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MENDELSSOHN'S <u>DIE</u> <u>ERSTE</u> <u>WALPURGISNACHT</u>

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
in the Graduate College of the
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS BY

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_____ Director of Thesis Research

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Committee on Final Examination†

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Felix Mendelssohn's <u>Die erste Walpurgisnacht</u> is a work
of about thirty-five minutes' duration for four soloists--
alto, tenor, baritone, and bass--mixed chorus, and orches-
tra. Its text is a ballad by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
Mendelssohn composed a first version of the work between
1830-32, giving it at least one Berlin performance in 1833.
Following considerable revisions begun in 1840, the work was
premiered in Leipzig in 1843 and published a year later as
Opus 60. Despite its intrinsic merit, immediate popularity,
and secure place in the common repertory of the later nine-
teenth century, <u>Die erste Walpurgisnacht</u> is not well known
or often performed today. This thesis will offer a full-
scale study of the work and its relationship to a signifi-
cant body of cantata repertory in the nineteenth century.

Nearly fifty years elapsed between Goethe's writing
of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" in 1798-99 and the completion
and first performance of Mendelssohn's Opus 60. In the late
1790s, Goethe, then director of the Hoftheater in Weimar,
wanted to write a libretto for a sequel to Mozart's <u>Magic
Flute</u>, which he had produced there with enthusiasm and

care.[1] To advance this plan, he made the acquaintance of the
Berlin composer Karl Friedrich Zelter, a few of whose recent
songs Goethe knew and admired. But because Zelter lacked
confidence as an opera composer, the hoped-for collaboration
did not materialize.[2] Goethe's inclusion of the poem "Die
erste Walpurgisnacht" in his first letter to Zelter, the be-
ginning of a remarkable correspondence lasting until their
deaths in the same year (1832), perhaps showed his reluctance
to let the matter drop. Maybe he could whet Zelter's inter-
est in dramatic music by starting out with a relatively
modest project, a cantata with ballad text? He wrote:

> I enclose a production which has rather a strange
> appearance. It was suggested by the question, whether
> dramatic ballads might not be worked out in such a
> manner, as to furnish a composer with material for a
> cantata.[3]

Although Zelter had been successful in this genre
earlier--his sacred cantata on the death of King Frederick
the Great had been an important turning point in his artistic
life[4]--his efforts to set "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" did not
go well. He wrote to Goethe in September, 1799:

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[1]Friedrich Blume, Goethe und die Musik (Kassel: Bären-
reiter, 1948), pp. 48-50.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

[3]Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Goethe's Letters to Zelter,
ed. and trans. A. D. Coleridge (London: George Bell, 1887),
p. 3.

[4]Karl Friedrich Zelter, Darstellungen seines Lebens,
ed. Johann-Wolfgang Schottländer (Hildesheim, New York: Georg
Olms, 1978), p. 173.

"Die erste Walpurgisnacht" is a very peculiar poem.
The verses are musical and singable. I wanted to enclose
the completed composition here, and have a good part of
the work behind me, but by myself, I can't seem to find
the breeze which blows through the entire thing, and
think I'd better leave it alone.[5]

In a letter to Goethe of December, 1802, Zelter explained:

"'Walpurgisnacht' remains unfinished, because it intrudes

upon my worn-out cantata model."[6]

"Die erste Walpurgisnacht" was published in the 1815

Cotta edition of Goethe's collected works,[7] but it has always

been assumed that the poem passed directly to Mendelssohn

from Zelter, who became his teacher in 1817.[8] (Zelter was

fifty-nine, Felix eight.) In any case, when he first men-

tioned the poem--in a letter to his sister Fanny in February,

1831--Mendelssohn called his idea of a musical setting of

"Die erste Walpurgisnacht" an "old favorite scheme."[9] He

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[5]Quoted in Günter Schwanbeck, Die dramatische Chorkan-
tate der Romantik in Deutschland (Düsseldorf: G. H. Nolte,
1938), pp. 11-12. [Die Erste Walpurgisnacht ist ein sehr
eigenes Gedicht. Die Verse sind musikalisch und singbar.
Ich wollte es Ihnen in Musik gesetzt hier beilegen und habe
ein gutes Teil hineingearbeitet, allein ich kann die Luft
nicht finden, die durch das Ganze weht, und so soll es lieber
noch liegen bleiben.]

[6]Quoted in Schwanbeck, p. 12. [Die 'Walpurgisnacht'
blieb aber deswegen unfertig, weil sich mir immer die alte,
abgetragene Kantaten-uniform aufdrängte.]

[7]Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Werke, 20 vols. (Stuttgart,
Tübingen: Cotta, 1815-19), vol. 1, p. 214.

[8]George R. Marek, Gentle Genius: the Story of Felix
Mendelssohn (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1972), p. 113.

[9]Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Letters from Italy and
Switzerland, trans. Lady Wallace (Boston: Ditson, 186-), p.
115.

composed *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* while travelling in Italy, Switzerland, and France between 1830-32, a trip which started with a visit to Goethe in May, 1830. He began the work soon after his departure from Weimar and was occupied with it off and on throughout his journey--in Vienna, Rome, and Milan, where he played part of it for Mozart's son, Karl.[10] He continued the composition in Switzerland; upon leaving Lucerne, he wrote to Eduard Devrient in August, 1831, that he had "nothing but voices and choruses buzzing around me, and I shall have no peace until I have worked it [Walpurgisnacht] out."[11] The overture and the orchestration were completed in Paris in 1832,[12] within months of the deaths of Goethe and Zelter.

This version of *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*, a "grand cantata,"[13] "longer and more enlarged than I had planned it originally,"[14] was premiered in Berlin on February 2, 1833, in the last of three subscription concerts which Mendelssohn

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[10]Hans Christoph Worbs, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1974), p. 116; also Douglass Seaton, "The Romantic Mendelssohn: The Composition of *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*," *Musical Quarterly* 68/3 (July 1982): 400.

[11]Eduard Devrient, *My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and His Letters to Me*, trans. Natalia Macfarren (London: Richard Bentley, 1869), p. 124.

[12]Worbs, p. 116.

[13]Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Letters from Italy*, p. 115.

[14]Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Letters*, ed. G. Selden-Goth (New York: Pantheon, 1945), p. 172.

had undertaken for charity during that winter season. The
concert took place in the concert room of the Königliche
Schauspielhaus (royal theater), with the orchestra of the
Königliche Kapelle and the theater chorus under Mendelssohn's
direction.[15] Among the soloists were a certain "Herr Man-
tius," tenor,[16] and probably also Mendelssohn's close friend
Eduard Devrient, baritone.[17] The work occupied the entire
second part of a program which otherwise included Mendels-
sohn's Overture, Die Hebriden, also a premiere, Beethoven's
Fourth Piano Concerto in G, for which Mendelssohn was the
soloist, and an aria and clarinet sonata by Weber.[18] A re-
view in the Leipzig AMZ was only lukewarm. For, despite some
"original and melodic" vocal solos, and "terrifying, bizarre,
and vigorous" choruses, the writer found the work less enga-
ging overall than he had expected from the text and forces
employed.[19]

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[15]Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung [hereafter cited as
AMZ] 35/8 (February 1833), col. 125-26.

[16]Ibid., col. 125. As a student, before joining the
Berlin opera, Mantius, Devrient, and Mendelssohn's sisters
had performed together in Mendelssohn's operetta Heimkehr aus
der Fremde; see Ernst Wolff, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
(Berlin: Harmonie, 1909), p. 72.

[17]Mendelssohn had written to Devrient: ". . . and in
my first subscription concert in Berlin you shall sing the
bearded Druid . . ."; see Devrient, p. 115.

[18]AMZ 35/8 (February 1833), col. 124-26. [originell
und melodisch; schauerlich, bizarre, und energisch]

[19]Ibid., col. 126.

Just a week before this concert, the Berlin Singaka-
demie had announced its choice of Rungenhagen as its new head
--Mendelssohn had been in the running--which marked the end
of a protracted and unpleasant affair which caused Mendels-
sohn much heartache in those days.[20] Later that spring, he
left Berlin to accept a position in Düsseldorf. Die erste
Walpurgisnacht, which had already undergone many alterations
by the time of its first performance,[21] was set aside.

In 1840, while working on the Lobgesang, Mendelssohn,
now musical director in Leipzig, decided to take up the Wal-
purgisnacht again. Since only a few fragments of the Berlin
version are extant,[22] it is impossible to know precisely what
Mendelssohn proceeded to change. He told his friend Karl
Klingemann that he left the Overture and the "Hexenchor" from
the earlier version more or less intact.[23] In early

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[20]Eberhard Rudolph, "Mendelssohns Beziehungen zu Ber-
lin," Beitrag zur Musikwissenschaft 13/3 (1972): 209.

[21]Devrient, p. 157

[22]In his letter to me dated August 20, 1981, Rudolf
Elvers, Director, Mendelssohn-Archiv, Staatsbibliotek, Preus-
sischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, stated: "Apparently Mendels-
sohn destroyed the first version of Die erste Walpurgisnacht.
In any case, I have never seen it, except for one page that
evidently originated from the first version and whose oppo-
site side had been used for another composition; it popped
up at Sotheby's in London a few years ago." [Die erste Fas-
sung der ersten Walpurgisnacht scheint Mendelssohn vernichtet
zu haben. Mir ist sie jedenfalls nie vorgekommen, lediglich
ein Blatt, das offenbar aus der ersten Fassung stammte und
dessen Rückseite für eine andere Komposition benutzt worden
ist, wurde vor Jahren bei Sotheby in London versteigert.]
However, Seaton (p. 409) lists seven different fragments
which he dates as originating from 1830-32.

[23]Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Briefwechsel mit Karl
Klingemann (Essen: Baedeker, 1909), p. 290.

December, 1842, he informed his mother that his <u>Walpurgis-</u>
<u>nacht</u> was to appear

> in different garb from the former one, which was some-
> what too richly endowed with trombones and rather poor
> in the vocal parts; but to this effect I have been
> obliged to rewrite the whole score from A to Z, and to
> add two new arias, not to mention the rest of the clip-
> ping and cutting. If I don't like it now, I solemnly
> vow to give it up for the rest of my life.[24]

Mendelssohn worked feverishly to finish parts and vocal
scores in time to perform <u>Walpurgisnacht</u> on December "twenty-
first or twenty-second" at a concert to be attended by the
King of Saxony.[25] The work was already in rehearsal when he
was called away to Berlin by his mother's death.[26] <u>Die erste</u>
<u>Walpurgisnacht</u> was finally premiered in its reworked version
on February 2, 1843, in the Leipzig Gewandhaus. It was the
sixteenth subscription concert; Robert Schumann called it "one
of the most beautiful of the winter," and noted its very en-
thusiastic reception from the public.[27] The program included
works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and Henselt.[28]
Pianist Clara Schumann and vocal soloists Herr Kindermann and

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[24]Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, <u>Letters</u> <u>from</u> <u>1833</u> <u>to</u>
<u>1847</u>, ed. Paul Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Carl Mendelssohn-
Bartholdy, trans. Lady Wallace, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fred-
erick Leypoldt, 1865), p. 285.

[25]Ibid., pp. 281-82.

[26]Ibid., p. 323.

[27]<u>Neue</u> <u>Zeitschrift</u> <u>für</u> <u>Musik</u> [hereafter cited as <u>NZfM</u>]
18/17 (February 1843):67. [zu den schonsten des Winters]

[28]Ibid.; see also W. A. Lampadius, <u>Life</u> <u>of</u> <u>Felix</u> <u>Men-</u>
<u>delssohn</u> <u>Bartholdy</u>, ed. and trans. William Leonhard Gage (New
York and Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt, 1865), p. 123.

Fräulein Schoss participated in the concert; Mendelssohn con-
ducted.[29] Hector Berlioz attended the performance and final
rehearsal for it. In a letter to Stephan Heller, made public
in October, 1843, in a Leipzig music journal,[30] Berlioz com-
mented enthusiastically on the perfect acoustics of the hall,
the astonishingly beautiful sound and appearance of the chor-
us, the precision and liveliness of the orchestra, but espe-
cially on the "splendeur de la composition" (splendor of the
piece).[31]

Following the Gewandhaus performance, Mendelssohn made
still further alterations in the piece, "giving the chorus
more attractiveness than ever."[32] The work was published by
Kistner in 1844. An arrangement for piano four-hands by
Henschke, approved by Mendelssohn,[33] appeared soon after,[34]
enabling more modest performances of the work in domestic
settings. Die erste Walpurgisnacht was a great favorite in

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[29]Elise Polko, Reminiscences of Felix Mendelssohn-
Bartholdy, trans. Lady Wallace (New York: Leypoldt and Holt,
1869), p. 150.

[30]Signale für die musikalische Welt 1/40 (October 1843):
305-306.

[31]Hector Berlioz, Voyage Musical en Allemagne et en
Italie (Paris: Jules Labitte, 1844; reprint ed. Gregg, 1970),
p. 77.

[32]Lampadius, pp. 125-26.

[33]Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Briefe an deutsche Ver-
leger, ed. Rudolf Elvers (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), p. 330.

[34]While the edition consulted in the Boston Public
Library was not dated, we can assume it appeared before its
review by "C. K." in NZfM 24/4 (January 1846): 19.

the celebrated Sunday Music concerts of Fanny Mendelssohn
Hensel, who was fatally stricken by a cerebral hemorrhage
while directing a rehearsal of the work.[35]

Die erste Walpurgisnacht rapidly achieved great popu-
larity with performers and audiences all over Germany, Eng-
land, and, to a more modest extent, in the United States as
well. Writing about a Berlin performance in 1893, one review-
er noted: "The third novelty of the evening was no novelty
at all. It was Mendelssohn's music to Goethe's 'First Wal-
purgis Night,' which has been 'done' in concert by every self-
respecting mixed chorus vocal society all over the civilized
world."[36] By the end of the nineteenth century, however,
performances of the work had become less frequent, and per-
formances in the twentieth century have been few. The pendu-
lum of criticism has swung from Friedrich Zander's glowing
judgment of the work in 1862 as a "masterpiece full of the
greatest beauty"[37] to Richard Hauser's in 1980 that "the work
remains strangely cold . . .negates Goethe . . . is 'Kitsch.'"[38]

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[35]Sebastian Hensel, The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847),
trans. from 2nd ed. Carl Klingemann, 2 vols. (London: Sampson,
Low, and others, 1881) 1:276.

[36]From a newspaper clipping, in English, source unknown,
dated (in pencil) October 17, 1893, one of many clippings de-
posited by Allen A. Brown inside the cover of a piano-vocal
edition of Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht (Leipzig:
Peters, 187-)located in the Boston Public Library.

[37]Über Mendelssohns Walpurgisnacht (Königsberg: Wilhelm
Koch, 1862), p. 1.

[38]"'In rührend feierlichen Tönen,' Mendelssohn's Kanta-
te Die erste Walpurgisnacht," Musik Konzepte 14/15 (September

More regrettable, perhaps, than negative opinion of the work
is the fact that Die erste Walpurgisnacht remains simply un-
known to many modern conductors, audiences and scholars. For
example, Malcolm Boyd's article on the "Cantata since 1800"
in the New Grove Dictionary doesn't mention it at all,[39] and
Wolfgang Leppmann refers to the piece as "Mendelssohn's Op. 60,
incidental music [sic] to Die erste Walpurgisnacht."[40] G. R.
Marek dismisses the work in a footnote, stating that

> I have not even mentioned several large works which at
> one time were considered important but are now hardly
> ever performed. For example, the dramatic cantata, Die
> erste Walpurgisnacht, which in spite of some interesting
> ideas must be considered a failure.[41]

Until quite recently, there was very little written
about the work in English. Indeed there are only a few sub-
stantial German sources. Zander's forty-seven page monograph,
Über Mendelssohns Walpurgisnacht (1862), offers a chatty,
emotional, blow-by-blow description of the work, sprinkled
with a few interesting analogies to works by earlier compo-
sers, but avoiding technical or theoretical language. Not
really a scholarly effort, it was intended simply to impart
to the contemporary reader a "feeling" for the work. Ernst

1980): 75, 91. [seltsam kalt; negiert Goethe; was . . . als
'Kitsch' definiert hat]

[39]The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 20
vols., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), 3:716-18.

[40]The German Image of Goethe (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1961), p. 97.

[41]Marek, p. 333, ft. 4.

Wolff's six pages on Walpurgisnacht in his excellent 1909

Mendelssohn biography is a fair and somewhat more technical

account of the piece, but by no means exhaustive.[42] Sieg-

fried Ochs' twenty pages, while offering invaluable informa-

tion on traditional performance practices, is of limited

scope.[43] Accessible to English readers in translation, Eric

Werner's biography of Mendelssohn at least discusses the

work, which he considers the "most significant secular ora-

torio [sic] of the nineteenth century."[44] But Werner de-

votes most of five pages to a consideration of Walpurgis-

nacht's text, arguing that Mendelssohn's Jewish heritage

significantly influenced his setting of it.[45] Most recently,

Douglass Seaton's essay, which appeared after this disserta-

tion was nearly finished, has helped illuminate for the Eng-

lish reader an "unjustly neglected work."[46] His twelve-page

article in the July, 1982, Musical Quarterly accurately sum-

marizes the evolution of Walpurgisnacht between 1830 and

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[42]Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Berlin: Harmonie, 1909),
pp. 91-96.

[43]Der deutsche Gesangverein für gemischten Chor, 4 vols.
(Berlin: Hesse, 1923-28), 4:83-102.

[44]Mendelssohn: A New Image of the Composer and His Age,
trans. Dika Newlin (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1963), p. 205.

[45]Similarly interpreting Walpurgisnacht "as a Jewish
protest against Christian domination" (p. 94) [als jüdischen
Protest gegen die Herrschaft des Christentums] is Heinz-Klaus
Metzger, "Noch einmal 'Die erste Walpurgisnacht,' Versuch
einer anderen Allegorese," Musik-Konzepte 14/15 (September
1980): 93-96.

[46]Seaton, p. 398.

1843, except for his incorrect hypothesis that its first ver-
sion received no public performance in Berlin in 1832-33.[47]
His listing of the few surviving drafts and sketches is valu-
able in itself. Seaton is primarily concerned with Mendels-
sohn's Romantic tendencies in _Walpurgisnacht_, especially his
inclination to "thematic cyclicity."[48] He does not attempt
to deal with many other important issues—for example, ques-
tions of genre, stylistic influences, or socio-political con-
text. I commend his conclusion that "_Die erste Walpurgisnacht_
is a more important item in Mendelssohn's oeuvre than is sug-
gested by the limited attention it has received."[49] My
thesis is intended to remedy this situation with a thorough
historical and analytical examination of the work.

My argument is developed in the following six chapters.
Chapter II studies the background of the Walpurgisnacht le-
gend, the origins and structure of Goethe's poem, and its
suitability as a ballad-libretto. The intimacy and affinities
between Goethe and Mendelssohn as men and as artists provide
the focus of Chapter III. Moreover, setting this particular
ballad—with what Goethe himself called its "highly symbolic"
struggle between the new and the old, between "emerging inno-
vations" and the past's "joyfully indestructible enthusiasm"[50]

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[47]Ibid., p. 401.   [48]Ibid., p. 406.   [49]Ibid., p. 409.

[50]Johann Wolfgang Goethe, _Gedenkausgabe der Werke,
Briefe und Gespräche_, ed. Ernst Beutler, vol. 19: _Briefe der
Jahre 1786-1814_ (Zurich, 1949), pp. 684-85; cited and trans.
Seaton, pp. 404-405.

--becomes a persistent challenge to a composer known as the "Romantic Classicist."[51] In Chapter IV, Die erste Walpurgis-nacht is seen as the merging of earlier traditions--ballad-cantata, grand cantata, oratorio, opera scenes--into a new genre, albeit still amorphous and ill-defined. In the nineteenth century these developing kinds of choral music supplied a demand for new repertory for burgeoning public concerts, choral societies, and music festivals. Richly indebted to his predecessors, Mendelssohn achieves in this cantata, as analyzed in Chapter V, remarkable originality and integrity--a lively, even humorous, rendering of those qualities of light and hope it celebrates. Based largely on primary sources (journals, letters, memoirs), Chapter VI surveys its extraordinary popularity in the years following its 1843 premiere. For several decades it seemed ideally suited to Germany's socio-political climate, capturing the imagination of performers and audiences there, as well as in England and the United States. Chapter VII examines the influence of Die erste Walpurgisnacht, which served as a pioneering model for a whole spate of cantatas during the second half of the nineteenth century. Most such works lack the enduring strengths of Mendelssohn's cantata, which, nevertheless, suffered the decline of the genre generally: by 1900 this former mainstay of the choral repertory had nearly disappeared into oblivion.

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[51]Alfred Einstein, Music in the Romantic Era (New York: Norton, 1947), p.124.

To study that demise is the last step toward rediscovering
a fascinating part of Mendelssohn's oeuvre and a choral piece
fully worth reviving. Appendix B below recounts one such
revival: my preparation and performance of <u>Die</u> <u>erste</u> <u>Walpur-</u>
<u>gisnacht</u> in November, 1982.

CHAPTER II

GOETHE'S POEM: DIE ERSTE WALPURGISNACHT

As Goethe told Zelter, the legend of Walpurgisnacht had
been "current in Germany from time immemorial."[1] The origins
of this folk superstition reach back at least to the Middle
Ages.[2] On the night before May Day, so the story goes,
witches ascend in procession to the summit of the Brocken
(Blocksberg), the highest peak in the Harz Mountains of cen-
tral Germany. There they honor Satan with an orgiastic revel-
ry of wild dances and rides around great bonfires, in the com-
pany of menacing night birds and all manner of evil spirits.

A few writers before and during Goethe's lifetime had
written about Walpurgisnacht. Two such Walpurgisnacht poems
were set by prominent composers: Willibald Alexi's "Walpur-
gisnacht" by Loewe and Brahms, and L. C. H. Holty's "Hexen-
lied" by Mendelssohn. They contain such basic ingredients of
the Walpurgisnacht legend as the craggy mountain scenery, the
witches and other evil night spirits, and especially the wild
night ride. All these elements are also found in German

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[1]Goethe's Letters to Zelter, p. 95.

[2]Cyrus Hamlin, Interpretative notes in Johann Wolfgang
Goethe, Faust: A Tragedy, ed. Cyrus Hamlin, trans. Walter
Arndt (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 321.

gothic ballads and novels of the 1780s and 1790s, which had

been heavily influenced by the English gothic and Ossianic

traditions.   These incantatory lines from Bürger's ever-popular

ballad "Lenore" (1774) depict the typical aerial acrobatics:

> Wie flogen rechts, wie flogen links
> Gebirge, Bäum und Hecken!
> Wie flogen links und rechts und links
> Die Dörfer, Städt' und Flecken!
> . . . .
> Und weiter, weiter, hopp hopp hopp!
> Gings fort in sausendem Galopp,
> Dass Ross und Reiter schnoben
> Und Kies und Funken stoben.[3]

Similar to the Walpurgisnacht riders were the "wilde Jager"

figures appearing in numerous contemporary poems and several

of the Grimms' fairy tales.   Bürger's "Der wilde Jager" (1778)

captures the horses' frenzied gait:

> Lichther erschien der Ritter rechts,
> Mit mildem Frühlingsangesicht.
> Grass, dunkelgelb der linke Ritter
> Schoss Blitz' vom Aug', wie Ungewitter.
> . . . .
> Und hurre, hurre vorwärts ging's
> Feldein und aus, Berg ab und an.[4]

Later poems, such as Eichendorff's "Nachtwanderer" (1815), de-

velop the same terrifying montage of night, riding, and evil:

> Er reitet nachts auf einem braunen Ross,
> Er reitet vorüber an manchem Schloss:
> Schlaf droben, mein Kind, bis der Tage erscheint,
> Die finstre Nacht ist des Menschen Feind![5]

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[3]Deutsche Balladen, ed. Hans Fromm, 4th ed. (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1965), p. 43.

[4]Gottfried August Bürger, Bürgers Gedichte, ed. Arnold G. Bürger (Leipzig & Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, n.d.), pp. 173-4.

[5]Joseph Eichendorff, Werke und Schriften, ed. Gerhart Baumann & Siegfried Grosse, vol. 1: Gedichte (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1957), p. 335.

Goethe, too, delved into this "murky spirit world of
Nordic, Germanic legend."[6] Throughout his career he remained
noncommittal whether spirits were real, entities above nature,
distinct from humankind, or whether they were merely figments
of man's imagination, the dark underside of the human psyche.
"Die Braut von Korinth," one of the ballads published in
Schiller's Musenalmanach für das Jahr 1798, represents Goethe
at his most sinisterly supernatural extreme. In this poem,
a ghostly maiden, actually a vampire, stealthily enters the
young bridegroom's chamber at night. "Just then the hollow
witching hour struck,"[7] and she begins a fiendish seduction
that eventually destroys the unwitting youth. Like most such
ballads, the poem blurs the borders between the worlds of
body and of spirit. The bride is terrifyingly enchanting,
both as witch and as woman. She is genuinely a ghost, yet
her fully human nature--coy, graceful, sensual--also suggests
Goethe's generally more "enlightened" attitude toward spir-
its. He tended rationally to humanize and therefore de-
mystify the supernatural. One of his earliest lyric poems,
"Willkommen und Abschied" (1770), describes ominous spirits
which do not threaten the cheerful poet, because they are
explainable in terms of natural causes--the oak tree, the
bushes, the fog:

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[6]Hamlin, p. 320.

[7]Goethe: Selected Verse, ed. and trans. David Luke
(Middlesex: Penguin, 1964), p. 163.

> Schon stand im Nebelkleid die Eiche,
> Ein aufgetürmter Riese, da,
> Wo Finsternis aus dem Gesträuche
> Mit hundert schwarzen Augen sah.
> . . . .
> Die Nacht schuf tausend Ungeheuer,
> Doch frisch und fröhlich war mein Mut:[8]

The full catalogue of portentous imagery makes the scene seem
a cliche, more literarily conventional than truly scary.
Even more openly comic, his poem "Der Zauberlehrling" tells
of the hapless witch-apprentice--which Disney's cartoon ani-
mated as a mouse--whose imperfectly mastered trade gets him
literally in over his head. Characteristically, the poet en-
dows these far-from-sinister spirits with human qualities, as
he was also to do in his several versions of the Walpurgis-
nacht legend.

Goethe wrote about Walpurgisnacht in three different
places: twice in Faust--in Part I (lines 3835-422; 4223-
4398), the "German" Walpurgisnacht followed by the Walpurgis-
nachtstraum (Walpurgis Night's Dream), and in Part II (lines
7005-8487), the "Classical" Walpurgisnacht--and in a poem
separate from Faust, "Die erste Walpurgisnacht." Written in
1830, the Classical Walpurgis Night was one of the last sec-
tions of Faust to be composed. It was conceived as a "dis-
tant analogue to the more medieval-Germanic witches' Sabbath
of the 'Walpurgis Night' in Part I. . . [thus] providing a
bridge from Faust's world in Germany to the Classical world
of Greece."[9] In form and content, the Classical

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[8]Ibid., p. 9.   [9]Hamlin, p. 332.

Walpurgis Night is quite different from "Die erste Walpurgis-
nacht" and has little bearing upon it. But more closely re-
lated are the poem and the Walpurgisnacht-Walpurgisnachts-
traum portions of Faust, Part I. For one thing, they were
written at about the same time. Max Morris dates Goethe's
conception of the Faust "German" Walpurgisnacht scenes from
August, 1799,[10] notably, the same month of Goethe's first
letter to Zelter (see p. 2 above). In Part I of the play and
in the poem Goethe approaches the same materials from differ-
ent perspectives, in works that seem at once parallels and
inversions of each other.

The Walpurgisnacht in Faust, Part I, interrupts the
Faust-Gretchen plot, when Mephistopheles leads Faust up the
Brocken to witness and join in the satanic revels. They are
assailed by a series of confusing, seemingly unrelated appar-
itions who momentarily appear out of the eerie atmosphere.

> Ein Nebel verdichtet die Nacht.
> Höre wie's durch die Wälder kracht!
> Aufgescheucht fliegen die Eulen.
> . . . .
> Ja, den ganzen Berg entlang
> strömt ein wütender Zaubergesang.[11]

Encountering these churlish, nasty, disgusting witch-types--
the Old One, the Young One, the Social Climber, the Cabinet
Minister--Faust is exposed to the worst, darkest side of

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[10]Max Morris, "Die Walpurgisnacht," in Goethe-Studien
(Berlin: Conrad Skopnik, 1902) 1:83.

[11]Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Faust: Part One, trans. Bayard
Taylor, rev. and ed. Stuart Atkins (New York and London: Col-
lier-Macmillan, 1962), pp. 269, 271; lines 3940-42, 3954-55.

human nature in others and in himself.[12] Then, that bleak,
biting satire is considerably lightened by the concluding
Walpurgis Night's Dream, self-consciously indebted to Shakes-
peare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. In this play-within-a-
play, dillettante spirit-actors don costumes, masquerading as
humans in a golden wedding anniversary masque before Oberon
and Titania, King and Queen of the Fairies. Their speeches
are written in trochaic meter, in regular quatrains, the so-
called "ballad stanza."[13] Hamlin observes that "the speakers
in the interlude include a number of figures who represent as
objects of satire in schematic, allegorical fashion various
modes and schools of thought and writing in Goethe's own day."[14]
Thus, the scene in Faust comments sardonically on contemporary
intellectual pretensions; like all satire, and unlike "Die
erste Walpurgisnacht," its allusions are specific, immediately
applicable more to the present than to the past.

But Goethe also saw other, less topical uses for the
legend. As he delved into the lore surrounding Walpurgis-
nacht, he studied an "historical" account of the origins of
the legend. "I found this explanation somewhere, a few years
ago, but cannot remember the name of the author,"[15] wrote

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[12]Reinhard Buchwald, Führer durch Goethe's Faustdichtung
(Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1942), p. 142; see also Julius
Frankenberger, Walpurgis zur Kunstgestalt von Goethe's Faust
(Leipzig: Ernst Wiegandt, 1926), pp. 65-66; Carl Geiger, Die
Walpurgisnacht im ersten Theil von Göthes Faust (Tübingen:
Franz Fues, 1883), pp. 9-10.

[13]Hamlin, p. 321.   [14]Ibid., p. 351.

[15]Goethe's Letters to Zelter, p. 96; Goethe's exact
source is identified variously--by Eric Werner (p. 224) as

Goethe to Zelter in 1812. His letter goes on to explain:

> One of our German antiquarians has endeavored to rescue,
> and to give an historical foundation for the story of
> the witches' and devils' ride on the Brocken. . . . His
> explanation is, that the heathen priests and patriarchs
> of Germany, when they were driven from their sacred
> groves, and when Christianity was forced upon the people,
> used to retire--at the beginning of spring--with their
> faithful followers, to the wild, inaccessible heights of
> the Harz Mountains, in order, according to the ancient
> custom, there to offer prayer and flame to the unembodied
> god of heaven and earth. And further, in order to be
> safe from the armed spies and converters, he thinks they
> may have found it well, to disguise a number of their own
> people, so as to keep their superstitious foes at a dis-
> tance, and that thus, protected by the antics of devils,
> they carried out the purest of services.[16]

This rational and intellectualized history of Walpurgis-

nacht appealed to Goethe primarily because of its sympathetic

portrayal of the Druids and, conversely, its anti-Christian

tone. Goethe's aversion to certain aspects of Christian--

particularly Roman Catholic--doctrine and practice had been

stimulated in his youth by his association with Johann Gott-

fried Herder[17] and confirmed by his Italian travels in the

1780s, manifested in such works as the Römische Elegien

(1795) and especially the Epigramme aus Venedig 1790 (1796).

This disdain--what Alfred Einstein calls "the smoldering

Honemann's Altertümer des Harzes (1754-55) and the Archiv der
Zeit (December 1796), and by Alfred Zastrau in "Ballade,"
Goethe Handbuch, ed. Alfred Zastrau (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1961),
col. 636, as J. P. C. Decker's Hanoverschen Gelehrten Anzei-
gen (1752).

[16]Goethe's Letters to Zelter, pp. 95-96.

[17]Walter H. Bruford, Culture and Society in Classical
Weimar, 1775-1806 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1962), pp. 229-30.

hate that Goethe harbored agains the 'Cross'"[18]--flares up

again in his poem, "Die erste Walpurgisnacht," offered to

Zelter for musical setting in 1799.

The text of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" apparently

exists in only one version, remaining unchanged in all of

the various editions of Goethe's collected works in which it

appears,[19] beginning with the Cotta edition of 1815. It is

given below. (The English translation alongside is mine,

based, in small part, on a translation by Hedy D. Jelli-

nek.[20])

DIE ERSTE WALPURGISNACHT

Ein Druide

Es lacht der Mai!
Der Wald ist frei
Von Eis und Reifgehänge.
Der Schnee ist fort;
Am grünen Ort
Erschallen Lustgesänge.
Ein reiner Schnee
Liegt auf der Höh;
Doch eilen wir nach oben,
Begehn den alten heilgen Brauch,
Allvater dort zu loben.
Die Flamme lodre durch den Rauch!
So wird das Herz erhoben.

Die Druiden

Die Flamme lodre durch den Rauch!
Begeht den alten heilgen Brauch,
Allvater dort zu loben!
Hinauf! Hinauf nach oben!

Einer aus dem Volke

Könnt ihr so verwegen handeln?
Wollt ihr denn zum Tode wandeln?

THE FIRST WALPURGIS NIGHT

A Druid

May laughs!
The forest is free
of ice and hoar-frost.
The snow is gone;
On the green ground
gay songs resound.
A cleaner snow
lies high above us;
Indeed, let's hurry up there,
to praise our Father-of-all,
according to our ancient holy rite.
Flames flare up through the smoke!
Our hearts are thus exalted.

The Druids

Flames flare up through the smoke!
Let us observe our ancient holy rite,
to praise our Father-of-all!
Arise, let's go up there!

One of the People

Could you be so daring?
Would you then wander into death?

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[18]*Music in the Romantic Era*, p. 174.

[19]It is omitted from some editions of Goethe's collected works, including Erich Trunz's important edition (Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1948).

[20]Record jacket notes for Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*, performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy (RCA ARL 1-3460).

Kennet ihr nicht die Gesetze
Unsrer harten Überwinder?
Rings gestellt sind ihre Netze
Auf die Heiden, auf die Sünder.
Ach, sie schlachten auf dem Walle
Unsre Weiber, unsre Kinder.
Und wir alle
Nahen uns gewissem Falle.

Chor der Weiber

Auf des Lagers hohem Walle
Schlachten sie schon unsre Kinder.
Ach, die strengen Überwinder!
Und wir alle
Nahen uns gewissem Falle.

Ein Druide

Wer Opfer heut
Zu bringen scheut,
Verdient erst seine Bande.
Der Wald ist frei!
Das Holz herbei,
Und schichtet es zum Brande!
Doch bleiben wir
Im Buschrevier
Am Tage noch im stillen,
Und Männer stellen wir zur Hut
Um eurer Sorge willen.
Dann aber lasst mit frischem Mut
Uns unsre Pflicht erfüllen.

Chor der Wächter

Verteilt euch, wackre Männer, hier
Durch dieses ganze Waldrevier
Und wachet hier im stillen,
Wenn sie die Pflicht erfüllen.

Ein Wächter

Diese dumpfen Pfaffenchristen,
Lasst uns keck sie überlisten!
Mit dem Teufel, den sie fabeln,
Wollen wir sie selbst erschrecken.
Kommt! Mit Zacken und mit Gabeln
Und mit Glut und Klapperstöcken
Lärmen wir bei nächtger Weile
Durch die engen Felsenstrecken.
Kauz und Eule
Heul in unser Rundgeheule!

Chor der Wächter

Kommt mit Zacken und mit Gabeln,
Wie der Teufel, den sie fabeln,
Und mit wilden Klapperstöcken
Durch die leeren Felsenstrecken!
Kauz und Eule
Heul in unser Rundgeheule!

Ein Druide

So weit gebracht
Dass wir bei Nacht
Allvater heimlich singen!
Doch ist es Tag,
Sobald man mag
Ein reines Herz dir bringen.
Du kannst zwar heut,
Und manche Zeit,
Dem Feinde viel erlauben.

Don't you know the laws
of our harsh conquerors?
Their traps are set all around,
to snare the heathen, the sinners.
Ah, on the ramparts they slaughter
our wives, our children.
And we are all
approaching certain doom.

Chorus of Women

On the ramparts of our encampment
they have slaughtered our children.
Ah, such cruel conquerors!
And we are all
approaching certain doom.

A Druid

Whoever fears today
to bring an offering,
truly deserves his bondage.
The forest is free!
Bring on the wood
and pile it high for burning.
Indeed, during daylight
we'll remain quite still
here in the shady thicket,
and to allay your fears,
we'll appoint some men as guards.
But later on, with fresh courage,
let us fulfill our duty.

Chorus of Watchmen

Divide your forces, valiant men,
spread through this entire forest
and keep a quiet watch in order
that they fulfill their duty.

A Watchman

These insufferable Papist Christians,
let's cleverly outwit them!
Let's terrify them with
the devil they've invented.
Come! With prongs and pitchforks,
with glowing embers and rattles,
we'll create an uproar in the night,
through the narrow mountain passes.
Screech owls, night birds,
join in our whirling howl.

Chorus of Watchmen

Come! With prongs and pitchforks,
like the devil they've invented,
and with wild rattles,
through the narrow mountain passes.
Screech owls, night birds
join in our whirling howl.

A Druid

We've succeeded to the extent
that we can secretly, by night,
sing praise to the Father-of-all!
But nevertheless, it's daylight
just as soon as one is able to
bring before you a pure heart.
Of course, both today
and henceforth,
you can allow our enemy to prosper.

Die Flamme reinigt sich vom Rauch:
So reinge unsern Glauben!
Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch,
Dein Licht, wer will es rauben?

The flames are purified by smoke:
thus purify our faith!
And even if they take away our rite,
who would steal your light?

Ein christlicher Wächter

A Christian Watchman

Hilf, ach, hilf mir, Kriegsgeselle!
Ach, es kommt die ganze Hölle!
Sieh, wie die verhexten Leiber
Durch und durch von Flamme glühen!
Menschen-Wölf und Drachen-Weiber,
Die im Flug vorüberziehen!
Welch entsetzliches Getöse!
Lasst uns, lasst uns alle fliehen!
Oben flammt und saust der Böse.
Aus dem Boden
Dampfet rings ein Höllen-Broden.

Help, oh help me, fellow warrior!
Oh, all Hell is loosed upon us!
See how those bewitched bodies
glow throughout with flames.
See the werewolves and dragon-women,
who pass by in flight!
What a dreadful din!
Let's flee, let's all flee!
Up above the devil flames and roars,
from below
hellish vapors rise around us.

