

Fanny Hensel's Op. 6, No. 1 and the Art of Musical Reminiscence

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At first glance, Fanny Hensel's *Andante espressivo* in A \flat major – the first of the *Vier Lieder für das Pianoforte* op. 6, published in June 1847 just weeks after her death¹ – impresses as a concise example of a textless, nocturne-like song cut from the cloth of her short piano character pieces and occasionally, but just occasionally, reminiscent of her brother's more celebrated *Lieder ohne Worte*. The 61 bars of the *Andante* show the gifts of an accomplished songwriter as they unfold an uninterrupted, 'singing' soprano melody, at times euphonious and lyrical, at times poignant and passionate, above a gently rippling accompaniment of arpeggiated triplets. The basic structure of the composition is clear enough. We hear in succession: 1) the melody in the tonic and a modulation (10 bars) to 2) a statement on the dominant (13 bars); 3) a retransition and dominant pedal point (9 bars) leading to 4) the return of the opening in the tonic (16 bars), further supported by 5) a coda, drawn once again from the melody (13 bars). The compositional plan is thus one of statement, departure and return, a familiar sequence Hensel employed in the majority of her short piano pieces, and yet a deceptively simple strategy that afforded her considerable latitude, within the circumscribed, epigrammatic realm of the piano miniature, to explore a wide emotional range of colours, textures and musico-poetic ideas.

As familiar as Hensel's strategy may be from the examples of other contemporary pianists who cultivated miniature song forms – one thinks of Chopin, the Schumanns and Mendelssohn – her op. 6, no. 1 is still rather unfamiliar, and has attracted relatively little critical attention during the burgeoning revival of this misunderstood, far too long neglected composer of the *Vormärz*. Our natural tendency is to contextualize the work by searching for models, in particular for signs of fraternal influence, and thus to relate the *Andante* to the so-called 'Mendelssohnian style' by comparing it, say, to her brother's *Lied ohne Worte* op. 53, no. 1 (1841), also in A \flat major, and also projecting a song-like soprano melody above arpeggiated triplets (Exx. 1a–b). Indeed, in a recent study Cornelia Bartsch has argued that Fanny's *Andante* is no less than an 'answer' to Felix's *Lied ohne Worte* in E major op. 30, no. 3, and as such,

¹ Released by Bote & Bock in Berlin, op. 6 was announced in June 1847 in Hofmeister's *Musikalisch-Literarische Monatsberichte neuer Musikalien*, vol. 19. See Hans-Günter Klein, *Das verborgene Band: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und seine Schwester Fanny Hensel* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1997): 220. For a reprint of the Bote & Bock first edition, see Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, *Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004).

Ex. 1a Fanny Hensel, *Andante espressivo* op. 6, no. 1, opening bars

Andante espressivo

p

Rit. Rit. e simile

4

Ex. 1b Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Lied ohne Worte* op. 53, no. 1, opening bars

Andante con moto

p sempre tenuto e legato

cresc.

4

establishes a musical dialogue between the siblings.² But such comparisons can be limiting, for the points of contact between Fanny and Felix – a specific melodic turn of phrase, or the use of so-called ‘feminine’ half-cadences, for example – are sometimes surface details that do not penetrate to the essence of Fanny’s *Lied*, or explain its expressive allure. Fanny’s own voice is indeed there, if we are willing to focus our listening, and Fanny’s music has an expressive content of its own, if we are willing to search out new ways of explicating her musical texts.

Admittedly, the primary sources do not assist much in the endeavour. Considerable mystery surrounds this work, as indeed it does many of her other compositions; we search her letters and diaries in vain for references that might

² Cornelia Bartsch, ‘Das Lied ohne Worte op. 6,1 als offener Brief’, in *Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Komponieren zwischen Gesellschaftsideal und romantischer Musikästhetik*, ed. Beatrix Borchard and Monika Schwarz-Danuser, 2nd edn (Kassel: Furore, 2002): 55–72.

shed light on the genesis or interpretation of the *Andante*. What we do know is that she dated its autograph in Berlin on 11 November 1846,³ so that it counts among her very last solo piano works.⁴ At the time, Fanny was awaiting the publication of her op. 1, the *Sechs Lieder für Gesang und Klavier*, which Bote & Bock issued in December along with the four piano *Lieder* op. 2. She had taken the decision to begin publishing her works in July, and thereby moved to resolve a long-standing tension with her brother, who had steadfastly opposed her aspirations as a professional composer.

