

# Felix Mendelssohn

## Prelude

MWV U 123  
Op. 104a, No. 2

Critical Edition

Edited by Benjamin Geer

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# Preface

This critical edition is Creative Commons licensed<sup>1</sup> and the source code is available,<sup>2</sup> to allow derived editions to be made.

Performance editions based on this edition can be found on the project web site, <https://tondauer.art>.

## About the Piece

Mendelssohn composed this prelude in 1836, intending at first to include it in Op. 35, a set of preludes (originally études) and fugues. He then chose a different prelude for Op. 35, and this one was published posthumously in 1868.<sup>3</sup>

## Methodology and Sources

Mendelssohn wrote two versions of the piece,  $V_1$  and  $V_2$ . Like most other editions, this one presents  $V_2$ . No autograph ( $A_2$ ) or engraver's copy of  $V_2$  has been found.<sup>4</sup> I have used the following sources:

**A<sub>1</sub>** The autograph of  $V_1$ ,<sup>5</sup> dated 12 October 1836.

**E<sub>S1</sub>** The first German edition of  $V_2$ ,<sup>6</sup> published in Leipzig by Bartholf Senff in 1868. It also gives the date of the composition as 12 October 1836.

**E<sub>N</sub>** The first English edition of  $V_2$ ,<sup>7</sup> published in London by Novello in 1868.

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1. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

2. See <https://github.com/benjamingeer/Tondauer>.

3. R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 188–198.

4. I am grateful to Dr. R. Larry Todd for this information.

5. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, shelfmark Mus.ms.autogr. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, F. 28, <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001F9E700000315>.

6. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, shelfmark N.Mus. 5420-1.

7. Bodleian Library, Oxford, shelfmark Deneke 256 (15).

**E<sub>S2</sub>** A later Senff edition,<sup>8</sup> published in about 1875. It is identical to **E<sub>S1</sub>**.

**E<sub>B</sub>** The Breitkopf & Härtel edition of **V<sub>2</sub>**,<sup>9</sup> part of a critically revised edition of Mendelssohn's collected works, published between 1874 and 1877.

Digital facsimiles of these can be found at <https://tondauer.art>.

**E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>** were coordinated editions (each mentions the other publisher), but are not identical; **E<sub>N</sub>** contains several emendations. **E<sub>B</sub>** has some of these as well as a number of others.

There are clearly problems with **E<sub>S1</sub>**. But it is possible that only the editors of **E<sub>S1</sub>** had access to the autographs, and that the variant readings in the other editions are conjectural emendations. Moreover, as explained below under [Analysis](#), it seems likely that Mendelssohn left **A<sub>2</sub>** in an unfinished state, which may well be accurately reflected in **E<sub>S1</sub>**.

I have taken **E<sub>S1</sub>** as a starting point, and accepted emendations from the other editions where they agree with **A<sub>1</sub>**. This approach gives considerable weight to **A<sub>1</sub>**, since it is the only available autograph, at the risk of undoing changes that Mendelssohn made in **A<sub>2</sub>**. I have also followed the emendation in **E<sub>N</sub>** and **E<sub>B</sub>** for what appears to be an error in measure 7, and supplied accidentals that are clearly missing. All these choices are detailed below under [Comments](#).

One could give more weight to **E<sub>S1</sub>**, given its proximity to **A<sub>2</sub>**. Or one could take a different approach and accept, for example, **E<sub>B</sub>**'s reading in the first beat of measure 15, on the grounds of musical plausibility.

## Comments

Each comment corresponds to a footnote in the music text.

**Measure 2, beat 2** Preferred sources: **A<sub>1</sub>**, **E<sub>N</sub>**.

**A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 3) and **E<sub>N</sub>** have G<sup>#</sup>, while **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>B</sub>** have G<sup>♯</sup> (with no accidental).

**Measure 4, beat 4** Preferred sources: **A<sub>1</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

**A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 8) and **E<sub>B</sub>** have A<sup>♯</sup> (with no accidental in **A<sub>1</sub>**), while **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>** have A<sup>#</sup> (with no accidental).