Chor der christlichen Wächter

Chorus of Christian Guards

Schreckliche, verhexte Leiber,
Menschen-Wölf und Drachen-Weiber!
Welch entsetzliches Getöse!
Sieh, da flammt, da zieht der Böse!
Aus dem Boden
Dampfet rings ein Höllen-Broden.

Horrible, bewitched bodies,
Werewolves and dragon-women!
What a dreadful din!
See, the devil flames and tugs!
From below
hellish vapors rise around us.

Chor der Druiden

Chorus of Druids

Die Flamme reinigt sich vom Rauch:
So reinge unsern Glauben!
Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch,
Dein Licht, wer kann es rauben!

The flames are purified by smoke·
thus purify our faith!
And even if they take away our rite,
who could steal your light!

Unlike the Walpurgisnacht in _Faust_, Part I, the straightforward plot of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" unfolds without confusion. The opening lines are a prelude to the action, serving to define the season of spring, the location in the mountains, and the busy, festive mood. The main conflict is soon introduced, a course of action chosen, a solution to the problem attempted, and a resolution quickly achieved and celebrated. At first, "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" does not seem to concern the spirit world at all, but rather, serious, life-and-death matters of real men and women, particularly, the efforts of an entire nation to combat religious persecution. Then, curiously reversing the Walpurgisnachtstraum in _Faust_, the humans don the costumes of devils, not to

entertain, but to trick, to fool their oppressors in order to
preserve "den alten heilgen Brauch." The mood turns sinister,
but it is a mock terror enacted to drive off the Christian
threat to their faithful worship. Goethe's language briefly
echoes the scary atmosphere of the _Faust_ Walpurgisnacht:

> Kommt! Mit Zacken und mit Gabeln
> Und mit Glut und Klapperstöcken
> Lärmen wir bei nächtger Weile
> Durch die engen Felsenstrecken.
> Kauz und Eule
> Heul in unser Rundgeheule!

Then, even more dramatically than in the _Faust_ Walpurgis-
nachtstraum, the gloomy mood suddenly gives way to a blaze of
light ("Doch ist es Tag") as the Druids raise their hymn of
praise. Unlike the scene in the play, which anticipates and
then reverts to the tragedy of Gretchen, the poem ends with
a conclusive, confident celebration.

There are musical elements in both versions of Walpur-
gisnacht.[21] The scene in _Faust_, Part I, contains much sing-
ing and dancing, such as the opening trio of Faust, Mephis-
topheles, and the Will-o'-the-Wisp (lines 3871-3911), the
witches' choruses, and Faust's dance with the young witch.
Intended to be set to music, "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" is
laid out like a cantata libretto. Unlike most ballads, the
poem consists of twelve stanzas with an unequal number of

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[21]A telephone interview with Jane K. Brown, Professor
of Comparative Languages, University of Colorado, greatly
clarified my own thoughts on Goethe's various treatments of
Walpurgisnacht. She gives considerable attention to the
musical elements in the poem and play in the "Walpurgisnacht
chapter" of her forthcoming book: Goethe's 'Faust,' the Ger-
man Tragedy.

lines. These are choruses and solo speeches of modest

length--4-13 lines each; the solos are not clearly divided

into recitative and aria. Indeed, Goethe's poem--as Mendels-

sohn's setting would later confirm--features communal groups

more prominently than any individualized voice or experience.

In "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" Goethe assigned a large

role to the chorus, or, more accurately, the several choruses:

Druids, Women, Watchmen, Christian Guards. In speeches only

slightly shorter than those of individual characters, the

chorus sometimes echoes the lines of a single character, but

also advances the action in its own behalf. This extensive

use of various choruses, which are specifically identified,

recalls the Bardic choruses in Klopstock's Hermann dramas:

Hermanns Schlacht (1769), Hermann und die Fürsten (1784), and

Hermanns Tod (1787).[22] Music written for these plays was

sometimes published separately in edition "for singing at the

piano"[23] and was also performed as a cantata, apart from the

play. In Johann Heinrich Rolle's music for Hermanns Tod, for

example, there are solo and ensemble pieces for the six in-

dividual characters, but also numerous and rather substantial

choral pieces for choruses of Minstrels, Young Men and Women,

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[22]J. G. Robertson, A History of German Literature, 6th
edition, ed. Dorothy Reich (Elmsford, N. Y.: London House and
Maxwell, 1970), p. 240. According to a plot summary in the
table of contents of Rolle's Hermanns Tod (Leipzig: Schwick-
ert, 1784), Hermann was a prince of an old German tribe, the
Cherusker, who unified the various German peoples to obtain
freedom from the Romans.

[23]Rolle, Hermanns Tod, title page.

and Germans. In his ballad-libretto, Goethe would extend
this precedent of incidental music for Klopstock's heroic
drama.

Pointedly, Goethe's first letter to Zelter calls his
poem a ballad, although it lacks the genre's customary regu-
lar stanzas, usually quatrains. Goethe did not always con-
sistently identify the genres of his various poems. Other
ballad-like poems about the time of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht"
he called variously Lied, Gedicht, Elegie, Idylle, Legende,
Romanze, as well as Ballade. Designations, once given, often
changed. "Die Braut von Korinth" and "Der Gott und die Baja-
dere," for example, called "Romanzen" in Schiller's Musenal-
manach of 1798, were grouped with "Ballades" in 1815, in the
Cotta edition of Goethe's works, supervised by Goethe him-
self. And conversely, the poem "Johanna Sebus," originally
called "Schön Süsschen Ballade," and which indeed has the
regular stanzas and recurring refrain of typical ballads, was
categorized as a "Kantate" in the same Cotta edition.[24]

By calling "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" a ballad, however,
Goethe invited its association with a literary tradition
thriving in Germany since the 1770s, including the works of
Bürger, Leopold and Christian Stolberg, Hölty, and Herder.[25]

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[24]Zastrau, col. 634, 643, 676, 677.

[25]Some helpful summaries of the ballad as a literary
genre in Germany are Albert B. Friedman, The Ballad Revival
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Wolfgang Kayser,
Geschichte der deutschen Ballade (Berlin: Junker & Dünnhaupt,
1936); Jane E. Schleicher, "A brief history of the literary

Certain features common to "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" and
such earlier ballads as Bürger's "Lenore" have been mentioned
above. Both plots feature a single episode drawn from a
broadly Teutonic folklore. The customary demonic elements
are present in both poems (even though Goethe's spirits are
not genuine), and each story transpires mostly at night.
There is a wild ride in "Lenore" and the suggestion of one--
the witches' Rundgeheule--in "Walpurgisnacht." Moreover,
both poems rely heavily on dialogue; in the case of "Walpur-
gisnacht," the plot is advanced entirely without an indepen-
dent narrator. Yet the two poems also show striking differ-
ences, such as the length of stanzas: "Lenore" has consis-
tent eight-line stanzas (essentially two quatrains, rhyming
ababccdd), whereas stanzas in "Walpurgisnacht" vary from four
to thirteen lines. The language of Goethe's poem is much
more literarily sophisticated than the folklike "Lenore" with
its pairings of words ("Sie frug den Zug wohl auf und ab"),
intentional archaisms ("Und das Gesindel, husch, husch,
husch!/Kann hinten nach geprasselt"), and more diminutive
diction and intimate forms of address ("Sag' an, wo ist dein
Kammerlein?") Also, the concluding optimism of "Walpurgis-
nacht," as well as its lighter touches of humor throughout,
contrasts with the more typically tragic outcome and general
gloom of Bürger's ballad.

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art-ballad in Germany" (Chapter I), The Ballads of Carl Loewe
(D.M.A. Thesis, University of Illinois, 1966).

In its philosophical content and more refined language,
"Die erste Walpurgisnacht" resembles the so-called "Ideen-
ballade"[26] from the Goethe-Schiller ballad years (1797-99),
particularly "Die Braut von Korinth" and "Der Gott und die
Bajadere." In all three poems the true identity of persons
is obscured. (In "Der Gott und die Bajadere," the God Maha-
döh assumes human form and subsequently dies, only to revive
in the flames to embrace his beloved Bajadere at the moment
of her suicide.) In all three ballads, Goethe called into
question institutionalized religion, especially modern Chris-
tianity. This attitude is most clearly stated at the opening
of "Die Braut von Korinth:"

> Er ist noch ein Heide mit den Seinen,
> Und sie sind schon Christen und getauft.
> Kommt ein Glaube neu,
> Wird oft Lieb und Treu
> Wie ein böses Unkraut ausgerauft.

As in "Die erste Walpurgisnacht," the historical moment of
transition between religious ideologies seems a most troub-
ling, disruptive time. Elsewhere in "Die Braut von Korinth,"
Goethe alludes to the cheerless inhumanity of the new faith:

> Und der alten Götter bunt Gewimmel
> Hat sogleich das stille Haus geleert.
> Unsichtbar wird Einer nur im Himmel,
> Und ein Heiland wird am Kreuz verehrt;
> Opfer fallen hier,
> Weder Lamm noch Stier,
> Aber Menschenopfer unerhört.

---

[26]A designation apparently first applied by Wolfgang
Kayser (see pp. 120-137); cited in David Charles Ossenkop,
The Earliest Settings of German Ballads for Voice and Clavier
(Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1968), p. 52.

"Der Gott und die Bajadere" examines a similar rigidity, but
in this "Indian legend" religion proves less oppressive than
does the dominant Christianity in the other two poems. Al-
though the Indian priests are depicted as ritual-bound and
unsympathetic to the Bajadere's true love and true loss, still
the conclusion admits the possibility of a God of grace, who
can redeem the individual soul. That more hopeful final pos-
sibility contrasts with the mood of unrelenting bitterness of
"Die Braut von Korinth," and thus is more like the assertive,
optimistic rhetorical question that concludes "Die erste Wal-
purgisnacht."

All three ballads end in flames, not destructive flames,
but rather the saving, purifying fires that cleanse trans-
gressions and restore the soul of the individual or--in "Die
erste Walpurgisnacht"--the community. This living fire of an
ancient faith persists despite the rise of new ideologies.
The closing lines of two of the ballads show a striking re-
semblance:

> Bring in Flammen Liebende zur Ruh!
> Wenn der Funke sprüht,
> Wenn die Asche glüht
> Eilen wir den alten Göttern zu.

> "Die Braut von Korinth"

> Die Flamme reinigt sich vom Rauch:
> So reinge unsern Glauben!
> Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch,
> Dein Licht, wer kann es rauben?

> "Die erste Walpurgisnacht"

Yet "Die Braut von Korinth" bespeaks an escapist, nostalgic
flight into the past; more confidently, "Die erste

Walpurgisnacht" celebrates the transcendent power of lasting
devotion. Though rooted in a prehistorical culture, the poem
faces the future with renewed hope. That Janus-like orienta-
tion, at once looking back and ahead, was a distinctive atti-
tude of Goethe's that Mendelssohn would later admire and
emulate.

CHAPTER III

GOETHE AND MENDELSSOHN

Goethe once said of his works: "My works can never be popular. . . . They have been written not for the masses, but only for individuals who are looking for similar things and walking along similar paths."[1] Arnold Hauser observes that Goethe's sphere of influence was small during most of his lifetime. His immediate "public" in Weimar consisted of only "a half-a dozen persons--the Duke, the two Duchesses, Frau von Stein. . .[and a few others]--and one must not imagine that even this public was particularly understanding."[2] Two of Goethe's early works were, in fact, popular: the Shakespeare-inspired 'historical' drama, Götz von Berlichingen (1772-73), and the epistolary novel, The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774). The latter especially was an immediate best-seller which remained in vogue far into the nineteenth century. But Goethe's voluminous body of later works--the plays and poems, the philosophical and scientific writings--attracted comparatively little notice in his lifetime.

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[1]Leppmann, p. 29.

[2]The Social History of Art, trans. Stanley Godman, 4 vols. (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, n. d.), vol. 3: Rococo, Classicism, Romanticism, pp. 125, 126.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century,
Goethe was "discovered" by the early Romantic writers in Ger-
many, the Schlegels, Tieck, Hardenberg (Novalis), Wackenroder,
and others. They, too, hailed his early works: _Götz_, _Wer-
ther_, and the short, personal, nature-oriented lyric poems
and ballads. Their favorite work was the novel _Wilhelm
Meisters Lehrjahre_ (1796); their favorite character, the
novel's mysterious Mignon, the "holy child."[3] They lauded
Goethe's attention to the 'inner man,' to dreams, to feelings,
to nature, and to the German past. Actually, Goethe's last-
ing fame originated in the Romantics' high opinion of him.[4]
But their initial enthusiasm was soon tempered by criticism.
They faulted Goethe on many counts, among them his purported
hostility to Christianity, his egotism, his politics, and his
Classicism. Many soon decried the lack of warmth and true
feeling in his works; they championed instead the "fluctua-
tion between laughter and tears, between vulgarity and unex-
pected grandeur"[5] in the works of Jean Paul. Typical was
this comment by Heinrich Heine: "Strange, these Greek an-
tiques reminded me of Goethe's poems which are as perfect, as
glorious, as calm, and seem likewise to pine and grieve that
their icy coldness cuts them off from the stir and warmth of

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[3]Linda Siegel, _Influence of Romantic Literature on Mus-
ic in Germany in the Early Nineteenth Century_ (Ph.D. disser-
tation, Boston University, 1965), p. 19.

[4]Leppmann, pp. 38, 45.

[5]Werner, p. 81.

modern life. . . ."[6] Goethe's harshest critics were associa-
ted with a movement known as "Young Germany," whose spokesmen--
Börne, Gutzkow, Laube, Weinbarg, and Heine--advocated a lit-
erature with a declared social and ethical function. They
chided Goethe for his attitude of "art-for-art's-sake" and
for his failure actively to support the liberal political
causes of his time. They accused him of being "cold-hearted,
stiff, indifferent to all but his own comfort."[7] Börne said
Goethe was "teil<u>nehmend</u>, aber nicht teil<u>gebend</u>," that is, one
who partakes of life without giving of himself.[8] Many critics
directed their attacks primarily at Goethe, the man, rather
than his artistic accomplishments.[9] They accused him of
being servile, effeminate, and aloof. Heine, for one, bore a
personal grudge, for as a young man, he had sent to Weimar
works dedicated to Goethe, who had never responded.[10]

Such criticism notwithstanding, Goethe's death in 1832
was everywhere acknowledged as an event of great significance.

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[6]<u>The Romantic School</u>, trans. Francis Storr (London:
George Bell, 1887), pp. 229-30.

[7]Leppmann, p. 27.

[8]Helmut Koopmann, <u>Das junge Deutschland</u>. <u>Analyse seines
Selbstverständnisses</u> (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1970), p. 121.

[9]Heine, <u>Romantic School</u>, p. 232; Koopman, p. 118.

[10]Other young Goethe admirers, among them the composers
Berlioz and Schubert, encountered similar indifference; how-
ever, Sigmund Levarie raises interesting questions regarding
the well-known story of Schubert's "rejection" in his intro-
duction to Frederick W. Sternfeld, <u>Goethe and Music</u> (New York:
Da Capo Press, 1979), p. vii.

Karl Immermann's expression of emptiness and loss was echoed
all over Germany: ". . . who is the modern-day sun-god, who
like Goethe sits in a golden sun-chariot and playfully tames
the snorting horses?"[11] Many artists, however, recognizing
that no one could succeed him in pre-eminence, at once mourned
and welcomed the passing of his dominant presence and voice.
To these younger contemporaries, his death marked the end of
a cultural epoch, the true turning point between eighteenth-
century Classicism and the aesthetic possibilities ahead.
Consigned to history, the titanic poet became a more manage-
able figure, a national resource to be exploited or neglected
as tastes changed.

The Poet and the Composer

Felix Mendelssohn also regarded Goethe's death as the
end of an era. But from him, the event would elicit no sigh
of relief. He expressed his unqualified admiration for Goethe
in a foreboding letter to his father in December, 1830:

> I have just received your letter, which brings me word
> of Goethe's illness. . . . When he is gone, Germany will
> assume a very different aspect for artists. I have
> never thought of Germany without heartfelt joy and pride
> in the fact that Goethe lived there; and the rising
> generation seems for the most part so weak and feeble
> that it makes my heart sick within me. He is the last,
> and with him closes a happy, prosperous period for us![12]

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[11]Cited by Koopmann, p. 116. [. . . wer ist der Sonnen-
gott des neuen Tages, der gleich Goethe, im goldenen Sonnen-
wagen sitzt und die schnaubenden Rosse spielend bändigt?]

[12]Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Letters, ed. Selden-Goth,
p. 104; cited by David Dalton, "Goethe and the Composers of
His Time," Music Review 34/2 (May 1973): 168.

Mendelssohn knew Goethe, the man, as did few others of his
generation. He was also widely and intimately acquainted with
Goethe's works.[13] Both acknowledged the affinity between
them as men and as artists. Mendelssohn never wavered in his
devotion to the poet and was exceptional in persistently
drawing upon the whole legacy of Goethe's life and works.
Fifteen years later, when Mendelssohn himself died, one of
Robert Schumann's succinct "recollections" would epitomize
Mendelssohn's debt to "Goethe, his model."[14]

Unlike Heine, Mendelssohn had no trouble gaining en-
trance into Goethe's Weimar circle, through his distinguished
family and his teacher, Zelter. "The opportunities which
[he] enjoyed as a boy, of seeing and knowing Goethe in his
own house, gave an impulse to his whole life,"[15] said Mendels-
sohn's son, Carl. These visits contributed critically to
their more mature artistic relationship that evolved in later
years.

Zelter could hardly wait to show off his best pupil to
his dear friend Goethe: Felix's first visit to Weimar was
arranged in 1821, when he was twelve.[16] In the presence of

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[13]For evidence that Mendelssohn knew and valued even
the late works, see, for example, in Letters from 1833-47, ed.
Paul and Carl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, pp. 103, 109.

[14]Robert Schumann, Erinnerungen an Felix Mendelssohn
Bartholdy, ed. Städtischen Museum Zwickau, Georg Eismann
(Zwickau: Predella, 1947), p. 43. [Goethe, als Vorbild]

[15]Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn,
trans. M. E. von Glehn (London: Macmillan, 1874), p. 1.

[16]Ibid., p. 4.

the 'sun of Weimar,' Felix was indeed "good and pretty, live-
ly and obedient."[17] And his all-round musical virtuosity
was dazzling. He played Bach fugues by the hour, crafted
bold and passionate improvisations, produced flawless read-
ings from Mozart and Beethoven manuscripts, and performed im-
posing quartet and sonata compositions of his own.[18] Goethe
was suitably impressed, and it was evident that he "felt
quite as much personal attraction for the boy as interest in
his music."[19] For Mendelssohn, the opportunity "to be intro-
duced to Goethe, to live under the same roof with him, and
enjoy the blessing of so great a man,"[20] was a tremendous
thrill, his first great triumph outside the family nest.

Mendelssohn returned to Weimar three more times, and
Goethe rejoiced in each visit. "You are my David," he once
said to Felix, "and if I am ever ill and sad, you must banish
my bad dreams by your playing."[21] Each visit marked a mile-
stone of sorts in Mendelssohn's artistic and personal devel-
opment. In 1822, when Felix was accompanied by his parents
and Fanny, the attention from Goethe earned him new respect

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[17]Zelter, letter to Goethe from Berlin, October 26,
1821, Goethe's Letters to Zelter, p. 206.

[18]Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn,
pp. 7-29 passim.

[19]Ibid., p. 11.

[20]Lea Mendelssohn, letter to her sister-in-law, quoted
in Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn, p. 5.

[21]Lea Mendelssohn, letter cited in Karl Mendelssohn-
Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn, p. 38.

from his family and caused his father to consider more seriously his professional future. "Goethe, the distinguished, exalted Minister, around whose head dignity, renown, poetic fame, genius and distinction of every kind form a dazzling crown of glory, and before whom common mortals tremble, is so sweet and kind-hearted and so like a father to the boy,"[22] gushed Felix's mother. Mendelssohn came alone to Weimar in 1825, fresh from Paris, bearing Cherubini's stamp of approval, now sufficiently confident of his own work to present Goethe a bound sample of it, his B minor piano quartet, dedicated to the old poet. His last visit to Goethe took place in May, 1830, after he had composed several masterworks—including the Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream (1826) and the Octet for Strings (1828)—and also staged his splendid revival of Bach's St. Matthew Passion (1829). In these memorable days they were able to converse on a more equal footing;[23] Mendelssohn even gave Goethe a daily lesson in music history. As a parting gift, Goethe presented to Mendelssohn a personally inscribed sheet of the autograph of Faust.[24]

Mendelssohn left Weimar on an extended trip to Italy, and subsequently, Switzerland, France, and England. The educational value of such a journey was then, as now, almost

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[22]Ibid., p. 37.

[23]For a summary of topics covered in what Mendelssohn called "one of those conversations which one can never forget, all one's life" (p. 75), see Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn, pp. 69-75.

[24]Ibid., pp. 66, 76.

axiomatic, but the opportunity of following in Goethe's foot-
steps had particular significance for Mendelssohn. Especial-
ly in Rome and Naples, Mendelssohn was aware of travelling
Goethe's exact paths and was continually reminded of
Goethe's own impressions. In a letter to his sisters from
Naples in May, 1831, he alluded to their common intellectual
ground:

> There are very few German books to be had here. I am
> therefore restricted to Goethe's poems, and, by God,
> there is enough food for thought in them, and they are
> eternally new. . . .In fact, as is the case with every
> masterpiece, I often suddenly and involuntarily think
> that the very same ideas might have occurred to me on a
> similar occasion, and it seems to me as if it was only
> by chance that Goethe uttered them first.[25]

Norbert Miller suggests that Mendelssohn's preoccupa-
tion with Goethe at this time prevented him from seeing Italy
as it really was:

> He brings Goethe's aura with him into a changed Italian
> present. . . . Mendelssohn observes in Italy really only
> the confirmation or the failure of expectations well-
> established beforehand.[26]

Susanna Grossmann-Vendrey offers a contrasting, more plausi-
ble argument that Goethe's influence heightened Mendelssohn's
powers both of observation and interpretation. More important
than his merely following Goethe's Italian itinerary, what

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[25]Letters, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 128.

[26]"Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys italienische Reise," in
Das Problem Mendelssohn, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Regensburg: Bosse,
1974), pp. 28, 32. [Er bringt Goethes Aura mit sich in eine
veränderte italienische Gegenwart. . . .Mendelssohn bemerkt
in Italien eigentlich nur die Bestätigung oder das Ausblieben
seiner vorher feststehenden Erwartungen.]

Mendelssohn saw almost daily reaffirmed Goethe's idea that
"the past towers up into the present."[27]

That each one appreciated the significance of history
was probably the key point of affinity between the mature
Mendelssohn and Goethe. Goethe was always looking for
sources, for "Urformen." He was interested in essences--a
thing's individual, distinctive properties--but especially in
historical connections and relationships. That Mendelssohn
had similar interests was demonstrated, for example, in his
"music history lessons" to Goethe, when he presented musical
compositions in terms of a historical continuum, detailing
both a chronological framework and the unique characteristics
of each composition or composer.[28] Goethe's daughter-in-law,
Ottilie, confirmed that Felix had taught the old poet some-
thing on this occasion: "My father sends you word that your
stay here, besides giving him great pleasure, was of lasting
use to him, as you have made him understand so many things."[29]

Mendelssohn belonged to the first generation of German
composers actively concerned with the music of the past. His
keyboard studies in childhood had introduced him to composi-
tions by Frescobaldi, Scarlatti, and Bach.[30] Through the

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[27]Quoted in Susanna Grossmann-Vendrey, "Mendelssohn und
die Vergangenheit," in Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über
die Musik, ed. Walter Wiora (Regensburg: Bosse, 1969), pp. 78-
80, 79. [der Vergangenheit in die Gegenwart hereinragt]

[28]Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn,
p. 66.

[29]Ibid., p. 79.

[30]Werner, pp. 14-15.

Singakademie he encountered not only the vocal music of Bach
and Handel, [31] but also the "Old Italians"--Palestrina, Bene-
voli, and Marcello, for example. [32] In his travels outside
Germany, he became acquainted with the English Handel tradi-
tion, the Viennese Baroque tradition, and the traditions of
the Sistine Chapel Choir. [33] He visited libraries, archives,
and private collections in many parts of Europe to seek out
good music to perform and to prepare authentic performance
editions. Mendelssohn's knowledge of the music of the past
also greatly affected his own creative output. For Mendels-
sohn, as for Goethe, history was a source of "inner exalta-
tion and challenge to further accomplishment." [34] The past was
something to build on, not to repeat. The past offered not an
escape from the present, but rather a fresh vantage point from
which to rework old materials in a new context. While a work
like the oratorio St. Paul, with its chorale melodies and
turba choruses, shows Mendelssohn's debt to the past perhaps
most clearly, his historical perspective pervades most of his
music. It was a quality certainly noticed, if not always uni-
versally admired, by Mendelssohn's contemporaries. As Berlioz

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[31] Grossmann-Vendrey, in Historismus, p. 15.

[32] Hermann Kre' schmar, "Chorgesang, Sängerchöre und
Chorvereine," in Sammlung musikalischer Vorträge, ser. 1,
ed. Paul Graf Waldersee (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879),
p. 408.

[33] Grossmann-Vendrey, in Historismus, p. 78.

[34] Ibid., p. 80

once said: ". . . [Mendelssohn] loves the dead a little too
much."[35]

Mendelssohn's regard for history had an impact on his
political thinking as well, another resemblance to Goethe.
Because he believed in organic processes, he opposed revolu-
tionary changes of all kinds, whether in art, literature, or
government.[36]   He remained sceptical of confrontational poli-
tics.   Like Goethe, a privileged child of the upper middle
class, he had more reason than some to trust the effective-
ness of education and other institutions.   Mendelssohn felt
that both he and society would be better served if he concen-
trated on his art and left the pursuit of politics to others.
He freely admitted to using art as an escape from current
events, as in remarks to Ignaz Moscheles in 1839:

> [The recent events in Hanover] do not exhibit our Father-
> land in a pleasing aspect; so that neither here [in
> Leipzig] nor there is life at present very enjoyable:
> therefore we ought the more heartily to thank God that
> within the domain of art there lies a world far removed
> from all besides; solitary, yet replete with life, where
> refuge is to be found, and where we can feel that it is
> well with us.[37]

By pursuing this course, Mendelssohn would seem to be heeding

Goethe's advice in an 1813 letter to Riemer:

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[35]Quoted by Grossmann-Vendrey, in Historismus, p. 81.
[. . . nur liebt er immer noch die Toten ein bisschen zu
viel.]

[36]Mendelssohn distinguishes between "reform" and "re-
volution" in a letter to his sister Rebecca (December 23,
1837), cited by Grossmann-Vendrey, in Historismus, p. 81.

[37]Letters from 1833-1847, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn-
Bartholdy, p. 171.

I go on being my natural self and try, not following the
way of the world, to conserve, to bring order and to ex-
plain. And so, too, I try to urge the friends of scholar-
ship and art who stay at home like me to keep alight, if
only under its ashes, the holy fire which the next gener-
ation will need so badly.[38]

By not getting too involved in the political affairs of his

time, one might make a more lasting contribution to society's

future.

Similarly, within the domain of art, Mendelssohn pre-

ferred to make his own quiet, highly principled way, undis-

turbed by the revolutionary "storms" around him, as he de-

clared in 1831 to William Taubert:

These are truly strange, wild, and troubled times. . .
but however wildly the storm may rage without, it can-
not so quickly succeed in sweeping away the dwellings,
and he who works on quietly within, fixing his thoughts
on his own capabilities and purposes and not on thoseof
others, will see the hurricane blow over, and afterward
find it difficult to realize that it ever was as violent
as it appeared at the time. I have resolved to act thus
as long as I can, and to pursue my path quietly, for no
one will deny that music still exists, and that is the
chief thing.[39]

Implicit in Mendelssohn's remarks to Taubert is his

commitment to the creative process as an orderly, systematic

enterprise. Neither Mendelssohn nor Goethe could be accused

of behaving like "geniuses"; they both emphasized "the work-

manlike nature of poetic creation and. . . above all, pro-

fessional reliability."[40] Each one's disciplined, steady

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[38]Cited by W. H. Bruford, _The German Tradition of Self-
Cultivation. 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann_ (Cam-
bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 91.

[39]_Letters_, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 166f.

[40]Arnold Hauser, p. 129.

work habits, in turn, perhaps reflected his sense of a cul-
ture's historical development, not by means of radical,
revolutionary breakthroughs, but rather by a more moderate
evolutionary process that built on the achievements of the
past.

Moreover, each avoided extravagance in his art as well.
Speaking of Goethe, Hauser calls his a "particular aversion
for the lack of solidity and thoroughness, for the. . .chao-
tic and pathological. . . ."[41] A third point of affinity be-
tween Mendelssohn and Goethe, therefore, is the tendency for
classic principles to prevail in their works. Friedrich Blume
convincingly argues that it is impossible and unwarranted to
make a fixed chronological distinction between Classicism and
Romanticism in art between 1770-1870. He advocates replacing
the labels "Classical" and "Romantic"--often referring, re-
spectively to the earlier and later music of the period--with
the composite term "Classic-Romantic" for the whole period,
because both currents existed simultaneously, even in a single
work.[42] Goethe himself, aware that "the notion of classic and
romantic poetry is spreading over the whole world and causing
such quarrels and dissension,"[43] resisted attempts to treat
the concepts as mutually exclusive. Several years before his
death he had explicitly stated that "Classic and Romantic

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[41]Ibid.

[42]Friedrich Blume, Classic and Romantic Music, trans.
M. D. Herter Norton, 1st ed. (New York, Norton, 1970), p. 17.

[43]Quoted in Blume, Classic and Romantic, p. 16.

meant to him no irreconcilable opposites, that basically they indeed form a unity,"[44] as he had tried to show in the Helena act of Faust, Part II. While there may not be distinct boundaries between Classicism and Romanticism, Blume suggests that it is proper and useful to speak of a classic or romantic "emphasis."[45] Classic art exists for its own sake; beauty is its final objective. It emphasizes that which is "universally human," achieving and maintaining an equilibrium between conflicting emotional forces, and the "dualities of law and freedom, of intellect and the senses, of wholeness and detail."[46] Romantic art carries a more particularized message, allowing its audience less freedom of interpretation. Its goal is no longer what is universally human, but rather what is "individually human," through, as Goethe calls it, "participation in the particular."[47] In romantic art, the various elements are intentionally out of balance, the equilibrium is disturbed. Goethe's personal inclination is well-known: "Classic I call what is healthy, Romantic what is sick."[48] As Hauser explains the oft-quoted remark, Goethe is characterizing the movement's extremist tendencies:

> For, if romanticism, in fact, sees only one side of a
> total situation fraught with tension and conflict. . .

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[44]Quoted in Blume, Classic and Romantic, p. 107.

[45]Ibid., p. 17.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Quoted in Blume, Classic and Romantic, p. 156.

[48]Quoted in Blume, Classic and Romantic, p. 107.

if, finally such a one-sidedness, such an exaggerated,
overcompensating reaction, betrays a lack of spiritual
balance, then romanticism can rightly be called
"diseased."[49]

Mendelssohn, like Goethe, was continually guided by a
desire for classic soundness and clarity. Goethe admired
this latter quality even in the boy Felix, who seemed "so
clear about his affair [music]."[50] His classic sensibility
was manifest in his predilection for symmetrical forms, his
conservative harmonic schemes, his pervasive sense of decorum
and delicacy in all things, even in his portrayal of the par-
ticular.

In notes to his translation of the poem "Die Braut von
Korinth" in 1835, John Anster praised Goethe's classical,
controlled handling of an ostensibly Romantic subject:

> It is a poem which, with a few heightening traits, a
> little more breadth, and coarseness in the coloring,
> would infallibly revolt every feeling of taste, religion
> and morals. But Goethe, with his sure and unerring
> hand, so delicately touched and 'tricked off' the sub-
> ject, that it acquires an irresistible grace and beauty
> in his hands. . . .[51]

The witches' ride in "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" is as
essentially Romantic a subject as the ghostly seduction in
"Die Braut von Korinth." But as Mendelssohn reworked the
music for this scene, he showed the same restraint which
Anster recognized in Goethe. He worried, for example, that

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[49]Arnold Hauser, p. 165.

[50]Cited in Worbs, p. 116. [sich über seine Sache so
klar sei]

[51]John Anster, trans. and notes to Goethe, _Faustus, A
Dramatic Mystery_ (London: Longman, Rees and others, 1835),
p. 489f.

he might go too far with the orchestration, a concern ex-

pressed to his sister Rebecca in April, 1831:

> This whole letter seems to hover in uncertainty, or
> rather I do so in my "Walpurgis Night," whether I am
> to introduce the big drum or not. "Zacken, Gabeln,
> und wilde Klapperstöcke," seem to force me to the big
> drum, but moderation dissuades me. I certainly am the
> only person who ever composed for the scene on the
> Brocken without employing a piccolo-flute, but I can't
> help regretting the big drum, and before I can receive
> Fanny's advice, the "Walpurgis Night" will be finished
> and packed up. . . .I feel convinced that Fanny would
> say yes; still I feel very doubtful; at all events a
> vast noise is indispensable.52

Mendelssohn and Berlioz: Their Relationships to Goethe

That spring Mendelssohn had just met such a composer

"for the scene on the Brocken" whose music showed little

"moderation." A month earlier Prix-de-Rome winner Hector

Berlioz had shown him the score to his Symphonie Fantastique,

which Mendelssohn viewed with both fascination and alarm.

His own self-conscious approach to the orchestration of Wal-

purgisnacht seems to reflect his disagreement with Berlioz's

handling of a theme much like Walpurgisnacht. In March, 1831,

he wrote his mother about the Symphonie Fantastique:

> The fifth and last [movement] is called songe d'une nuit
> du sabbat, in which he sees the witches dancing on the
> Blocksberg, his beloved among them. At the same time he
> hears the distorted cantus firmus of the "Dies Irae," to
> which the witches are dancing. How utterly loathsome all
> this is to me, I don't have to tell you. To see one's
> most cherished ideas debased and expressed in perverted
> caricatures would enrage anyone. And yet this is only
> the program. The execution is still more miserable: no-
> where a spark, no warmth, utter foolishness, contrived

52Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Letters from Italy, p.
149.

passion represented through every possible exaggerated
orchestral means: four timpani, two pianos for four
hands, which are supposed to imitate bells, two harps,
many big drums, violins divided into eight parts, two
parts for the double basses, which play solo passages,
and all these means (to which I would not object if they
were properly employed) used to express nothing but in-
different drivel, mere grunting, shouting, screaming
back and forth. . . .[53]

Even more excessive and unbalanced instrumentation
characterized Berlioz's Eight Faust Scenes (1828-29), his
first published work, which required, among other things,
two harps, English horn, harmonica, four bassoons, ophicleide,
and guitar. If that spring in Rome the two young contempor-
aries were sharing musical thoughts about Goethe, Mendelssohn
may very well have been equally enraged by this prototype for
Berlioz's Damnation of Faust (1846).

Whatever their differences, Mendelssohn and Berlioz
shared a great admiration for and debt to Goethe. His poetry
continually inspired both composers, but they responded to
that inspiration in very different ways. Mendelssohn was far
more faithful, literal, Goethe-like. As one Berlin reviewer
observed in 1843: "In the 'Walpurgisnacht' Mendelssohn walked
hand-in-hand and in equal strides with the patriarch Goethe
. . . . .[The poem's varied qualities he] has set genuinely
poetically and the musical poetry entirely carries the true
stamp of collaboration."[54] Berlioz, however, saw Goethe as a

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[53]Cited in Hector Berlioz, Fantastic Symphony, ed. Ed-
ward T. Cone (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 281.

[54]H. Adami, "Die erste Walpurgisnacht von Felix Mendels-
sohn-Bartholdy," Signale für die musikalische Welt 1/15 (April

catalyst, a generator of his own highly original creative im-
pulses. As Berlioz himself freely admitted and his title,
Damnation of Faust, underscores, he rejects Goethe's princi-
pal idea, that Faust is saved, not damned. The composer's
preface to the work argues that because Goethe's drama was
never meant to be sung it must be modified to suit Berlioz's
own musical purposes, even as opera composers alter their
literary sources.[55] Thus he transforms Faust and Mephisto's
night on the Brocken into a series of more pointedly dramatic
scenes (Nos. 16-19), in the course of which Faust signs his
life away, rides with Mephisto to the abyss of hell, falls
in, and is lost in the pandemonium of demons and damned who
howl a secret jargon invented for the occasion by Berlioz!
By contrast, Mendelssohn selected "Die erste Walpurgisnacht,"
a poem Goethe wrote as a libretto for Zelter to set. More-
over, this much more moderate poem lacks the diabolical ex-
tremes which attracted Berlioz to the Faust legend. Both the
Symphonie Fantastique and Damnation of Faust conclude with
supernatural episodes that invite Berlioz's most Byronic mu-
sic. To end with the witches' sabbath or with Faust's damna-
tion and Margaret's apotheosis is to emphasize a Romantic

1844): 113-14. [In der "Walpurgisnacht" ist Mendelssohn Hand
in Hand und gleichen Schrittes mit den Altvater Goethe gegang-
en. . . .Diesen Weltstoff. . .hat Mendelssohn echt poetisch
aufgefasst, und die musikalische Dichtung trägt ganz das wahre
Gepräge einer Mitarbeit.]

[55]Hector Berlioz, "Avant Propos de l'auteur," La Damna-
tion de Faust, ed. Julian Rushton, vol. 8a, New Edition of the
Complete Works (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1972-), p. 2.

extravagance very different from the calmly classical hymn at
the end of Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht.

The Poem and the Composer

Einstein said that in Mendelssohn's music, the "Classic
element admitted the Romantic, and the Romantic did not dis-
turb his Classicism."[56] Such a paradoxical compatibility
would apply equally well to Goethe, especially in "Die erste
Walpurgisnacht," and the young composer found in that poem
features which simultaneously could satisfy his Classical and
Romantic impulses. As he wrote to his sister, the aspects of
the poem that most fascinated Mendelssohn included its fairy
lore, transcendent spirituality, and nature symbolism.

> The composition has now taken shape and become a grand
> cantata, with full orchestra, and may turn out quite
> amusing, for a the beginning there are songs of spring,
> and plenty of other similar things. Then, when the
> watchmen with their pitchforks, pronged sticks and owls,
> make a noise, the witches come, and you know that I have
> a particular foible for them; the sacrificial Druids then
> appear in C major--with trombones--after which the watch-
> men come in again with alarm and here I mean to intro-
> duce a tripping, mysterious chorus; and lastly to con-
> clude with a grand sacrificial hymn. Do you not think
> that this might develop into a new style of cantata? An
> instrumental introduction I have gratis; and the effect
> of the whole is very spirited. I hope it will soon be
> finished.[57]

In this letter, the first to mention Die erste Walpur-
purgisnacht, Mendelssohn spoke of his "particular foible" for
witches. Certainly witches, fairies, and spirits of all kinds

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[56]Einstein, Romantic Era, p. 125.

