibid., 302.

⁹² Ibid., 286–7.

the melody which is the counterpart of the absent voice, and thereby somewhat restricted his resources of expression; so his work may be said to lean in the formal direction more than many later productions.”⁹³ Parry’s reference to form again drew upon a common association for Mendelssohn and his other comments about Mendelssohn’s Classical nature. Though Mendelssohn was permitted to be pushed toward greater expression, his place in the continuity required him to be not *too* expressive yet. Unlike Dannruether, Parry did not cite Mendelssohn’s biography or personality to explain his restricted expression, confining his discussion to traits observable in the music. In Parry’s history, the restrictions on the songs were not an absence of interiority, but instead a product of the age in which they were written.

As Mendelssohn’s reception in England during Parry’s time focused on the enduring popularity of *Elijah*, Parry gave Mendelssohn most attention for his contributions to the oratorio, which Parry described as having a “crisis” in the nineteenth century:

[T]he first important crisis in the modern story of oratorio is undoubtedly centred in the work of Mendelssohn in that department....His critical feeling was subtle enough to hit the true standard of style, just poised halfway between the strict clearness and reserve of instrumental music and the loose texture of the dramatic style; and his scheme proved so generally successful that it has served most composers as a model ever since the appearance of *Elijah* and *St. Paul*. The works are so well known that it is hardly necessary to point out the degree to which they make for expression rather than for mere technical effect. To many people they have long formed the ideal of what such expression ought to be. Mendelssohn undoubtedly emphasized melody, but by no means to the exclusion of other means of expression. ...He applied his resources almost to the highest degree of which he was capable in this line of art, and it naturally followed that his solution of the problem of oratorio has satisfied the constant and exacting scrutiny of most musicians ever since.⁹⁴

⁹³ Ibid., 324.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 307–8.

Parry acknowledged that his readers would be accustomed to reading about Mendelssohn as lacking expression, and he confronted this assumption directly by pointing out ways in which his oratorios went beyond technical skill and are expressive. His statement even corresponded to the one he made about Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, pointing out his emphasis on melody – in the case of the songs, they restricted expression, but in the oratorio, Mendelssohn did not allow this tendency to limit his expressive means. By organizing his history by genre rather than composer, Parry allowed for composers to work differently in different contexts without having to maintain a consistent style that could be stereotyped in a few words. Mendelssohn could therefore be expressive as an oratorio composer while being more concerned with form in his symphonies, without implying any contradiction.

Parry's history acknowledged his readers' expectations of reading about composers while remaining true to the goal of showing the development of musical genres. The familiar names were present, yet they have been decentered. As a result, *The Art of Music* comes closest to realizing Spencerian ideas of evolution as applied to music. Mendelssohn was no longer a major presence, but few individual composers were. Parry engaged with the established perception of Mendelssohn as a classicist, but he did not allow this to restrict his presentation of Mendelssohn's compositions. What might be considered an inconsistency in a biographically-organized history became part of the illusion of objectivity, as Parry could claim to more accurately present compositions, free from previous authors' assumptions.

G. Conclusion

Within the span of a few decades, the style of music history writing changed dramatically, offering authors several options for organizing their narrative. The older,

Carlylean paradigm did not disappear overnight, and writers who worked within the Great Man tradition had various success incorporating newer ideas of biological development. For those who perceived history as the successive stories of Great Men, Mendelssohn proved to be an appealing figure. The qualities that endeared him to the English public—his gentlemanly bearing and religious piety—also made him an effective Carlylean Hero. Mendelssohn's personality and activities accorded with a view of Art as spiritual vocation, at least according to distinctly English values. For Haweis and Rockstro, Mendelssohn factors heavily into their narratives, a Great Man among who stood out among many.

As the Spencerian model gained prominence, however, Mendelssohn became less of a central figure. This retreat mostly occurred because individual composers themselves became de-emphasized. However, there were other factors at play that made Mendelssohn a less appealing figure. To historians committed to progress narratives, Mendelssohn represented several dead ends. Dannreuther and Parry privileged the late German Romantics, placing them at the end of their teleological trajectories, which put Mendelssohn on the wrong branch of the evolutionary tree. Furthermore, authors struggled to find musical features Mendelssohn could be said to have originated. Naumann made a few claims, but they were eroded by his English editor. Mendelssohn's enduring legacy to evolutionists was tied to his achievements in the oratorio, a genre which was lauded in England but losing popularity in other countries. This unique interest in the oratorio afforded Mendelssohn a place in English histories longer than in histories written for Continental audiences.

As these authors grappled with ontological and methodological considerations of what history was and how it should be recorded, they also found themselves caught up in changes in the relationship between music history books and their readers. As the next chapter

demonstrates, music history books became increasingly prescriptive, a means by which audiences learned about which music was worth knowing and how they ought to receive it. This added expectation entailed that writers not only had to consider how to position Mendelssohn's music in relation to that of other composers, but how his music pertains to the authors' intended audiences. In order to address this, authors had to consider the taste of their English readership, leading to observations of the role Mendelssohn already played in the English concert scene and varied opinions on the position the writers argued he should occupy.

III. Felix Mendelssohn and the English Public

A. Introduction

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the idea that audiences had to do more than merely listen to the music in order to experience it properly. To truly appreciate great music, audiences were expected to study music through program notes, public lectures, and history books. In *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, William Weber explains, “Taste was now founded on a body of classical works and invested with the status of truth based on systematic knowledge.”⁹⁵ Such was the environment from which the history books of this dissertation emerged; the public that these authors describe is the public they aspired to create through their writing. The books were manuals for proper audience behavior, instructing readers which composers deserved the most respect.

Weber identifies several trends that affected concert life in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century, all of which affected perception of the nebulously-defined “public” and its similarly vague “taste.” Although the eighteenth century allowed for and even encouraged a mixture of genres on “miscellany” programs, in the nineteenth century concert programs became more homogenous and stratified, leading to an emerging hierarchy of “high” and “low” music.⁹⁶ Increasingly, one’s taste in music came to be seen as an indicator of one’s moral bearing. Mendelssohn entered the scene at a fortunate time amidst these major shifts in audience expectations and behavior, particularly as they affected England. As a conductor and performer, Mendelssohn featured works by Schubert and

⁹⁵ Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, 272.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 235–6.

Beethoven, who were about to be inducted into the nascent canon of classical composers. Mendelssohn actively cultivated an audience that revered dead Germans, then became one himself. In the decades following his death, he benefitted from the conditions that he helped establish in England: the increased presence of deceased composers on concert programs.

Mendelssohn's oratorios were considered "high" music in England even as they were "low" elsewhere in Europe. In Germany, Mendelssohn's emphasis on the oratorio proved to be a liability, as critics perceived it as a "public" genre and therefore not "high" music. As J. Michael Cooper explains in his essay "Mendelssohn Received," the composer's posthumous reception suffered almost immediately due to a shift away from music as "universalized public communication" and toward the Romantic idea that music should express the composer's individuality even at the expense of alienating listeners.⁹⁷ In England, however, the oratorio remained highly regarded, resulting from the enduring pride in Handel's contributions to the genre while in England as well as the genre's connection to religious morals, which aligned with Victorian values. Nevertheless, by the end of the Victorian period, the devaluing of public music reached English intellectuals, and later history books reflect this reevaluation of Mendelssohn's compositions.

In this chapter, I perform close-readings of passages pertaining to Mendelssohn's relationship to the English public from music history books from the 1870s to the 1910s. Taken together, they represent several lines of thought that shaped musical discourse during this period. George Grove speaks as an amateur informing fellow amateurs why Mendelssohn is held in such high esteem. His associate William Smyth Rockstro addresses his readership from a more learned position, drawing authority from personal contact with

⁹⁷ Cooper, "Mendelssohn Received," 244.

Mendelssohn. Charles Hubert Hastings Parry also takes a professorial tone, but his historiographical methods reflect later trends of an evolutionary approach to history, resulting in condescension toward Mendelssohn and his audience. Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis discusses music from a moral and philosophical stance, citing Mendelssohn's behavior as proper for an artist. Finally, John A. Fuller Maitland and Ernest Walker represent post-Renaissance perspectives, which reevaluate Mendelssohn's reception in light of intellectual shifts and nationalistic concerns.

When viewing these writings in aggregate, several trends emerge. Mendelssohn is consistently linked to Handel, though the implied meaning of that connection is open to interpretation. In all cases, this linkage is intended to communicate something about England, either its appreciation of noble music or preoccupation with Germanic styles. Several authors assess Mendelssohn's conscious efforts to improve the state of English music, and the country's readiness for such a program. Another thread running through these debates is the nature of "accessibility," and whether it is anathema to great art, or an artistic pursuit in itself.

B. Mendelssohn as the Next Handel

To several authors, including George Grove, Mendelssohn's extreme popularity among English audiences offered parallels to another German composer who forged a lasting connection with their country: George Frideric Handel. Oratorios form the basis of both composers' legacies, a correlation that was not coincidental; Mendelssohn cannily cultivated this genre precisely because it was so beloved in England. This correspondence offered historians the convenience of placing Mendelssohn within a pre-existing Handel narrative: the German who finds conditions in England more hospitable than in his homeland. By

emphasizing these similarities, the authors legitimated both Mendelssohn and the English public. Mendelssohn's legacy benefitted by being linked to one of the acknowledged masters; as "good" music was quite often "old" music, being tied to the past enhanced his reputation. Furthermore, emphasizing reception in Mendelssohn's biography allowed authors to remind readers that the English assessment of Handel as a master was ultimately vindicated. Likewise, the authors imply, time would validate English audiences' appraisal of Mendelssohn. Even though Mendelssohn had fallen out of favor with Germany, ultimately the English taste would prevail.

All these motives are evident in Grove's entry on Mendelssohn in his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published in 1880:

Ever since Handel's time, Oratorios have been the favourite public music here. Mendelssohn's works of this class, St. Paul, Elijah, the Lobgesang, soon became well known. They did not come as strangers, but as the younger brothers of the Messiah and Judas Maccabaeus, and we liked them at once. Nor [sic] only liked them; we were proud of them, as having been produced or very early performed in England; they appealed to our national love for the Bible, and there is no doubt that to them is largely owing the position next to Handel which Mendelssohn occupies in England.⁹⁸

Grove's emphasis in this passage is not on the works themselves, but on the ways in which they rightfully belong to the English audience. He claims the genre of oratorio as the province of England, due to the country's religious bent and their claim to Handel. He asserts England's spiritual ownership of Mendelssohn's oratorios in particular, due to circumstances surrounding their production, but also the audience reaction. By highlighting the instantaneous popularity and familiarity of the works, Grove presents the audience as

⁹⁸ George Grove, "Mendelssohn," ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), 303.

having an innate affinity for this music. The English public has the capacity to appreciating these works like no other country, which makes the English special.

More than any other author discussed in this chapter, Grove (1820-1900) aligns himself with the public he describes. Grove's entree to London's concert culture was as an audience member, and he amassed his extensive musical knowledge through self-education. As such, he considered himself a musical amateur in the literal sense—a lover of music.⁹⁹ He saw himself as a communicator of music for the public, writing program notes for the Crystal Palace concerts. His *Dictionary* stems from the same motivation as these notes: to educate the concert-going public about good music. In doing so, Grove helps the reader become more like him: an informed listener who gleans musical knowledge through applied study. Because Grove identifies so strongly with the audience, he often conflates his opinion with that of the “public.” Indeed, one may find that Grove's preferences were shared by many people of the time, but his writing simultaneously shaped public opinion as he reported on it. Although Grove can only really speak for himself when writing, “we liked them at once,” and “we were proud of them,” his opinions are amplified when he ascribes them to the larger body of the English public, including the reader.

