

Felix Mendelssohn

Prelude

MWV U 123
Op. 104a, No. 2

Critical Edition

Edited by Benjamin Geer

Version 0.1 (draft), 24 September 2020

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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 \sharp is tied between measures 10 and 11.

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

E_N and **E_B** have D \sharp , 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 \sharp (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 \sharp , 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 \sharp 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 \sharp (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 \sharp (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 \sharp . 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 \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_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 ♭?

²A ♭ or A #?

2

7

cresc.

8

1

9

f

10

dim.

2

11

3

12

4

5

¹B or G?

²Does the upper tie continue to measure 11?

³D # or D ♭?

⁴B ♭ or B #?

⁵Redundant accidental.

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

19

20

21

22

23

¹Redundant accidental.

²Staccato?

³Redundant accidental.

⁴G # or G b?

24

Measures 24-25. Treble clef, key of D major. Measure 24 features a rapid ascending scale in the right hand, while the left hand is silent. Measure 25 continues the scale in the right hand, with the left hand entering with a single note. A fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking is present in measure 25.

25

Measures 25-26. Treble clef, key of D major. Measure 25 continues the rapid ascending scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment. A fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic marking is present in measure 25. Measure 26 continues the scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment.

26

Measures 26-27. Treble clef, key of D major. Measure 26 continues the rapid ascending scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment. A fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic marking is present in measure 26. Measure 27 continues the scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment.

27

Measures 27-28. Treble clef, key of D major. Measure 27 continues the rapid ascending scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment. Measure 28 continues the scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment.

28

Measures 28-29. Treble clef, key of D major. Measure 28 continues the rapid ascending scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment. Measure 29 continues the scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment.

29

Measures 29-30. Treble clef, key of D major. Measure 29 continues the rapid ascending scale in the right hand, with the left hand providing a steady accompaniment. Measure 30 concludes the piece with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained note in the left hand.