[57]Letters, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 117.

--but mostly benign ones--had figured prominently in his ear-
lier works, from childhood on. During Felix's first visit to
Weimar, as he concluded a brilliant improvisation, Zelter is
reported to have exclaimed: "What hobgoblins and dragons have
you been dreaming about, to drive you along in that helter-
skelter fashion!"[58] Following that same visit, one of the la-
dies of the court sent Felix a "silhouette"--a fancy paper
cut-out then much in fashion--of a "winged hobby-horse in the
shape of a witches-broom, bestridden by a little elf, crowned
and decked with flowers,"[59] above a specially-composed verse
of Goethe's. Already by 1830, Mendelssohn was widely praised
for his evocation of Oberon and Titania's fairy kingdom in the
Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream, composed when he was
seventeen. Less well known was the "fairy music" of the scher-
zo movement in his B minor Piano Quartet (1824), the work dedi-
cated to Goethe, and, closely related to it, the third move-
ment of his Octet for Strings (1828), what Sebastian Hensel
called an "ethereal, fanciful and spirit-like scherzo."[60] In
this piece, Mendelssohn aimed to recapture the atmosphere of
the following stanza from the Walpurgisnachtstraum in Faust:

> ORCHESTER (pianissimo). Wolkenzug und Nebelflor
> erhellen sich von oben.
> Luft im Laub und Wind im Rohr,
> und alles ist zerstoben.[61]

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[58]Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn,
p. 13.

[59]Ibid., p. 34. [60]Hensel, 1: 131.

[61]Goethe, Faust: Part One, trans. Bayard Taylor, p. 295;
lines 4395-98.

Fanny Mendelssohn's description of the movement identified

certain traits common to all of Mendelssohn's fairy music:

> The entire movement is to be performed staccato and
> pianissimo: the isolated, spasmodic tremolandos, the
> lightning flash of trills, all is new, strange, and
> yet so ingratiating and pleasing--one feels so close
> to the world of spirits, so lightly carried up into the
> air, indeed, one might even seize a broomstick so as to
> follow the airy procession with more alacrity. At the
> end, the first violin soars feather-like aloft . . . .[62]

In 1829, just one year before he began to compose Die erste

Walpurgisnacht, Mendelssohn made a setting for solo voice and

piano of Hölty's "Hexenlied," a conversation between witches

on the Brocken in which broomsticks and pitchforks also fig-

ured prominently.[63]

Mendelssohn found in "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" a super-

ficial excuse to indulge his "particular foible" for witches,

while exploring far deeper religious questions. For the com-

poser, Goethe's poem is at once humorous and serious,

"amusing" and "spirited" in two senses of the word. Although

the motif of witchcraft could suggest a mood of secular

triviality, through it Goethe acknowledges man's need to be-

lieve in and worship a higher power. Although anti-Christian,

the poem is hardly anti-religious. It does not set forth the

extreme Romantic creed of the egotistical sublime, the indi-

vidual imagination above all else. Instead, the poem cele-

brates the sacred through communal liturgy and institutional

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[62]Quoted in Marek, p. 128.

[63]Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Werke, ed. Julius Rietz,
19 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, [1874-77]; Reprint ed.
Farnborough, Eng.: Gregg Press, [1967-68]), vol. 19: 15-18.

worship, which Mendelssohn, whose music often served both church and state, would have highly valued. Neither Goethe nor Mendelssohn opposed the establishment of religion as such, but rather its growing inflexibly unresponsive to the spiritual needs it was intended to fulfill.

Even more than its religious connotations, no doubt, the outdoors setting of "Die erste Walpurgisnacht" must have appealed instinctively to Mendelssohn, who was an enthusiastic hiker and a landscape painter of great technical proficiency. The poem opens with the contrasts familiar in spring poetry: the frozen winter vs. the green, laughing, lively, free spring. Its first stanza is not unlike so many of the other "Frühlingslieder" which Mendelssohn set for solo voice or vocal ensemble. Compare it, for example, with the opening lines of Spee's "Altdeutsches Frühlingslied," Mendelssohn's last composition:

> Der trübe Winter ist vorbei,
> die Schwalben wiederkehren,
> nun regt sich Alles wieder neu,
> Die Quellen sich vermehren. . . .[64]

Although never specifically named in "Die erste Walpurgis-nacht," the location "auf der Höh'" is understood to be the Brocken, the highest peak in the Harz Mountains, whose "granite mass, an expansive, treeless summit surrounded by craggy rocks, looms above three neighboring, more rounded peaks."[65] This region and mountain were known and loved

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[64]Ibid., pp. 128-9.

[65]Karl Buerlen and Alfred Zastrau, "Brocken," Goethe Handbuch, ed. Alfred Zastrau (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler,

universally by Germans and became a favorite destination for
many a nineteenth-century tourist, including Mendelssohn in
1827.[66] The year before, Heine contributed to its fame with
his autobiographical "Tour in the Harz," the first chapter in
his Reisebilder (Travel-Pictures)(1826). In folklore, the
Brocken symbolized a wild and forbidding territory. But the
real mountain, with its footpaths, inns, and viewing platform,
was hardly a place of actual terror. Henry Chorley, an
English music lover writing about his pilgrimage up the
legendary Brocken in the mid-nineteenth century, called the
view "pleasant"; he was disturbed not by witches but rather
by the din from his fellow tourists:

> . . . I had at least twenty fellow gazers; and what with
> the hubbub made by them while hacking their names on the
> timber battlements. . . a noisier score of scenery
> hunters 'you would not find in Christendie.'[67]

Chorley's sampling of nature on the Brocken was an enjoyable,
guided, entirely safe experience. That nature should be so
contained, managed, and humanized was characteristic of this
age of ever-expanding technology. The so-called English gar-
den, already popular in the late-eighteenth century, similarly
shows man's desire to enjoy a cultivated wilderness. Mendels-
sohn fully shared this attitude of his age, as G. R. Marek

1961), col. 1450. [Sein Granitmassiv ist vom Hornfels umla-
gert, die breit ausladende, baumlose Ruppe läuft über drei
weitere Rundkuppen aus. . .]

[66]Hensel, 1: 133.

[67]Henry F. Chorley, Modern German Music, 2 vols. (Lon-
don: Smith, Elder, 1854), 1:85-86.

notes about his sketches: .

> As we look at Mendelssohn's drawings and water colors,
> we get the impression that the man who sketched these
> technically excellent pictures enjoyed Nature as long
> as Nature remained decently behaved. He had a fine [68]
> sense of the picturesque, but no sense for wildness.

In terms of the Brocken, Heine carried further such a

tendency to domesticate nature when, in the _Reisebilder_, he

characterized its human--"genuinely German"--personality:

> The Brocken is a German. With German thoroughness he
> shows us clearly and plainly as in a giant panorama the
> hundreds of cities, towns, and villages. . . and all
> around, the hills, forests, rivers, and plains stretching
> away to the distant horizon. But this very distinctness
> gives everything the sharp definition and clear coloring
> of a local chart; there is nowhere a really beautiful
> landscape for the eye to rest on. This is just our way,
> thanks to the conscientious exactitude with which we are
> bent on giving every single fact, we German compilers
> never think about the form that will best represent any
> particular fact. The mountain, too, has something of Ger-
> man calmness, intelligence and tolerance, just because
> it can command such a wide, clear view of things. And
> when such a mountain opens its giant eyes, it may well
> happen that it sees more than we dwarfs do, clambering
> with purblind eyes upon its sides. Many, indeed, declare
> that the Brocken is bourgeois, and Claudius has sung of
> 'the Blocksberg, that tall Philistine.' But that is a
> mistake. It is true that owing to his bald pate, over
> which he sometimes draws his white cap of mist, he gives
> himself an air of philistinism, but, as with many other
> great Germans, this is pure irony. Nay, it is notorious
> that the Brocken has his wild freshman days, _e.g._ the
> first of May. Then he tosses his cloud cap in the air
> and goes romantic mad, like a genuine German. [69]

Likewise for Goethe, and later for Mendelssohn, the Brocken

was a richly suggestive place--all-encompassing, variable,

playful--a setting which, more than just providing a backdrop

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[68] Marek, p. 92f.

[69] Heinrich Heine, _Travel-Pictures_, trans. Francis Storr
(London: George Bell, 1887), p. 50f.

for the action, joined in the dramatic struggle of characters
and ideas. Although Mendelssohn's letter to Fanny also sing-
les out the poem's witches and spirituality as especially
attractive to him, indeed they get subsumed in the mountain
itself: the Brocken is a locale hospitable to a wide range
of elements, from fairy lore to national history. There the
natural and the supernatural, man and nature, are more readily
seen as one. And there, with a rare intensity, the poet and
the composer alike set central concerns of each one's artistic
career.

In conclusion, these areas of affinity between Mendels-
sohn and Goethe, two men "looking for similar things and walk-
ing along similar paths," provide at least some reasons why
Mendelssohn was drawn to "Die erste Walpurgisnacht." There
can be no doubt that Mendelssohn loved both the poet and the
poem, a love which shines through his words to Goethe on the
occasion of the poet's last birthday (August 28, 1831) before
he died:

> I wrote you from Rome that I had been bold enough to com-
> pose your "First Walpurgis Night." I completed the work
> in Milan; it is a kind of cantata for chorus and orches-
> tra, longer and more enlarged than I had planned it ori-
> ginally, because the more I was occupied with the task,
> the more important it seemed to me. Allow me to thank
> you for the heavenly words; when the old Druid offers up
> his sacrifice and the scene grows to unmeasurable heights
> and solemnity, there is no need of inventing music; it is
> there already; everything sounds clear, and I started to
> sing the verses to myself before ever thinking of the
> composition. In case I should find a good choir and an
> opportunity in Munich. . . I intend to perform the work.
> The only thing I hope for, is that my music should be able
> to express how deeply I was moved myself by the beauty of
> the words.[70]

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[70]Letters, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 172.

Within a year of Goethe's death, Mendelssohn would perform
this "longer . . . more important" work, marking both his
life-long debt to the poet and a crucial stage in the devel-
opment of the cantata genre.

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CHAPTER IV

THE CONCERT CANTATA BEFORE

MENDELSSOHN'S WALPURGISNACHT

Die erste Walpurgisnacht was completed over a period of
some fourteen years, between 1830 and 1844, in the course of
which the composer referred to it by a variety of labels.
Writing to Devrient in July, 1831, he called it simply "a
large concert piece."[1] In other letters during that year, in-
cluding one to Goethe, he speaks of a "cantata," although his
cautious language suggests that the term as then understood
did not quite fit. Thus he asked Fanny: "Do you think that
this will grow into a new style of cantata?"[2] And he told
Goethe that "it is a kind of cantata for chorus and orchestra,
longer and more enlarged than I had planned it originally."[3]
One section in particular, the orchestral introduction, grew
to unconventional length. At first conceived of as a "short
overture,"[4] it eventually formed about one third of the work.
Recognizing the prominence of this instrumental movement, Men-
delssohn was later inclined to call Die erste Walpurgisnacht

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[1]Devrient, p. 115.

[2]Letters, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 117.

[3]Ibid., p. 172.   [4]Ibid., p. 118.

a "symphony cantata," a term invented for the Lobgesang by

Karl Klingemann, whom Mendelssohn thanked in an 1840 letter:

> By the by, you have much to answer for in the admirable
> title you hit on so cleverly, for not only have I sent
> forth the [Lobgesang] into the world as a symphony can-
> tata, but I have serious thoughts of resuming the first
> "Walpurgisnacht" (which has been so long lying by me)
> under the same cognomen, and finishing and getting rid
> of it at last.[5]

In 1842, Mendelssohn wrote his mother: "I am really anxious

at last to make the 'Walpurgis Nacht' into a symphony cantata,

for which it was originally intended, but did not become so

from want of courage on my part. . . ."[6] For its first Leipzig

performance, however, and for its subsequent publication as

Opus 60, Mendelssohn finally settled on Goethe's designation

--"Ballade." Even though the piece went "far beyond what most

musicians understood by the term ballad," at least one contem-

porary journalist concluded that Mendelssohn had chosen the

best of the several alternatives.[7]

Mendelssohn had reason for uncertainty regarding the

genre to which his work-in-progress belonged, not only because

of the piece's continual modifications, but also because the

musical genres of his day were not all that clearly defined.

But whatever its proper classification, the work achieved an

innovative synthesis of two developing traditions in the

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[5]Letters from 1833-47, ed. Carl and Paul Mendelssohn-
Bartholdy, p. 199.

[6]Ibid., p. 282.

[7]J. Becker, NZfM 20/17 (February 1844): 66. [was wir
Musiker unter Ballade verstehen, weit überbietet]

public concert repertory: the "inflated" solo ballad and the grand cantata.

"Cantata"--An Ambiguous Term

Goethe, in 1799, had posed the question whether "dramatic ballads might not be worked out in such a manner as to furnish a composer with material for a cantata." One wonders what sort of piece he had in mind, for in the early nineteenth century the term "cantata" was rather loosely employed, as even dictionaries readily admitted. According to a mid-century edition of Koch's Musikalisches Lexicon, it "is somewhat difficult to determine a general conception of this type of form. . . for in different stages of its development, it is explained by one writer as a small, single-voiced, lyrical composition, by another as a long and dramatic, and by a third as a musical work almost identical with the oratorio."[8] No doubt it is an ambiguous term at any point in history, but in Goethe's lifetime "cantata" was--as Schilling's Encyclopadie (1835-42) observed--"such a vague, general expression that it in itself offers little or nothing to clearly differentiate this genre from other kinds of vocal pieces."[9]

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[8]Musikalisches Lexicon auf Grundlage des Lexicons von H. Ch. Koch, ed. Arrey von Dommer (Heidelberg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1865), s. v. "Cantate," p. 135. [wodurch der Allgemeinbegriff dieser Formgattung etwas schwierig zu bestimmen wird. . .beziehentlich auf die verschiedenen Entwickelungsstadien findet man sie bei dem Schriftsteller als ein kleines einstimmiges lyrisches, bei einem anderen als ein langes drammatisirendes, und bei einem dritten als ein mit dem Oratorium fast identisches Tonwerk erklärt.]

[9]G. W. Fink, "Cantate," in Encyclopadie der gesammten

Nowhere was the term used consistently. In the table
of contents of five early volumes of Friedrich Rochlitz's
Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung,[10] the most highly-regarded
and most comprehensive music journal of the period,[11]
"cantata" formed a separate category under the general head-
ing "song," along with "church," "'Lieder' and other songs,"
and sometimes also "opera." But in any particular volume,
pieces classified as cantatas were astonishingly dissimilar.
In volume six (1803-4), for example, only two--Haydn's Die
Jahreszeiten and Maschek's Klage und Trost an Freundes Grabe
--are so listed. While the former lasts some two hours and
is for three soloists, chorus, and full orchestra, the latter
takes perhaps five minutes and is for solo voice with piano
accompaniment. The four cantatas listed in volume thirteen
(1810-11), all fairly long works, nevertheless varied greatly
in terms of medium and text. Dalberg's Jesus auf Golgatha,
a "declamation" for solo speaker accompanied by orchestra, was
a setting of one portion from Klopstock's epic poem Messias.
The dramatic text of Paer's Diana ed Endimione, for two solo
voices, was drawn from classical mythology. Published with

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musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal: Lexicon der
Tonkunst, ed. Gustav Schilling, 7 vols. (Stuttgart: Köhler,
1835-42), 2:105. [ein so unbestimmter Allgemeinausdruck, dass
ich aus ihm selbst wenig oder gar nichts bestimmen lässt, was
die Gattung von andern Gesangstücken klar unterscheidet.]

[10]AMZ, vols. 6-7 (1803-5) and 13-15 (1811-13).

[11]Imogen Fellinger, Verzeichnis der Musikzeitschriften
des 19. Jahrhunderts (Regensburg: Bosse, 1968), p. 13.

piano accompaniment, though originally accompanied by orches-
tra, it was "a rather large cantata, almost entirely in opera
style. . ." with a long introduction worthy of an opera "semi-
seria."[12] Andreas Romberg's setting of Schiller's lyric poem
Die Macht des Gesänges required several soloists, chorus, and
orchestra. The reviewer complained that the orchestra so
dominated the piece that it seemed to overpower rather than
celebrate song: ". . .this whole poem, with the exception of
a very few places, could be carried by the orchestra alone
. . . ."[13] Finally, Schulze's cantata Froh wall' ich zum Heil-
igthum was an adaptation from the slow movement--a set of
variations--of Andreas Romberg's Symphony No. 1. Its sacred
text was imposed on a formerly purely instrumental composition.
"Whoever can condone or be reconciled to such a thing, let him
find a use for it," scorned a critic.[14] Thus, the term
"cantata" was applied so inconsistently that it merely sug-
gested in a relative sense its meaning with regard to the
size, shape, or text of a composition.

The Solo Cantata-Ballad

First, with regard to size and musical design, "cantata"
tended to signify more than the solo song but less than the

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[12]AMZ 13/52 (December 1811), col. 882. [eine ziemlich
grosse Cantate, fast ganz in Opernstyle. . .]

[13]AMZ 13/10 (March 1811), col. 173. [. . .dieses ganze
Gedicht, mit Ausnahme wenigen Stellen, von dem Orchester al-
lein vorgetragen werden könnte. . .]

[14]AMZ 13/1 (January 1811), col. 15. [Wer das billigen,
wer sich damit vereinigen kann, der gebrauche es.]

opera or oratorio. In the repertory for solo voice, "cantata"
usually implied a work of some length and complexity, often
consisting of several separate movements in contrasting re-
citative and aria styles. A reviewer therefore expressed sur-
prise that Zumsteeg's "An Fanny," for bass soloist and orches-
tra, "consists only of one recitative and one rather long
aria following it," noting that "the word cantata ordinarily
suggests a larger composition with more recitatives, arias,
etc."[15] Yet even some single-movement works, generally with
clear-cut interior divisions, were called cantatas. Though
frequently given some other designation, often that of a poet-
ic genre such as ballad, these multipartite structures were
generally classified as cantatas.[16]

Indeed, ballads belonging to this genre were longer,
more imposing pieces than simple strophic settings with the
same music for each successive stanza such as those preferred
by most North German ballad composers of Goethe's time.[17]
Zelter and Friedrich Reichardt, the composer whom Goethe had
most admired before Zelter,[18] who managed between them to set
most of Goethe's ballads, generally used a strophic form,

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[15]AMZ 7/14 (January 1805), col. 227. [. . .besteht nur
aus einem Recitative und einer darauf folgenden ziemlich lang-
en Arie. . .; Bey dem Worte: Kantate, denkt man gewöhnlich
an ein grösseres Musikstück, mit mehreren Recitativen, Arien,
Chören, u.s.w.]

[16]Ossenkop, p. 213.

[17]Ibid., Chapter VII.

[18]Blume, Goethe, p. 34.

even for long poems like "Die Braut von Korinth" with its twenty-eight stanzas.[19] Bürger was said to have desired a strophic setting for "Lenore," although that meant thirty-one repetitions of the same melody.[20] Goethe, whose general preference for strophic settings is well-documented,[21] felt that music should animate the poem without interpreting its content or distorting its form. A simple strophic setting would best preserve the folklike roots and flavor of the typical ballad.[22] But the ballad composers of southern Germany--Zumsteeg and his Swabian contemporaries--were inclined towards the cantata format.[23] This more elaborate structure permitted the composer to reflect the poem's plot and emotional nuances by changing the meter, tempo, and harmony, etc. In such settings, tone-painting was prevalent, especially in the accompaniments. "Cantata" in the solo repertory implied, therefore, a work of greater size and complexity than a simple song.

The Choral-Orchestral Cantata

On the other hand, applied to a work requiring several soloists and chorus, "cantata" usually indicated smaller size

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[19]Ossenkop, pp. 280-82, 314-16, 320.   [20]Ibid., p. 68.

[21]Paul L. Althouse, Jr., Carl Loewe (1796-1869): His Lieder, ballads, and their performance (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1971), p. 108; Ossenkop, p. 335f., ft. 168; also Frederick W. Sternfeld, "The Musical Springs of Goethe's Poetry," Musical Quarterly 35/4 (October 1949): 524.

[22]Blume, Goethe, p. 40.

[23]Ossenkop, Chapter VIII; Ossenkop observes (p. 355) that all of Zumsteeg's separately-published ballad settings were of the cantata type.

and less complexity than opera or especially oratorio which

it otherwise much resembled. In "On Cantata and Oratorio in

General," an 1827 article in the AMZ, G. W. Fink discriminated

between the two only "in terms of the oratorio's greater

length and grander content and style."[24] Writing in 1938

about the nineteenth-century "dramatic" choral cantata,

Günter Schwanbeck makes a similar point:

> The relationship to the oratorio was obvious. The musi-
> cal means and form were in essence the same. Whereas
> the oratorio was based on a complicated plot, similar to
> the opera, the cantata was content initially to explore
> a more limited dramatic event. . . .Those works deserve
> to be classified as cantatas which are of more modest
> size than is true of an oratorio.[25]

The texts of cantatas developed many different themes

drawn from various sources, sometimes with seemingly opposite

characteristics which, on closer examination, prove not alto-

gether incompatible. Cantata texts were said to be lyric in

nature, but a few texts were indeed dramatic, and many

achieved a synthesis of lyric and dramatic elements. Cantata

texts could be either sacred or secular, unlike oratorios

which were more narrowly defined in Goethe's lifetime as

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[24]"Über Cantate und Oratorium im Allgemeinen," AMZ 29/
37 (September 1827), col. 625. [nur durch die Länge und
durch einen grossartigern Stoff und Styl.]

[25]Schwanbeck, p. 4. [Die Verwandtschaft mit dem Ora-
torium liegt auf der Hand. Die musikalischen Mittel und
Formen sind im wesentlichen die gleichen. Während aber dem
Oratorium eine gross angelegte Handlung--der Oper entsprech-
end--zugrunde liegt, benügt sich die Kantate in ihren An-
fängen damit, eine enger umgrenzte Begebenheit dramatisch zu
gestalten. . . .Der Kantate wird man dejenigen Werke zuordnen,
die einen geringeren Umfang aufweisen, als es beim Oratorium
der Fall ist.]

dealing exclusively with religious subjects. In fact, what was sacred or secular in any given cantata text was often ambiguous. These observations are substantiated by actual works composed, performed, or discussed during the first half of the nineteenth century and also by cantata texts the AMZ editor Rochlitz proposed for musical setting.[26]

Lyric versus Dramatic Elements

Schwanbeck applies the adjective "dramatic" to the cantata, but he himself admits that nineteenth-century composers used the term only occasionally.[27] Generally, "cantata" was understood to designate pieces with texts that were essentially lyric.[28] Lyric poetry emphasizes expression of feeling rather than narration of an incident. In volume nine of the AMZ (1806-7), six of the seven texts recommended for musical setting were specifically called cantatas. And, consistent with Rochlitz's practice in earlier volumes, all these cantatas were of the lyric type.

Occasionally, more dramatic poems were also included in the AMZ, but given other names than "cantata," despite their familiar cantata-like layout: solo verses divided clearly into recitatives and arias, alternating with short choruses.

[26]Rochlitz provides interesting reasons for including such texts in his journal: AMZ 9/1 (October 1806), col. 3-5.

[27]According to Schwanbeck (p. 4), "dramatic scene" is used more frequently, or the designation of genre is avoided altogether.

[28]J. Becker, NZfM 20/17 (February 1844): 66.

Among these were the two "musical fantasies" of Carl Grum-
bach, entitled Ariadnens Apotheose[29] and Penelope,[30] appear-
ping in volume twelve (1809-10). Both of these could easily
be mistaken for opera scenes. Each opens with the heroine--
Ariadne or Penelope--bemoaning her fate to an admiring throng,
the chorus. About midway in each scene, the hero enters--
Bacchus on a chariot or Ulysses masked--and the male and fe-
male soloists engage in lively dialogue. Each scene ends in
a joyful denouement, celebrated by soloists and chorus togeth-
er. Viewed overall, these texts were at once lyric and drama-
tic, both expressing feelings and also enacting an incident.

As Fink observed in 1827, a cantata would almost inev-
itably blend or juxtapose lyric and dramatic elements.[31] One
of the most striking examples in the early nineteenth century
was Carl Maria von Weber's Kampf und Sieg, a "cantata to cele-
brate the destruction of the enemy in June, 1815 at Belle-
Alliance and Waterloo."[32] Here the soloists carry allegori-
cal names: Love, Hope, and Faith. The choruses represent
real-life protagonists: the allied forces of north and south
German soldiers, as well as the "Volk," the German masses.
In extremely vivid scenes, troops prepare for, engage in, and

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[29]AMZ 12/29 (April 1810), col. 449-454. "Ariadnens
Apotheose" was set by Friedrich Schneider in 1810; see Helmut
Lomnitzer, Das musikalische Werk Friedrich Schneiders (Mar-
E. Mauersberger, 1961), p. 62.

[30]AMZ 12/38 (June 1810), col. 593-596.

[31]AMZ 29/37 (September 1827), col. 627f.

[32]Piano-vocal edition (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1871), title
page.

emerge victorious from battle with the enemy. The poem in-
cludes summons to arms, specific military maneuvers, and horn
calls to heighten the realism. In contrast, framing these
central dramatic scenes, .he lyric opening and closing move-
ments express the peoples' war-weariness, faith, joy, and
thankful relief.

Secular versus Sacred Elements

These early nineteenth-century volumes of the AMZ clas-
sified as "grosse Kantaten" not only Haydn's The Seasons but
also Handel's Alexander's Feast, entirely on textual grounds.[33]
Otherwise, their length and musical properties rendered them
virtually indistinguishable from oratorios by their respective
composers. Not only were both texts predominantly lyric, but
both were secular rather than sacred. While cantatas could
be either sacred or secular, a well-established tradition in-
sisted that an oratorio was a religious, "sacred" work. Re-
viewing the publication of The Seasons, a critic makes a
generic distinction between this cantata and Haydn's oratorio,
The Creation:

> If anything stood in the way of the intended total
> impression of Haydn's Creation it was the traditional
> notion of oratorio, insofar as this suggested the poetic
> and musical rendering of a sacred subject. . . .Now with
> The Seasons, this limitation does not exist. . . .[34]

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[33]AMZ 10/13 (December 1807), col. 207; 6 (1804), table
of contents, col. III.

[34]AMZ 6/31 (May 1804), col. 514. [Wenn dem bestimmten
Totaleindrucke der Haydnschen Schöpfung irgend etwas im Wege
seyn konnte, so war es der hergebrachte Begriff des Namens

Forty years later, Becker still bristled at Berlioz's classi-
fication of Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht as an ora-
torio, for "the oratorio, strictly speaking, belongs only to
the church."[35]

Actually it was often difficult to determine precisely
whether a text was sacred or secular, especially if a libret-
to--like that of The Creation--celebrated nature as God's
handiwork. Texts in praise of music frequently took on a
sacred tone, especially in reference to music's divine ori-
gins. On the model of Dryden's Alexander's Feast, in which
St. Cecilia "drew an Angel down," a final stanza almost invar-
iably linked music with heaven.[36] Of the six cantata texts
recommended for musical setting in volume nine of the AMZ,
four clearly intermingled worldly and religious imagery.
Rochlitz's "secular" cantata, Der Sommerabend, evocatively
describes such natural phenomena as the radiant sunset and a
sudden, turbulent rainstorm, but ends with reference to an
"enduring, holy belief that, out of dust, a Saviour will
appear!"[37] On the other hand, Wagenseil's "sacred" cantata,

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Oratorium, in sofern darunter die poetische und musikalische
Darstellung einer heiligen Handlung verstanded wird. . . .Die-
ser Hindernis findet nun bey den Jahreszeiten nicht Statt. . .]

[35]NZfM 20/17 (February 1844): 66. [weil das Oratorium,
streng genommen, nur der Kirche angehört]

[36]As, for example, in Klopstock's "An die Musik": Es
freuet nicht allein in den Sternen! es freut/ Auch in dem
Himmel Musik.

[37]AMZ 9/1 (October 1806), col. 8. [Heiliger Glaube,/
Nimmer zu vergehen/ Aus dem Staube/ Ein Sieger aufzustehen!]

Preis Gottes, extols not only the Almighty, but also spring
and all creatures, from elephants to worms, who rejoice in
the year's awakening.[38] Both cantatas by Amadeus Wendt,
Frühlingskantate and Kantate zur Feyer eines Friedensfestes,
refer to natural menaces--storms, winds, thunder, death--but
the final sunny, triumphant choruses praise a Saviour of
light, a Lord of earth, sea, and heaven.[39] Similar blends of
sacred and secular language may be seen in actual cantata
compositions of the period, such as Ferdinand Ries' Der Morgen,
and Sigismund Neukomm's Ostermorgen and Hochgesang an die
Nacht.[40]

A fascinating but rather typical blending of lyric,
dramatic, sacred, and secular elements is found in Herklot's
libretto for Bernard Anselm Weber's peace cantata, Vertrauen
auf Gott, first performed in Berlin in 1809.[41] In its open-
ing recitative, the "thunderclouds of war roll through the
world, and nature is everywhere sad"; but in a subsequent hymn,
God is implored to cast a "sunny glance" upon the world. In
the middle portion of the cantata, the interweaving of chorus,
solo ensemble, and individual soloists achieves considerable
dramatic tension through dialogue. Then the entirely lyric

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[38]AMZ 9/31 (April 1807), col. 487-93.

[39]AMZ 9/41 (July 1807), col. 658-60; 9/41 (August 1807),
col. 734-38.

[40]AMZ 14/2 (May 1812), col. 345-47; 27/1 (January 1825),
col. 9-13; 32/4 (January 1830), col. 49-52.

[41]AMZ 11/33 (May 1809), col. 525-27.

closing chorus in praise of "our father, our Saviour" estab-
lishes a contented, satisfied mood.

The term "cantata" was clearly too imprecise, too vague
a classification to be useful as a heading in the AMZ's table
of contents. For it did not appear again between 1814 and
1848. Between 1814 and 1831, cantatas were listed either un-
der "church" or "chamber." But first in volumes nineteen
through twenty-two (1817-20), and then consistently beginning
with volume thirty-three (January 1831), there appeared a new
category of vocal music called "Concert." Cantatas and other
works were included in this category not on account of their
length, musical design, or text, but primarily because they
required an instrumental accompaniment other than piano.
These instrumental accompaniments ranged from a single obbli-
gato instrument, to "complete military wind band," to full
orchestra. This new concert category reflected at once the
growing importance of the public concert in German musical
life and the increasing popularity of the instrumental medium.

Public Concerts and the

New Cantata Repertory

The public concert in Germany evolved gradually during
the course of the eighteenth century.[42] Important milestones
were academic collegia musica such as Telemann's in Frankfurt,

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[42]Eberhard Preussner documents this evolution in Die
bürgerliche Musikkultur; ein Beitrag zur deutschen Musik-
geschichte des 18. Jh., 2nd ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1950).

and various concert societies such as those in Leipzig
(founded in 1743), Berlin (in 1745), and Vienna (in 1771).[43]
But even in the late eighteenth century, German musical life
was still dominated by church and court. Adam Carse summar-
izes the situation as follows:

> The public concert hardly existed, and those [concerts]
> given by court orchestras were held in private in the
> chamber of the sovereign or prince for the enjoyment of
> his court. . . .The close and intimate surroundings of
> the 'chamber' required no large volume of sound and con-
> sequently few players.[44]

Around the turn of the century, however, economic and
political changes, including, of course, the spread of Napo-
leonic authority to lands east of the Rhine, led to the de-
cline or actual abolishing of many ecclesiastical and court
establishments. For a considerable time, the model of the
private, socially exclusive concert was preserved, but now
frequently under the auspices of privileged middle-class as
well as noble patrons. Goethe, for example, founded his own
"Hauskapelle" in 1807,[45] with a young professional musician,
Karl Eberwein, directing its regular Thursday evening prac-
tices and Sunday afternoon concerts before invited guests.[46]

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[43]Hans Engel, Musik und Gesellschaft (Berlin-Halensee:
Max Hesse, 1960), p. 244; Blume, Classic-Romantic, p. 84.

[44]The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz (Cambridge:
Heffer, 1948), p. 20.

[45]K. Muthesius, "Hausmusik/Hauskapelle," in Goethe Hand-
buch, ed. Julius Zeitler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1917), 2:129.

[46]Wilhelm Bode, Die Tonkunst in Goethes Leben, 2 vols.
(Berlin: E. G. Mittler, 1912), 2: 33f.

Goethe's Kapelle included soloists from the Weimar Theater
and amateur participants who were not, however, maintained or
salaried by his household. Small, aristocratic musical cir-
cles continued to flourish in many parts of Germany, particu-
larly in Vienna.[47] A new market for chamber music also devel-
oped in the homes of middle-class citizens who vigorously
cultivated musical interests.[48]

But also outside the home, the first half of the century
saw fresh enthusiasm for the various sorts of public concerts
which already existed in 1800.[49] "The emancipation of the
middle-class" generated more and more people, especially in
cities, with affluence, leisure, musical literacy, and a de-
sire for self-improvement.[50] In this "frenzy of culture and
education,"[51] they became the growing clientele both as audi-
ence and participants for an upsurge of public performances.
Although affected by these shifts in patronage and audience,
opera houses nevertheless retained their central position in
urban music throughout Germany:[52] in Berlin, Dresden, and

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[47]Gerhard Pinthus, Das Konzertleben in Deutschland (Leip-
zig: Heitz, 1932), p. 101.

[48]Blume, Classic-Romantic, p. 85.

[49]Preussner, pp. 29-31; cited in Blume, Classic-Romantic,
p. 84.

[50]Christoph Hellmut Mahling, "Zum 'Musikbetreib' Berlins
und seinen Institutionen in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jh.," in
Studien zur Musikgeschichte Berlins im frühen 19. Jahrhunderts,
ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Regensburg: Bosse, 1980), p. 27.

[51]Hauser, p. 125.   [52]Carse, p. 12.

Munich, in Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Stuttgart, Kassel, Brunswick,
Hanover, Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Weimar, Carlsruhe, and numerous
smaller towns.[53] This decentralization of musical activity
all over Germany contrasted greatly with the dominance of
Paris and London over their respective national cultures.
Ultimately, such variety and geographic spread would contrib-
ute to both the health and quality of German musical life.

Somewhat exceptional, the city of Leipzig had developed
already in the eighteenth century a tradition of regular pub-
lic concerts wholly independent of opera. Concert series like
these "Gewandhauskonzerte" and their sponsoring "Vereine,"
societies of public-spirited music lovers, sprang up quite
rapidly all over Germany in the early nineteenth century.
Tickets were sold on a subscription basis for a season of
concerts, usually from October to April, held in large public
rooms or buildings. Initially, the sponsors were often also
the participants. But gradually a real division of labor
evolved between concert management and the salaried perform-
ers.[54] As early as 1804, Spohr observed that the Gewandhaus
orchestra's "concerts are got up by a society of shopkeepers.
But they are not amateur concerts; for the orchestra is alone
composed of professional musicians and is both numerous and
excellent."[55]

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[53]Ibid., p. 107.

[54]Pinthus, p. 113.

[55]Quoted in Carse, p. 132.

Subscription concerts were organized not only by such societies but also by individual musicians or entrepreneurs. Examples include the many successful series undertaken by violin virtuoso Carl Möser in Berlin in the second and third decades of the century, and the series of three Berlin concerts in the winter of 1832-33 which Mendelssohn managed to squeeze into a crowded concert calendar.[56] (The original version of Mendelssohn's _Walpurgisnacht_ was premiered in the third of these.)

Concerts were frequently given to benefit many charitable causes: the musicians' own pension or widows' funds, the poor of Berlin's Jewish colony, winter fuel supply for that city's needy, or overworked children in factories.[57] Such charity provided a further incentive for the individual citizen, "who considered membership in a concert society to be an honor, and concert-going an essential part of his general 'Bildung.'"[58] In 1852, the American music educator, Lowell Mason, referred to the important civilizing function of a Gewandhaus performance he had heard:

> Indeed the Gewandhaus Concert is a kind of high school, where taste is formed in the young, and perfected in

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[56]Mahling, pp. 40, 57.

[57]Engel, p. 249; Mahling, p. 63; Preussner, p. 59.

[58]Preussner, p. 58. [Die Bürger machten sich eine Ehre daraus, Mitglied dieser Konzerte zu sein; es gehörte eben zur allgemeinen Bildung zu subskribieren.] Advocated by Wilhelm von Humboldt and others, "Bildung" involved the shaping, deepening, cultivating of one's inner self for the ultimate benefit of society as a whole.

the old, and where the knowledge of musical science,
the appreciation and love of musical art, and the
general state and progress of both, are made manifest.[59]

Some of the less-serious types of public concerts in the
eighteenth century such as "Gartenkonzerte" or "Unterhaltungs-
konzerte," remained popular in the nineteenth.[60] But now a
clear distinction was made between music for entertainment or
relaxation and the more profound, more ennobling concert.[61]
As Mason noted, at these serious performances, the gentlemen
removed their hats and everyone was silent during the music.[62]
It was widely believed that ". . .the man who has so profound-
ly experienced music will also notice the good, harmonious
influence in his everyday life."[63]

Nevertheless, typical programs combined instrumental and
vocal fare--both whole works and excerpts--representing a wide
variety of styles and appealing to a range of tastes. More
or less standard was the format the Gewandhaus sponsors re-
commended already in 1781: a symphony, aria, concerto and
duet (trio or quartet) in the first part, followed by a
symphony, aria, chorus and concluding number in the second
part.[64] Increasingly, however, concert programs all over
Europe tended to reflect the audiences' preference for purely

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[59]Lowell Mason, Musical Letters from Abroad (reprint of
1854 ed., New York: DaCapo Press, 1967), p. 32.

[60]Engel, p. 248.   [61]Hauser, p. 225.   [62]Mason, p. 25f.

[63]Preussner, p. 129. [der Mensch, der Musik so inner-
lich erlebt hat, wird auch den guten harmonischen Einfluss in
seinem Alltagsleben spüren.]

