

Tensions between the ‘serious’ and the ‘popular’ in music: Josephine Lang’s compositional environment

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‘High’ and ‘low’ culture in the nineteenth century

In her seminal book, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, Marcia Citron highlights the existence in art of a dichotomy between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture.¹ By the nineteenth century ‘high’ art, in a general sense, had come to be associated with the masculine and ‘low’ art with the feminine. Examples of this kind of division may be observed in the artistic output of both sexes, namely in literature, painting and music. This generally accepted ideology of ‘high’ culture as masculine and ‘low’ culture as feminine manifested itself in many respects within the musical world of the nineteenth century. The perceived connection, for example, between such composers as Chopin, Schubert and Mendelssohn with feminine genres such as song and miniature piano works has indeed been a negative component in reception of these composers. This traditional linkage of these genres with the feminine in effect undermined the public’s perception of these composers as purveyors of ‘high’ art music. ‘Serious’ music was indeed predominantly linked with male musicians and in the nineteenth century it became increasingly valued for its aesthetic qualities. Paradoxically, this music began to occupy a more valuable position in society as it began to be stripped of its social function. In contrast, women’s musical activities, which were limited to the home, were viewed as trivial. Unlike public concerts mostly given by male performers, women’s music often served a particular function, either as a pedagogical tool or as entertainment in

¹ Marcia Citron relates that this hierarchy within art did not always exist, but resulted from changes in the economic structure of the family around 1700. Such revisionist social structures led to a feminising of art forms that has endured to the present day. According to Citron, ‘the principal hierarchy in art has been a division into fine arts (high) and decorative or applied arts, or crafts (low).’¹ These lower art forms as a result suffered a diminution in their artistic worth. See Marcia Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 127. Hereafter referred to Citron, *Gender*.

the salon.² Indeed, there lay many subtle and not so subtle boundaries within the musical *milieux* of the day: the whole range of music covered in the *Gesellschaftslied*, as discussed by Byrne Bodley, provides a fitting example of the tensions embodied in this genre.³

The standard of musical performance varied extensively in the different salons, ranging from the musically mediocre to the sublime: Clara Schumann, for example, gave private recitals in the salons of Berlin.⁴ Similarly, Fanny Hensel's salon which hosted the weekly *Sonntagsmusik* was considered 'one of the most important sites for music-making in Berlin'.⁵ The cases of Hensel and Schumann, however, proved to be the exception to the rule and the common association of women's music with light entertainment in the home had a negative impact on society's perception of the music of many female composers. Although Josephine Lang's Lieder aspired towards the *Kunstlied* revolutionised by Schubert, her musical environment was found wanting. It appears that the repertoire of the typical salon in Munich left much to be desired. To the disapproval of Felix Mendelssohn, Lang

² Citron, *Gender*, p. 104.

³ Lorraine Byrne Bodley explores the context of the *Gesellschaftslied* at length in her paper, 'Schubert's Literary Genius and Eclectic Imagination: Questions of Musical Inheritance.' Guest lecture, Department of Music, University College Dublin, 1 November 2001. Hereafter referred to as Byrne Bodley, 'Schubert's Literary Genius'. See also the chapter entitled 'The Dilemma of the Popular, The Volk, the Composer and the Culture of Art Music', in *Cultivating Music, The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Culture*, ed. by David Gramit (California: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 63–91 for a comprehensive discussion of the schism between 'serious' and 'popular' music.

⁴ David Ferris, 'Public Performance and Private Understanding: Clara Wieck's Concerts in Berlin', *Journal of the American Musicological Association*, 56/2 (2003), 351–407 (p. 351). Hereafter referred to as Ferris, 'Public Performance'.

⁵ Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, 'The Music Salon', in *Jewish Women and their Salons: The Power of Conversation*, ed. by Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun (New York and New Haven: Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 38–49 (p. 44).

gave many performances in these salons.⁶ In stark contrast to these mediocre musical activities, however, the songs Lang composed and performed in this context transcended the limitations of the Munich drawing room.

