

Henriette Herz (1778)

Abstract

Henriette Julie Herz (1764-1847), the daughter of Benjamin de Lemos (1711-1789), a Portuguese Sephardic physician from Hamburg, was a well-known figure in late-eighteenth century Berlin society. She was an exact contemporary and close personal friend of Dorothea Mendelssohn (later Schlegel), the daughter of Moses Mendelssohn. After marrying the well-to-do philosopher and physician Markus Herz (1747-1803) in 1779, she opened a salon that attracted prominent figures in the arts, philosophy, and politics. It was a place where members of various Berlin circles – Jews, aristocrats, artists, and intellectuals – met and mixed. Her guests and friends included such diverse personalities as theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), as well as his brother, the philosopher, scholar, linguist and politician Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), and liberal publicist (but later arch-conservative) Friedrich Gentz (1764-1832). In this portrait by Anna Dorothea Thierbusch, a fourteen-year old Herz appears as Hebe, the Greek goddess of youth. Herz was renowned not only for her intellect, her conversational skills, and her great aptitude for languages, but also for her extraordinary beauty, which roused the passions of many of her famous contemporaries.

Source



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