Bolstering Fanny's determination in 1846 was the encouragement of a new masculine voice in her Berlin circle, that of the law student Robert von Keudell (1824–1903). A future German diplomat and confidant of Bismarck, Keudell was an accomplished amateur pianist who offered Fanny advice about her early publications. 'There can be no more well-intentioned and yet scrupulously observant critic', was her estimation of him in a diary entry from September 1846.⁵ Keudell may even have acted as intermediary between Fanny and Felix regarding her publication ventures. On 9 July, she wrote to Leipzig to inform Felix and seek his approval for her decision to begin printing her works, for, as she put it, at age 40 she still feared him, just as at age 14 she had feared her father.⁶ For more than a month she waited for an answer, and in the interim confided to her diary on 24 July:

I had thought, through Keudell, who returned the day before yesterday and saw Felix, to have received a reply from him, but no. Incidentally, I have continued to be productive, and feel that I've succeeded in many things – that, allied with the wonderfully most splendid summer I have ever experienced, makes me inwardly and outwardly as content and happy as perhaps I have ever been, excepting a short time during our first Roman sojourn, and so even the reality of Felix's silence does not concern me, though under other circumstances it would quite put me out.⁷

When Felix's response, written shortly before he departed in August for England to conduct the Birmingham premiere of *Elijah*, finally arrived, it contained his acceptance of her 'entering our guild', and these wishes: 'may the public pelt you with roses, and never with sand; and may the printer's ink never draw black lines upon your soul.'⁸ Reading between the lines a lacklustre endorsement, Fanny noted, 'At last Felix has written, and given me his professional blessing in

³ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mendelssohn Archiv Ms. 49, p. 119.

⁴ No. 454 in the catalogue by Renate Hellwig-Unruh [H-U], *Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Thematisches Verzeichnis der Kompositionen* (Adliswil: Edition Kunzelmann, 2000): 62 and 351.

⁵ Fanny Hensel, *Tagebücher*, ed. Hans-Günter Klein and Rudolf Elvers (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2002): 268 (23 Sep. 1846), ll. 15–16.

⁶ Fanny to Felix, 9 Jul. 1846, in Marcia J. Citron, *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn, Collected, Edited and Translated with Introductory Essays and Notes* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1987): 349–51.

⁷ Hensel, *Tagebücher*: 266.

⁸ Felix to Fanny, 12 Aug. 1846, Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family (1729–1847) from Letters and Journals*, trans. Carl Klingemann [Jr] (London, 1881; repr. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969): II, 326.

the friendliest manner. I know that he is not quite satisfied in his heart of hearts, but I am glad he has granted me a kind word about it'.⁹

Composed in November, the *Andante espressivo* thus followed by only a few months Fanny's decision to become a professional composer, and there is the possibility that she drafted the piece with the firm intention of publishing it, in contrast to much of her earlier work, written primarily for her own private use and pleasure with little thought of revision or publication. Presumably Keudell continued to offer his critical judgement in 1846 as she began assembling what became the *Six Mélodies pour le piano* opp. 4 and 5, and the *Vier Lieder* op. 6, though Felix too may have played some role. On 13 December he arrived in Berlin, and over the course of the next week – the last days Fanny spent in his company – there was much music-making. At the piano he introduced her to the music of *Elijah*; she seems to have been impressed in particular by Obadiah's aria 'If with all your hearts', for she later alluded to it in the third movement of her Piano Trio op. 11 in D minor, finished a few months later for the birthday of her sister Rebecka.¹⁰ From her diary we know that she played duets with Felix in December, and we can easily imagine her submitting her new compositions, including the *Andante espressivo*, to his critical review.

