

APRIL 29-MAY 1, 2009

“Viewing Mendelssohn, Viewing Elijah”

assimilation, interpretation and culture
a research conference at Arizona State University

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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Viewing Mendelssohn, Viewing Elijah: assimilation, interpretation and culture

a research conference at Arizona State University / April 29 – May 1, 2009

Conference synopsis

From child prodigy to the most celebrated composer of his time: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was hailed as a genius, reviled as a sentimentalist, beloved as a model of assimilated thinking and attacked for his Jewish heritage. In honor of the 200th anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest composers—and one of the most paradoxical figures—of the Romantic age, Jewish Studies, the Herberger College of Fine Arts School of Music, and Faculty of Religious Studies in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University present “Viewing Mendelssohn, Viewing Elijah: assimilation, interpretation and culture.”

Mendelssohn and Elijah have been viewed through a variety of cultural and ideological lenses, with often contradictory outcomes. This conference explores this variety of interpretive perspectives, and features a performance of Mendelssohn’s oratorio, *Elijah*, presented by the Arizona State University Symphony Orchestra and Choirs.

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Conference Program



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

7:30 p.m. | University Club, South Room

WELCOME

Deborah Losse *Dean of Humanities, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences / Arizona State University*

Kimberly Marshall *Director, Herberger College of the Arts School of Music / Arizona State University*

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson *Director, Jewish Studies / Arizona State University*

David Schildkret *Choral Program, Herberger College of the Arts School of Music / Arizona State University*

Keynote Address

MUSIC AND MELANCHOLY

Michael P. Steinberg *Humanities, History, Music / Brown University*

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THURSDAY, APRIL 30

8:45-9 a.m. | University Club, North Room

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

9-10:30 a.m. | University Club, North Room

SESSION 1: MENDELSSOHN AND THE PARADOXES OF ASSIMILATION

CHAIR: Hava Tirosh-Samuelson *Director, Jewish Studies / Arizona State University*

Introduction: A Paradox, a Paradox: Mendelssohn and Assimilation, Berlin and Leipzig

Jeffrey Sposato *Music History / University of Houston*

Theoretical Approaches to Defining Jewish Identity and the Case of Felix Mendelssohn

Daniel Langton *Religion and Theology / University of Manchester, England*

Why Felix Mendelssohn, Heinrich Heine, et al. Became Christians

Todd Endelman *History, Judaic Studies / University of Michigan*

10:30-10:45 a.m.

Break

10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | University Club, North Room

SESSION 2: NEW VIEWS OF MENDELSSOHN'S "ELIJAH"

CHAIR: Maryellen Gleason *CEO, Phoenix Symphony*

Introduction: Mendelssohn, Elijah, and the Free Chorale

R. Larry Todd *Music History / Duke University*

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and the Concept of the Romantic Hero

Markus Rathey *Music History / Yale University*

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, William Bartholomew, and the Elijah Correspondence, Reconsidered

Angela Mace *Music History / Duke University*

12:15-1:15 p.m. | University Club, Thoren Room

Lunch *presenters and registered participants*

1:30-3:30 p.m. | University Club, North Room

SESSION 3: THE FIGURE OF ELIJAH IN WESTERN CULTURE

CHAIR: Joel Gereboff *Chair / Religious Studies*

A Prophetic Nationalism: Assimilation and Reform in Elijah and Felix Mendelssohn

Sara Malena *Religion / Wells College and Donald Wallace History / United States Naval Academy*

Will the Real Elijah Please Stand Up? Anti-Assimilationist or Mystic Messenger?

Jonathan D. Lawrence *Religious Studies / Canisius College*

Ascending by the Whirlwind into Heaven: Pagan, Jewish and Christian Visual Formulae

Ariella Amar *Centre for Jewish Art / Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

The Figure of Elijah in Jewish and Christian Thought

Barry Wiener *Music History / Graduate Center, City University of New York*

3:30-6:30 p.m.

Break

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THURSDAY, APRIL 30 (EVENING)

6:30-7:00 p.m. | ASU Gammage

Pre-concert Talk

David Schildkret *Choral Program, Heberger College of the Arts School of Music / Arizona State University*

7:30-10 p.m. | ASU Gammage

Concert: *Elijah*

ASU Symphony Orchestra and Choirs

FRIDAY, MAY 1

9-10:30 a.m. | University Club, North Room

SESSION 4: MENDELSSOHN AND THE PARADOXES OF ASSIMILATION

CHAIR: Robert Oldani *Heberger College of the Arts School of Music / Arizona State University*

Privilege, Genius and Claustrophobic Intimacy in the Life of Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn

Deborah Hertz *Judaic Studies / University of California at San Diego*

Mendelssohn's Conversion to Judaism: An English Perspective

Colin Eatock *Music History, Composition / University Toronto, Canada*

Mendelssohn in England – As a German and a Jew

David Conway *Hebrew and Jewish Studies / University College London*

10:30-10:45 a.m.

Break

10:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. | University Club, North Room

SESSION 5: THE RECEPTION OF MENDELSSOHN

CHAIR: David Schildkret *Choral Program, School of Music / Arizona State University*

Welcoming Elijah in Jewish Chicago: Mendelssohn in Yiddish Socialist Clothing

Michael Ochs *Music Library / Harvard University, ret.*

Interpreting the Metaphorical Dimensions of Mendelssohn Criticism

Sinéad Dempsey-Garratt *Music History / University of Manchester*

Mendelssohn and Mormonism

Luke Howard *Music History / Brigham Young University*

Opening the Door to Elijah: Comparing Historical and Contemporary Reception

Julius Reder Carlson *Music History / University of California, Los Angeles*

1-2 p.m. | University Club, Thoren Room

Lunch *presenters and registered participants*

2 p.m.