Grove draws clear distinctions between English and German opinions of Mendelssohn, using extreme examples to state his case. After recounting the success of Mendelssohn's first symphony during the composer's first visit to England, Grove concludes,

It was thus an English body which gave him his first recognition as a composer. The simple applause of London had wiped out the sneers and

⁹⁹ For more on Grove's musical self-education, see Michael Musgrave, ed., *George Grove, Music and Victorian Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 87.

misunderstandings of Berlin. This he never forgot; it recurs throughout his correspondence, and animates his account of his latest visits to us. Near the close of his life he spoke of it as ‘having lifted a stone from his heart.’ The English had much to learn, and he could laugh heartily at them; but at least they loved him and his music, and were quite earnest in their appreciation.¹⁰⁰ Tellingly, Grove emphasizes Mendelssohn’s reception in Berlin rather than Leipzig, where he was conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and founder of the Conservatory. Moreover, the “sneers” Grove refers to were directed at Mendelssohn’s admittedly lackluster opera *Die Hochzeit des Camacho*, which does not make for a fair comparison with his symphony, a genre in which he had more experience.¹⁰¹ These asymmetric examples allow Grove to create starker contrasts between German and English reception. The constant reference to less favorable opinions of Mendelssohn in Germany allows Grove to differentiate English taste from the Austro-Germanic hegemony, a growing concern in late nineteenth-century England. Furthermore, as is typical for Grove, this passage emphasizes a mutual affinity between composer and country that flatters them both. According to Grove, the applause of London is “simple”—that is, it comes naturally and spontaneously to the English audience. As he did with Mendelssohn’s oratorios in the previous passage, Grove lays claim to the composer’s larger body of work due to England’s unique capacity to appreciate it.

Grove’s contrast of reception serves as an indictment of German taste, as the reader is invited to consider how far Germany has fallen when they can no longer acknowledge talent as great as Mendelssohn’s. Grove even waxes biblical, quoting John 4:44: “A prophet hath

¹⁰⁰ Grove, “Mendelssohn,” 263.

¹⁰¹ Although the symphony Mendelssohn performed was No. 1, he had previous practice in the genre with his twelve string symphonies.

no honour in his own country.”¹⁰² By invoking Handel, Grove reveals an underlying desire for Mendelssohn to have become English, just as Handel had become a citizen. Grove engages in such wishful thinking when he proclaims,

[Mendelssohn] had been for long looked upon as an Englishman. He spoke English well, he wrote letters and familiar notes in our tongue freely; he showed himself the provinces; his first important work was founded on Shakespeare, his last was brought out in England, at so peculiarly English a town as Birmingham; and his ‘Scotch Symphony’ and ‘Hebrides Overture’ showed how deeply the scenery of Britain had influenced him. And, perhaps more than this, there were in the singular purity of his life, in his known devotion to his wife and family, and his general high and unselfish character, the things most essential to procure him both the esteem and affection of the English people.¹⁰³

Again, Grove presents the relationship between Mendelssohn and his English audience as mutually affectionate in a way that praises both parties. He commends Mendelssohn for sharing their values and appreciating their culture, and English culture is vindicated by having such an esteemed figure participating in it. Grove projects an image of strength for English musical culture during the time of Mendelssohn. Overall, the entry is representative of a particular strain of Mendelssohn Mania still present in 1880 but quickly fading as Grove’s generation dies out.

Not all writers who link Mendelssohn to Handel do so in Grove’s inflated terms. As a counterexample, James E. Matthew’s *Manual of Music History* makes the same connections as Grove twelve years later, without the hyperbole:

In Germany [Mendelssohn's reputation] has perhaps been somewhat obscured by that of Schumann...; but in this country his music has taken hold of the

¹⁰² Grove, “Mendelssohn,” 279.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 293.

public taste in a way which that of no other composer has done since the days of Handel. In the popular mind *Elijah* occupies a position almost on a level with the *Messiah*, and the two works are considered essential at every musical festival.¹⁰⁴

Like Grove, Matthew compares Mendelssohn to Handel in terms of public reception. Both authors also use Mendelssohn as a means to distinguish English and German national taste. But Grove goes further to assert that the English position is the correct one, whereas Matthew maintains a neutral stance, consistent with the more “scientific” approach to music history that proliferated at the end of the nineteenth century.

C. Mendelssohn Ushers in Progress

Just as Handel initiated a musical revolution in England in the eighteenth century, several authors cite Mendelssohn’s visits as the dawn of a new era in English music of the nineteenth century. For those authors writing during that new age, concert culture was vastly improved from the previous generation. English audiences post-Mendelssohn appeared to be more capable of appreciating great works of music. Accounts of precisely *how* Mendelssohn enacted this change, however, vary according to the authors’ perception of agency in artistic production. William Smyth Rockstro relates how English taste was revolutionized by the obvious quality of Mendelssohn’s compositions, whereas Hugh Reginald Haweis focuses on Mendelssohn’s behavior and consequential responses from English musical institutions.

Rockstro (1823-1895) approached music history from the perspective of a scholar, firmly entrenched in the academic musical establishments of London. He also had personal contact with Mendelssohn, studying with him in Leipzig for one year, from 1845-6—an

¹⁰⁴ James E. Matthew, *Manual of Musical History* (London: H. Grevel, 1892), 358–9.

experience that cemented his reverence for the composer. When relating the premiere of Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* in his "Schools of Composition" entry for Grove's *Dictionary*, Rockstro dramatically establishes the poor conditions which preceded Mendelssohn's arrival:

[T]he weakness, which, fifty or sixty years ago, lowered the tone of English Sacred Music so deplorably, has given place to a more promising power of healthy production. There can be no doubt that this reaction is mainly traceable to the first performance, in 1846, of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah,' an event which impressed the British with deeper reverence for the higher branches of Art than it had previously entertained. The audiences assembling at Exeter Hall knew some dozen Oratorios—the finest in the world—and honestly appreciated them. But, they did not care to hear anything they did not know. They were afraid to pass judgment on Music with which they were not familiar, lest, by criticising it too favorably, they should compromise their taste. The appearance of 'Elijah' put an end to this unsatisfactory state of things. The Oratorio proved to be superb; and no one was afraid to acknowledge it. The reaction was complete. The eyes of a large section of the Musical public were opened....¹⁰⁵

Unlike Grove, Rockstro removes himself from the audience he describes, allowing him to ascribe to them some unflattering qualities even while praising their judgment. Rockstro's depiction of English audiences before *Elijah* alludes to Handel's contributions, noting that the audiences "honestly appreciated" the finest oratorios in the world. Thus they are sophisticated consumers of music. Rockstro draws upon England's national pride in having a vast commercial empire, able to import the best of anything from anywhere. In the time that elapsed since Handel's tenure, according to Rockstro, audiences became familiar with a particular set of oratorios—both the music within them and the socially acceptable responses

¹⁰⁵ William Smith Rockstro, "Schools of Composition," ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1883), 307.

to them. The major weakness of this audience is the fear of breaching propriety by expressing a wrong opinion.

Fortunately, as Rockstro tells it, *Elijah* was so obviously good that everyone immediately recognized that it was high Art, and this recalibrated their taste such that they were able to better discern great music from that point onward. Unlike Grove's article, which presents Mendelssohn and the English audience as mutually appreciative with an equitable exchange of culture, Rockstro suggests a lopsided relationship that privileges Mendelssohn because he produces great art. Rockstro describes Mendelssohn's rehabilitation of the public taste as nothing short of miraculous. Given that Rockstro had studied with Mendelssohn, it is not surprising that his version of events flatters Mendelssohn more; furthermore, Rockstro's telling demonstrates the importance he places on particularly great individuals. For Rockstro, the indication of improvement was the audience's ability to engage with "higher branches of Art" without filtering it through a predetermined consensus opinion. Mendelssohn thus sparks an intellectual and aesthetic achievement for the public.

Another book that raises Mendelssohn as a luminary in English music is Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis's *Music and Morals*, first published in 1871. Haweis, an Anglican cleric and music enthusiast, considers the philosophical and theological aspects of music, concluding that music had the potential to be spiritually uplifting. Mendelssohn, whom Haweis describes as "a moral lighthouse in the midst of a dark and troubled sea,"¹⁰⁶ becomes a beacon for England:

We may fairly date the present wave of musical progress in this country from the advent of Mendelssohn. It is now more than thirty years ago since he appeared at the Philharmonic, and, both as conductor and pianist, literally

¹⁰⁶ Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 90.

carried all before him. He brought with him that reverence for art, and that high sense of the artist's calling, without which art is likely to degenerate into a mere pastime, and the artist himself into a charlatan. The young composer read our native bands some useful lessons.¹⁰⁷

Like Rockstro, Haweis credits Mendelssohn with introducing a “reverence” for art.

However, Rockstro ascribes the change to the integrity of Mendelssohn’s compositions and the inherent power of art, whereas Haweis presents the change in human terms, as Mendelssohn leads by the example of his personal conduct.

Whereas Rockstro describes an instant conversion to higher musical standards, Haweis posits that England’s progress took a long time and required institutional change. He writes,

At a time when Schubert was known here only by a few songs, Mendelssohn brought over the magnificent symphony in C (lately performed at the Crystal Palace), together with his own *Ruy Blas* overture in MS. The parts of Schubert's symphony were distributed to the band. Mendelssohn was ready at his desk—the baton rose,—the romantic opening was taken,—but after the first few lines, signs of levity caught the master’s eye. He closed the score;—certain gentlemen of the band evidently considered the music rubbish, and amidst some littering, the parts were collected and again deposited in the portfolio.

“Now for your overture, Mendelssohn!” was the cry.

“Pardon me!” replied the indignant composer; and, taking up his hat, he walked out of the room.

Ruy Blas went back to Germany, but the lesson was not soon forgotten.¹⁰⁸

This anecdote reaffirms Mendelssohn’s reverence for high art and allows Haweis to portray him as a man of uncompromising standards. Moreover, his outburst was prompted by poor

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 490.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 491.

treatment of a Schubert symphony and not one of his own compositions, which further emphasizes his devotion to art and not self-aggrandizement. The anecdote also gives a vivid illustration of the poor conditions of English musical culture at that time—even the professional musicians are so ignorant of Schubert that they cannot recognize his work for the masterpiece it is. Once again, Haweis refers to this moment as a “lesson” for the English ensemble, with the implication that the institution learned from the incident.

Haweis notes two ways in which Mendelssohn impacts the concert culture of London: he introduces higher standards of both repertoire and performance technique. Both conditions serve to make the public more discerning. Of course, what constitutes “better repertoire” is subjective; for Haweis, it entails dead, Germanic composers who were part of the nascent canon:

The immense advance of the popular mind is remarkably illustrated by the change in the ordinary orchestral programme. We have now Mozart nights, and Beethoven nights, and Mendelssohn nights. Not bits of symphonies, but entire works are now listened to, and movements of them are encored by audiences at Covent Garden. We have heard the Scotch symphony and the “Power (Consecration?) of Sound” received with discrimination and applause. A certain critical spirit is creeping into these audiences, owing to the large infusion of really musical people who are on the look-out for good programmes, and invariably support them.¹⁰⁹

Haweis proudly declares that this critical spirit informs public opinion about the quality of performance, as well:

The ears of the public have grown sharp. When musical amateurs now go to hear a symphony, they know what they go for, and they know, too, whether they get it. They hear the Italian Symphony by the Crystal Palace band on

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 496, parentheses in the original.

Saturday afternoon, and not long afterwards at the Philharmonic, and there is no possibility of evading a comparison.¹¹⁰

Given that Haweis traces these favorable conditions to Mendelssohn's visits, it is not surprising that Mendelssohn's compositions feature prominently as examples (along with a symphony by Spohr). According to Haweis's history, Mendelssohn cultivated the environment in which his music could be best appreciated. Haweis praises the English public for engaging intellectually with music, and he presents Mendelssohn's symphonies as appropriate subjects for aesthetic debate.