How Fanny selected the contents of op. 6 is unclear, but the chronology of the four pieces and disposition of their keys and tempi encourage some educated speculation. In order they are: 1) *Andante espressivo* (November 1846, A \flat major), 2) *Allegro vivace* (Italian sojourn of 1839–40, B major), 3) *Andante cantabile* (May 1846, F \sharp major), and 4) *Allegro molto* (March 1841, A minor). The four fall into two pairs, each comprising a slow and fast movement, each juxtaposing keys separated by a minor third or its equivalent (A \flat –B, and F \sharp –a), and each coupling a newly composed piece from 1846 (nos. 1 and 3) with an earlier one written or conceived during the first Italian sojourn of 1839–40 (nos. 2 and 4). Of the four, only the last displays a programmatic title – *Il saltarello Romano*, a memento of Fanny's first visit to Rome (November 1839–June 1840). Nevertheless, we know that in addition the third piece, finished on 16 May 1846, was written to mark the confirmation of her son Sebastian (1830–98), and originally bore the descriptive title *O Traum der Jugend, O goldner Stern!* (*O Dream of Youth, O Golden Star*).¹¹ These titles, of which Fanny allowed one to stand but suppressed the other, encourage us to suppose that the first and second pieces as well were autobiographical in nature, and perhaps represented events or sites Fanny deemed worthy of preserving musically.

Occasionally, it seems, she embedded multiple layers of biographical meaning into her piano music. In the case of *Il saltarello Romano*, for example, we know that Fanny based the composition, finished in Berlin in March 1841, upon a 'Motif' notated a year or so before in Rome, so that the completed work became, in effect, a reminiscence of an Italian experience. But *Il saltarello Romano* also suspiciously parallels the precedent of the finale of Felix's 'Italian' Symphony, inspired by his own experiences in Naples and Rome in 1830 and 1831, and a work that

⁹ Hensel, *Tagebücher*: 266. (For the German original see Nancy Reich, 'The Diaries of Fanny Hensel and Clara Schumann', p. 31, n. 28 of this issue.)

¹⁰ See further my chapter 'On Stylistic Affinities in the Works of Fanny Hensel and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy', in *The Mendelssohns: Their Music in History*, ed. John Michael Cooper and Julie D. Prandi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 245–61, here at 257–9.

¹¹ H-U No. 424. The title also appears in Fanny's *Tagebücher*, 264, in reference to Sebastian's 'debut' at a ball on 16 May.

Fanny obviously knew quite well. Indeed, she chose the same key of A minor for her saltarello, and employed a melodic configuration featuring the fifth scale degree *e*" and its upper neighbour note *f*", as if to allude to – or, *à la* Cornelia Bartsch, establish a dialogue with – the saltarello of her brother (Exx. 2a–b). To be sure, there are details that set Fanny's effort apart – her application of pungent, chromatic embellished tones and, later on, the use of the Neapolitan, for instance – but the double interpretative layer is nevertheless present. The purpose of the piece seems twofold: first, to reminisce about Fanny's engagement in 1840 with Italian folk music, and, second, to compare her experiences musically with those of her brother a decade before.

Ex. 2a Hensel, *Il saltarello Romano* op. 6, no. 4, opening bars



Ex. 2b Mendelssohn, *Italian Symphony* op. 90, Saltarello, opening bars

We find another example of a piano work into which Fanny wove differing though complementary strands of meaning in the wistful *Andante con espressione* in A minor (1840, H-U 352). Titled *Ponte molle*, a reference to the last bridge crossed by travellers leaving Rome,¹² the piece also contains an allusion to Goethe's poem *Erster Verlust*, the opening words of which ('Ach, wer bringt [die schönen Tage]'; 'Ah, who brings back [those sweet days]') Fanny inscribed in the third and fourth bars above the soprano melody and its plaintive diminished-seventh harmony, as if she intended to compose not a piano piece but a texted lied. In fact, in 1820 and 1823 she had produced two settings of Goethe's poem about lost happiness,¹³ and in 1840 the unwelcome prospect of her departure from Rome evidently triggered associations with these verses.

With the precedent of all these examples, could Fanny have conceived op. 6, no. 1 as a further entry in her 'musical diary', and if so, what autobiographical significance might the piece have conveyed? Admittedly, here we tread upon

¹² In 1841 and 1845 Fanny made two additional copies of the piece, which she entitled *Abschied* and *Abschied von Rom*. See further the illuminating study by Hans-Günter Klein, "Alle die infamen Gefühle": Überlegungen zu Fanny Hensels Klavierstück *Abschied von Rom*, in *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz* 2003, ed. Günther Wagner (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003): 177–88.