Departure

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Paper Abstracts

Music and Melancholia

Keynote Address

Michael P. Steinberg

Humanities, History, Music / Brown University

My paper will look at Felix Mendelssohn as a musical and cultural figure in the context of several major historical and theoretical concerns about modernity and its discontents, including national and religious identity, the building of community, and the authority of languages of art. Was Mendelssohn's view of the world a melancholy one, and how do we understand melancholy as an emotional, historical, and theoretical category?

A Paradox, A Paradox:

Mendelssohn and Assimilation, Berlin and Leipzig

Jeffrey S. Sposato

Music History / University of Houston

Most scholars since World War II have assumed that composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy maintained a strong attachment to Judaism throughout his lifetime. As these commentators have rightly noted, Mendelssohn was born Jewish and did not convert to Protestantism until age seven, his grandfather was the famous Jewish reformer and philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, and his music was banned by the Nazis, who clearly viewed him as a Jew. But such facts tell only part of the story.

This paper will provide background for the overall panel discussion by outlining the argument first made in Sposato's 2006 book, *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition*. As Sposato argued in that book, Mendelssohn attempted to distance himself from Judaism throughout his lifetime, especially while his father, Abraham, was alive. The paper will then look at the question of Mendelssohn and assimilation by examining the composer's experiences in two cities: Berlin, where Mendelssohn grew up and spent his early career, and Leipzig, where he moved in 1835 to lead the Gewandhaus Orchestra. In Berlin, Mendelssohn and his family profoundly grappled with assimilation questions because of their conversion from Judaism to Lutheranism, beginning with the children's baptism in 1816. Ironically, Mendelssohn again was forced to grapple with assimilation questions in Leipzig: while Lutheranism was the state religion in Saxony, Mendelssohn's children were baptized by a French Reformed minister, albeit at the family's home. In effect, Mendelssohn became something of a religious outsider once again, a paradoxical twist for a composer who had attempted to assimilate so fervently for his entire life.

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Theoretical Approaches to Defining Jewish Identity and the Case of Felix Mendelssohn

Daniel Langton

Religion and Theology / University of Manchester, England

A good number of scholars and critics, including Wagner, Werner, Botstein, Steinberg, Todd, and most recently Sposato, have contributed to the fractious debate concerning the Jewishness of Felix Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn's Jewishness has been held against him, has been embraced proudly, has been qualified in terms of a symbiosis with Protestantism, and has been denied on grounds of his conversion. What exactly is at stake in this controversy? And how do the scholars' underlying assumptions relate to the ideological divisions found in modern Jewish identity politics?

When it comes to defining Jewish identity or "Jewishness" in a systematic way, ideological assumptions are everything. One tendency is to essentialize by classifying people and phenomena as Jewish only in so far as they conform to an assumed essence of a normative Jewishness. From this perspective, responsibility for determining Jewish authenticity rests entirely with the observer, irrespective of whether his views originate from within the community or from outside. The problem, of course, is that observers do not agree on what exactly constitutes the core of authenticity. An alternative method of categorization is that of "self-definition". This non-essentialist approach does not pre-determine the outer limits of Jewishness and so terms like "marginality" and "authenticity" are largely redundant. Such a criterion for inclusion can be problematic, but the advantage of a self-definitional approach is that it largely frees the observer from the responsibility for selection and minimizes the projection onto the subject of his own ideological biases.

Unfortunately, "self-definition" excludes many who do not appear to see themselves in Jewish terms and yet who live lives and produce works that strike the sensitive observer as inexplicable without reference to a Jewish dimension of some sort. Arguably, Felix Mendelssohn falls into this category. The key question, surely, is whether a significant part of an individual's worldview is best explained in terms of his self-identification at some level as a Jew, and whether the failure to take this dimension seriously would result in an impoverished understanding of his life and work. The problem is how an observer can know whether the individual so identifies if this association is not articulated explicitly. But if one takes seriously such a Jewish dimension to the individual's inner world, then one should admit the possibility of it having a tangible impact on the individual's creative work. Such works then become evidence of the author's state of mind at the time of production. Arguably, Mendelssohn should be included under the self-definitional approach if a case can be made that an awareness of his identification as Jews at some level contributes in a significant sense to an understanding of his compositions. Consequentially, both the subject and the observer must share the responsibility for establishing "self-definition" because however much depends upon the subject's assumptions, attitudes, value-judgments and ideas, just as much hangs on the observer's ability to uncover and interpret them in their historical context.

With reference to the difficult case of the oratorio *St. Paul*, an attempt will be made to apply this qualified self-definitional approach to Mendelssohn. Further insight will be offered by a brief discussion of Jewish views of the apostle Paul and the key role the Apostle to the Gentiles has played in the Jewish exploration of self-identity in the modern world.

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Why Felix Mendelssohn, Heinrich Heine, et al. Became Christians

Todd Endelman

History, Judaic Studies / University of Michigan

The conversion of talented, ambitious Jews to Protestantism in nineteenth-century Germany was a commonplace event. In this sense, there was nothing unusual about the motives propelling and the circumstances surrounding the baptisms of Felix Mendelssohn and Heinrich Heine. It is only in the light of their later careers, that their conversions to Christianity (and Heine's inability to stop writing about it) appear to be unusual or noteworthy. My argument is that their conversions were similar to those of other German Jews who wished to make their mark outside the arenas of commerce and finance. This becomes clear when we probe their explanations (or, in Mendelssohn's case, the explanations offered by his father) and cease to take them at face value. For conversion, even if increasingly common, was not a casual matter for Jews of this generation but a step fraught with meaning, not lightly undertaken. I also argue that, despite the temptation to view Mendelssohn's conversion as "enlightenment-driven" and Heine's as "culture-driven," they were more similar than dissimilar in the end.