Both Rockstro and Haweis credit Mendelssohn's influence with instigating a major positive shift in the discriminating taste of the English public. For Rockstro, the change was immediate, placing the impetus on Mendelssohn in the act of composition. To Haweis, however, the change was gradual and filtered through England's own musical institutions. Mendelssohn was a prominent figure, but a bulk of the improvement came from the efforts of the English people themselves. The audience described in Haweis's book—and the audience reading the book—has much more justification to feel proud.

D. Accessibility—at the Expense of Depth?

Several authors, including Grove, offered extramusical reasons for why Mendelssohn's compositions garnered such popularity in England, but many sought explanations within the music. Mendelssohn seemed to strike a balance between artistry and accessibility. His most famous works revealed the quality of his training and meticulous attention to craft—multiple authors apply “perfect” as a descriptor, even if only in reference to form. Yet his learnedness

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 497.

did not result in obscurity, as apparently audiences found his compositions listenable. Depending on the author, this listenability either enhanced or detracted from Mendelssohn's claim to genius. As the writers debate what type of person is capable of producing great art, their comments reveal a parallel disagreement over what type of people are capable of understanding great art. Both discussions are fraught with elitism as the authors casually refer to a nebulously defined "average taste."

According to Haweis, Mendelssohn intentionally balanced accessibility and aesthetic integrity, confirming his mastery of the art. In the passages from *Music and Morals* quoted above, Haweis cites Mendelssohn's symphonies as music accessible enough to be understood by amateurs yet deep enough to sustain intelligent debate. In reference to *Elijah*, he writes, "No man ever wrote more in the presence of his public and less in the seclusion of his study than Mendelssohn, and in no other work has he so finely calculated the capacities of the ordinary music-loving mind, and so richly poured forth treasures which the most experienced musician will find, if not inexhaustible, yet always perfect."¹¹¹ Haweis places "the ordinary music-loving mind" in opposition to "the most experienced musician." Moreover, he implies that the former is limited (in that they have calculable capacities), whereas the latter is boundless (able to explore the inexhaustible). Beyond that, these descriptors remain undefined. To Haweis, *Elijah* better satisfies the ordinary taste because its unspecified "treasures" are not inexhaustible, yet this limitation is deliberate; part of the composer's "perfection" was the execution of the intent to reach the average listener without lowering the composer's standards. This endeavor does not weaken the artistic integrity of

¹¹¹ Ibid., 338.

the work but rather strengthens it, as Haweis indicates accessibility was a parameter of Mendelssohn's choosing.

To other authors, however, condescending to the average listener precludes a musical work from greatness. Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, an eminent composition and music history professor at the Royal College of Music, tended to privilege music that required effort from the listener. Although Parry's assessment of Mendelssohn's symphonies in Grove's *Dictionary* likewise refers to "perfection," Parry presents the issue of accessibility in a different light:

The perfection of his art in many respects necessarily appeals to all who have an appreciation for first-rate craftsmanship; but the standard of his ideas is rather fitted for average musical intelligences, and it seems natural enough that these two circumstances should have combined successfully to attain for him an extraordinary popularity. He may fairly be said to present that which appeals to high and pure sentiments in men, and calls upon the average of them to feel at their best. But he leads them neither into the depths nor the heights which are beyond them; and is hence more fitted in the end to please than to elevate.¹¹²

Whereas Haweis praises Mendelssohn's ability to meet the average taste, Parry (1848-1918) places that observation behind a dismissive "but." Haweis implies that Mendelssohn has the ability to write beyond the average listener yet chooses not to; Parry implies that his capabilities are limited. Parry presents Mendelssohn's success as a matter of coincidence rather than calculation, as circumstances naturally converge to make him popular. This passage reflects the evolutionary tinge to Parry's conception of history. In his book *The Art of Music*, published in 1893, Parry takes a more "scientific" approach to writing music

¹¹² Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, "Symphony," ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1889), 33.

history by framing it as the natural development of genres rather than the manifest genius of exceptional individuals.¹¹³ Parry's entry on the Symphony, published in 1889 in the final volume of Grove's *Dictionary*, establishes a more detached tone than Grove's entry on Mendelssohn, published almost a decade prior. Beyond demonstrating differences in personal style between the two authors, these passages exemplify the paradigm shift occurring in music history writing at the time. As a professor of music history at the Royal College of Music, Parry disseminated his approach to history to the next generation of English musicians.

The fictive objective perspective that Parry adopts is elitist, as he places distance between himself and the audience, particularly the "average musical intelligence." He condescendingly suggests that Mendelssohn's audiences have fooled themselves into merely *feeling* as though they have been elevated. They elicit pleasure from thinking that they have been spiritually uplifted without exerting the effort to actually go anywhere. Whereas Rockstro and Haweis present Mendelssohn as a figure who motivates audiences to expect more from art, Parry contends that he meets their prepossessed expectations. He affirms, "Mendelssohn did good service in supplying a form of symphony of such a degree of freshness and lightness as to appeal at once to a class of people for whom the sternness and power of Beethoven in the same branch of art would often be too severe a test."¹¹⁴ Parry implies that this particular class of people has no desire to subject themselves to the test of Beethoven and are content with what Mendelssohn has given them, and nothing more. Parry presents both the composer and his audience as inherently limited.

¹¹³ See Allen, *Philosophies of Music History*, 112.

¹¹⁴ Parry, "Symphony," 33.

Although Grove concedes that some of Mendelssohn's compositions may lack depth, he presents them as vehicles through which the public discovers greater art. In his entry on the composer, he notes, "[Mendelssohn's] Songs may be said to have introduced the German *Lied* to England, and to have led the way for the deeper strains of Schumann, Schubert, and Brahms, in English houses and concert-rooms."¹¹⁵ Grove delineates an explicit hierarchy: Schumann, Schubert, and Brahms are "deeper" than Mendelssohn, at least in the genre of song. Mendelssohn did England a service by leading the public to more challenging German music, and he did so precisely by being less challenging. His perceived lack of depth was, to some, the very mechanism that allowed him to be such an effective musical ambassador. Key to Grove's presentation is the assumption that the audience did in fact follow up on the possibilities offered by Mendelssohn and sought out the music of other composers. This activity is at odds with the way Parry construes Mendelssohn's audience. Whereas Grove delineates a hierarchy of composers, Parry presumes a hierarchy of audiences as well. Grove states that the same listeners who appreciate Mendelssohn go on to discover deeper composers; Parry implies that these audiences stick to their stations and remain segregated.

Both Grove and Haweis describe an upwardly-mobile audience in regard to taste. They portray the English public as actively seeking to better themselves, with Mendelssohn providing an ideal conduit for improvement. According to Haweis, the audience can plumb the depths of the art within Mendelssohn's compositions themselves; Grove, on the other hand, positions Mendelssohn as a stepping stone to even greater works. In either case, the English audiences they describe take deliberate steps toward becoming a musically discerning nation. For Parry, however, the landscape of English audiences is fixed; certain

¹¹⁵ Grove, "Mendelssohn," 303.

segments of the public will never have the capacity to appreciate great music. Mendelssohn increases the musical activity of the nation by giving the public something they enjoy, but it ultimately does not improve their aesthetic discernment.

E. Narrowing of Taste and England's Obsession with Elijah

Parry's approach to music history highlights a generational difference between himself, born in the late 1840s, and Grove and Rockstro, both born in the early 1820s. Time inevitably progresses, and Parry's generation became the new establishment. Parry succeeded Grove as head of the Royal College of Music in 1895, further embedding his historiographical methods into the institution. The appearance of objectivity became increasingly common in music history writing, encouraging the adoption of a detached tone to imply impartiality.

When it came to describing Mendelssohn's initial audience, this rhetorical distance became increasingly valid, as the people old enough to remember Mendelssohn's visits to England died out or otherwise retreated from public life. Parry was born the year after Mendelssohn's death; younger authors were even further removed from personal encounters with the composer. Whereas Grove asserted himself as part of the audience that witnessed premieres of Mendelssohn's compositions, allowing him to ascribe his personal opinions to the larger body of the public, writers at the turn of the century reevaluated Mendelssohn's merit as a composer and, consequently, the audience's reaction to him. Such authors also promoted the idea of an English Musical Renaissance occurring in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In such an environment, the audience's adoration of a German composer was unpalatable. Rather than portraying Mendelssohn as exposing the audience to deeper

music, the younger authors argue that the public taste narrowed after Mendelssohn's visits, fixating on *Elijah*.

In *English Music of the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1902, music critic John A. Fuller Maitland (1856-1936) places Mendelssohn's popularity within a cyclical pattern of audience behavior. His writing carries the same detachment masquerading as objectivity as Parry's; likewise, he writes removed from the public. Having appointed himself the "Doorkeeper of Music" and ultimate tastemaker for the nation, Maitland assumes the role of an impartial observer of public behavior—even though he was the ultimate insider and had considerable influence over audience opinion.

Maitland describes the idolization of foreign composers such as Mendelssohn as "dominations" of English music, and he notes that each domination results in an inexplicable contraction of the repertoire:

The second of the foreign dominations with which this chapter is concerned is that of Mendelssohn, which, beginning with the vogue of his 'Songs Without Words' in every family in the land, reached its culminating point in the production of *Elijah* at the Birmingham Festival of 1846. In all the dominations it is remarked that the public chooses one work as so far surpassing all the rest by its composer that they may be disregarded. Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* was given in 1836 in England, and repeated with success in the next few years; but it has never been accepted with the same enthusiasm as has been bestowed upon the later work...[T]his curious habit...seems to be quite peculiar to the English public. *Elijah* is undeniably a very great work, but its superiority to *St. Paul* is not obvious enough to account for the difference between the two in popularity.¹¹⁶

Maitland's passage describes Mendelssohn's popularity in both public and private genres, demonstrating how thoroughly he dominated English musical culture at the middle of the

¹¹⁶ John A. Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century* (New York, London: E. P. Dutton & co.; G. Richards, 1902), 69.

century. Maitland's description of the reception of *Elijah* offers a compelling counterpoint to Rockstro's account. In Rockstro's description, *Elijah* was perfect, so its superiority was apparent to every listener. Maitland critiques this view, suggesting that when one lets go of the dogmatic assumption that *Elijah* is the standard by which all oratorios must be measured, one finds that it is not appreciably different from Mendelssohn's previous oratorio.

The uproar over *Elijah*, Maitland concludes, is not due to intrinsic qualities of Mendelssohn's composition but due to an extramusical factor: a recurring quirk of English audience behavior. Maitland even posits that, even without Mendelssohn, Louis Spohr would have stepped into the same role and dominated English music in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ By presenting foreign domination as an inevitable outcome of audience behavior regardless of the composer, Maitland's model flips the relationship between audiences and great works. To Rockstro, great works become popular; to Maitland, popular works become recognized as great. Whereas Grove writes of the audience with the expectation that history will vindicate their idiosyncratic tastes, Maitland presents an audience that is irrational and misguided. Yet Maitland proclaims that the audience is shedding this bad habit, writing, "Like the ricochets of a stone along the surface of water, the periods of foreign dominations in music become shorter and shorter as time goes on, and the music of England takes a higher and higher place."¹¹⁸ He indicates recent popularity of Charles Gounod as evidence both of the cycle perpetuating and winding down. Like all other writers discussed so far in this chapter, Maitland presents current conditions as an improvement over times in recent

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 71–2.

memory. By Maitland's generation, time had pushed Mendelssohn's popularity from the auspicious present into the troubled past.