¹³ H-U 18 and 95; see also R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 85.

highly speculative territory, for some scholars that chartless realm between absolute and programmatic music about which so much ink has been spilled since the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, in this case a bit of musical evidence may provide a clue. To begin with, Fanny seldom used the key of A \flat major; it occurs in only 19 (or 4 per cent) of the 466 works listed in Renate Hellwig-Unruh's *Verzeichnis*, ranging from the early Piano Quartet of 1822 to the op. 6, no. 1 of 1846 under consideration here. Now what further captures our attention is a thematic link between op. 6, no. 1 and two earlier piano pieces in the same key from Fanny's Roman sojourn, the *Allegro moderato* H-U 346¹⁴ and *Villa Medicis* H-U 353,¹⁵ placed, with op. 6, no. 1, in bold face in Table 1, which summarizes Fanny's works in A \flat major.

Table 1 Fanny Hensel's Compositions in A \flat major

Piano Quartet (1822, H-U* 55)
<i>Wanderers Nachtlied</i> I (1825, H-U 147)
Recitative and Aria, <i>Numi clementi-Chi puo dire</i> (1825, H-U 159)
<i>Umsonst</i> (1827, H-U 206)
<i>Der Maiabend</i> , op. 9, no. 5 (1827, H-U 208)
<i>Die frühen Gräber</i> , op. 9, no. 4 (1828, H-U 222)
<i>Gram</i> (1829, H-U 228)
Capriccio for cello and piano (1829, H-U 247)
Fantasy for piano (1830, H-U 253)
<i>Allegro assai</i> for piano, op. 4/5, no. 1 (1839, H-U 342)
<i>Allegro moderato for piano</i> (1840, H-U 346)
<i>Villa Medicis for piano</i> (1840, H-U 353)
<i>Wanderers Nachtlied</i> II (after 1840, H-U 367)
<i>Allegro molto vivace</i> for piano (c. 1840–43, H-U 369)
<i>October</i> , from <i>Das Jahr</i> , for piano (1841, H-U 385)
<i>Allegretto grazioso</i> for piano duet (1844, H-U 409)
<i>Bitte</i> , op. 7, no. 5 (1846, H-U 440)
<i>Stimme der Glocken</i> (1846, H-U 444)
<i>Andante espressivo, op. 6, no. 1</i> (1846, H-U 454)

*Catalogue numbers from Hellwig-Unruh (see n. 4)

All three highlighted pieces begin with themes that describe similar descending forms of the tonic triad in the same register in the order e \flat "– c"– a \flat ' (Exx. 3a, 3b and 1a). Of these pieces the nocturne-like *Allegro moderato*, with its soprano *cantilena* supported by wave-like arpeggiations in the bass, is stylistically closer to our *Andante* than the *Villa Medicis*. The latter, marked *Allegro maestoso*, presents

¹⁴ *Vier römische Klavierstücke*, ed. Christian Lambour (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1999): 3–6.

¹⁵ *5 Klavierstücke aus der Sammlung "Zwölf Klavierstücke von Fanny Hensel geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Für Felix 1843"*, ed. Renate Hellwig-Unruh (Frankfurt am Main: Robert Lienau Musikverlag, 1999): 4–14.

a stately melody above block chords and sturdy octaves in the bass, and creates quite a different effect, though here the opening of the melody, like that of op. 6, no. 1, fills in the descent from c'' to a_b' by means of the passing tone b_b' . Also, *Villa Medicis* shares its metre (4/4) with op. 6, no. 1, while the *Allegro moderato* is in triple time. On the other hand, *Villa Medicis* is linked to the *Allegro moderato* by its early turn to the subdominant (compare the move to the minor subdominant in Ex. 3a).

Ex. 3a Hensel, *Allegro moderato* in A_b major, opening bars

The musical score for Ex. 3a shows the opening of Hensel's *Allegro moderato* in A_b major. It is written for piano in 3/4 time. The right hand plays a melody starting on c'' and descending to a_b' through the passing tone b_b' . The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of octaves and block chords. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The key signature has two flats. The bass line is marked 'sempre col R&D.' and 'R&D.'