Mendelssohn, *Elijah*, and Free Chorales

R. Larry Todd

Music History / Duke University

If Mendelssohn's first oratorio, *St. Paul* (1836), based on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus into the early Christian missionary Paul, is often taken as a metaphor for the experience of the composer's immediate family, his second oratorio, *Elijah* (1846), has been viewed as reflecting at some level a coming to terms with his Jewish ancestry. Another interpretation of *Elijah*, first suggested by Otto Jahn in the nineteenth century, and explored more recently and systematically by scholars such as Martin Staehelin and Jeffrey Sposato, has advanced the idea that Mendelssohn construed the Elijah story in a Christological sense, and developed and shaped the libretto to reinforce parallels between Elijah and Christ. In effect, Mendelssohn's culminating masterpiece is multivalent, so that it can be read both ways. This paper explores the tension between the two interpretations, and offers some new evidence that would seem to bear directly on Mendelssohn's own view of the oratorio. In particular, some hitherto unexplored similarities between *Elijah* and Ferdinand Hiller's earlier oratorio, *Die Zerstörung Jerusalems*, based largely on Jeremiah are explored. And special attention is given to Mendelssohn's conspicuous use of freely composed chorales and chorale-like textures in the oratorio and other works, and to his observation that in No. 15, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," he wished to have the effect of a chorale in his "Old Testamental work" without having a real chorale.

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Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and the Concept of the Romantic Hero

Markus Rathey

Music History / Yale University

The idea of the “Romantic Hero” is one of the central concepts of human identity in the nineteenth century. The man, who stands alone for his convictions, withstanding all temptations by his adversaries, was a favorite topic of both historiography and fictional literature. Music participated in this discourse in its choice of topics for operas, oratorios, and program music.

It is therefore not surprising that several of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's compositions focus on the “Romantic Hero” in different ways: the Reformation Symphony celebrates Martin Luther; the Lobgesang was composed in commemoration of Johannes Gutenberg, and the oratorios *Paul* and *Elijah* each focus on one individual of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The Romantic Hero is also a Lonely Hero who has to go his predetermined path. It is this very idea that informed the beginning of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's oratorio *Elijah*, composed in 1846. Instead of a large scaled instrumental overture the oratorio starts with the lonely voice of the prophet Elijah, sung by the bass, announcing God's wrath: “As God the Lord of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, there shall not be dew or rain, but according to my word.” Only after this recitative, the overture begins. This surprising beginning of the oratorio (even though not Mendelssohn's own idea) reflects the romantic concept of the hero in a significant way: individuality and singularity go hand in hand, and they are the necessary characteristics of heroic action.

A similar pattern is visible in the reception of Mendelssohn as a composer in the nineteenth century. After a performance of *Elijah* on April 23, 1847, in front of Queen Victoria of England and her husband Prince Albert, the prince wrote to the composer: “To the Noble Artist who, surrounded by the Baal-worship of debased art, has been able, by his genius and science, to preserve faithfully, like another Elijah, the worship of true art, and once more to accustom our ear, amid the whirl of empty, frivolous sounds, to the pure tones of sympathetic feeling and legitimate harmony: to the Great Master, who makes us conscious of the unity of his conception, through the whole maze of his creation, from the soft whispering to the mighty raging of the elements.”—For Prince Albert, Mendelssohn is the romantic hero who, like Elijah, defends the (esthetic) truth against false idols.

The paper examines the concept of the “hero” in the first half of the nineteenth century and show, how Mendelssohn participates in this discourse in the choice of topics but also in the way these individuals are depicted in his compositions. The focus will be on his last complete oratorio, *Elijah*.

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Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, William Bartholomew, and the *Elijah* Correspondence, Reconsidered

Angela R. Mace

Music History / Duke University

William Bartholomew's efforts leading up to the August 1846 premiere of Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* are legendary: Bartholomew received movements of the oratorio from Mendelssohn, re-worked the German text into an English libretto, and sent the work on to Birmingham for immediate rehearsal. We can even credit Bartholomew with suggesting the overture following Elijah's curse. Bartholomew's larger role in Mendelssohn's numerous English projects, however, is less well known. Bartholomew, an amateur playwright, wrote to Mendelssohn as a stranger in 1841 but soon became a trusted translator of Mendelssohn's English editions, through their mutual friend Edward Buxton of Ewer & Co. in London. The letters and documents tracing the friendship between Mendelssohn and Bartholomew are almost completely extant, preserved in several collections including the Bodleian Library, the British Library, and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. The letters pertaining to *Elijah* were published in F. G. Edward's 1896 monograph, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio, 'Elijah'*.

I will reconsider the "*Elijah* correspondence" with special attention to how Mendelssohn and Bartholomew developed their working relationship, and then applied it in their greatest collaboration. I will explore in particular how Mendelssohn and Bartholomew resolved issues of text setting to accommodate the English libretto. The English version of *Elijah* is no mere translation; it was wrought in excruciating detail through Bartholomew's correspondence with Mendelssohn. What is more, the translation in numerous instances nearly matches the King James Version Bible. Mendelssohn was particularly adamant about remaining true to the text as it stands in the Bible—in his case a German Lutheran text—so Bartholomew's feat of adhering to the same goal while translating to the King James Version requires further exploration.

Without Bartholomew's efforts to smooth the transition of Mendelssohn's oratorio from German to English, it is possible that the premiere of *Elijah* and its subsequent revision and publication would have been seriously delayed. Reconsidering the "*Elijah* correspondence" in light of the entire relationship will allow us to place the English libretto of *Elijah* into the context of the remarkable international exchange between Mendelssohn and Bartholomew.