Even within Maitland's sphere of influence, however, not everyone was convinced that Mendelssohn's popularity had waned enough. In the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Maitland, Ernest Walker (1870-1949) wrote an entry on Oratorio to replace the one by Rockstro in the first edition. Like Maitland, Walker promoted the idea of a contemporary renaissance; his *A History of Music in England* (1907) would become the accepted narrative of the English Musical Renaissance for most of the twentieth century.¹¹⁹

In his entry on the oratorio, Walker agrees with Maitland's assessment that *Elijah's* popularity caused widespread misevaluations of Mendelssohn's other compositions. He amplifies Maitland's presentation of mid-century English audiences as misguided and flawed by complaining that the public's continued obsession with *Elijah* leads to ignorance of other composers, as well:

And we can best realise [Mendelssohn's] position when we reflect on the countless sacred works written by all sorts of composers... [T]hey have all gone down to decay, but 'Elijah' survives, because it makes this appeal of being the work of a great musician. But it cannot, as a whole, survive for ever, and it is only to be hoped that its fall will not drag Mendelssohn's real masterpieces with it. The whirligig of time in the long run puts down the things which have got no business to be at the top, but it does not at all follow that it will raise the things that have got no business to be at the bottom. Who, for example, of the thousands of English people who melt over 'If with all your hearts' know anything of their countryman William Byrd?¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940*, 220.

¹²⁰ Ernest Walker, "Oratorio," ed. John A. Fuller Maitland, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910), 503.

Walker concedes that Mendelssohn has produced some “real masterpieces,” but *Elijah* may not actually be among them. He posits that over-rated music will eventually be put in its proper place, though the same indiscriminate audience behavior that pushed it to become more popular than it merited could also indiscriminately impugn the rest of Mendelssohn’s work in the inevitable backlash. This reaction is due to the audience basing musical judgments on name recognition rather than educated evaluation of the music. The days of discernment touted by Grove, Rockstro, and Haweis never actually materialized, according to Maitland and Walker. But whereas Maitland discusses the public obsession with Mendelssohn as a phenomenon contained to the past, Walker presents it as a problem that persists in his own time.

Finally, Walker expresses some nationalistic concern that Mendelssohn’s popularity has robbed English audiences of opportunities to hear music by their own countrymen. His reference to William Byrd comes on the heels of a recent “rediscovery” of Tudor music, as research into older English music became a priority for music historians in order to shore up their own musical past. This concern extends to contemporary English composers as well, which forms the basis of my discussion in the next chapter.

F. Conclusion

By reading the histories as manuals for proper audience etiquette, both the underlying values of the Victorian era and the individual interests of the authors come into focus. Given Mendelssohn’s prominence among the performances in England, both professional and amateur, it comes as no surprise that the responses to his music are numerous and varied. Whether the authors praise or admonish English audiences, nearly all make two underlying assumptions: First, that English audiences are different from the rest of Europe, and second,

that England's relationship to Mendelssohn is likewise unique. Their observations of the public's reception of Mendelssohn reveals authors' concerns about English music as it was and how they believed it ought to be. The legacy of English music during the Victorian era seemed inextricably bound to Mendelssohn, circumstances that writers took great care in explaining, particularly when it came to the effects on their own composers. Considerations of Mendelssohn's influence on English composers form the topic of chapter 4.

IV. Mendelssohn's Perceived Effect on English Composers

A. Introduction

[A composer] will create works which at once appeal to every one who hears them, and which attain and retain such a powerful influence over the public at large that thenceforward they are made into a standard from which no departure must be made by their successors. For these successors it is fatal to leave the well-worn road; the slightest attempt at originality is held as a blasphemous innovation upon the established pattern, and those who dare to express anything beyond what appears in the popular idol's creations are foredoomed to failure....[This] kind of influence, whereby slavish copying of the model is imposed upon the younger men as the only means by which success can be reached, is almost wholly bad; the repression of new ideas, the insistence on conventionality, and the hopelessness of getting a hearing for anything outside the well-worn pattern, cannot fail to repress all those in whom there may be a spark of genius, and to encourage the race of mere copyists, who are contented to obey the dictates of the public.¹²¹

In *English Music in the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1902, critic and historian John A. Fuller Maitland confronts England's historical preference for works by foreign composers. As one of the chief promoters of the English Musical Renaissance (EMR), Maitland weaves this facet of English taste into a larger narrative of rebirth, tinged with the spirit of revolution. In order to tell a story of successful rebellion, Maitland establishes the conditions of oppression that necessitated the radical change. The above passage comes from the chapter titled "Foreign Dominations," but interestingly, the foreign composers themselves are not the oppressors—rather, the English public is. Maitland describes the "public at large" as though it were a great hive-mind imposing its will on composers. His rhetoric is both religious—"blasphemous," "idol"—and political—"slavish," "impose,"

¹²¹ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 61–2.

“repress,” “obey the dictates.” These terms reflect the concerns of English nationalists as Germany accumulated more economic and political power coming into the twentieth century.

Maitland was a hugely influential figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had multiple platforms to advance his particular framing of the EMR and the preceding decades. He had been one of the youngest contributors to the first edition of George Grove’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, merely 23 years old when Grove invited him to participate in the massive undertaking. He became the editor of the second edition of what was then re-titled *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. He also wrote for the *Times* from 1889-1911, becoming its chief music critic.¹²² As historian Merion Hughes observes, “No other critic ever matched Maitland’s determination to help build and then defend the walls of English music.”¹²³ Hughes and fellow historian Robert Stradling credit Maitland’s *English Music in the Nineteenth Century* with pushing the EMR into the mainstream of musical discourse.¹²⁴

Maitland’s account of recent musical history resonated with larger cultural emphasis on Empire building and wariness toward Continental influences. Others fell in line with this compelling narrative of musical rebirth. This narrative coalesced over decades through concert reviews and other articles in periodicals, shifting according to the needs of the music critic in each situation. *English Music in the Nineteenth Century* gives Maitland the opportunity to fix the details, presenting a stable version of history to explain the conditions

¹²² For more biographical information on Maitland, see chapter 1.

¹²³ Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press, 1850-1914*, 30.

¹²⁴ Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940*, 45.

of the present. According to the “Renaissance” narrative, England entered a Dark Age of music after the death of Henry Purcell, as audiences overwhelmingly preferred music by foreign composers and performers. The Dark Age ended in the early 1880s due to a combination of the rediscovery of English folk music, the compositions of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford, the establishment of the Royal College of Music, and the cultivation of a more educated musical taste among the public at large. The story of England reclaiming its rightful place in the realm of music was intended as a parallel to the country’s political situation—a casting-off of German influences and reassertion of English identity.

Although this Renaissance narrative became the accepted version of English music history by authors of Maitland’s generation, older historians portray nineteenth-century English composers differently. The same composers whom Maitland cites as evidence of the continuing Dark Age are considered by other writers to be luminaries. Regardless of their age, however, the authors agree upon one point: English composers ought not to imitate Mendelssohn at the expense of originality. The extent to which *specific* English composers were doing so was a matter of much debate. As always, the authors’ own biases and motivations lie behind the stories they tell, as they position composers in relation to Mendelssohn in whatever way pushes the advancement of English music in the direction they want it to go.

The degree to which English composers *actually* imitated Mendelssohn has been a scholarly topic for over half a century. In a 1962 article “Mendelssohn’s Influence on English Music,” Nicholas Temperley assesses music from nineteenth-century England to

determine what style traits, if anything, can be traced to Mendelssohn.¹²⁵ He concludes that the weaknesses labeled “Mendelssohnian” by critics were actually caused by attempts to imitate Mozart’s instrumental music, and they existed in England before Mendelssohn ever visited.¹²⁶ He catalogues a list of qualities of early Victorian music considered “Mendelssohnian”: “the over-use of the dominant seventh, indulgence in appoggiaturas and feminine endings for the sake of mere prettiness, too great reliance on four-bar and eight-bar phrases, and neglect of verbal rhythms.”¹²⁷ While it is useful to have these parameters in mind when reading period sources, for the purposes of this chapter, actual evidence of influence is irrelevant. What matters to the current discussion is the way in which the authors relied upon the trope of Mendelssohn’s purported influence to advance their own narratives.

This chapter explores how Mendelssohn’s legacy affected the presentation of English composers in music histories by English authors from 1870 to 1910. It begins by examining comments made by authors writing about English composers *en masse*, noting general tendencies without attaching them to specific names. Next, I analyze comments by multiple authors about three specific English composers, dedicating a section to each:

- **William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875)**, the most famous English composer of his generation. According to Maitland, that fame was a result of his naturally-Mendelssohnian style. However, some earlier writers emphatically defend Bennett’s originality and deny Mendelssohn’s influence.

¹²⁵ Temperley, “Mendelssohn’s Influence on English Music.”

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

- **Henry Hugo Pierson (1815-1873)**, a contemporary of Bennett's whose work gained more acceptance in Germany than in his home country. Maitland argues that his lack of success in England was due to the public's Mendelssohn-worship, but earlier writers offer no such explanation for his tepid English reception.
- **Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900)**, the most famous English composer of the generation following Bennett—troublingly for the authors, he built his fame on decidedly non-serious music. All of the authors struggle to reconcile the style that granted Sullivan his lofty position with the narrative of England's achievements in high art. Maitland positions him as a transitional figure, following the Mendelssohnian legacy as a youth before shedding the influence and finding his own style in serious compositions.

Although the history books discuss other specific composers in addition to Bennett, Pierson, and Sullivan, these composers offer three different vantage points from which to observe how Mendelssohn's legacy threatens the establishment of a distinctly "English" music. The biographies of nineteenth-century English composers eventually melded into a single tale of foreign domination and revolution, but they had not always been this way.

I examine the treatment of Bennett, Pierson, Sullivan, and other English composers by authors spanning multiple generations. Younger writers more readily adhered to the Renaissance narrative than their predecessors, who expressed more varied opinions of composers from their own generation. In addition to considering the generation to which each author belongs, I examine the authors' comments in light of their association with the EMR. Because his version of history gained widespread acceptance, Maitland serves as the point of departure for this chapter. I also present alternatives to the Renaissance narrative,

from authors of previous generations, and by contemporaries of Maitland who were not directly promoting his vision of the EMR. In doing so, I reveal the contexts in which authors invoke Mendelssohn and the strategies they employ to make his legacy most useful to their various causes. This chapter continues the trajectory of this dissertation from Mendelssohn to his English audience to subsequent generations of English composers.

B. The Cycle of Foreign Influence

In the passage that opens this chapter, Maitland does not limit his description of the effects of bad foreign influence by naming a specific composer. Though he later clarifies that his remarks accurately describe England's response to Mendelssohn, Maitland claims that this phenomenon is not unique to Mendelssohn. Rather, it is part of a larger cycle, and Mendelssohn's popularity is merely one instance of it:

As with Handel so with Mendelssohn; the English composers of his time, or rather of the time during which the influence of his music was at its strongest, must write in as good an imitation of his manner as could be contrived; and the risk of striking out a new line for themselves was too great for any but the most daring. Independence of thought was sure to bring about failure....¹²⁸

By positioning Mendelssohn within a larger pattern of behavior, Maitland diminishes the composer's distinctiveness and therefore his power. He is no longer the singular, luminary figure leading the English public to higher art; he is another in a long line of passing fads. Maitland shifts agency from the foreign composers onto the English public, a distinguishing feature of the Renaissance narrative. In his version of music history, foreign composers dominated only with consent from the public. The Renaissance was about the English saving themselves from themselves. By clarifying that the time of composers' strongest influence

¹²⁸ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 69.

need not correspond to their lifetime, Maitland implies the composers' lack of active participation in this phenomenon, rendering them passive.