Ex. 3b Hensel, *Villa Medicis*, opening bars

The musical score for Ex. 3b shows the opening of Hensel's *Villa Medicis*. It is written for piano in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a melody starting on c'' and descending to a_b' . The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of octaves and block chords. The tempo is marked 'Allegro maestoso'. The key signature has two flats. The bass line is marked 'f largamente'.

Now these similarities may be nothing more than coincidence, but they could also suggest a connection between op. 6, no. 1 and Fanny's Italian sojourn. That is to say, Fanny could have written op. 6, no. 1 to reminisce about Italy, by recalling the common motif of the *Allegro moderato* or *Allegro maestoso*, distorted through the passage of time. In 1846, she could have paused musically in Berlin to reflect on where she had been six years before, a period when she purposely viewed her Roman piano compositions as a type of second diary. Early in May 1840, indeed just days before she finished *Villa Medicis*, she disclosed in a letter to the family of her sister, Rebecka Dirichlet,

Recently I have composed several things, and given my little piano pieces I wrote here names of my present favourite places [*Lieblingsplätze*]. Some actually occurred to me at the sites, and for some I [already] had something in mind, a pleasant memento for the future, a kind of second diary. But don't believe that I will label them so when I play them – that is only for use *zu Hause*.¹⁶

As we know, at the Villa Medici on the Pincian Hill, not far from the Spanish Steps, Fanny and her husband, the painter Wilhelm Hensel, formed part of the

¹⁶ Letter of 4 May 1840 from Fanny Hensel to the Dirichlets, in Fanny Hensel, *Briefe aus Rom an ihre Familie in Berlin 1839/40*, ed. Hans-Günter Klein (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002): 93.

circle around the old and new directors of the French Academy, the painters Horace Vernet and J.-A.-D. Ingres. An amateur violinist, Ingres played chamber music with Fanny, while Wilhelm associated with a group of artists that included the Prussians Friedrich August and Julius Elsasser,¹⁷ A.T. Kaselowsky and Eduard Magnus, and Ingres's pupil Charles Dugasseau. The young Prix de Rome laureates Georges Bousquet and Charles Gounod joined the circle and, enthusiastic members of Fanny's audience, absorbed her performances of German music – J.S. Bach's Concerto in D minor (BWV 1052) and Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, which impelled the impressionable Gounod to declare, 'Beethoven est un polisson' ('Beethoven is a rascal'). Understandably, the Villa Medici remained one of Fanny's *Lieblingsplätzen*. Perhaps its then unimpeded, majestic view of the city, including St Peter's, provided the inspiration for the opening of Fanny's eponymous piano piece, or perhaps her stimulus was the view from the loggia of the villa, which Wilhelm recorded in a vignette adorning Fanny's fair copy. Here we see the imposing statue of the goddess Roma, framed on the right by a column of the portico, and in the background on the left by the Casina di Raffaello of the Villa Borghese.¹⁸ The weighty classical statue may account for the *maestoso* tempo marking. To these visual impressions we should add Fanny's prose description, recorded on 3 May 1840: 'Early to the Villa Medici. Heavenly air, the pealing of bells, the feeling of Sunday. I cannot say how indescribably happy I feel here. For a long while I have been in an almost continuing elevated mood and have the purest sensation of enjoying life in the highest sense. My only bitterness is the necessity of leaving this paradise so soon ...'¹⁹

As it happened, another Roman villa, another *Lieblingsplatz*, inspired Fanny to compose a piano piece. The Villa Mills, built early in the nineteenth century by a Scotsman on the south-east side of the Palatine, extracted from her an ingratiating *Allegretto grazioso* in E major (H-U 357), which she published as her op. 2, no. 2 in 1846, when it appeared without the programmatic title. Like *Villa Medici*, the fair copy of *Villa Mills* was also a collaborative effort with her husband,²⁰ who obliged with another vignette, this one occupying the left margin of the manuscript next to the opening bars, but extending below to the space between the third and fourth staves of the second system, where Wilhelm cleverly positioned a fountain so that its water spilled over, and thus visually intruded upon the soprano melody of the eighth bar. He incorporated into his view from the villa the distant pyramidal tomb of the praetor Caius Cestius, which, as Hans-Günter Klein has noted, involved a bit of artistic licence, as that landmark would have been obscured by the horizon.²¹ Fanny does not seem to have commented upon the pyramid, but in a letter of March 1840, after a visit to the villa, did note the 'celebrated Italian transparency', which mysteriously permitted remote objects to appear clearly. And she mentioned the lush vegetation of the villa, including the orange trees that bloomed throughout the winter (one appears in the foreground of Wilhelm's vignette). 'This little villa is a real jewel', she wrote, 'where one can see what a little art can do, even in the

¹⁷ See Hans-Günter Klein, 'Fanny und Wilhelm Hensel und die Maler Elsasser', in *Mendelssohn Studien* 13 (2003): 125–67.