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A Prophetic Nationalism:

Assimilation and Reform in Elijah and Felix Mendelssohn

Sarah Malena

*Religion / Wells College
and*

Donald Wallace

History / United States Naval Academy

Felix Mendelssohn's choice of the prophet Elijah for his oratorio can suggest a desire to balance the prevalence of his Christian identity (seen in his *Paulus*, for example) by way of a strong Jewish character and theme. Was his choice, however, an explicit attempt to reconnect with his Jewish ancestry? And if so, was it a religious, cultural, or political attempt? To answer these questions one must take into account the symbolic and historical position of Elijah within biblical and Jewish contexts. Only by exploring the nature of Elijah as a critic and reformer of the ninth century BCE and as a character/spokesman for sixth century BCE Jewish exiles, can we then ask whether Mendelssohn's choice of Elijah automatically translates to reintegration with his Jewish identity or community.¹ What is of particular significance to these questions is the growing role of nationalism in Mendelssohn's world in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and the Prussian Reform Movement. Our goal is to understand the biblical Elijah as an exemplar for the exilic Jewish community as they consider how to rebuild their society, so that we can better understand the figure of Elijah in Mendelssohn's oratorio, which was written in the historical context of building a German national identity.

¹ The question of whether the Elijah oratorio represents a Christian or Jewish cultural viewpoint is extensively examined by Jeffrey S. Sposato in his *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth Century Anti-Semitic Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 114-62.

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Will the Real Elijah Please Stand Up? Anti-Assimilationist or Mystic Messenger?

Jonathan D. Lawrence
Religious Studies / Canisius College

Before we can talk about Mendelssohn's use and interpretations of Elijah's story, we must examine the myriad ways Elijah has been understood in scripture and in later Jewish and Christian traditions. In First and Second Kings alone, four different aspects of his story are presented. First, he is a miracle worker, providing a self-refilling jar of meal and jug of oil and raising a child from the dead in 1 Kings 17. Second, he is violently opposed to Israelite leaders who tried to assimilate into Canaanite culture and religion, as personified by King Ahab and his Phoenician Queen, Jezebel, as in Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18. Third, he is one of the few biblical figures to experience God's glory, even if only through the enigmatic "sound of sheer silence" in Chapter 19. Finally, at the end of his life, he does not die but is taken into heaven in a flaming chariot, in 2 Kings 2. These different features of Elijah's story are picked up in varying ways by later writers.

Elijah is mentioned only briefly in the rest of the Old Testament, and then usually only in passing. However, some Jewish interpreters began to focus on his miracles and on his unusual departure from the earth. For instance 1 Maccabees speaks of his being taken into heaven, echoed in Sirach 48 which summarizes his life without direct reference to the contest with the priests of Baal. Perhaps the most intriguing reference is in Malachi 4:5, "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes." This idea that Elijah will return before the Final Judgment and the arrival of the Messiah is picked up in the Christian Gospels, both in questions about Jesus' identity and in the story of the Transfiguration, where Jesus meets with Moses and Elijah upon the mountaintop. See for instance Matthew 16:14, Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Later Jewish traditions continued this emphasis on Elijah's return for a special purpose as in Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair's statement, "the Holy Spirit leads to the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection of the dead comes through Elijah, blessed be his memory." (Mishnah Tractate Sotah 9:15) Jewish tradition has incorporated Elijah into the Passover Seder, even providing an empty seat and open door for him, a role hauntingly portrayed in Elie Wiesel's "An Evening Guest."

This paper will outline these various readings of Elijah with a special focus on the passages included selected for the libretto and the differences between Jewish and Christian interpretations of Elijah's story. This examination will provide a background for considering the significance of Mendelssohn's use of the Elijah story considering his own conversion to Christianity.

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Ascending by a Whirlwind into Heaven: Pagan, Jewish and Christian Visual Formulae

Ariella Amar

Centre for Jewish Art / Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The artistic representations of the Elijah story in early Jewish and Christian Art, derive from combined sources. The depicted episodes of the non-biblical elements were mainly of Jewish midrashic origins, while the visual formulae and gestures stemmed from Roman Pagan art.

The biblical prophet became famous for his jealousy for God and for his non-compromised struggle against idolatry. However, the brutal killing of the forty Baal prophets did not determined Elijah's identity. His miraculous activities on a personal level, and especially the raising of the widow's son, made him the protagonist in miraculous episodes of salvation that occurred throughout the years, and as one of Christ's prototypes.

Elijah's dramatic ascent into heaven on a chariot of fire, and the fact that he never died enabled his return to this world and accentuated his role as a redemptive and an intermediate figure between God and the People of Israel.

The visual depictions of the prophet Elijah during Late Antiquity reflect common belief in survival and revival through faith. Similar ideas were part of various sects developed during the first two centuries CE, of which Mithraism is the most prominent cult that is relevant to our discussion.

This paper will be a suggestion for a new interpretation exposing the syncretistic ideas as well as visual formulae, which represent the prophet's personal and national miracles.

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Faith, Covenant, and Revelation in the Music of Felix Mendelssohn

Barry Wiener

Music History / Graduate Center, City University of New York

The figure of Elijah in Felix Mendelssohn's oratorio of the same name has been interpreted from both Jewish and Christian perspectives. This disagreement is emblematic of larger scholarly disagreements about Mendelssohn's life and music. Many of the most recent musicological publications about Mendelssohn present a view of his religious identity that emphasizes his Christian faith while minimizing the strong residually Jewish elements in his thought. Although Mendelssohn's self-identification as a Christian is beyond dispute, the details of his personal theological orientation remain murky. During the first half of the nineteenth century, both Judaism and Christianity underwent a complex ideological evolution. Inevitably, the religious controversies of the period are inscribed in Mendelssohn's work. In order to interpret the theological ideas that underlie his oratorios, it is essential to examine the ideas of the leading German religious thinkers of the period.

Ultimately, the import of the figure of Elijah in Mendelssohn's oratorio is bound up with his conception of Jesus. Mendelssohn's religious mentor, Friedrich Schleiermacher, negated or minimized the importance of many of the central dogmas of Christianity, including the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and the ascension. Schleiermacher emphasized the primacy of the monotheistic idea. He rejected a personal, anthropomorphic conception of God. He criticized the use of Old Testament texts to foreshadow the New, while discussing "Jesus the Jew."