**Measure 7, beat 3** Preferred sources: **E<sub>N</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

**E<sub>N</sub>** and **E<sub>B</sub>** have B, while **E<sub>S1</sub>** has G, which is surely an error. The passage is different in **A<sub>1</sub>**, but the theme occurs with B in measure 16.

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8. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, shelfmark N.Mus. 5419-1.

9. <https://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ReverseLookup/109142>

**Measure 10, beat 1** Preferred sources: **A<sub>1</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

In **A<sub>1</sub>** (measures 19-21) and **E<sub>B</sub>**, both the ties in measure 9 continue to the first beat of measure 11, while in **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>**, only the lower C $\sharp$  is tied between measures 10 and 11.

**Measure 10, beat 1** Preferred sources: **E<sub>N</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

**E<sub>N</sub>** and **E<sub>B</sub>** have D $\sharp$ , while **E<sub>S1</sub>** has D $\flat$  (with no accidental), which is surely an error. **A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 19) has a different structure here.

**Measure 12, beat 2** Preferred sources: **A<sub>1</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

**A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 23) and **E<sub>B</sub>** have B $\flat$ , while **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>** have B $\sharp$  (with no accidental).

**Measure 12, beat 3** Redundant sharp in **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>**.

**Measure 13, beat 1** Preferred sources: **A<sub>1</sub>**, **E<sub>N</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

**A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 25), **E<sub>N</sub>**, and **E<sub>B</sub>** have D $\sharp$ , while **E<sub>S1</sub>** has D $\flat$  (with no accidental).

**Measure 13, beat 2** In **E<sub>S1</sub>**, **E<sub>N</sub>**, and **E<sub>B</sub>**, the accidental is missing on the G $\sharp$  in the upper staff. **A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 25) is unclear.

**Measure 13, beat 2** Preferred source: **E<sub>B</sub>**.

**E<sub>B</sub>** has D $\flat$ , while **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>** have D $\sharp$  (with no accidental), which is surely an error. **A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 25) is unclear.

**Measure 13, beat 3** Preferred sources: **A<sub>1</sub>**, **E<sub>B</sub>**.

Twice in this beat, **A<sub>1</sub>** (measure 26, though slightly different) and **E<sub>B</sub>** have E $\flat$ , while **E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>** have E $\sharp$  (with no accidental).

**Measure 15, beat 1** Preferred sources: **E<sub>S1</sub>**, **E<sub>N</sub>**.

**E<sub>S1</sub>** and **E<sub>N</sub>** have E $\flat$  (with no accidental), while **E<sub>B</sub>** has E $\sharp$ . The corresponding passage in **A<sub>1</sub>** (starting in measure 29) has neither, and has a somewhat different harmonic structure.

Five diminished seventh chords descend chromatically in measures 13-14, and again in measures 15-16. The reading with E $\flat$  here matches the E $\flat$  that occurs with the corresponding chord in measure 13. On the other hand, the reading with E $\sharp$  maintains a parallelism in measures 15-16, repeating the same ascending four-note interval sequence each time (minor third, major second, minor second). That same interval sequence, inverted, also appears with the first, third, and fifth diminished chords in measures 13-14.

**Measure 15, beat 3** Preferred sources:  $A_1$ ,  $E_B$ .

$A_1$  (measure 30) and  $E_B$  have  $E_{\flat}$ , while  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_N$  have  $E_{\sharp}$  (with no accidental).

**Measure 15, beat 3** Preferred sources:  $A_1$ ,  $E_N$ ,  $E_B$ .

$A_1$  (measure 30),  $E_N$ , and  $E_B$  have  $G_{\flat}$ , while  $E_{S1}$  has  $G_{\sharp}$  (with no accidental).

**Measure 16, beat 1** Preferred source:  $E_N$ .

$E_N$  has  $G_{\sharp}$ , while  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_B$  have  $G_{\flat}$ , which is surely an error.  $A_1$  (measure 31) has a different structure here.

**Measure 16, beat 3** Redundant sharp in  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_N$ .

**Measure 17, beat 3** Redundant sharp in  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_N$ .

**Measure 18, beat 3** Redundant sharp in  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_N$ .

**Measure 20, beat 4** Preferred sources:  $E_{S1}$ ,  $E_N$ .

The chord is staccato in  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_N$ , but not in  $E_B$ .  $A_1$  (measure 40) has a different structure here.

