

### 3 Choral music in the culture of the nineteenth century

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In his study of Romantic music, Alfred Einstein suggested that the nineteenth century was no longer “a period of great choral music.”<sup>1</sup> He based that judgment on his belief that the large-scale choral works written in that century presented nothing new, only a continuation of genres (mass, oratorio, requiem, motet, etc.) already well established in the preceding century. He dismissed the nineteenth century’s singular contribution to choral repertory – the part-song – as mere musical trifles designed to engage and entertain a new class of amateur singers. While there is an element of truth in Einstein’s assessment, he failed to consider the new political, economic, and social realities to which composers of the time were responding. In this chapter, I shall (all too briefly) consider how the new cosmology of the nineteenth century transformed the nature of choirs and the music they sang.

#### Collision of cosmologies

While 1800 is a handy chronological marker, it is not particularly useful when defining cultural history. To understand nineteenth-century music, we must first understand the ideas of the preceding century that shaped it. The philosophical engine that fueled Europe’s growth in the eighteenth century was the Enlightenment, a period dominated by scientific method and reason that postulated that, given sufficient time and information, humanity could construct a new Eden. Correlative to this philosophical stance was the emergence of the Industrial Revolution (c.1750) that offered the ideal laboratory for implementing the theoretical formulations of such “enlightened” thinkers as René Descartes, John Locke, Isaac Newton and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.<sup>2</sup> In the history of music (especially choral music), the Enlightenment found clearest expression in the ecclesiastical reforms (c.1780) enacted by Emperor Joseph II of Austria and his disciple Hieronymus Colloredo, who served as Archbishop of Salzburg during Mozart’s time there. Many have attributed Haydn’s cessation of mass composition in 1782 to these reforms, even more blaming Colloredo for Mozart’s departure for life in Vienna, outside the patronage system

that had been the prime mover of European art since the Renaissance. While nineteenth-century commentators saw Romantic aspects in Mozart's music and Haydn's late works, the first unabashedly Romantic composer was Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827).

The role enlightened thinking played in fomenting the successful revolution of the American colonies against England seemingly endorsed its idealism as the *Weltanschauung* of the future. But that promising beginning foundered on the French Revolution's descent into chaos (1789). Indeed, without the breakdown of the social fabric that accompanied the Reign of Terror, Romanticism would not likely have become the potent cultural force it was. The Romantic's response to reason run amok was to retreat into fantasy, fairy tales, and the benign pleasures of nature as antidotes for a reality that was unthinkable. For choral music, the French Revolution's destruction of the Catholic Church and the secular religion (the *Culte de l'Être suprême*)<sup>3</sup> that emerged from the Church's demise inspired a new kind of church music – the massive hymns of Gosssec, Mehul and, ultimately, Hector Berlioz that established choral music's new dimensions and place in society.

Even more disruptive was the emergence of Napoleon Bonaparte, who, in contrast to the dreamscape espoused by E. T. A. Hoffmann, Friedrich Schegel, Ludwig Tieck, W. H. Wackenroder and Immanuel Kant, acted politically and militarily, ultimately becoming not only the fallen hero of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony (1804), but also the reality behind the subtiles *in tempore belli* and *in angustis* that Haydn applied to his late masses. The havoc Napoleon wrought on the European landscape found a musical analog in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* (Op. 123, 1819-23), which effectively relocated the inherited choral/orchestral mass from the church to the concert hall. Beethoven's new conceptual model of the festival mass and its imitations by Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, and Bruckner forged a new synergy between these previously distinct musical entities.

The other factor that shaped the chorus's new identity was the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the largely rural, agrarian European economy to one dominated by machines and cities. The new factories it spawned altered both European commerce and the skylines and environments of the new centers of technological innovation. This new industrialization produced fundamental changes in economic, political, religious, and cultural values that forever altered the nature of choral music. Capitalism created a new class of wealthy people whose success played out in the novelties of leisure time, disposable income, and a disposition to charitable acts prompted by the increasing gap between the nouveaux riches and those whose labor created their wealth. The activity that eased the discomfiture of the new bourgeoisie was music, in

the form of domestic music making (notably involving the piano), the need for music lessons (and teachers), the acquisition of printed music and the eventual emergence of that quintessential group music-making enterprise, the choral society. This new class of musical amateurs increased the size of choirs and, their need both of music to perform and appropriate venues (both physical and cultural) in which to perform.

