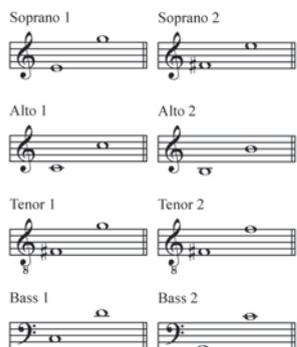




“Lasset uns frohlocken,” No. 5
from *Sechs Sprüche*, Op. 79
SSAATTBB, unaccompanied
Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
©2009, Novello (\$2.95)



Felix Mendelssohn was one of the most prolific choral composers of the nineteenth century. Among his vast and varied choral output are six short anthems, *Sechs Sprüche* (Op. 79) for eight-part unaccompanied chorus, which he composed between 1844 and 1846. “Lasset uns frohlocken” is the fifth of this set and is published here under its incipit title; each of the six anthems was originally named by Mendelssohn according to its relevant position in the liturgical year.

“Lasset uns frohlocken” is based on a quintessentially Advent text: “Let us rejoice! The redeemer is coming, whom the Lord has promised. The name of the Lord be praised forever. Hallelujah!” Like its companions in this compact set of anthems (none exceeding two minutes in length), the piece displays two important influences on Mendelssohn’s approach to sacred, unaccompanied choral music: the imitative style of Renaissance composers such as Palestrina, and the contrapuntal complexity of J. S. Bach. Similarly

to the Cecilian approach of later nineteenth-century composers such as Bruckner and Liszt, Mendelssohn emulated the techniques of sacred masters who preceded him but infused them with Romantic elements such as expanded harmonic and melodic language, a wider range of dynamics, and thicker textures.

The main idea is first presented in the tenor I part, outlining a G-major triad but evading resolution by continuing upward to the sixth scale degree, a typical melodic gesture for Mendelssohn. After several imitations in quick succession, a middle section occurs at measure 11, signified by an abrupt shift to *pp* that crescendoes to *f* as the music trumpets the coming of the “redeemer.” Here Mendelssohn abandons contrapuntal texture for a more chordal, declamatory style. The music re-

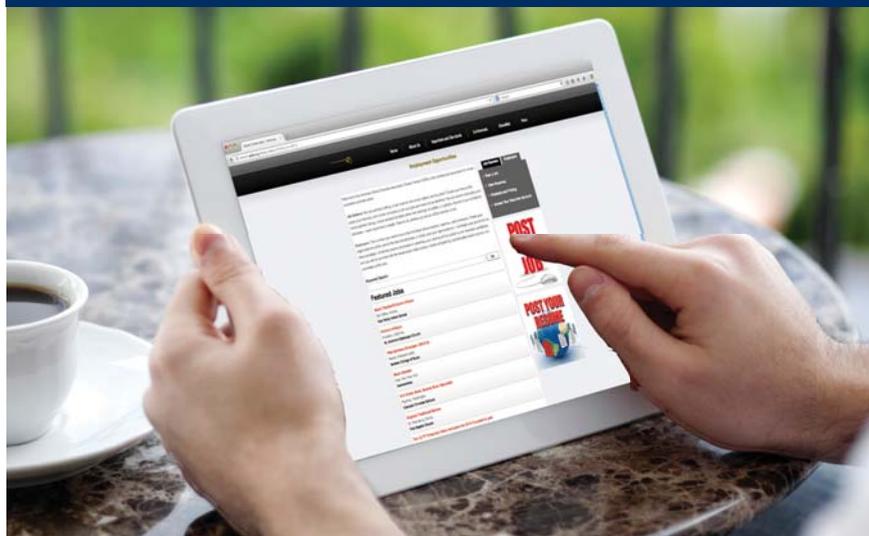
turns to polyphony in the final text, as “the name of the Lord is praised forever” in a long-spun, Romantic melody traded among the parts, with greater range in its melodic contour and more variation in its harmonic progressions. A typical IV-V7-I cadence closes the piece on its final Hallelujah.

Novello’s attractive edition of this anthem includes a helpful piano reduction for rehearsal. Though not without its challenges, the manageable length of this anthem makes it, and perhaps the entire set of six, accessible to a medium-sized church or chamber choir of intermediate ability. As with much of Mendelssohn’s underrated choral music, it deserves to be programmed and performed.

D. Jason Bishop
West Orange, NJ

The ACDA CAREER CENTER

acda.careerwebsite.com



Your next choral career opportunity
could be closer than you think.