¹⁸ Mendelssohn Archiv Ms. 163, p. 27. See further, Hans-Günter Klein, *Die Mendelssohns in Italien* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002): 69–70.

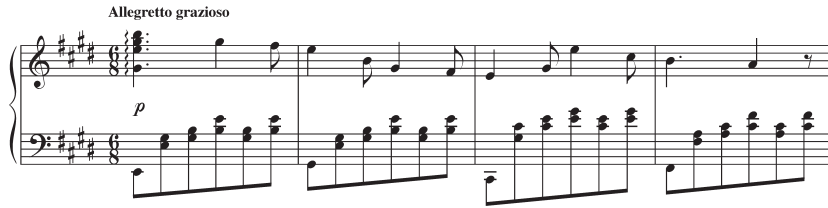
¹⁹ Hensel, *Tagebücher*: 132.

²⁰ Mendelssohn Archiv Ms. 163: 51.

²¹ *Die Mendelssohns in Italien*: 74–5, with a facsimile of the first page of Fanny's autograph on p. 81.

most beautiful natural setting'.²² Unlike the *Villa Medici*, *Allegro moderato* and op. 6, no. 1, Fanny's composition is in the key of E major, not A \flat major; nevertheless, it shares with the three other compositions our now familiar descending melodic motif, here transposed to the form b $''$ -g \sharp'' -f \sharp'' -e $''$ (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4 Hensel, *Villa Mills* op. 2, no. 2



And the nocturne-like textures of *Villa Mills* relate it as well to the *Allegro moderato* and op. 6, no. 1, to which we now return.

For all the appeal of reading the *Andante espressivo* as a page from Fanny's musical diary, a work resonating with musical imagery from her Italian sojourn, how does it stand on its own merits as a composition, and how shall we evaluate its musical qualities? There are many features that we might single out – for example, the supple *Sangbarkeit* of the melodic line and equally subtle voicing of the accompaniment. There is, too, Fanny's strategic placement of three rising climactic points on successively higher pitches – c $'''$, d $'''$, and e $'''$ in bars 22, 30 and 45 (Exx. 5a–c) – as the melody crests and subsides in three successive waves. At the first two climaxes the undulating triplets of the accompaniment momentarily cease, as our attention focuses on dramatically cascading lines in the soprano, two striking interruptions of the texture that intensify the emotional affect of the composition. It is precisely at these two points that Fanny specifies *appassionato* and *largamente*, as she creates romantic effects of melodic collapse and abatement reminiscent of Chopin's nocturnes.

One feature of the *Andante* that calls for more extended discussion is the remarkable range and variety of its harmonic coloration, which lends the composition its distinctive freshness and richness, but also an intensity of effect that sets it apart from many of her brother's *Lieder ohne Worte*, usually less adventurous harmonically. In the restricted space of the 61 bars, Fanny prolongs or touches upon no fewer than 14 harmonic areas, summarized in Table 2, where they are arranged by ascending third. A detailed analysis of the opening bars (see Ex. 1a) reveals her method, which, we shall argue, de-privileges the traditional tonic–dominant axis in favour of ever-shifting third relationships, and of chromatic exchanges between the major and minor modes.

Thus the initial melodic gambit of the first two bars proceeds from the tonic harmony, A \flat major, through a passing sonority to its lower third, F minor, blended with the tonic triad on the second beat. In the third bar, Fanny reaches a half-cadence on the dominant, E \flat major, but immediately exchanges it for its minor form, which in turn prepares a new third relationship in the fourth bar with C \flat , major, the altered third below the dominant and above the tonic. In the space of

²² Fanny Hensel to her mother, Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, 14 March 1840, in Hensel, *Briefe aus Rom*: 65.