### Choral singing in the nineteenth century: a paradigm shift

Contemporary Western notions of choral singing are a nineteenth-century invention. Documentary, iconographic, and anecdotal evidence indicates that eighteenth-century choirs were generally small and more likely to consist of "professional" singers than their nineteenth-century counterparts. Handel would have been shocked by the choir of one thousand singers that performed his music at Westminster Abbey in the 1791 concert that Haydn attended.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, newly discovered documentary evidence suggests that the choir that performed Haydn's late masses at Esterháza consisted of four soloists and a choir of twelve to fifteen singers, of whom probably eight were employed at court.<sup>5</sup> The situation in Salzburg was similar in 1757 (a year after Mozart's birth); the archbishop's *Kapelle* had the relatively grand complement of ten solo singers, fifteen boy choristers and twenty-nine adult choristers (with an orchestra of thirty players).<sup>6</sup> By the premiere of Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* (1798), the chorus had swelled to between sixty and eighty singers accompanied by an even larger orchestra.<sup>7</sup> But these numbers pale in comparison with the size of nineteenth-century choirs. Late eighteenth-century performances of Handel's oratorios, both in England and on the Continent, routinely involved choirs of several hundred singers, culminating in the huge chorus for the 1791 concerts at Westminster Abbey. The trend established by these Handel celebrations continued to play out in the performances of European choral societies.<sup>8</sup>

The tipping points from the old to the new notion of a chorus were Beethoven's unprecedented expectations of the chorus and the simultaneous rise of Grand Opera in France. Beethoven's impact was already evident in his Mass in C, Op. 86 (1807), commissioned by Prince Nikolaus Esterházy to continue the tradition established by Haydn's last six masses. Its redefinition of "symphonic" mass was evident in the unusual use of tonalities, cyclic return of music,<sup>9</sup> orchestral interludes based on motivic continuity to create seamless connections between otherwise disparate movements, and the curious string of tempo words by which Beethoven tried to quantify "tempo rubato" in the mass's Kyrie.<sup>10</sup> But it was the *Missa Solemnis* and Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 (1817–24) that truly raised the bar of choral expectations to unprecedented heights.

The advent of a five-act format in French grand opera initiated by the collaboration of the composer D. F. E. Auber and the librettist Eugène Scribe created an expectation of choral participation in the drama not found in the operas of Mozart, Gluck or Weber. With the operas of Rossini, Meyerbeer, Halévy, *et al.*, the chorus transcended its prior restriction to providing what Victor Hugo called "couleur du temps," becoming a dramatically active, costumed and staged ensemble.<sup>11</sup> The visual and dramatic needs of this new format led to an assumed choral presence in the operas of Verdi and Wagner.

The beginnings of public concert life (as early as the Concert Spirituel in Paris [1725-90] and the Bach-Abel Concerts in London [1765-81]) also contributed to the increased size of both choruses and orchestras. In many locales, the popularity of choral singing led to the creation of civic orchestras to accompany them (as was the case, for example, with the Birmingham Festival). The use of concerts as philanthropic, charitable events, a precedent established by Handel's performances of *Messiah* for the Foundling Hospital and codified by the mission of the Tonkünstler Sozietät of Vienna (1771), prompted the growth of new choral festivals and societies.<sup>12</sup> The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the birth of important English concert-giving institutions such as the Three Choirs Festival (1715-present) and the Birmingham Festival (1768-1912), as well as the institutions listed in Table 3.1, many of which remain active today.

By the mid nineteenth century, symphonic concerts began to dominate public concert life; existing local choruses were typically drafted when choral works were programmed. For the remainder of the century, extant choral societies were increasingly absorbed into symphonic organizations or newly created as adjuncts to them.

Public concerts were less numerous and consistently available than performances linked to traditional institutions, for example domestic chamber music and liturgical choral music. Even such a venerable institution as the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde limited participation in its concerts to its membership, which by 1834 totaled two hundred; the "season" typically included four large "Society Concerts" and sixteen "Abendunterhaltungen." The former were primarily symphonic concerts (with occasional choral works by Handel, Haydn, Mozart or local composers); the latter were salon concerts, smaller in scale and commensurately more professional.<sup>13</sup> It was not until considerably later that the organization sponsored dedicated choral and orchestral ensembles.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Birmingham Festival didn't have a professional orchestra dedicated to giving concerts of symphonic music until after 1855.<sup>15</sup>