Within the high/low cultural divide many connected dichotomies existed: public vs. private, professional vs. amateur, non-functional vs. functional and, the 'serious' vs. the 'popular'. The aim of this chapter is not to negate such tensions but rather to explore their impact on such female composers as Josephine Lang and her musical environment. The public musical arena, where music was published, performed, and critically received, was generally dominated by professional male musicians. Women's musical pursuits, on the other hand, normally occurred in the private domain,⁷ which was largely associated with amateur musical performance. The American musicologist Nancy Reich argues that with the rise of an increasingly prosperous middle class more women took part in amateur musical activities during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸ While this was positive with regard to women's participation in music in general, it certainly had an adverse effect on women composers, placing their music in the category of musical amateur. Essentially it meant that it was much more difficult for a female composer to distinguish herself in musical circles. Reich also states that, no matter how talented they were, women musicians were restricted to musical activities in a domestic setting,⁹ thus pointing to the confinement of women's musical endeavours by social conditions and ideologies. That Lang's performances took place largely in the salons is evidence of this. Lang

⁶ Harald Krebs and Sharon Krebs, *Josephine Lang Her Life and Songs* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 43. Hereafter referred to as Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*.

⁷ Marcia J. Citron, 'Women and the Lied 1775–1850', in *Women Making Music*, ed. by Jane Bowers & Judith Tick (Illinois: Macmillan Press, 1987), pp. 224–48 (p. 224).

⁸ Nancy B. Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800–1890', in *Women and Music: A History*, ed. by Karin Pendle, 2nd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 147–74 (p. 147). Hereafter referred to as Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians'.

⁹ Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians', p. 172.

did, however, enjoy the success of getting many of her songs published in her lifetime, a remarkable achievement for a female composer at that time. This success, however, did not translate into a lasting imprint in music history and musicology (although this has begun to change in recent decades). This lack of longevity does not reflect a dearth in the quality of Lang's music but rather the judgement of women's music in the past as being dilettantish and unworthy of scholarly examination.

Gendered implications within genres

Josephine Lang, for the most part, composed songs and piano pieces. Typical of female composers of that era, she did not experiment with large-scale genres or 'masculine forms'. This was in part due to a lack of sufficient education in musical composition but also perhaps a fear of violating the boundaries that were considered 'proper' for a woman at that time. The association of women with such 'minor' genres was also linked to the hierarchy of genre¹⁰ which existed in the domains of the 'public' and 'private'. The music of the public arena, namely the concert hall, consisted of more complex, large-scale works such as symphonies or in the world of music theatre, opera. The salon, on the other hand, a musical sphere largely associated with women, comprised smaller genres, mainly songs and piano pieces which were not heard in the concert hall.¹¹ Women tended to compose music for other women to perform, deliberately simple in style and easily performed by amateur musicians in this salon context. Such songs were regularly published in almanacs intended specifically for women, a good example of which is found in the songs of Luise Reichardt. Some female composers were able to break free from these limitations: Josephine Lang's songs were published by many leading publishing houses in Germany including Falter und Sohn in Munich, Kistner, Breitkopf und Härtel, and Schlesinger among many others. She was at times criticized, however, for the difficulty of both the piano and vocal parts of her songs. An

¹⁰ For a more detailed evaluation of the hierarchical nature of genre, see Citron, *Gender*, pp. 120–32.