Ex. 5a–c Hensel, *Andante espressivo* op. 6, no. 1

(a) bars 21–24

(b) bars 29–33

(c) bars 43–49

four bars, tonic and dominant harmonies are thus effectively weakened through their association with third-related harmonies. What impresses listeners is a series of harmonic steps by thirds, so that we begin to form in our aural imagination a chain of thirds, in this case, in the order F minor–A \flat major–C \flat major–E \flat major. In bars 9 and 14, Fanny then extends that chain, by briefly exploring in turn G minor and G \flat major, two harmonic realms a third *above* the dominant. And, continuing to survey the composition, we discover that she employs five more harmonic regions, including B \flat major and minor, D major, D \flat major (especially emphasized in the coda), and, at the first climax in bar 22, F \flat major, reinterpreted as part of a German augmented-sixth chord that resolves to the dominant (see Ex. 5a). Placing all these harmonic areas in ascending order yields the scheme of Table 2 below, a complete chain of thirds progressing from the first to the third, fifth, seventh, second, fourth and sixth scale degrees.

Fanny's harmonic explorations bring to mind the experiments of contemporaries such as Chopin and Liszt, who sometimes structured large-

Table 2 Summary of Harmonic Areas in Fanny Hensel's op. 6, no. 1

Areas		Bars		
A flat	I	1	33	49
a flat	i	25	45	48
C flat	♭III	4	36	
C	III	7	39	
E flat	V	11	24	
e flat	v	3	15	35
G flat	♭VII	14		
g	vii	9	41	
B flat	II	6	38	
b flat	ii	18	20	
D	♯IV	51		
D flat	IV	42		
F flat	♭VI	22	46	
f	vi	2	34	

scale piano compositions on patterns of ascending tonal thirds. For example, Chopin's Fantasy in F minor, op. 49 (1849) treats F minor and A_♭ major as dual tonics – the work begins in one and ends in the other – and employs between its endpoints a rising chain of thirds. Then there is the case of Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor (1850), which begins by asserting the sixth scale degree, G, before turning to the tonic and describing an ascending trajectory of thirds through the mediant D, F_♯ major (the slow middle movement), and B_♭ minor (the fugue, enharmonically equivalent to the leading tone A_♯), before re-establishing the tonic. Now admittedly, Fanny's *Andante* does not unfold an ascending chain of thirds in a regular sequence; rather, she uses her chain somewhat as a pre-compositional tool, a palette of harmonies from which to draw in the course of her composition. The third-pairings add an aural layer that effectively blurs the elementary background progression from the tonic to the dominant and back to the tonic. Her technique is still evident even in the closing bars, where Fanny subtly manipulates the final cadential gesture (Ex. 6a). Thus instead of repeating the V⁷–I cadence of bars 56–57, she replaces the dominant seventh by a chromatically altered chord above the tonic that insinuates into the sonority an F_♭, an alteration that obscures the anticipated dominant-to-tonic progression. Then, in the antepenultimate bar, the closing A_♭ major triplets are quietly blended with F minor, yielding a cadential pairing and quasi-consonant six–five sonority once again reminiscent of Chopin (Ex. 6b).

These pairings and chromatic adjustments are like so many brief digressions that seductively divert us from the main path to explore unanticipated tonal realms. Their number and variety, especially when we consider the confined temporal space of the *Andante*, give this miniature an undeniable vividness and cogency of expression. Perhaps these qualities were among those an anonymous Leipzig reviewer had in mind in 1847, when comparing Fanny's and Felix's piano compositions: '*Frau Hensel's* lieder are more complicated; here fantasy

Ex. 6a Hensel, *Andante espressivo* op. 6, no.1, closing bars

Ex. 6b Chopin, Nocturne in E major op. 62, no. 2, closing bars

is permitted a freer reign, the form is applied in broader strokes ...²³ If part of that fantasy lay in Fanny's harmonic spontaneity and latitude, another part surely concerned the intimate relationship between her piano music and events in her life. The harmonic diversity of her piano works and their well-veiled autobiographical allusions as she moved from the private to a public arena offer two profitable ways to approach her music, and to appreciate her art – the art of the musical diarist, and the art of the miniaturist.

²³ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 49 (1847), col. 382 ('Ueber die Claviercompositionen von Fanny Hensel/ geb. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy').