

Felix Mendelssohn

Prelude

MWV U 123
Op. 104a, No. 2

Critical Edition

Edited by Benjamin Geer

Version 0.1 (draft)

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Preface

This draft edition is part of an experimental project, <https://tondauer.art>, aimed at developing technology for digital editions of music. An interactive on-line edition will eventually be based on this one. Performance editions based on this edition can be found on the project web site.

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 1868.¹

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.² I have used the following sources:

A_1 The autograph of V_1 ,³ dated 12 October 1836.

E_{S1} The first German edition of V_2 ,⁴ published in Leipzig by Bartholf Senff in 1868. It also gives the date of the composition as 12 October 1836.

E_N The first English edition of V_2 ,⁵ published in London by Novello in 1868.

E_{S2} A later Senff edition,⁶ published in about 1875. It is identical to E_{S1} .

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

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

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

4. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, shelfmark N.Mus. 5420-1, and University of California Riverside Library, shelfmark SCUA M25.M45 P7.

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

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

E_B The Breitkopf & Härtel edition of **V₂**,⁷ 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> (except for **E_N**, for copyright reasons).

E_{S1} and **E_N** were coordinated editions (each mentions the other publisher), but are not identical; **E_N** contains several emendations. **E_B** has some of these as well as a number of others.

There are clearly problems with **E_{S1}**. But it is possible that only the editors of **E_{S1}** 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 **A₂** in an unfinished state, which may well be accurately reflected in **E_{S1}**.

I have taken **E_{S1}** as a starting point, and accepted emendations from the other editions where they agree with **A₁**. This approach gives considerable weight to **A₁**, since it is the only available autograph, at the risk of undoing changes that Mendelssohn made in **A₂**. I have also followed the emendation in **E_N** and **E_B** 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_{S1}**, given its proximity to **A₂**. Or one could take a different approach and accept, for example, **E_B**'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: **A₁**, **E_N**.

A₁ (measure 3) and **E_N** have G[♯], while **E_{S1}** and **E_B** have G_♯ (with no accidental).

Measure 4, beat 4 Preferred sources: **A₁**, **E_B**.

A₁ (measure 8) and **E_B** have A_♯ (with no accidental in **A₁**), while **E_{S1}** and **E_N** have A[♯] (with no accidental).

Measure 7, beat 3 Preferred sources: **E_N**, **E_B**.

E_N and **E_B** have B, while **E_{S1}** has G, which is surely an error. The passage is different in **A₁**, but the theme occurs with B in measure 16.

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

Measure 10, beat 1 Preferred sources: **A₁**, **E_B**.

In **A₁** (measures 19-21) and **E_B**, both the ties in measure 9 continue to the first beat of measure 11, while in **E_{S1}** and **E_N**, only the lower C# is tied between measures 10 and 11.

Measure 10, beat 1 Preferred sources: **E_N**, **E_B**.

E_N and **E_B** have D#, while **E_{S1}** has D \flat (with no accidental), which is surely an error. **A₁** (measure 19) has a different structure here.

Measure 12, beat 2 Preferred sources: **A₁**, **E_B**.

A₁ (measure 23) and **E_B** have B \flat , while **E_{S1}** and **E_N** have B# (with no accidental).

Measure 12, beat 3 Redundant sharp in **E_{S1}** and **E_N**.

Measure 13, beat 1 Preferred sources: **A₁**, **E_N**, **E_B**.

A₁ (measure 25), **E_N**, and **E_B** have D#, while **E_{S1}** has D \flat (with no accidental).

Measure 13, beat 2 In **E_{S1}**, **E_N**, and **E_B**, the accidental is missing on the G# in the upper staff. **A₁** (measure 25) is unclear.

Measure 13, beat 2 Preferred source: **E_B**.

E_B has D \flat , while **E_{S1}** and **E_N** have D# (with no accidental), which is surely an error. **A₁** (measure 25) is unclear.

Measure 13, beat 3 Preferred sources: **A₁**, **E_B**.

Twice in this beat, **A₁** (measure 26, though slightly different) and **E_B** have E \flat , while **E_{S1}** and **E_N** have E# (with no accidental).

Measure 15, beat 1 Preferred sources: **E_{S1}**, **E_N**.

E_{S1} and **E_N** have E \flat (with no accidental), while **E_B** has E#. The corresponding passage in **A₁** (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# 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_4 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_4 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_4 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

2

3

4

5

6

f

cresc.

p

1

2

¹G # or G b?

²A b or A #?

2

7

cresc.

8

9

f

10

dim.

11

12

dim.

13

14

dim.

15

16

dim.

17

18

dim.

19

20

dim.

21

22

dim.

23

24

dim.

25

26

dim.

27

28

dim.

29

30

dim.

31

32

dim.

33

34

dim.

35

36

dim.

37

38

dim.

39

40

dim.

41

42

dim.

43

44

dim.

45

46

dim.

47

48

dim.

49

50

dim.

51

52

dim.

53

54

dim.

55

56

dim.

57

58

dim.

59

60

dim.

61

62

dim.

63

64

dim.

65

66

dim.

67

68

dim.

69

70

dim.

71

72

dim.

73

74

dim.

75

76

dim.

77

78

dim.

79

80

dim.

81

82

dim.

83

84

dim.

85

86

dim.

87

88

dim.

89

90

dim.

91

92

dim.

93

94

dim.

95

96

dim.

97

98

dim.

99

100

dim.

101

102

dim.

103

104

dim.

105

106

dim.

107

108

dim.

109

110

dim.

111

112

dim.

113

114

dim.

115

116

dim.

117

118

dim.

119

120

dim.

121

122

dim.

123

124

dim.

125

126

dim.

127

128

dim.

129

130

dim.

131

132

dim.

133

134

dim.

135

136

dim.

137

138

dim.

139

140

dim.

141

142

dim.

143

144

dim.

145

146

dim.

147

148

dim.

149

150

dim.

151

152

dim.

153

154

dim.

155

156

dim.

157

158

dim.

159

160

dim.

161

162

dim.

163

164

dim.

165

166

dim.

167

168

dim.

169

170

dim.

171

172

dim.

173

174

dim.

175

176

dim.

177

178

dim.

179

180

dim.

181

182

dim.

183

184

dim.

185

186

dim.

187

188

dim.

189

190

dim.

191

192

dim.

193

194

dim.

195

196

dim.

197

198

dim.

199

200

dim.

201

202

dim.

203

204

dim.

205

206

dim.

207

208

dim.

209

210

dim.

211

212

dim.

213

214

dim.

215

216

dim.

217

218

dim.

219

220

dim.

221

222

dim.

223

224

dim.

225

226

dim.

227

228

dim.

229

230

dim.

231

232

dim.

233

234

dim.

235

236

dim.

237

238

dim.

239

240

dim.

241

242

dim.

243

244

dim.

245

13

14

15

16

17

¹D # or D ♭?

²Missing accidental.

³D ♭ or D #?

⁴E ♭ or E #?

⁵E ♭ or E #?

⁶E ♭ or E #?

⁷G ♭ or G #?

⁸G # or G ♭?

⁹Redundant accidental.

¹⁰Redundant accidental.

18

24

Measures 24-25 of a musical score in D major. Measure 24 features a treble clef with a series of eighth-note chords and a bass clef with a whole note chord. Measure 25 continues the treble line with eighth-note chords and the bass line with a whole note chord. A *ff* dynamic marking is present in measure 25.

25

Measures 25-26 of a musical score in D major. Measure 25 features a treble clef with a series of eighth-note chords and a bass clef with a whole note chord. Measure 26 continues the treble line with eighth-note chords and the bass line with a whole note chord. A *sf* dynamic marking is present in measure 25.

26

Measures 26-27 of a musical score in D major. Measure 26 features a treble clef with a series of eighth-note chords and a bass clef with a whole note chord. Measure 27 continues the treble line with eighth-note chords and the bass line with a whole note chord. A *sf* dynamic marking is present in measure 26.

27

Measures 27-28 of a musical score in D major. Measure 27 features a treble clef with a series of eighth-note chords and a bass clef with a whole note chord. Measure 28 continues the treble line with eighth-note chords and the bass line with a whole note chord.

28

Measures 28-29 of a musical score in D major. Measure 28 features a treble clef with a series of eighth-note chords and a bass clef with a whole note chord. Measure 29 continues the treble line with eighth-note chords and the bass line with a whole note chord.

29

Measures 29-30 of a musical score in D major. Measure 29 features a treble clef with a series of eighth-note chords and a bass clef with a whole note chord. Measure 30 continues the treble line with eighth-note chords and the bass line with a whole note chord. The piece concludes with a double bar line.