¹¹ Valerie Woodring Goertzen, 'The Eighteenth Century', in *From Convent to Concert Hall A Guide to Women Composers*, ed. by Martha Furman Schleifer and Sylvia Glickman (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), pp. 91–152 (p. 91).

important example of this is found in a letter from Franz Hauser, a famous baritone of the day and a key figure in the Bach revival.¹² Although he was an admirer of Lang's songs, Hauser believed they were far too difficult for the average performer. On 30 October 1847 he wrote to Lang:

You know well what an interest I have taken in them [your songs], and how highly I value everything you write, and therefore you must permit me to tell you as well when I do not agree with you. [...] Do you know with what I am not in agreement? With your piano playing. You play too well and you expect other people to do the same, and it is too much. With your singing it is the same thing. There are very few singers who can handle their voice the way you can – at least, I know of no one else besides [Jenny] Lind – for her, too, nothing is too high or too low.¹³

Hauser's comparison with Jenny Lind, the most prominent diva of the day, is telling as it acknowledges Lang as a skilled performer, but Hauser's comments also serve to illustrate the instability of Lang's position as an aspiring professional female composer. For whom was she writing her songs? Even if she herself did not take this into consideration, publishers, keenly discerning of their market, were acutely aware of their potential audience. Therefore, it was difficult for women composers like Lang to find a market for their songs. In April 1878 the renowned British composer Ethel Smyth confided to Clara Schumann: 'He (Dr. Hase) told me that a certain Frau Lang had written some very good songs but they had no sale.'¹⁴ The relative technical difficulties and intricacies of Lang's songs suggest that they were not intended for the average amateur musician. In the nineteenth century, a woman's ability to play the piano was viewed as a social

¹² John Warrack and Douglass Seaton, 'Hauser, Franz', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), ix, 146–47 (p. 146).

¹³ Letter from Franz Hauser to Lang, 30 October 1847, cited in Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*, p. 133.

¹⁴ Letter from Ethel Smyth to Clara Schumann, April 1878, cited in *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. by Carol Neuls-Bates (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 105.

accomplishment and increased desirability for marriage.¹⁵ Over-achievement in music, however, was considered unattractive and women's musical education suffered because of this invisible ceiling which was placed on the musical education of the vast majority of women in the nineteenth century.

As alluded to earlier, women's music tended to possess a 'function', but the implications of such functionality demand further discourse: the 'functional' role of women's music in the contemporary social climate implied that this music, namely the music of the salon, lacked a higher aesthetic function. Citron describes the distinction between the two domains: 'Lower art has tended to stress practicality, the present, and plurality of class [whereas] [...] the higher arts have prided themselves on timelessness and non-functionality.'¹⁶ High art music or men's music therefore was valued for its transcendent quality whereas the music of the drawing room, that is, women's music, had an immediate social function. This distinction between the functional and non-functional highlights the subordinate position of music in the woman's domain, which made it difficult for aspiring female composers to draw serious critical attention to their musical compositions.

Women's music: 'serious' or 'popular'?

The focus of this chapter is on one of the corresponding hierarchies mentioned earlier, namely the 'serious' and the 'popular' and its bearing on female composers. This related configuration manifested itself in the inherent association of the professional, public, and most likely male composer with 'serious' music and the amateur female musician with the 'popular'. Linda Whitesitt observes the close connections between popular music and the family,¹⁷ implying that women's music, to a large extent, became inseparably bound up with the 'popular'. According to popular music scholar Simon Frith: 'in the nineteenth century the equation of the serious with the mind and the popular with the body was indicative of the way in which high culture was established in

¹⁵ Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians', p. 98.

¹⁶ Citron, *Gender*, p. 128.

¹⁷ Linda Whitesitt, 'Women's Support and Encouragement of Music and Musicians', in *Women and Music: A History*, ed. by Karin Pendle, 2nd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 481–94 (p. 485).