Other authors, even those outside of Maitland's circle, also embedded Mendelssohn in a cyclical pattern of foreign influence. In *The Student's Musical History* (1889), Henry Davey names other composer fads, even a few after Mendelssohn: "Our composers have for over 200 years lagged behind, and have confined themselves to imitating Italians and Germans...about 1830 it was Spohr, then Mendelssohn, then Schumann, and now it is Wagner. Let there be an end to this."¹²⁹ Davey's style is more direct and polemical than Maitland's; whereas Maitland's style conveys a removed standpoint, as though he objectively describes universal properties of audience behavior that happen to manifest in England, Davey allies himself with his reader, describing "our" composers in a nationalist struggle. Davey aims this history book directly at English music students, using the stories of composers as examples of how to achieve success for England. Furthermore, all the names he lists as fads in the 19th century are German, playing on specific nationalistic anxieties. In his later book, *The History of English Music* (1895), Davey expands upon his concerns over the Germans:

The influence of the moribund German school has had a very deleterious effect upon some of our best composers; German music since Beethoven has been abstract and unpractical, and these defects are copied here. Consequently all the fertile resources awaiting cultivation are neglected, and our composers persist in lazily using those which have long ago been provided for, and in repeating the old forms. They even produce orchestral works, though they perfectly well know that there are scarcely any orchestras in England.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Henry Davey, *The Student's Musical History* (London : J. Curwen, 1919), 139, <http://archive.org/details/studentsmusicalh00daveuoft>.

¹³⁰ Henry Davey, *History of English Music* (London: J. Curwen, 1895), 490.

As Mendelssohn was a German composer after Beethoven, he falls within Davey's criticism. Most of his frustration is aimed at English composers themselves, and Davey directs his writings as a call to action, stating that current conditions in England ought to be changed.

Though writing only seven years later, Maitland writes as though the prescribed change has already occurred. He confidently asserts, "Like the ricochets of a stone along the surface of water, the periods of foreign dominations in music become shorter and shorter as time goes on, and the music of England takes a higher and higher place."¹³¹ This distinction—between exhorting the reader to break the cycle and commendatory affirmation that the cycle has been broken—stems less from the slightly different times in which these histories were written and more from the different positions the authors held in relation to the EMR. As its chief promoter, Maitland felt compelled to claim that the EMR was already a success, with Parry and Stanford as proof of England's return to glory.¹³² As an outsider to Maitland's circle, Davey was not compelled to be self-congratulatory by proclaiming victory.¹³³

Coming from a previous generation, William Smyth Rockstro's concerns about England's musical stature manifest differently from those invested in the EMR; as such, his

¹³¹ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 71–2.

¹³² While Parry and Stanford did contribute to English music's increased prestige in the twentieth century, they ultimately do not hold the lofty positions that Maitland claimed for them—their compositions were eclipsed by those of their students.

¹³³ Davey describes *Grove's Dictionary* as "affording the strongest contrasts of careful scholarly research side-by-side with careless hackwork" (Davey, *History of English Music*, 1895, 489.)

version of history provides an alternative account that differs from those of Davey and Maitland in significant ways. A former student of Mendelssohn, Rockstro continually advocates for English composers to follow German models for cultural success. Whereas Maitland and Davey present Mendelssohn's influence as part of a nationalist narrative of struggle, Rockstro does not confine his discussion to England. In his article on "Oratorio" in the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1880), Rockstro notes, "We cannot deny, that, since 'S. Paul' and 'Elijah' saw the light, there has been a manifest tendency, both in this country, and in Germany, to follow Mendelssohn's lead more closely than is consistent with true originality of thought. This tendency ought to be corrected—and it must be, if any real work is to be done."¹³⁴ Rockstro's comments echo many of the themes of the other writer's histories: he sets imitation of Mendelssohn in opposition to originality and unambiguously claims that the latter is preferable. Like Davey, he recommends a course of action to his reader (though his rhetoric is less direct than Davey's). Unlike Davey, however, Rockstro does not address a specifically English readership, but an international one. He observes that Mendelssohn's influence has affected Germany, as well. For Rockstro, the "work to be done" is not the nationalist project of the EMR, but rather the supranational advancement of music as a Great Art. This is consistent with Rockstro's presentation of music history as a succession of great composers, as well as his personal affection for Mendelssohn as a teacher.

Rockstro notes another effect of Mendelssohn's influence not commented upon by the other authors—that of avoidance. Whereas Maitland and Davey focus on the production of

¹³⁴ William Smith Rockstro, "Oratorio," ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), 559.

unoriginal, derivative works based on Mendelssohnian models, Rockstro claims, “The almost unexampled popularity of Mendelssohn, after his first two visits to this country, undoubtedly deterred many English Musicians from trying their strength in Oratorio.”¹³⁵ Here, Rockstro is referring specifically to England. Nearly every other writer notes a boom in oratorios after Mendelssohn, contradicting Rockstro’s claim. The period between Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* in 1846 and Charles Hubert Hastings Parry’s *Prometheus Unbound* in 1880—the work that launched the EMR, accord to its promoters—saw the production of several English oratorios, including Henry Hugo Pierson’s *Jerusalem* (1852), Frederick A.G. Ouseley’s *The Martyrdom of St Polycarp* (1854), John Francis Barnett’s *The Raising of Lazarus* (1873), and George Macfarren’s *St John the Baptist* (1873).¹³⁶ Rockstro’s idiosyncratic (and somewhat unsubstantiated) position stems from his high esteem for Mendelssohn, as he implies that composers were too intimidated to attempt to match Mendelssohn’s success in the genre, perhaps out of fear that they would be seen as imitators. Because Rockstro does not write with the intent of promoting the idea of a Renaissance or a Dark Age, he frames his discussion in a way that flatters Mendelssohn, even at the expense of English composers.

In the second edition of *Grove’s Dictionary*, edited by Maitland and published in five volumes starting in 1900, Rockstro’s “Oratorio” entry is replaced by one by Ernest Walker, another writer in Maitland’s circle who advanced the EMR. Even more than Maitland, Walker depicts the 18th and 19th centuries as dark periods of English music. He presents the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 441.

¹³⁶ See Nigel Burton, “Oratorios and Cantatas,” in *The Romantic Age, 1800-1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley, *The Athlone History of Music in Britain*, v. 5 (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 214–241.

influence of Handel and Mendelssohn in much more ominous language: “[In 1775] English oratorio-music entered on a century of artistic darkness, over which brooded from first to last the elephantine shadow of Handel, to which was added in the final thirty years the almost equally universal though less ostentatiously ponderous shadow of Mendelssohn.”¹³⁷ The ominous shadow metaphor plays upon nationalist fears that Rockstro’s reporting of avoidance does not.

In Walker’s own *A History of Music in England* (1907), his language is more overtly political:

The fact remains that [the influence of the Handelian oratorio] was consciously imposed upon us from outside, and was not in any sense a natural development of any previously existing English art; and the later reigns of Mendelssohn and Gounod...were definitely foreign in character. All three dominations were gravely detrimental in so far as they dictatorially imposed certain methods on all British composers who had any desire for recognition in the field of religious music; we may admire non-British work as much as we like and can, but it should be as learners, not as slaves.¹³⁸

With his emphasis on “imposition,” “reign,” “domination,” “dictatorially,” and “slaves,” Walker turns the language of imperialism against the English reader. In all other endeavors, England has been the colonizer, not the colonized. Perhaps the last word would rankle readers accustomed to singing the chorus of “Rule, Britannia!”: “Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.” Walker’s position in his *Grove* article and his history book are identical, but his history has greater urgency and goes even further to tie Mendelssohn’s legacy to a nationalist struggle.

¹³⁷ Walker, “Oratorio,” 508–9.

¹³⁸ Ernest Walker, *A History of Music in England*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 352.

Walker's comments also display concern for developing "previously existing English art." In a time of marking territory, writers settled on certain genres as being the province of England. One such genre was the glee. Even before the idea of the EMR pervaded discourse, writers expressed concern that the glee was becoming less popular than part song, a genre presented as German. In his supplement to Emil Naumann's *The History of Music* (1886), Frederick A.G. Ouseley observes,

The gradual introduction of the German part-song into England, although in itself an unquestionable gain, yet had this disadvantage, that it tended to supersede the older and more national glee. ...During the last thirty years the number of part-songs produced in England has very greatly exceeded that of the glees, and it is much to be feared that the older and more truly English form will ere long be entirely lost—a result which is, in the writer's opinion, very much to be deprecated.¹³⁹

Although Ouseley does not refer to Mendelssohn by name, he was often credited with bringing the part song to England, as can be seen in Grove's entry on Mendelssohn in his *Dictionary*¹⁴⁰ as well as the entry on "Part-Song" written by Henry Frederick Frost.¹⁴¹

Not everyone viewed the glee and the part song as competing genres. In his book of music history, Rockstro considered the glee a type of part song, writing, "[We have seen the English composers] inventing, and bringing to absolute perfection, the characteristic and

¹³⁹ F. A. Gore Ouseley, "Supplement," in *The History of Music*, by Emil Naumann, vol. 2 (London: Cassell & company, limited, 1886), 1278.

¹⁴⁰ Grove, "Mendelssohn," 303.

¹⁴¹ Henry Frederick Frost, "Part-Song," ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), 658.

truly national form of Part-Song known as Glee...”¹⁴² In the aforementioned entry on “Part-Song” in the first edition of Grove’s *Dictionary*, Frost writes,

It is not too much to say that [Mendelssohn’s] ‘songs for singing in the open air,’ so redolent of blue sky and sunshine and nature’s freshness, worked a revolution, or, to speak more accurately, inaugurated a revival, in the choral music of England, the influence of which is ever widening and extending. ... The study of these fascinating little gems led to the search after similar treasures of home manufacture which had been half forgotten under the accumulated dust of centuries, and it also introduced musicians without number to essay a style of composition in which success seemed to be a comparatively easy matter.¹⁴³

To Frost, Mendelssohn’s introduction of the part song *revived* English interest in the glee (the “similar treasures of home manufacture”) and encouraged composers to continue in the same vein. This position is incompatible with the idea of the EMR, as a foreigner cannot be credited with sparking a native Renaissance.

The above examples treat English composers as an undifferentiated mass and do not name any specific native composers. This vagueness allows the writer more leeway when crafting their narrative, whether a pre-EMR tale of the international advancement of the art of music by Rockstro, or a Renaissance narrative of foreign oppression and heroic resistance by Walker. In order to shore up their stories, however, the writers did cite details from biographies of well-known 19th-century English composers. One name occurs more frequently than any other: William Sterndale Bennett.

¹⁴² Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, 431.

¹⁴³ Frost, “Part-Song,” 658.

C. William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875): Riding a Wave of Mendelssohn Mania

Bennett's biography offers many points of contact with Mendelssohn, which makes comparison of the two composers almost inevitable. Bennett was seven years younger than Mendelssohn; he was born in Sheffield in 1816. Like Mendelssohn, his primary instrument was the piano. He was admitted to the Royal Academy of Music at age 9, where he eventually studied piano and composition. He garnered attention with his first piano concerto in 1832. He travelled to Leipzig in 1836, spending time with Mendelssohn and Schumann, who championed his music. He returned to England and held prominent positions within the Philharmonic Society, and he taught at the Royal Academy of Music, Queen's College and Cambridge.¹⁴⁴ The histories discussed in this dissertation consider Bennett to be the most prominent and successful English composer of his generation.

Although Bennett's position amongst his contemporaries is secure, historians differ in their assessment of that generation overall. For his near contemporaries, Bennett's generation was the first to receive the international recognition that had eluded English composers for so long. To authors writing later, however, after subsequent composers surpassed the achievements of their predecessors, Bennett and his cohort still belong within the Dark Age that preceded the EMR. This shift in perspective affects the ways in which authors compare Bennett's music to Mendelssohn's. Based on authors' application or avoidance of the Mendelssohnian label, I identify three stages in Bennett reception in the long 19th century: First, a period in which Bennett is described as a follower or imitator of

¹⁴⁴ For more biographical details, consult Nicholas Temperley and Rosemary Williamson, "Bennett, Sir William Sterndale," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online (Oxford University Press), accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42930>.

