

Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*: How Can This Be?

Presented by

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Music History: 1750 to 1900

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Felix Mendelssohn is perhaps one of the more peculiar composers of the Romantic era, not for who he was, but because of his music. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* cites Mendelssohn as one of the most gifted and versatile prodigies of his age¹. Mendelssohn's music, particularly his piano compositions, did not reflect the new virtuoso style of his day, but a restrained style which still managed to make significant technical demands on the performer. In the generation of composers following Beethoven, Mendelssohn's music reflected the tension between Classicism and Romanticism. A musical giant, he stood at the forefront of the German music scene as a conductor, pianist, organist, and composer during his brief two decades of professional musicianship². One entire genre, to which Mendelssohn has become inseparably attached, is called *Lieder ohne worte*. A dedicated musician for his entire life, this new genre represents one of the main achievements for which Mendelssohn is remembered and cherished.

Nearly all of Felix Mendelssohn's short life was dedicated to the study of music. Among Felix Mendelssohn's earliest musical influences was his mother, Lea Mendelssohn, who oversaw his early musical education. At the age of seven, in 1816, and again in 1817, Felix Mendelssohn's father took Felix and his sister, Fanny, to Paris where they both took piano lessons from Marie Bigot, whose technique was admired by the likes of Haydn and Beethoven. Also in 1817, Felix visited his aunt Doroteheo von Schlegel who dubbed the young Mendelssohn a genius. At that time he was already reading complex scores with ease and he also transposed keyboard studies by JB Cramer at sight. In 1818, at the age of nine, after Felix had finished elementary school, he began his studies under the pianist Ludwig Berger, who himself was a former pupil of Clementi. After joining the Berlin Singakademie, Felix began taking music theory lessons from the Singakademie's conductor, Carl Friedrich Zelter. Within a few months, Mendelssohn had completed courses on figured bass, chorale, invertible counterpoint, canon, and fugue³. In 1824, at the age of 15, Zelter officially ended Mendelssohn's apprenticeship. At this time, Felix began to take lessons from virtuoso pianist Ignaz Moscheles. At the age of 27, Felix Mendelssohn moved to the front rank of German

¹ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, "Mendelssohn, Felix." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 389.

² Ibid, 389.

³ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, "Mendelssohn, Felix." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 390.

musicians and acquired international fame for directing the 1836 Niederrheinisches Musikfest in Dusseldorf, where he premiered his oratorio *St. Paul*⁴.

By the time of the Niederrheinisches Musikfest in 1836, Mendelssohn had already published the first volume of *Lieder ohne Worte*. Although Mendelssohn wrote a prodigious amount of music in his six volumes of *Lieder ohne Worte*, not including two volumes published posthumously, the origin of *Lieder ohne Worte* remains uncertain. Mendelssohn may have borrowed the idea with regard to why one should write in the style of *Lieder ohne Worte* from A.B. Marx who saw music as a higher form of communication. In the 1820s, Marx wrote about the expressive potential and “definiteness” that is found in instrumental music⁵. Mendelssohn summed up the idea of *Lieder ohne Worte*, or Songs without Words, in saying that music has “not thoughts that are too vague to be put into words but too precise”⁶. Mendelssohn hardly attempted to explain the music of *Lieder ohne Worte* to anyone because he felt that words could not adequately expressed what was portrayed through the music. Only a few of the lieder have titles. For the most part, Mendelssohn did not want his lieder to be confined by titles or contents.

On October 15, 1812, Mendelssohn wrote to his Marc Andre’ Souchay, who wanted to give each *Lieder ohne Worte* titles:

People usually complain that music is so ambiguous; that they are doubtful as to what they should think when they hear it, whereas everyone understands words. For me, it is just the reverse. And that is not for while speeches but for single words also: they seem to me so ambiguous, so indefinite, so open to misunderstanding in comparison with real music which fills one’s soul with a thousand better things than words. To me, the music I love does not express thoughts too indefinite to be put into words, but too definite...If you ask me what I thought (in connection with one or another of the Songs without Words), I must say: the song itself as it stands. If, with one or the other of them, I had a specific word or words in mind, I should not like to give them those titles, because words do not mean the same to one person as they mean to another; only the song says

⁴ Ibid, 398.

⁵ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, “Mendelssohn, Felix.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 406.

⁶ Douglass Seaton, *The Mendelssohn Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 310.

the same thing, arouses the same feeling, in one person as in another—a feeling that, however cannot be expressed in the same words...The word remains ambiguous, but in music we understand each other rightly⁷.

The idea for the genre which *Lieder ohne Worte* represented originated with Mendelssohn in the late 1820s. Mendelssohn began to compose in this style in the late 1820s for albums of his friends and family. However, one cannot say with certain definiteness where the idea for this new genre came. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* relates the origins of *Lieder ohne Worte* as remaining “couched in mystery”⁸. There has been limited success in tracing Mendelssohn’s compositions to the character pieces of Schubert, Dussek, Tomasek, and Berger⁹. German romantic lyric poetry remains to be another possible source of inspiration for *Lieder ohne Worte*¹⁰. Robert Schumann speculated that Mendelssohn composed lieder with texts and then suppressed the texts in the music¹¹. Some also believe *Lieder ohne Worte* to be a secular diary of Mendelssohn’s life, just as his church music can be seen as a spiritual diary¹². However, the most plausible idea seems to be that the genre was inspired from a childhood game which Felix and his sister, Fanny, played together. Evidence for this source from which *Lieder ohne Worte* may have originated is seen in a letter that Fanny wrote to Felix which reads: “shouldn’t a person think a lot of himself...when he sees that the jokes that we mere children contrived to pass the time have now been adopted by the great talents and used as fodder for the public?”¹³. Fanny herself composed many lieder in the form represented by *Lieder ohne Worte*. Ironically, perhaps the first incidence of this new style is not found in any of Mendelssohn’s piano compositions, but his symphony in D as well as other shorter pieces¹⁴. Regardless of the way in which Mendelssohn developed this new genre of piano music, the idea that a piano composition can be in a song form, yet without words was innovative.

⁷ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 185.

⁸ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, “Mendelssohn, Felix.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 406.

⁹ Larry R. Todd, *Nineteenth-century piano music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 192.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 196.

¹¹ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, “Mendelssohn, Felix.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 406.

¹² Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 300.

¹³ Larry R. Todd, *Nineteenth-century piano music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 192.

¹⁴ John Erksine, *Song Without Words The Story of Felix Mendelssohn* (New York: Julian Messner Inc, 1941), 58.

Although many of the origins of *Lieder ohne Worte* are shrouded in mystery, there is some background information on some of them. Among the earliest of the compositions which was included in *Lieder ohne Worte* was in Eb which Mendelssohn composed as a birthday present for Fanny in 1828¹⁵. Only five of the thirty-six pieces contained in *Lieder ohne Worte* have titles that were authorized by Mendelssohn. No. 29 in A minor, the Venetian Gondola Song, describes a gondola in the canals of Venice, slowly rising above the waters. No. 34 in C major is a spinning song. The “Duetto” Op. 38 No. 6 was written in 1836 when Mendelssohn became engaged to Cecile Jeanrenaud. The melodic material in the “Duetto” alternates between the soprano and tenor registers with the closing section having the melody appear doubled at octaves in both voices. The “Volkslied” Op. 55 No. 5 contains open-spaced chords and strident introductory fifths, capturing the first movement of Mendelssohn’s Scottish Symphony and looking ahead to Brahms’s piano sonata Op. 1 at the same time¹⁶.

Released in 1832, the innovative *Lieder ohne Worte* Op. 19b was the first of six volumes of *Lieder ohne Worte* to be released during Mendelssohn’s lifetime. In putting together Op. 19b, Mendelssohn drew on material of older piano compositions which he had already written and he also wrote new compositions. Apparently in Op. 19b, Mendelssohn sought to achieve a balance among his compositions between major and minor keys and short and long pieces. Op. 19b first carried the title “Original Melodies for the Pianoforte” and later “Romances for the Pianoforte” before Mendelssohn gave them the title of *Lieder ohne Worte*. Five more volumes of *Lieder ohne Worte* were published during Mendelssohn’s lifetime, and two volumes were published posthumously (Opp. 30, 38, 53, 62, 67, 85, 102).

When Op. 19b was published, Mendelssohn’s contemporaries had mixed reactions regarding this new genre of popular music. At first, many of his contemporaries were confused by the contradiction in the title of Op. 19b. Moritz Hauptman wrote, “Songs without Words? What can they be?”¹⁷. Until he saw the music, Hauptman initially mistook *Lieder ohne Worte* to be vocal exercises. Another contemporary wrote, “Is it possible? Does Mendelssohn mean it seriously?”¹⁸.