Table 3.1 Choral-orchestral societies in Europe and America

Date	Name	Location
1781-present	Gewandhaus	Leipzig
1785-93	Professional Concerts	London
1793-present	Sing-Akademie	Berlin
1800-present	Cincinnati May Festival <sup>a</sup>	Cincinnati
1802-54	Singakademie	Leipzig
1813-67	Philharmonic Society	London
1814-1938	Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde	Vienna
1815-present	Handel and Haydn Society	Boston
1818-present	Frankfurter Cäcilienverein	Frankfurt
1819-48	Concerts Spirituels	Vienna
1832-33	Fétis's Concerts historiques	Paris
1832-89	Sacred Harmonic Society	London
1833-60	Orphéon	Paris
1842-48; 1860-present	Vienna Philharmonic Society	Vienna
1842-present	New York Philharmonic	New York
1852-?	New Philharmonic Society	London
1853-present	Budapest Philharmonic	Budapest
1858, 1860, 1874-1970	Leeds Triennial Festival	Leeds
1858-present	Singverein	Vienna
1861-1939	Academy of Music <sup>b</sup>	London
1868-present	Tonhalle Orchester	Zürich
1869-present	Orchesterverein	Vienna
1873-present	Oratorio Society of New York	New York
1874-present	Mendelssohn Club	Philadelphia
1875-present	London Bach Choir	London
1881-present	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston
1882-present	Berlin Philharmonic	Berlin
1888-present	Concertgebouw Orchester	Amsterdam
1893-present	Munich Philharmonic	Munich
1898-present	Bethlehem Bach Festival	Bethlehem, PA
1900-present	Philadelphia Orchestra	Philadelphia

<sup>a</sup>This festival began as a German *Sängerfest*, later becoming the more prototypical choral/orchestral festival.

<sup>b</sup>The name of this organization changed to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in 1935 (*NG 2*, vol. 15, p. 167).

### Choral societies and the rise of music education

Since the membership of these new choral societies consisted largely of amateurs, the teaching of sight-reading and singing technique became virtual "cottage industries" essential to the success of the enterprise. In America, this phenomenon was embodied by the itinerant Yankee tunesmiths, most notably William Billings (1746-1800), who went from town to town, teaching singing by using his own music and methods. Later, in the early nineteenth century, similar concerns in the American South led to shape-note singing, a movement the cultural and religious bases of which could not have been more different than those of their northern predecessors. In England, the concern with pedagogy galvanized the activity of three important figures: Joseph Mainzer (1801-51), John Pyke Hullah (1812-84) and the Reverend John Curwen (1816-80).

Joseph Mainzer, a former German priest residing in Paris, went to England in 1841. Within a year, he had begun publishing materials based on his earlier sight-singing method book, *Singschule* (1831), which he developed into his landmark publication *Singing for the Million* (1842). As Percy Scholes has noted, the success of Mainzer's work must be understood within the milieu of a new social consciousness that sought to better the intellectual, moral, and religious life of the "lower classes."<sup>16</sup> Mainzer's principal disciple was Guillaume-Louis Wilhelm (1781-1842), who adapted his teacher's methodology to provide music education to Parisian schoolchildren (beginning in 1819). So successful were Wilhelm's classes that a reunion of former students in 1833 led to the formation of a permanent choral ensemble, the Orphéon,<sup>17</sup> which was later conducted by Charles Gounod.<sup>18</sup>

The leading English exponents of sight-singing classes were Hullah and Curwen. Hullah, who traveled to Paris in a vain attempt to study with Mainzer, eventually learned his methodology from Wilhelm in 1839. In 1841, Hullah returned to England and began teaching sight-singing classes using Wilhelm's methods (*Wilhelm's Method of Teaching Singing Adapted to English Use*, 1841). Initially intended for schoolteachers, his popular classes were eventually opened to the general public, leading to the certification of some fifty thousand pupils by July 1842.<sup>19</sup>

In that pivotal year of 1841, John Curwen, a Congregational minister in Yorkshire, was commissioned to produce a method to teach young Sunday School children to sing by note. He adopted the methodology of Sarah Glover (1785-1867) of Norwich, whose unique visual aid, the "Sol-Fa Ladder," illustrated the key notes of every scale, substituting Anglicized versions of Guido d'Arezzo's solmization syllables (doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, te [or si]). Unlike Mainzer and Hullah, Curwen's system used movable doh, resulting in a new notational system (still found in the editions of the publishing house that bears his name) to visualize pitch and rhythm (Curwen's "Tonic-Sol-fa system"). Curwen's publications eventually included: *The Standard Course* (1861); *The New Standard Course* (1872); *The Teacher's Manual of the Art of Teaching in General, and especially as applied to Music* (1875) and *A Tonic Sol-fa Primer* (ed. John Stainer, published by Novello).<sup>20</sup>

### Choral societies and their repertory

Initially, British choral societies existed to perform oratorios, specifically those of Handel; the popularity and growth of this activity created demand for new compositions that emulated Handel's style. Ironically, the most notable results came not from British composers but from Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), who had been inspired by hearing the Westminster Abbey performances of

