In the Mendelssohn Anniversary Year 2009 many music lovers took the opportunity to visit Leipzig and the Mendelssohn House – one very welcome occasion was the Mendelssohn Gala on 2nd February 2009.

Once again the Leipzig Gewandhaus was the host, with a Celebration Concert given to a packed audience by the Gewandhaus Orchestra with the outstanding piano virtuoso and Mendelssohn admirer Lang Lang, under the direction of Maestro Riccardo Chailly – which was the great occasion to honour this year’s Leipzig Mendelssohn Prize-winners.

Unfortunately, former Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was unable for health reasons to receive his prize in person on this evening – his “Laudator” Justus Franz later presented it to him at home. The two other Mendelssohn Prize-winners – the conductor and Gewandhaus Kapellmeister Riccardo Chailly and the actor Armin Mueller-Stahl – received their deserved awards from Ornella Muti and Geraldine Chaplin respectively. These read out the laudations with fulsome praise for “their” prize-winners and artistic colleagues at festive dinner in the Mendelssohn Room following the concert.

Helmut Schmidt was honoured in the Social Engagement Category for his services in the spirit of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, for example for developing understanding between peoples through the medium of music. Gewandhaus Kapellmeister Riccardo Chailly received the Mendelssohn Prize 2009 in the Music Category. Since his opening concert for the 2005/2006 season he has given prominence to the compositions of his distant predecessor as Gewandhaus Kapellmeister, confirming this with numerous CD recordings.

In the Visual Arts Category the jury selected the multi-talented artist Armin Mueller-Stahl – he is not only an actor, his deep love of music and painting with roots in nature linking him with Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

The financial benefits of the evening will be used to support the work of the Foundation – for which our grateful thanks!
The Prize-winners and their charming “Laudatores”: Italian actress Ornella Muti and Gewandhaus Kapellmeister Maestro Riccardo Chailly; Geraldine Chaplin and her artistic colleague Armin Mueller-Stahl with the Leipzig Mendelssohn Prize 2009

Mayor Burkhard Jung and his wife meet Sebastian Krumbiegel, one of the members of “Die Prinzen” from Leipzig

Pianist Lang Lang (soloist of the evening concert), Generalbundesanwältin Monika Harms and Gewandhaus Director Andreas Schulz; right: Prize-winner of the year 2008 Peter Sloterdijk, with German Star Cook Sarah Wiener. Again Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lang Lang and Geraldine Chaplin in the Mendelssohn Hall of the Gewandhaus; The dinner was cooked by Dieter Müller (3 stars) of the Schloßhotel Lerbach.
A further splendid event in the framework of the Mendelssohn Anniversary Year 2009 took place in the Mendelssohn House on 14th June. The President of the Felix-Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Foundation, Professor Kurt Masur, and the Chairman of the Board, Mayor Burkhard Jung, invited guests to a Benefit Evening, at which the world-famous violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, the pianist and composer Sir André Previn and the cellist Lynn Harrell had agreed to give a concert in support of the Mendelssohn House. The programme consisted of Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor opus 49, and Mozart's Piano Trio KV 502. The concert given by the three world-stars provided very special enjoyment. The trio interpreted the music in complete stylistic harmony, completely focussed on the works and their composers, and with breathtaking beauty. This joyous performance was greeted with thunderous applause and a standing ovation.

After the concert everyone moved to the Gardenhouse, where the Foundation's President had invited them to join him for a festive menu created by the Leipzig Hotel Fürstenhof, and to listen to stimulating speeches.

The Patron of the Benefit Evening was Thomas de Maizièr, Minister from the Federal Chancellery, who gave a personal and moving speech about Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy before the concert.

A surprise guest was Queen Silvia of Sweden, who wished to please Maestro Kurt Masur with her unplaned arrival – a successful Royal joke. Other guests for the evening included the publisher Friede Springer, Ann-Katrin Bauknecht, Beate Middelschulte, Maren Otto, the Mayor of Leipzig Burkhard Jung, Neo Rauch, Kurt Biedenkopf – all of whom through their generous donations contributed to the extraordinary success of the evening and its objectives.

The Mendelssohn House and its team with Director Jürgen Ernst organised the outstanding musical and social elements of the event, in close cooperation with former Cultural Mayor of Leipzig Dr Georg Girardet.