¹⁵ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, “Mendelssohn, Felix.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 406.

¹⁶ Douglass Seaton, *The Mendelssohn Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 595.

¹⁷ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 185.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 185.

After the initial confusion however, many of Mendelssohn's contemporaries highly favored *Lieder ohne Worte*. Henry Charley wrote:

Though hard to be conveyed in words, there is felt to be a mind clear and deep, an appreciation of character and form which refers to the inner spirit rather than the outward details...which gives so exquisitely southern a character to the barcole and the gondola tune in Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*."¹⁹

Hiller commented on the skill which is seen in *Lieder ohne Worte* in saying that Mendelssohn "had to return to the piano and improvise by weaving a Bach motiff in the most ingenious fashion into the first of his well known Songs without Words, uniting past and present into something new and virtually unnameable"²⁰.

Joseph Joachim looked on with wonderment as it seemed that Mendelssohn would electrify pieces almost from the very first note²¹. Charles Salaman noted that Mendelssohn's fingers seemed to sing as they "rippled over the keyboard"²². Fanny Hensel reported to Felix on the great reception of *Lieder ohne Worte* in Berlin. She noted that wherever she played *Lieder ohne Worte* a pair of young ladies would regularly fall into a faint²³. Buxton, who published Mendelssohn's fifth volume of *Lieder ohne Worte* in 1844 wrote to Mendelssohn saying, "Make me up another book—do it at once. I know you have got plenty ready. You need not be afraid of the people getting tired of them, they are the very things which have made you so many friends"²⁴. Hans von Bulow holds *Lieder ohne Worte* as being equal with the poetry of Goethe²⁵.

Two of Mendelssohn's biggest fans were Robert and Clara Schumann. In 1840, Robert Schumann listed Mendelssohn as first among a list of distinguished contemporary composers of his day as having "the poetic, the humoristic, the profoundly combinatory quality of modern music"²⁶. Clara Schumann wrote, "he played so consummately...that for a few minutes I really could not restrain my tears. When all is said and done, he remains for me the dearest pianist of all"²⁷. As for *Lieder ohne Worte*, Robert Schumann

¹⁹ Douglass Seaton, *The Mendelssohn Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 110.

²⁰ Larry R. Todd, *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 57.

²¹ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 189.

²² Herbert Kupferberg, *The Mendelssohns: Three Generations of Genius* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 151.

²³ Peter Mercer-Taylor, *The Life of Mendelssohn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133.

²⁴ Larry R. Todd, *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 253.

²⁵ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 186.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 189.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 188.

dubbed them “masterpieces of miniature art”²⁸. Robert Schumann carries on his fascination with Mendelssohn’s talents and the *Lieder ohne Worte* in saying:

who has not once sat at dusk at the keyboard...and in the middle of improvising unconsciously added a sung melody? Now if one could by chance combine the accompaniment with the melody in the hands alone, and if one just happens to be a Mendelssohn, there thereby arise the most beautiful songs without words²⁹.

One of the reasons why *Lieder ohne Worte* was received popular reception was because its music was written with accessibility to the common amateur musician of the day. That is why *Lieder ohne Worte* perfectly fulfilled the demands of the middle-class salons of Mendelssohn’s time³⁰. However, Mendelssohn did not simply write salon music, but he adjusted his music to present to people a small form which was based on the salon’s existence. Furthermore, according to a letter that Felix wrote to his sister, Fanny, *Lieder ohne Worte* was written specifically for an audience composed of young women who played piano in the salons who used the music to derive their own fantasies about the composer³¹. Each volume of *Lieder ohne Worte* was dedicated by Mendelssohn to a woman, further enhancing its appeal to middle-class, piano playing, salon women. The fifth volume, Op. 62 was dedicated to Clara Schumann, who was a huge fan of Mendelssohn’s. At the same time, *Lieder ohne Worte* contained some pieces of considerable difficulty, which were also performed in public concerts³².

Initially, however, the public did not seem too thrilled about *Lieder ohne Worte*. In England, after having been published for an entire year, only forty-eight copies of Mendelssohn’s lieder had been sold³³. Neither did all of Mendelssohn’s contemporaries appreciate his music. Berlioz commented on Mendelssohn’s partiality to the musical traditions of Bach and other Baroque composers in saying that he studied the music of the dead too much. Oscar Bie said Mendelssohn was lacking “the disconcerting honesty of a Bach or a Schubert”³⁴. Yet, despite the initial reaction by the public and the critics,

²⁸ Ibid, 328.