Mendelssohn; next, a period in which English historians assert Bennett's originality; and finally, the period in which writers state that Bennett's resemblance to Mendelssohn was an inherent weakness. The group of historians strenuously defending Bennett's originality point to him as proof of the improving state of English music. But as the idea of the EMR coalesced, historians cited his Mendelssohnian style as evidence of the prolonged German domination of English tastes.

Writers debated the similarity of style between Bennett and Mendelssohn long before the idea of the EMR took hold; this resemblance was remarked upon in contemporary criticism of Bennett's works, particularly outside of England. This criticism ossified into accepted historical fact in the widely circulated *A General History of Music* by Joseph Schlüter, originally written in German and published in English translation in 1865. In the few pages devoted to the Danish composer Niels Gade, Schlüter remarks that Gade is "superior to Mendelssohn's imitators, as the English composers Sterndale Bennett, with his smooth concert overtures ('*Die Najaden*,' 'The Wood-nymph,' etc.), and his cantata 'The May Queen,'¹⁴⁵ and Arthur Sullivan ('*The Tempest*' Cantata) is [sic] of their number."¹⁴⁶ To Schlüter, a German, this comparison to Mendelssohn was damning, as he found the composer's works overplayed and too much associated with "female and dilettanti influences."¹⁴⁷ As this offhand comment is the only context in which either Bennett or

¹⁴⁵ The overture to Bennett's *The May Queen* contains many similarities to Mendelssohn's *Overture to A Midsummernight's Dream*. Given the shared forest setting and supernatural elements, both works draw from the same well of musical clichés intended to invoke these aspects of the narratives, rather than one being a direct influence on the other. For the same reason, both overtures also resemble Carl Maria von Weber's *Oberon*.

¹⁴⁶ Schlüter, *A General History of Music*, 336.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 326.

Sullivan are mentioned in Schlüter's history, he is able to dismiss the foremost English composers of their generations as derivative.

Conversely, for a writer who held Mendelssohn in high esteem, such as Hugh Reginald Haweis, connecting Bennett to Mendelssohn had the potential to enhance his prestige. In *Music and Morals*, Haweis writes, "After living amongst us just long enough to complete and produce his masterpiece, the *Elijah*, at Birmingham, [Mendelssohn] died (1847), leaving behind him an illustrious school of disciples, of whom Sir Sterndale Bennett may be named chief..."¹⁴⁸ This positive association nonetheless subordinates Bennett to the German master. Further comments from Haweis reveal that, though he does admire Bennett, he does not consider the music he writes to be "English music." Related to Maitland and Davey's portrayals of cycles of foreign influence, Haweis claims that music produced under foreign influence cannot be considered English at all, explaining, "At the Restoration, Pelham Humphreys...is as really French as Sir Sterndale Bennett is really German.... But all these men have one thing in common,—they were composers in England, they were not English composers. They did not write for the people, the people did not care for their music."¹⁴⁹ Haweis's stance reflects a prominent Victorian view of English musical culture. He states outright that "The English are not a musical people, and the English are not an artistic people."¹⁵⁰ This belief is one that later writers challenged and dismantled. Bennett became central to the argument that the English could indeed be musical. But in order for him to serve that function, he had to be thoroughly English and not subordinate to Mendelssohn.

¹⁴⁸ Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 491.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 484.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 483.

One of the first indications of this new, independent version of Bennett can be found in the first volume of the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The entry on Bennett, written by Henry Heathcote Statham, repeatedly asserts Bennett's originality, hyperbolically deeming him, "the only English musical composer since Purcell who has attained a distinct style and individuality of his own."¹⁵¹ As the comparison to Mendelssohn had been so prevalent in criticism of Bennett, Statham presents a careful consideration of similarities, noting, "[T]he Capriccio in D minor', op. 2...clearly shows in its opening theme the influence of his admiration for Mendelssohn, then the central figure of the musical world, though there are touches of complete originality suggesting the pianoforte style which the composer subsequently made his own."¹⁵² By qualifying Mendelssohn as "then the central figure of the musical world," Statham both offers an explanation for why people may hear Mendelssohn in Bennett and denies that this quality is exclusive to Bennett—because Mendelssohn was the sound of the time, he implies, most music of the time will carry that association.

Historian John Hullah also offers defense against Bennett sounding too German, though he does not mention Mendelssohn specifically. He says of Bennett's music,

That it should present indications of German influence was inevitable. In the works of German masters alone could the principles of the symphonic school be found exemplified, and Bennett profited by them....But there is enough and more than enough in the works of Bennett to distinguish them from those

¹⁵¹ Henry Heathcote Statham, "Bennett, Sir William Sterndale," ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1879), 224.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 225.

of any of his predecessors or contemporaries of whatever nationality, among the greatest of whom he is assuredly entitled to a place.¹⁵³

Like Statham, Hullah presents Bennett as taking in the musical style of his time, yet being original enough to distinguish himself from other composers. Hullah's comment reads as a rebuke of people like Haweis who did not consider Bennett's music to be English enough. Moreover, Hullah specifically addresses Bennett's orchestral music, which is the type that Moscheles found derivative.

Returning to Statham, he addresses the issue of Bennett as Mendelssohn imitator directly with forceful language, stating,

It is to this visit [to Leipzig] probably that is to be traced the idea still current in England that Bennett was a pupil and a mere imitator of Mendelssohn; an idea which can only be entertained by those who are either ignorant of his works or totally destitute of any perception of musical style, but which has been parroted by incapable or prejudiced critics till it has come to be regarded by many as an admitted fact.¹⁵⁴

This statement acknowledges comments like Schlüter's dismissal of Bennett as well as Haweis's appointment of Bennett as a Mendelssohn disciple. Writing for the first-ever comprehensive dictionary of music, Statham takes it upon himself to set the record straight and stake claims for Bennett as a prominent figure in English music.

Other writers echo Statham's vehement denial of Mendelssohnian influence, even resorting to similar *ad hominem* attacks against critics. F.A. Gore Ouseley writes,

¹⁵³ Hullah, John, *The History of Modern Music*, Seventh (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896), 189, <http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/c/c8/IMSLP276330-SIBLEY1802.26894.13ee-39087008689137text.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ Statham, "Bennett, Sir William Sterndale," 225.

[Bennett's] style is emphatically *his own*. It has been said by many writers that he was an imitator of Mendelssohn; but it is hardly credible that any competent critic could form such a judgment if he had taken the trouble to examine Bennett's works at all minutely. The stamp of originality pervades them all, and to accuse their author of plagiarism can only be taken as proof of ignorance or prejudice.¹⁵⁵

Ouseley writes this as part of his supplement to Emil Naumann's history, an addition deemed necessary due to Naumann's lack of coverage of English composers. Ouseley's defense of Bennett's originality accords with the overall goal of his contribution to the book—highlighting Continental ignorance of English composers and educating the English public about their musical heritage. Rockstro also published a strong repudiation of the Bennett-as-Mendelssohn-imitator meme, stating, "It is not true that Bennett was a pupil of Mendelssohn. They were friends; but nothing more. The strongly-marked difference in their styles of composition ought, alone, to suffice for the correction of the prevalent mistake, which the author is able positively to contradict."¹⁵⁶ Rockstro's defense focuses on the composers' relative positions; he is yet another English writer who refuses to subordinate Bennett to Mendelssohn, and by asserting their friendship, Rockstro places them on the same level.

Yet German recognition of Bennett's talent was crucial to portraying him as England's greatest musical success. For this version of history, Bennett's trip to Leipzig was beneficial, and his connection to Mendelssohn granted him access to a powerful social network.

Ouseley observes that living in Leipzig was

¹⁵⁵ Ouseley, "Supplement," 1286.

¹⁵⁶ Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, 442–3. Footnote.

an event of no slight advantage to Bennett, who was not only able to make many valuable musical acquaintances, but was also enabled to make his talents known outside his own country. But perhaps the greatest benefit to him was the opportunity which he had in Leipzig of cultivating the friendship of two such musical giants as Mendelssohn and Schumann, who became his warmest admirers.¹⁵⁷

Like Rockstro, Ouseley asserts friendship between Bennett and the Leipzig composers, which places them on the same social level. Claiming Mendelssohn and Schumann were “admirers” rather than “teachers” enhances Bennett’s prestige and asserts his independence. Others from Ouseley’s generation point to Bennett’s time in Leipzig as evidence of the composer’s international appeal. In *Musical History* by George Macfarren (1885), the author praises him, writing,

The wide recognition of Bennett’s genius at home and in Germany distinguishes him; far more so does the quite individual charm of his music, and most of all does the tender age at which he wrote his best works and the facility with which he produced them....the eternal riddle of the beautiful is propounded in every cadence, and still defies analysis, still remains unsolved.¹⁵⁸

Macfarren’s comments emphasize the originality of Bennett’s style while establishing other qualities he intends to link to his music (and English music at large): beauty that transcends an analytical/intellectual (that is, *German*) approach to music.

Rockstro makes similar comments:

All critics are agreed, that, since the time of Henry Purcell, no Englishman by birth has attained so high a position in the English School as [Bennett], or contributed so largely to its advancement. His genius was one which would have figured prominently in the Art-history of any country, at any period; and

¹⁵⁷ Ouseley, “Supplement,” 1284.

¹⁵⁸ G. A. Macfarren, *Musical History* (New York: Harper and brothers, 1885), 86.

it may safely be said that he never produced one single Composition unworthy of his artistic position.¹⁵⁹

Rockstro's statement is un-equivocating to the point of hyperbole. He presents Bennett as an acknowledged genius, admitting Bennett to the international pantheon of great composers. He also claims that *all* of Bennett's compositions were masterpieces, a claim disputed by later authors, particularly Henry Davey.

For the generation of writers including Statham, Ouseley, Macfarren, and Rockstro, Bennett's career was the epitome of English accomplishment in music: He had an original style that was decidedly un-Mendelssohnian, which earned him the respect of the international music community, and for a critic to claim otherwise is to display their ignorance of English music.

The next generation of writers, however, does not present Bennett's career as the overwhelming and undeniable success described by their predecessors. Instead, Bennett becomes yet another English composer crushed by German musical dominance. In *The Student's Musical History* (1889), Davey mentions that the high expectations of Bennett's trip to Leipzig pushed him to give up composing.¹⁶⁰ In his later book on English music, published in 1895, Davey extends his discussion of Bennett and turns it into a cautionary tale. First, he establishes Bennett's potential, prior to meeting Mendelssohn:

It was in 1833 that [Bennett] first attracted general attention; then he played a concerto of his own which was so well received that Mendelssohn, who was present, invited him to Germany, and the Academy authorities had the concerto printed. Before Mendelssohn's invitation was accepted, Bennett had

¹⁵⁹ Rockstro, *A General History of Music from the Infancy of the Greek Drama to the Present Period*, 445.

¹⁶⁰ Davey, *The Student's Musical History*, 130.

composed three symphonies, four concertos, and three overtures, besides smaller pieces, of which several had been published.¹⁶¹

Whereas previous authors cited Bennett's pre-Leipzig compositions as evidence of an original style free from Mendelssohnian influence, Davey has another motive in cataloging these works. He contrasts Bennett's early productivity with his diminished post-Leipzig output, stating, "Then he broke down, and turned drudge.... Bennett composed almost nothing of any kind for years, and the actual few works published were far inferior to his early works."¹⁶² Although Davey does not directly blame Mendelssohn's influence for souring Bennett's career, he presents Leipzig as a turning point for the worse, quite differently from how previous writers present Bennett's opportunities in Germany. Similarly, Rockstro's claim that Bennett's genius would be recognized in any period of history is completely at odds with Davey's perspective as he writes, "Sir Sterndale Bennett's influence on English music, though wide, was not lasting; his opinions were not those of the present day, and have long since relinquished.... The timidity which is one great curse of English music never worked direr mischief than in Bennett's case."¹⁶³ Davey thus ties Bennett's biography to a larger narrative of problems faced by English composers.

