Foundation’s Work – Around the World

Collection of first editions

There are many future plans for the international work of the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation Leipzig, several now concrete. And some are now becoming reality – already in the Summer Newsletter we could give details of the proposal to acquire a major collection of Mendelssohn first editions. With concerts for benefit of the Foundation we collected money, and we asked for further contributions and donations to help realise the dream of an archive of first and early editions in the rooms of the Mendelssohn House Leipzig, for research and performance objectives – now we can report that in October the collection could move to Leipzig.

Already in the summer the experts had validated the collection in preparation for contract signature, which took place during this year’s Mendelssohn Festival in Leipzig on 18 September. Janet and Richard Macnutt (Great Britain) and Ulrich Drüner (Germany) on behalf of the owners, and Maestro Kurt Masur and Leipzig Mayor Burkhard Jung as representatives of the Foundation met to put their names on a document of such importance for the future of the Mendelssohn House.

And now the institution is the owner of a huge collection of source material, which will be a focal point especially for researchers. In addition, performing musicians will now have a rich fund of material at their disposal. Therefore all the works will be individually digitalised, in order to preserve the valuable original material, given the expected demand, and to make digitalised documents available for specific work projects.

The next stage will be to put the digitalised documents on the new Mendelssohn-Portal website, which was established in October 2009. In the summer of 2010 the project will be started.
At the invitation of the German Ambassador in London, HE Georg Boomgaard and his wife, and of the law firm Pritchard Englefield, the Chairman and Management of the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation travelled to London in October. The London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir under Maestro Kurt Masur gave a performance of Mendelssohn’s famous oratorio “Elijah” in a packed Royal Festival Hall, followed by a Reception with prominent guests from the worlds of politics and music, including British Culture Secretary Ben Bradshaw and former German Foreign Secretary Hans-Dietrich Genscher. The occasion was in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the composer’s birth, and of the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall. Both anniversaries have stimulated great interest in the British capital.

Desmond Cecil, Chairman of the “UK Friends of the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation” and long-standing supporter of the Mendelssohn House, welcomed the guests most warmly, above all Maestro Kurt Masur, highlighting the rich traditions linking London and Leipzig, including of course the music of Mendelssohn, and which have received new inspiration and life since the Fall of the Berlin Wall. The German Ambassador took up this theme in his own words of welcome, setting the musically and politically active Leipzig in centre stage, and he especially thanked Mayor Burkhard Jung for his commitment and for coming to London. Maestro Kurt Masur in his speech expressed his thanks for the opportunity to present to London Mendelssohn, his last home and the musical city of Leipzig, and above all with such an impressive work as the oratorio “Elijah”, which was known to have been composed in the Leipzig Mendelssohn House.

Mayor Jung and Jürgen Ernst as representatives of the Foundation and Christiane Schmidt of the Mendelssohn House benefited from the evening to renew old contacts, to get to know new ones, and above all to discuss concrete ideas for the future international development of Mendelssohn’s heritage.

A most welcome and appreciated result of the visit is a donation from the “UK Friends of the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation” to the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation for the archiving of the recently acquired collection of early editions.
A long awaited visit took place on 16 September during this year’s Mendelssohn Festival in Leipzig. Mrs Tomoko Masur invited the enthusiastic members of the Japanese Mendelssohn Society, so that they could get to know the historical Mendelssohn sites in the musical city. The guests had a rich and varied programme – an extended walk in Mendelssohn’s footsteps with visits to the city churches and Gewandhaus, a long visit to the museum in the Mendelssohn House with a guided tour and a concert, motets, visits to the Schumann House, the Hochschule for Music and Theatre named after Mendelssohn, and much else – so that the guests could in a short time enjoy an excellent overview of the musical traditions and the modern developments in Leipzig.

Naturally the visit to the Mendelssohn House was the central point of the Leipzig programme. Here the Japanese guests, who came with Mrs and Professor Kurt Masur, were most warmly welcomed by the First Mayor of Leipzig Andreas Müller. In his speech he referred not only to the Mendelssohn Year 2009, but also to the varied and intensive activities of the Mendelssohn friends in Japan in general. He spoke from personal experience, since during his last visit to Tokyo in 2008 at invitation he had already met a large and committed circle of the Mendelssohn friends there.

Mrs Masur reciprocated the thanks on behalf of the Japanese guests, and expounded current ideas and plans – she spoke of the plans of the Japanese Society for December 2009. Also Professor Masur addressed the visitors, thanked them for coming, and for the attention and friendship which the guests had shown towards the music city of Leipzig, and especially to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and his sites.

After a Reception in the Garden House, the guests were invited by Director Jürgen Ernst to a concert in the Music Salon, where he again greeted them in the authentic setting. Alexandra Oehler (piano) and Panu Sundquist (violoncello) performed works by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

This was not the only meeting between the representatives of the Mendelssohn House and the Japanese guests – at further concerts for example at the Gewandhaus, there was always an occasion for an exchange of views.

This exchange will continue in Tokyo, Osaka and Kanasawa, on the occasion of the Mendelssohn Festival Weeks in these big Japanese cities from 9-19 December 2009. As Mrs Masur explained, there would be an intensive programme of master-classes with Maestro Masur, the German singer Peter Schreier and with the famous Gewandhaus Quartet, an exhibition called “Felix” in the Goethe Institute, a symposium and research “roundtable”, concerts and meetings to celebrate the 200th birthday of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

More well-known names would be represented and active in the presentation of the Festival Week – not only Maestro Kurt Masur, Peter Schreier, the Gewandhaus- and Okayama-Quartets, but also Peter Ward Jones, Ralf Wehner and Hiromi Hoshino, who are known in the world for their work and books on Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Mrs Tomoko Masur would co-ordinate the organisation of this attractive offering from the Japanese Mendelssohn friends in co-operation with the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation Leipzig. The Leipzig Mayor Burkhard Jung and the Managing director of the Foundation Jürgen Ernst would attend the closing performance in Tokyo, to show their solidarity and to strengthen their links with the Japanese circle of friends.
Mendelssohn-Portal website

Since the beginning of October the new Mendelssohn-Portal website is now online. Interested persons will reach the pages via the well-known web addresses. There the visitors will find many information about Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, his work and his family in German as well as in English. With the new pages it is easier to look at the announcements for the events of the Mendelssohn House and of the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation. Websites of the Mendelssohn societies world-wide are listed and linked there. Very comfortable is the page with pictures in printing quality of the composer, of the Mendelssohn House and its museum for download. In the online shop there is a special offer of Mendelssohn compact discs and books on the composer.

Mendelssohn Prize 2010

Pre-announcement – the Mendelssohn Prize for the year 2010 will be awarded on 12th June by the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation for the fourth time. The Winner will be again honoured during a concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Maestro Riccardo Chailly, Mendelssohn Prize Winner in the Anniversary Year 2009, has generously offered to lead the festive concert with his Gewandhaus orchestra.

The details of ticket sales and the programme for the evening will be announced in good time. However the name of the Prize Winner will remain a secret for the moment – come and find out yourself on the evening!

Donators and Supporters since June 2009

In the second half of the Anniversary Year for Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy there were again many donations to the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation - and also in addition much valuable support; grateful thanks are due to all supporters for their generous contributions to the work of the Foundation:

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