Europe.¹⁸ The creativity and cultural productivity of the male mind was revered whereas females were valued for their reproductive qualities, and deemed to be incapable or unworthy of creating serious art.¹⁹ This conservative ideology had an adverse psychological affect on women composers – an affect that can be readily observed in evaluation of women's attitudes to their art. Citron argues that this manifested itself in the lives of female composers through an 'anxiety of authorship'²⁰ which can often be detected in 'ambivalence, and contradictory statements about one's activities.'²¹ Like Clara Schumann, Lang reveals embarrassment at her attempts to compose, constantly referring to her Lieder as 'Unkraut'²² (weeds). Referring to a new collection of songs she has written, she says 'the 'weeds' again began to run wild!'²³ Also, when asking Mendelssohn for his agreement to dedicate her op.12 to him, Lang asks: 'Would you be embarrassed to accept this lowly dedication?'²⁴ This question unveils Lang's obvious lack of confidence with regard to her compositional abilities. Nancy Reich points out another possible cause of embarrassment to women composers:

The emphasis on the home as the proper sphere of woman and the subsequent 'cult of domesticity' that developed during the first half of

¹⁸ Simon Frith describes how these constructed connections between the mind with the 'serious' and the body with the 'popular' have manifested themselves in the way audiences participate in 'classical music' concerts where the physical is completely restrained. See Simon Frith, *Performing Rites on the Value of the Popular* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 124.

¹⁹ For more information on women's relationships to creativity, see Citron, *Gender*, pp. 44–79.

²⁰ Citron discusses the implications of this 'anxiety of authorship' in *Gender*, pp. 54–78.

²¹ Citron, *Gender*, p. 54.

²² For one example of Lang's designation of her songs as 'weeds', see Marbach, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, letter from Lang to Eduard Eyth (undated, but probably 1861, according to Harald and Sharon Krebs) Eyth 28801.

²³ Letter from Lang to Ferdinand Hiller, 27 February 1870, cited in Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*, p. 190.

²⁴ Letter from Lang to Mendelssohn, 10 June 1844, cited in Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*, p. 126.

the nineteenth century must have caused considerable conflict for and perhaps even embarrassment to professional women musicians.²⁵

Reich's perceptive comments reiterate that women's intrinsic connection to the private, domestic sphere had the affect of limiting their musical experience. Women's ambitions in music were placed against society's expectation of how a woman should behave resulting in this feeling of unease at their professional inclinations.

Women, indeed, were not the only sex to endure the ramifications of the dichotomy that existed between 'serious' and 'popular' music. Indeed the term 'popular' immediately invokes the notion that this music must not be serious and indeed that the intentions behind its creation are not conscientious. As stated above, the broader domain of gender studies shows how the association of 'female' genres of music with composers such as Chopin and Schubert has triggered negative criticism of these composers.²⁶ Despite this adverse reaction, however, Schubert's revolutionising of the Lied, a genre previously considered to be inferior to instrumental music, both highlighted the dichotomy between serious and popular music but also served to narrow this dichotomy. It is also interesting to consider the repositioning of the Lied from the drawing room to the concert hall in the later nineteenth century, which suitably illustrates the fluidity and instability of this dichotomy but also a reclaiming of 'song', or more specifically the 'art song', as a 'serious genre.' Conversely, the rise of the étude from a 'technical exercise' to a concert piece also highlights the changeable nature of this dichotomy between 'major' and 'minor' genres.

One instance in Josephine Lang's early musical career convincingly unearths the tensions between the 'serious' and the

²⁵ Nancy B. Reich, 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. by Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 125–46 (p. 130).

²⁶ Jeffrey Kallberg refers to the devaluation of the nocturne as a genre which occurred as a result of its association with the 'feminine' realm. See Jeffrey Kallberg, 'Gender', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), ix, 645–47.

‘popular.’ Until her marriage to the poet-lawyer Christian Reinhold Köstlin (1813–56) in 1842, Lang was based in Munich. Years earlier as an eleven-year old child Lang performed publicly in Munich. This debut recital was in 1826 with the Munich Museum Society, a private society for which attendance at concerts was limited to its members. As a gifted child, Lang was probably invited to perform because of her *Wunderkind* status – a phenomenon which was highly fashionable at the time.²⁷ Amidst the conventional repertoire she performed was a set of variations by the popular contemporary composer, Henri Herz (1803–88). Characteristic of the Leipzig composers’ attitudes to ostentatious virtuosity, Robert Schumann publicly criticized such Parisian virtuoso-pianist composers as Herz, Thalberg and Kalkbrenner, who were extremely popular in Munich on account of the virtuosic style of their compositions.²⁸ In Schumann’s opinion, such virtuosity and empty showmanship lacked real musical depth. Schumann was also highly critical of their ‘mercenary’ attitude to composition. Leon Plantinga points out that ‘there was a strong commercialism about the Parisian virtuosi, and that the pianists themselves did nothing to dispel it.’²⁹ Steve Lindeman, however, challenges Schumann’s criticism claiming that many of Herz’s works are of ‘considerable merit.’³⁰ Schumann, it should be added, had once been an admirer of Herz’s piano music and modelled his unfinished piano concerto in F on Herz’s first piano concerto. Byrne Bodley points out that ‘in ‘high art’ music it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between popular music and popular musicians and in the nineteenth century the cult of the star was extensively, but haphazardly practiced.’³¹ This argument serves to

²⁷ Roberta Werner, ‘Josephine Lang: The Expression of Life’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1992), p. 39.

²⁸ For an example of Schumann’s ongoing criticism of Herz, see Schumann’s review of Herz’s Second Piano Concerto in: Robert Schumann, Schumann, Robert, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, ed. by Marin Kreisig, 2 vols (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1914), I, 153–54.

²⁹ Leon Plantinga, *Schumann as Critic* (New York: Da Capo, 1976), p. 19.

³⁰ Steve Lindeman, ‘Herz, Henri’, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), xi, 452–53 (p. 453).

³¹ Byrne Bodley, ‘Schubert’s Literary Genius’, p. 5.

highlight that the boundaries between the 'serious' and the 'popular' were not always so clear. Connected with this cult of the star were the varied perceptions of virtuosity in the nineteenth century, over which there was an ongoing contemporary debate. Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms believed that virtuosity was evident in the development of musical ideas and not the type of showmanship prevalent in performances, even by such eminent musicians and composers as Liszt and Paganini. While Schumann's criticisms are musically valid, they also open a grey area as to the tensions of the 'serious' and the 'popular' in art music at that time.

Felix Mendelssohn also criticized the repertoire of the salons in Munich and complained about this in a letter to his brother Paul:

Even the best pianists had no idea that Mozart and Haydn also composed for the piano; they had just the faintest notion of Beethoven and consider the music of Kalkbrenner, Field and Hummel scholarly [...] The young ladies, quite able to perform adequate pieces very nicely, tried to break their fingers with juggler's tricks and ropedancer's feats of Herz's.³²

While Mendelssohn's and Schumann's shared criticism points to the inadequacies of women's musical activities in Munich, it also reveals the underlying friction that existed between the 'serious' and the 'popular'. This kind of elitist attitude essentially fostered an unintentional negative attitude towards the very repertoire that women performed. My intention here is not to vilify Mendelssohn or Schumann in highlighting their criticism but merely to point out that these tensions did exist and were part of the cultural climate of their day. Through their criticism, both Mendelssohn and Schumann were trying to raise the level of performance in the private domain. Therefore, although it is a testament to Lang's musical ability that she was able to master Herz's difficult piano music at the age of eleven, criticism of Herz and the virtuoso-composers serves to highlight the limitations even on female performance because of the kind of music education they received. We

³² Letter from Felix Mendelssohn to Paul Mendelssohn, 27 September 1830 in Felix Mendelssohn, *Letters*, trans. by G. Selden Goth (London: Paul Elek, 1946), p. 84.

gain a clearer picture if we realize that this criticism is intended to be constructive, and yet it reveals the commonplace belief that ‘genuine value could not be discovered in the popular’,³³ a perception with which such female composers as Josephine Lang had to battle with both socially and internally.

Munich was an active musical city in early nineteenth-century Germany, but like Vienna, however, ‘preference was for the familiar and not the new and demanding.’³⁴ Although the quality of concert life in Munich would not have equalled that of Berlin, interesting parallels can be drawn between the two. David Ferris’ article on the private performances given by Clara Wieck in Berlin illustrates how she and Robert Schumann were indeed trying to raise the level of private performance in opposition to the public concert life of the day.³⁵ It is indicative of these tensions that they were using an environment, typically associated with the performance of ‘popular’ music as a forum to showcase their own ‘serious’ music. This reversal of roles, in that the public arena now comprised a more popular style, highlights once again the fine dividing line between the ‘popular’ and the ‘serious’ within music at the time.

Josephine Lang’s compositional environment

In Munich, Lang taught piano for up to eight hours a day from the time she was a teenager until her marriage in 1842. In another use of the term ‘serious’, it could be argued that women’s activities in composition were not viewed as ‘serious’ enough to allow them dedicate themselves to it fulltime. Many female composers were very much occupied with other musical activities such as teaching and performing in salons, which left little time for composition. Therefore even before her marriage to Christian Reinhold Köstlin brought about a virtual hiatus in her compositional activity, Lang’s active role as a pedagogue and performer in Munich detracted from the time she could spend

³³ Byrne Bodley, ‘Schubert’s Literary Genius’, p. 1.

³⁴ Byrne Bodley, ‘Schubert’s Literary Genius’, p. 5.

³⁵ Ferris, ‘Public Performance’, 351–407.

composing.³⁶ In his article on Lang in *Aus dem Tonleben unserer Zeit*, Ferdinand Hiller, a prominent composer and close friend of Felix Mendelssohn – and a composer who did much for women’s music education – makes reference to the little time Lang had for composition. Sympathetically he states: ‘Only in the quietude of the night and on important walks, could she listen to the inspiration of her creative genius.’³⁷

Artistically sophisticated composers such as Josephine Lang were affected by these conflicting factors as they were situated at the very core of the dichotomy between ‘public’ and ‘private’ and indeed the ‘serious’ and the ‘popular’. How was Lang capable of achieving professionalism in her career in the face of such tensions and obstacles? Being surrounded by a wealth of female professional role models – her mother and grandmother were professional opera singers – certainly inspired confidence in her abilities. Yet they were not composers and the lack of a female compositional tradition left many women composers feeling isolated by their choice of profession. Lang’s famous encounter with Mendelssohn in 1830 doubtlessly inspired a positive affect on her compositional career. As Harald Krebs believes, ‘she realised she was destined for something more than teaching piano and entertaining in Munich salons.’³⁸ Lang’s discerning choice of the poetry she set which included poems by Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Uhland and Wilhelm Müller, reveals her attempt to set herself apart from the realm of typical drawing room song aesthetic and associate herself with a higher musical aesthetic which composers like Reichardt and Zelter had worked so hard to establish.³⁹ Features of Lang’s musical style also betray a desire to break free from the confines of the salon. Her sophisticated use of harmony for example, and the intricacy of her piano parts reveal that these songs were not intended for the average amateur musician. Granted they are not ferociously taxing, yet they

³⁶ Harald and Sharon Krebs make reference to the ‘obstacles’ of teaching and performing that curtailed Lang’s compositional activity somewhat during her youth. See Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*, p. 223.

³⁷ Ferdinand Hiller, *Aus dem Tonleben unserer Zeit*, 2 (Leipzig: H. Mendelssohn, 1868), p. 124.

³⁸ Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*, p. 22.