[64]Pinthus, p. 107.

instrumental compositions.   Carse observes that

> . . .some of the largest and most influential [concert
> societies] made the performance of symphonies, overtures,
> and concertos the main object of their existence. The
> London Philharmonic (1813), the Paris Societe des Con-
> certs (1828), the Munich Odeon Concerte (1828), the
> Vienna Philharmonischen Concerte (1842), and many simi-
> lar if less influential societies in Germany, together
> with the old established Gewandhaus Concerte at Leipzig,
> were mainly instrumental in character, although few of
> them could afford entirely to abandon the position
> which placed vocal and choral music very high in the
> range of musical activity.[65]

Even in a mixed program, as Lowell Mason wrote, "a principal

point of attraction is always found in the symphony."[66]

Everywhere popular was the Romantics' idea that instrumental

music--"wordless" music--was the "choicest means of saying

what could not be said, of expressing something deeper than

the word had been able to express."[67] Musicians and audien-

ces alike were enthusiastic about the coloristic and expres-

sive possibilities of instrumental music in general, and

Beethoven's in particular. Especially his symphonies, works

of marked difficulty intended for the accomplished pro-

fessional player, appeared on public concert programs with

increasing regularity.[68] Orchestras gradually grew in size,

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[65]Carse, p. 13.

[66]Mason, p. 32.

[67]Einstein, p. 32.

[68]Adolf Weissmann, Berlin als Musikstadt (Berlin and
Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1911), p. 148; Cecilia Hopkins
Porter, "The new public and the reordering of the musical
establishment: the Lower Rhine Music Festivals, 1818-67,"
Nineteenth Century Music 3/3 (March 1980):222; Carse, p. 133;
Mahling, p. 41.

both to meet the demands of contemporary compositions and to accommodate the acoustics of larger concert spaces.[69]

"Inflated" Ballad Cantatas: André's Lenore, Zelter's Johanna Sebus, and Loewe's Die erste Walpurgisnacht

The interest in instrumental music was also reflected in vocal concert repertory. Although appropriate for the aristocratic salon or private home, piano accompaniments were simply not adequate for the public concert hall. Thus, existing compositions for one or more solo voices and piano, or for chorus and piano, were often orchestrated and otherwise reworked to become more suitable for public concert perform-ance.[70] New vocal works often appeared from the outset in two versions, for piano or orchestra. Three compositions--by André, Zelter, and Loewe--illustrate the practice of "inflating" the cantata-type solo ballad for concert use.

One of the earliest settings of Bürger's "Lenore," a cantata-like composition by Johann André first published in 1775, proved popular enough to warrant several subsequent editions.[71] Originally a single-movement, multipartite piece

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[69]Carse (p. 20) contrasts the typical eighteenth-century chamber orchestra of 12-17 players with the 60 players desired by Beethoven for one of his late symphonies.

[70]According to Ossenkop (p. 520), the first ballad set-ting with orchestral accompaniment to be published was Beeke's "Das Lied vom braven Manne" (text by Bürger) in 1784. Other early orchestrated cantata ballads mentioned by Ossenkop (pp. 234, 251): André's "Die Weiber von Weinberg" (1800), and Antonin Reicha's "Lenore" (1802).

[71]Philipp Spitta, "Ballade," in Musikgeschichtliche Aufsätze (Berlin: Paetel, 1894), p. 410. Ossenkop discusses

for solo singer and piano accompaniment, the third edition
which appeared between 1785-87, following André's years as
musical director of a theater in Berlin,[72] distributed the
melodic material among four individual solo singers (soprano,
alto, tenor, bass), assigned two passages to a Chorus of
Spirits, and reworked the accompaniment for an orchestra of
double flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, and a quintet of
strings.[73] The instrumental accompaniment had considerable
importance and independence throughout the composition. A
twenty-three measure prelude was added to better establish
the gloomy mood of the ballad's first stanza. In this ver-
sion, too, orchestral color conveyed specific programmatic
effects, as when the winds were featured in a "regimental
march" (for strophes 2 and 3) or the strings in a plodding,
pizzicato eighth-note figure simulating a funeral procession.
The doubling trombones added a solemn, quasi-religious flavor
to the concluding chorus. The general effect of André's mod-
ifications was to make the ballad both longer and grander,
more obvious and more vivid than the original version for one
singer and piano. This Lenore could be appreciated in a larg-
er hall by a larger audience than his first version.[74]

the five editions (pp. 207-34, with a summary in Table 1,
p. 209).

[72]Wolfgang Plath, "Johann André," in The New Grove,
1:403.

[73]Dietrich Manicke, ed., Critical notes to Balladen von
Gottfried August Bürger (Mainz, Schott, 1870), p. 256.

[74]Ibid., p. 256; Ossenkop (p. 521) says a quartet of
trombones doubled the voices for the last verse.

Zelter's cantata <u>Johanna Sebus</u> (1810),[75] a setting of
Goethe's ballad-like poem commemorating a heroic farm girl
caught in the flood waters of the Rhine, was similarly con-
ceived as a chamber work. It called for three soloists--
soprano, baritone, and bass--four-part chorus, and piano.
But bringing this modest chamber cantata to the public con-
cert hall also required its orchestration, in this case by
another composer, J. P. C. Schulz, in 1820.[76] <u>Johanna Sebus</u>
is one continuous movement in four sections. Its twelve-
measure introduction is mildly programmatic, as running six-
teenth-notes within the key of e minor suggest the ominous
swell of flood waters.[77] Providing structural unity is a
rondo-like recurrence of thematic material in the choral en-
trances of sections one and four, slightly modified each time
to parallel modifications in the text. The bass solo in sec-
tion three, marked "Langsamer und gehalten" approaches reci-
tative style. The choral entrance which follows on the words
"Kein Damm! Kein Feld! nur hier und dort/ Bezeichnet ein
Baum, ein Turm, den Ort," marked "Sehr langsam und zurück-
gehalten," an effective, yet understated rendering of one
climactic moment in the poem, was a passage particularly

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[75]Joseph M. Müller-Blattau, ed. (Hannover: Nagel, 1932).

[76]Ossenkop, p. 522.

[77]The contrapuntal writing in the choral refrain of
<u>Johanna Sebus</u> greatly resembles the opening chorus of Bach's
<u>St. Matthew Passion</u>; Zelter knew the work, and would be in-
volved, with Mendelssohn, in the 100th anniversary revival of
it in 1829.

admired by Goethe.[78] Goethe apparently said nothing about
Zelter's restraint in the final section, when he sets the
very poignant words "Und überall wird schön Susschen beweint"
with the most inane, _Allegretto_, C major music. Zelter's
cool, if not entirely insensitive attitude to a richly emo-
tional text may explain why the colorful language of "Die
erste Walpurgisnacht," as well as its philosophical content,
failed to inspire his musical response.

Like André's first "Lenore," and Zelter's cantata
Johanna Sebus, most of Carl Loewe's ballads were obviously
intended for an intimate performance setting. At least one
ballad, however, stood on the borderline between the salon and
the public concert hall: his setting of Goethe's "Die erste
Walpurgisnacht," written in 1833, several months after the
first performance of Mendelssohn's composition, at the height
of Loewe's fame.[79] The work, Loewe's Opus 25, exists in two
versions. It was conceived for a solo singer or a group of
soloists, chorus, and, according to Spitta, piano accompani-
ment--a virtuoso part requiring the skills of a Loewe.[80] But
the title page of the Schlesinger original edition of this

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[78]Blume, _Goethe_, p. 38.

[79]Althouse, pp. 3f., 48.

[80]Maximilian Runze, ed., Preface to Johann Carl Gott-
fried Loewe, _Werke_, 17 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel,
1899-1904), 12:xv; the original autograph of the orchestrated
version (in the piano edition) states: "can be performed by
one, or, observing the variety of persons called for in the
story, by several singers." [kann von Einem, oder nach den
verschiedenen Personen des Stücke, von mehreren vorgetragen
werden.] See also Spitta, p. 454.

version makes clear that the second version, "for the whole
orchestra," would soon be forthcoming.[81]

Loewe's Die erste Walpurgisnacht is a single movement
of about ten minutes' duration. It is essentially a cantata-
ballad in the tradition of such works as discussed above
(pp. 62-4). After an eight-measure instrumental prelude, the
piece flows along without real pause, an alternation of major
and minor modes and a few tempo changes coinciding with
stanza divisions. The music depicts, in a general way, the
changes of mood in the poem, but tone-painting is by no means
specific.[82] Two groups of themes serve for most of the story,
until a broad, hymn-like conclusion. As in André's orchestra-
ted Lenore, the solo vocal lines occur in different registers,
corresponding to the various characters: "A Druid," whose
text is partially narrative, is high; "One among the people"
is low; and so forth. Some repetition of text occurs in the
choruses, virtually none in the solo passages.

The choruses in the work are neither very imaginative
nor technically demanding; they often consist of a single mel-
odic line. Only the chorus "Vertheilt euch, wackre Männer"
(let's divide, valiant men) is at all contrapuntal, the imi-
tative entrances of the two parts cleverly mirroring the
text. The final chorus might be powerful indeed, when sung

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[81]Runze, preface to Loewe, p. xv.

[82]Since I have not examined an orchestral score, I can-
not say to what extent instrumental color may have been em-
ployed to achieve programmatic effects.

by a large chorus and accompanied by full orchestra. Loewe
changes Goethe's "Chorus of Druids" to a "Large chorus of
Druids, Women, and the entire heathen population,"[83] implying
that a large number of singers would indeed be welcome. This
setting of the poem's final quatrain, "Die Flamme reinigt sich
vom Rauch. . .," repeats the music for these words from a pre-
vious section, but now in a four-part texture. The climax of
this section is marked fortissimo crescendo as the sopranos
leap the octave to high B. While still far from Mendelssohn's
grander realization, Loewe's setting does partially convey the
poem's key sense of the united human community and represents
a significant attempt to carry the ballad genre from intimate
salon to public concert hall.

Repertory for the Gesangverein: Oratorio, Opera Scenes, and the "Grand Cantata"

Neither the André, Zelter, or Loewe "inflated" ballad
cantatas was a sufficiently meaty piece for chorus to sustain
the interest or excitement of the amateur choral society,
another important aspect of the story of public concerts in
this period. For paralleling the upsurge of instrumental ac-
tivity in the nineteenth century was an equally impressive
expansion in choral music.[84] But as civic orchestras were
becoming more professional, choral organizations, the

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[83][Grosser Chor der Druiden, der Weiber und des ganzen heidnischen Volkes].

[84]Percy Young provides a helpful overview of this devel-
opment in "The Growth of Choral Societies," in The Choral Tra-
dition (New York: Norton, 1962), pp. 191-98.

so-called "Gesangvereine," were more and more the province of
the musical layman. Berlin's Singakademie was the first chor-
al society where singers--male and female, students of the
founder Fasch--voluntarily submitted to the discipline of
regular rehearsal and performance. At its founding in 1791,
this chorus numbered twenty-eight, most of them "musicians."
By 1818, nine societies on the Berlin model had been founded
elsewhere in Germany.[85] By mid-century there were hundreds,
perhaps thousands, of singing "Vereine," mixed choruses and
also choruses exclusively for men, as well as a few for women
only. Increasingly the membership in these societies consist-
ed of singers not really vocationally oriented to music, but
rather representing various mostly middle-class occupations.
As was also true initially of the orchestral societies, these
choral groups at first were often content to experience great
music in rehearsal only. Gradually their efforts were direct-
ed more towards public performance, often in collaboration
with an instrumental ensemble. A few choral societies even
undertook sponsorship of their own subscription series, as,
for example, the Berlin Singakademie's four regular concerts
per winter season,[86] or connected themselves permanently to a
civic orchestra and its series.

Choral societies also figured prominently in the music

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[85]Kretzschmar, "Chorgesang," p. 406f.; also Hugo Rie-
mann, Handbuch der Musikgeschichte (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1922),
vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 223.

.[86]Mahling, pp. 48, 52.

festivals, another institution with eighteenth-century roots, originating in the great English Handel festivals.[87] Music festivals gained immense popularity in the nineteenth century. Hans Engel summarizes the proliferation of German music festivals in the first third of the century:

> Cantor G. F. Bischoff organized a music festival for the performance of The Creation in Frankenhausen already on June 4, 1804. In 1810 it became a more extensive festival, with many more people participating, under the direction of Ludwig Spohr, as was also the case with the Erfurt Festival in 1811 (the so-called Napoleons Day Festival). These festivals primarily involved the musicians themselves, as was also true of music festivals in Erfurt in January and in Wiesbaden and Frankenhausen in August, 1813. Between 1816-19 there were festival oratorio performances in Hamburg, Lübeck, and Hannover and three festivals in Hildesheim. Seven "Rhineland Music Festivals" were held in these years in Mannheim. The year 1818 began the series of nearly annual Lower Rhine Music Festivals held in Düsseldorf, Elberfeld, and also in Cologne and Aachen. There were music festivals in the middle-German cities of Peine, Helmstedt, Quedlinburg, Magdeburg, Alze, Bückeburg and Pyrmont, and in Giessen there were five Upper Hessian Music Festivals held between 1820-25. Schneider, Spohr, and Weber all took part at the Quedlinburg Klopstock Festival in 1824; a "civic society for music festivals on the Elbe" was organized in Bernburg, which sponsored (under Schneider's leadership) festivals in Magdeburg, Zerbst, Halberstadt, Nordhausen and Halle. A Thuringian-Saxon music society held a festival in Halle in 1829 (under Spontini). . . . Silesian Song- and Music-fests were founded in the east; Prussian music festivals were also celebrated in the monastery of Marienburg.[88]

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[87]Riemann, p. 224.

[88]Engel, p. 81. [In Frankenhausen hatte schon am 4. Juni 1804 der Kantor G. Fr. Bischoff ein Musikfest mit Aufführung der Schöpfung veranstaltet. 1810 wurde es ein umfang- und personenreiches Fest, das Ludwig Spohr leitete, wie das Erfurter Fest 1811 (den sogenannten Napoleonstag). Diese Feste waren noch Musiker-treffen gewesen, wie die Musikfeste in Erfurt im Januar und August 1813 in Wiesbaden und Frankenhausen. 1816-18 wurden festliche Oratorien-aufführungen in Hamburg, Lübeck, und Hannover und drei Feste in Hildesheim

Spurred on by new opportunities to perform both during
the winter and festival seasons, choral societies rapidly ex-
ceeded the boundaries of the old, predominantly a cappella
and sacred repertory associated with the early years of the
Berlin Singakademie.[89] Especially the mixed choruses now
favored "big music," compositions of imposing dimensions,
with the impact and expressive possibilities of full orches-
tral accompaniment, on texts of either literary, religious,
or political significance. Never really tiring of the oft-
repeated choral masterpieces--Handel's Messiah in particular,
and also Alexander's Feast, Israel in Egypt, Samson, and Saul,
and Haydn's The Creation and The Seasons--societies sought to
expand their concert repertory with works whose choral parts,
like these, were rewarding but not too technically demanding.
Also welcome were works which additionally provided ensemble
or solo passages of greater difficulty, intended for currently

verantaltet. Sieben "Rheinische Musikfeste" wurden in diesen
Jahren in Mannheim abgehalten. 1818 beginnt die Reihe der in
Düsseldorf, Elberfeld, dann auch in Köln und Aachen nahezu
jährlich veranstalteten Niederrheinischen Musikfeste. In
mittel-deutschen Städten Peine, Helmstedt, Quedlinburg, Magde-
burg, Alze, Bückeburg und Pyrmont gab es Musikfeste, in Gies-
sen wurden von 1820-1825 fünf "Oberhessische Musikfeste" ge-
boten. Schneider, Spohr und Weber wirkten bei der Quedlin-
burger Klopstockfeier 1824 mit, in Bernburg wurde ein "Städt-
verein für Musikfeste an der Elbe" gegrundet, die unter
Schneider 1826-1834 Feste in Magdeburg, Zerbst, Halberstadt,
Nordhausen und Halle veranstalteten. Ein Thüringisch-
Sächsischer Musik-verein hielt in Halle 1829 (unter Spontini).
. . ."Schlesische Gesang- und Musikfeste" wurden im Osten
veranstaltet, Preussische Musikfeste wurden auch im Grossen
Remter der Marienburg gefeiert.]

[89]Kretzschmar, "Chorgesang," p. 408.

prominent professional soloists who lent a certain lustre to the choral performances.[90] Oratorio was, of course, one genre which met the choral societies' need for big music. Many new oratorios came forth from the celebrated Handels-of-their-time: Loewe, Eybler, Stadler, Klein, and Schneider, as well as Mendelssohn and a few others of enduring fame.[91] An alternative to the oratorio's "sacred" fare was the production of opera scenes and occasionally even complete operas in the concert hall.[92] Michael Jarczyk cites several representative examples of this practice, including performances of Mozart's _Figaro_ and _Don Giovanni_ during Dresden's 1806-7 concert season.[93] Schwanbeck notes that choral scenes from Gluck's operas were favored among opera fragments, citing as examples, performances of scenes from _Armide_ at the thirty-sixth Lower Rhine Festival and the first act of _Alceste_ at the fourth Middle Rhine Music Festival.[94] A concert presentation of scenes from _Alceste_ in Leipzig in the spring of 1808 is

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[90]However, as Porter (p. 218) documents with regard to the Lower Rhine Festivals, professional soloists were only gradually favored over amateur singers, societies initially preferring to choose soloists from their own ranks.

[91]Hans Schnoor, "Das Oratorium vom Ende des 18. Jh. bis 1880," in _Handbuch der Musikgeschichte_, ed. Guido Adler (Tutzing: Schneider, 1961), p. 933.

[92]_Die Chorballade im 19. Jh._ (Munich-Salzburg: Emil Katzbichler, 1978), vol. 16 in _Berliner Musikwissenschaftliche Arbeiten_, ed. Carl Dahlhaus & Rudolf Stephan, pp. 13ff.

[93]Ibid., p. 14.

[94]Schwanbeck, p. 10.

mentioned in the AMZ.[95] But this "borrowing" of opera frag-
ments was not deemed altogether satisfactory. Praising
Andreas Romberg for composing a work--the ode Was bleibet und
was schwindet--specifically for public concert, one reviewer
castigates the current practice of programming "either opera
finales or real church music, which may in themselves be very
good, but are really not in their proper element in the concert
hall. . . ."[96] And, too, there were concerts where a shorter
work, possibly somewhat lighter yet with the same desirable
qualities of oratorio and opera would be more suitable, such
as the choral segment of a mixed program during the regular
concert season, special civic occasions--e.g. the Congress of
Vienna or Leipzig's commemoration of the birth of printing--
and the second day of extended music festivals. The so-called
"grand cantata" emerged as the ideal solution; such works
appeared with regularity in the AMZ's table of contents under
the concert heading, along with oratorios and pieces for solo
voice or solo ensemble with orchestra.

As Director of the Lower Rhine Music Festival in 1842,
Mendelssohn expressed a need for such a work in a letter to
the president of the festival's executive committee. Seeking
a replacement for Bach's Mass in B Minor which could not be

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[95]AMZ 10/31 (April 1808), col. 484.

[96]AMZ 19/43 (October 1817), col. 731. [Opernfinalen
oder. . .eigentlicher Kirchenmusik. . .was recht gut seyn
mag, aber doch im Concerte nicht ganz an seinem Platze
ist. . .]

learned in time and was too much for the second day after an
opening day already long and serious, Mendelssohn argued that
"an easier, more cheerful piece, also one which would make a
lighter impression, would seem to me, and I think to everyone
else, a better choice."[97] Mendelssohn suggested a grand can-
tata, Weber's Ernte Kantate on a text by Amadeus Wendt.[98]
(Just three years later, the second day of the 1845 Lower
Rhine Music Festival would feature Mendelssohn's own grand
cantata, Die erste Walpurgisnacht![99])

Besides Weber's, various new works in this genre had
appeared in the nineteenth century prior to the Leipzig pre-
miere of Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht. Figure 1
(on page 90) is a list of fourteen such secular grand canta-
tas, all requiring several soloists, chorus, and full orches-
tra. An examination of a few representative works on this
list reveals several ways in which these works indeed served
as prototypes for Mendelssohn's grand cantata. However, these
works also manifest certain structural weaknesses which the
composer of Walpurgisnacht managed to overcome.

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[97] Quoted in Julius Alf, "Komponisten in Düsseldorf.
Sechs biographische Miniaturen: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,"
in Studien zur Musikgeschichte der Rheinlandes, ed. Ernst Klu-
sen, Beiträge zur rheinischen Musikgeschichte, 5/119 (Cologne:
Arno, 1978), p. 18.

[98] This cantata, originally called Jubel-Kantate (on a
text of Friedrich Kind) was composed (but never performed) for
the 1818 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of King Frie-
drich August's accession to the throne of Saxony; see John War-
rack, Carl Maria von Weber (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp.
187-88.

[99] AMZ 47/25 (June 1845), col. 429.

Figure 1. Nineteenth-century secular
grand cantatas before Mendelssohn's <u>Walpurgisnacht</u>

Joseph Haydn	Die Jahreszeiten	1801
Andreas Romberg	Das Lied vond der Glocke	c. 1809
Peter von Winter	Timotheus, oder, Die Macht der Töne	1809
Andreas Romberg	Die Macht des Gesänges	c. 1811
Ferdinand Ries	Der Morgen	c. 1812
Ludwig van Beethoven	Der glorreiche Augen-blick/Preis der Tonkunst	1814/1836
Carl Maria von Weber	Kampf und Sieg	1815
Andreas Romberg	Was bleibet und was schwindet	c. 1817
Carl Maria von Weber	Ernte Cantate/Jubel Cantate	1818/1831
Friedrich Schneider	Die Seefahrt	1830
August Ferdinand Anacker	Bergmannsgrusse	c. 1833
August Ferdinand Anacker	Lebens Blume und Lebens Unbestand	c. 1834
Anton Heinrich Radziwill	Incidental music to <u>Faust</u>	1835
Heinrich Marschner	Klänge aus Osten	1840

Of the works listed above, probably the least remembered
today is an unpublished cantata by Friedrich Schneider, com-
poser of <u>Das Weltgericht</u> (1820), an oratorio much celebrated
in its day.[100] Like nearly all of the works above, the can-
tata <u>Die Seefahrt</u> is divided into separate numbers or move-
ments. As do about half the works listed, it begins with an

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[100]Schnoor, p. 933.

instrumental overture, which, like the overture in Die erste
Walpurgisnacht, is programmatic. Several other features of
Schneider's cantata curiously seem to anticipate aspects of
Mendelssohn's.[101] Its dramatic-lyric description of a storm-
tossed ship owes much to a pair of Goethe poems which, inci-
dentally, inspired two more wide-known musical works:
Beethoven's Meerestille und Glückliche Fahrt (1815), an eight-
minute choral-orchestral piece, and Mendelssohn's concert
overture by the same title (1833-4). One movement of Die See-
fahrt, No. 11, describedy by Helmut Lomnitzer as a wild in-
strumental movement "in which extravagant triads and dimin-
ished seventh harmonies are occasioned by the travelers'
anxious cries,"[102] may indeed resemble the "Rundgeheule" of
Walpurgisnacht (No. 6) in its psychological effect and rela-
tive place in the overall sequence of movements. Schneider's
final movement, a "hymn-like conclusion to celebrate the
announcement of 'Land in sight,'"[103] also seems similar in
mood to Mendelssohn's uplifting finale and anticipates the
general mood and style of closing movements of many later
nineteenth-century cantatas. Of course, Schneider and Mendels-
sohn both share a debt to earlier composers' depictions of

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[101]My comparisons are based on Lomnitzer's description
of Die Seefahrt (p. 64f.), since I did not have access to the
work itself.

[102]Lomnitzer, p. 64. [in übermässigen Dreiklängen und
verminderten Septakkordharmonien schliesslich noch die Angst-
rufe der Reisenden hinzufügt werden.]

[103]Ibid. [Die Meldung 'Land im Sicht' wird dann in einem
hymnischen Abschluss gefeiert.]

"thanksgiving after a storm," as, for example, in Haydn's The Seasons or Beethoven's "Pastorale" Symphony.

Besides The Seasons, the most popular cantata on the above list was probably Andreas Romberg's Das Lied von der Glocke. Contemporary critics seemed to imply, however, that this might be attributed more to its being the "first attempt to set in this medium the wonderful, universally-known Schiller poem,"[104] than to its musical merit. The work lacks an overture; one writer chides Romberg for thus beginning the "Meister's song" too abruptly, without sufficiently lengthy and serious introductory music.[105] Romberg attempts an uninterrupted flow of music, avoiding absolute silence between arias, recitatives, and choruses. He followed this same procedure more successfully in his orchestrally accompanied solo cantatas, such as Die Kindesmörderin,[106] but in Das Lied von der Glocke, his plan is overwhelmed by the extraordinarily long text. This narrative poem follows step-by-step the casting of a new church bell and simultaneously celebrates the cycles and "seasons" of human life within earshot of the bell. Working with a more compact poem specifically intended as a libretto, Mendelssohn would more readily achieve an almost seamless form.

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[104]AMZ 12/26 (March 1810), col. 401. [der erste Versuch solcher Art, der mit diesem allbekannten, wunderbaren Schillerschen Werke gemacht worden ist.]

[105]Ibid.

[106]Full score (Hamburg: Böhme, [182-]).

"Performed before the highest royalty and nobility at the Vienna Congress in 1815," Beethoven's Der glorreiche Augenblick is in many respects the "grandest" of the grand cantatas listed above.[107] The work lacks an overture, but the orchestra has great prominence and independence throughout. The chorus is also extremely important, singing in five of the six movements. As in Weber's Kampf und Sieg, the soloists are allegorical figures; the chorus represents the "Volk," identified (in movement No. 6) as "men, women, and children," those European masses who would supposedly benefit from a new, more rigid political order. Beethoven's choral style is monumental, pompous, and loud; only the Cavatine, No. 4, is at all graceful or delicate. The opening and closing choruses end in sturdy, "classical" fugues. Mendelssohn's choral folk in Die erste Walpurgisnacht would be less schooled, more natural and also more affable.

One account of the Leipzig premiere of Mendelssohn's Walpurgisnacht claimed that the composition was without precedent, "except perhaps for Marschner's Klänge aus Osten, which is at least on the same track."[108] First performed in 1840, also at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Marschner's work

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[107]John N. Burk, The Life and Works of Beethoven (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 331; the cantata's original text was by Weissenbach, but it was published in 1837 with an alternate, all-purpose text under the title Preis der Tonkunst.

[108]NZfM 18/17 (February 1843): 68. [die wenigstens auf derselben Fährte sind]

consists of six separate movements, beginning with a long
overture which Schwanbeck calls a "magnificent piece. . .a
garland of passionate melodies full of exotic magic,"[109] and
including a gypsy song and a humorous "robber's chorus."
While praising its many beautiful and "characteristic" moments
evocative of a particular mood or quality, one contemporary
writer nevertheless especially criticized its lack of dramatic
cohesion and overall lopsidedness. He observed that the con-
cluding number, "Maisuna's Duet," was too slight to balance
the opening instrumental movement.[110] While painting similar-
ly characteristic scenes, Mendelssohn would more carefully
solve the problems of structural unity that had weakened
Marschner's work.

As conductor, chorus master, and one responsible for the
planning of concert programs, Mendelssohn undoubtedly sympa-
thized with the view expressed by Marschner's critic in 1842:

> As rich as we are in all kinds of instrumental music
> suitable for concert performance, we are as poor in vocal
> works for this purpose. Concert directors must resort
> mostly to oratorios and other similarly serious works
> more appropriate for church, or seize upon favorite opera
> excerpts. . . .Now when such an excellent composer as
> Herr Kapellmeister Marschner publishes a work meant par-
> ticularly for concerts, he certainly deserves our
> thanks. . . .[111]

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[109]Schwanbeck, p. 15. [ein Kranz feuriger Melodien voll
exotischen Zaubers]

[110]AMZ 42/44 (October 1840), col. 912.

[111]AMZ 44/21 (May 1842), col. 433; cited in Schwanbeck,
p. 15. [So reich wir an Instrumentalmusik aller Art sind, die
sich zur Aufführung in Konzerten eignet, so arm sind wir an
dergleichen Gesangmusik. Die Conzertdirektoren müssen daher .

Not content to leave the creation of such works to others
only, Mendelssohn responded by filling the gap with works of
his own, Die erste Walpurgisnacht among them. Neither in the
early stages of his work on this piece, however, nor in the
1840's as he returned to it, did Mendelssohn work in a
vaccuum. He knew the existing vocal repertory and drew upon
it in shaping this composition. Eric Werner is incorrect,
therefore, to claim that "Mendelssohn had no models for his
undertaking."[112] More valid is Rey Longyear's suggestion that
"the models for this work [Walpurgisnacht] are the dramatic
cantatas by Andreas Romberg,"[113] but that does not account for
all Mendelssohn's sources. As my Chapter III has tried to
show, it was not Mendelssohn's nature to strive for original-
ity by ignoring the past; quite the contrary, he desired to
create something new and fresh by building on the past. In
Walpurgisnacht, Mendelssohn draws primarily upon two tradi-
tions: the solo ballad-cantata, particularly orchestrated
pieces of this type, and also the grand cantata. Put simply,
the orchestrated ballad tradition offered a precedent for the
work's essentially uninterrupted, flowing, yet sectional

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meist zu Oratorien und ähnlichen ernsten, der Kirchenmusik
näher stehenden Werken ihre Zuflucht nehmen oder zu beliebten
Opernsachen greifen. . . .Wenn nun ein so ausgezeichneter
Komponist wie Herr Kapellmeister Marschner eine eigens für
das Conzert bestimmte Gesangskomposition veröffentlicht, so
verdient er sich wohl Aller Dank. . .]

[112]Werner, p. 205.

[113]Nineteenth-century Romanticism in Music (Englewood
Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 64.

form, and for sensitive, colorful rendering of text with a
variety of moods and emotions. The grand cantata tradition
offered a precedent for the work's length, large-scale
performing forces, its overture, and many of its symphonic
and choral techniques. In addition to these two traditions,
Mendelssohn was certainly influenced as well by opera and
oratorio. (Specific parallels are noted in Chapter V.) But
Die erste Walpurgisnacht is so much more than a sort of
"Zwischengattung" (in-between genre).[114] Rather, Mendels-
sohn's cantata achieves a formal integrity and emotional
intensity rarely matched by other examples of the genre
before or since.

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[114]As Schumann calls it, NZfM 18/17 (February 1843): 68.

CHAPTER V

OPUS 60:   THE MUSIC

Douglass Seaton in "The Romantic Mendelssohn: The
Composition of Die erste Walpurgisnacht" examines the work in
progress as a useful example of Mendelssohn's tendency to
continually rework, revise his compositions. With access to
the extant brief fragments of the cantata's first version
(1831-32), Seaton demonstrates how there evolved a motivic
unity in the 1843 version; unquestionably, such a development
is a trait of Mendelssohn's Romantic aesthetic. But the few
existing fragments so limit Seaton's comparisons that his
article at best offers a tantalizing glimpse of the finished
cantata's full riches. Earlier studies have tended either to
dismiss Walpurgisnacht altogether or to offer merely a gener-
al description of the piece's emotional effects.[1] Perhaps
the best descussion of the cantata is still the brief account
in Ernst Wolff's 1909 biography of Mendelssohn. However, the
cantata deserves a careful, comprehensive examination with
due regard to its essential character, scoring, structure,
and style.

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[1]See Chapter I, pp. 10-12 above.

In General

Considered as a whole, Die erste Walpurgisnacht is
characterized by two distinctive qualities: 1) its structur-
al integrity or organic unity, and 2) its emotional strength
or lack of sentimentality. The cantata was not created in a
flash of inspiration, but rather through lengthy, thoughtful
effort of trial and revision. Even the regrettably few sur-
viving drafts and sketches demonstrate Mendelssohn's deter-
mination in the work to achieve a coherence of musical form
and effect. He does so both in terms of momentary, localized
details (phrase to phrase) and also large-scale structural
connections (movement to movement, scene to scene).

All too often, Mendelssohn has been considered senti-
mental or "aenemic."[2] Gerald Abraham finds the "Scottish"
Symphony symbolic of "the course of its composer's career:
the brief touch of inspired romanticism at the beginning
followed by a dreary waste of mere sound-manipulation, re-
lieved only by the oasis of the light-handed scherzo, and
ending in a blaze of sham triumph. . . . Die erste Walpur-
gisnacht . . . is--if possible--even less alive than the
A minor Symphony, in spite of its highly romantic subject."[3]
A careful analysis of the cantata refutes Abraham's assertion.
The forthright vitality of the overture's first theme sets a

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[2]Gerald Abraham, A Hundred Years of Music (Chicago:
Aldine, 1964), p. 60f.

[3]Ibid., p. 61.

tone maintained throughout the work. There is an economy to
Mendelssohn's writing that fulfills its musical purpose with-
out redundancy. Colorful, imaginative, and relatively brief,
the individual movements have the pithy, direct language of
the musical miniature so characteristic of the age (e.g., those
by Schubert, Schumann, Chopin). The cantata's textual mater-
ials are potentially "Wagnerian": this rich mingling of
history and mythology could have been made much more elaborate
and overwrought. But the scope of Mendelssohn's composition
is fully compatible with the self-imposed limits of Goethe's
poem. Die erste Walpurgisnacht possesses a succinctness and
refinement less and less evident in the dramatic cantatas
after Mendelssohn's death.

Scoring

Orchestra

In Die erste Walpurgisnacht, a relatively large number
of singers--mixed chorus and soloists--is balanced by an
orchestra of "classical" dimensions, hence conservative for
the 1840s: pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons,
horns, trumpets, three trombones, tympani, and the usual quin-
tet of strings. For the "Rundgeheule" (Nos. 5 and 6), pic-
colo, bass drum, and cymbals are additionally required.

Although the orchestra occasionally performs a purely
supporting, accompanimental role--as in No. 9, m. 5^4 and

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[4]In this discussion, measures are numbered from "1" at
the beginning of each movement.

following--more frequently it is independent of the voices
while never overwhelming the vocal component. This is true
especially at the outset of individual movements where the
orchestra establishes various text-related moods. The over-
ture, serving as introduction to the whole work, carries to
the extreme this independent, programmatic function. Remi-
niscent of instrumental preludes and interludes in earlier
orchestrated cantata ballads[5] are moments such as the delicate
calls to arms at the beginning of No. 4, the unsettling urgen-
cy of No. 6's m. 1-13, the surprising jocularity of No. 7's
m. 1-20, or the nervous quivering of the first two measures
of No. 8.

Mendelssohn's orchestration is characteristically clear
and wonderfully varied. Only rarely is there an orchestral
tutti, several passages in the overture and m. 19 to the end
of No. 9 being important exceptions. More frequently the in-
struments function either in families, as in one dialogue of
winds and strings in the overture, m. 374-390, or m. 61-73 of
No. 4, or in kaleidoscopic, chamber-like combinations. Singly
or, more often, in pairs, all of the winds have important solo
spots. The string parts are equally demanding, with rapid
figuration (particularly in the overture), tricky arpeggios
(No. 6), and exposed solo passages occurring in upper and
lower strings, even the string basses (opening of No. 5).
Mendelssohn himself had called the first version of

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[5]See Chapter IV, pp. 79-83 above.

Walpurgisnacht "too richly endowed with trombones"; neverthe-
less the trombones remain prominent in this later version,
especially in the overture, lending weight to the _forte_ sec-
tions of No. 6, and adding a solemn religiosity to Nos. 7
and 9.

Soloists

Goethe's poem provides for several soloists; Mendelssohn
gives the individual characters a more distinct personality.
He changes Goethe's masculine "Einer aus dem Volke" to "Eine
alte _Frau_ aus dem Volke," making her a contralto (with a range
from the A below middle C, to the D a ninth above) as was tra-
ditional with old female operatic roles. This change of gen-
der not only provided a female soloist for the cantata, but
served as the natural musical complement to Goethe's "Chor der
Weiber."[6] The work requires at least two male soloists, a
tenor (with a range from C below middle C, to the A above),
and a bass-baritone (with a range from the A a tenth below
middle C, to the F above). By assigning the opening stanza
to a tenor, Mendelssohn suggests a youthfulness which distin-
guishes this character, "Ein Druide," from the older Druid
priest and also underscores his narrative function, in the
tradition of a Passion evangelist. The tenor soloist doubles
later as "Ein christlicher Wächter." It is clear from
nineteenth-century programs that the roles of "Der Priester"

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[6]Zander, p. 8.

and "Ein Wächter der Druiden" were indeed customarily filled
by one singer. Mendelssohn, however, distinguishes the roles
musically: the watchman's music is lower and more speech-
like; the priest's music is higher and more lyrical. The role
of Druid priest was intended for Mendelssohn's friend, the
baritone Eduard Devrient, to whom he wrote: "I have written
the part of the Druid into your throstle, and you will have
to sing it out again."[7] Using two different soloists, bass
and baritone, as some nineteenth-century performances did,[8]
and as Ochs recommended in the 1920s,[9] would better equalize
the amount of singing by any one soloist and would more clear-
ly distinguish the separate roles. Although soloists are
important in the work, the amount of solo singing is small
compared to most oratorios of the period and later dramatic
cantatas. There are no separate arias: the solo roles are
well integrated into an essentially choral fabric.

Chorus

The chorus in Goethe's poem was implicitly all men--
Christian watchmen, Druid guards and priests--except for the
brief appearance of the lamenting pagan women. While leaving

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[7]Devrient, p. 116.

[8]For example, both Hr. Betz, baritone, and Hr. Haase,
bass, performed in a concert at the Berlin Hochschule on
November 2, 1876 (see Neue Berliner Musikzeitung 30/45
(November 1876): 357); another example of the use of three
male soloists by the Stern'sche Gesangverein is cited in the
Neue Berliner Musikzeitung 39/46 (November 1885): 364.

[9]Ochs, p. 85.

some choruses for male voices only, Mendelssohn adds women to
others, even No. 4 where the text refers specifically to
"wackre Männer." The effects of doing so are both dramatic
and structural: the mixed chorus suggests a more heterogen-
eous "Heidenvolk" and, as in opera, makes a weightier conclu-
sion to the various scenes. The choral forces should be
sufficiently numerous and confident to succeed in sections
for independent, four-part male or female voices, and to
balance the full, _forte_ orchestral sound.[10] The choral writ-
ing is interestingly varied, but relatively simple; counter-
point is used sparingly. No choral part has an unreasonable
tessitura, and melodies often proceed stepwise. Again like
the operas of the period, the cantata contains much unison
writing. The work is, however, very demanding for the chorus
in terms of diction and dynamic control.