The texts of Mendelssohn's dramatic works on sacred themes stress the centrality of the monotheistic idea, in a manner consistent with both Jewish tradition and Schleiermacher's theology. His religious ideas meld Schleiermacher's doctrine of Jesus as the perfected, purely human being, filled with the spirit of God, with a traditionally Jewish perception of the importance of the Sinaitic revelation. For Mendelssohn, this revelation was universalized by Christianity, a view similar to that of his contemporary, the Tübingen theologian, Ferdinand Baur. Like his Jewish contemporary, Salomon Ludwig Steinheim, Mendelssohn located the importance of the Sinaitic revelation in the promulgation of the principles of God's transcendence and uniqueness. Like both Steinheim and his grandfather Moses, Mendelssohn considered the public nature of the covenant to be central to its significance. The central event of *Elijah* is the Mount Carmel scene, in which the entire kingdom of Israel witnesses a reaffirmation of the Sinaitic covenant.

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Privilege, Genius and Claustrophobic Intimacy in the Life of Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn

Deborah Hertz

Judaic Studies / University of California at San Diego

I begin the talk with a short summary of Thomas Mann's controversial short story, "The Blood of the Volsungs", written in 1905 but published widely only after Mann's death. The tale is of two Jewish twins, aged 19, who have come of age in a wealthy, protected, culturally sophisticated family in a large German city. The female twin is about to marry a Christian man, who has been chosen more for his religious status than for his personal qualities. Several evenings before the wedding the twins attend *Die Walküre*, an opera by Richard Wagner, which features an act of incest between two twins, who bear the same names as Mann's imagined characters. After returning home from the opera, the twins embark on their own incestuous evening. The last word in the story is "we'll jew that goy."

I begin with the Mann story to show that the Mendelssohns' lifestyle, while pioneering in the 1820s, became more widespread in the course of the nineteenth century. Jewish or formerly Jewish families used their wealth to finance elaborate cultural consumption and education, but remained adrift between the Jewish and the Christian worlds. Because of the emotional intensity of these very special families, the metaphor of incest to describe the unusual intimacy between the siblings seemed fitting for hostile observers.

My major challenge in the talk is to examine the bond between Fanny and her younger brother Felix, so as to understand in which ways that bond nurtured her musical creativity and in which ways that bond limited her musical career. The life of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel has become a subject of great interest in contemporary Germany. Books, articles, performances and publication of her compositions continue to appear, and the end is not in sight. As a woman, a converted Jew, a composer, an organizer of home musical concerts and as the brother to the feted Felix, Fanny's life exemplifies so many themes that continue to concern musicologists, historians, and indeed the wider public.

Opinions divide sharply about the meaning of her life. Few defend her father Abraham's and her brother Felix's demands that she subordinate a public musical life to her duties as a mother. At the other end of the spectrum from that outdated defense of her father and her brother, we see the militant accusations against Abraham and Felix, which focus on inner family dynamics. Another, more nuanced view points to the wider shifts in values and practices associated with the Biedermeier era as the explanation for the decided limits placed on Fanny's public musical career. Of special interest is the notion that in addition to the increasingly sharp cleavage between private music and public music, the converted status of the family influenced the father and brother's unwillingness to allow Fanny to receive any money for her musical creations and performances.

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Mendelssohn's Conversion to Judaism: An English Perspective

Colin Eatock

Music History, Composition / University Toronto, Canada

To many music lovers today, Felix Mendelssohn is regarded as a prominent Jewish composer. Indeed, his Jewishness has, at various times, been treated as emblematic. When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, they pulled down his statue in Leipzig and banned performances of his music. More recently, in 1993, when the African-American violinist Louis Farrakhan – better known as the leader of the Nation of Islam – decided to publicly perform a work by a Jewish composer (as a gesture of reconciliation towards the Jewish community), he chose Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto*.

It may come as a surprise, therefore, to some people to learn that Mendelssohn did not wish to be viewed as Jewish. Baptized as a Lutheran at the age of seven, he presented himself to the world as a German Christian – and was (ironically) more readily accepted as such in England than in Germany, during his lifetime. Although Mendelssohn never lived in England, he visited the country ten times in his short life, where he was hailed by the English musical press as a “great German,” an “illustrious German,” and a “true German.”

The goal of this paper is to trace the roots of the differing interpretations of Mendelssohn's ethnicity and religion in England and Germany during his lifetime, and also shifting perceptions in England in the second half of the nineteenth century. Following his death in 1847, changing attitudes about the significance of race in Victorian society led to a gradual reinterpretation of Mendelssohn's “true” identity, so that, by the end of the century, he was widely viewed in England as essentially Jewish. Not coincidentally, this change was concurrent with a decline in Mendelssohn's popularity, especially in “progressive” artistic circles.

Specifically, this paper draws on both anti- and philo-Semitic ideas that influenced English intellectual thought in the nineteenth century, as well as such diverse factors as the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution, Wagner's essay *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, and the political career of Britain's only “Jewish” Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli.

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Gentelmann, Komponist der Insel Ceylon, nephew of the Grand Philosopher *Felix Mendelssohn in England as a German and as a Jew*

David Conway

Hebrew and Jewish Studies / University College London

Doubly an outsider, as a German and a Jew, in ten visits to Britain between 1829 and 1847, totaling in all around twenty months – crowned by the London premiere of *Elijah*, itself a subject straddling Jewish and Christian traditions – Felix Mendelssohn became a legend in the country, and profoundly influenced English culture.

I will note how Mendelssohn was received, especially at the time of his debut, in the contexts of English musical life in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and of the composer's own personality, associations and activities.

Mendelssohn was not the only German – indeed not the only German Jew – to be active in musical life in England at this time. What brought them to Britain, and was Mendelssohn one of the herd or a special case? To what extent was Mendelssohn perceived as a Jew, and how did his reception compare with that of other Jews in the music profession?