**Measure 23, beat 3** Redundant sharp in  $E_{S1}$  and  $E_N$ .

**Measure 23, beat 4** Preferred sources:  $E_N$ ,  $E_B$ .

$E_N$  and  $E_B$  have  $G_{\sharp}$ , while  $E_{S1}$  has  $G_{\flat}$  (with no accidental), which is surely an error. The second half of measure 23 and the first half of measure 24 do not occur in  $A_1$ .

## Analysis

In the process of transforming  $V_1$  into  $V_2$ , Mendelssohn halved the note values throughout, and thus combined every two measures into one. Some of the problems with accidentals in  $E_{S1}$  seem likely to have resulted from incomplete proofreading of the second half of each measure after this change.

For example, in measure 8 of  $A_1$ , the last note in the lower staff is  $A_{\flat}$ . There it did not need a natural sign, but it needed one after the preceding bar line was removed to form measure 4 of  $V_2$ ; the natural sign is missing in  $E_{S1}$ . The same is true of the  $E_{\flat}$  notes in measure 26 of  $A_1$ , which are in the third beat of measure

13 of  $V_2$ , and the  $E_{\sharp}$  in measure 30 of  $A_1$ , which is in the third beat of measure 15 in  $V_2$ .

Moreover, in measure 30 of  $A_1$ , the first  $G_{\sharp}$  in the lower staff has a cautionary accidental, but in  $V_2$  it has been changed to another note. A natural sign therefore needs to be added to the subsequent  $G_{\sharp}$  to cancel the sharp earlier in the measure, but it is missing in  $E_{S1}$ .

The redundant sharp on the  $E_{\sharp}$  in the third beat of measure 12 in  $E_{S1}$  seems to be another sign of this process; it was probably left there after being needed in measure 24 of  $A_1$ . The same goes for the redundant sharp on the  $G_{\sharp}$  in the third beats of measures 16, 17, and 18, and the one on the  $E_{\sharp}$  in the third beat of measure 23.

Perhaps Mendelssohn decided not to use this prelude in Op. 35 before completing the proofreading of  $A_2$ , and therefore left the manuscript in an unfinished state, with errors that were then reproduced in  $E_{S1}$ .

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# Prelude

Felix Mendelssohn  
MWV U 123 (Op. 104a, No. 2)

**Allegro agitato**

*f*

2

3

4

*cresc.*

5

6

*p*

<sup>1</sup>G # or G ♭?

<sup>2</sup>A ♭ or A #?

2

<sup>1</sup>B or G?

<sup>2</sup>Does the upper tie continue to measure 11?

<sup>3</sup>D # or D ♭?

<sup>4</sup>B ♭ or B #?

<sup>5</sup>Redundant accidental.

13

14

15

16

17

<sup>1</sup>D # or D ♭?

<sup>2</sup>Missing accidental.

<sup>3</sup>D ♭ or D #?

<sup>4</sup>E ♭ or E #?

<sup>5</sup>E ♭ or E #?

<sup>6</sup>E ♭ or E #?

<sup>7</sup>G ♭ or G #?

<sup>8</sup>G # or G ♭?

<sup>9</sup>Redundant accidental.

<sup>10</sup>Redundant accidental.

18

19

20

21

22

23

<sup>1</sup>Redundant accidental.

<sup>2</sup>Staccato?

<sup>3</sup>Redundant accidental.

<sup>4</sup>G # or G b?

24

Measures 24-25 of a musical score in D major. Measure 24 features a treble clef with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a bass clef with a whole rest. Measure 25 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. A fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking is present in measure 25.

25

Measures 25-26 of a musical score in D major. Measure 25 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. A fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking is present in measure 25. Measure 26 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. A fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic marking is present in measure 26.

26

Measures 26-27 of a musical score in D major. Measure 26 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. A fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic marking is present in measure 26. Measure 27 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes.

27

Measures 27-28 of a musical score in D major. Measure 27 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. Measure 28 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes.

28

Measures 28-29 of a musical score in D major. Measure 28 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. Measure 29 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes.

29

Measures 29-30 of a musical score in D major. Measure 29 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes. Measure 30 continues the treble line and adds a bass line with eighth notes.