²⁹ Larry R. Todd, *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 131.

³⁰ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 180.

³¹ Peter Mercer-Taylor, *The Life of Mendelssohn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133.

³² Ibid, 133.

³³ Larry R. Todd, *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 243.

³⁴ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 189.

Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* remained a revolutionary approach to music, and as is sometimes common with revolutions, *Lieder ohne Worte* set the musical world of Europe on fire.

Lieder ohne Worte also reflect a new style of piano music which heavily emphasized depth of feeling and belonged to a psychologically different genre than previous piano composition³⁵. *Lieder ohne Worte* all exhibit a sentimental quality, yet without overstepping the limits of politeness in emotion³⁶. There are few moments in *Lieder ohne Worte* which can be described as adventurous or breathtaking. One of the things that prevented *Lieder ohne Worte* from this over-emotional emptiness is a hidden presence of the Baroque style, which Mendelssohn learned from his intense preoccupation with J.S. Bach³⁷. Other examples of this new style are Chopin's *Preludes*, Schubert's *Impromptus*, and Schumann's *Carnival*.

The organization of the form for this new genre was more or less a song, but without words, making the title *Lieder ohne Worte* all too appropriate. Typically, *Lieder ohne Worte* had song-like qualities, including lyrical treble melodies that were supported by an arpeggiated form of accompaniment and ternary song form. Mendelssohn employed the closed ternary form in which the B section is continuous with the A section, a model which was taken from Beethoven's *Bagatelles*³⁸. Hug O Leichtentritt commented on Mendelssohn's ability to create beautiful songs in such a simple form in that "he actually raised the simplest form pattern, ABA...in a succession of inspired new variations, a brilliant demonstration of his command of form"³⁹. The song-like form of *Lieder ohne Worte* contained two strophes of equal length, both of which began and ended on the tonic. The second strophe contained a variation or development of material from the first strophe, enriching its harmony and intensifying its expressions. Other qualities of song-like form include a short introduction, monothematic material, with a limited amount of repetition. Most compositions belonging to the form represented by *Lieder ohne Worte* begin and end with a few bars of the accompaniment, corresponding to the prelude and postlude of the song. In *Lieder ohne Worte*, Mendelssohn was one of the first composers to make use of writing textures with notes being doubled at

³⁵ Ibid, 182.

³⁶ Philip Radcliffe, *Mendelssohn* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons LTD, 1967), 12.

³⁷ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 189.

³⁸ Eric Werner, *Mendelssohn A New Image of the Composer and His Age* (London: Collier-MacMillan LTD, 1963), 220.

³⁹ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 198.

two octaves apart⁴⁰. Mendelssohn purposely avoided big leaps in the melody which some composers employed in order to surprise their audience. However, Mendelssohn used his dependable and unsurpassed skill in order to win his audiences⁴¹. Most of *Lieder ohne Worte* can be divided into three groups, which represent pianistic parallels to vocal categories of songs: solos, duets, partsongs. However, a few of the songs defy any attempts to classify them into one of those categories, such as seen in Op. 53 No. 4, which is entitled “Abendlied.”

Lieder ohne Worte themselves stood as a unique Romantic fusion of forms. They are varied in mood, but not in style as they are all melodious. With eight volumes containing a total of forty-eight piano pieces, *Lieder ohne Worte* espouses a surreal ambiance with a genteel passing note chromaticism. The *Norton Anthology of Western Music* describes the *Lieder ohne Worte* as pieces of music that are not unlike preludes and etudes, each pursuing a consistent pattern of accompaniment of a song-like melody⁴².

As for Mendelssohn himself, his style of music was formed during the 1820s in the conservative culture of Restoration Berlin. He learned to emulate famous past composers such as Handel, Mozart, Haydn, and JS Bach—from which he derived his rich love of complex chromatic partwriting and counterpoint⁴³. When he began his studies with Ignaz Moscheles, Mendelssohn also began to absorb the styles of Weber and Beethoven, both of whom he had been restricted from studying with Zelter. Three main influences stand out in Mendelssohn’s keyboard music: the contrapuntal vigor of Bach, the dramatic gestures and transcendental utterances of Beethoven’s middle and late periods, the scintillating piano textures of Weber⁴⁴. Early during the piano virtuoso’s career, Rossini encouraged Mendelssohn to adopt popular themes in his compositions; perhaps the *Lieder ohne worte* were the culmination of Rossini’s advice⁴⁵. Rossini’s advice seems to have paid off because Mendelssohn’s compositions were among the most successful of his age⁴⁶. Mendelssohn surpassed his contemporaries in both flawless formal purity and

⁴⁰ John Erksine, *Song Without Words The Story of Felix Mendelssohn* (New York: Julian Messner Inc, 1941), 79.