Structure and Style

An Overview

The general design of Mendelssohn's cantata is only
partially predetermined by Goethe's libretto. Mendelssohn,
not Goethe, is responsible for most textual repetition, all
textual rearrangement, the number and proportions of interior
movements, and their separateness or interdependence. The
work consists of a bipartite overture attached to the first

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[10]Thus, reviews of the piece appearing in the London
Times (7 May 1850, p. 5, col. 6, and 18 May 1852, p. 8, col.
5) advocated choruses much larger than could be accommodated
in the Hanover Square Rooms.

of nine numbered movements, stylistically distinct "character"
pieces, which are, in turn, musically connected, with the
exception of Nos. 4 and 5. At the end of No. 4 is a full
cadence, followed by silence on a _fermata_ before No. 5. Some
twenty minutes into the work, this one breathing place marks
the one real change of scene in an otherwise continuous dra-
matic flow.[11] On either side of this slightly off-center
pause, the work's two principal sections are each divided in-
to two subsections, articulated by significant musical
changes: the vocal entrance and stable theme at the begin-
ning of No. 1, and the jarring deceptive cadence, change of
theme, and sudden dissipation of energy at the beginning of
No. 7. The resulting four subsections of the cantata--the
overture, Nos. 1-4, 5-6, and 7-9--correspond to the major
events or "changes" in the story line. The overture marks
the change of seasons, Nos. 1-4 the Druids' change of heart
and rededication to duty, Nos. 5-6 their change of costume,
and Nos. 7-9 the Druids' change of fortune and the Christians'
dispersal.

The key scheme of the work overall tends at once to
clarify these four subdivisions, while yet promoting a seam-
lessness within the two larger units. The overture establish-
es the tonic (a minor), ending with a section on the dominant
(E major) which prepares the tonic major (A) of No. 1. The

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[11]Zander, p. 10.

next subsection parallels this tonic-dominant motion, the

clear E major tonality of No. 4 confirming a real modulation

to the dominant level. Starting up again from the pitch E,

some relatively surprising key juxtapositions occur sequen-

tially in the next subsection, Nos. 5-6: g minor/E major and

a minor/F major (beginning of No. 7). The first twenty-eight

measures of No. 7 are pivotal, moving from F, the subdominant

of the relative major, turning around the tonic (a minor) to

the relative major (C), the cantata's ultimate harmonic des-

tination, solidified by the C major/c minor/C major scheme of

the final subsection, Nos. 7 (from m. 29) through 9. Thematic

relationships also tend to blur the subdivisional boundaries

within the larger structural units. This is especially true

in the first large section, where the "Es lacht der Mai"

theme of No. 1 gradually evolves in the course of the overture,

and is echoed in the "Vertheilt euch hier" melody of No. 4.

The organization and general proportions of movements,

the placement of the women's, men's, and mixed choruses (S/A,

T/B, and M), and the key scheme in Walpurgisnacht may all be

represented graphically, as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. A graphic overview of Walpurgisnacht.

The shaded areas of Figure 2 depict some of the more obvious
melodic relationships previously mentioned: the gradual
emergence of No. 1's theme (§§§) in the course of the over-
ture, the close likeness of themes in Nos. 1 and 4, and the
reappearance in Nos. 5 and 7 of secondary motivic material
drawn from the overture (‡‡).

Figure 3 (on page 107) will further demonstrate how
the work's principal melodic ideas indeed are derived from
the overture's first theme, specifically from its initial
motive (a.) which consists of four elements: 1) repeated
notes, 2) an upwards skip of a perfect fourth, 3) a dotted
rhythm, and 4) anacrusic energy directed towards the pitch
goal C.   Mendelssohn subtly varies the combination of these
four elements from movement to movement (see column A), and
occasionally emphasizes or "studies" one element within a
single piece or over several movements (see column B).   In
the course of the whole work, he places more and more emphasis
on the approach to C, with the work's final measures force-
fully reiterating that pitch.

The Overture

The programmatic overture to Die erste Walpurgisnacht
is the work's longest--twelve of thirty-six measures--and
weightiest movement.   Mendelssohn's depiction of "Das
schlechte Wetter" followed by the "Übergang zum Frühling" was
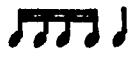often described by his contemporaries as an entirely original

Figure 3. Thematic transformation in <u>Walpurgisnacht</u>

idea, indeed a stroke of genius.[12] Seldom mentioned was the
fact that Haydn's cantata The Seasons, so popular in Mendels-
sohn's day, also opens with an overture titled "Übergang vom
Winter zum Frühling." Haydn's modest turbulence pales beside
Mendelssohn's, but moves similarly out of gloomy minor mode
(g minor) to an opening chorus--"Komm, holder Lenz"--in the
parallel major (G). Certain aspects of sonata form are mani-
fest in both overtures: an exposition of two themes in con-
trasting keys and a recapitulation following development.
Significantly, the recapitulations of both overtures omit a
return of the second theme in favor of an anticipatory section
on the dominant level, connected to the opening choral move-
ment.

The overture to Walpurgisnacht is approximately the same
length as Mendelssohn's several concert overtures, three of
which--Meerestille und Glückliche Fahrt, Die Hebriden, and
Das Märchen von der schönen Melusine--were completed within
a year of Walpurgisnacht's first performance. Das Märchen
von der schönen Melusine, for example, is also twelve minutes'
duration. However, the "open" form of the Walpurgisnacht
overture which renders it inseparable from its subsequent
texted movements, distinguishes it from the "closed," dis-
crete forms of these other overtures. Die Hebriden, for
example, which does have in common with Walpurgisnacht a

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[12]See, for example, J. Becker in NZfM 20/18 (February
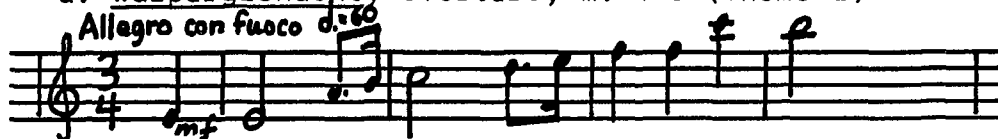1844): 71.

programmatic content, closes with a lengthy _animato_ section
which forcefully nails down the tonic key. The open-endedness
of the overall design of Walpurgisnacht's overture is reflect-
ed, moreover, in the lack of interior points of real stabil-
ity. One of the most flagrant examples of this occurs at
m. 187, where the finality of this arrival point following
intense and lengthy development is undercut by the inconclu-
siveness of the F major tonality: the subdominant of the
relative major. Also, the development of material is by no
means restricted to a single "development section." Indeed,
much of the piece is generated from a rhythmic motive already
present in m. 2-3 (♫♫♩♪), and which is scarcely absent
from the texture during all of "Das schlecte Wetter," except
in two moments of disruption, m. 183ff. and m. 303ff.
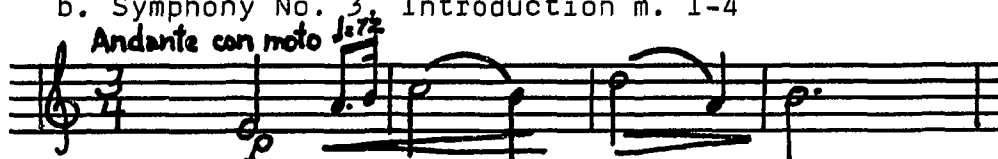
Resembling the commands "On your mark, get set, go!" the
overture is set in motion by three woodwind chords: I, V, I.
But the strings nervously jump the gun with the rushing six-
teenth-note figuration which becomes background to the move-
ment's rapidly ascending principal theme (Example 1a below).
As is frequently noted,[13] this theme bears a likeness to the
opening theme of Mendelssohn's A minor "Scottish" Symphony
(Example 1b), a theme which, however, proceeds at a much more
leisurely pace. Another close likeness in terms of key and
rhythmic qualities is found in the a minor theme of the _con_

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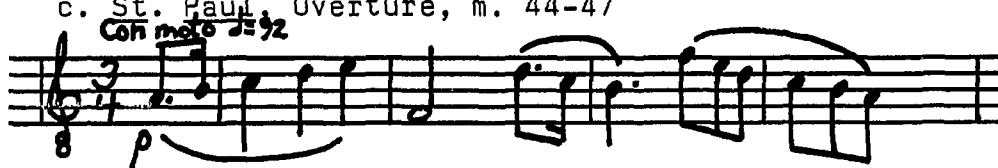
[13]See, for example, Percy Young, _Choral Tradition_,
p. 220.

moto section of Mendelssohn's overture to St. Paul (Example
1c), an overture which rushes ahead with similar anacrusic
energy.

Example 1.

    a. Walpurgisnacht, Overture, m. 4-8 (Theme I)

    b. Symphony No. 3, Introduction m. 1-4

    c. St. Paul, Overture, m. 44-47

Following two more statements of Theme I--the first ff
in a minor, the second ff (with trombones added) in the dom-
inant minor (e)--the quiet, tumbling, legato second theme
(Example 2) is introduced in the oboe and bassoons. Theme II

Example 2. Walpurgisnacht, Overture, m. 13-17 (Theme II)

is much less stable, sliding abruptly from e minor to d minor
to f minor, its motivic fragments almost immediately combined

with Theme I material. With jabbing sforzandos on normally
weak second beats in the winds (m. 169-77), and furiously
competitive descending scale figures in the strings (m. 169-
80)--the latter an expansion of the motive in m. 2 (see p. 109
above)--accompanied by a chromatically ascending bass line,
the piece lurchest to its dynamic climax in m. 181--a mean
fff, an unusual dynamic for Mendelssohn[14]--hanging suspense-
fully in the fresh tonality of F major. Then, as unexpectedly
as the first crocus pushing through the winter's snow, a new
theme emerges haltingly in m. 187, possessing a "Romantic"
horn-bassoon color. This somewhat histrionic theme (Example
3) combines features of rhythm and contour from both Themes
I and II. Its ritardandos and fermatas disrupt the inertia

Example 3. Walpurgisnacht, Overture, m. 187-91.

of the movement to this point. After several false recapitu-
lations (m. 191, 198, and 205) and reappearances ot the "new"
theme, as well as a radical thinning of texture, a five-meas-
ure phrase in the bassoon and horn delivers us gently to the

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[14]Lowell Mason (p. 64) remarks: "Although Mendelssohn
does not belong to the noisy school, yet he has shown in the
Walpurgisnacht, that if he had chosen to do so he might have
cast quite into the shade, or thundered out of existence, all
of the Verdis of modern times."

true recapitulation of Theme I in a minor, pp, in m. 228.
One wild last gasp of development ensues (m. 241-82), the
winds' dotted half-notes, derived from m. 1-3, pitted against
the strings' sixteenth-note scale figure, now inverted, moving
to the dominant through foreign harmonic territory--B-flat,
E-flat--to another tonic statement of Theme I in m. 283. In
m. 303, the horn-bassoon theme is back again, now assuming a
squarer, more tuneful guise, and we recognize the melody of
"Es lacht der Mai" from No. 1. The clarinets now sing it out
in sweet thirds, while the strings mutter their ugly, wintery
last in m. 308-31. Finally the warm, ultra-Romantic cellos
carry us, cantabile, to the "Übergang zum Frühling" in m. 350.
Suggesting gentle spring rain, a descending figure introduced
high in the violins is passed from solo flute to second vio-
lins to violas, while the clarinet interjects the "Es lacht
der Mai" tune, here for the first time in A major. Mendels-
sohn creates a marvelously tantalizing anticipation with a
long dominant pedal, tympani roll, etc., simultaneously func-
tional as well as programmatic (further postponing the moment
of spring's arrival). At last, the cellos again transport us
to the next section, movement No. 1.

Mendelssohn displays in the overture to Walpurgisnacht
a truly Beethovenian economy of means. At the same time, the
music seems very "melodious," largely due to the many intact
repetitions of Theme I, and the concern with the gradual
shaping, the evolution of another theme, finally realized

at the outset of No. 1. Also reminiscent of Beethoven is
Mendelssohn's effective use of dynamics for structural pur-
poses, as, for example, the long crescendo-diminuendo in the
recapitulation (m. 261-304), prior to where the second theme
"ought to be" (m. 303).

No. 1: Tenor and Chorus

The forward-motion of the piece is momentarily arrested
at the beginning of No. 1, as the tenor soloist deliberately,
boldly--note the climactic high A already in m. 5--announces
the arrival of spring. But following the fermata in m. 7,
the piece is off and running again, the women's chorus spring-
ing from a pizzicato downbeat. The "Es lacht der Mai" tune
is organized in three two-measure segments, the final segment
echoed in the upper strings (m. 14-15). But with adolescent
exuberance, the women begin their next phrase "early" (m. 15).
In m. 57, flute and violin have a fragment of melody "left
over" from the overture, suggesting that perhaps the whole
first numbered movement has somehow started too soon, or, more
likely, representing a season still in transition. With an
abrupt shift to the relative minor (f#), the tenor directs his
comrades' attention to the more serious matter of religious
worship: "Allvater dort zu loben." Sudden fpp's and tremolos
in the strings (m. 111-18) generate anxiety. In m. 127, the
male chorus makes its first appearance, divisi, and the whole
choral ensemble delivers the word "Rauch" (smoke) in m. 135
on a very thick, "dirty" chord (see Example 4, p. 114), the

only instance of eight-part choral texture in <u>Walpurgisnacht</u>.
By contrast, the subsequent unison exhortations of "Hinauf"

Example 4.   <u>Walpurgisnacht</u>, No. 1, m. 133-36.

(m. 149-53) are quite clear and pure. A return to the tonic
(A major) occurs in m. 192, but a curious subdominant (D major)
emphasis in the very next bar, along with the sopranos' sus-
tained pitch climax on high A, makes particularly ecstatic
this reference to "Herz" (heart) and anticipates techniques at
the end of the work, during the actual sacrificial liturgy.
Even more exhilarating, however, is the concluding choral
phrase (m. 208-14) with the sopranos' chromatic ascent over a
dominant pedal and their leap of a fourth to repeat the high
A, obviously a painting of "erhoben" (to lift up).

No. 2:   Alto and Chorus

Typical of the marvelous contrasts throughout <u>Walpurgis-
nacht</u>, the music of No. 2 immediately establishes the opposite
mood. This is the most sparsely orchestrated movement--strings
and oboes only--capturing something like the mournful color of
the alto recitatives of Bach's <u>St. Matthew Passion</u>. Most of

the time, the alto soloist refers to the Christian oppressor
in bound, restricted melodic contours, consisting of repeated
notes or half steps. In her final outcry of grief (m. 78-83),
however, the last part of it totally unaccompanied, she
plunges from her highest note, down a seventh, then descends
a second time from d, in a relatively tortured outline (see
Example 5 below). Here Mendelssohn has rearranged Goethe's

Example 5. <u>Walpurgisnacht</u>, No. 2, m. 78-83.

text to close the movement with the penultimate line of the
stanza, but nevertheless he paints musically the last line,
the missing reference to "gewissem <u>Falle</u>" (certain fall, doom),
an image earlier highlighted by dissonant suspensions (m. 64,
68). The movement closes after a long pedal point on E which
creates the expectation of the key of a minor.

No. 3: Baritone and Chorus

In a characteristically neat blurring of a structural
seam, the expected a minor does arrive, but not until the
second, "weaker" half of No. 3's first measure. The tonality
then quickly shifts to C, foreshadowing the events of Nos.
7-9, in which the Druid priest is again prominent, another
characteristic link within the work's overall design. For the

baritone's first entrance, the orchestral accompaniment is especially mellow: clarinets, bassoons, violas and cellos. As the Priest summons his people to action, the tempo increases (in m. 22), coinciding with a rhythmic ostinato which in the Baroque tradition was symbolic of flagellation or penitence. (In Example 6 below, this figure is compared to an excerpt from the alto aria "He was despised" from Handel's Messiah.) Mendelssohn then inserts two extra cries

Example 6.

a. Walpurgisnacht, No. 3, m. 27-31.

Dann a-ber lasst mit fri-schem Mut

b. Messiah, No. 23, m. 50-51.

He gave his back to the smi-ters,

of "Hinauf!" (m. 41-42), supplying both a rousing conclusion and a sudden foray into the new tonality of No. 4. The baritone's subsequent outline of an E major triad in recitative (m. 43-44), confirms the new key.

No. 4: Chorus

Movement No. 4, marked Allegro leggiero, is one of the work's most beloved character pieces. This is forest music, but despite the trumpet and horn calls, the instrumental introduction makes clear this forest is full of elves, not soldiers! With "an ingenious, truly Mendelssohnian tone painting,"[15] high staccato winds, pizzicato strings, running eighth notes, and soft dynamics--pp sempre, Mendelssohn scatters the Druid forces in the still of an unmistakably "Midsummer's Night." Again Mendelssohn rearranges the text at the end of the movement, replacing "erfüllen" with the more picturesque "stillen," setting it in tied whole notes. Earlier in the movement, he also cleverly divides ("vertheilt") the forces, constantly varying the number of parts in the choral texture. The theme introduced in m. 14 (Example 7a) is obviously related to the "Es lacht der Mai" melody (Example 7b) of movement No. 1, helping to pull together the opening four numbers into one cohesive scene.[16]

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[15]Wolff, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, p. 93. [einer genialen, echt Mendelssohnschen Tonmalerei]

[16]Seaton (pp. 407, 409) observes that No. 4's "original" opening choral line as seen in an 1831 manuscript fragment, was a "far cry indeed from the audibly derivative [later] version."

Example 7.

a. Walpurgisnacht, No. 4, m. 14-15.

Ver- theilt euch hier!————

b. Walpurgisnacht, No. 1, m. 8-9.

Es lacht der Mai!————

No. 5: Bass and Chorus

Following the G. P., "Ein Wächter der Druiden," the low
bass, neatly resumes the story in recitative, starting off
from E, the tonic of the previous movement. Structurally this
little thirteen-measure section smoothly prepares the g minor
tonality of No. 5, but the recitative is also highly symbolic
and suspenseful. The strings' first punctuating chord in
m. 2--a g# diminished seventh--introduces an element of mys-
tery. The second vocal phrase with an upward leap of a sixth
on "keck" (clever) emphasizes the Druids' cunning. As the
devil is mentioned, the string basses and cellos begin a
chromatic ascent. Following a deceptive cadence to B-flat and
two more diminished seventh chords (m. 10, 12), the strings
hover momentarily on a dominant chord. Then with an ominous
tympani roll and the first stroke of the bass drum, the
demonic masquerade begins.

Nos. 5 and 6 should really be considered together, for
they use the same text, representing two contrasting

dimensions of a single happening, although their structure and
style differ greatly. No. 5--comparatively simple, regular
and restrained--is the perfect foil for No. 6--so much more
complex and discursive.

No. 5, about two minutes long, is much shorter than No.
6, which runs about six minutes. Its overall form--essential-
ly variations on a theme--may be represented by the following
clear-cut diagram (Figure 4). A melody with the text "Kommt

Figure 4. Graphic representation of
movement No. 5.
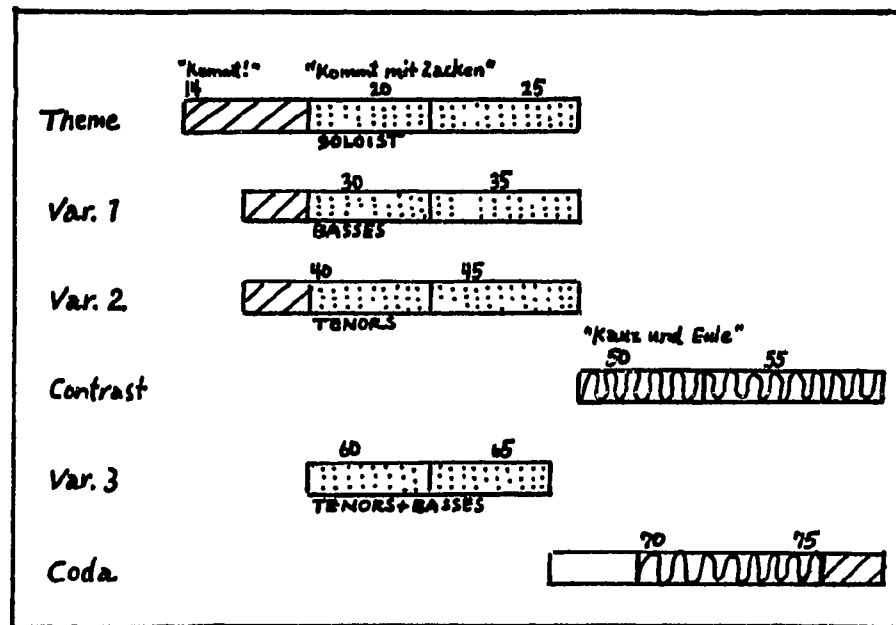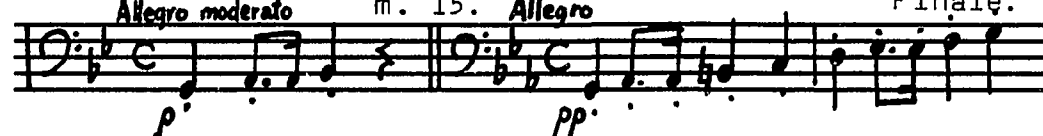
mit Zacken. . ." occurs three times, always preceded by per-
cussive repetitions of the word "Kommt" on the tonic (g). The
successive statements of this theme are artfully varied,
sounding first in the solo bass, then the choral basses, then
the tenors, and each time "clothed" in an ever-more-elaborate

instrumental and vocal texture, perhaps symbolizing the Druids' donning costumes for their orgiastic revelry. Two contrasting phrases, on the text "Kauz und Eule," are delivered homophonically before the final appearance of the tune (m. 59-66), now shorter by one measure, and stated in an emphatic choral unison. The movement concludes with a coda made from the contrasting "Kauz und Eule" material, with a striking final cadence in G major. The harmonic scheme is very simple, for the piece only momentarily departs from the tonic, and then only to the most closely-related keys (IV and V).

The piece is essentially march-like, with characteristic rhythms: walking quarter-notes against an accompanying ostinato ($\sqcap$). This motive greatly resembles the march theme in Beethoven's Choral Fantasy, a piece with which Walpurgisnacht was frequently programmed (see Example 8 below).

Example 8.

a. Walpurgisnacht, No. 5,   b. Choral Fantasy, opening of
   m. 15.   Finale.

The movement opens with appropriately military instrumentation: horns, trumpets, and two drums. Amidst a pervasive sense of order and discipline, there are, nevertheless, a few devious touches. For example, the imbalance in the two

phrase groupings of the main melody--four plus five measures--
seems a little eccentric. Then there are the fluttering
figures (m. 38) in the winds, piccolo included, which dart
out almost at random, perhaps to suggest an atmosphere like
that at the beginning of the _Faust_ Walpurgisnacht scene. This
motive closely resembles a figure already greatly significant
in the overture (m. 139ff.), and associated there, too, with
foul weather (see Example 9 below). The sudden swells on the
word "Kauz" (m. 49, 53, 70) are also a little weird, and the
descending chromaticism of the main tune's second phrase is
downright devilish!

Example 9.

    a. _Walpurgisnacht_, No. 5 b. _Walpurgisnacht_, Overture,
                m. 38.   m. 139

In. m. 76, the solo bass, who has melded with his choral
comrades during the course of the movement, emerges again to
lead the now familiar anticipatory "kommts." For the final
measures of No. 5, the texture is reduced to chorus only, on
only one note (G).

No. 6: Chorus

Then suddenly and simultaneously, the cymbals crash, the
men's chorus lurches upwards to G#, while the horns, trumpets,

and strings blare out __ff__ the principal theme of movement No.
6. This theme as well as its orchestration directly recalls
a passage from the Wolf's Glen scene at the end of Act II of
Weber's Der Freischütz, as Example 10 suggests. Apparently

Example 10.

    a. __Walpurgisnacht__, No. 6, m. 1-5.

    b. __Der Freischütz__, Act II, after the "fifth shot"
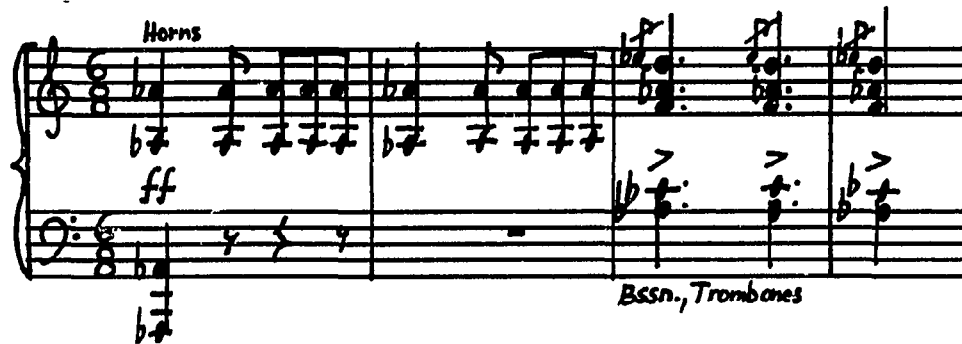
this allusion has gone unrecognized by previous Mendelssohn
scholars, although Zander does mention the opera in connection
with Mendelssohn's and Weber's similar use of the clarinets
in a low register.[17] Of course, associating 6/8 meter with
portentous rides was by now something of a cliché, having been

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[17]Zander, p. 26.

used, for example, in ballad settings such as Andre's Lenore
and in symphonic works such as the "Witches' Sabbath" of Ber-
lioz's Symphonie Fantastique. In Marschner's opera Der Vam-
pyr (1828), both 6/8 and 2/4 meters appear in different
sections of the introductory "Chorus of Witches and Spirits,"
a chorus similar in mood, and, to some extent, also in means,
to Walpurgisnacht's "Rundgeheule." Mendelssohn's juxtaposi-
tion of 6/8 and 2/4 meters in movement No. 6, however, seems
altogether unique and jarringly effective.

Except for the overture, No. 6 is the longest movement
of Walpurgisnacht. While certainly not a "classical" sonata
form, the design of the movement overall does resemble sonata
form in some important aspects. In any case, the form is not
nearly so eccentric, so bizarre as that of Berlioz's "Witches'
Sabbath." It has an essentially expository first part (m. 1-
190), connected to a developmental second part, which con-
cludes with a curiously compacted recapitulation/coda (m. 251-
end). The movement's general harmonic scheme reinforces this
overall plan, as Figure 5's diagram shows:

Figure 5. An overview of No. 6
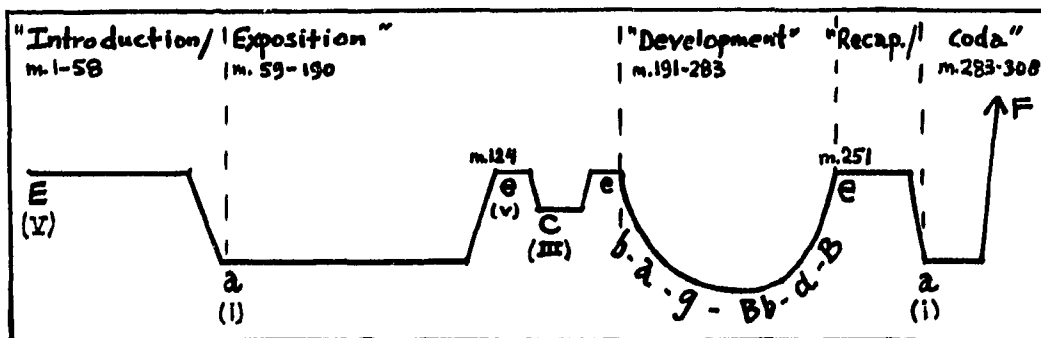
Like the overture, which is also in a minor, movement
No. 6 is an "open" form, here open at its front end. With a
characteristic eye to symmetry of the whole cantata, Mendels-
sohn balances the dominant emphasis at the end of the overture
with dominant emphasis at the beginning of No. 6. Once the
tonic is established and before the transition to the dominant
minor (e) in m. 124, with its surprising reference to the
relative major (C) in m. 163, the first part of No. 6 is
really very static harmonically. 'Diminished seventh chords
add spice and interest, but Mendelssohn avoids tedium and
achieves length mostly by an almost kaleidoscopic variation
of material. He hangs one short section upon another, intro-
ducing a number of simple, "catchy," distinct though inter-
related, tunes. He relies heavily on repetition: repetition
of adjoining measures (e.g. m. 1-2), whole phrases (m. 59-66;
67-74), and whole sections (m. 59-90; 91-120). Throughout
the movement, alternation of timbres as well as densities,
important already in the opening measures, provides a crucial
technique of variation. Winds vs. strings, men vs. women,
orchestra vs. chorus--these almost endlessly imaginative pair-
ings suggest the shifting combinations in round dancing.

In. m. 191, at a point where the movement could easily
end, a unison statement of principal theme, once again on "e"
as in the opening measure, launches the second half of the
piece. This section is "developmental" primarily in terms of
its boldly deviant and rapidly shifting tonal centers. In

this section the choral writing is also more contrapuntal
(see m. 119ff. and 263ff.) And, too, the basses must sing a
curiously grotesque trill (m. 258 and 266), following a devil-
ish, descending chromatic line.

Mendelssohn's ability to obscure the piece's structural
seams helps propel it forward with dizzying momentum. Such
a wonderfully deceptive overlap occurs in m. 279, just before
the movement's conclusion in a minor. Twelve measures of
dominant pedal combined with a soaring chromatic line in the
soprano create the expectation of certain arrival in a minor
in m. 279. But at that moment, the chorus basses roar dis-
sonantly upwards to F, then ascend chromatically, as tympani
and lower strings continue to pound the dominant (note the
sforzandos on weak beats) until the tonic "a" is reached in
m. 283.

As in movement No. 4, and, of course, the overture, the
orchestra is especially prominent in No. 6; the movement be-
gins with thirty-two measures of orchestra alone. Much in
this instrumental passage is characteristic of the rest of
the movement. Melodically, it consists of short, four-measure
and two-measure snippets, repetitive and appropriately circu-
lar in contour. Like the "development section" later in the
piece, this passage is harmonically tense and anticipatory.
Since the piece begins out of the tonic--in the dominant E
major--these thirty-two measures serve to prepare the tonic
a minor, moving from the opening unison E's and E major

triads, through a g# diminished seventh in m. 7ff. over a long dominant pedal. But the moment of arrival of a minor (m. 33), although in root position and coinciding with the male chorus' entrance on unison a's, is by no means a clear structural seam. Several factors keep the piece flowing here without let-up. Breaking the pattern of short, regular phrases, the winds have earlier initiated a nine-measure phrase (m. 25-33), which then overlaps with the off-beat, breathless beginning of the eleven-measure, chromatically ascending vocal phrase (m. 33-43). A falling, then rising arch of unison, tremolando strings further glosses over a potentially obvious seam, pushing the piece forward "con fuoco." The entrance of the women's voices in m. 59--note the phrase overlaps here, and likewise in m. 145, 149, 153, and 259--marks a more stable, "official" beginning in the tonic, but a very gradual thinning of orchestral texture un- til m. 74 sustains the continuity through this important point of formal articulation, thus melding the interior sec- tions.

What Wolff calls a "youthful, exuberant, droll humor"[18] is both plentiful and pervasive in this movement. Or, as Zander comments, the listener can hardly take the "program" seriously because the music seems "pure mummery."[19] For Men- delssohn's light touches capture the playfulness, almost

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[18]Wolff, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, p. 94. [jugendlich überschäumender, toller Humor]

[19]Zander, p. 31. [nur Mummerei]

slapstick inherent in Goethe's poem. For example, many of the
melodic figures are prefaced by a jocular "grace" note. Also
the extensive use of women's voices, associated from the first
choral movement with youth and spring, makes a bright, opti-
mistic effect here. Particularly boisterous is the passage
occurring between m. 168-82, recalling the similarly rollick-
ing, almost rowdy music of the "town band" in the finale of
Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. We are never allowed to forget
that these Blocksberg spirits are really only clever men,
sporting as witches and devils and obviously having a wonder-
ful time.

No. 7: Baritone and Chorus

In the remaining movements, Nos. 7-9, Mendelssohn deals
with two simultaneous actions: the Christians' flight and the
Druids' triumphant celebration of their ancient rite. Eschew-
ing an "Ivesian" solution in which the two events might be
musically simultaneous, Mendelssohn observes Goethe's chrono-
logical sequence with the Christians' rather histrionic dis-
persal a centerpiece between thematically related sections of
sacred character.

A twenty-measure transition begins No. 7, carrying the
listener from demonic revelry to religious devotion. The sud-
den shift from E major to F major at the outset abruptly dis-
turbs the inertia of No. 6. At the same time, a motive drawn
from No. 5 (but appearing already in the overture--see p. 121
above) "laughs" in the winds and strings, while a <u>diminuendo</u>

and thinning of orchestral texture occurs over eight measures
of extended a minor harmony, and the "witching instruments"--
bass drum and piccolo--sound for the last time.[20]

A new section begins in m. 21, marked Andante maestoso.
With the words "Doch ist es Tag," the Druid priest introduces
a further metamorphosis of the overture's principal theme.[21]
In phrases punctuated by a solemn trio of trombones, he leads
his congregation from a minor to C major (m. 29), that is,
from a key associated most recently with the murky chaos of
the masquerade and earlier with wild winter weather to a key
universally symbolic of light and righteousness. Here Mendels-
sohn follows Haydn's precedent in the opening movement of The
Creation, where the chorus so dramatically moves to C major
for the exclamation "And there was light," and also antici-
pates his own C major setting of the text "Through darkness
riseth light" in movement No. 9 (m. 37) of Elijah (1846).
Then in the manner of a responsive liturgy, the priest's short
phrases are answered by the chorus. Zander observes that the
dividing of basses in m. 34-35 contributes the "holy" sonority
of the lower octave to this unison response.[22] The conven-
tional four-part chorale writing of the next choral phrase
(m. 40ff.) makes a lovely, warm contrast.[23] From the

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[20]Ibid., p. 32.

[21]Seaton, p. 408; see Figure 3 above (p. 107).

[22]Zander, p. 33.

[23]Ochs (p. 100) says that in one Leipzig performance,

straightforward, relatively pure harmony associated with the
text "reines Herz," the mention of "Feinde" (enemy) coincides
with the introduction of a series of unstable, flat keys--
E-flat, A-flat--from which we emerge once again to radiant C
major on the words "Dein Licht" (m. 58ff.). Here, unison
chorus and soloist ascend by steps to one of the cantata's two
truly uplifting climaxes (the other occurring in No. 9,
m. 19ff.). With means so obviously reminiscent of Beetho-
ven[24]--third-related harmonies and a relatively sudden retreat
from _ff_ to _p_--chorus, soloist, and full orchestra unite
"communally" to pose the question: "Dein Licht, wer _will_ es
rauben?"

No. 8: Tenor and Chorus

A deceptive cadence (V of C to V_7 of f) connects No. 7
to No. 8, depicting the "terror, anxiety and fear"[25] of the
would-be robbers. This mood is created by shivering string
tremolos--once again, a figure anticipated in the overture
(m. 82ff.)--sighing half-steps in the principal oboe, and
ghostly echoes of the witches' ride (see flutes, m. 8; trip-
lets in winds and violins m. 10, 14, 16). The tenor soloist
sputters two-measure phrases which emphasize the whining,
falling minor third. Diminished seventh chords abound.

Mendelssohn removed the winds from this spot, leaving the
chorus to render the phrase a cappella.

[24]Ochs, pp. 100-101.

[25]Zander, p. 36. [Schrecken, Angst, und Furcht]

Beginning in m. 10, the bass line ascends chromatically from

D, spanning more than an octave before changing directions

in m. 32, reaching and then confirming the key of c minor.

Simultaneously, two lengthy crescendos contribute to the

build-up of tension and suspense. All but six measures of

the movement occur over a pedal point on C in the horns. In

music which seems otherwise frenzied and fragmented, this one

stable element serves as a structural link between Nos. 7 and

9, a persistent reminder of the indomitable power of light

which the last movement reasserts.

Zander describes the painterly effect of Christian

watchmen fleeing down the Blocksberg, the final outcries on

"Lasst uns fliehen" (m. 44-47) sounding at successively

lower intervals.[26] Mendelssohn's rendering of escape,

flight, recalls Mozart's in the "Corriamo, fuggiamo" chorus

which ends Act II of the opera, Idomeneo (see Examples 11a

and 11b on pp. 131-32).

No. 9: Baritone and Chorus

The trombones, which along with the trumpets have re-

mained significantly silent throughout No. 8, sound a promi-

nent C major triad at the start of No. 9. Here the chorus

takes the lead, stating ff in octave unison an expressive,

soulful, ornamented, almost soloistic figure similar to that

which opens the Andante con moto movement of Mendelssohn's

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[26]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Example 11.

a. <u>Walpurgisnacht</u>, No. 8, m. 40-47.

(Example 11 continued)

   b. _Idomeneo_, final 9 measures of Act II.

"Italian" Symphony (see Example 12 below). The strings'
accompanying arpeggiated chords give the impression of great
strength, a familiar Handelian effect.[27]

Example 12.

   a. Walpurgisnacht, No. 9, m. 1-2.

   b. "Italian" Symphony, 2nd movement, m. 1-2.

A rapid diminuendo and thinning of texture sets up the
recapitulation in m. 5 of material from No. 7 (m. 29-71), now
telescoped, compacted into fewer measures. Contributing to
the religiosity of this passage are two heavy doses of sub-
dominant harmony—m. 13 and especially m. 21ff., the latter
coinciding with the sopranos' climactic sustained high A,
before the full tonic cadence in m. 28. The sixteen-measure
coda beginning at this point efficiently brings the whole
work to a clear and impressive close. In the final seven
measures, orchestra and chorus cooperate to terminate the

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[27]Used, for example, at the beginning of the "Corona-
tion anthem," Zadok the Priest (cited in Zander, p. 42).

liturgy, the chorus reiterating "Dein Licht" on the tonic,
the orchestra with two IV-I cadences (m. 38-39, 40-41) in
effect responding "Amen." Then, perhaps symbolic of the
Druids' spiritual unity, vocal and instrumental forces sound
one measure (m. 41) in rhythmic unison, presenting a united
and determined final statement of the text "Wer kann es
rauben!"--the question of movement No. 7 now made merely
rhetorical.

Although Berlioz particularly admired the finale of
Walpurgisnacht,[28] one American journalist writing in 1862
found the conclusion of the work unequal to the "dignity and
grandeur" of its text, calling the closing chorus "about the
least impressive portion of the work."[29] It is true that the
final movements, Nos. 7-9 taken together, do not really
balance the "weight" of the opening overture, either in length
or musical complexity. The monumental fugal choruses which
end both Lobgesang and Elijah show Mendelssohn fully capable
of creating the traditionally imposing contrapuntal edifice.
But for Walpurgisnacht, he chooses relatively simple choral
textures, either homophonic or unison, with no counterpoint.
Why? Perhaps to more appropriately represent the dramatic
situation. For the Druids' victory is modest and, in real
historical terms, temporary. Instead of the triumphant,

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[28]See Berlioz's letter to Stephan Heller, quoted in
Signale für die musikalische Welt 1 (October 1843): 306.

[29]Dwight's Journal of Music 21/5 (May 1862): 39.

"Jupiter Symphony" finale typical of many symphonies and oratorios, this compact, lyrical, understated conclusion resembles a more open-ended opera in which the drama's ramifications persist beyond its close. Mendelssohn's cantata does not offer a final resolution to the questions it raises; it challenges its performers and listeners to dwell on them afterwards.