Handel's music in 1791. Haydn's two principal oratorios – *Die Schöpfung* (1798) and *Die Jahreszeiten* (1801) – became templates for the increasingly diverse array of pieces called 'oratorio' in the nineteenth century. Haydn's *Creation* was based on an English libretto ostensibly intended for Handel, which Gottfried van Swieten translated into German. His text consisted of modules of biblical narrative, followed by poetic texts intended for use as arias and choruses. *The Seasons* was an even more radical departure from the Handelian template; Swieten adapted James Thompson's secular poetry into four separate, self-sufficient musical compositions. This oratorio's abandonment of biblical stories produced what some have described (for lack of any better terminology) as secular oratorio. The textual independence of the four "Seasons" led others to classify Haydn's composition as a "grand cantata" (especially if they were performing only a single part of it).<sup>21</sup> Works like *The Seasons* resembled oratorio primarily in the retention of multiple movements of varying character scored for chorus, professional soloists, and orchestra. In the concert listings of the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (established in Leipzig in 1798/99) one finds numerous works that fit this generic description.<sup>22</sup> In her dissertation on Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht*, Op. 60, Catharine Melhorn provided a representative list of secular "grand cantatas" (augmented in Table 3.2 by the present author) performed in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Haydn's *The Seasons* heads this list, further emphasizing the increasingly blurry line between oratorio and new works for chorus, soloists and orchestra.

In their day, these compositions ably served the repertorial needs of choral societies; today, most, if not all, of these compositions have disappeared from the concert programs of choruses and orchestras. Beethoven's paradigmatic Ninth Symphony not only generated a series of choral symphonies (by Mendelssohn, Liszt, Mahler, et al.), but also made it fashionable for

Table 3.2 Nineteenth-century "grand cantatas"

1801	Franz Josef Haydn	<i>Die Jahreszeiten</i>
c.1809	Sigmund Romberg	<i>Das Lied von der Glocke</i>
1809	Peter von Winter	<i>Timotheus oder Die Macht der Töne</i>
c.1811	Andreas Romberg	<i>Die Macht des Gesanges</i>
c.1812	Ferdinand Ries	<i>Der Morgen</i>
1814	Ludwig van Beethoven	<i>Der glorreiche Augenblick</i>
1814-15	Ludwig van Beethoven	<i>Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt</i> , Op. 112
1815	Carl Maria von Weber	<i>Kampf und Sieg</i>
1816	Franz Schubert	<i>Prometheus</i> , D. 451 (lost)
c.1817	Andreas Romberg	<i>Was bleibt und was schwindet</i>
1818	Carl Maria von Weber	<i>Jubel Cantate</i>
1828	Felix Mendelssohn	<i>Grosse Festmusik zum Dürerfest</i>
1830	Friedrich Schneider	<i>Die Seefahrt</i>
1832	Felix Mendelssohn	<i>Die erste Walpurgisnacht</i> , Op. 60
1840	Heinrich Marschner	<i>Klänge aus Osten</i>

composers to write choral-orchestral works that differed from the oratorio primarily by being secular, more dramatic and shorter.

European choral societies first performed oratorios and a cappella church music because such music was increasingly neglected by church choirs of the day. The new nineteenth-century symphonic choruses and orchestra produced choral repertory primarily conceived for the concert hall. While early symphonic concerts occasionally featured oratorios and opera excerpts (and occasionally complete concert performances), changes in contemporary taste and expectation led composers to produce music similar to what Felix Mendelssohn proposed to the directors of the Lower Rhine Festival to replace a performance of Bach's *B Minor Mass* during the 1842 festival; in its place, he argued that "an easier, more cheerful piece . . . would seem to me, and I think to everyone else, a better choice."<sup>23</sup>

Mendelssohn and other mainstream German composers created a body of choral-orchestral music that defied easy classification; even the composers themselves were not sure what to call their new compositions. Consider the case of Robert Schumann, whose list of instrumentally accompanied choral works (arranged chronologically in Table 3.3 by date of composition) epitomizes the problem.

Schumann does not describe any of this diverse group of compositions for chorus, solo voices and orchestra as "oratorio," although *Das Paradies und die Peri* and *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt* closely resemble what many have called "secular oratorio." His *Manfred* and the *Scenes from Goethe's Faust*

Table 3.3 Choral-orchestral works by Robert Schumann

Title/opus	Year of composition	Schumann's description
<i>Das Paradies und die Peri</i> , Op. 50	1843	Dichtung aus Th. Moore's <i>Lalla Rookh</i>
<i>Beim Abschied zu singen</i> , Op. 84	1847	Lied
<i>Adventstied</i> , Op. 71	1848	
<i>Requiem für Mignon</i> , Op. 98b	1849	Aus Goethe's <i>Wilhelm Meister</i>
<i>Nachtlied</i> , Op. 108	1849	von Friedrich Hebbel
<i>Manfred</i> , Op. 115	1848-49	Dramatisches Gedicht
<i>Neujahrstied</i> , Op. 144	1849-50	von Friedrich Rückert
<i>Der Rose Pilgerfahrt</i> , Op. 112	1851	Märchen nach einer Dichtung von Moritz Horn
<i>Der Königssohn</i> , Op. 116	1851	Ballade von Ludwig Uhland
<i>Verzweifelte nicht im Schmerzenshah</i> , Op. 93	1852	Motette
<i>Des Sängers Fluch</i> , Op. 139	1852	Ballade nach Ludwig Uhland
<i>Vom Pagen und der Königsstochter</i> , Op. 140	1852	Vier Balladen von Emanuel Geibel
<i>Fest-Ouverture</i> , Op. 123	1852-1853	"Rheinweihnied"
<i>Szenen aus Goethe's Faust</i> , WoO3	1844-53	
<i>Das Glück von Eäenhall</i> , Op. 143	1853	Ballade nach Ludwig Uhland



Table 3.4 Johannes Brahms: secular dramatic choral-orchestral works

<i>Begräbnisgesang</i> , Op. 13	1858
<i>Rinaldo</i> , Op. 50	1863–68
<i>Alt Rhapsodie</i> , Op. 53	1869
<i>Schicksalslied</i> , Op. 54	1870
<i>Triumphlied</i> , Op. 55	1870–71
<i>Nänie</i> , Op. 82	1880–81
<i>Gesang der Parzen</i> , Op. 89	1882

are essentially multi-movement dramatic works with an operatic bent, whereas the *Requiem für Mignon* seemingly defies placement in any genre. The most interesting descriptor Schumann himself used was “Ballade,” a Romantic vocal genre ranging from solo songs (Loewe, Zelter, *et al.*) to multi-movement works that averaged a half-hour in length.<sup>24</sup> In works such as Opp. 116, 139, 140, and 143 Schumann created works perfectly suited to the burgeoning choral festival market without having to wrestle with the formal complexity and expense required to perform either choral symphonies or operatic scenes.

The influence of Robert Schumann extended to Johannes Brahms’s body of small dramatic choral-orchestral works, which are far more frequently performed today than any of Schumann’s works (see Table 3.4). These pieces have remained popular not only for their intrinsic musical beauty, but, perhaps more important, also for their ability to lend variety to the typical orchestral concert without overextending either the orchestra or the chorus. That Brahms composed all of these works after *Ein deutsches Requiem* (Op. 45) suggests that he regarded works of such scope as more pragmatic than works like the *Requiem*.

Three of these – the *Begräbnisgesang*, Op. 13, *Rinaldo*, Op. 50, and the ultra-nationalistic *Triumphlied*, Op. 55 – are rarely performed today. The other four rank among the most beloved and oft-performed choral-orchestral works of any type, probably because, though significantly less demanding than the *Requiem*, they do not compromise or restrict his expressive power.

### Nineteenth-century choral music as microcosm

The production of choral-orchestral works constitutes only one side of the nineteenth-century choral revival. Alfred Einstein acknowledged a totally different type of choral music, the intimate proportions and simple style of which more readily accommodated the explosive growth of small choral ensembles, both mixed and gender-based. For lack of a better term, I refer to this genre as the part-song, realizing that the term is quite generic.

This new type of choralism began with the creation of the *Liedertafeln*, small male choirs comprised of amateurs who were at least as interested in socializing as they were in making music. In his article in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd edn.), Ewan West reports:

The term was coined by Zelter, at whose instigation the first group was formed in Berlin on 24 December 1808 from his celebrated larger Singakademie . . . Liedertafel sprang up through Germany: in Frankfurt an der Oder (1815), Leipzig (1815), Thüringen (1818), Magdeburg (1819), Münster (1822), Hamburg (1823)[and] Bremen (1827).<sup>25</sup>

From these humble beginnings, this movement grew rapidly, eventually engulfing all of Germany and Austria and necessitating the formation of a governing body, the *Männerchörevereine*.<sup>26</sup> At first, these groups disdained the participation of professionals, preferring to create their own music. But as the movement grew, professional composers became more involved as both composer and conductor (e.g. Mendelssohn, Schumann, Bruckner, Rheinberger). The music these groups sang explored predictably masculine topics – songs about drinking, hunting, love, and the joys of nature. The songs about nature, in particular, reveal the most important aspect of such organizations; political disenfranchisement and longing for nationalistic unity transformed the processes of nature into a metaphor for the negative aspects of technological innovation.

Analogous to the *Liedertafeln*, but operating within a decidedly more sophisticated level of society, were informal musical evenings like the *Abendunterhaltungen* instituted by the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna or the famous *Schubertiades*, musical soirées mostly dedicated to the presentation of Schubert's Lieder and piano music held in the homes of benefactors such as Josef Witticzek, Karl Ritter von Enderes, or Josef Freiherr von Spaun.<sup>27</sup> Such events hovered in a nether world between the aristocratic salons of celebrities such as Clemens Metternich and the informal social get-togethers of the lower middle class. Differences of class and purpose may account for the often significant variation in style, text, scoring, and difficulty found in Schubert's part-songs for male voices. Works like "Nachthelle" (D. 892), "Grab und Mond" (D. 893), "Der Gondelfahrer" (D. 809) or the famous "Ständchen" (D. 921) exhibit a virtuosity and aesthetic concept strikingly different from his several "drinking songs" (*Trinklieder*), which more closely approach the style of the *Liedertafel*.<sup>28</sup> His setting of Franz Seidl's poem of transfigured night, "Nachthelle," demonstrates this distance in the demands of both its piano accompaniment and the tenor solo which dialogues with the choir.

Contrast Schubert's Romantic tone-painting with the more direct, masculine topics of the six songs that comprise Mendelssohn's Op. 50 (1840):

- 1 "Türkisches Schenkenlied" (Turkish drinking song)
- 2 "Der Jäger Abschied" (The hunter's farewell)
- 3 "Sommerlied" (Summer song)
- 4 "Wasserfahrt" (Water travel)
- 5 "Liebe und Wein" (Love and wine)
- 6 "Wanderlied" (Wanderer's song)

The first and fifth songs deal with drinking, while the remaining four involve some aspect of nature. Mendelssohn even marked "Liebe und Wein" "Im betrunkenen Ton zu singen," employing his signature meter, 6/8. That "Der Jäger Abschied" is a somber hymn to the forest, sung by departing hunters, is made clear by Mendelssohn's provision of an *ad libitum* accompaniment for hunting horns and trombone and a vocal appropriation of the stereotypical "horn fifths" for "Lebe wohl!" (Farewell!)

The part-song reached new heights of expressivity and musical complexity with Robert Schumann (1810–56) and his protégé Johannes Brahms (1833–97). Whereas Schubert had focused nearly exclusively on songs for male chorus, a preference that Mendelssohn diverged from only by adding an equal number of mixed chorus songs, both Schumann and Brahms wrote a significant body of music for women's voices. Unlike Schumann, however, Brahms wrote very little music for male chorus (Op. 41, 1867). Both composers' music for women's chorus was concert music that tended towards sacred texts because the church was frequently the only concert venue available to women (this in a time when the participation of women in traditional church choirs was still the exception).

A distinguishing feature in both composers' part-songs was the integration of counterpoint (particularly canon) into a genre previously dominated by simple, homophonic settings of mostly strophic poems. While Schumann's oeuvre also contained this simpler type of music, it was his adroit yet expressive use of canon in the *Ritornelle in canonische Weisen* (Op. 65, 1849) for men's chorus, works like "Die Kapelle" (Op. 69, no. 6) and "In Meeres Mitten" (Op. 91, no. 6) for women's chorus and the *Vier doppelchörige Gesänge* (Op. 141, 1849) that presaged Brahms's elevation of the part-song to a new artistic prominence. From Schumann (Opp. 67, 69, 75, 91, 145, and 146) Brahms also borrowed the designation *Romanzen und Balladen*, used in Op. 44 (women's chorus) and Op. 93a (mixed chorus). The influence of Schumann's fascination with counterpoint is similarly apparent in Brahms's canons for women's voices (Op. 113) and in mixed chorus songs such as "Beherrzigung" (Op. 93a,

no. 6) and "Verlorene Jugend," Op. 104, no. 4 (not to mention motets like "Schaffe in mir Gott," Op. 29, no. 2).

Though most choral conductors would agree that the part-songs of Brahms are the crowning achievement of this genre, a host of other composers in Germany and England also made significant contributions. In Germany, the enormous output of Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901), Anton Bruckner's (1824-96) significant contribution to the *Liederfestel* repertory, the fascinating body of choral songs by Peter Cornelius (1824-74) and the daunting works of that arch-Romantic Max Reger (1873-1916) are all important. After Germany, the part-song flourished in England (largely because of Mendelssohn's lasting influence), where its cultivation was even longer in duration and more diverse in style than in Germany.