⁴¹ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 198.

⁴² “Felix Mendelssohn *Lieder ohne Worte*,” In *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 337.

⁴³ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, “Mendelssohn, Felix.” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 402.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 406.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 398.

⁴⁶ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 180.

brevity⁴⁷. His successes, however, did not come without hard work; his entire life from an early age was dedicated to the learning and performing of music.

Unlike many other virtuosos—whose music Mendelssohn despised—he did not write music which challenged the limits of the new pianos which were being made during the early 1800s. Otherwise, Mendelssohn would have made virtuosity an ends in itself, which is what he scorned so much about the new virtuoso style⁴⁸. *Lieder ohne Worte* however, does require a fluent technique which omitted the indulgence in violence or excess bravura. One technique which Mendelssohn did take advantage of the new capabilities of the pianoforte was its ability to respond to a player's varying touch, in such a way that the melody was louder and the accompaniment was softer, even if both were played with the same hand. Examples of this technique are seen in *Lieder ohne Worte* Op. 67 No. 4 and Op. 85 No. 4.

Mendelssohn also wrote other compositions not written for the piano which also reflected the genre of *Lieder ohne Worte*. The eighteenth movement from *Elijah* is an Arioso in the style of *Lieder ohne Worte*⁴⁹. Also in the style of *Lieder ohne Worte* is a piece of posthumous chamber music written for cello and piano, a *Romance sans Paroles* Op. 109, slow movements of *Piano Trios* opp. 49 and 66, string quartets Op. 44, the *Piano Concerto in D minor* Op. 40, and *Violin Concerto in E minor* Op. 64⁵⁰. Furthermore, Mendelssohn's style of *Lieder ohne Worte* was also emulated by other composers as seen in Schumann's *Phantasiestücke* Op. 12, Brahms *Piano Sonatas* Opp. 1,2 and 4, Liszt, pohl, Heller, Litloff, Tchaikovsky, Faure, and Richard Strauss⁵¹.

Felix Mendelssohn's piano compositions, particularly *Lieder ohne worte*, was highly regarded among the favorites of salon music during the 1840s. Contemporaries of Felix Mendelssohn admired the pithiness of his themes and the formal completeness and the perfection of his pianistic style⁵². Although many contemporaries delighted in Mendelssohn's compositions, he was not without his critics in his

⁴⁷ Ibid, 186.

⁴⁸ Franz Krautwurst and Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel, "Mendelssohn, Felix." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: macmillan, 2001. Vol. 16), 402.

⁴⁹ Jack Werner, *Mendelssohn's "Elijah"; a historical and analytical guide to the oratorio* (London: Chappell, 1965), 58.

⁵⁰ Larry R. Todd, *Nineteenth-century piano music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 198.

⁵¹ Ibid, 198.

⁵² Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 186.

lifetime. One critic accused his music of sometimes being too coy and strewn with “Blumelein”; however, the same critic also acknowledged the warmth and poetic sensibility of some of Mendelssohn’s music⁵³.

Having noted the influence of Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte* on other composers, the impact that it had upon the public, and the positive reaction of most of Mendelssohn’s contemporaries, it is no wonder that Mendelssohn’s name has become inseparably attached to *Lieder ohne Worte* and the form which that music represents. Mendelssohn’s study of the Baroque tradition, Bach, Handel, Beethoven, and his intensive study of music theory under Zelter all contributed to his success and particularly to *Lieder ohne Worte*. From 1840 to 1890, *Lieder ohne Worte* was played more than any other composition⁵⁴.

Mendelssohn’s music stands as its own. A child prodigy, a gentle genius, Mendelssohn was a unique composer for his time. He went against the fashionable virtuoso composing methods of his contemporaries and sought out a path of his own. Mendelssohn did not seek heroism through virtuosity as an end to itself, but heroism came to him for not doing what everybody else was doing, but for doing what he wanted to do.

⁵³ Herbert Kupferberg, *The Mendelssohns: Three Generations of Genius* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 331.

⁵⁴ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and his times* (Englewood Cliffs., Prentice-Hall, 1963), 185.

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