Mendelssohn's diffidence as to making explicit comment on his Jewish heritage is evident (and has engendered heated academic debate); but, in an age of conventional prejudice against Jews, what part was played by his success in handling this ambiguity, (together with his formidable musical achievements), in creating a stereotype in English society of the cultured, "acceptable", Jew?

I aim to indicate some ways in which Mendelssohn's "differentness" made a direct and specific contribution to his success, so that throughout – and beyond – his lifetime, his character as a German and/or as a Jew continued to resonate in British cultural life.

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Welcoming *Elijah* in 1920s Chicago: Mendelssohn in Yiddish Socialist Clothing

Michael Ochs

Music Library / Harvard University, ret.

An unusual—indeed, surprising—version of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was heard in a 1927 concert at Chicago's Orchestra Hall. The city's Jewish population had swelled from 10,000 to 225,000 during the preceding 40 years. Most of the newcomers were Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe, many of whom found work in clothing industry sweatshops. A citywide strike in 1910 of some 40,000 women garment workers, 80 percent of them Jewish, solidified Jewish support for the labor movement and the Communist party, which promised freedom to workers in Russia and had not yet become stigmatized.

A Yiddish chorus, the Frayheyt Gezang Fareyn (Freedom Singing Society), described as “a true child of the Jewish revolutionary worker movement in America,” was founded in 1914. In May 1927, the daily Yiddish newspaper *Der Idishe Kurier* announced that the Fareyn would sing excerpts from *Elijah* “for the first time in Yiddish.” But the oratorio's text was no mere translation: it was deftly rewritten by a Yiddish poet to reflect the workers' struggle against the ruling classes. Thus the oppressed Jews of the nineteen twenties found their new redeemer in Lenin and Communism, and so read back into the story of Elijah the redemption they themselves envisioned: a class war in which the next generation would be redeemed. Here the freedom would come not from rain bestowed by God—who is notably absent from Elijah's pleadings—but from a new generation of young workers who would rise up in justified anger and destroy the enemy. That three leading Chicago dailies reviewed a performance directed at a Yiddish-speaking audience can in itself be regarded as a triumph for the city's Jewish community and a testament to its importance.

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Interpreting the Metaphorical Dimensions of Mendelssohn Criticism

Sinéad Dempsey-Garratt

Music History / University of Manchester

A constant feature in the German reception of Mendelssohn's music in the fifty years following the first published critiques of his works (1824) is the tendency to compare him with other artistic figures both contemporary and past. Thus Mendelssohn is paired with a variety of musicians including Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Meyerbeer and Schumann; a diverse selection of poets and playwrights such as Lessing and Tieck, artists such as the Caracci brothers and the actress Rachel Felix. Comparisons with other composers are, to be sure, straightforward in function, arising primarily from perceived similarities or differences between their musical style and that of Mendelssohn. Links with figures in other branches of art, however, are more complex in scope and significance. This paper seeks to elucidate the meaning of the metaphors for the composer drawn from literature and presented in the writings of such critics as Franz Brendel, Eduard Hanslick, Heinrich Heine and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl. While such metaphors may appear to be mere literary conceits warranting little attention, reconstructing their meanings and resonances for contemporary readers reveals they had a significant function in Mendelssohn's reception. In fact, they point to the key themes that appeared in negative assessments of the composer from both during his lifetime and after his death. Thus, interpreting these literary metaphors provides a means to reappraise traditional perspectives on the trajectory of the composer's reception.

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Mendelssohn and Mormonism

Luke Howard

Music History / Brigham Young University

In May 2007, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir with soloist Bryn Terfel performed Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* at a gala concert to commemorate the reopening of the newly-renovated Salt Lake Tabernacle. While a significant musical event in its own right, this performance also represents a pinnacle of Mormon interest, both among musicians and the general membership of the Church, in the music of Mendelssohn. This paper makes the case that Mendelssohn can plausibly be considered as something of a favored composer in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, certainly more favored than any other notable art-music composer of the 18th or 19th centuries.

The Mormon interest in Mendelssohn is expressed clearly in the music and literature of the Church. This paper examines the inclusion of Mendelssohn's vocal and instrumental works in current and historical Church publications including the official hymnbooks and music provided for other auxiliary services and programs within the Church. It also documents references to Mendelssohn's music and texts in speeches by general Church leadership, especially in the Church-wide biannual General Conferences. It surveys discussions of Mendelssohn's life and music in other religious, educational, and unofficial publications used in Church services and auxiliary programs.

These references to Mendelssohn's music and life create a (perhaps subconscious) familiarity among LDS Church membership with the music of Mendelssohn. Similarly-conducted surveys of musical and textual references to other composers in these same Church contexts reveals that there are none who are granted anywhere near the level of attention as Mendelssohn, with the possible exception (significantly) of J. S. Bach.

The paper concludes with several possible explanations for the peculiar Mormon interest in Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn's career coincided exactly with the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the 1830s. Mormons, noting that in 1838 Mendelssohn expressed a desire to see again an "old-time kind of prophet" like Elijah, easily relate that desire with the contemporaneous rise of Joseph Smith as (Church members believe) a latter-day prophet. Mendelssohn's religious biography, blending Jewish and Christian experiences, parallels Mormons' strong personal identification with Judaism. Anecdotes regarding the composer's upright moral character combined with his relatively conservative music style fit neatly into traditional Mormon standards of culture and behavior. And references to Mendelssohn and his music by prominent Church leaders give an aura of official imprimatur to his compositions.