CHAPTER VI

PERFORMANCES OF WALPURGISNACHT: 1843-1900

Following its 1843 premiere, Die erste Walpurgisnacht
was performed with success throughout Germany, within a year
in London and then in the rest of England, and ultimately in
America. Its rapid, wide circulation reflects the fashionable
network of musical societies developing at mid-century in
these countries. Given both polished and underrehearsed per-
formances, it was frequently heard and extensively reviewed
by contemporary critics. Such reviews suggest the nature of
orchestral-choral collaboration in Germany, England and the
United States, and the ready, attentive "market"[1] for such a
work at mid-century. The cantata was popular in both Germany
and England, though appealing to different musical and cultur-
al tastes on either side of the North Sea. In the United
States its impact was considerably less than that of several
other Mendelssohn compositions; its technical difficulty,
indivisible structure, and remote mythology made the work less
accessible to American performers and audiences. The

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[1]Theodore M. Finney, "The Oratorio and Cantata Market:
Britain, Germany, America c. 1830-c. 1910," in Choral Music,
A Symposium, ed. Arthur Jacobs (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963),
pp. 217-19.

enthusiasm for Walpurgisnacht in these early years seems part-
ly attributable to Mendelssohn's personal involvement in its
performance during the height of his fame, and also to the
intensity of public reaction to his unexpected, early death
in 1847. For several decades the work held an undisputed
place in the common repertory. This chapter will examine that
performance history; the following chapter will then discuss
briefly its notable influence on the developing dramatic can-
tata genre, and its gradual falling into relative obscurity
in the twentieth century.

Germany

The Leipzig Premiere

The revised Die erste Walpurgisnacht was premiered under
Mendelssohn's baton[2] at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on February 2,
1843. It formed the entire second part of that season's
sixteenth subscription concert, a program which eyewitness
W. A. Lampadius considered "brilliant in every respect."
Robert Schumann also called the concert one of the most beau-
tiful of the winter, noting that it included composers from
every epoch, Haydn to Mendelssohn.[4] The first part of the
program consisted of a Haydn symphony, Mozart's aria "Deh per

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[2]According to Percy Young, Mendelssohn was the first
Gewandhaus conductor to use a baton (see "Leipzig," The New
Grove, 10:639).

[3]Lampadius, p. 123.

[4]NZfM 18/17 (February 1843): 67.

questo" sung by Frl. Schloss, Beethoven's Fantasy in C with

piano soloist Clara Schumann, Weber's Overture to Euryanthe,

selections from Weber's Leyer und Schwert for unaccompanied

men's chorus, and variations for solo piano by Henselt, played

by Clara Schumann.[5] Henry Chorley describes another concert

evening when the Gewandhaus was similarly filled to capacity:

> The ladies of the place. . . occupied the center of the
> room, sitting in two. . .divisions, that is, sideways
> to the orchestra. . .[and] behind them crowded the gen-
> tlemen so thickly, that any one going as late as half
> an hour before the music struck up, run [sic] no small
> chance of being kneaded into the wall by the particular-
> ly substantial proportions of those before him. . . .[6]

The orchestra probably numbered about sixty players, among the

best in Europe.[7] Having witnessed Mendelssohn's final rehear-

sal for Walpurgisnacht, Berlioz praised the orchestra's

"precision and verve." He was also astounded by the chorus,

by both the beautiful timbre of the voices and the singers'

intelligence.[8] Without mentioning the number of singers--

there were about 150 voices for an 1852 performance in the

Gewandhaus[9]--Berlioz explained that

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[5]Signale 1/7 (February 1843): 46.

[6]Chorley, vol. 2, pp. 33-34. This seating arrangement
is clearly depicted in the engraving (c. 1840) reproduced in
The New Grove 10:638.

[7]Günter Hempel, "Leipzig: III. Bürgerliche Musikpflege
im Vormärz 1800-1848," in Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegen-
wart, ed. Friedrich Blume, 14 vols. (Kassel, Basel. . .:Bären-
reiter, 1949-1968), vol. 8, col. 560.

[8]Voyage Musical, p. 77. [la precision et. . .la verve
de l'orchestre]

[9]Mason, p. 64.

. . .the choir includes a few people from the theater and the boys of the Thomaskirche, but it is almost wholly made up of amateurs drawn from the upper ranks of Leipzig society. That is why it is relatively easy to obtain a large number of rehearsals when there is an exacting work to be learned.[10]

According to Lampadius, "the manner in which [Walpurgisnacht] was given the first time was beyond criticism."[11] And, indeed, the work was very well received. Some fifty years later one critic recalled that in its 1843 premiere "the overture and several numbers were encored over and over again, and the whole performance was received with enthusiasm approaching delirium."[12]

The various first-hand accounts of Opus 60's premiere repeatedly praise Mendelssohn's ability to create varied and colorful musical pictures. For the Overture and No. 1, Elise Polko suggested that Mendelssohn used "tints. . . taken from that favored land, 'wo die Citronen blühen' [where lemons grow] . . .for we poor creatures do not usually sing of our spring in such delightfully gay and buoyant strains, for generally it brings us only violent colds!"[13] Lampadius singled

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[10]The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz, trans. and ed. David Cairns (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969), p. 297. In the AMZ 49/49 (December 1847), col. 827, the reviewer describes the Gewandhaus chorus as a combination of several different "Vereine," along with the boys from the "Thomanerchor."

[11]Lampadius, p. 126.

[12]"Handel and Haydn heard in concert," Boston Herald, 18 February 1907 (Allen Brown clipping, see p. 9, ft. 36 above).

[13]Polko, p. 150.

out the dispersal of Druid watchmen (No. 4) as the most dra-
matic scene; Schumann called that same movement a chorus of
"rare beauty and great originality." Both Lampadius and
Schumann referred to the "Kommt mit Zacken" scene (Nos. 5 and
6) as "grotesque" and "fantastic," yet both noted as well
Mendelssohn's formal clarity, his ability to keep "order and
harmony even in the wild chaos of tones." Schumann praised
the work's conclusion as a heartfelt and devout expression of
personal faith.[14] Polko wondered what Goethe would have
thought of the finale, adding that "as for us commonplace
children of the earth, tears rushed to our eyes, and our
hearts beat with emotion." She also called attention to the
soloists' fine contribution, particularly the "most touching
effect" of the old woman's "mournful appeal" (in No. 2).[15]

Other Performances in Germany

Friedrich Kistner published Die erste Walpurnisnacht
early in 1844,[16] and the work was performed at least twice
that season in "German" cities, first in Vienna, then in
Prague.[17] Walpurgisnacht was performed again in Leipzig in
1845, and also in Hamburg, Jena, Frankfurt, Kassel, and

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[14]Lampadius, p. 125; NZfM 18/17 (February 1843): 68.
[von seltener Schönheit und grosser Originalität]

[15]Polko, p. 150.

[16]Reviewed by J. Becker, NZfM 20/17 (February 1844):
65-66 and 20/18: 71-72.

[17]Adami, p. 114; AMZ 46/27 (July 1844), col. 459.

Breslau.[18] In May, 1845, it received its first festival per-

formance at the Lower Rhine Festival in Düsseldorf, with an

orchestra numbering 174 players and a chorus of 464 singers.[19]

In December, 1847, less than a month after Mendelssohn's

death, Walpurgisnacht was performed again in Leipzig at the

King's request, and later that season in memorial concerts

for the composer in Göttingen and Greifswald.[20] Mendelssohn's

close friend William Taubert conducted the work at the Berlin

Singakademie on November 4, 1848, the first anniversary of

Mendelssohn's death.[21] It was also performed there in Novem-

ber, 1850, by the Stern'sche Gesangverein and featured in many

of their subsequent Mendelssohn memorial concerts presented

each November for decades afterwards.[22] Not surprisingly,

the work also figured prominently in Goethe celebrations, such

as those in Leipzig in August, 1849, marking the centenary of

Goethe's birth.[23]

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[18]"L. R.," AMZ 47/10 (March 1845), col. 165; also AMZ
47 (January 1845), cols. 60, 123, 150, 308; (February 1845),
col. 316; (April 1845), col. 260; (May-June 1845), col. 457.

[19]"F. R.," AMZ 47/25 (May 1845), col. 429; see also
Porter, p. 217.

[20]AMZ 49/49 (December 1847), col. 847; AMZ 49/52
(December 1847), col. 918; Neue Berliner Musikzeitung 2/11
(March 1848): 87.

[21]AMZ 50/46 (November 1848), col. 751.

[22]Neue Berliner Musikzeitung 4/46 (November 1850): 365;
for examples of later performances, see Neue Berliner Musik-
zeitung 10/46 (November 1856): 365; 13/45 (November 1859):
355; and 39/46 (November 1885): 364.

[23]Neue Berliner Musikzeitung 3/34 (August 1849): 285 and
3/36 (September 1849): 295.

In these early Walpurgisnacht performances, the work

usually appeared as part of a long mixed program, along with

at least one other substantial choral piece. The Mendelssohn

cantata was often either the first, or more typically, the

last piece on the program. Contemporary critics certainly

did not ignore the question of the compatibility of programmed

works. For example, one critic complained that on the second

day of the 1845 Düsseldorf Festival, where Walpurgisnacht was

sandwiched in between Mozart's Requiem and Beethoven's Ninth

Symphony, the contrast between Mozart's refined religious

sentiment and Mendelssohn's primitive tone was much too sud-

den.[24] Another writer quibbled about juxtaposing Walpurgis-

nacht with Prince Radziwill's incidental music to Faust, for

such programming raised an unfulfilled expectation of a link

between the two pieces.[25] One particularly happy and frequent

pairing put Walpurgisnacht with Beethoven's Fantasy in C.[26]

Another attractive pairing occurred in Frankfurt in 1845,

where Walpurgisnacht followed the overture and selections from

Mozart's opera Idomeneo.[27]

Although intended for the public concert hall,

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[24]"F. R.," AMZ 47/25 (May 1845), col. 429.

[25]AMZ 47/18 (April 1845), col. 316.

[26]For instances other than the Leipzig premiere, see
AMZ 47/9 (January 1845), col. 150 and 47/18 (April 1845), col.
308.

[27]AMZ 47/18 (April 1845), col. 316; for discussion of
one musical link between Idomeneo and Walpurgisnacht, see pp.
130-32 above.

Mendelssohn's _Walpurgisnacht_ was occasionally performed in
other settings. For example, it was often featured at the
Sunday Music concerts in the Berlin home of Fanny Mendelssohn
Hensel. In March, 1844, Fanny described to her sister Rebecca
"the most brilliant Sunday Music that ever was," when there
were twenty-two carriages in the courtyard, and the composer
Liszt and eight princesses in the concert room. On the pro-
gram were a quintet by Hummel, a vocal duet from _Fidelio_,
variations for violin by David played by the child prodigy
Joachim, two songs, followed by the _Walpurgisnacht_

> . . .which my public have been eagerly looking forward
> to these four weeks, and which went off capitally. We
> had three rehearsals, which the singers enjoyed so much
> that they would have liked to have as many again.[28]

On this occasion, the work was performed with piano accompan-
iment. Felix played the overture with Fanny; she apparently
accompanied the rest of the piece by herself.[29] Later on,
Fanny's son Sebastian Hensel wrote that _Walpurgisnacht_ was
often sung at the Sunday Music

> . . . with a fervor and enthusiasm beyond that created
> by any other music. The performance of the 'Walpurgis-
> nacht' was universally looked upon as a special festive
> treat. Its harmonies were the last that Fanny ever
> heard--at a rehearsal of this work [in May, 1847] she
> died.[30]

In 1846, Kistner issued _Walpurgisnacht_ in Henschke's
arrangement for piano four-hands, to be enjoyed at home.

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[28]Hensel, vol. 2, p. 261.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 276; also Devrient, pp. 291f.

Vocal as well as instrumental parts were assigned to keyboard, the words appearing in small print over the notes, for reference only. Mendelssohn pronounced the arrangement "recht gut."[31] One critic, however, claimed that several passages were simply unplayable up to tempo, and that, like many such arrangements, this one was not very satisfying to those who knew the original.[32] That there was a market for such an arrangement in 1846 suggests how popular Walpurgisnacht had become within just three years of its premiere. In turn, undoubtedly the "domestic" version of the work contributed to its further popularity.

Occasionally Walpurgisnacht was performed as an operatic, staged work. This may have happened as early as 1848, for a Berlin journal reported that year from London that "here they intend to mount a theatrical performance of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's 'erste Walpurgisnacht.'"[33] Already in 1833, Mendelssohn's friend, the baritone Devrient, mentioned to the composer "the dramatic effect that the cantata might be capable of." Mendelssohn replied, "thoughtfully, 'It may be so, try it.' 'So I will,' I answered, 'as soon as I have a stage at my disposal.'"[34] In the 1860s, the work was regularly

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[31]Briefe an deutsche Verleger. p. 330.

[32]"C. K.," NZfM 24/4 (January 1846): 19.

[33]Neue Berliner Musikzeitung 2/43 (November 1848): 342. [Hier beabsichtigt man Mendelssohn-Bartholdys 'erste Walpurgisnacht' dramatisch dargestellt zur Aufführung zu bringen.]

[34]Devrient, p. 157.

featured in the repertory of the Carlsruhe opera which
Devrient directed.[35] In 1862, it was also presented in a
Leipzig theater, with Devrient's staging.[36]

Devrient's production required a divided stage--upper
and lower--similar to that used for contemporary productions
of Shakespeare and also Greek plays.[37] The curtain remained
closed for the first part of the overture, opening at the
"Übergang zum Frühling" to reveal groups of Druids--warriors
(men only) and people (men and women)--sleeping at the front
edge of the stage. These Druids stirred awake, as others
entered the stage. Following the "Hinaufs" of No. 1, the
warriors ascended to build an altar, while the people assem-
bled below to listen to the old woman (No. 2). Reviewer Pohl
noted the "first scenic inconvenience," occurring in No. 4:
"a chorus which sings 'Divide your forces, valiant men,' but
meanwhile remains motionless, creates nothing other than a
comic effect."[38] Although one critic wrote that Walpurgis-
nacht was staged in Carlsruhe (in 1860) "with great effect,"[39]

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[35]Ibid.

[36]See Richard Pohl's account of this production in NZfM
56/20 (May 1862): 165-67.

[37]Ibid., p. 165.

[38]Ibid., p. 166. [ersten scenische Inconvenienz. . .
ein Chor, der 'Vertheilt Euch wackre Männer' singt, dabei aber
unbeweglich stehen bleibt, macht keinen anderen Effect als
einen komischen.]

[39]From an unidentified newspaper source, dated "1860"
in pencil (an Allen Brown clipping).

Pohl found the work's staging progressively more awkward. In
No. 6, the music required women to participate in what should
have been the warriors' "Teufelspuk." And a realistic por-
trayal of Nos. 7-9, placed in far too close proximity events
which, in concert, could be _imagined_ as occuring at much
greater distance: the pure religious ceremony in one place,
the demonic orgy in another. Besides, Pohl argued, most
choral societies are stronger than the finest theater chor-
uses, and amateur voices are "fresher, less strained and
strident than opera choruses."[40] Pohl excused the staging of
Walpurgisnacht as more than just an experiment, but rather a
serious, albeit unsuccessful attempt to bring "classical" con-
cert repertory into line with the tendencies of the Wagnerian,
"new-German" school.[41] A reviewer of an 1893 staged produc-
tion in Berlin was less forgiving:

> Mr. Tetzlaff did everything for admirable and _stimmungs-_
> _volles_ stage setting, and the Druids did not look any
> more funny than they do in _Norma_, while the accompaniment
> of sticks and bushes rhythmically beaten upon the stage
> rather improves the great 'Kommt mit Zacken und mit
> Gabeln' chorus; but the music does not act dramatically
> on the nerves of the listener, and the 'Walpurgisnacht'
> fell a trifle flat upon the audience. There were a few
> faint calls for Mendelssohn at the close of the perfor-
> mance [!] . . .the ensemble in the entire work was not
> of the very best, as the choristers had to be active and
> were jumping about on the stage like so many dervishes,
> and consequently could not pay as strict attention to
> rhythm as they would have done if quietly standing on a
> concert platform with eyes fixed on the conductor.[42]

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[40]Pohl, pp. 166, 167. [frischer, weil weniger ange-
strengt und ausgeschrien, als die der Opernchoristen]

[41]Ibid., p. 167.

[42]From an unidentified newspaper (English text), 17
October 1893 (Allen Brown clipping).

The response of German audiences and performers to
Walpurgisnacht in concert, however, was almost universally
positive during the early years of its history. "Musical ex-
perts and amateurs are really of one voice concerning the
great merit of the 'Erste Walpurgisnacht,'" declared one wri-
ter in 1845. "The chorus and orchestra showed true delight
and enthusiasm. . .and the audience applauded heartily."[43]
Viennese critic Adami reassured his readers that

> [applause for Walpurgisnacht) was not always loud follow-
> ing the individual numbers only because of the construc-
> tion of the cantata, which builds a whole rather than
> presenting separate arias, duets or choruses, with the
> customary cadence which seems to indicate to an absent-
> minded public: now I'm at the end, applaud.[44]

The work's immediate appeal is strongly evidenced in its
being performed twice in a city during a single season, as in
1844-45 in the cities of Hamburg, Kassel and Breslau. During
that same season, Walpurgisnacht created such a sensation be-
fore a "packed house" in Frankfurt that it was immediately
repeated in its entirety.[45]

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[43]"L. R.," AMZ 47/10 (March 1845), col. 165f. [Über den
hohen Werth der "Ersten Walpurgisnacht" ist unter den Musik-
Kennern und Freunden nur eine Stimme. . .Dass Sänger und Or-
chester dieser Composition Mendelssohn's mit wahrer Lust und
Begeisterung ausführen, zeigte sich. . . .Auch im Publicum gab
sich durch reichen Applaus eine begeisterte Erregung kund.]

[44]Adami, p. 114. [Dass dieser nach den einzelnen Num-
mern nicht immer laut wurde, liegt wohl in dem Baue der Can-
tate, die ein Ganzes bildet und keine einzelnen Arien, Duette,
oder Chöre darbietet, die, mit einem gewöhnlichen Schlusse
verstehen, dem meistens zerstreuten Publikum zu sagen schein-
en: Jetzt bin ich zu Ende, plaudite.]

[45]AMZ 47/4 (January 1845), col. 60; 47/9 (February
1845), col. 150; 47/15 (April 1845), col. 260; 47/18 (April
1845), col. 308, 316; 47/27 (July 1845), col. 457.

In the next several decades following the work's pre-
miere, German critics tended to highlight those features of
the work already emphasized by Schumann and others in 1843.
They continued to find the long overture the strangest, most
original part of the work. One writer even wondered if it
were perhaps a separate, earlier composition, although entire-
ly compatible with the poetic spirit and "lofty meaning" of
the rest of the work.[46] Others championed the work's cohe-
siveness. As Adami remarked in 1844: "everything fits."[47]
Adami was also impressed by what he called a Beethovenian
quality, an ardor ("Gluth") which he had missed in earlier
Mendelssohn compositions:

> [Mendelssohn] had never really set on fire those of us
> accustomed to Beethoven and Mozart; his greatest work,
> the oratorio St. Paul is, despite many beautiful moments,
> somewhat drawn out. . .[and] we had trouble warming up
> to his Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream, with its
> severe, almost puritanical manner which so obviously
> depended upon the genius of Sebastian Bach. [But] this
> material [Walpurgisnacht] affirms the individuality of
> the composer, one feels this in every measure, and for
> his work he deserves a shining laurel wreath upon his
> brow.[48]

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[46] J. Becker, p. 66. [hohe Bedeutung]

[47] Adami, p. 114. [Alles tritt gehörig heraus.]

[48] Ibid. [Bei uns, die wir an Mozart und Beethoven
gewöhnt sind, hatte er noch im eigentlichen Sinne nicht ge-
zündet; sein grösstes Werk, das Oratorium: Paulus ist, trotz
vieler Schönheiten, etwas gedehnt; seine Ouverture zum
Sommernachtstraum. . .wir hatten Mühe, uns mit seiner streng-
en, fast puritanischen Manier welcher der Genius des alten
Sebastian Bach sichtbar zum Grunde lag zu befreunden; . . .
dieser Stoff sagte der Individualität des Componisten zu, das
fühlt man bei jeden Tacte, und seine Arbeit flicht ihm um die
Stirne eine glänzende Lorbeerkrone.]

Besides praising Walpurgisnacht's clarity and richly evocative
musical pictures, critics focussed on the work's essential
optimism. Impressed by the contrast between the initial de-
piction of depressing turbulence and the uplifing finale, one
critic observed:

> That is precisely the lofty, godly nature of an artist-
> genius, that he holds out to us a glimpse of the horror
> of death, of hell, of damnation, which he depicts with-
> out distortion, and then, for all that, shares with us a
> feeling of freedom, of life, of blessedness, which up-
> lifts us and sanctifies us.[49]

Walpurgisnacht and the German Social-political Climate of Mid-century

To what extent does the enthusiastic response of Walpur-
gisnacht's performers, listeners, and critics in Germany raise
wider social and political issues? It is never a simple task
to trace the relationship between a successful work of art and
the Zeitgeist, the political and social currents of an age.
Most directly an audience is moved by a new composition's mu-
sical effects, rather than its moral ideas. But especially
during the decades between the Congress of Vienna (1815) and
the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848, concerts were thought to
contribute an essential part to the overall education of the
citizenry and new music was most acclaimed if--in Horatian
terms--it gave instruction as well as delight. The lessons

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[49]J. Becker, p. 71. [Das ist eben das Erhabene, das
Göttliche des Kunstler-Genius, dass er uns einen Blick in die
Schrecken des Todes, der Hölle, der Vernichtung gewährt, in-
dem er sie ohne Fratze malt, und uns dennoch ein Gefühl der
Freiheit, des Lebens, der Seligkeit mittheilt, das uns selbst
erhebt und heiligt.]

implicit in Mendelssohn's cantata reflect three key social-
political developments in Germany during this period: 1)
a "liberal" egalitarianism, 2) resistance to repression, and
3) cultural nationalism, especially a desire to conserve the
German heritage.

1) Increasingly in these years, Germany was alive with
political agitation, a rising consciousness that pressed re-
lentlessly, if ineffectually, toward more democratic institu-
tions. German liberals believed de Tocqueville's statement
in his preface to Democracy in America (published in German
in 1836) that "a gradual trend toward equality of conditions
is a work of Providence. . . .It is universal, it is enduring,
it constantly eludes human powers of control."[50] That ineluc-
table longing for democratic freedoms fired various groups of
Germans. Often organizations formed to promote some osten-
sibly non-political end--social, recreational, or artistic--
actually provided an environment in which to test liberal
ideals otherwise impracticable in the society at large. For
example, some of the new national associations of scholars and
professional men became, in fact, conspiratorial "front organ-
izations" for covert political activity.[51] Another hotbed of
liberalism on the local level was the choral society, which
required intense commitment and faithful participation by a

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[50]Quoted in John L. Snell, The Democratic Movement in
Germany, 1879-1914, ed. and completed Hans A. Schmitt (Chapel
Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), p. 57.

[51]Ibid., p. 64ff.

diverse, virtually "classless" membership.[52] Such choruses,

in turn, would be especially attracted to the story of an

almost grass-roots movement celebrated in Mendelssohn's canta-

ta. With minimal hierarchy, the Druids organize to perpetuate

their community in the face of persecution by the "establish-

ment." But their modest, almost covert triumph at the end of

the poem would also have been compatible with the growing

realization, especially after the "retrenchment" of 1848, that

artistic involvement might have to substitute for more overt

political action.[53] Liberal thinkers and artists alike proved

better able to express the Enlightenment's high, humanist

ideals than to put them into social action and institutions

when the time came to wield political power. The very nostal-

gia of Mendelssohn's cantata could soothe these unfulfilled

political expectations in a way that a more urgent, inflamma-

tory music would not.

2) It was an age in which repression thrived. The

Carlsbad Decrees of 1819 constituted a sort of anti-bill of

rights, limiting freedoms of the press and of assembly.[54]

Until the frustrated revolutions of 1848, printers, intellec-

tuals--including the brothers Grimm--Jews, Catholics, and

liberals repeatedly suffered from censorship, excessive

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[52]James J. Sheehan, German Liberalism in the Nineteenth
Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 13;
see also Henry Raynor, Music and Society since 1815 (London:
Barrie and Jenkins, 1976), pp. 8, 90; Engel, p. 76.

[53]Sheehan, p. 76.

[54]Snell, p. 24; Raynor, Music and Society, pp. 4-5.

bureaucracy, and official persecution.[55] In 1841, Johann

Jacoby's <u>Vier Fragen</u> called for a Prussian constitution and

demanded the "legal participation of independent citizens."[56]

In March, 1841, Felix Mendelssohn wrote to his brother Paul

concerning this controversial document:

> It is a most remarkable sign of the present time in
> Prussia, that nothing more true, more candid, or more
> sober in form and style could be desired. . . .In the
> meanwhile it is prohibited, and we shall soon see in how
> far it is merely an individual lofty spirit expressing
> his views, or a spirit that has really impressed and
> fired the whole community, for the great misfortune
> with us has always been want of unanimity, of <u>esprit</u> <u>de</u>
> <u>corps</u>. . . .[57]

Two years later, Jacoby was convicted and nearly imprisoned.

Such a political atmosphere finds an obvious analogue in Men-

delssohn's cantata. In their nocturnal conspiracy to outwit

the powerful "dumpfen Pfaffenchristen" who threaten their

conscientious worship, the Druids achieve the communal <u>esprit</u>

so valued by Mendelssohn. Their clever, joyous victory offers

an image of success, a fulfilled wish which would tantalizing-

ly elude most nineteenth-century German liberals.

   3) More hopeful, a new sense of cultural nationalism

partly offset these political frustrations. If a reformed

political community was not a possibility, Germans could in-

stead develop their "Volksgemeinschaft"--the vital, rich

cultural bonds of the people, their language, art, and

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[55]Snell, pp. 28-48 passim.

[56]Ibid., p. 73.

[57]<u>Letters</u> <u>from</u> <u>1833-47</u>, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn-
Bartholdy, p. 225.

customs. This rediscovering of a folk culture was promulgated by the Enlightenment poet Herder, but many others' works --including the Grimms' fairy tales--also stressed its fundamental values.[58] Among the chief virtues identified with this native artistic tradition was a primitive courage, a cunning and strength against great odds, the "frischem Mut" called for in Mendelssohn's cantata. In March, 1832, just as he was putting the finishing touches on his first version of Walpurgisnacht, Mendelssohn included in a letter to Zelter this call for a cohesive national purpose to offset a sense of inferiority and geographical disunity:

> I have thought all this out for myself. . .when I heard
> how people, mostly Germans, chided Germany or pitied it
> because it has no centre, no leader, and no concentra-
> tion, and when they believe that all this will surely
> come soon. It will surely not come, and I also believe
> that that is a good thing. What must and will come, how-
> ever, is the end of our exaggerated modesty which makes
> us accept everything that comes from others as good, and
> which keeps us from appreciating our own until it has
> first been recognized by others. Let us hope that Ger-
> mans will soon stop their grumbling about their lack of
> unity, thus themselves becoming the first dis-integrating
> factor; and let us hope too that one day they will begin
> to imitate the unity of others which is the best quality
> those others have.[59]

In time, however, such a community as that envisioned by the cultural nationalists tends to grow exclusive, turning inward in fear and hatred against those outside its circle. Politically this isolationist attitude engendered the proud superiority that would ultimately unify Germany under Bismarck.

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[58]Louis L. Snyder, Roots of German Nationalism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 43.

[59]Letters, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 188.

After 1848, national unity was achieved in terms of interna-
tional politics and military might rather than of personal
liberties. But to most mid-century Germans such cultural
nationalism seemed a goal worth pursuing, especially through
artistic means. Music, perhaps Germany's preeminent field
of artistic endeavor, was naturally thought a chief path
toward cultural cohesiveness. And in turn, the choral socie-
ty, a relatively recent development in German music, was it-
self a little Volksgemeinschaft, a fellowship from all classes
devoted to furthering the best works, sacred and secular, of
German culture.

Cultural pride brought a renewed commitment to conserve
an essentially German heritage. Typically, Wagner's Die
Meistersinger (1867) dramatizes this proud, vigorous preserva-
tion of German art. Rather than the church or the state, the
people themselves become the guardians and channels of artis-
tic tradition and artistic progress.[60] Mass choral gatherings
or festivals were especial "occasions for spirited communal
relationship in the name of art, and for the expression of
mounting pride in the German musical legacy."[61] Choral works
and songs of the period often capitalized on this fervor for
conserving native culture. One such piece, the so-called
"Rheinlied," began with the lines "Sie sollen ihn nicht haben,
den freien, deutschen Rhein" (They shall not have it, the free
German Rhine), and repeated with each verse, "Sie sollen ihn

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[60]Raynor, Music and Society, p. 130.   [61]Porter, p. 212.

nicht haben!" Mendelssohn was outraged at the incredible

popularity of this banal poem. In November, 1840, he wrote

his friend Klingemann that the "defensive enthusiasm" of such

a text was nonsense:

> If I actually and definitely possess an object, it is
> useless to go on saying and singing that it belongs to
> nobody else. This song is now sung at the court in Ber-
> lin, and in the clubs and casinos here [in Leipzig], and
> of course, the musicians pounce on it like mad and are
> immortalizing themselves by setting it in their own way.[62]

In this very letter, Mendelssohn reveals his plan to resume

composition of Die erste Walpurgisnacht. Curiously he does

not seem to recognize the parallel between the sentiment and

syntax of the "Rheinlied" and that rhetorical question posed

in Goethe's poem: "Dein Licht, wer will (kann) es rauben?"

In his letter to Klingemann, the composer sneers at the popu-

lar song's assertions, whereas a similar sentiment would serve

as the defiant climax of his cantata. Consciously or not, the

serious artist breathes the same social atmosphere as does the

songsmith. Regardless of his condescension to the "Rheinlied,"

Mendelssohn's German audiences could no doubt hear in both the

song and the cantata a similarly stirring appeal to hold dear

the birthright of a people's spiritual beliefs.

England

The London Premiere

Throughout his career, Mendelssohn's relationship to

England--to individuals, to institutions, and to the general

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[62]Letters, ed. Selden-Goth, p. 299.

public--was a mutually happy one. "That smoky nest [London]
is fated for ever to be my favorite residence," he wrote.[63]
On his first visit to London in 1829, Mendelssohn had been
made an honorary member of the Philharmonic Society, to whom
he had dedicated his Symphony in C Minor.[64] In 1836, his
oratorio St. Paul had been successfully premiered in Liver-
pool,[65] and repeated at the Birmingham Festival of 1837, "a
great personal triumph for him, as composer, pianist, and
conductor."[66] He had been received by Queen Victoria and
Prince Albert at Buckingham Palace in 1842.[67] Surely when
Walpurgisnacht was given its first English performance on
July 8, 1844, less than a year and a half after its premiere
in Leipzig, performers and audience alike were predisposed
in its favor.

The work appeared on the eighth subscription concert of
the Philharmonic Society of London held in the Hanover Square
Rooms.[68] Mendelssohn himself conducted the marathon program:
Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony, a song by Nicolai, a Corelli
trio sonata, an opera scene, Walpurgisnacht, a violin

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[63]Quoted by Philip Radcliffe, Mendelssohn (London: J. M.
Dent, 1954), p. 28.

[64]Ibid., p. 17.

[65]Peter Ranft, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Eine Lebens-
chronik (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag, 1972), p. 51.

[66]Radcliffe, Mendelssohn, p. 38.   [67]Ibid., p. 46.

[68]For a picture of this hall, see Robert Elkin, The Old
Concert Rooms of London (London: Edward Arnold, 1955), facing
p. 96.

concerto, a selection from Beethoven's The Ruins of Athens,
and Weber's Overture to Oberon.[69] The Times critic com-
plained the next day that the program contained only one
symphony, "an infraction of the charter of this society,"
organized primarily for the performance of instrumental mu-
sic. But he nevertheless praised the new work by this "grace-
ful and original composer," and reported its enthusiastic
reception. "The chorus of 'Druid guards' was encored, and the
interest of the audience in the piece increased so rapidly as
it advanced, that nothing but its great length prevented an
encore of the remaining movements."[70] The orchestra would
have numbered around seventy players, professional musicians,
"esteemed as good as any in Europe."[71] We can assume that
the choir, too, was made up of professional singers, for "it
was not until 1881. . .that an amateur choir was heard in a
concert of the Royal Philharmonic Society."[72] Powerful
voices were no doubt required, because the hall was too small
to permit a large chorus. The Times reviewer of an 1850
Walpurgisnacht performance in the same hall found its chorus
too small, noting that "the chorus should at least be treble
the number, a desideratum which the accommodation afforded by

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[69]Myles Birket Foster, History of the Philharmonic
Society of London: 1813-1912 (London: John Lane, 1912), pp.
187-88.

[70]The Times (London), 9 July 1844, p. 6, col. 1.

[71]Elkin, p. 100.

[72]Raynor, Music and Society, p. 93.

the Hanover Square Rooms puts out of the question."[73]

An English translation of Goethe's text was used for
the London premiere, and, so far as we know, for all subse-
quent nineteenth-century performances of the work in England.
The earliest and most popular translation was made by "English
chemist, violinist, flower painter, and man of letters"[74]
William Bartholomew, responsible for English translations and
adaptations of most of Mendelssohn's vocal works, including
Elijah. Like many translations for singing, Bartholomew's
rhymed paraphrase is stilted, unidiomatic, and unwieldy in
spots, as demonstrated in the following two examples:

(from No. 3)   (translated)
Der Wald ist frei.   The woods are free,
Das Holz herbei,   Disbranch the tree,
und schichtet es zum Brande!   And pile the stems together!

(from No. 5)   (translated)
Diese dumpfen Pfaffenchristen,   Should a Christian foe assail us,
Lasst uns keck sie überlisten!   Aid a scheme that may avail us!

The musical effect is occasionally weakened by a change of
consonant or vowel color, as, for example, when the deeply
resonant and percussive German "kommt" becomes the English
"come." Then, too, some of the cultural allusions of the
original language, so meaningful to German audiences and per-
formers, are lost in translation. Thus, the final defiant
question "Dein Licht, wer kann es rauben?" becomes a more

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[73]The Times, 7 May 1850, p. 5, col. 6.

[74]George Grove, "William Bartholomew," Grove's Diction-
ary of Music and Musicians, 5th ed., 9 vols., ed. Eric Blom
(London: Macmillan, 1954), 1:462.

complacent assertion, "Thy light shall shine forever!" In-
stead of speaking implicitly, as did Goethe's text, to urgent
contemporary social and political issues which understandably
were not so pertinent in a more progressive England, the
English translation indulges a much more detached, antiquar-
ian sensibility. One English edition--available in the
United States today in a relatively inexpensive Kalmus re-
print (catalogue number 6304)--includes an introductory
paragraph that identifies St. Walpurga as a British saint,
further appealing to the British taste for vaguely medieval
or Gothic lore, a cultivated primitivism which ranged from
Macpherson's Ossianic poems (late 18th century), through
Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes" (1821), to the pre-Raphaelites
and Tennyson's Arthurian "The Idylls of the King" (_circa_
1850).

Other Performances in England

Walpurgisnacht was performed again by the Philharmonic
Society during the very next season, its first with a "per-
manent" conductor, Henry R. Bishop.[75] But perhaps the sole
luster to this second subscription concert on April 14, 1845,
was supplied by the presence of Queen Victoria and Prince Al-
bert. For, in addition to other inadequacies,

> . . .that fine work, Mendelssohn's Walpurgis Night,
> which created such delight, when played for the first

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[75]Henry Raynor, "London, VI (Concert Life): 4 (Concert
Organizations)," in The New Grove, 11: 197. Bishop led the
orchestra for only one season, succeeded by Michael Costa,
1846-54, who was very partial to Mendelssohn's works.

time last season, went off very unsatisfactorily. The
absence of the tenor [a Mr. Allen] obliged Herr Staudigl
[the bass] to attempt to fill the tenor part himself,
which, of course is not suited to his voice, and the
piece was completely sacrificed.[76]

In August, 1845, just three months after Walpurgisnacht

was performed in the Lower Rhine Music Festival, the work was

introduced at the prestigious English provincial Three Choirs

Festival held that year in Worcester. In choosing Walpurgis-

nacht, the festival directors were driven by a keen sense of

competition:

> The committee presiding over the Worcester festival
> were determined that the honour of doing justice to the
> exalted merits of Mendelssohn Bartholdy should not be
> monopolized by the members of the Philharmonic Society
> of London. They resolved to present one of his grandest
> and most ingenious works to the admiration of their fel-
> low citizens. . . .[77]

It is interesting that the German bass, Herr Staudigl, who

had sung both London performances, was engaged in Worcester

also:

> . . .[T]he whole weight of the leading vocal parts was
> sustained by Staudigl, and manfully did he grasp his
> subject. Commencing with the solo 'The man who flies,'
> he had no rest until the very last bar, and not even
> then, for the performance was entirely repeated from
> the point whence he had first set out, so delighted were
> the audience, both with his interpretation of the music,
> and with Mendelssohn's work itself.[78]

Staudigl's monopoly on the piece may have been interrupted the

following year when the piece was done at the Three Choirs

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[76]The Times, 15 April 1845, p. 6, col. 3.

[77]The Times, 30 August, 1845, p. 5, col. 2.

[78]Ibid.

Festival in Hereford. For one reviewer notes a policy al-
ready established there in 1842, that only "native" soloists
were used, since the foreigners asked too much money.[79] In
any case, Staudigl appeared in Walpurgisnacht once again when
the Three Choirs Festival moved on to Gloucester in September,
1846. Thus,

> . . .the Walpurgis Night has now been performed at the
> three festivals of Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester,
> and on each succeeding occasion it has been better
> appreciated and better relished, which, since it is one
> of Mendelssohn's greatest works, is honorable to the
> discernment of the amateurs of music in this part of
> the country.[80]

Walpurgisnacht moved along the English festival circuit,
being performed at the Norwich Musical Festival in September,
1848, and at the Birmingham Music Festival in September, 1852.
In many ways the "brilliant and thoroughly satisfactory con-
cert" in Norwich was typical of the English festival perfor-
mances of Walpurgisnacht. The work was featured in the Wed-
nesday evening concert, the second concert of the first day.
The audience was large: "901 persons in the nave, 79 in the
aisles."[81] If Lowell Mason's statistics for the Norwich Fes-
tival four years later were more or less true in 1848, the
orchestra numbered more than one hundred players, and the
chorus totalled 254 singers: 75 sopranos, 52 altos, 60 ten-
ors, and 67 basses. Of these, 34 sopranos were boys and 47

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[79] The Times, 9 September 1846, p. 5, col. 1.