In his welcoming speech Professor Kurt Masur expressed his great pleasure that in the Mendelssohn Anniversary Year 2009 so many leading figures from the worlds of culture, economics and politics had found their way to Leipzig, each in his or her way honouring the great 19th century master Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. He spoke of the work of the Felix-Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Foundation, and explained the purpose of the evening’s fund-raising – to focus on two very important projects of the Mendelssohn House.

However, this is only a part of the project. In the context of better usage and publication of valuable archive
Impressions of the concert

Picture above: Queen Silvia of Sweden, Beate Middelschulte, the publisher Friede Springer und Barbara Groth in the music salon of the museum.

Pictures left, above: There was time for talks before the concert in the music salon – Queen Silvia of Sweden, Leipzig Mayor Burkhard Jung and his wife and the painter Neo Rauch discussed long and intensive.

middle: The former president of the Freistaat Sachsen Professor Kurt Biedenkopf, Maren Otto and the publisher Friede Springer (from left) talked about their impressions after looking round the museum.

below: Jürgen Ernst, Director of the Mendelssohn House, is explaining some details of the historical site for Queen Silvia of Sweden, Beate Middelschulte and Ute Petersen-Schulz.

Picture below: Maestro Kurt Masur and Queen Silvia of Sweden.
Continuation of page 3: material, there has been much discus-

sion in recent years of the digitalisati-

on of museum assets. If the Mendels-

sohn House were able to acquire this

big collection, it could make these rare

editions available to a wider public on

a cost-effective basis, for example

through the internet.

Thus, a part of the funds realised

at the 14th June event would contrib-

ute to the money needed to acquire

this unique collection.

The second current project of the

Felix-Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Foun-

dation would be to acquire a rare

historical piano made in the work-

shop of Johann Nepomuk Tröndlin, a

Leipzig piano-maker. This well-preser-

ved and cared-for “Hammerflügel” was

built between 1828 and 1830.

Although it is not widely known,

there was a close relationship between

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and

Johann Nepomuk Tröndlin, arising

from Mendelssohn’s time in Leipzig

as Gewandhaus Kapellmeister. Men-

delssohn generally valued and prefer-

red pianos from English makers, but

in this case he was so impressed by

the excellent quality of this local pro-

duction from Tröndlin’s workshop

that he acquired many of the instru-

ments for the Leipzig Gewandhaus –

for the concerts and the rehearsals. It

has been established that those

pianos continued to be played until

the 1860s. According to experts,

Leipzig piano-making by the Tröndlin

workshop can be compared in impor-

tance with piano-making in Vienna.

It is estimated that there are only

12 and at most 15 Tröndlin pianos in

existence in the world today. If it is

possible to acquire this valuable

historical piano for the Mendelssohn

House, an instrument which is cur-

tently not being played, could bring

the particularly rich sounds of the

19th century to a wider public.

The 14th June event was unforget-

table, and was a great success in every

respect. However, we still do not have

the complete funds necessary for

these projects. Therefore, we should

be extremely grateful for further

donations.

First prints of Mendelssohn’s compositions; there
are more than 730 printed scores in the unique
complete collection – well-preserved and stored
in special boxes.

The rare historical piano from the Leipzig Tröndlin
workshop; this instrument with its typical 19th cen-
tury sound could be used also in the salon con-
certs of the Mendelssohn House in Leipzig

Pictures above: The Patron of the evening, Dr.
Thomas de Maizière, speaking about Felix
Mendelssohn Bartholdy.
World stars after a wonderful concert: Lynn
Harrell, Anne-Sophie Mutter and Sir André Previn,
(from left) – flowers and a standing ovation for
very impressive interpretations of Mendelssohn’s
and Mozart’s works.
Dr Georg Girardet retires

At the last meeting of the Board of the Felix-Mendelssohn-Bartholdy-Foundation on 26th May 2009 the former Cultural Mayor of Leipzig Dr Georg Girardet, who had represented the Lord Mayor on the Board since its inception, bade farewell as he took his well-earned retirement. Lord Mayor Burkhard Jung in a heartfelt speech thanked him for his long-standing involvement and for his constructive and very valuable work on the Board. Maestro Kurt Masur also wished Dr Girardet well on behalf of all Board members, friends, supporters and colleagues. In a short speech he looked back on the difficult beginnings, and the hard-won progress which had significantly improved the situation both for the Foundation and for the Mendelssohn House.

The successor to Dr Girardet and thus the Lord Mayor’s representative on the Foundation’s Board is Mayor Michael Faber, who was recently elected to the office of Cultural Councillor.

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