Well before the foundation of the first *Liederfestel*, part-song singing was a well-established tradition in England. Such organizations as the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club (1761) and the more egalitarian Glee Club (1763) laid the foundation for the future growth of the English part-song. Given Mendelssohn's enormous influence in England (c. 1840), English adaptations of his songs were a foregone conclusion, culminating in Joseph Novello's publication *Orpheus, A Collection of Gleees by the Most Admired German Composers with English Poetry* (1836). To give equal time to English composers, Novello published an *English Part Song Book* (edited by F. G. Monk) in 1850. In that same year, the English Glee and Madrigal Union was founded to "preserve from oblivion the masterpieces of our English school."<sup>29</sup> Ultimately even more important for the development of the English part-song was the founding by Henry Leslie (1822-1896) of the choir that was to establish a new standard of English choral performance, eventually winning the Paris Choral Competition in 1878. Even though Leslie disbanded his choir in 1880, its many successors led to the creation of the English choral competition as early as 1885. These competitions featured "test pieces," typically new compositions designed to provide a measurement of the quality of choirs in each competitive division. Well-known composers of such works included Robert Lucas de Pearsall (1795-1856), Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), C. Hubert H. Parry (1848-1918) and Edward Elgar (1857-1934), whose part-songs are the English equivalent of Brahms's achievement in the genre.

## The role of music publishing

An important distinction needs to be drawn between the physical act of printing music and the process of publication and distribution.<sup>30</sup> Printed music began in early sixteenth-century Venice, experiencing steady growth with little comparable technological innovation. Consequently,

printed music remained the preserve of institutions or individuals who had the substantial financial means needed to acquire the relatively small quantities of printed music that were issued. The next major step forward was the advent of engraving in the eighteenth century, but this innovation was limited by the prevalent use of letterpress printing for music with simple notation, when large print runs were possible or when the material was mostly text (as in treatises). The year of Bach's death (1750) was also significant for the emergence of the music-printing house founded by J. G. I. Breitkopf in Leipzig. Not only did Breitkopf figure significantly in the development of musical typography, he was also the first publisher able to produce large enough quantities of music to satisfy the needs of the new choral societies at a reasonable price. He accomplished this feat by using two different techniques – typeset music that allowed larger press runs of acceptable quality, allowing him to undersell the competition, and music manuscript (engraved and then printed) that allowed much wider dissemination of a greater range of repertory than his rivals.<sup>31</sup> Breitkopf's successful marketing strategy was soon adopted by other firms, creating a number of financially viable music publishing houses in England and Europe (see Table 3.5). That these firms remain well known today underscores how significantly nineteenth-century innovations changed the world of choral music. Other pivotal events in creating quantities of affordable printed music were the advent of lithography, (c.1810), offset printing (1860) and Novello's invention of the octavo (1847).

Table 3.5 *Music publishers of the eighteenth to the early twentieth century*

1750	Breitkopf und Söhne	Leipzig
1770	Schott	Mainz
1793	Simrock	Bonn (Berlin)
1778–1837	Artaria	Vienna
1808	Ricordi	Milan
1811	Breitkopf und Härtel	Leipzig
1811	Novello	London
1814	C. F. Peters	Vienna
c.1816	Boosey	London
1838	Bote und Bock	Berlin
1839–80	Heugel et Cie.	Paris
1853	Wilhelm Hansen	Copenhagen
1861	G. Schirmer	New York
1863	Curwen	London
1864–1970	J. Fischer	Dayton/New York
1872	Carl Fischer	New York
1874	E. Eulenburg	Leipzig
1883	Theodore Presser	Philadelphia
1891	Fazer	Helsinki
1901	Universal Edition	Vienna

### The rise of historical music

Prior to the nineteenth century, all choral music was contemporary save for the important exceptions of the choral music of Palestrina and Handel, which continued to be performed (in Rome and London respectively) after the composers' deaths. These were, however, the exceptions that proved the rule that the music of living composers was still preeminent. This changed completely when Felix Mendelssohn revived J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Zelter's Singakademie in 1829. This rediscovery of Bach's music not only invigorated the compositions of Mendelssohn but also provided (along with Beethoven and Brahms) the repertorial foundation of music conservatories established in countries that had previously lacked a substantial national musical tradition. The renewed interest in Bach also led to the founding of the Bach Gesellschaft in 1850, the creation of which led Leipzig-based Breitkopf und Härtel to issue the first complete edition of the compositions of a non-living composer. Indeed, Breitkopf und Härtel's ascendancy established Leipzig as the center for producing collected works editions of Handel (ed. Friedrich Chrysander, 1856-94), Schütz (ed. Philip Spitta, 1885-94), and Lassus (ed. Adolph Sandberger, 1894-1926). At roughly the same time, a series of musical "monuments" was initiated with the publication of the *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst* (1892-1931), followed by its Austrian companion, the *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (Graz/Vienna, 1894-1959).