For writers promoting the EMR, Bennett's career had to be reevaluated and his style reassessed in order to serve the new narrative. Older writers had needed Bennett to be a pillar of English music history, so they downplayed his musical resemblance to Mendelssohn. But these later writers needed Bennett to be part of a crisis of English music,

¹⁶¹ Davey, *History of English Music*, 1895, 467.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 468.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 469.

so they not only admitted that criticism of Bennett's style had merit, but they wove his similarity to Mendelssohn into the larger narrative of foreign domination. Bennett is presented as too *weak* to resist German influence. Victorian values of restraint and discretion gave way to emphases on strength and vigor.

When presenting Bennett's biography in *Music of the Nineteenth Century* (1902), Maitland reflects,

[A]s beauty, or at least symmetry, of form and design had special attractions for him, he found no difficulty in falling in with the Mendelssohn worship of the time, and his own style, which had been developed...long before he had the opportunity of meeting Mendelssohn or knowing much about his music, was so remarkably similar to Mendelssohn's that he has often been accused of imitating him too closely, or even having been his pupil.¹⁶⁴

Thus Maitland has it both ways—Bennett sounds like himself, and he sounds like Mendelssohn.

Maitland satisfies the need for Bennett to have an “original” style by pointing out that he developed his style before making personal contact with Mendelssohn, thus disproving the hierarchical arrangement early writers assumed with Bennett subordinating himself to Mendelssohn. However, he points out that Bennett came under Mendelssohn's influence in another way—he was swept up in the current of the Mendelssohn worship of his own culture. In Maitland's telling, the English public was the medium that transferred Mendelssohn's influence to English composers such as Bennett. He explains, “[T]he career of Sterndale Bennett...would undoubtedly have been less successful than it was if he had resisted his natural tendency to express himself in some of the Mendelssohnian

¹⁶⁴ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 115.

idioms.”¹⁶⁵ To Maitland, the English public rewarded Bennett precisely *because* he sounded so much like Mendelssohn, not because of any particular sense of originality. This contradicts writers such as Rockstro whose conception of history is predicated on the progress of art through originality: In order for Bennett to have been a success, he must have distinguished himself from previous masters, but Maitland claims the opposite—he sounded close enough, even though he did not really intend to.

Whereas older writers spilled much ink over ways in which Bennett’s style was distinct from Mendelssohn, Maitland catalogs their similarities. Furthermore, he presents these overlaps as weaknesses:

One mannerism he possessed in common with Mendelssohn, who never seemed to be aware that a commonplace does not become a brilliant witticism by the simple expedient of repeating it. Whether Bennett got the habit from Mendelssohn or not cannot be known, but it is certain that he does indulge himself in a trick of textual repetition of phrases to an extent that is almost irritating when once it is noticed.¹⁶⁶

Again, Maitland does not claim that Mendelssohn personally encouraged Bennett to compose this way; he presents Mendelssohn’s influence as something woven so tightly into the culture of English music that Mendelssohn does not even *need* to be an active agent. Instead, the English public sustains Mendelssohn’s influence by encouraging composers who sound most Mendelssohnian.

Maitland used the multiple media outlets under his control to propagate his specific version of music history. His specific criticism about repetitiveness finds its way into the revision of the entry for “Song” in the second edition of *Grove’s Dictionary*. The article is

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 119.

still attributed to the original author, Adele Sophia Harriet Bagot Wodehouse (as Mrs. Edmond Wodehouse), but the revision includes this new statement: “Had [Bennett] not shared in common with Mendelssohn a tiresome mannerism of frequent repetition of the same phrase, his songs would have been more fully recognised and appreciated.”¹⁶⁷ Although this passage does not sport the brackets used to indicate editorial changes, the content is at odds with the original entry and is so similar to Maitland’s comments elsewhere that one can be fairly certain that this expresses Maitland’s opinion and not Wodehouse’s. In fact, Wodehouse compares Bennett and Mendelssohn in another *Dictionary* article, “Romantic”: “Not unlike Mendelssohn was William Sterndale Bennett; and the points of resemblance between them were strict regard to form, clearness of poetic thought, and cultivated refinement of taste.”¹⁶⁸ She appears to be one of the few of her time willing to admit similarities between the composers, but in this entry the overlap is portrayed positively, unlike the edited version of her entry on “Song.” Thus it is likely an instance of Maitland editing an entry to conform to his version of history.

Ernest Walker’s *A History of Music in England* (1907) likewise uses Bennett to demonstrate his generation’s worst tendencies, including “Mendelssohnianism.” Walker writes from the same triumphant position as Maitland, but his rhetoric is more absolute and emotionally-charged than Maitland’s aloofness. Like Davey, Walker portrays Bennett’s potential as diminishing after going to Leipzig, stating, “Bennett is indeed the great instance

¹⁶⁷ Adele Sophia Harriet Bagot Wodehouse, “Song,” ed. John A. Fuller Maitland, *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910), 599.

¹⁶⁸ Adele Sophia Harriet Bagot Wodehouse, “Romantic,” ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1883), 151.

in music of a man who might have reached real greatness being slowly but very effectually killed by his environment.”¹⁶⁹ Walker negatively characterizes Mendelssohn’s influence on Bennett, portraying Bennett as simply too artistically weak to stand up on his own:

It is indeed easy to overrate the promise of the early works; though the Mendelssohnian influence is not so strong as to altogether overburden the delicate, rather shy refinement which was Bennett’s own endowment, yet we can see that something more robust was necessary to secure the really outstanding artistic position in European music which his friends prophesied for him.¹⁷⁰

Like Maitland, Walker does not place the blame on Mendelssohn the person; rather, Mendelssohn’s music occupies a domineering position that threatens to “overburden” composers who are not “robust” enough to climb out from his shadow.

Whenever Walker invokes Mendelssohn’s name in connection to Bennett, it is invariably with negative connotations. For example, Walker observes, “We shall indeed find that—as with the work of his master and overwhelming influencer, Mendelssohn—his best religious pages never rise to anything like the artistic height of his best secular.”¹⁷¹ With “overwhelming,” Walker again presents Mendelssohn as an insurmountable force. Although the statement itself could be spun positively—Bennett and Mendelssohn’s secular works soar above their religious works—he opts for the negative presentation, with the religious works failing to meet an assumed standard.¹⁷² Even when assessing Bennett’s secular works,

¹⁶⁹ Walker, *A History of Music in England.*, 268.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹⁷² This also represents a shift from previous generations’ assessments of Mendelssohn, which largely considered his oratorios to be his greatest artistic achievements.

Walker considers similarity to Mendelssohn a weakness, concluding, “‘Maydew’ and others of the same graceful, easy style are pleasant enough, but their somewhat diluted Mendelssohnianism does not come to very much.”¹⁷³ Walker employs wishy-washy language when discussing Mendelssohn, playing on established tropes that his music is lacking in artistic depth. For Walker’s narrative, Bennett’s ineffectuality is emblematic of his generation, a weakness that plagues even composers who do not sound like Mendelssohn.

D. Henry Hugo Pierson (1815-1873): Punished for being Un-Mendelssohnian

In *English Music in the Nineteenth Century* (1902), Maitland proposes Henry Hugo Pierson’s career as a counterexample to Bennett’s Mendelssohn-aided success:

As a contrast to [William Sterndale Bennett’s] career that of Henry Hugo Pierson may be profitably studied, for his ways of expressing himself were so different from Mendelssohn’s that his really great abilities never received their due meed [sic] of recognition, and the defects of his style grew upon him as the result of disappointment and failure, so that he had to be content with making a name in Germany, being one of the few Englishmen who have succeeded in establishing a lasting reputation there.¹⁷⁴

Maitland uses Bennett to argue that Mendelssohn’s influence worked to the detriment of English composers who sounded *too much* like him, either through natural tendencies or deliberate modeling. Maitland raises Pierson as an example to demonstrate how Mendelssohn’s influence also adversely affected English composers who did not sound *enough* like him. Pierson becomes Maitland’s evidence of “the hopelessness of getting a

¹⁷³ Walker, *A History of Music in England*., 277.

¹⁷⁴ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 70.

hearing for anything outside the well-worn pattern,” to revisit the quote that opened this chapter. English audiences at this time were unwilling to receive music too far out of their comfort zone, and thus straying too far from Mendelssohnian models meant being ignored by the public. Or, at least, that is what the Renaissance narrative claims.

Pierson does indeed offer an intriguing parallel to Bennett. The men were contemporaries, with Bennett born one year and one day after Pierson (born Pearson, but he later opted for a German spelling), and they died about two years apart. Both Bennett and Pierson were candidates for the Reid Professorship of Music at Edinburgh University, with Pierson winning the position but ultimately resigning eight months later to settle in Germany. Both composers travelled to Leipzig, and both met Mendelssohn. Also, Maitland reconsiders the previously accepted accounts of their biographies in order to advance his version of history.

When writing about Pierson in their histories, authors other than Maitland rarely mention Mendelssohn, nor do they blame him for Pierson’s lack of success in England. In Ouseley’s addition to *The History of Music* (1886), he notes that Pierson met Mendelssohn in Leipzig, but gives no further details about the encounter.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, in the first edition of Grove’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1883), the article on Pierson (written by his brother, Hugh Pearson) states, “At Leipzig he had much intercourse with Mendelssohn.”¹⁷⁶ Pearson presents this fact as part of a larger goal to present Pierson as a respected and well-connected composer in Germany. As for England’s lack of appreciation for Pierson, Pearson

¹⁷⁵ Ouseley, “Supplement,” 1294.

¹⁷⁶ Hugh Pearson, “Pierson, Henry Hugo,” ed. George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1880), 752.

does not delve into reasons but notes, “the sympathy thenceforward accorded to his genius in continental society was undoubtedly more congenial to his feelings than the slight appreciation he received from English critics.”¹⁷⁷ Though this comment implicates the critical establishment, it does not explain what the criticism was.

In the second edition of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1900), the original article on Pierson remains intact, but Maitland interjects with a clarification, offset in editorial brackets:

[The above estimate of Pierson’s powers, from the pen of the composer’s brother, has hardly gained general acceptance; for his comparative failure in his native land, the inordinate Mendelssohn-worship of his day has been often assigned as a reason, and Pierson was one of the few who even then discerned that master’s weak points.]¹⁷⁸

Maitland supplies a motive for the harsh criticism: institutional Mendelssohn Mania. He presents this explanation as a consensus viewpoint, casually noting that it “has often been assigned as a reason,” even though none of the other authors make the same claim—even Ernest Walker, another ardent promoter of the Renaissance, only remarks that Pierson’s oratorios “owe next to nothing to either Handel or Mendelssohn,”¹⁷⁹ and makes no connection between that and his tepid English reception. Moreover, Maitland vindicates Pierson while disparaging Mendelssohn, intimating that Pierson’s negative views of Mendelssohn are ultimately the correct ones.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Fuller Maitland, editorial comment Hugh Pearson, “Pierson (originally Pearson), Henry Hugo,” ed. John A. Fuller Maitland, *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910), 746.

¹⁷⁹ Walker, *A History of Music in England.*, 269.

Maitland's story of Pierson the anti-Mendelssohnian, summed up in one sentence in an editorial comment in *Grove 2*, is fully fleshed out in *English Music in the Nineteenth Century*. He cites a negative review from 1852 by George Macfarren, criticizing Pierson's oratorio *Jerusalem*.¹⁸⁰ Maitland unambiguously places Macfarren in the "Mendelssohn worshiper" camp, both as a critic and as a composer.¹⁸¹ Maitland thus posits that Pierson's lack of popularity in England was mostly due to extramusical partisanship, stating, "Worst of all, he held opinions concerning Mendelssohn's music which would nowadays seem very harmless, and which, indeed, are not uncommon amongst modern musicians; but in the middle of the century such tenets meant the forfeiture of all chances of pecuniary success."¹⁸² As in his comment in *Grove 2*, Maitland implies that Pierson's anti-Mendelssohn opinions had become mainstream, as the public has outgrown its Mendelssohn worship. But in his own time, Pierson becomes a victim of the outdated tastes of powerful men.