[80] The Times, 23 September 1847, p. 8, col. 2.

[81] The Times, 15 September 1848, p. 4, col. 5.

altos were men.[82] But the incongruity of so many men singing
the role of pagan women, especially in movement No. 2, eli-
cited no special comment from the _Times_ reviewer, who merely
noted that the contralto solo in this movement was "perfectly
rendered by Miss M. Williams."[83]

Both in England and Germany, festival concerts frequent-
ly assumed a quasi-religious aura. Such concerts, especially
those held in church buildings, were considered by many to be
a form of worship. While visiting the Brunswick Festival in
1839, Chorley comments on this ambiguous relationship between
religious and aesthetic experience:

> Our Music Festivals are not direct acts of devotion
> because they are performances of holy words set to befit-
> ting music, and are often held in churches. . .[but] it
> is not the mere adoption of the text of Scripture by the
> musician--it is not the selection of Saints and Angels
> by the painter--that makes works of art operate with a
> hallowing influence upon our vexed and worldly spirits.
> It is that the high thoughts which the artist has brought
> to his task awaken in us those better and more spiritual
> aspirings, which are too often stifled in the heavy
> sleep of self-indulgence, or the harsh tumult of money-
> getting, or the dissipating frivolity of society.[84]

But a further source of ambiguity existed in the case of
Walpurgisnacht: its ostensibly anti-Christian theme might
nevertheless be taken as a celebration of Christian values.
One notion seemed to be that music so beautiful really _should_

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[82]Mason, p. 260. As English visitor Chorley (vol. 1,
p. 25) remarked upon hearing the women altos in the chorus at
a North German Music Festival in Brunswick: "It was a great
relief to be delivered from male countertenors. . . ."

[83]The _Times_, 15 September 1848, p. 4, col. 5.

[84]Chorley, v. 1, p. 12.

be Christian, or, as the _Times_ reviewer of the 1845 Worcester

festival put it, "The last solo of Staudigl. . .was more than

sublime--certainly more worthy of a congregation of Christians

than a concourse of sorcerers."[85]   The final chorus in its

English translation ("Thy light shall shine forever") could

certainly be easily confused with, say, the opening lines of

Elijah's concluding chorus: "And then shall your light break

forth. . . ."   But the problem was not confined to English

audiences, or festival audiences, for that matter.   Sebastian

Hensel recounts that

> at one of Fanny's performances, a very pious gentleman
> [was] moved by the 'beautiful _redeeming_ and elevating
> _Christian_' chorus at the end--the good man having under-
> stood the hymn of the Pagans after the expulsion of the
> Christian watchmen in this to him more satisfactory
> sense.[86]

The American Lowell Mason, describing the Tuesday evening con-

cert at the 1852 Birmingham Festival which followed a morning

performance of _Elijah_, seemed distressed that the audience

greeted both works with equal fervor:

> . . .[F]or aught we saw, the people were as much delighted
> and as well satisfied, with the success of the Druids, as
> with the triumphs of a more mild and rational religion
> based on the revelation of Him who came to _save from_
> _sin_.[87]

Whatever the setting, the cantata readily served that

blurring of the sacred and the secular which Victorian culture

often expressed.   Not surprisingly, therefore, it was soon

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[85]_The Times_, 30 August 1845, p. 5, col. 2.

[86]Hensel, vol. 1, p. 277.

[87]Mason, p. 220.

played in the mid-century temple to high-minded, progressive

materialism--the Crystal Palace. Built for the Great Exhibi-

tion of 1851, the Crystal Palace, "an enormous structure of

iron girders and glass, a kind of apotheosis of the Victorian

conservatory,"[88] was moved in 1852 from Hyde Park and re-

erected at Sydenham in southeast London. During the next

several years, the Crystal Palace was increasingly associated

with the "advancement of music." After 1854, its resident

wind band rapidly developed into a first-class symphony or-

chestra under August Manns, and regular "Saturday Concerts"

were played to vast and socially heterogeneous audiences.[89]

In August, 1857, soon after a mammoth three-day Handel

Festival at the Crystal Palace had attracted much attention,[90]

Mendelssohn's Walpurgisnacht was performed there as part of

the third concert of the newly-organized Vocal Association.

This group of about 300 amateur singers, consciously modelled

on the German Gesangvereine, was conducted by Julius Benedict,

assisted by Mendelssohn's close friend, Charles Horsley.[91]

For this particular concert, "all the music was selected from

the works of Mendelssohn, which was sufficient guarantee for

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[88] H. C. Colles, "Crystal Palace," Grove's Dictionary, 5th ed., 2:552.

[89] Raynor, Music and Society, p. 106.

[90] For a picture of the 1857 Handel Festival in the Crystal Palace, see Grove's Dictionary, 5th ed., 2: facing p. 55.

[91] Raynor, "London. . .", p. 90.

the excellence of the programme."[92] Walpurgisnacht came at
the end, a piece still new enough, loud enough, and inspiring
enough to suit the impressive, chic surroundings.

Walpurgisnacht continued to hold a prominent place in
the English concert repertory of the last quarter century,
although performances of the piece were apparently somewhat
sporadic. In 1884, the Times reviewer wrote that no sooner
had he regretted that Walpurgisnacht was but seldom heard in
London, when, within a fortnight early that year, there were
two different performances.[93] And one of these was at St.
James Hall, "by 1880, the premier concert hall of London."[94]

The United States

Among the flood of German immigrants to the United
States in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions were many
accomplished, dedicated professional musicians. They were
greatly responsible for an awakening and rapidly growing
American interest in German music generally, and, in some
cities, the establishment of veritable Mendelssohn "cults."[95]
It was Mendelssohn's oratorio Elijah that "most firmly

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[92]The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular, 8/175
(September 1857): 113, col. 2.

[93]The Times, 16 January 1884, p. 7, col. 6.

[94]Elkin, p. 152; see picture facing p. 154.

[95]Joseph A. Mussulman, "Mendelssohnism in America,"
Musical Quarterly 53/3 (July 1967): 336; H. Earle Johnson,
"Some First Performances in America," Journal of the American
Musicological Society, 5 (1932): 240.

captured the favor of American musicians and audiences."[96]
There were already performances of this work in New York and
Boston within two years of its Birmingham premiere.[97] Mendels-
sohn's Walpurgisnacht did not make nearly the same impact.
But by 1865, according to H. Earle Johnson, the cantata had
received performances in Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis,
Chicago, Boston, and Cincinnati.[98]

Its Boston premiere occurred on Walpurgis Night: April
30, 1862. It was presented "in the Music Hall, with full
orchestra, and a picked chorus of 100 voices, under the
direction of Mr. B. J. Lang."[99] Thanks to instructive notices
in Dwight's Journal, as well as private study of the work by
a "club of amateurs, conducted by Mr. J. C. D. Parker," Wal-
purgisnacht must have had a rather well-prepared and eager
audience.[100] Moreover, to ensure that the audience would
come away with "a clear impression of it. . .[and] in view of
the novelty and shortness" of it, Lang performed the piece
twice in the same evening--"a bold experiment, but we believe,
a good one."[101]

For many years, Walpurgisnacht's performance history in

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[96]Mussulman, p. 337.   [97]Ibid., p. 338.

[98]H. Earle Johnson, Hallelujah, Amen! The Story of the
Handel and Haydn Society of Boston (Boston: Bruce Humphries,
1965), p. 100.

[99]Dwight's Journal of Music, 20/25 (March 1862): 407.

[100]Ibid.

[101]Dwight's Journal of Music 21/5 (May 1862): 39.

Boston remained linked to conductor Lang, who led the Cecilia

Society's performances of it at the Harvard Musical Associa-

tion concerts on November 19 and December 24, 1874. Despite

the distractions of the holiday, the audience for the concert

on Christmas Eve was nevertheless "large and [their] attention

hearty and unflagging." The singers had apparently improved

with "renewed rehearsal," and Mr. Lang conducted with "more

self-possession and control of the orchestral forces."[102]

Better balance was achieved by a rather unusual placement of

choral and orchestral forces, in which the players were

> . . .grouped behind the voices. The sopranos and altos
> were massed together on one wing of the front, the
> tenors and basses on the other, for the reason that the
> choruses in this work for the most part are alternately
> for male and female voices.[103]

Lang was still conducting the work in 1887 when the Cecilia

Society presented it at Boston's Music Hall.[104]

Another of Boston's distinguished choruses, the Handel

and Haydn Society (founded in 1815), whose annals mention

frequent nineteenth-century performances of Mendelssohn's

sacred works--Lobgesang, the Psalms, Christus, and Elijah--

does not appear to have presented Walpurgisnacht before 1894.

And their performance of it that year, "six weeks before [Han-

del's] Belshazzar. . .suffered the same fate. . . ." Their

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[102]Dwight's Journal of Music 34/20 (January 1875): 366.

[103]Ibid.

[104]From an unidentified newspaper source, dated (in pen-
cil) 1 December 1887 (an Allen Brown clipping).

public didn't much like it![105]

Boston was clearly ahead of New York in giving Mendels-
sohn's cantata a "proper" performance, i.e. with orchestra.
The Oratorio Society of New York, "the longest-lived serious
choral organization" in that city, presented the work just
three years after Leopold Damrosch founded the society in
1873,[106] and again in 1883. For the earlier performance at
least, the accompaniment was rendered by "Mr. S. P. Warren,
Organist."[107]

While no rival for Elijah, Walpurgisnacht was still
popular enough in this country to warrant publication in the
1870s by Boston publisher Oliver Ditson. This edition pro-
vided only the "English version by W. Bartholomew, Esq."

Traditional Performance Practices

Since Mendelssohn himself was so directly involved in
early performances of Walpurgisnacht, one wonders about his
interpretation of the work in performance. For what subtle
nuances or perhaps even radical departures from the printed
score was Mendelssohn-the-conductor responsible? And what
about other nineteenth-century interpreters of Walpurgisnacht?

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[105]Johnson, Hallelujah, p. 184.

[106]Irving Kolodin, Francis D. Perkins, Susan Thiemann
Sommer, "New York: 7 (Choral Societies)," The New Grove 13:
184.

[107]Henry Edward Krehbiel, Notes on the Cultivation of
Choral Music and the Oratorio Society of New York (New York:
Schubeth, 1884; reprint New York: A. M. S. Press, 1970), pp.
89, 105.

Was there a "traditional" manner of performance for this work,
as there was for so many others? Contemporary sources--
letters, newspaper and journal articles--supply few details,
except regarding numbers of performers, and occasionally
their distribution or arrangement on stage, and perhaps also
the soloists' manner of delivery. By far the richest source
of pertinent information appears to be the twenty pages on
Walpurgisnacht in Siegfried Ochs' book, Der deutsche Gesang-
verein für gemischten Chor.[108] From the 1880s well into the
twentieth century, Berlin conductor Ochs (1858-1929) was a
prominent figure in European choral music. As a young man,
within four years he had changed a more-social-than-serious,
eleven-member "Gesellschaft der Freunde" into an extraordi-
narily well-disciplined and highly-accomplished "Ochs'schen
Gesangverein" numbering 140 members.[109] Beginning in 1886,
this ensemble (later called the Philharmonic Choir) appeared
regularly with the Berlin Philharmonic Choir under Hans von
Bülow.[110] Ochs set an extremely high performance standard
and was deeply interested in questions of authenticity. He
knew personally Joseph Joachim, Mendelssohn's concertmaster
in Leipzig from 1843, and others close to Mendelssohn, and
had himself examined scores with Mendelssohn's markings.

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[108](Berlin: Max Hesse, 1928), vol. 4, pp. 83-102.

[109]Martin G. Sarneck, "Siegfried Ochs," Musica 12 (1958):
231.

[110]Weissmann, p. 371.

Some of Ochs' more interesting observations concerning <u>Die</u>
<u>erste Walpurgisnacht</u> are outlined below.

1. It is a good idea to double the horns in certain
places, for example, at the beginning of the overture, but
not between 23 after "A" (m. 72) and 4 before "B" (m. 98).[111]

2. At the beginning of the overture, the tempo marking
♩. =60 should be observed exactly. It will be beneficial to
rehearse the strings separately ahead of time so that this
tempo will be possible. However, four measures before the
"Übergang zum Frühling," Mendelssohn changed to a slower tem-
po: ♩ =144. The marking ♩ =96 is in error.[112]

3. The difficulties in No. 3 are more with the orches-
tra--winds especially--than the chorus. The main problem:
playing soft enough![113]

4. In No. 5, the "kommt" should be sung very dark;
the initial "k" should not stick out. The word should sound
almost like "bomm," i.e. like the beat of a big bass drum.[114]

5. The tempo of No. 6 should remain under control, on
the border of <u>allegro molto</u>, but also not too slow. The bass
trills in this movement are intended to be performed. They
are not only feasible, but very easy. And when the neighbor
note is not exact, that makes just the right impression.
Throughout the movement, the word "kommt" should have a crisp
final "t," with no diminishing of energy at the word's end.

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[111]Ochs, p. 87.   [112]Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[113]Ibid., p. 91.   [114]Ibid., p. 94.

The real virtuosity for the chorus is in making everything
clean at such a fast tempo.[115]

6. In No. 7, at m. 28, Mendelssohn made a *ritard.*, one
not indicated in the score, giving special weight to the
three solo eighth-notes in the tympani. In Leipzig, Mendels-
sohn took the winds away for the phrase at m. 40 ("Ein reines,
reines Herz. . .") so that the chorus would sound more rever-
ent.[116]

7. Seven measures before No. 8 was a real high point
for Mendelssohn; one should give emphasis to the word "Wer"
both in the chorus and the orchestra. The *diminuendo* here
must be well supported and very intense; as von Bülow used to
say: "*diminuendo* means *forte*. . . ."[117]

8. Don't be in a hurry in No. 8; the men's chorus al-
ways tends to rush![118]

Although evidence concerning *Walpurgisnacht* specifically
is rather sparse, we may assume that Mendelssohn prepared the
piece for performance with the same patience and attention to
detail characteristic of his other rehearsals. As Chorley
said of Mendelssohn's preparation of a Brunswick Festival pro-
gram in 1839: ". . .all [was] practiced with care and intel-
ligence, not rattled over as a task."[119] Had later conduc-
tors more fully followed his example, Ochs suggests, the

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[115]Ibid., pp. 96-97, 99-100.   [116]Ibid., p. 100.

[117]Ibid., pp. 100-101.   [118]Ibid., p. 101.

[119]Chorley, vol. 1, p. 15.

cantata might have endured.[120] For a time, as the next
chapter records, its success sparked a flourishing of similar
compositions by others; by the end of the century, however,
its light had grown considerably dimmer.

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[120]Ochs, p. 83.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONCERT CANTATA AFTER WALPURGISNACHT

Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht resoundingly,
affirmatively answered Goethe's question to Zelter in 1799,
whether a dramatic ballad might serve as material for a
large-scale vocal composition. Its phenomenal success by
the mid-nineteenth century, along with a persistent demand
for repertory of its type, undoubtedly stimulated the crea-
tion of other, similar musical works. A rich flowering of
the dramatic cantata/ballad cantata genre--the term "concert
cantata" is as useful as any--was seen first in Mendelssohn's
immediate circle, in works by his close colleagues--Niels
Gade, Robert Schumann, and Ferdinand Hiller--performed in
"Mendelssohn territory" (Leipzig and Düsseldorf). Later, the
genre was cultivated in a wider sphere both by such prominent
composers as Bruch and Brahms, and by a multitude of lesser
talents.[1] The concert cantata was especially prominent in
the musical life of smaller cities, reaching its peak of de-
velopment in the 1880s.[2] This chapter will discuss a few
representative works chosen from the large repertory of

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[1]A list of seventy-three nineteenth-century German
concert cantatas after Walpurgisnacht is given in Appendix A.

[2]Jarczyk, pp. 146, 151.

compositions which could be considered the legacy of Men-
delssohn's Walpurgisnacht. We will look at their texts,
their most striking musical features, and their similarities
to or differences from Mendelssohn's Opus 60. Finally, this
discussion of the genre will conclude with some observations
on the declining interest in the concert cantata generally,
and Die erste Walpurgisnacht in particular.

Representative Works

Gade's Comala and Erlkönigs Tochter

It is easiest to see the direct influence of Mendelssohn
and Walpurgisnacht in two works by the Danish composer Niels
Gade (1817-90). Gade came to Leipzig in the autumn of 1843,
having received a stipend from the Danish king to further his
musical education in Germany.[3] By the 1845-46 concert season,
he had become Mendelssohn's associate conductor at the Gewand-
haus, where he served as principal conductor for several
seasons after Mendelssohn's death, before returning to Copen-
hagen. His cantatas Comala (1846) and Erlkönigs Tochter
(1853) were among the "most widely known in Germany."[4]

Comala was scored for four soloists, mixed chorus, and
an orchestra in which the harp was prominently featured. The
work was premiered somewhere else in Leipzig on March 23,

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[3]W. Neumann, Niels W. Gade, Siegfried Saloman (Kassel:
Ernst Balde, 1957), p. 5.

[4]Schwanbeck, p. 27. [in Deutschland am meisten ver-
breiteten Chorkantaten]

1846, at a concert for the poor, and repeated three days later by popular demand at the Gewandhaus.[5] Its ballad-like text is a tragic love story drawn from Ossian: the warrior Fingal departs for battle; his beloved Comala falsely imagines him overcome and takes her own life; Fingal returns victorious, only to confront and lament Comala's death.

The cantata lasts about forty minutes. It consists of twelve numbered movements, preceded by a brief instrumental introduction. In general, the movements are not really separate from each other. There are actual musical links, as the horn solo bridging Nos. 9 and 10; elsewhere _atacca_ is employed to indicate an immediate connection, as with Nos. 11 and 12. Also promoting unity within the overall structure is the use of the same music for the three warriors' choruses, Nos. 1, 3, and 9. Only the second movement is really isolated; this movement is further distinguished by a distinct recitative and aria scheme. Nine of twelve movements include chorus. Separate men's and women's choruses predominate, although the mixed chorus appears (as in _Walpurgisnacht_) at moments of special dramatic or structural significance, about midway through _Comala_ and particularly at the end. A grand, hymn-like final chorus of "Barden und Jungfrauen" is set in C major, like the conclusion of _Walpurgisnacht_.[6]

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[5]Fr. Niecks, "Niels W. Gade. A Sketch," _The Monthly Musical Record_ 13/146 (February 1883): 25.

[6]Schwanbeck (p. 28) calls this "a forerunner of choruses of similar character which one frequently encounters several

Two other more striking echoes of Walpurgisnacht are

found in the warriors' chorus (No. 1, also Nos. 3 and 9),

which like Mendelssohn's chorus of Druid watchmen (No. 5 in

Walpurgisnacht) opens with tympani strokes on a g minor ton-

ic, and continues with repeated staccato g's on the word

"Auf!" (like Mendelssohn's "kommt!"), and also in the text,

at least, of Comala's No. 6, where the women sing "lasst uns

fliehen, kommt, O kommt!" Gade's contemporaries praised Co-

mala's subtle nuances and Nordic mysticism,[7] but the work now

seems monochromatic, morose, and heavy-handed, especially

compared to Walpurgisnacht.

Erlkönigs Tochter is a similarly melancholy composition,

but "significantly richer in colors and ideas" than Comala.[8]

Its ballad text is a Danish folk legend, familiar already

from Loewe's popular setting for solo voice and piano: Herr

Oluf resists seduction by the Erl-king's daughter on his wed-

ding night, but cannot escape her curse, and following a wild

ride home, falls dead in the midst of the bridal procession.

Gade organizes the cantata in three acts, framed by a brief

choral prologue and epilogue which use the same music. The

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decades later in cantatas for men's chorus." [eine Vorahnung
der Chöre ähnlichen Ausdruckscharakters, wie sie Jahrzehnte
später in den Männerchorkantaten vielfach anzutreffen waren.]

[7]Niecks, p. 26.

[8]Hermann Kretzschmar, "Oratorien und weltliche Chor-
werke," in Führer durch den Concertsaal, vol. 2, part 2
(Leipzig: A. G. Liebeskind, 1890), p. 352. [Bedeutend reicher
an Farben und Ideen]

first and third acts consist of separate and distinct move-
ments, but the "numbers" of the second act flow as one con-
tinual musical and dramatic unit. This most psychologically
compelling portion of the work begins with an imaginative
instrumental introduction, in which flutes, clarinets, horns,
and muted violins create "a genuinely Romantic, magical
sound,"[9] and is climaxed by Oluf's wild ride. Here Gade
effectively employs many of the same musical cliches found
in Mendelssohn's "Rundgeheule," the wild ride in Walpurgis-
nacht: 6/8 meter, minor mode, chromatic lines, and octave
leaps. In Erlkönigs Tochter the chorus is the primary "car-
rier of epic elements" and hardly ever participates in the
action.[10] The choral writing seems generally less technically
demanding and finally also less interesting than in Walpur-
gisnacht.

Schumann's Ballad Cantatas

Between 1851 and 1853, while he served as director of
the orchestra and Gesangverein in Düsseldorf, Robert Schumann
composed four ballad cantatas. The first three--Der Königs-
sohn, Des Sängers Fluch and Vom Pagen und der Königstochter--
were for several soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra; the
fourth--Das Glück von Edenhall--was for tenor and bass solo-
ists, men's chorus and orchestra. These works were the last

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[9]Schwanbeck, p. 30. [ein echt romantischer Klang-
zauber]

[10]Ibid., p. 29. [Träger des epischen Elements]

important milestone in Schumann's continual efforts to forge
"a new genre for the concert hall."[11] Two oratorio-sized
works on ballad texts--Das Paradies und die Peri (1843) and
Der Rose Pilgerfahrt (completed in a version for piano in
May, 1851),[12] as well as his sole opera, Genoveva (premiered
rather unsuccessfully just a few years earlier), were also a
preliminary phase in his developing dramatic concert works
of more modest dimensions. Although Schumann considered his
efforts pioneering, he was undoubtedly influenced by the can-
tatas of Mendelssohn and Gade, works which he knew and ad-
mired.[13] But Schumann was truly the first systematically to
write a whole series of such works. As his contemporary
Peter Lohmann so perceptively stated,

> What was earlier created by Loewe, Mendelssohn, Gade
> and others in only single instances, we observe [in
> Schumann] in what approaches an organic, self-conscious,
> critically-grounded development, the introduction and
> establishment of an independent genre.[14]

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[11]Susanne Popp, Untersuchungen zu Robert Schumanns
Chorkompositionen (Ph.D. dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich
Wilhelms Universität, 1971), pp. 36-41; Popp traces Schumann's
use of the terms "neue Genre" or "neue Gattung" in his criti-
cism of others' works (e.g. the "secular oratorios" of
Schneider and Loewe) and in regard to his own works.

[12]Gerald Abraham, "Robert Schumann," in Grove's Dic-
tionary, 5th ed., 7:619.

[13]Abraham ("Schumann," p. 620) says that Walpurgisnacht
was slated by Schumann for performance in Düsseldorf in 1853,
before his choir all but disintegrated. According to Ber-
thold Litzmann, Comala was the first work rehearsed by Schu-
mann's Gesangverein in 1850; see Clara Schumann: An Artist's
Life, trans. Grace E, Hadow, 2 vols. (New York: Vienna House,
1972; reprint of the 1913 ed.), vol. 2, p. 4.

[14]Peter Lohmann, "Robert Schumann's Balladen," NZfM

Schumann's Des Sängers Fluch

Lohmann's enthusiasm notwithstanding, Schumann's con-
cert cantatas never generated such excitement as did Die
erste Walpurgisnacht. Writing in 1890, Kretzschmar's left-
handed compliment suggests that most of them should be
viewed as "biographical documents," rather than viable con-
cert pieces.[15] In 1913, Leopold Hirschberg has little good
to say about any of the ballad cantatas, calling Der Königs-
sohn, for example, an embarrassment to the composer.[16] Of
the four ballad cantatas, Kretzschmar prefers Vom Pagen und
der Königstochter, in his opinion "a full, astonishingly rich
masterpiece."[17] Schwanbeck also praises this work, in which
he feels "Schumann stands again fully at the height of his
powers."[18] However, Des Sängers Fluch, composed in 1852,
premiered in Elberfeld in 1857, was apparently the most fre-
quently performed of these works, and also the most widely
acclaimed in its day.[19] It had the additional distinction

53/2 (July 1860): 9. [Was in einzelnen Fällen von Löwe, Men-
delssohn, Gade u.A. vorgewirkt war, sehen wir hier auf dem
Wege organischer, selbst bewusster, kritisch begründeter Ent-
wicklung als selbstständige Gattung eingeführt und festge-
setzt.]

[15]Kretzschmar, "Oratorien," p. 343.

[16]Robert Schumanns Tondichtungen balladischen Charak-
ters (Langensalza: H. Beyer, 1913), p. 35.

[17]Kretzschmar, "Oratorien," p. 346. [ein volles,
staunenwertes, reiches Meisterwerk]

[18]Schwanbeck, p. 23. [Hier steht Schumann wieder völlig
auf der Höhe seiner schöpferischen Kraft.]

[19]Jarczyk, p. 40.

of being dedicated to Johannes Brahms.

The text of Des Sängers Fluch is based on a well-known
1814 poem of Ludwig Uhland, a ballad which had typically
passed through several versions before Uhland's.[20] A con-
frontation between "the power of the spirit and the power of
the sword,"[21] the story concerns an old harper[22] and his
youthful companion, who are summoned to entertain a melan-
choly king and queen. The youth's nostalgic, patriotic songs
evoke the queen's sympathy and favor, in turn enraging the
jealous king who slays the youth. As the harper carries away
the corpse, he utters a curse that the castle be forever bar-
ren of life and song and that the king go unrecorded in his-
tory. For Königssohn, Schumann had set a Uhland ballad more
or less intact, but Des Sängers Fluch required considerable
reworking. For this task, Schumann sought the help of li-
brettist Richard Pohl in a letter of May, 1851, which echoes
Goethe's to Zelter in 1799:

> It seems to me that many ballads, with little effort
> and good results, could be rendered nicely as concert
> pieces for soloists, chorus, and orchestra. I think

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[20]According to a citation in Waterman T. Hewett, Poems
of Uhland (New York: Macmillan, 1904), p. 318, the poem has
been traced by R. M. Werner to a Scottish source, via Thomas
Percy's "Young Waters," and Herder's "Der eigersuchtige
König."

[21]Harmut Froeschle, Ludwig Uhland und die Romantik
(Cologne: Bohlau, 1973), p. 75. [den ewigen Kampf zwischen
der Macht des Geistes und des Schwertes]

[22]whose paternal manner, fierce loyalty and quasi-
divine powers liken him to the Harper in Goethe's Wilhelm
Meister.

this is particularly true of Uhland's Des Sängers
Fluch. . . .[23]

Pohl and Schumann collaborated to both intensify the
drama of Uhland's text and to facilitate a musical rendering
of it.[24] In other words, their reworking attempted what
Goethe had already done for the compser of Walpurgisnacht.
They changed verb tenses from past to present, pronouns from
reflexive to personal, and narrative to dialogue. From Uh-
land's seventh strophe, Pohl fashioned a series of three in-
dependent songs--a troubador song, a ballad, and a patriotic
song--borrowing lines, even whole verses from other Uhland
poems.[25] Thus he provided a solo each and duet for tenor
and bass, creating the opportunity for "characteristic"
music of somewhat standard moods and almost guaranteed audi-
ence appeal. The duet "Den Frühling kündet der Orkane sau-
sen," for example, with its references to "Deutschlands
Heldensöhnen" and to "jungen Freiheit Blüthen" was a bit of
surefire nationalism. Another such virtually self-contained
insert, the tenor solo "An den Ufern der Provence," eventually

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[23]Cited by Popp (p. 149) and also Jarczyk (p. 40).
[Mir fiel ein, dass manche Ballade mit leichter Mühe und
guter Wirkung als Concert-Musikstück für Solostimmen, Chor,
und Orchester zu behandeln wäre. Vor Allem hab' ich es auf
'Des Sängers Fluch' von Uhland abgesehen. . .]

[24]Jarczyk (pp. 40-59) discusses this collaboration most
fully.

[25]According to Jarczyk (pp. 58-59), these modifications
were initially praised by critics, but soon castigated by
later writers.

became more famous than the cantata itself.[26]

For the most part, the fourteen numbers in Des Sängers
Fluch flow from one to the next without pause, in the manner
of a single opera act of the period, such as Schumann's own
Genoveva.[27] Three caesurae between Nos. 2-3, 3-4, and 11-12
serve to mark changes of scene, changes reinforced by distant
key relationships and radically different orchestration. Des
Sängers Fluch begins in the key of f# minor, and ends in c
minor, this tritone relationship probably symbolic of some
aspect of the story, perhaps the curse? Tension builds grad-
ually in the course of the work; it is increased with each
jarring deceptive cadence--between Nos. 5-6, 7-8, 9-10--as
the jealous king disrupts the natural conclusion of each song.
Schumann downplays any traditional distinctions between aria
and recitative, although certain passages may be viewed as
aria-like (No. 4, for example), introduced by recitative-like
passages (No. 3, m. 28-56, for example) of rapidly modulating
harmony and orchestral punctuation.[28] The soloists usually
employ a fully-orchestrated "arioso" style, characterized by
declamatory, theatrical diction,[29] and sinking phrase endings.
Schwanbeck identifies this melodic style as the weakest as-
pect of the work.[30] Clearly, contemporary audiences also
found the arioso passages confusing and even monotonous,

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[26]Lohmann, p. 27; Ochs, p. 104.

[27]Jarczyk, p. 61.   [28]Ibid., p. 63.

[29]Ibid., p. 84.   [30]Schwanbeck, p. 20.

although Lohmann defends the style as a laudable experiment,
and one example of Wagner's strong influence on Schumann at
this time.[31]

Unlike Schumann's other choral-orchestral works with
numerous choruses for separate men's and women's choruses,
all six of the choral passages in Des Sängers Fluch are for
mixed voices. The modest demands on vocal range and tech-
nique must somewhat reflect the limited capabilities of Schu-
mann's choral forces in Düsseldorf, or rather their abilities
under his incompetent leadership.[32] "Safe and dull homo-
phonic plodding" would too harshly characterize the predomi-
nantly chordal writing in these choruses.[33] But in fact
there is rarely any contrapuntal interest, although the four
parts occasionally function in pairs (as in one particularly
memorable passage given in Example 13 below). Although the
"Höflingschar" (crowd of courtiers) assumes a more imposing
presence in the musical work than in Uhland's poem, neverthe-
less its role is passive, as witness to or commentator on the
action. In the final moments, the chorus does briefly become
narrator, recapitulating in hushed tones and in a poignant
new harmonization the alto narrator's tune from the cantata's

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[31]Lohmann, p. 27.

[32]Percy Young, Tragic Muse: The Life and Works of
Robert Schumann (London: Hutchinson, 1957), p. 179; see also
Litzmann, pp. 9-15.

[33]John Horton, "The Choral Works," in Schumann, A
Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London: Oxford, 1952), p. 284.

Example 13. Des Sängers Fluch, No. 11, m. 91-102

opening. This touching but rather depressing conclusion of
Des Sängers Fluch, so unlike the uplifting, hopeful finale
of Walpurgisnacht, was consistent with the generally more
serious, melancholy character--the "ernsten Balladenton"[34]--
of the whole cantata. Although a quality much in vogue in
Schumann's time, such humorless, lifeless, "archaicizing
pathos"[35] was not a musical emotion likely to fix such a
piece in the concert repertory.

Hiller's Die Lorelei

    Mendelssohn and Ferdinand Hiller (1811-1885) had been

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[34]Kretzschmar, "Oratorien," p. 353.

[35]Jarczyk, p. 77. [archaisierendes Pathos]

friends from early childhood,[36] and close musical associates
in later life. During the winter season of 1843-44, two
years before Gade, Hiller was Mendelssohn's substitute con-
ductor in the Gewandhaus. Hiller authored a book of "recol-
lections" of Mendelssohn, and also an account of Goethe's
musical activities.[37] Composer of two oratorios well-known
in his time--Die Zerstörung Jerusalems and Saul--Hiller also
wrote a number of sacred and secular cantatas, including Die
Lorelei, a work which was apparently "remarkably popular
for several decades."[38]

First performed in Cologne in November, 1854, Hiller's
Lorelei shows a more decided Mendelssohn influence than
Schumann's Des Sängers Fluch. Its libretto, Wolfgang von
Königswinter's version of a German folk legend concerning
the seduction of a young fisherman by the Rhine maiden Lore-
lei and her enchanting court of nixies, was also the subject
of Mendelssohn's unfinished opera.[39] Hiller's cantata opens
with an unmistakable parallel to movement No. 1 of

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[36]According to Ranft (p. 11), they met in July, 1822,
when Mendelssohn was thirteen, Hiller nine.

[37]Ernst Wolff, "Ferdinand Hiller," in NZfM 78/41 (Octo-
ber 1911): 554-55.

[38]Schwanbeck, p. 31. [das auf Jahrzehnte hinaus ausser-
ordentlich beliebt war]

[39]Mendelssohn used a libretto by Emanuel Geibel, later
set by Max Bruch (1863); see Reinhold Sietz, "Die musikalische
Gestaltung der Loreleysage bei Max Bruch, Felix Mendelssohn
und Ferdinand Hiller," in Max Bruch-Studien, ed. Dietrich
Kämper, Beiträge zur rheinischen Musikgeschichte, 87 (Cologne:
Arno, 1970), pp. 14-45.

Walpurgisnacht: a women's chorus celebrating the coming of
May. There is an unusual emphasis on the women's chorus
throughout this work, which, in addition to several sections
for men's chorus alone, includes only a few measures for
mixed voices. Hiller's Lorelei consists of six numbered
movements. Several of these are connected; the last is very
long, with many sub-sections. As in Gade's Comala, the second
movement is a separate soprano aria. This cantata seems one
of the more attractive of the genre, relatively compact, and
definitely colorful, with variously graceful and passionate
moods.

Bruch's Scenen aus der Frithjofs-Sage

Max Bruch (1838-1920) was Hiller's student in Cologne
in the mid-1850s, during the time of Lorelei's composition
and first performance.[40] Prominent among the next generation
of German composers, Bruch's influence was felt perticularly
in the cities of Koblenz, Sondershausen, Berlin, Bonn, Liver-
pool, and Breslau, where he was active as music director of
numerous choral and instrumental Vereine. In additon to his
still-famous Violin Concertos and the Scottish Fantasy, his
opera Loreley, and several oratorios, Max Bruch composed a
great number of concert cantatas.

Bruch's Opus 23, Scenen aus der Frithjofs-Sage, was
completed in 1861, then revised and first performed in

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[40]Karl Gustav Fellerer, Max Bruch: 1838-1920, Beiträge
zur rheinische Musikgeschichte, 103 (Cologne: Arno, 1974),
pp. 19-26.

Aachen in November, 1864, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Gesangverein Concordia.[41] The work--dedicated to Clara Schumann--was scored for soprano and baritone soloists, orchestra and men's chorus. It stands as the first really significant work in this genre for male voices. Bruch used one portion of a text by Esias Tegner, a rather complicated Norse legend. The story line may be summarized: upon returning from exile, the hero Frithjof finds his beloved Ingeborg married to King Ring; the enraged Frithjof destroys a sacred temple and is again banished; he returns in disguise, but eventually serves, even saves his rival, who finally commits suicide to enable Frithjof's marriage to Ingeborg.

The cantata consists of six rather substantial scenes, all separate from each other except Nos. 3 and 4 which are connected. The first scene begins with an unusually long instrumental introduction--18 of 176 total pages of the score. Briefer orchestral preludes occur in several other scenes, featuring colorful, text-related timbres--trumpets and horns for the bridal procession in scene 2, lower brass for the "seltsam Grauen" of scene 3, the harp for the billows and sea breezes of scene 6. The chorus in this work plays a far from passive role; rather it is a significant "carrier of

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[41]For an excellent discussion of the work's composition, see Paul Mies, "Zur Entstehung des 'Frithjof,' Scenen aus der Frithjofsage von Esais Tegner, Op. 23 von Max Bruch," in Max Bruch-Studien, ed. Dietrich Kämper, Beiträge zur rheinische Musikgeschichte, 87 (Cologne: Arno, 1970), pp. 46-56.

the action."[42] The choral writing is most dramatic in the
third scene during the burning of the temple and Frithjof's
escape. Here the unison writing for the chorus of priests is
reminiscent of choral unisons in Walpurgisnacht--particularly
in No. 8. Schwanbeck also draws parallels to similar passages
in Mendelssohn's incidental music to Antigone and Oedipus auf
Colonos.[43] A particularly effective contrast is achieved with
the juxtaposition of scenes 3 and 4, the jarring sforzandos
and wild cries of woe in the former, the gentle ease of the
solo quartet with chorus in the latter. Scene 5 contains what
seems by this date to be an almost requisite detachable solo
aria, "once a favorite concert piece among female singers."[44]
Scene 6 is a mostly homophonic chorus, whose broad, sweeping
gestures recall the finale of Gade's Comala.

Bruch's Frithjof-Scenen "overtook the concert hall with
unbelievable speed"[45] and quickly became a standard repertory
item for male choral societies. Such popularity was never
really true of Brahms' cantata Rinaldo, which dates from the
same time.[46]

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[42]Schwanbeck, p. 33. [Träger des Geschehens]

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., p. 34. [ein früher bei Sängerinnen beliebtes
Konzertstück]

[45]Ibid., p. 35. [eroberte mit ungläublicher Schnellig-
keit die Konzertsäle]

[46]Walter Niemann, Brahms, trans. Catherine Alison
Phillips (New York: Knopf, 1930), p. 438.

Brahms' Rinaldo

When Brahms left Hamburg for Vienna in 1862, he did so, according to Heinz Becker, in order to build an "unassailable artistic reputation that would enable the Hamburg senate to summon him back from beyond their city walls." But in the end, he was passed over for the desired Hamburg post, and he "retreated to the suburb of Blankensee to work on the cantata Rinaldo."[47] His composition of Rinaldo (Brahms' Opus 50) stretched over most of the decade of the 1860s, the same period that he was occupied with composition of the Requiem. According to Geiringer, most of Rinaldo was written in the summer of 1863; Schwanbeck says that all but the final chorus had been finished already by 1861.[48] In any case, the final chorus was added in 1868, and Rinaldo was premiered by the Akademischen Gesangverein of Vienna in February, 1869.

Its text is but one of many features which make Rinaldo something of an oddity among concert cantatas of its time. And Brahms' choice of a Goethe poem over one by some more currently fashionable ballad-maker, suggests at least one link to Mendelssohn. The poem "Rinaldo"--consistently classified by Goethe as a cantata, not a ballad--was, like "Die erste Walpurgisnacht," intended for musical setting.