The greatest choral composer of the nineteenth century, Johannes Brahms was a pioneer in the programming of historical choral music in contemporary concerts, as well as composing music that in various ways revealed his indebtedness to the past. Consider, for example, the motets of Op. 74 - "Warum ist das Licht gegeben dem Mühseligen" and "O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf." Not only do both works depend upon such historical practices as canon, cantus firmus, polychorality, and a surprising understanding of modality, but they were also dedicated to Philipp Spitta, the author of the first definitive biography of J. S. Bach (1873-80) and editor of the original Schütz *Gesammelte Werke*.

Berlin soon attained a status equal to Leipzig's with the appearance of landmark publications such as Johannes Winterfeld's pioneering study of Giovanni Gabrieli and his contemporaries (1834), which did much to fuel the revival of interest in Schütz's music. The edition by F. A. X. Haberl and Caspar Witt of Palestrina's music (1862-1907) followed an earlier Italian edition by Alberti (1841). The firm of Bote und Bock in Berlin produced two important anthologies of sacred music - Franz Commer's *Musica Sacra* (1834-42, 1860-87 as *Cantiones*) and a companion volume intended to serve the repertorial needs of the Königliche Berliner

Domchor (1843–1905). The conservative, largely Catholic Cecilian movement inspired historical editions by Caspar Witt and Karl Proske, whose anthology, *Musica Divina* (1853–76), established Ratisbon (Regensburg) as the center for the study and dissemination of the music of the “Palestrina” school.

Indeed, the conservative tenets of the Cecilian movement provided a viable alternative to contemporary composers for whom the mass was no longer a viable genre of concert music. Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* had its imitators, but for those not so bold as to challenge its lofty heights, Romanticism’s fascination with antiquity provided the necessary impetus for modern re-creations of the a cappella style of Palestrina and his contemporaries. Among the more famous products of this movement were Bruckner’s Mass No. 2 in E minor (WAB 27, 1866) and Franz Liszt’s *Missa Choralis* (1859–65). Bruckner parodies the Sanctus of Palestrina’s *Missa Brevis* in the Sanctus of his Mass in E minor, while Liszt prominently uses a Gregorian intonation throughout the Credo of his mass, originally intended for a cappella performance in the Sistine Chapel.

The effects of the Cecilian movement had far greater influence on smaller sacred works. For composers such as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Rheinberger, Bruckner, and Liszt, this influence manifested itself in the composition of Latin liturgical motets for both women’s choirs (where they would, of necessity, have constituted concert repertory) and mixed choirs. This retrospective reform, which embraced the study and performance of early music, also championed a myth about choral performance that persists to this day, namely that “old” music (whether chronologically or stylistically so) was, *ipso facto*, performed a cappella; while a cappella performance was the norm for the Sistine Chapel, no evidence suggests its widespread use elsewhere. Yet, even today, there are choirs the very names of which perpetuate this tradition. Indeed, this enduring myth may be one of the nineteenth century’s greatest legacies to contemporary choral performance, even as we increasingly understand how misguided that notion was.

## Conclusion

For some time, the stature of nineteenth-century choral music has been questioned not only by Alfred Einstein but also (tacitly) by the editors of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, the fourth edition of which included only two choral excerpts in its 997-page second volume – “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen” from Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* and Bruckner’s motet *Virga Jesse floruit*.<sup>32</sup> What I hope I have made abundantly clear in this chapter is that choral music, as we understand it

today, is still indelibly marked by historic and aesthetic conventions that were products of the nineteenth century – choral societies, music education, the importance of historical music, technological advances that made possible affordable scores of larger choral works and choral octavos (the choral octavo itself was a nineteenth-century invention), the “glee club” tradition, the choral competition, the amateur church choir and the ideal of a cappella singing. Not only do works like Beethoven’s *Missa solennis*, Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* (not to mention his motets, part-songs and choral-orchestral songs), Schubert’s Mass in G and Verdi’s *Requiem* remain vital parts of the canon of performed choral repertory, but there are also literally innumerable works for choruses of all types that are still regarded by choral conductors and music educators at all levels as valuable reminders of the era whose ideas spawned our own.