³⁹ Byrne Bodley, ‘Schubert’s Literary Genius’, p. 10.

present their own challenges to the performer: the Goethe settings, 'Sie liebt mich' op.34, no.4, and 'Frühzeitiger Frühling' op.6, no.3, for example, possess relentless piano figurations which are to be played in an *Allegro tempo*.⁴⁰

Referring back to Franz Hauser's criticism of Lang's songs, interestingly, Schubert was faced with the same criticism of his Lieder by a number of publishing houses. In both cases such comments poignantly illustrate the tensions composers faced: namely those between the public/private, professional/amateur and of course the 'serious' and the 'popular'. In the case of such composers as Josephine Lang, this dichotomy was blurred. An obscuring of these divisions is also evident in the career of Fanny Hensel, who carried on the tradition of her mother's salon in Berlin. Music-making in the Mendelssohn salon went way beyond the confines of conventional drawing room song in the standard of performance and the range of repertoire performed. Barbara Hahn speaks of the absence of a clear distinction between professional and amateur within the Mendelssohn salon,⁴¹ illustrating once again the blurring of boundaries between the public and private realms that these composers experienced.

Where did talented composers like Josephine Lang, who were indeed 'serious' about their compositions, fit in this musical context, in the presence of such debilitating tensions? Lang's compositional endeavours lay *between* the areas of the 'serious' and the 'popular' quotes, but into which realm she fitted is suggested through the publication of her songs. As stated earlier, most female composers of the day were published in women's almanacs intended specifically for a female readership. Josephine Lang's songs, on the other hand, were published by many leading publishing houses of the day. Her songs were also widely reviewed, the most notable of these being a favourable

⁴⁰ Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Josephine Lang, 'Frühzeitiger Frühling', MS Mus. fol. 54c, (pp. 6r–6v). For a printed edition of these songs see *Josephine Lang Selected Songs*, ed. by Judith Tick (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982).

⁴¹ Barbara Hahn, 'A dream of living together: Jewish Women in Berlin around 1800', in *Jewish Women and their Salons*, ed. by Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun (New York and New Haven: Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 149–58 (p. 167).

review in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1838 by Robert Schumann, who also published her song 'Das Traumbild' in a supplement to the journal.⁴²

Josephine Lang's lieder: transcending limitations

What is there to be learned from this glimpse at the social context of Lang's compositional environment and what significance has this in our contemporary musicological world? Indeed in the case of Josephine Lang, the dichotomy between the 'serious' and the 'popular' is beginning to be transcended and she is beginning to be considered an important exponent of the German Lied. Her contribution was unique and yet serves as a reflection on the situation for women musicians at the time. In examining Josephine Lang's career, we gain a deeper insight into the effects of pedagogical limitations on women's music in the nineteenth century. Josephine Lang attained recognition in her day that went beyond the confines of the private musical world and her musical achievement is being unearthed and justified today. An exploration of her experience as a composer adds to our understanding of the social situation for female musicians in the nineteenth century. Like many women composers of the day, Lang was deprived of a proper musical education; of those women who did receive an education, it was decidedly less thorough than that received by their male contemporaries. Fanny Hensel is a good example of such gendered musical practice. Lang achieved professional standing as a composer in her day,⁴³ not least through the musical sophistication of a large share of the Lieder she composed. Despite these achievements, however, her experience typifies that of many female composers in the nineteenth century which was in various ways rooted in the dichotomy between 'serious' and 'popular' music. Her musical output was limited to songs and piano pieces. Perhaps a fear of breaking with genres which were deemed proper to her sex or lack of musical education prevented her from experimenting with larger genres. Furthermore, while Lang attained the status of professional at certain points throughout her

⁴² The review is reprinted in Robert Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, ed. by Martin Kreisig, 2 vols (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1914), II, 334.

⁴³ Krebs and Krebs, *Josephine Lang*, p. 25.

career, her marriage and the demanding roles of wife and mother had a drastic effect on her compositional output. Considering Josephine Lang in the musical context of her day is important in allowing us to build on our perception of the complex social fabric of the nineteenth century but also to consider its relationship to the present day. In conclusion, it is fascinating to think that if we were to consider the current dichotomy between the 'serious' and the 'popular' today, how the music of composers like Lang would be firmly situated on the 'serious' side, revealing the ever fluid, volatile, complex and fascinating ways which we continue to think about and appreciate music.

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