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[47] "Johannes Brahms," The New Grove 3:157.

[48] Karl Geiringer, Brahms, His Life and Work, trans. H. B. Weiner and Bernard Miall, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford, 1947), p. 308; Schwanbeck, p. 39.

It, too, was unsuccessfully attempted by Zelter;[49] settings of

Goethe's "Rinaldo" by Peter von Winter (1811) and Gottfried

Hermann (1867) pre-date Brahms'. The story concerns a Crusa-

der, Rinaldo, who, on his way back from the Holy Land, has

fallen into debauchery with the enchantress, Armida. Support-

ed by loyal comrades, Rinaldo finally recognizes his misdeeds,

and, despite Armida's great wrath, finds the courage to set

sail for home. Unlike the vivid, externally dramatic situa-

tions depicted in the texts of Walpurgisnacht, Comala, and the

Frithjof-Scenen--the nocturnal face-off of Druids and Chris-

tians, for example, or Comala's suicide, or the passionate ex-

changes between Frithjof and Ingeborg--the conflict in Rin-

aldo is essentially internal. The hero struggles with moral

issues; the drama is psychological rather than eventful.[50]

The poem contains no speaking part for one of its central

characters, Armida; therefore Brahms' cantata is scored for

only one soloist (tenor), male chorus and orchestra.

Rinaldo lasts about thirty-five minutes. Brahms adopts

Goethe's formal scheme: choral sections in alternation with

Rinaldo's "three great love songs."[51] The work consists of

seven sections, unnumbered, the first six of which flow to-

gether without pause. The final section, entitled "Auf

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[49]Schwanbeck, pp. 11-12.

[50]Brian Primmer, record jacket notes for Brahms' Rinal-
do, performed by the New Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by
Claudio Abbado (London OS26106).

[51]Niemann, p. 439.

dem Meere," is set apart by the preceding complete cadence.
This concluding movement, apparently sanctioned by Brahms as
a separate detachable number,[52] seems much fresher, more vital
than the rest of the work. It contains some of the most im-
pressive choral writing, with interestingly varied textures
including sections of energetic counterpoint and passages for
double chorus (TTBB/TTBB). Rinaldo's overall tonal scheme,
which begins and ends in E-flat major, is either as rambling
as it seems, or, indeed intricately organized and highly
symbolic, as Brian Primmer suggests.[53] Not surprisingly, the
tonal plan depends heavily on third relationships and juxta-
positions of major and minor mode. Obviously significant
are the fall from E major to C major-c minor approximately
midway in the work--at the nadir of Rinaldo's depravity--and
the subsequent turn upwards to D-flat major--coincidental with
the reference to the diamond mirror so important to Rinaldo's
salvation. Even Brahms' "use and development of a few Leit-
motives, among which Armida's siren call. . . is the most im-
portant,"[54] does not overcome a decided lack of unity and
direction in the work.

Rinaldo's choruses are much more technically demanding
than, say, Bruch's Frithjof-Scenen, especially for the tenors
"as regards both volume and compass in the high register."[55]
And their emotional content is certainly less accessible, more

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[52]Ibid.   [53]Record jacket notes to Brahms' Rinaldo.
[54]Niemann, p. 440.   [55]Ibid.

intellectual and restrained, than the cantata choruses of Mendelssohn, Gade, and others. It is interesting to compare the treatments of demonic disguise in Walpurgisnacht and Rinaldo. Whereas the "Teufelspuk" in Walpurgisnacht is a tour-de-force for chorus, in Rinaldo, Brahms must necessarily depict the transformed Armida, who "blieht und handelt gleich wie Dämonen" (looks and acts exactly as devils do), entirely in the orchestra. Schwanbeck suggests that here Brahms, so conservative in other respects, created an entirely up-to-date, almost Wagnerian program music.[56] But how disappointing for the chorus, to be left on the sidelines!

Despite its many attractive details--"and it is the detail that really matters in the work"[57]--Brahms' Rinaldo leaves a general impression of "pleasant picturesqueness,"[58] certainly less tightly-woven and dramatically powerful than the Frithjof-Scenen (at one extreme) or Walpurgisnacht.

Bruch's Das Feuerkreuz

Bruch's Opus 52, Das Feuerkreuz, is an excellent work, one which can serve to epitomize the "mature," later-nine-teenth-century German concert cantata. It was composed in 1889 and dedicated to the Sing-Akademie of the small city of Breslau.

The text of Das Feuerkreuz

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[56]Schwanbeck, pp. 41-42.   [57]Geiringer, p. 309.

[58]Philip Radcliffe, "Johannes Brahms," Grove's Dictionary, 5th ed., 1:887.

> . . .belongs among the best cantata librettos of the
> time. . . . .Of course, one should not look for a profound
> treatment of subjects; this presentation strives for a
> stunning external effect. The solemnity of the language
> matches the nobility of the material. A tendency towards
> the monumental binds [librettist Heinrich] Bulthaupt and
> Bruch.[59]

Bulthaupt's reworking of Walter Scott's piece of Scottish

folklore combines elements familiar from numerous other can-

tata texts: just after the wedding of Mary and Norman, the

bearer of a fiery cross arrives to summon the bridegroom to

war; Mary prays for her beloved, and observes the battle from

afar; Clan Alpine is victorious, and Norman safely returns.

The story's happy ending would no doubt have been compatible

with the more optimistic political climate of Germany in the

1880s.

The work is scored for soprano, baritone, and bass solo-

ists, mixed chorus, and orchestra. Das Feuerkreuz is approxi-

mately the same length as Walpurgisnacht, Comala, Des Sängers

Fluch, and Rinaldo: about forty minutes. Following a short

instrumental prelude, its eight numbered movements flow with-

out pause, except for two separate aria-like solo movements--

Nos. 4 and 6, the latter an "Ave Maria." Bruch takes full

advantage of a libretto offering a wide range of expressive

possibilities. He creates music to match a variety of

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[59]Schwanbeck, p. 36. [. . .gehört zu den besten Kanta-
tendichtungen der Zeit. . . . Eine vertiefte Behandlung des
Gegenstandes darf man freilich nicht erwarten; die Darstel-
lung erstrebt mehr eine glänzende aussere Wirkung. Das
Pathos der Sprache entspricht der Erhabenheit des Stoffes.
Ein Zug sum Monumentalen verbindet Bulthaupt mit Bruch.]

"characteristic" moods and scenes; a misty landscape, a
tense battle, private devotion, a public, patriotic celebra-
tion, etc. The emphasis in Das Feuerkreuz is on the chorus,
which functions variously as narrator, participant and com-
mentator. The choruses are technically simple, but Bruch
keeps them interesting and lively, including a variety of
textures--unison passages and also counterpoint carefully
placed at moments of great excitement or to mark the ends of
longer sections.

In short, Das Feuerkreuz is a work of real substance,
and probably more so than the cantatas of Schumann, for exam-
ple, deserves a modern revival. But it lacks the distinctive
innovations that charge Mendelssohn's pioneering composition
a half-century earlier. At the outset of the development of
the concert cantata, Die erste Walpurgisnacht embodied the
genre's best potential without being complacently convention-
al.

"Untergang"

For a half century following Walpurgisnacht's premiere
in Leipzig, the concert cantata was an important genre of
choral music. But even the finest examples of the kind, such
as Mendelssohn's, were not destined to hold the concert stage
in the twentieth century. An exhaustive explanation of this
decline lies beyond the scope of this thesis, but a few gen-
eral reasons serve as preliminary to the particular case of
Die erste Walpurgisnacht.

Most works in the genre, like the typical examples above, drew upon highly dramatic Teutonic legends, and yet obviously could not give those subjects the full-scale dramatic rendering possible in contemporary opera. As Jarczyk observes, the choral cantata, in the course of its development, seemed to find its place in smaller cities, rarely in the musical mainstream--Walpurgisnacht being exceptional in this regard.[60] The more typical concert cantata seemed most suited for relatively small-time, small-town performance. Thus, on the one hand, the genre tended to be overshadowed by the grander developments in operatic and symphonic music. On the other hand, lacking a sacred subject, such pieces were also unsuitable for liturgical performance, just at a time when the full legacy of Baroque choral works was being rediscovered. Ironically, Mendelssohn's own revival of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, like the burgeoning studies of the German musicologists, helped open up a whole "new" repertory suitable for choral organizations, whether church or civic choirs. After 1900 that earlier music would become far better known than the cantatas of the nineteenth century.

Although an exceptional example of the concert cantata, Die erste Walpurgisnacht suffered the general fate of the genre. For all its innovative excellence, it did not continue to fare well. What accounts for the virtual disappearance of this fine work from the common repertory of the twentieth

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[60]Jarczyk, pp. 147, 151.

century? Four factors negatively affected Die erste
Walpurgisnacht: 1) the general decline of Mendelssohn's
reputation; 2) the impact of Wagner and the inflated post-
Romantic musical aesthetic; 3) the standardization of concert
program format; and 4) some of its own relatively unmarket-
able features.

1) In January, 1852, five years after Mendelssohn's
death, Lowell Mason's description of a Gewandhaus concert
mentioned that

> the first object of attention, after entering the room,
> is a fine large medallion of Mendelssohn, back of the
> orchestra; there is no other bust or picture in the
> room. . . .At almost every concert, more or less of his
> music is performed; his memory is cherished, not only
> here, where he was so well known, but by all the musi-
> cal world. . . .[61]

But Henry Chorley in 1854 suggested that Mendelssohn's lus-
tre was tarnishing quickly, even among his own countrymen:

> . . .[I]t becomes sickening to think, that no sooner
> was he cold in his grave, than his shallow and fickle
> townsmen began to question among themselves how far
> they had been administering to a real greatness. . . .
> [T]his sudden coolness and indifference, nay even de-
> preciation, with which the name and works of Mendels-
> sohn were treated immediately after his decease, in his
> own land, and by his own townsmen, must be recorded as
> facts. . . .[62]

This early, dramatic reversal suggests how tenuous was Men-
delssohn's hold on the musical imagination at mid-century.
His career and his reputation--in the eyes of both the larg-
er audience and of the arbiters of artistic fashion--had
been meteoric. From A Midsummer Night's Dream on, his music

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[61]Mason, p. 20.   [62]Chorley, v. 2, p. 401.

had been readily captivating, accessible to a large public,
charmingly popular. Almost as readily, when new musical
fashions developed, much of his work lost favor, criticized
as too facile, too accessible, superficial, out-of-date.

But this ephemerality of criticism and taste in Mendels-
sohn's case especially reflects a larger question about the
composer's place in German culture. Even so unmistakably
Germanic a piece as Die erste Walpurgisnacht proved suscepti-
ble to a growing suspicion that Mendelssohn was somehow peri-
pheral to the nation's artistic mainstream. Anonymously and
self-servingly, Wagner himself raised such doubts within
three years of Mendelssohn's death. In 1850, his pamphlet,
"Judaism in Music," argued that Jewish artists as cultural
outsiders could not truly articulate essentially Germanic
material; Mendelssohn was mentioned as a prominent example.
(Richard Freigedank, the pamphlet's alleged author, was re-
vealed in 1868 to be the pseudonym of Richard Wagner.[63]) Such
sentiments were but early signs of a century-long attempt to
repudiate the contributions of Mendelssohn and other artists
of Jewish heritage. Even in his own lifetime, Mendelssohn
had suffered from such suspicions. For a year the Berlin
Singakademie pondered his appointment as director before re-
jecting him in part because of misgivings whether a "Jew"
could appropriately lead its sacred Christian repertory.[64]

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[63]Heinrich Eduard Jacob, Felix Mendelssohn and His
Times, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (London: Barrie and
Rockliff, 1959), pp. 328-338 passim.

[64]Weissmann, pp. 187-88.

A century later, such anti-Semitism would find its full sym-
bolic expression when in 1937 the Leipzig town fathers carted
off for scrap metal the Gewandhaus statue of Mendelssohn.[65]

For other reasons Mendelssohn would also become a fal-
len idol in England and in America. Although a certain few
of his works, such as the Overture to A Midsummer Night's
Dream and Elijah, were permanent fixtures in the English
repertory, the fanatic devotion to Mendelssohn had waned by
1900. "Since everything Victorian was suspect, so was Men-
delssohn."[66] Irreverently acid as ever, George Bernard Shaw,
who, before embracing the more passionate musical drama of
Verdi, Wagner, and Strauss, had once praised Mendelssohn,
sneered: "[Mendelssohn] is, indeed, the great composer of
the century for all those to whom Tennyson is the great poet
of the century."[67] Moreover, the rise of a substantial
English school of composers around 1900, and the growing
pre-war enmity towards Germany contributed to the English
coolness towards Mendelssohn. In America meanwhile, although
Mendelssohn's place in the repertory remained stable, his
reputation was based on a limited list of favorite works from
which Walpurgisnacht was absent.[68] Also, no doubt, there
would have been in England and America a ripple effect from

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[65]Werner, p. 513.   [66]Ibid., p. 512.

[67]London Music in 1888-89 as Heard by Corno di Bas-
setto (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1937), p. 71.

[68]Philip Hart, Orpheus in the New World, The Symphony
Orchestra as an American Cultural Institution (New York:
Norton, 1973), p. 411.

Germany as the declining interest in Mendelssohn there was felt across the North Sea and the Atlantic.

2) Most simply, Mendelssohn's star was gradually eclipsed by Wagner and post-Romanticism. By comparison, his work seemed innocuous and tame: after the Ride of the Valkyries, the Rundgeheule--the most excessive, colorful part of Die erste Walpurgisnacht--would sound restrained, without abandon. As Marek states: "To the broad public. . .Mendelssohn's work for some years did not mean much; it was not vital to, it did not excite listeners inculcated by the fever of Tristan."[69] Wagner's radical innovations changed not only the expectations of the audience but also the very means of making music. "Everyone's orchestra, except that of Brahms, became larger, everyone's palette more gorgeously coloured, everyone's symphonies longer and more demanding until, at the close of the century, we reach Strauss' Ein Heldenleben, Mahler's Eighth Symphony and Schönberg's Gurrelieder."[70] In his Die erste Walpurgisnacht, the self-imposed limits on length, orchestration, and structural complexity suited Mendelssohn's understatement of nationalistic faith; in contrast, Wagner's elaborate mythopoesis, like his orchestral medium itself, celebrated extravagant passions that would make Mendelssohn seem dull, classically contrived, even cold. Only much later, if at all, might tastes shift back again, as Marek suggests: "when Till Eulenspiegel was hanged and

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[69]Marek, p. 326.   [70]Raynor, Music and Society, p. 35.

Electra screamed 'Strike once again, Orest!' Mendelssohn
served as a relief for those who wanted to hear 'music with
a tune to it.'"[71]

3) More technically, the second part of the nineteenth
century saw a standardization of concert programming which
allowed increasingly little opportunity to perform a piece
like Die erste Walpurgisnacht. Programs became less flexible
as to the genres performed; the most customary program con-
sisted of an overture, a concerto, and a symphony. If an
orchestra collaborated with a chorus, it would do a more ex-
tensive choral work such as an oratorio; the limited choral
passages of Die erste Walpurgisnacht would hardly justify
assembling a chorus and soloists for only a small part of an
entire program. As a genre, the concert cantata fell between
the established categories of later nineteenth-century pro-
gramming.

4) Finally, certain characteristics of the piece itself
would have limited its continued widespread performance and
popularity. The text is parochial and exotic, based on mater-
ial not readily familiar to non-Germanic peoples. It is a
regional, rather than an international myth, not immediately
understood by most listeners. Its religious content belongs to
no recognizable tradition; Die erste Walpurgisnacht could not
therefore be appropriately performed as part of institutional-
ized worship. And yet its very proximity to familiar sacred

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[71]Marek, p. 326.

themes makes it ambiguous--not clearly a secular or a reli-
gious work. Its seamless structure permits no easily detach-
able excerpts for soloists or chorus to perform in concert or
in worship. Thus, the piece was deprived of the ready popu-
larizing by which favorite arias and choruses of large works
introduce the public to an entire composition. Moreover, un-
like some other large choral pieces, including ones by Men-
delssohn, Die erste Walpurgisnacht does not lend itself to
piano or organ accompaniment, thus being performed usually
only when full orchestral resources were available.[72]

Siegfried Ochs, who believed that Die erste Walpurgis-
nacht represented, "along with the famous Violin Concerto
and the music to Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,'
surely the best that Mendelssohn ever wrote," offered one
further explanation for the work's demise. He said it was
the fault of "incompetent conductors" who, insufficiently
understanding the work and underestimating its difficulties,
had led half-hearted, under-prepared performances of Walpur-
gisnacht, foolishly relying on the soloists to carry it.[73]

---

[72]However, with the help of pianists Content Sablinsky
and Ivain Dupuis, I did rework Henschke's piano four-hands
version (see pp. 143-44 above) to serve as sole accompaniment
for a Walpurgisnacht performance on March 26, 1983, at the
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, with splendid re-
sults--exciting for the audience and chorus, exhausting for
the two pianists!

[73]Ochs, pp. 83-84. [Er ist wohl mit dem berühmten
Violin-konzert und der Musik zu Shakespeares 'Sommernachts-
traum' das Beste, was Mendelssohn überhaupt geschrieben hat
. . . .unfähige Dirigenten]

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This is one of those works, Ochs argued, "for which a medi-
ocre rendering would prove simply murderous."[74] As part of
the composition's recent revival, this doctoral thesis will,
I hope, instruct future conductors of Die erste Walpurgis-
nacht to resuscitate the piece and to prevent further homi-
cide. If so, then my study of Mendelssohn's cantata will
have proven doubly rewarding.

_____

[74]Ibid., p. 86. [eines von jenen Werken, bei denen
eine mittelmässige Wiedergabe geradezu mörderisch wirkt.]

APPENDIX A

A LIST OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN CONCERT
CANTATAS OF BALLAD CHARACTER AFTER <u>WALPURGISNACHT</u>

<u>Composer</u>	<u>Title</u> (Source of Text)	<u>Date</u>
Niels Gade	Comala (Ossian-Eschenburg)	1846
Ferdinand Hiller	Die Lorelei (Königswinter)	1850s
Franz Liszt	Der entfesselte Prometheus (Herder)	1850
Robert Schumann	Der Königssohn (Uhland)	1851
Robert Schumann	Des Sängers Fluch (Uhland-Pohl)	1852
Robert Schumann	Vom Pagen und der Königs-tochter (Geibel)	1852
Robert Schumann	Das Glück vom Edenhall (Uh-land-Hasenclever)	1853
Niels Gade	Erlkönigs Tochter (Herder)	1853
Niels Gade	Balders Tod	1856-57
Richard Wüerst	Der Wasserneck (Mosen)	1857
Karl Perfall	Dornröschen	1859
Friedrich Sobolewski	Vinvela (Ossian)	1859
Johannes Bartels	Das Lied von der Glocke (Schiller)	1859
Julius Benedict	Undine	1860
J. L. Zwonar	Der Ritt zum Elfenstein	1860s
C. J. Brambach	Velleda (Pfarrius)	1860s

Wendelin Weissheimer	Das Grab im Busento (Platen)	1861
L. S. Meinardus	Rolands Schwanenlied	1863
L. S. Meinardus	Frau Hitt	1863
Franz Wüllner	Heinrich der Finkler	1864
Max Bruch	Scenen aus der Frithjofs-Sage (Tegner)	1864
Carl Reinthaler	Das Mädchen von Kola (Ossian)	1865
Max Bruch	Schön Ellen (Geibel)	1866-67
Gottfried Hermann	Rinaldo (Goethe)	1867
C. J. Brambach	Alcestis (Herder)	late 1860s
Josef Rheinberger	Das Thal des Espingo (Heyse)	1869
Max Bruch	Normannenzug (Scheffel)	1869-70
Johannes Brahms	Rinaldo (Goethe)	1869
Max Joseph Beer	Der Wilde Jäger (Wolff)	1870s
Max Bruch	Frithjof auf seiner Vaters Grabhügel	1870
Max Erdmannsdörfer	Prinzessin Ilse (Petersen)	early 1870s
Heinrich Herzogenberg	Columbus (Herzogenberg)	1871
Max Bruch	Odysseus (Graff)	1872
Joseph Sucher	Die Seeschlacht von Lepanto (Lingg)	1873
Franz Liszt	Die Glocken der Strassburger Münsters (Longfellow)	1874
Carl Reinecke	Hakon Jarl	1876
Carl Reinecke	Dornröschen	1876
Joseph Rheinberger	Klärchen auf Ebernstein (Hofnass)	1876-77
Max Bruch	Das Lied von der Glocke (Schiller)	1879

Gustav Mahler	Das klagende Lied (Des Knaben Wunderhorn)	1880
Heinrich Zöllner	Die Hunnenschlacht (Zöllner)	1880s
Heinrich Zöllner	Columbus (Zöllner)	1880s
Heinrich Hofmann	Waldfräulein (Zedlitz)	1880s
Heinrich Hofmann	Haralds Brautfahrt	1880s
Arnold Krieg	Sigurd (Soochay)	1880s
Arnold Krieg	Fingal	1880s
Joseph Sucher	Waldfräulein (Zedlitz)	early 1880s
Albert Thierfelder	Zlatorog (Baumbach)	early 1880s
Albert Thierfelder	Frau Holde (Baumbach)	early 1880s
Gustav Hecht	Schön Elsabeth	1880s
Gustav Hecht	Tidian	1880s
Carl Reinecke	Die wilden Schwäne (Kuhn)	1881
Arno Kleffels	Schwestertreue	1881
C. J. Brambach	Prometheus (Herder)	1881
Albert Becker	Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar (Heine)	1882
Albert Becker	Des Müllers Lust und Leid	1883
Antonin Dvořák	Die Geisterbraut (K. J. Erben)	1884
Engelbert Humperdinck	Das Glück von Edenhall (Uhland)	1883-84
Engelbert Humperdinck	Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar (Heine)	1885
Max Bruch	Achilleus (Bulthaupt)	1885
Gustav Schreck	König Fjalar	1885
Albert Schröder	Columbus	1885

Friedrich Lux	Coriolan	1885
Josef Rheinberger	Montfort (Hofnass)	1885-86
Joseph Anton Mayer	Kyffhäuser (Souchay)	1886
C. J. Brambach	Columbus (Waldbrühl)	1886
Bernhard Scholz	Das Lied von der Glocke (Schiller)	1886-87
J. G. Eduard Stehle	Frithjofs Heimkehr (Tegner)	1886-87
Felix Draeseke	Columbus (Draeseke)	1889
Max Bruch	Das Feuerkreuz (Bulthaupt)	1889
C. J. Brambach	Loreley (Waldbrühl)	1889
Max Bruch	Leonidas (Bulthaupt)	1894
Hugo Wolf	Der Feuerreiter (Mörike)	1894

[1]The above list is derived from primarily two sources: Schwanbeck and Jarczyk. The classification of certain works is debatable; for example, Bruch's _Achilleus_ might more correctly be called a "secular oratorio" because of its length (although both Schwanbeck and Jarczyk treat it as a cantata).

APPENDIX B

ONE MODERN PERFORMANCE OF

MENDELSSOHN'S WALPURGISNACHT

On Sunday, November 14, 1982, I conducted a performance
of Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht in Buckley Recital
Hall of Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts. Participa-
ting in this performance were the Mount Holyoke College Glee
Club (women) and the University of Virginia Men's Glee Club
and an orchestra of faculty and student players contracted
from the "Five College" (Mount Holyoke, Amherst, Smith and
Hampshire Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts)
area. Soloists were Pamela Gore (contralto), Peter Kazaras
(tenor), Joseph Penrod (baritone)--all "professional" singers
--and my husband, John Lemly (bass), an accomplished "ama-
teur." Some of my problems planning and executing this per-
formance were unique to my own particular situation. For
example, the men's chorus had to be imported from great dis-
tance, trained by another conductor (fortunately an excellent
one, Professor Donald Loach), meeting the women's chorus and
me only one day ahead of the performance. But most of my
problems would challenge any modern interpreter of Walpur-
gisnacht. Perhaps my solutions will be helpful to anyone
else contemplating a performance of the piece.

Companion Pieces

Since Walpurgisnacht lasts but forty minutes, to
achieve a program of customary length one must do other works
along with it. Our program had two parts, with a fifteen-
minute intermission. Part I consisted of Beethoven's Opfer-
lied, Opus 121b, followed by the Fantasy in C (conducted by
Richard Sparks, Mount Holyoke's Assistant Choral Director);
Walpurgisnacht was Part II.

The Opferlied is a six-minute work scored for solo
soprano (one with a convincing lower range), two clarinets,
two horns, two bassoons, strings (including a difficult solo
cello part), and mixed chorus. Its text, a poem by Friedrich
Matthison, with its allusions to sacrificial flames and the
out-of-doors, anticipates the language and spirit of Goethe's
poem. Beethoven's slow, eloquent setting establishes a some-
what solemn tone, which is then effectively lightened by the
playfulness of the Choral Fantasy.

The Choral Fantasy was programmed with Walpurgisnacht
in Opus 60's 1843 Leipzig premiere. It uses virtually the
same orchestra (Walpurgisnacht calls additionally for trom-
bones, piccolo, and two percussionists). It also offers an
opportunity for virtuosic display--the solo virtuosity absent
in Walpurgisnacht but much appreciated, almost expected, by
modern audiences. Its high, loud choral parts provide a
change of mood from the more mellow Opferlied. The Choral
Fantasy's stirring conclusion left our audience and

performers all "psyched" for the second half.

Scores and Parts

I am grateful for help received from Joseph Boonin,
president of Jerona Music Corporation (Hackensack, New
Jersey), from whom we purchased our performance materials:

> 1. Conductor's score and set of parts in a Kalmus
> edition, reprinted from the original Breitkopf & Härtel
> edition--"the only set currently available," according
> to Mr. Boonin. This edition has German text only.
>
> 2. Piano-vocal scores in an unaltered reprint of Peters
> Edition 1752, made by Jerona in 1979 "for the St. Cecilia
> Chorus of New York (David Randolph, conductor) who wished
> to perform the work in German and felt that $17.50 per
> copy on the Peters was unreasonable." It has German text
> only. We ruled out the Kalmus-Belwin vocal score--
> English only--"most probably a reprint of the Novello
> . . .[or possibly] a reprint of the old G. Schirmer
> score." We were heartily in agreement with Mr. Boonin's
> comment: "Why any chorus able to successfully mount a
> performance of this work would choose to perform it in
> an (indifferent) English version at the expense of
> Goethe's original is quite beyond me."

One should be advised that the rehearsal letters in the Boonin
vocal scores do not correspond to those in the Breitkopf
parts, but their greater number and more convenient placement
justify the five-hours of necessary part-marking. We also
added measure numbers to the string parts, which greatly
facilitated stopping and starting during the string sectional
rehearsal.

Preparing the Performers

Soloists

We were fortunate to find singers with just the right
voice and even the right "look" for the piece. Our alto--a

large, stern-looking woman--had a mature sound, intentionally
using a good deal of vibrato, as an old woman might. Her
diction was superbly "overplayed." Our tall-dark-and-handsome
tenor managed beautifully his contrasting roles, supplying an
effortless lyrical sound for "Es lacht der Mai" (which soars
directly to a high A), and a more urgent quality for both
"Die Flamme lodre" and No. 8. Our baritone, the Druid priest,
although young, was bearded. His manner was poised, self-
assured ("mit frischem Mut"). He delivered the long, sus-
tained, sweeping phrases of Nos. 7 and 9 with real elegance
and power. Our bass, a local favorite, had the "cameo role,"
his voice deep and rich, his delivery appropriately sinister.
It was interesting that both the baritone and tenor soloists
were initially hesitant to accept this engagement, being un-
familiar with the cantata. But I sent tapes and vocal scores
for their consideration, and they were soon "hooked." Walpur-
gisnacht definitely requires excellent soloists, comfortable
with German, and possessing real dramatic flare.

Instrumentalists

The work is very demanding for all instruments, so, of
course, good players are needed. Not one of our instrumental-
ists had ever before played or even heard (or heard of!) Wal-
purgisnacht. The wind players especially were pleased that
they all had so many lovely solo passages, and the strings
were challenged, to say the least. Our young trombone play-
ers should have been forewarned that their parts were high

and exposed. We held a two-hour sectional rehearsal for violins, violas and cellos, one week ahead of the performance, concentrating on the following passages:

Overture--beginning, to m. 188; m. 308 to end

No. 1--m. 66-149; m. 213 through beginning of No. 2

No. 3--beginning (for violas and cellos)

No. 4--all

No. 5--m. 59 to end

No. 6--beginning to m. 191; m. 235 to m. 21 in No. 7

No. 7--m. 21-59; m. 65 through beginning of No. 8

No. 8--first violins at m. 10 and similar spots; m. 44 through beginning of No. 9

No. 9--all

Chorus

As with any great piece, I hoped that the chorus would not only attain a high level of technical proficiency, but would also be able to grasp Walpurgisnacht's wider dimensions as a work of art. My rehearsals with the women began with a reading of No. 1 (m. 1-57) and No. 6 (m. 59-114). In our second rehearsal we listened to a recording of part of No. 6, which stimulated a great deal of curiosity and excitement. Our choral rehearsals continued over a period of about seven weeks, our two two-hour rehearsals each week covering a good deal of other repertory as well. Special problems for the women included No. 1's inconsistently dotted rhythms; building a robust, sufficiently "desperate" tone for No. 2; the diction

and intense soft sound for No. 4; No. 6's high tessitura, tricky notes and diction (especially the umlauts in "lärmen wir bei nächtger Weile"); and developing proper support for the sustained, slow singing in Nos. 7 and 9. (Preparing in these same rehearsals the lighter, more melismatic style required for Bach's Magnificat provided an added challenge.) Because I didn't actually train the men, I am not so familiar with their specific "problems" in the work, except for their initial off-beat entrance in No. 6, and their tendency to rush in No. 8.

Two weeks before the concert, at the end of a regular evening rehearsal, German professor Ingrid Merkel (visiting Mount Holyoke that semester from Catholic University and teaching a Goethe seminar) and I led an informal session on Walpurgisnacht's text and performance history. She gave these American young people a fascinating introduction to Brocken lore and, for many students, an introduction to Goethe as well. I shared parts of my "thesis-in-progress" and played more taped excerpts. The singers responded enthusiastically to this session, and I believe their resulting deeper knowledge of and respect for the whole piece did positively affect their performance of it.

We pulled together the various "foreign" elements of the ensemble--the male chorus, a pick-up orchestra, our out-of-town soloists, etc.--in one rather gruelling day of rehearsal (Saturday, November 13). Since Dick Sparks was

conducting the <u>Choral</u> <u>Fantasy</u>, we were able to rehearse choral
and orchestral forces simultaneously in different spaces,
observing the following schedule:

Chorus   9:15 a.m.-12 noon (Pratt)

                          9:15 warm-up, Opferlied
                          9:40 Mendelssohn
                          11:15 break
                          11:25 Choral Fantasy

Orchestra   10:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m. (Chapin)

                          10:30 Choral Fantasy
                          11:20 Mendelssohn--giving much
                            attention to the overture
                          12:35 Opferlied

Chorus   1:30-4:40 p.m. (Chapin)

                          1:30 placement and warm-up

Orchestra, Soloists 2-4:30 p.m.

                          2:00 Mendelssohn--no overture
                          3:30 break
                          3:45 Choral Fantasy--finale
                          4:15 Opferlied

The following morning we held a "dress rehearsal" in Buckley
Recital Hall, running through the program in order.

Inspired by the precedent of one 1874 Boston performance
of <u>Walpurgisnacht</u> (see p. 167 above), I first positioned our
chorus of 92 women and 50 men with men and women in distinctly
separate blocks: the women to my left, the men to my right.
However, for the final runthrough and performance, we used
another arrangement which seemed better for all three pieces:
chorus in four rows (standing, no chairs) on a large semi-
circle of risers, with male chorus forming a block of three
rows in center back, arranged BBTT, women to their left and

right and in front, arranged SSAA. What was lost in terms of
visual contrast between the separate men's and women's choral
units, was more than gained by improved intonation, a more
forceful, focussed men's sound, and better blend and balance
in the mixed chorus.

Questions of Tempo and Tactus

Knowing Mendelssohn's reputation for quick tempi, I was
inclined to take literally the indicated metronome markings.
And early in my study of Walpurgisnacht, I thought I would
also conduct each movement with the tactus suggested by the
metronome marking. That would mean, for example, conducting
the first part of the Overture (𝅗𝅥. =60) "in 1," the second
part (beginning withm. 350, 𝅗𝅥 =96) "in 2," No. 1 (𝅗𝅥 =96)
"in 2," etc. Generally, this proved to be the correct way to
proceed. And with highly experienced professional players,
indeed this scheme might be possible for all movements--
although finally it is hard to imagine keeping No. 6 (the
"Rundgeheule") under control "in 1." At any rate, I decided
to observe the printed tactus, with the following exceptions:

> Overture--m. 1-349 in 3, making a poco rit. in m. 339
> (m. 350-409 in 2)
>
> No. 6--in 2, 𝅘𝅥. =132. This is slower than marked, but
> in line with Ochs' suggestions (see p. 170 above).
>
> No. 7--m. 1-20 in 2. Note the marking "L'istesso tempo,"
> i.e. keep the same (slower) tempo as No. 6. (m. 21ff.
> in 4, however).
>
> No. 8--in 2, but slower than 𝅗𝅥 =92. (M. 10 is extreme-
> ly difficult for violin 1 at the indicated tempo, and
> anyway should sound like m. 59 in No. 6.)

Preparing the Audience

Since Walpurgisnacht was unknown to the general public,
we made an extra effort to put out attractive, copious pub-
licity: press releases, posters, flyers, and several thou-
sand "john notices" for campus dorms. A huge "Walpurgis-
nacht" banner hung for a week outside our campus post office.
One member of the chorus, a "D.J." for the campus radio
station, included both Walpurgisnacht and Choral Fantasy on
her show during the week of the performance. That same week,
one paid ad and several clever "personals" appeared in the
campus newspaper. I wonder how many Mount Holyoke students
mistook our Druids for "Smurfs." At any rate, we were able
to attract a sizeable audience to an "off-campus" concert.

For the concert itself, I felt that an attractive and
informative program was essential. The program cover was
identical to our poster (see Figure 6, p. 216). The program
contained translations for all three pieces, and the original
German. This made it easier for everyone to follow the music,
and--especially important in an academic community--provided
an opportunity for those familiar with German to enjoy the
original poetry. To give the audience a little more back-
ground (without being too "scholarly"), I included brief
notes on the performers and the three works, including the
following paragraph on Walpurgisnacht:

> DIE ERSTE WALPURGISNACHT. Widely acclaimed in the nine-
> teenth century as a "masterpiece, full of the greatest
> beauty," Mendelssohn's Die erste Walpurgisnacht has been
> virtually neglected in the twentieth century, until quite

Figure 6. Program Cover Design

Mendelssohn's
DIE ERSTE WALPURGISNACHT
Beethoven's CHORAL FANTASY and OPFERLIED

Sunday, November 14, 1982, at 2:30 p.m.
Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College
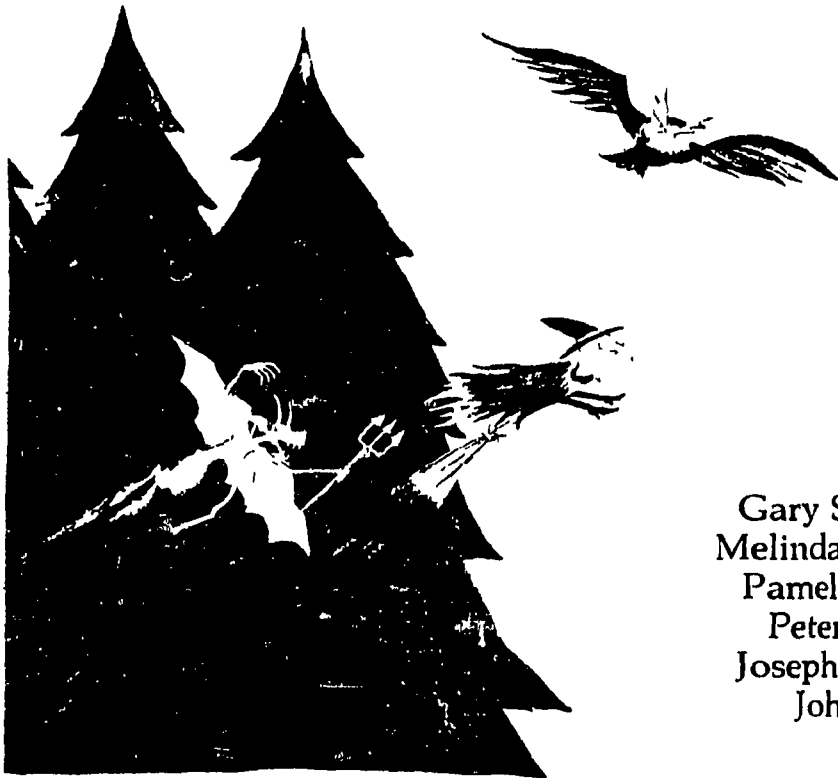
Gary Steigerwalt, *piano*
Melinda Spratlan, *soprano*
Pamela Gore, *contralto*
Peter Kazaras, *tenor*
Joseph Penrod, *baritone*
John Lemly, *bass*

University of Virginia Glee Club   Mount Holyoke College Glee Club
Donald Loach, *Director*   Catharine Melhorn, *Conductor*

Orchestra conducted by Catharine Melhorn *and* Richard Sparks

recently when it has been again programmed by many lead-
ing orchestras and recorded (in 1979) by the Philadelphia
Orchestra. In its richly evocative overture, its slight-
ly outlandish use of piccolo and bass drum for the demons'
dance (movements 5 and 6), and its structural cohesive-
ness, especially the evolution and transformation of the-
matic materials progressing throughout the work, the can-
tata reveals a particularly animated and Romantic side of
Mendelssohn. Its text is a ballad by Goethe, written in
1799, concurrent with his work on the Faust Walpurgisnacht
scenes. Goethe invited a musical setting from composer
Karl Friedrich Zelter, who was unable to comply, baffled
by its atmosphere and philosophical content. No mere epi-
sode of quaint medieval folklore, Goethe's poem deals with
a timeless human concern for free expression of beliefs
and the threat of cultural supression. At the age of 23,
Mendelssohn honored his teacher, Zelter, and Goethe, too,
with his setting of Walpurgisnacht, completed just a few
months after their deaths in 1832. This first version
received only one public performance, in 1833. But Men-
delssohn later revised the work and led the superb orches-
tral and choral forces of the Leipzig Gewandhaus in the
1843 premiere of this version.

The audience heartily applauded our performance, and seemed

to share the performers' pride and excitement in bringing

to light this unjustly neglected masterwork.

.

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