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Mendelssohn and the Racial Imagination: Comparing Historical and Contemporary German Reception

Julius Reder Carlson

Music History / University of California, Los Angeles

As reflected in the recent publications of Jeffrey Sposato, Leon Botstein, and Michael Steinberg, the last decade has witnessed a renewed scholarly interest in the “Jewishness” of Felix Mendelssohn and his music. In this paper, I look at the stakes of this polemic in the context of the historical and contemporary reception of Mendelssohn’s music in Germany. Using Philip Bohlman and Ronald Radano’s discussion of the “racial imagination” as a point of reference, I compare and contrast two divergent understandings of this composer’s music. In a first case study, I explore Weimar-era sociologist Heinrich Berl’s depiction of Mendelssohn’s oeuvre as an aesthetic reflection of his racial identity and document the resonance that this perspective had among German-Jewish music critics of the time. In a second case study, I look at the apparent absence of racial discourse in present-day Berliner musicians’ reactions to the oratorio *Elijah*, highlighting the ways in which the history of National Socialism may impact what Germans can say about musical “Jewishness.” These case studies raise two important issues: First, despite popular assumptions to the contrary, racially “Jewish” understandings of Mendelssohn and his music have not necessarily been – and need not necessarily be – anti-Semitic. Second, as sociologist David Theo Goldberg’s discussion of racial discourse in the “New Europe” implies, avoiding discussion of Mendelssohn’s “Jewishness” may serve both to socially displace his work and to obscure the durability of anti-Semitism as a factor in contemporary German perceptions of it.

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Conference Presenters

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

MICHAEL P. STEINBERG is the director of the Cogut Center for the Humanities and Professor of History and Music at Brown University. He also serves as Associate Editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and *The Opera Quarterly*. Professor Steinberg received his doctorate from the University of Chicago, conferred jointly by the Department of History and the Committee on Social Thought. He is the author of *Judaism Musical and Unmusical* (University Of Chicago Press, 2006) and *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

JEFFREY S. SPOSATO is an assistant professor of musicology at the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston. He received his doctorate in musicology from Brandeis University. His most recent book, *The Price of Assimilation: Felix Mendelssohn and the Nineteenth-Century Anti-Semitic Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2006), was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2006 and a Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award finalist.

DANIEL LANGTON is a member of the Centre for Jewish Studies and a lecturer in Religions and Theology at the University of Manchester, England. He received his doctorate from the University of Southampton, and his teaching and research interests include the history of Jewish-Christian relations and Jewish approaches to the New Testament for what they reveal about modern Jewish identity. His publications include *Children of Zion: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land* (Woolf Institute of Abrahamic Faiths, 43, 2008) and "Felix Mendelssohn's Oratorio *St. Paul* and the Question of Self-Identity", *Journal of Jewish Identities*, Vol.1/1 (2008).

TODD ENDELMAN is the William Haber Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of Michigan. He received his doctorate from Harvard University and specializes in the social history of Jews in Western Europe and in Anglo-Jewish history. He is currently working on a comparative study of conversion and other forms of radical assimilation in Europe and North America from the enlightenment to the present. His publications include *Radical Assimilation in Anglo-Jewish History, 1656-1945* (Indiana University Press, 1990) and *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (University of California Press, 2002). His book *Broadening Modern Jewish History* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization) will be released at the end of 2009.

R. LARRY TODD is a professor of musicology in the Department of Music at Duke University. He received his doctorate from Yale University, and numerous awards and honors including: Best Biography of 2003 (Association of American Publishers) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (Guggenheim Foundation, New York) and National Humanities Center Fellowship (National Humanities Center) in September, 2007. He has published widely on Mendelssohn and his time, and on nineteenth-century music. His publications include *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford University Press, 2003) and *Mendelssohn Essays* (Routledge, 2007).

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MARKUS RATHEY is an associate professor of music history in the Yale School of Music. He studied musicology, Protestant theology, and German philology in Bethel and Münster and joined the Yale faculty in 2003. His research interests focus on music of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, Johann Sebastian Bach, and the relationship among music, religion, and politics during the Enlightenment. His recent publications include the books *Johann Rudolph Ahle (1625–1673): Lebensweg und Schaffen* (Eisenach, 1999), an edition of Johann Georg Ahle's *Music Theoretical Writings* (Hildesheim, 2007), and *Kommunikation und Diskurs: Die Bürgerkapitänsmusiken Carl Philipp Emanuel Bachs* (Hildesheim, 2008).

ANGELA R. MACE is a doctoral candidate in Musicology at Duke University, where she received her Master of Arts in Musicology. Her dissertation is titled: "Fanny Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and the Formation of the 'Mendelssohnian Style.'" She co-authored: "Verzeichnis der Werke Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys" in *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Sein Leben, Sein Musick*. (Stuttgart Carus-Verlag/Reclam, 2008) and "Mendelssohn and the Free Chorale." *Choral Journal*, Spring 2009 with R. Larry Todd.

SARAH MALENA is an assistant professor of religion at Wells College. Trained as a biblical scholar, ancient historian and anthropological archaeologist with a focus on the Middle East, her research examines the influence of trade and exchange on the development of the biblical kingdoms, peoples and their religions. She co-edited *Milk and Honey: Essays on Ancient Israel and the Bible in Appreciation of the Judaic Studies Program at the University of California, San Diego* (Eisenbrauns, 2007) with David Miano.

DONALD L. WALLACE is an assistant professor of history at the United States Naval Academy. He received his doctorate in European History from the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of "The Obscure Sea Change: Hermann Broch, Fascism, and the United States" in *The Fruits of Exile*, edited by Richard Bodek (University of South Carolina Press, 2009).

JONATHAN D. LAWRENCE is an assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies and Theology at Canisius College. He earned his Master of Divinity from Pittsburg Theological Seminary and his doctorate in theology (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity) from the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *Washing in Water: Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Society of Biblical Literature *Academia Biblica* Series, 2006).

ARIELLA AMAR is head of the Synagogues and Ritual Objects Section of The Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she also completed her doctoral work in art history and Jewish studies. She contributed to *Jews in Arab Lands Today* (The Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv, 1996) and *Ingathering of the Nations, Treasures of Jewish Art: Documenting an Endangered Legacy* (Center for Jewish Art, Jerusalem, 1998 with Ruth Jacoby).