Looking to other history books, however, Maitland's explanation appears not to be as widely accepted as he claims. Even Ernest Walker's *A History of Music in England* (1907), which usually advances Maitland's version of history with more impassioned rhetoric, does not blame Pierson's failure to gain acceptance on Mendelssohn partisans. To Walker, Pierson's style is beyond un-Mendelssohnian—it is un-*anything*. He notes Pierson's "defiant

¹⁸⁰ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 111.

¹⁸¹ Maitland was very harsh toward Macfarren, observing, "[His] oratorio sometimes shows a sort of childlike dramatic characterization that would hardly have been possible to a composer possessing any sense of humour; and throughout Macfarren's tentative modernities are pathetically ineffectual." *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 111.

rejection of the Handelian and Mendelssohnian traditions of the England of his day, and his incorrigible amateurishness of technique.”¹⁸³ Of his oratorios, Walker observes that they “owe next to nothing to either Handel or Mendelssohn,” and goes on to state, “[A]s a rule, Pierson shows all the independence of the bold but somewhat ignorant amateur.”¹⁸⁴ He concludes, “Pierson seems to have a sovereign contempt for structural technique of any kind.... [T]here can indeed be no doubt that Pierson’s muddled amateurishness contrasts extremely badly with [Bennett’s] polished skill.”¹⁸⁵ Whereas Maitland presents criticism of Pierson as being rooted in narrow acceptance of forms based on Mendelssohnian models, Walker instead suggests that Pierson’s technique is poor by *any* standards, not just Mendelssohnian ones.

Although Pierson presents a compelling maverick figure, to Maitland he still belongs within the Dark Age and cannot occupy a position of strength like the Renaissance composers. Maitland supplies a reason for why the Renaissance does not start with Pierson, explaining, “[H]is own music was not of a kind that could be called in any sense ‘epoch-making’; had it been a little stronger than it was, the world at large might have accepted it, and Pierson might have been set up in definite opposition to Mendelssohn and his imitators.”¹⁸⁶ Again, Maitland embeds Pierson within a factional conflict with Mendelssohn. Unlike Bennett, Pierson was able to extricate himself from Mendelssohn’s domination, but

¹⁸³ Walker, *A History of Music in England.*, 281.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁸⁶ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 111–2.

he was still unable to overcome it. That victory awaited composers of subsequent generations.

E. Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900): Leaving Mendelssohn Behind

Many histories affirm that Arthur Sullivan was the most successful English composer of the generation immediately following Bennett and Pierson. Unfortunately for the authors of these histories, most of whom were concerned with England's ability to produce serious art music that would earn the respect of the international (or at least German) musical community, Sullivan's success was founded on his lighter works, including his collaborations with William Schwenck Gilbert. In *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940*, current historians Merion Hughes and Robert Stradling explain how Sullivan's devotion to musical theater, which was morally suspect to Victorians, made him an unsuitable figure to lead the Renaissance.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Sullivan produced several works that were acceptably serious, which critics and historians lavished with attention as signs of England's imminent recovery.

Sullivan's musical talent was apparent from a young age, which gave him opportunities that would have placed him in an ideal position for the standards-bearer of the post-Mendelssohn generation. At age 14, Sullivan received the very first Mendelssohn Scholarship from the Royal Academy of Music, sponsoring his studies both there and at the Leipzig Conservatory. Sullivan thus provides a tangible link between Mendelssohn's legacy and England's future, with the tantalizing potential to demonstrably benefit from Mendelssohn's presence in England without needing to be linked stylistically to the older

¹⁸⁷ See "Sir Arthur Sullivan's crime," in Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940*, 222–8.

composer. Ultimately, Sullivan's career path made him undesirable for this role, which some writers mourned as a lost opportunity.

The first edition of Haweis's *Music and Morals* was published in 1871, the same year that Gilbert and Sullivan collaborated for the first time, producing the comic opera *Thespis*. Not knowing the turn Sullivan's career was about to take, Haweis writes,

Let us only trust that Mr. Sullivan, the brightest hope of the young English school, will keep before him the high ballad ideal of his Shakespeare songs, and those lyrics which Mr. Tennyson has written for him, and not be tempted into the 'Ever of thee' style, by the tears of sopranos or the solemn warnings of publishers.¹⁸⁸

Haweis's comments reek of the mistrust of popular music that pervaded English elite culture in the Victorian era. One of the goals of *Music and Morals* was to demonstrate that music could be used for moral instruction, with Mendelssohn a prime example of one who produced high art music while leading a righteous life. Haweis expresses a desire for Sullivan to continue in this tradition, matching respected literary texts to music, even though his popular music could earn him more money. Reverend Haweis characteristically puts this dilemma in religious terms, with Sullivan facing temptation away from a higher calling.

As Sullivan did eventually succumb to temptation, writers had to reconcile his success with the moral character they wanted to project for the Renaissance. Maitland looked for a silver lining—at least the English public was finally listening to an English composer again:

From beginning to end of his career, Sullivan wrote nothing that was subversive or polemical; the taste of the average man was what he sought to meet, and it was in meeting this taste that his work in regard to the renaissance was fulfilled. He took no part whatever in the work of the renaissance itself; but, inasmuch as he was the first Englishman who

¹⁸⁸ Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 549.

contrived to excite enthusiasm in his countrymen, he must be held to have done much to prepare the way for the revival of interest in English music.¹⁸⁹

Thus the Doorkeeper of Music shut Sullivan out of the Renaissance proper, relegating him to an ancillary role. Moreover, Maitland presents Sullivan's contribution as inadvertent—he was not actively working for the EMR, but his actions ultimately benefitted the cause. Maitland denies Sullivan agency, making him subject to the taste of “the average man” rather than leading audiences to great art. Sullivan's popularity could not be ignored, but Maitland diminishes it through qualifications and damning with faint praise.

Maitland is also able to weave Sullivan's ties to Mendelssohn into a satisfying narrative that reinforces the EMR, portraying Mendelssohn as an influence that Sullivan was eventually able to overcome. He compares one of Sullivan's oratorios to a later cantata, concluding that the oratorio is Mendelssohnian and the non-Mendelssohnian cantata is the superior work:

In the six years that elapsed between [*The Martyr of Antioch*] and the greatest work of his life, *The Golden Legend*, he seems to have accommodated his style in some measure to the great difference in public taste that had come about as the fruit of the renaissance; for nothing could be more entirely at variance than the styles of these two compositions. [*The Martyr of Antioch*] contains little or nothing that would not have been approved by Mendelssohn, of whom Sullivan was an ardent admirer in his younger days.¹⁹⁰

In addition to portraying Sullivan's Mendelssohnianism as youthful indiscretion, Maitland indicates a major shift in the public taste away from Mendelssohn, which he presents as a great improvement. Maitland's version of events again robs Sullivan of artistic agency,

¹⁸⁹ Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century*, 170.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 173–4.

claiming that he was responding to his audience, who in turn was responding to the renaissance. Even though Sullivan is denied a leadership position, Maitland uses him to advance the anti-Mendelssohnian angle of the EMR.

Linking Sullivan to Mendelssohn was not unique to authors advancing the idea of Renaissance, nor even to just English writers. In *A General History of Music* (English edition 1865), German author Joseph Schlüter cites Sullivan's cantata *The Tempest* as evidence that he is a mere "Mendelssohn imitator."¹⁹¹ Whenever authors of this period refer to Mendelssohn in their discussions of Sullivan, it is always in conjunction with Sullivan's "serious" works—incidentally, the ones that fit the role that Haweis wished Sullivan had fulfilled. English writers use this connection to reinforce the Renaissance narrative, even though Sullivan could not be considered one of the major figures of the EMR. Walker observes, "Indeed, Sullivan's church music shows traces of many influences; some pages are diluted, but not, in its way, at all unpleasant Mendelssohnianism..."¹⁹² Underneath all his qualifications, Walker says that Sullivan's Mendelssohnianism is not unpleasant, though the reader should expect them to be based on that descriptor. This description also shows a weakening of Mendelssohn's influence, as Sullivan exhibits other influences as well.

In the Romantic volume of *The Oxford History of Music* (1905), Dannreuther links other works by Sullivan to Mendelssohn's influence: "Other oratorios, *The Light of the World* (1873), Mendelssohnian in style and arrangement, and *The Prodigal Son* (1887), which shows a little more individuality, do not at the present day count for much."¹⁹³ Once again,

¹⁹¹ Schlüter, *A General History of Music*, 336.

¹⁹² Walker, *A History of Music in England.*, 307–8.

¹⁹³ Dannreuther, *The Romantic Period*, 6:314.

an author places “Mendelssohnian” in opposition to “individuality,” implying that Mendelssohnian style was the hegemony in the realm of the English oratorio. From Dannreuther’s perspective, however, neither work has proven worthwhile, as Sullivan does not fit his narrative of the evolution of the Romantic imperative manifest in music. Sullivan again defies easy classification; the most popular composer of his generation was unable to find a comfortable niche in the history books.

F. Conclusion

Historians Merion Hughes and Robert Stradling observe, “Perhaps the greatest of all the weapons forged by the Renaissance...was the power to inscribe itself, and to refashion English music history in its own image.”¹⁹⁴ Maitland granted himself the greatest power of all—determining the exact boundaries of the EMR by deciding who would and would not be considered part of it. By choosing Charles Hubert Hastings Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford as the official starting point, Maitland shut out earlier generations of English composers, including William Sterndale Bennett and Arthur Sullivan, whose careers had been considered successful in their own times. In order to reconcile older versions of English music history with his own, he blamed Mendelssohn worship—by composers, by critics, but especially by the public—for blinding the musical establishment to their own shortcomings during the purported Dark Age.

For all of the authors discussed in this chapter, to sound “Mendelssohnian” is to be unoriginal. This position is obvious, as sounding like another composer is, by definition, sounding derivative to some degree. The authors advancing the Renaissance narrative,

¹⁹⁴ Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940*, 51.

however, imply something else as well: To sound “Mendelssohnian” is to be *un-English*. English composers faced a Catch-22: In order to be taken seriously by the international music community, they had to demonstrate mastery of the Austro-Germanic style, but they risked sounding derivative and foreign. But if they adopted an “English” style, perhaps by referring to folk music or Anglican traditions, they risked being perceived as too provincial and alienating Continental audiences. These were the true stakes of writing the music history of the nineteenth century: laying a foundation for the composers of the EMR that was not built so blatantly on foreign composers. In order to do so, historians had to overturn some widely accepted truths about English musical culture. Whereas previous English critics prided themselves on being able to import the finest musical talent from around the world, the Renaissance narrative flipped the metaphor of imperialism so that the English were the dominated rather than dominators. Victorian English composers thus toiled under the oppressive regime of Mendelssohn Mania, which only the composers of the EMR were strong enough to overcome.

The decades leading up to World War I saw an increase in nationalism throughout Europe, and countries strove to define their own past in order to determine their future. The music history books published in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century reveal that country’s particular concerns: the perceived lack of musical taste among the general populace and specialists alike, the absence of a distinctly English “sound” in art music, and the influence of foreign composers. As Felix Mendelssohn continued to be a popular musical figure during this period, his music and his character were woven into the emerging narratives, sometimes in contradictory ways. Examining discrepancies in Mendelssohn

reception illuminates the major cultural shifts during this period and reveals how music history books manifest the society in which they were written.

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