BARRY WIENER is a doctoral candidate in musicology at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He is the issue coeditor of the Ralph Shapey special issue of the journal *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 27, nos. 4/5, August/October 2008.

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FRIDAY, MAY 1

DEBORAH HERTZ is the Wouk Chair in Modern Jewish Studies and professor of history at the University of California, San Diego. She received her doctorate in German history from the University of Minnesota. Her publications include *How Jews Became Germans. The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin* (Yale University Press, 2007) and *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (Yale University Press, 1988).

COLIN EATOCK holds a doctorate in musicology from the University of Toronto in addition to graduate degrees in music criticism and music composition. As a composer, he has written for solo instruments and voice, chamber ensembles, choir and orchestra. His works have been performed and broadcast in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. He has written for Toronto's *Globe and Mail* newspaper and contributed to *The New York Times*, the *Houston Chronicle* and other publications. His forthcoming book *Mendelssohn and Victorian England* (Ashgate Press) will be released in August 2009.

DAVID CONWAY is an Honorary Research Fellow at University College, London, where he earned his doctorate. He is currently researching Jewish involvement in the music professions in the 19th century and preparing a book for publication *Jewry in Music: the Entry of Jews to the Music Professions in Europe* examines the entry of Jews to musical professions in the period approximately 1780-1850 in the perspectives of music history, Jewish history and European social, economic and political history.

MICHAEL OCHS retired from the Music Library at Harvard University and is currently an editorial consultant advising on book proposals and manuscripts, providing developmental editing for style and content. He earned a Master of Arts in Musicology from New York University and a Doctor of Arts in Library Administration from Simmons College. His recent publications include "You Say 'Sabachthani' and I Say 'Asabanthi': A St. Matthew Passion Puzzle," in the edited volume *About Bach* (University Illinois Press, 2008) and "What Music Scholars Should Know about Publishers," *Notes* 59: 288-300 (December 2002).

SINÉAD DEMPSEY-GARRATT is a postgraduate student at the Manchester Centre for Music in Culture, University of Manchester. Her research interest is in nineteenth-century German music, culture, and aesthetics, in particular the issues that impacted Mendelssohn's reception during his lifetime and after his death. She is the author of "Mendelsson's 'Untergang': Reconsidering the Impact of Wagner's 'Das Judentum in der Musik'", a book chapter in *Mendelssohn in the Long Nineteenth Century* ed. Jacqueline Waeber and Nicole Grimes (Ashgate Press, forthcoming).

LUKE HOWARD is an associate professor in the School of Music at Brigham Young University. He received his doctorate in musicology from The University of Michigan. His research focuses on appropriations of classical music in popular culture, and he has published his work in major journals including the *Musical Quarterly*, *Paris New Music Review*, *Periphery*, and *Context*.

JULIUS REDER CARLSON is a doctoral student in musicology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He received his master's degree from the Universidad de Chile, Santiago with a thesis regarding the *Chacarera*, a genre of Argentine folk music. He spent the 2005-06 academic year as a DAAD scholar in Berlin, where he conducted research on Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy reception. He is the recipient of a 2008 Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship to study in Argentina.

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JOEL GEREBOFF (Ph.D., Brown University) is an associate professor and chair of Religious Studies. He specializes in rabbinic Judaism, Judaism and bioethics, and Judaism in America. He is the author of *Rabbi Tarfon: The Tradition, The Man, and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (1979) and contributed essays to *Handbook of Religion and the Emotions* (2008), *Key Texts in American Jewish Life* (2003), *Crisis and Reaction: The Hero in Jewish History* (1995); and *Jewish Sects, Movements and Political Parties* (1992). Other essays appeared in the *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry*; *Semia*; and *Religious Studies Review*.

DAVID SCHILDKRET (DMA, Indiana University) is a professor of music in the School of Music. He is conductor of the ASU Chamber Singers and Choral Union (College-Community Symphonic Chorus). In 2007, he organized a major festival, "Bernstein, Bloch, and Music of the Jewish Tradition," that culminated in a performance of Bernstein's *Jeremiah* and Bloch's *Sacred Service*. He has conducted most of the major works for chorus and orchestra and presents a major work each summer in Maine with the Mount Desert Summer Chorale. Prior to joining ASU he was Dean of the School of Music at Salem College in Winston-Salem North Carolina; Director of Choral Activities at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky; and assistant professor of music at the University of Rochester. His essays have appeared in *Antiphon, the Newsletter of the Society for Seventeenth Century Music*; *Choral Journal*; *Bach*; and *Eighteenth Century Life*. He has given many lectures, workshops and public presentations, and is the founding editor of the *The Choral Scholar*, an on-line publication of the National Collegiate Choral Organization.

HAVA TIROSH-SAMUELSON (Ph.D., Hebrew University of Jerusalem) is the Irving and Miriam Lowe Professor of Modern Judaism, professor of history and is also affiliated with the Department of Religious Studies and Department of Philosophy. Tirosh-Samuelson specializes in Jewish intellectual history, Judaism and ecology, religion and science and feminist philosophy. She is the author of *Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon* (1991), awarded by the Hebrew University for the best work in Jewish history published in 1991, and *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge, and Well-Being* (2003). In addition to articles and book chapters, she is also the editor of *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word* (2002); *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy* (2004); and co-editor (with Christian Wiese) of *The Legacy of Hans Jonas: Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life* (2008). Tirosh-Samuelson is the Principle Investigator of the Templeton Research Lectures (2006-2009) on "Facing the Challenges of Transhumanism: Religion, Science, and Technology" and is the co-editor (with Giuseppe Veltri) of the book series, *Studies in Jewish History and Culture*, for Brill Academic Publishers.

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