

MENDELSSOHN'S ORGAN WORKS

TOWARDS AN AUTHENTIC INTERPRETATION
OF
MENDELSSOHN'S ORGAN WORKS

By
EUGENE MURRAY GATES, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Eugene Murray Gates, B.A. (Acadia University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Frederick A. Hall

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ABSTRACT

A steady decline in the quality of organ literature began around the time of J. S. Bach's death (1750), and continued into the early decades of the nineteenth century. Through the publication of his Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37 (1837) and the Six Sonatas, Op. 65 (1845), Mendelssohn brought an end to the most decadent period in the history of German organ music. It may justly be said that he founded the modern school of organ composition.

Performers, teachers and critics frequently approach Mendelssohn's organ works from the perspective of the late nineteenth-century "symphonic" tradition, thus presenting a complete distortion of the composer's intentions. It is the purpose of this thesis to establish an historically accurate performance practice for Mendelssohn's important and unique contribution to the organ repertoire.

Many sources and documents from the period are available. Mendelssohn's performing career as a virtuoso organist (an area largely ignored by his biographers and music historians) is documented in his own letters and contemporary critiques of his concerts. These sources preserve considerable information on the subject of Mendelssohn's organ playing. It has been possible, through a study of the instruments on which he is known to have played, together with research into contemporary treatises

on performance practice and organ building, to establish guidelines for a valid and accurate approach to the performance of Mendelssohn's organ works. Using these guidelines as criteria for evaluation, all presently available performing editions and recordings of his organ works have been critically examined from the perspective of historical accuracy.

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I. GERMAN ORGANS AND ORGAN MUSIC:

BACH TO MENDELSSOHN

The organ works of Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47) occupy a unique place in the evolution of the literature of "Bach's royal instrument." The publication of his Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, and his Six Sonatas, Op. 65, brought to a close the most decadent period in the history of German organ music. A steady decline in the sister arts of organ building and organ composition began around the time of J. S. Bach's death (1750), and continued well into the nineteenth century. Only when placed within this historical context can a full appreciation of the import of these and the lesser known organ works of Mendelssohn be reached.

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, German organ building had achieved its zenith under the leadership of Arp Schnitger (1648-1719),¹ and continued to flourish in the instruments created by Gottfried Silbermann (1683-1753) in the south of Germany and Joachim Wagner, his northern counterpart, who worked in Berlin between 1720 and 1750.²

Each national school of organ building produced instruments with their own unique tonal characteristics, and until 1750 the German school was historically the most significant. It was for German instruments that the

greatest quantity of important organ music had been composed, most notably, the works of J. S. Bach.³ In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the influence of organ builders from the Latin countries became increasingly felt, and the German organ lost its identity.⁴ After 1770, the piano began to emerge as the preferred instrument for keyboard composition. The generation of composers which followed Bach sought new techniques and forms of expression, and the achievements and aesthetic of the master were all but forgotten.⁵

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, a new expressive style (empfindsamer Stil) began to appear in German instrumental music. The composers who worked in this style abandoned the Baroque practice of maintaining a single "affection" throughout a composition, replacing it with constant changes of affection or expression. Their works employ such devices as unusual modulations, abrupt shifts of harmony, changes of texture, expectant pauses and uncommon turns of melody, all of which were intended to aid the expression of "true and natural" feelings. Thus, the empfindsamer Stil anticipated, to a degree, the ideals of nineteenth-century Romanticism.⁶

The most influential exponent of this new style was J. S. Bach's son, Carl Phillip Emanuel (1714-88). In his autobiography, C. P. E. Bach explains his reasons for adopting this mode of composition:

Since I have never liked excessive uniformity in composition and taste, since I have heard such a quantity and variety of good [things], since I have always been of the opinion that one could derive some good, whatever it may be, even if it is only a matter of minute details in a piece, probably from such [considerations] and my natural, God-given ability arises the variety that has been observed in my works.⁷

In the compositions of the younger Bach, the orderly counterpoint of his father gave way to a more homophonic texture. Through the subjective manipulation of the vocabulary of music, he attempted to evoke the emotive life. He left a clear statement of his musical philosophy in his Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments, where he offered performers the following advice:

A musician cannot move others unless he too is moved. He must of necessity feel all of the affects that he hopes to arouse in his audience, for the revealing of his own humor will stimulate a like humor in the listener. . . . Above all, he must discharge this office in a piece which is highly expressive by nature, whether it be by him or someone else. In the latter case he must make certain that he assumes the emotion which the composer intended in writing it.⁸

Although C. P. E. Bach favoured the clavichord above other keyboard instruments, he wrote a number of works for the organ. While he was music director and accompanist to the court of Frederick the Great of Prussia, C. P. E. Bach composed four of his Seven Organ Sonatas (W. 70/1-7) for Princess Anna Amalia, Frederick's sister.⁹ On the title page of Sonata VI he wrote: "These four organ solos were written for a Princess who was unable to play difficult music, but who nevertheless had a fine organ with two

manuals and pedal built for herself, and took great pleasure in playing it."¹⁰

Commenting on C. P. E. Bach's instrumental style, Karl Geiringer has observed:

He adopted elements from the opera seria of his time, such as recitatives, ariosos, and certain forms of aria accompaniment. . . . He had learned from his father that transplanting musical idioms from one medium to another could produce outstanding results.¹¹

The continuing changes in aesthetic ideals of composers were accompanied by equally important sociological and political developments. These factors, in turn, worked to the detriment of the organ builder's art. With the rise of Rationalism, interest in the church and church music waned, and the organist was no longer seen as an important figure in musical life. Many fine musicians, disliking the loss of status, sought secular employment, thus leaving their former church positions to be filled by amateurs and music hobbyists.¹² With the increasing emphasis on the sermon in the Protestant churches of northern Germany, organ playing lost its liturgical significance, becoming simply an embellishment to the service.¹³ In southern Germany and the Habsburg countries, the decline of the organ was further hastened by the dissolution of the monasteries in 1803. This unfortunate circumstance, a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars, suddenly deprived organ builders of their richest clients and most opulent settings for new instruments.¹⁴

The average organ of the early nineteenth century differed from earlier instruments in a number of important ways: it was usually larger; each builder attempted to devise his own version of orchestrally imitative stops; and a general deterioration and roughening of tone quality became the norm.¹⁵ By 1840, a new organ in a new parish church was built solely to accommodate congregational needs, which in the main consisted of the accompaniment of hymns. For this purpose, a predominance of 8 foot stops was considered most suitable.¹⁶

The changes in organ building led to the production of instruments which held little attraction for most major composers; they sought other media as outlets for their expression. As musical styles and tastes changed, the great composers explored the resources of the orchestra, opera, and of course, the piano.

Nowhere was the change of taste in organ literature more dramatically exemplified than in the new treatment of the cantus firmus chorale. The disciplined, contrapuntal elaboration of a chorale melody which had developed to such a degree of refinement at the hands of J. S. Bach, had now degenerated into a mere musical expression of the mood of the chorale text. One of J. S. Bach's pupils, Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809), dealt in depth with this new approach to the chorale prelude in his three-volume treatise on organ playing, Der angehende praktische Organist

(1801-08). In this work, he emphasizes that it is the essence or spirit of the words of the chorale which the organist or composer must strive to convey, rather than the cantus firmus itself. With the chorale melody now rendered superfluous, the chorale prelude had been transformed into a Romantic "character piece" for the organ.¹⁷

This new genre of organ music was closely related to the contemporaneous character piece for piano. The form of these pieces was frequently ternary (ABA), the middle section being comprised of contrasting thematic material.¹⁸ Composers of these organ works delighted in the use of evocative titles such as "Gebete" (Prayers), "Stiller Friede" (Quiet Peace), and "Tröstung" (Consolation). Modern writers often refer to this genre as the "religious Adagio."¹⁹

The old cantus firmus chorale prelude continued to be written by a small number of more conservative composers, but in a modified fashion. The former contrapuntal texture was replaced by a homophonic style of writing, in an effort to create music which was simple and readily comprehensible to the congregation.²⁰ "Without the wealth of the Affektenlehre coupled to inspired and disciplined polyphonic writing, the form lost its vigour."²¹

A great similarity to the Baroque toccata can be found in other varieties of early nineteenth-century organ music. These include the prelude and fugue and the fantasia,

a piece which exploits both the technical virtuosity of the executant and the colouristic resources of the instrument.²² Recital programmes abounded in fashionable transcriptions of every sort, and there appeared to be an ever-growing conviction that the organ was, in reality, a one-man symphony orchestra.

The culmination of this period of decadence was probably reached in the work of the travelling virtuoso and organ builder, George Joseph ("the Abbé") Vogler (1749-1814). He had no sympathy for the achievements of the Baroque era, and in the name of progress, he paved the way for the development of the "symphonic" organ, the descriptive fantasia and the orchestral transcription.²³

In 1784, Vogler built a portable touring organ of 900 pipes which he called the Orchestrion, a sort of one-man band.²⁴ The enclosure of the complete instrument in three swell boxes, in an attempt to emulate the Mannheim crescendo, was then something of a novelty. One need only read contemporary accounts of his performances to appreciate the excitement generated by his use of crescendi and decrescendi.²⁵ His tours with the Orchestrion continued well into the first decade of the nineteenth century,²⁶ and his programmatic improvisations were found quite irresistible by his audiences. The following items appeared on his recital programmes between 1790 and 1806, and may be regarded as typical repertoire for a Vogler concert:

"Allegro--Swiss Cow Song in the Lydian mode;" "Rondo--Chinese air deciphered by G. J. V. from the original notes of a missionary;" "A Pastoral Symphony with storm, rejoicing after, and echoes;" and what must have been his pièce de résistance, "A Sea Combat, complete with drum-rolls, movement of ships, engaging of the enemy, canons and cries of the wounded."²⁷

Vogler's method of organ building (and rebuilding), which he called the "Simplification System,"²⁸ was founded upon a misunderstanding and misapplication of the theory of resultant tones.²⁹ It is the commonly held assumption that he developed his ideas from the writings of Tartini, G. A. Sorge, and F. W. Marpurg.³⁰ He devoted considerable energy on his concert tours attempting to prove to anyone who would listen, that $16' + 10 \frac{2}{3}' + 6 \frac{2}{5}' = 32'$,³¹ and as a result of his persuasiveness, was permitted to do considerable damage to existing instruments in Munich, Berlin, Salzburg and other cities.³² His Simplification System was found attractive by a number of clergy and organists for reasons of economy. In summary, his proposals for the simplification of organs were:

- 1 to limit the number of larger and more expensive pipes through the use of extensions and borrowing;

- 2 to replace reed pipes with free (harmonium-style) reeds;

- 3 to do away with the symmetrical arrangement of pipes,

and rearrange them by semi-tones on the wind chests; and

4 to decrease the number of multi-rank mixtures and replace them with mutations.³³

Fortunately, the effects of Vogler's dabblings in the organ arts were not to be permanent. Serious musicians of the time dismissed him as a fool. Mozart referred to him as "a loathsome musical buffoon who imagines much but achieves little."³⁴ The organ builders of integrity who followed--the Mosers, Walckers, and Sauers--perceived his theories as those of a dilettante and reacted against them.³⁵

Vogler was not alone in his desire to recreate the effect of the Mannheim crescendo on the organ. Heinrich Knecht (1752-1817) was also drawn to the "symphonic" possibilities of organ playing. In 1795, he wrote the following instructions for building up a crescendo over the course of a long movement:

At the beginning one gradually draws a 16' and 8' register, one after the other, in order to express the crossing from pp to p; then slowly one by one the 8' stops would be drawn, when the crescendo is to progress a poco; as the crescendo nears il forte, the 4', 2' and 1' stops are added, and finally at f and ff reeds and mixtures. In the pedal one begins the pp with the Subbass alone, joins to it a 32' register, if there is one, and one by one the 16', 8' and 4' stops, partly flutes, and first at f and ff the pedal reeds and mixtures are drawn.³⁶

A different approach was devised by Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770-1846). A pupil of Kittel at Erfurt from 1786-89 and esteemed as a composer and recitalist in

his time, he is chiefly remembered for his Orgelschule, Op. 55, published in Darmstadt in 1820. In its various English editions, Rinck's Practical Organ School became a well-known organ tutor in the English-speaking world.³⁷

In the Preface to Part V, Rinck explains his method of achieving crescendi and decrescendi without the help of a swell box:

In order to produce a crescendo on the organ, I often avail myself of an advantage which may be gained by slowly pulling out, during a sustained note, another 8 feet stop (say Gedackt), and at the decrescendo slowly pushing it back: this may be done by another person.³⁸

As has been shown in this brief overview of the early nineteenth-century organ arts, the composition of organ music had reached what probably was its lowest ebb in history. Organ builders and virtuoso organists were attempting to transform the instrument into an imitation of the symphony orchestra. The general tenor of musical taste was such that these practices were often supported by church officials, congregations, and concert audiences. It is with a knowledge of these conditions that Mendelssohn's career as an organ virtuoso and his unique contribution to the repertoire of the instrument will be examined. Through this study, it is my intent to point toward the historically accurate performance practice which is frequently absent from current presentations of these works.

NOTES

¹William Leslie Sumner, The Organ: Its Evolution, Principles of Construction and Use, 4th ed. (London: Macdonald, 1973), p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 96.

³Cecil Clutton and Austin Niland, The British Organ, 2d ed. (London: Eyre Methuen, 1982), p. 16.

⁴Sumner, p. 96.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2d ed., s.v. "Empfindsamer Stil," by Willi Apel.

⁷Cited by William S. Newman in "Emanuel Bach's Autobiography," Musical Quarterly 51 (April 1965):371.

⁸C. P. E. Bach, Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments, trans. William J. Mitchell (New York: Norton, 1949), p. 152.

⁹Douglas Lamar Butler, "The Organ Works of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" (D.M.A. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1973), p. 4.

¹⁰Cited in translation by Butler, p. 4.

¹¹Karl Geiringer, The Bach Family (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1954), pp. 252-53.

¹²Daniel Walter Chorzempa, "Julius Reubke: Life and Works" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1971), p. 140; Marilou Kratzenstein, Organ Literature and Editions (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1980), p. 48.

¹³Kratzenstein, p. 48.

¹⁴Peter Williams, A New History of the Organ (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 155.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁷F. E. Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 347.

¹⁸Butler, p. 9; Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2d ed., s.v. "Character Piece," by Willi Apel.

¹⁹Kirby, p. 347.

²⁰Ibid., p. 348.

²¹Chorzempa, p. 139.

²²Kirby, p. 340.

²³Sumner, p. 216.

²⁴Ibid., p. 217.

²⁵Clutton and Niland, p. 80.

²⁶Peter Williams, The European Organ 1450-1850 (London: Batsford, 1982), p. 93.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Idem, A New History of the Organ, p. 153.

²⁹A resultant tone is a tone of different pitch which is heard when two loud tones are sounded at the same time. Its frequency is the difference or the sum of the two primary tones or their multiples. Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2d ed., s.v. "Combination tone, resultant tone," by Willi Apel.

³⁰Williams, The European Organ, p. 93.

³¹Idem, A New History of the Organ, p. 156.

³²Idem, The European Organ, p. 93.

³³Sumner, p. 218.

³⁴Williams, The European Organ, p. 94.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Justin Heinrich Knecht, Vollständige Orgelschule für Anfänger und Geübtere, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Mufilhandlung, 1795-96), 1:30, cited by Chorzempa, p. 142.

³⁷Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1910 ed., s.v. "Rinck (Rink), J. C. H.," by Herbert S. Oakley.

³⁸Christian Heinrich Rinck, Rinck's Practical Organ School, trans. and ed. W. T. Best (London: Novello and Ewer, n.d.), Preface to Pt. 5, n.p.

II. FELIX MENDELSSOHN: VIRTUOSO ORGANIST

In his youth, Mendelssohn developed a love for the organ which remained with him throughout his life. An essential step toward the development of a performance practice for Mendelssohn's organ works is the exploration of the literature which documents his approach to the instrument. Although much has been written of Mendelssohn's career as a pianist, his biographers have largely ignored his importance as a virtuoso organist. It is only through his letters, reviews of his recitals and the letters of other musicians who knew him, that this part of his life's work is revealed. The biographical sketch presented in this chapter draws extensively from these sources.

Felix Mendelssohn, the second of four children, was born into a cultured and wealthy Jewish-Christian family at Hamburg, on February 3, 1809. His reputation as a child prodigy was to rival that of Mozart. His older sister, Fanny, was also to become a fine pianist and composer.¹

Both Felix and Fanny showed signs of their extraordinary musical gifts at an early age. Their first piano lessons, at the age of four, were taught by their mother, Lea Mendelssohn. She instructed the children in several five-minute sessions per day, gradually extending the time as her students developed. For several years, every moment of the children's piano practice was supervised by their

mother.²

When the Mendelssohn family visited Paris in 1816, both children were sent to Mme. Marie Bigot (an acquaintance of Haydn and Beethoven) for piano lessons.³ On their return to Berlin, where Felix was to spend most of his childhood, their father, Abraham Mendelssohn, engaged the finest tutors available to guide the education of his children. Thus, Felix studied composition with Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832) and piano with Ludwig Berger (1777-1835), a former pupil of Clementi and Field. Subsequently, Mendelssohn completed his piano studies with Hummel and Moscheles.⁴

The strongest influence in Mendelssohn's early musical education was exerted by Zelter. A respected friend of Goethe, Zelter was founder and director of the Berliner Singakademie. His great admiration for the music of J. S. Bach was to have a profound effect in the development of Mendelssohn's musical taste. Both Felix and Fanny became members of the Singakademie on October 1, 1820.⁵

August Wilhelm Bach (1796-1869), organist of Berlin's Marienkirche, gave Mendelssohn his first organ instruction.⁶ A. W. Bach had been a composition student of Zelter, and in later years became his successor at the Singakademie.⁷ The first reference to Mendelssohn's lessons with Bach is found in a letter of May 3, 1821, written by Felix and addressed to his teacher. The letter seeks confirmation of the time of his organ lesson and mentions that he was composing a

fugue for the organ.⁸ It is probable that the lessons took place at the Marienkirche beginning in 1820, but it is not known how long this period of organ study lasted.⁹

In the fall of 1821, Mendelssohn was taken by Zelter to visit Goethe in Weimar.¹⁰ This was to be the first of several such enjoyable visits for the young musician. The organ was very much on his mind at this time, and on September 27, he wrote a letter to Fanny describing the various organs he had played at stopping places on his journey.¹¹

In 1822, the Mendelssohn family took a trip to Switzerland. Again, in his letters Felix left a record of his impressions of several Swiss organs which he encountered. On September 18, he wrote the following to Zelter:

And [now] something about the Swiss organs, as far as I got to know them. I was greatly pleased to find in the pastoral canton of Appenzell, one of the smallest in Switzerland, a tiny organ. I found one too in Zug, but in the worst possible condition. . . . In Bern I played on the organ in the Cathedral, a truly grand instrument with fifty-three stops, several sixteen-foot stops in the manual, a thirty-two in the pedal and eight bellows, which, however, leak and often make the old organ sigh. Also two pipes in the 16 foot Principal rattle together murderously. In Bulle, a small town in the canton of Fribourg, I found an excellent organ in very good condition. It has about twenty-eight stops, two manuals, and I found only one fault with it, that the pedal reaches only to high A; B and C are missing, so that nothing of Bach's can be played on it. All the stops worked, the instrument is in good condition, because Aloys Moser, who built it, is in Bulle. . . . The soft voices and the full organ are particularly fine.¹²

In the years 1822-23, Mendelssohn had his first

exposure to the Bach tradition of organ playing. He met two important organists of the time, both of whom had studied with students of J. S. Bach: Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770-1846) and Friedrich Wilhelm Berner (1780-1827).¹³

The meeting with Rinck at Darmstadt in 1802 was brought about through a letter of introduction from Zelter. On July 3, 1822, he wrote:

My dear student, Felix Mendelssohn, wants to meet the man personally whose name is associated with such fame, and I also would like him to meet him. The young boy has made a good start at organ playing, and it would be good for him to become familiar with the sources from which, in our time, good and right things come. Would you, dear friend, receive him in a friendly manner and tell him of your art? If so, I will be quite prepared to be helpful to you.¹⁴

In 1823, Abraham Mendelssohn took his two sons, Felix and Paul, on a trip to Silesia. While in Breslau, they seized the opportunity to meet with Berner, a noted virtuoso, and heard him perform. In an enthusiastic letter home, Felix wrote:

We all went to the church [St. Elisabeth's] to hear Berner play. First he took off his coat and put on a light one instead, then he asked me to write down a theme for him, and then he began. He took the low C in the pedal, and then threw himself with all his might upon the manual, and after some runs began a theme on the manual. I had no idea it could be played on the pedals . . . but he soon began with his feet, and carried it out with both manual and pedals. After he had thoroughly developed it, he began my theme on the pedals, carried it out for a short time, then took it on the pedals in augmentation, put a fine counter subject with it, and then worked up both themes splendidly. He has wonderful execution on the pedals. . . . He then played variations in Vogel's manner, which did not please me so well as his former playing, although they were also very beautiful. . . . He [later] brought

out some variations of his own on the chorale 'Von Himmel hoch', which are very beautiful. The last variation is a fugue the theme of which is the chorale in diminution. He played it on the middle manual. At length it appeared as if he were about to close; he brought in the theme alla stretta, struck the chord of the dominant, and then suddenly began the simple chorale with the whole power of the organ on the lower manual, which was coupled, then modulated splendidly on the melody, and so ended. It had a heavenly effect as the chorale came out with all its might. The sounds streamed out of the organ from all sides. That tired him very much, so he had to take two or three glasses of wine. But soon he sat down again and played variations on 'God save the King', in which he treated the theme first in the Phrygian and then in the Aeolian mode, and towards the end gave it on the full organ, which had just as fine an effect as before. Thus the organ-concert ended, and Berner was very tired. . . . While he is playing a choir boy stands by him and draws out and pushes in such stops as he touches lightly with his finger in the midst of his playing.¹⁵

This letter not only testifies to the great interest which the fourteen-year-old Felix had in organ playing, but it is valuable as a documentation of organ performance practice. As was the case in the Baroque era, it was usual for an organ recital to contain a combination of extemporizations and organ solos. Virtuoso organists favoured the use of patriotic melodies such as "God Save the King" and "Austria" for thematic material upon which to build extempore variations. This practice would later be continued by Mendelssohn in his own recitals. Mechanical aids for registration changes were not yet available to the performer; thus, the Baroque practice of registrant assistants was continued into this period. Despite the dramatic use of dynamic contrasts in Berner's playing, it appears from

Mendelssohn's account that they were achieved primarily through manual changes--another continuation of Baroque performance practice.

In 1825, Abraham Mendelssohn took Felix to Paris. He was as yet not sure that his son should devote his life to music, and decided to ask for Cherubini's opinion on the matter. Cherubini was then professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire. As a sample of his composing ability, Felix chose his Piano Quartet in B minor, Op. 3. Despite what Mendelssohn described as "a bad performance," Cherubini was impressed, and Abraham was now satisfied that Felix had chosen the profession for which he was most suited.¹⁶

While in Paris, Felix had the opportunity to meet with many French musicians. As this letter of April 20 to Fanny suggests, he was not impressed by French musical taste:

You say I should try and convert the people here, and teach Onslow and Reicha to love Beethoven and Sebastian Bach. That is just what I am endeavoring to do. But remember, my dear child, that these people do not know a single note of 'Fidelio,' and believe Bach to be a mere old-fashioned wig stuffed with learning. . . . The other day, at the request of Kalkbrenner, I played the organ preludes in E minor and B minor. My audience pronounced them both 'wonderfully pretty,' and one of them remarked that the beginning of the prelude in A minor was very much like a favorite duet in an opera by Monsigny. Anybody might have knocked me down with a feather.¹⁷

This is the only reference to Mendelssohn's organ playing which has been found in his letters from the period 1823-26.

In the summer of 1827, Mendelssohn made a trip to

the southern part of Germany with his friends, Heydemann and Magnus. In a letter to his family, he tells of playing the organ in the cloister of Banz while his two friends "pumped the bellows sweatingly."¹⁸

From Brandenburg, he wrote to Fanny on October 28, 1828 concerning three very fine organs which were built by Wagner. This letter also mentions that he improvised and practiced organ works of Bach daily on the largest of these instruments.¹⁹

Felix had long felt a desire to conduct J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion in public, and thus rescue the work from the obscurity into which it had fallen. With a small group of amateur singers, he rehearsed it for over a year, and the first performance in a century took place at the Berliner Singakademie on March 11, 1829.²⁰ With the added forces of the Singakademie, the chorus numbered one hundred and fifty-eight voices.²¹ It proved to be such a success that Mendelssohn had to present it a second time ten days later.

This part of his contribution to the Bach revival is well known, but too little has been said concerning Mendelssohn's use of the organ to further the same end. As his performing career developed, he worked both in public and private circles to ensure that the organ works of Bach became better known. Due to the efforts of a group of Bach's pupils and their disciples, his organ music could still be heard in many churches throughout Germany. Toward

the latter part of the eighteenth century, they congregated in Berlin where they centered their activities. Prominent members of this circle included Ludwig Krebs, J. F. Agricola, G. A. Homilius, J. P. Kirnberger, J. C. Altnicol, J. C. Kittel, C. P. E. Bach, W. F. Bach, F. W. Marpurg and Princess Anna Amalia of Prussia. They labouriously copied again and again the works of the master, and circulated them among all the organists of northern and central Germany. Through this means, they ensured that Bach's keyboard and organ works, together with his concept of organ technique, were passed on to succeeding generations.²² In England, however, the situation was quite different; no similar group of Bach devotees existed there. The organists Samuel Wesley and Thomas Adams had played some of Bach's organ works, but it was Mendelssohn who introduced English audiences to much of the Bach repertoire.

In 1829, Mendelssohn was to make the first of ten visits to London. Before his departure, Fanny made note in her diary of three private organ recitals which Felix played for the family in various Berlin churches: the Dreifaltigkeitskirche, Garnisonkirche, and the Parochialkirche. She wrote: "I have never heard anything more formidable than the Chorus from the Passion, as Felix played it." Of the three performers, Fanny felt the third to be the most impressive. After playing the first Chorus from the Passion twice, the final Chorus, and some organ pieces, he played Tu es Petrus.

This choral work by her brother was one of Fanny's favourites, and had been presented to her as a birthday gift in 1827.²³

These entries in his sister's diary not only document Mendelssohn's three evenings of organ playing for his family, they also provide further evidence of his life-long involvement with the composition and performance of choral music. His editions and performances of Acis and Galatea, Israel in Egypt and the Dettingen Te Deum brought about a renewed interest in the oratorios of Handel. Through the composition of his own two oratorios, St. Paul (1836) and Elijah (1846), Mendelssohn reversed the declining standards from which the German oratorio had suffered since the death of Haydn.

Felix left for England by ship on April 10, 1829. His friend, Karl Klingemann, a young German diplomat from Hanover, helped him find lodgings and generally looked out for his welfare.²⁴ Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), his former piano teacher, and now himself a Londoner, introduced Mendelssohn to London's musical circles.²⁵ Felix's presence in London did not go unnoticed. The English music journal, Harmonicon, in its "Diary of a Dilettante" column, reported:

Another arrival in London is the young M. Mendelssohn, son of the rich banker of Berlin, and I believe, grandson of the celebrated Jewish philosopher and elegant writer [Moses Mendelssohn]. He is one of the finest piano-forte players in London, and is supposed to be better acquainted with music than most professors of the art.²⁶

Although Mendelssohn made his London debut as both

pianist and conductor on this first visit, the revolution he was to effect in English organ circles came a few years later. He did, however, spend considerable time perfecting his organ playing.

Among Mendelssohn's new English friends was Thomas Attwood (1765-1838), organist of St. Paul's Cathedral. A favourite pupil of Mozart, Attwood was one of the first English musicians to recognize Mendelssohn's genius,²⁷ and he generously allowed Felix free access to the St. Paul's organ.²⁸

It was on this first visit to London that Felix began to compose his Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, which, when completed, would be dedicated to Attwood.²⁹ He was also working on an organ piece for Fanny's forthcoming wedding to Wilhelm Hensel.³⁰

With Klingemann, Mendelssohn travelled through Scotland and Wales, as well as various parts of England. Due to a knee injury, his stay in England lasted two months longer than originally planned, and he was unable to attend Fanny's wedding. He returned to Berlin in December, 1829.³¹

In the winter of 1830, Berlin University offered Mendelssohn a chair in the department of music. Felix declined the offer, and at his suggestion, Adolph Bernhard Marx was appointed.³² Zelter felt strongly that the atmosphere in Berlin was no longer conducive to his student's progress. He "fear[ed] to see him dissolve on

the spot, like a jelly, in the midst of the pernicious and idle family tiddle-tattle of the place." In his usual rough manner, Zelter continued, "I can hardly await the time when the boy will be out of reach of all the confounded musical trash of Berlin."³³

Acting upon Zelter's advice, Abraham Mendelssohn carefully planned a tour for Felix which would occupy him for the next few years. In a letter from Felix to his father on February 21, 1832, near the end of his journey, is found a neatly encapsulated summary of what Abraham hoped would be achieved from this time abroad:

I must . . . , in taking the past in review, refer to what you designed to be the chief object of my journey; desiring me strictly to adhere to it. I was to examine the various countries closely, and to fix on the one where I wished to live and to work. I was, further, to make my name and capabilities known in order that the people, among whom I decided to settle, should receive me well, and not be wholly ignorant of my career. Finally, I was to take advantage of my own good fortune, and your kindness, to push forward in my subsequent efforts. It makes me feel happy to be able to say that I believe this has been done.³⁴

This period of travel was to be of primary importance in Mendelssohn's development as an organist, as his many letters will show.

On May 13, 1830, Mendelssohn left for Weimar, where he spent a fortnight with Goethe. Unknown to him was the fact that this would be the last time he would see his aged friend.³⁵ In his letter of June 22 to Zelter, Felix reports this incident from his stay with Goethe:

One day he [Goethe] asked me if I would not care to pay a compliment to craftsmanship and call on the organist who might let me see and hear the organ in the cathedral [of Munich]. I said, yes, of course, I would, and the instrument gave me great pleasure. I was told that you too, had given your expert opinion on the repair work, and that therefore it had been done better than on any repaired organ I know of. Owing to the long narrow space in which it is housed, the pedal-pipe [work] is fitted deep in the rear; nonetheless the full organ sounds ample and strong, the tone does not tremble in the least, and this shows that there must be plenty of wind. The pedal is in perfect proportion to the manual and there is no lack of beautiful, soft voices of various kinds. The organist offered me the choice of hearing something scholarly, or something for the 'people' (because he said that for people one had to compose only easy and bad music), so I asked for something scholarly. But it was not much to be proud of; he modulated around enough to make one giddy, but nothing unusual came of it; he made a number of entries, but no fugue was forthcoming. When my turn came to play to him, I started with the D minor toccata of Sebastian and remarked that this was at the same time scholarly and something for the 'people' too, at least for some of them; but mind, hardly had I begun to play when the superintendent dispatched his valet upstairs with the message that this playing had to be stopped right away because it was a weekday and he could not study with that much noise going on. Goethe was very much amused by this story.³⁶

From Munich, Mendelssohn travelled via Vienna, Venice and Florence to Rome, where he passed most of the winter. After Rome, brief stops were made in Naples, Florence, Genoa and Milan. With the exception of the music of Holy Week at the Sistine Chapel,³⁷ Italy seemed a musical wasteland to him.

Switzerland followed Italy, and here Mendelssohn found several interesting organs. He wrote to Goethe:

I spent last week at Engleberg, in an Unterwald monastery several thousand feet above the sea, perfectly secluded, where I found a nice organ and pleasant monks.

They had never heard of Sebastian Bach, so that a few of his fugues on the organ were a complete novelty to them; but still they were pleased, and on the saint's day (St. Bartholomew's) I had to play the organ for them, accompany the mass, and make the responses. It was the first time on this journey that I had got hold of a decent organ, for in Italy I didn't find a single one in good order.³⁸

From Wallenstadt on September 2, Felix reports that he worked on a Swiss organ which had fallen into disrepair:

I have this moment returned from the church, where I have been playing the organ for three hours, far into the twilight; an old man, a cripple, blew the bellows for me, and except for him, there was not a single soul in the church. The only stops I found available were a very weak croaking flute, and a quivering deep pedal diapason of sixteen feet.³⁹

The final letter dealing with Swiss organs was written at Sargans on the following day:

Happily an organ is always found in this country; they are certainly small, and the lower octave, both in the keyboard and the pedal, imperfect, or as I call it, crippled; but still they are organs, and that is enough for me.

I have been playing all this morning, and really begun to practice, for it is a shame that I cannot play Sebastian Bach's principal works. I intend, if I can manage it, to practice for an hour every day in Munich, as after a couple of hour's work today, I certainly made considerable progress with my feet (nota bene, sitting). Ritz told me that Schneider, in Dresden, played him the D major fugue, in the 'wohl-temperirten Clavier,' on the organ, supplying the bass with the pedal. This had hitherto appeared to me so fabulous, that I could never properly comprehend it. It recurred to me this morning when I was playing the organ, so I instantly attempted it, and I at least see that it is far from being impossible, and I shall accomplish it. The subject went pretty well, so I practiced passages from the D major fugue, for the organ, from the F major toccata, and the G minor fugue, all of which I knew by heart. If I find a tolerable organ in Munich, and not an imperfect one, I will certainly conquer these,

and feel childish delight at playing such pieces on the organ. The F major toccata, with the modulation at the close, sounded as if the church were about to tumble down; what a giant Cantor he was!⁴⁰

Writing from Munich on October 6, Felix discusses his registration of a Bach chorale prelude:

I also play the organ every day for an hour, but unfortunately I cannot practice properly, as the pedal is short of five upper notes, so that one cannot play any of Sebastian Bach's passages on it. But the stops, with which you can vary chorales, are so wonderfully beautiful; so I edify myself with the celestial, flowing tone of the instrument. Moreover, Fanny, I have discovered here the particular stops which have to be used in Sebastian Bach's 'Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele'. They seem actually made for this melody, and sound so touching, that a feeling of awe invariably comes over me when I begin to play it. For the flowing parts I have a flute stop of eight feet, and also a very soft one of four feet, which continually floats above the chorale. You know this from Berlin. But there is a keyboard for the chorale with nothing but reed stops, so I use a mellow oboe and a soft clarion (four feet) and a viola. These give the chorale in subdued and touching tones, like distant human voices, singing from the depths of the heart.⁴¹

From Munich, Mendelssohn travelled via Stuttgart and Heidelberg to Frankfurt, then on the Düsseldorf. He arrived in Paris in mid-December, remaining there until the spring. By this time, he had decided on Germany as his permanent home.⁴²

By April 23, 1832, Felix returned to London for the second time.⁴³ With Thomas Attwood, he explored the organ of Westminster Abbey, and the organs in Croyden.⁴⁴ On Sundays, he played the organ at St. Paul's Cathedral, where on June 10, he presented an organ recital to a capacity audience.⁴⁵ It was during this visit to London that

Mendelssohn played Bach's little organ Prelude and Fugue in E minor (S. 533) for Vincent Novello. This circumstance led to the publication of the work in England by Novello before it appeared in print anywhere else, including Germany.⁴⁶

Felix returned home to Berlin in July of 1832, where he spent the entire summer and winter.⁴⁷ Two more trips to London were undertaken in 1833, the first of which was dedicated primarily to the study of original editions of Handel's oratorios,⁴⁸ preparatory work for his impending production of Israel in Egypt at Düsseldorf.

Mendelssohn was also attempting to increase his repertoire of Bach's organ works for the recitals which, at that time, he played mostly for invited guests.⁴⁹ His friend, Hauser, had compiled a catalogue of Bach's music, and helped him obtain copies of several organ pieces which were previously unknown to him. These he quickly added to his repertoire, and played them frequently for his fellow musicians, Franz Cramer and Ignaz Moscheles.⁵⁰ On March 10, 1833, Felix wrote to Hauser:

I noticed some pieces in your catalogue, the themes of which are so beautiful that I would like to have them. They are mainly for the organ, and since I play often, as you know, at St. Paul's I would like to perform them there. Therefore, I would like to ask you to copy them for me as soon as possible, and send them to me. . . . They are the following: Fantasie in C minor,--chorale preludes on Ach Herr mich armen Sünder,--Ach Gott erhöhr mein Seufzen,--Christ lag in Todesbanden,--Herr Jesu Christ sich zu uns wend,--Zeuch ein zu deinen Thoren, and finally, the motette: Lieber Gott wan werd ich sterben.⁵¹

Following a conducting engagement in Düsseldorf, where he produced Israel in Egypt in the authentic version, Mendelssohn accepted a three-year contract as Municipal Music Director of Düsseldorf.⁵²

Accompanied by his father, Felix was back in London by early June.⁵³ There are no known reports of the organ recitals he may have played at this time, but an account of his playing on the St. Paul's organ is preserved in his father's letter of June 23:

This morning he [Felix] played the organ at St. Paul's, and, as the bellows-blowers had gone, Klingemann and two other gentlemen supplied their places. Felix played an introduction and fugue, then extemporised, then played one of Attwood's coronation anthems with him, for four hands, and lastly three pieces by Bach. It sounded very well; the church was empty, only two ladies, frequenters of the Philharmonic, stole in and listened unseen.⁵⁴

Documentation concerning Mendelssohn's organ playing during the period 1834-36 is scarce. His conducting duties and composing seem to have left him little free time. This letter of August 4, 1834 to his parents suggests that he continued to seek out organs on which to practice whenever he could escape the rigours of his busy life in Düsseldorf:

The next day I rode on to Werden, a charming retired spot, where I wished to inquire about an organ; the whole party drove with me there. . . . We dined in the open air at Werden; I played fantasias and Sebastian Bach on the organ to my heart's content; then I bathed in the Ruhr, so cool in the evening breeze.⁵⁵

On March 28, 1837, Mendelssohn married Cécile Jeannrenaud, in the Reformed French Church of Frankfurt.⁵⁶

Difficult as it must have been to be separated from his young wife, Felix had agreed to conduct his oratorio, St. Paul, and to play the organ and his D minor Piano Concerto at the Birmingham Festival. He therefore returned to London on August 27 for his fifth visit.⁵⁷

The year 1837 marked a high point in Mendelssohn's career as an organist. Before leaving London for Birmingham, he played the organ at St. Paul's Cathedral on September 10 and at Christ Church, Newgate on September 12.

When he played at St. Paul's after the Sunday morning service, it is recorded that despite the vergers' warning that the service was over, the congregation refused to leave the Cathedral. In an effort to disperse the crowd, the vergers ordered the organ-blowers to cease their work. Thus, the wind ran out of the organ during Bach's A minor Prelude and Fugue, near the end of the fugue, just before the subject re-enters in the pedals.⁵⁸

Two days later, in response to the invitation of Dr. Henry J. Gauntlett, then organist of Christ Church, Newgate Street, Mendelssohn played the recently rebuilt organ in that church.⁵⁹ Following his interrupted recital at St. Paul's, the word was spread amongst the disappointed listeners that Felix would play again on Tuesday at Christ Church, and a large congregation assembled to hear him. Among those present was the aged Samuel Wesley. On this occasion, Mendelssohn played six extempore fantasias, one

on a theme supplied by Wesley, and a toccata by Bach. At Mendelssohn's request, Wesley then played his Fugue in B minor, a work he had composed and dedicated to Felix just a few days before. This was to be Wesley's final performance on the organ; he died one month later to the day.⁶⁰

London's musical circles were much impressed by Mendelssohn's organ playing, and a review of this recital was published in the Globe on the following day. Inspired by what he had heard, Henry Gauntlett wrote a lengthy article entitled "Mendelssohn as an Organist," which appeared in the Musical World on September 15.⁶¹ Gauntlett was especially impressed by Mendelssohn's skill as an improviser. He reported:

The enthusiasm, the fire and energy with which the whole was carried on, was perfectly marvellous; he sat at the keys as one inspired, casting forth one gorgeous jewel after the other, sparkling in the radiance of light--throwing out a succession of bright passages, anyone of which would have made the reputation of an ordinary performer.⁶²

Commenting on these two London performances, Sir George Grove wrote:

He was the greatest of the few great German organ players who had visited this country, and the English organists, some of them no mean proficients, learned more than one lesson from him. . . . The touch of the Christ Church organ was both deep and heavy, yet he threw off arpeggios as if he were at a piano. His command of the pedal clavier was also a subject of much remark.⁶³

Mendelssohn's letter to his mother on July 13 of that year indicates that he had already made a decision to play a major organ work of J. S. Bach at the Birmingham

Festival:

Ask Fanny, dear Mother, what she says to my intention of playing Bach's organ prelude in E flat major in Birmingham and the fugue at the end of the same book. I suspect she will disapprove of this, and yet I think I am right. I have an idea that this very prelude will be peculiarly acceptable to the English, and you can play both prelude and fugue piano and pianissimo, and also bring out the full power of the organ. Faith! I can tell you it is no stupid composition.⁶⁴

The 1837 Birmingham Festival began on Tuesday, September 19. At the evening concert of that day, Felix improvised on the organ, taking as themes, "Your Harps and Cymbals Sound" from Handel's Solomon, and a melody from the opening movement of a Mozart Symphony. On the morning of September 22, he played the E flat major Prelude and Fugue of Bach, a performance which left an indelible impression on those who heard it.⁶⁵

Following the Birmingham Festival, Mendelssohn settled in Leipzig, arriving there on October 1. Over the next few years he devoted himself to the organization and conducting of the Gewandhaus Concerts.⁶⁶ In the light of his recent successes as an organist in England, it is somewhat ironic that he wrote the following to Klingemann on October 5: "I have made up my mind to study the organ diligently because they do take me for an organist after all, so in the end, I shall become one."⁶⁷

In the period covering the next several years, reports on Mendelssohn's organ playing are more plentiful.

A letter to Felix from the Leipzig conductor and organist, August Pohlenz, expresses his gratitude for a recital which was played at the Thomaskirche in March of 1838:

My organ bench has once more become dear to me, and you are the first great master who has sat on this new seat. I thought of Mozart who played the St. Thomas organ in 1789. . . . You are truly an extraordinary master of the art.⁶⁸

Felix spent the summer of 1839 in Frankfurt with his family, where he practiced daily on the organ of the Catherinenkirche. His letters mention, with enthusiasm, his study of Bach's great C minor Passacaglia and the Fugue in C major.⁶⁹ On September 7 of that year, Mendelssohn was presented in a recital of Bach organ works at the Aegediuskirche in Braunsweiler.⁷⁰

Mendelssohn played several important organ recitals in 1840, both in Germany and in England. When the Leipziger Singvereins performed in Rötha, he played for them on two famous organs built by Gottfried Silbermann: the 23-stop instrument of the Georgenkirche and the smaller 11-stop organ of the Marienkirche. For these occasions, he chose works by Bach, and also demonstrated his skill as an improviser.⁷¹ The organ of the Georgenkirche was a particular favourite of Felix. He praised it highly, and because of its close proximity to Leipzig, was able to play it frequently.⁷²

As early as 1838, Mendelssohn had spoken of "playing together" enough money to erect a monument to J. S. Bach in

front of Leipzig's Thomas-schule. On August 6, 1840, he began the translation of his dream into reality, by playing a Bach recital on the organ of the Thomaskirche.

The recital received a very positive review in the Leipziger Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung:

Through the performance of several magnificent compositions of Sebastian Bach, and through the rendition of a free fantasy, Mendelssohn once more proved himself a distinguished organist and great artist; it was a truly splendid artistic treat, for which we are all the more thankful as it is offered to us--alas!--so seldom.⁷³

Robert Schumann was equally generous with his praise in the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik. He wrote:

Would that I could record last evening in these pages with golden letters! It was, for a change, a concert for men, a complete whole from beginning to end. . . . How well Mendelssohn understands the treatment of Bach's royal instrument is generally known; and yesterday he laid before us nothing but precious jewels, in the most glorious variety and gradation, which he only prefaced, as it were, at the beginning, and concluded with a fantasy of his own. After a short introduction, he played a very splendid Fugue in E flat major, containing three ideas, one built on the other; then a Fantasy on the Chorale 'Deck Thyself, Beloved Soul,' as priceless, deep, and full of soul as any piece of music that ever sprang from a true artist's imagination; then a grandly brilliant Prelude and Fugue in A minor, both very difficult, even for a master of organ playing. After a pause, these were followed by the Passacaille in C minor (with 21 variations, intertwined so ingeniously that one can never cease to be amazed) admirably handled in the choice of registers by Mendelssohn; then a Pastorella in F major, mined from the deepest depths in which such a composition may be found; which was followed by a Toccata in A minor with a Prelude typical of Bach's sense of humor. Mendelssohn ended with a fantasy of his own, in which, then, he showed himself in the full glory of his artistry; it was based on a Chorale (if I am not mistaken, with the text 'O Sacred Head, now wounded'), into which he afterwards wove the name BACH and a fugued movement--the entire fantasy was rounded out into such a clear and

masterly whole that, if printed, it would appear a finished work of art. . . . There is nothing greater in music than the twofold mastery displayed when one master expresses the other. Fame and honor to old and young alike!⁷⁴

When the recital had finished, the revered old critic, Rochlitz embraced Mendelssohn and said, "I can now depart in peace, for never shall I hear anything finer or more sublime."⁷⁵

There is some confusion regarding the final Bach work on this programme. Schumann, in his review, refers to a Toccata in A minor. However, Bach did not compose an organ toccata in that key. The actual printed programme lists the work as Toccata in D minor.⁷⁶ Two possibilities for this discrepancy exist: either Schumann confused the key of the work in his review, or, perhaps the typesetters made an error either in the programme or in Schumann's review. It appears probable that Mendelssohn adhered to the printed programme, playing one of the two D minor Toccatas, S. 538 or S. 565. Thus, the recital programme would have been as follows:

Prelude and Fugue in E flat major ("St. Anne"), S. 552
 Chorale Prelude, "Schmücke dich, du Liebe Seele," S. 759
 Passacaglia in C minor, S. 582
 Prelude and Fugue in A minor, S. 543
 Pastorale in F major, S. 590
 Toccata in D minor, S. 538 or S. 565
 Free fantasy on "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden."

Concerning this recital, Felix wrote his mother on August 10:

On Thursday I gave an organ concert here in St. Thomas's church, from the proceeds of which old Sebastian Bach is to have a monument erected to his memory in front of the St. Thomas School. I gave it solissimo and played nine pieces, finishing up with an extempore fantasia. This was the whole programme. Although my expenses were considerable, I had a clear gain of three hundred thalers. I shall repeat this pleasure in the autumn or spring, and then a fine stone can be erected. I practiced for eight days before, so that I could scarcely stand up on my feet any longer and walked along the street only in organ passages.⁷⁷

Sufficient funds were eventually raised to accomplish Mendelssohn's plan, and in 1843, the statue was erected in front of the Thomas-schule, directly below Bach's window. Mendelssohn himself had the pleasure of unveiling the monument at the ceremony.⁷⁸

Following his success in Germany, Karl Klingemann persuaded Mendelssohn to play a series of organ recitals in England.⁷⁹ Again, Mendelssohn was invited to perform as an organist at the Birmingham Festival. On Tuesday, September 22, he played a fugue on the organ. On Wednesday, he conducted a performance of his Lobgesang, and after it was over and the hall had emptied, he played the organ for three-quarters of an hour. On Thursday, following the singing of a selection from Handel's Jepthe, he extemporized on the organ for the enthusiastic audience. He chose as his theme the selection from Jepthe which had just been sung.⁸⁰

On September 30, Felix played in London at St.

Peter's, Cornhill. His programme consisted of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E minor, two works of his own--the Prelude and Fugue in C minor, Op. 37, no. 1 and the as yet unpublished Fugue in F minor--along with other works, and concluded with Bach's C minor Passacaglia.⁸¹

It was during this 1840 visit that Mendelssohn played on a Sunday morning at another London church--St. John's, Waterloo Road. Here, this amusing incident is recollected in the words of his friend and former student, John Horsley:

We were taken straight to the organ-loft, where the sight of the gaping congregation and the drawn curtains, exposing him and us to the public gaze, ruffled the usually seraphic temper of Mendelssohn, and 'slewing' himself across the organ-bench, after a few preliminary words with the organist, he dashed into an extempore of the most startingly magnificent kind, thundering forth in music his perturbed spirit. Finally quieting down, he played the introduction of one of Bach's superb fugues, at the close of which he darted up from his seat, seized his hat, which he jammed down on his head, and made his escape, evidently much annoyed.⁸²

Two years later, on Sunday, June 12, 1842, Mendelssohn revisited St. Peter's, Cornhill. He arrived as the congregation was singing a hymn to Haydn's well-known tune, "Austria." Choosing this as his theme, he extemporized a set of variations.⁸³

On June 16, Felix played at Christ Church, Newgate. This was possibly the occasion when he played a free fantasia on a theme from Israel in Egypt, which was reported to be "positively electrifying." Here again, he used

"Austria" as a theme upon which to extemporize, but this time he treated it as a fantasia and fugue.⁸⁴ An interesting account of this performance is recorded by his English pupil and biographer, W. S. Rockstro:

During the course of the Fantasia by which this Fugue was introduced, a long treble A began to sound on the swell. Mendelssohn accompanied it in the form of an inverted organ-point of prodigious length, treating it with the most ingenious and delightful harmonies, his invention of which seemed to be inexhaustible. We were very young in those days; but we well remember whispering to our kind old friend, Mr. Vincent Novello, who was sitting next to us at the east end of the Church: 'It must be a cypher;' and he quite agreed with us. After harmonising the note in an infinity of different ways, with ever-varying passages which would probably have filled some pages of music-paper, he at last confirmed our impression by leaving it to sound, for some considerable time, alone. By this time, all present were convinced that, during the remainder of the performance, that particular manual would be useless; when to our astonishment, the A quietly glided through G sharp and G natural to F sharp; and the organ-point came to the most natural conclusion imaginable. While he was amusing himself with this little plaisanterie, a number of inconsiderate persons had the bad taste to crowd so closely round the unusually confined and inconvenient organ-loft, that, to save himself from fainting, Mendelssohn was compelled to leave in the middle of an unfinished passage, and make his way to the staircase. He was so ghastly pale, that it was feared he really would faint, but after breathing the fresh air, he speedily revived, and as he passed down the stairs, he laughed and said, 'You thought it was a cypher, I know you did.'⁸⁵

The following evening, at a concert of the Sacred Harmonic Society at the Exeter Hall, he played two selections on the organ: Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E flat major and an extempore introduction and variations on "The Harmonious Blacksmith," ending with a fugue on the same theme.⁸⁶

Large numbers of people heard these performances, as

this letter to his mother, dated June 21, shows:

They have really asked a little much of me. Recently when I played the organ in Christ Church, Newgate Street, I thought for a few moments that I would suffocate, so great was the crowd and pressure around my bench at the organ. Then, too several days later I had to play in Exeter Hall before three thousand people, who shouted hurrahs and waved their handkerchiefs, and stamped their feet till the hall quaked. At that moment I felt no bad effect, but next morning my head was dizzy and as if I had had a sleepless night.⁸⁷

Mendelssohn's 1842 trip to England also included a visit to Buckingham Palace, where he played the organ for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He describes the royal visit in this letter to his mother, dated July 19:

The details of my last visit to Buckingham Palace I must write you at once because they will amuse you so very much, and me, too. . . . Prince Albert had asked me to go to him on Saturday at two o'clock, so that I might try his organ before I left England. I found him all alone; and as we were talking away, the Queen came in, also quite alone, in a house dress. She said she was obliged to leave for Claremont in an hour; 'But, goodness! how it looks here,' she added, when she saw that the wind had littered the whole room, and even the pedals of the organ (which, by the way, made a very pretty feature in the room), with leaves of music from a large portfolio that lay open. As she spoke, Prince Albert helped, and I too was not idle. Then Prince Albert proceeded to explain the stops to me, and while he was doing it, she said that she would put things straight alone.

But I begged that the Prince would first play me something, so that as I said, I might boast about it in Germany; and thereupon he played me a chorale by heart, with pedals, so charmingly and clearly and correctly that many an organist could have learned something; and the Queen, having finished her work, sat beside him and listened, very pleased. Then I had to play, and I began my chorus from 'St. Paul': 'How Lovely are the Messengers!' Before I got to the end of the first verse, they both began to sing the chorus very well, and all the time Prince Albert managed the stops for me so expertly--first a flute, then full at the forte, the whole register at the D major part, then he made such an excellent

diminuendo with the stops, and so on to the end of the piece, and all by heart that I was heartily pleased.⁸⁸

In Mendelssohn's last years, his public appearances as an organist became rare, as much of his energy was taken up with conducting,⁸⁹ and teaching both composition and piano at the Leipzig Conservatory, an institution he founded in April of 1843.⁹⁰ On May 17 of that same year, he played Bach's Preludes and Fugues in A minor and D major on the organ of the Thomaskirche for Charles Gounod, Johann Vesque von Puttlingen and a group of his own students.⁹¹

In 1844, Mendelssohn edited a collection of Bach's organ works for the English publishing firm of Coventry and Hollier.⁹² The correspondence between Mendelssohn and his publisher indicates that he was most concerned for his edition of these works to reflect the true intention of their composer.⁹³

In London, a scheduled organ recital had to be cancelled because the instrument was found lacking a full complement of pedals. In June of 1844, this notice appeared in the London newspapers: "The organ in the Hanover Square Rooms being found by Dr. Mendelssohn not to have the German pedals, he is prevented giving the Organ Performance as previously announced."⁹⁴

From the year 1845, three accounts of private performances of his Six Organ Sonatas, Op. 65 exist. The first appears in Rockstro's biography of Mendelssohn:

. . . 'I have just finished some Sonatas for the Organ,' [he said] 'and, if you meet me at the Catherinenkirche, at ten o'clock to-morrow, I will play them for you.'

He played them exquisitely--the whole six, straight through, from the neatly written MS.⁹⁵

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel was also given a private performance of these works. From Frankfurt, on April 20, Felix wrote her the following:

The manuscript of my six organ sonatas is on its way to the copyist who will send it on to Breitkopf and Härtel. I will play them to you at Ober-Liederbach, that is to say, by three at a time, for all six are too fatiguing, as I found out the other day when trying them.⁹⁶

The final "private" performance was given to Mendelssohn's pupil, Emil Naumann, in Kronenberg, in a church filled to capacity with people. In his autobiography, Nachklänge, Naumann wrote a glowing report of Mendelssohn's playing; he considered Felix to be the greatest virtuoso of his day.⁹⁷

On July 20, 1846, Mendelssohn again played in the Thomaskirche for a small gathering of his admirers.⁹⁸ In the fall, he played in Birmingham,⁹⁹ but not without some misgivings about the state of the organ, as this letter to Moscheles, director of the 1846 Birmingham Festival, shows:

The last time I passed through Birmingham the touch of the organ appeared to me so heavy that I could not venture to perform on it in public. If, however, it is materially improved, I shall be happy to play one of my sonatas; but I should not wish this to be announced before I had tried the organ myself.¹⁰⁰

While it is known that Felix did not perform any of the sonatas on this occasion, available sources neglect to

mention the specific compositions which he must have played in their stead.

Mendelssohn's final public performance as an organist took place in London, on May 5, 1847. Here, at one of the Ancient Concerts, he improvised a prelude and fugue on BACH,¹⁰¹ a final public gesture of respect to his beloved Kantor of Leipzig.

Two days after returning home from London, Felix received word of the sudden death of his sister, Fanny. Already exhausted from his arduous work-load, he became severely depressed. He tried to continue his work, but there seemed little heart in anything he attempted.¹⁰² In a letter to Hensel, Fanny's husband, he wrote, "This will be a changed world for us all now, but we must try to get accustomed to the change, though by the time we do, our lives may be over, too."¹⁰³

That summer, Felix and his family decided to take a trip to Switzerland. The English music critic and historian, Henry Chorley was also in Interlaken at the time, and the two men spent long hours together discussing music. Mendelssohn spoke of his ambition to compose an opera for the Paris Grand Opera, and complained about the evident lack of scholarship in current performances of Handel's organ concertos.¹⁰⁴

Mendelssohn had discovered an organ in an isolated village called Ringgenberg on the lake of Brienz. Travelling

there by boat, he and Chorley found the church door open, so they walked in. It was here that Mendelssohn played the organ for the final time. A peasant boy was found to pump the bellows, and Felix played Bach, followed by some of his own improvisations.¹⁰⁵ When later recalling the details of this strange recital, Chorley wrote: "I feel when I think of this organ-playing, as if I had taken leave of the greatest music forever. . . . Such things must come to an end; but they are never to be forgotten."¹⁰⁶

Felix returned to Leipzig and resumed his work, but after a series of strokes, he died at 9:24 p.m. on Thursday, November 4, 1847. He was then thirty-eight years old.¹⁰⁷

The letters and reviews quoted in this chapter give us much valuable information on Mendelssohn's approach to organ playing. Other contemporary reports add to this information.

Hans von Bülow (1830-94), who heard Mendelssohn play, has left us his impressions in his Ausgewählte Schriften, published in 1896:

Here above all, we enthusiastically recall Mendelssohn, whose delicate constitution, unfortunately, did not often allow him to offer his admirers this treat--especially as, once he was at the instrument, he forgot himself in his art and entirely neglected to spare his nerves. His style of playing had a definitely modern character; it was interesting and poetical, whereas the style of the organists who could not play the piano was hard without energy--in short, dry and leathery.¹⁰⁸

Sir George Grove (1820-1900), in his article on Mendelssohn which appeared in earlier editions of Grove's

Dictionary of Music and Musicians, provides this description (based on Dr. E. J. Hopkin's recollection) of Mendelssohn performing the A minor Fugue of J. S. Bach: "He took the episode on the Swell, returning to the Great Organ when the pedal re-enters, but transferring the E in the treble to the Great Organ a bar before the entry of the other parts, with very fine effect."¹⁰⁹ Grove concludes his discussion of Mendelssohn's organ playing with the following:

He took extraordinary delight in the organ; some describe him as even more at home there than on the pianoforte, though this must be taken with caution. But it is certain that he loved the organ, and was always greatly excited when playing it.¹¹⁰

An exceedingly significant fact has emerged from the foregoing historical overview of Mendelssohn's organ playing; the major part of his career as a virtuoso organist took place in England. For this reason, the many accounts of his English recitals, and the specifications of the English instruments on which he played are of primary importance in the development of a performance practice for his works. The next chapter will, therefore, be devoted to an in-depth exploration into the nature of the English organ which Mendelssohn came to know so well.

Mendelssohn set a new standard in organ playing for his era. He devoted considerable time and study to determine Bach's registrational practices and preferences in organ specifications, and his letters to Attwood and Buxton show that he thought highly of the sonorities

associated with the "Baroque" organ.¹¹¹ One can only conclude from the overwhelming amount of available evidence that a performance practice suitable to Mendelssohn's organ works is far more closely related to the aesthetic of the Baroque era than to that of the nineteenth century.

NOTES

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³Phillip Radcliffe, Mendelssohn (London: Dent, 1978), p. 5.

⁴R. Larry Todd, Mendelssohn's Musical Education (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 3.

⁵William A. Little, prefatory remarks to Mendelssohn, Kompositionen für Orgel (Leipzig: Veb Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1979), n.p.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Kirby, A Short History of Keyboard Music, p. 348.

⁸Susanna Grossman-Vendrey, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Musik der Vergangenheit (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1969), p. 179.

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¹⁰W. A. Lampadius, The Life of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, trans. W. L. Gage (Boston: Ditson, 1887), p. 15.

¹¹Grossman-Vendrey, p. 179.

¹²G. Selden-Goth, ed. and trans., Felix Mendelssohn: Letters (New York: Pantheon, 1969), pp. 28-29.

¹³Grossman-Vendrey, pp. 179-80.

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¹⁵Sebastian Hensel, The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847), 2d ed., 2 vols., trans. Carl Klingemann (New York: Harper and Bros., 1881), 1:118-20.

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- ²⁰Kupferberg, pp. 126-32.
- ²¹Marek, p. 142.
- ²²Friedrich Blume, Two Centuries of Bach, trans. Stanley Godman (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 32-33.
- ²³Victoria Ressmeyer Sirota, "The Life and Works of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel" (Mus. A.D. dissertation, Boston University School for the Arts, 1981), p. 39.
- ²⁴Kupferberg, p. 134.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Harmonicon, 1829; reprint ed. (London: Gregg International, 1971), p. 116.
- ²⁷Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1910 ed., s.v. "Attwood, Thomas," by William H. Husk.
- ²⁸Grossman-Vendrey, p. 181.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 182.
- ³⁰Radcliffe, p. 19.
- ³¹Kupferberg, p. 142.
- ³²Marek, p. 172.
- ³³Karl Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Goethe and Mendelssohn, trans. M. E. von Glehn (London: Macmillan, 1872), pp. 61-62 (hereafter cited by its title).
- ³⁴Selden-Goth, p. 193.
- ³⁵Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1910 ed., s.v. "Mendelssohn, Felix," by George Grove, with the addition of new information by F. G. Edwards (hereafter cited as Grove).
- ³⁶Selden-Goth, pp. 81-82.

³⁷See Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Letters from Italy and Switzerland, trans. and ed. Lady Grace Wallace (Boston: Ditson, 1861), pp. 168-91 (hereafter cited as Wallace) for Mendelssohn's detailed description of this in his letters to Zelter.

³⁸Goethe and Mendelssohn, p. 93.

³⁹Wallace, p. 281.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 284-85.

⁴¹Selden-Goth, p. 177.

⁴²Grove.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Grossman-Vendrey, p. 183.

⁴⁵Julius Benedict, Sketch of the Life and Work of the Late Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, 2d ed. (London: John Murray, 1853). See also Marek, p. 199. Reports on the nature of this performance vary. Neither Grove nor Grossman-Vendrey refers to this event as a public recital.

⁴⁶Grove.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Grossman-Vendrey, p. 183.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 183-84.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 184.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 183.

⁵²Grove.

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⁵⁴Hensel, 1:297.

⁵⁵Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy from 1833-1847, ed. Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, trans. Lady Wallace (London: Longman, Green, Roberts and Green, 1863), pp. 40-41 (hereafter cited by its title).

⁵⁶Marek, pp. 249-50.

⁵⁷Grove.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Thomas Murray, "A Performance Style for Mendelssohn," Diapason, August 1976, p. 6.

⁶⁰Grove.

⁶¹Grossman-Vendrey, p. 184.

⁶²H. J. Gauntlett, "Mendelssohn as an Organist," Musical World, 15 September 1837, n.p.

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⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 186.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.; Williams, The European Organ, p. 153.

⁷²Harold Gleason, Method of Organ Playing, 6th ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 271.

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⁷⁴Cited in The Bach Reader, revised edition, ed. Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel (New York: Norton, 1966), pp. 371-73.

⁷⁵Elise Polko, Reminiscences of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, trans. Lady Wallace (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1869), p. 87.

⁷⁶See appendix D for a photographic facsimile of this recital programme.

⁷⁷Selden-Goth, pp. 294-95.

⁷⁸Werner, p. 318.

⁷⁹Grossman-Vendrey, p. 187.

⁸⁰Grove.

⁸¹Ibid.

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⁸³Grove.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵W. S. Rockstro, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy 1809-1847 (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1884), pp. 81-83.

⁸⁶Grove.

⁸⁷Selden-Goth, p. 303.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 366-67.

⁸⁹Grossman-Vendrey, p. 189.

⁹⁰Grove.

⁹¹Grossman-Vendrey, p. 189.

⁹²Grove.

⁹³These letters are published in Selden-Goth, pp. 336-38. See also Polko, pp. 245-48.

⁹⁴The Oxford Companion to Music, 2d American ed., s.v. "Organ," by Percy A. Scholes.

⁹⁵Rockstro, p. 100.

⁹⁶Selden-Goth, p. 321.

⁹⁷Douglas M. Moorehead, "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas: A Look at Number 3," Music/The AGO-RCCO Magazine, November 1975, p. 32.

⁹⁸Grossman-Vendrey, p. 190.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Cited by F. G. Edwards in "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," Proceedings of the Musical Association, 1894; reprint ed. (Vaduz: Kraus Reprints Ltd., 1966), p. 5.

¹⁰¹Grossman-Vendrey, p. 190.

¹⁰²Kupferberg, pp. 224-26.

¹⁰³Cited by Kupferberg, p. 226.

¹⁰⁴Henry F. Chorley, Modern German Music, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1844; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo, 1973), 2:398.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 2:396.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 2:396-97.

¹⁰⁷Kupferberg, pp. 228-31.

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III. MENDELSSOHN AND THE ENGLISH ORGAN

The majority of Mendelssohn's most important organ recitals were played in England. His Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, were dedicated to an English organist (Thomas Attwood), while his Six Sonatas, Op. 65, were commissioned by an English publishing house (Coventry and Hollier). It is significant that Mendelssohn chose the preface of these sonatas in which to set out his only instructions on registration. Therefore, in order to establish an historically accurate performance practice for his organ works, the specifications and tonal characteristics of those English instruments on which he played must be studied in detail. Similarly, Mendelssohn's influence on progressive English organ builders, particularly William Hill and Henry Gauntlett, demands careful examination; it is too closely related to performance practice considerations to be overlooked.

The first half of the nineteenth century brought with it an enormous change in the art of organ building in England. Much can be learned concerning the evolution of the British organ through an examination of the instruments upon which Mendelssohn is known to have performed. His concert tours played a large role in convincing the English of the importance of an independent Pedal division, and it is partially due to his influence that English organists acquired

a taste for larger instruments incorporating some characteristics of the continental organ.¹ By performing the organ works of Bach, and his own organ compositions on the few instruments which possessed anything approaching an adequate pedal division, Mendelssohn introduced important new concepts to English musicians, concepts which were to have a lasting effect both on organ playing and on composers of organ music.²

In order to fully understand the import of the dramatic changes initiated by Mendelssohn's performances in England, one must first examine the development of the British organ up to that time. Although the English organ had a history equal in length to that of its counterpart on the continent, the art of organ building developed very slowly in Britain. Until the middle of the sixteenth century, small instruments with a single manual and no pedals were the norm, and little significant change took place in the period immediately following. The focus of musical development was to be found in the realm of vocal music, the Puritans considering the organ to be an abomination.³

A new dark age for English organs and organ building was ushered in by the passing of an ordinance in the House of Lords on January 4, 1644. The wording of this ordinance demonstrates the illogical and fanatical zeal of the Puritans, which ultimately led to the destruction of most of the organs in England:

Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, for the speedy demolition of all organs, images and all manner of superstitious monuments in the Cathedrals, and Collegiate or Parish Churches and Chapels, throughout the kingdom of England and the Dominion of Wales, the better to accomplish the blessed reformation so happily begun, and to remove all offences and things illegal in the worship of God.⁴

Only an estimated twelve organs survived the ravages of the Puritans; among them were the instruments of St. Stephen's Church at Old Radnor (from ca. 1500), and King's College, Cambridge (1605). Though the cases of these organs remain today in their original positions, the pipes were long ago discarded.⁵

The Restoration, in 1660, brought an end to the destruction of organs in England, but another fifty or sixty years passed before they were commonly found in parish churches. During the Interregnum, organ building had been abandoned, and immediately after the Restoration, few workmen possessing the expertise to build important instruments were available. It was therefore necessary to import organ builders from the continent. The two most important foreign builders to settle in England after the Restoration were Bernard ("Father Smith") Schmidt (1630-1708), who was probably German or Dutch by birth, and Renatus Harris (1652-1724).⁶ The latter was the youngest member of an English family of organ builders who had fled to Brittany at the beginning of the Interregnum in order to continue their work in a less hostile environment.⁷

The period dominated by the work of Father Smith and Renatus Harris is considered to be the "first golden age" of English organ building. Though these two men incorporated some of the tonal characteristics of the German-Dutch and French schools into their work, the conservative attitudes of English organists forced them to conform to the traditional British concept of organ building. This is especially evident in their omission of pedals.⁸

Following the death of Renatus Harris in 1724, British organ building continued in the tradition established by Father Smith around 1680, through the efforts of John Harris (the son of Renatus Harris), the Byfields, Schrider, Snetzler, Green, the Englands and other builders of the day.⁹ John Harris entered into partnership with John Byfield. One of their first instruments was the large organ which they built for St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, in 1726. The most remarkable feature of this organ was the fact that it was the first English instrument to have authentic pedals. This pedal device was, however, very limited, consisting of one octave of pull-down pedals, possibly with an octave coupler.¹⁰

St. Paul's Cathedral possessed an organ with pedals of a more rudimentary type six years prior to the building of the St. Mary Redcliffe instrument. A document recording payment to Christopher Schrider for rebuilding the original Father Smith organ exists from the year 1720, and the addition of pedals is mentioned in it. Schrider also added

"Six large Trumpet Pipes down to 16 Foot Tone to be used with a pedal or without." The historian, Burney, wrote that Handel "went to St. Paul's to play on the organ, for the exercise it afforded him in the use of the pedals."¹¹

Although this is the first recorded use of pedals in England, they were only toe pedals which pulled down the lower notes of the Great organ keys.¹²

These two early examples of the application of pedals to English organs are isolated incidents only, and neither of them involved the development of an independent Pedal division. The resistance of English organists against foreign innovations was great, and it was well into the nineteenth century before pedals became generally accepted. The few pedal attachments which existed prior to the nineteenth century were of little use for anything but improvising and accompaniment. An obbligato pedal part is not found in English organ music until the time of William Russel (1777-1813) and Samuel Wesley (1766-1837). Even in their works, the pedal is used chiefly for slow-moving passages and pedal points.¹³

In 1757, John Snetzler, a German Swiss, built a three-manual instrument containing a Swell organ¹⁴ from fiddle G to F and pull-down pedals from FFF to C (nineteen notes) for the German Lutheran Chapel in the Savoy.¹⁵ Snetzler's instrument possessed such other foreign features as a manual coupler and a Tremulant. This organ is of

interest in that it demonstrates the protective and insular attitudes to which the English organists adhered. During the period 1750-1875, any advanced ideas, or those originating from foreign schools of organ building, were first tried out not on Anglican church organs, but on those associated with other traditions--embassy chapels, concert halls, Methodist meeting houses, and those of other non-conformist denominations.¹⁶

Work of a pioneering nature was undertaken by the Abbé Vogler when he visited London in 1790. He had pedals added to the organ in the Pantheon, where in a series of morning recitals, he demonstrated his considerable virtuosity. As a musician, he was deemed by the English to be a charlatan, but it is probable that he caused many to consider the possibilities of an organ with a proper pedal board.¹⁷

In contemporary accounts, when appreciative comments were made of British organs, the words most often encountered are "sweet," "deep" and "melodious." These descriptions correspond well to the preference for soft wooden Gedeckts and various other wooden flutes which were commonly used by English builders.¹⁸ A penchant for the Swell, the Dulciana (introduced into England by Snetzler), and a pedal-less plena, betrays the prevailing lack of imagination regarding organ tone.¹⁹

Dr. Burney, in his glowing appraisal of the tonal characteristics of the English organ of the 1770's, reflects

the conservative taste and insular attitude of his fellow countrymen:

I must observe, that most of the organs which I met with on the Continent, seem to be inferior to ours built by Father Smith, Byfield, or Snetzler, in everything but size. As the churches there are often immense, so are the organs; the tone is indeed somewhat softened and refined by space and distance; but when heard near, it is intolerably coarse and noisy; and though the number of stops in these large instruments is very great, they afford but little variety, being, for the most part, such as the great and small 12ths, flutes, and 15ths; hence in our own organs not only the touch and tone, but the imitative stops are greatly superior to those of any other organs I have met with.²⁰

By the early years of the nineteenth century, the English solo-stop voluntary--the genre favoured by John Stanley and his contemporaries--had outlived its vogue. Both the instrument and its music were now ready for the German influences which were soon to make themselves felt.²¹

In 1800, the English were unacquainted with the organ works of J. S. Bach and his predecessors. The Bach "pedal-fugues," when played by Samuel Wesley, Thomas Adams, and especially by Mendelssohn on his later visits, created a great sensation.²² Mendelssohn performed these works with a degree of musical understanding and technical skill previously unheard in England. His ability to adapt difficult pedal passages to the limitations of the English pedal board was a subject of much admiration. That his Bach playing was perceived as a revelation, is evident in the following contemporary appreciation written by Dr. Henry

John Gauntlett (1805-1876):

It was not that he played Bach for the first time here--several of us had done that. But he taught us how to play the slow fugue, for Adams and others had played them too fast. His words were, 'Your organists think that Bach did not write a slow fugue for the organ.' Also he brought out a number of pedal-fugues which were not known here. We had played a few, but he was the first to play the D major, the G minor, the E major, the C minor [and] the short E minor.²³

With reference to Mendelssohn's 1837 performance of the A minor fugue at St. Paul's Cathedral, Gauntlett wrote:

Those who know the wide range of passages for the pedals with which this fugue abounds, may conceive how perfectly cool and collected must have been the organist who could on a sudden emergency transpose them to suit the needs of an ordinary English pedal board. His mind has become so assimilated to Bach's compositions, that at one point in the prelude, either by accident or design, he amplified and extended the idea of the author, in a manner so in keeping and natural, that those unacquainted with the details could not by any possibility have discovered the departure from the text. His execution of Bach's music is transcendently great, and so easy, that we presume he has every feature of this author engraven in his memory. His touch is so even and firm, so delicate and volant, that no difficulties, however appalling, either impede or disturb his equanimity.²⁴

At the time of Mendelssohn's first visit to London, he found no organs on which Bach's music could be properly played. This situation was remedied by Dr. Gauntlett and the organ builder, William Hill (1789-1870). Gauntlett strongly supported the German compass (manuals from CC, pedals from CCC), full choruses on the manual divisions, and an independent Pedal division, all of which are essential for the performance of Bach and other German repertoire. Hill willingly became his ally, and under Gauntlett's

guidance he built and/or rebuilt a number of important instruments, including St. Peter's, Cornhill, Christ Church, Newgate, and the large concert organ of the Birmingham Town Hall.²⁵

Despite the efforts of Gauntlett and Hill, considerable time was to pass before most English organ builders were willing to incorporate German tonal concepts into their work. As late as 1843, the Breslau organist, J. J. Seidel, in his treatise, Die Orgel und ihr Bau, complained of the conservative tonal design of English instruments. He wrote:

English organists and organ-builders will see . . . that the Germans possess a number of very fine registers, which are hardly known in England. The consequence is that, as English organ-builders use but such a limited number of registers, they can never obtain by them that beautiful variety which we so frequently meet with in German organs.²⁶

The St. Paul's Cathedral organ was possibly the oldest of the English instruments to be played by Mendelssohn, and its specifications reveal some of the limitations of older British organs. The original Father Smith organ of 1695 had been enlarged by Christopher Shrider in 1720, rebuilt in 1800 by John Crang and others, and was again rebuilt in 1826 by J. C. Bishop, who added one octave of open wood pipes to the pedals.²⁷ Its specifications at the time of Mendelssohn's performances were as follows:²⁸

Great Organ (cc-f³)

Open Diapason (East)
 Open Diapason (West)
 Stopped Diapason
 Principal
 Twelfth
 Fifteenth
 Block flute
 Tierce
 Trumpet (to middle C)
 Mixture 3rks.
 Sesquialtera 4rks.
 Trumpet
 Clarion

Swell Organ (G-f³)

Open Diapason
 Principal
 Cornet 3rks.
 Trumpet
 Hautboy
 Stopped Diapason

Composition pedals--Sw./Gt.; Sw./Ped.; Gt./Ped.;
 Ch./Ped.

Choir Organ (FF-f³)

Principal
 Stopped Diapason
 Flute
 Dulciana
 Cremona
 Twelfth
 Fifteenth
 Open Diapason

Pedal (CC-c')

Pedal 16' (one octave)
 Toe pedals replaced by German
 type pedals.

The earliest attempt by Gauntlett and Hill to produce an adequate Pedal organ is found in the organ at Christ Church, Newgate Street, an instrument they rebuilt in 1835. Accounts of Mendelssohn's performances on this instrument exist from 1837 and 1842. Although impressive at first glance, the two and one-half octaves of pedals had pipes only for the lowest octave. These pedal pipes were a downward continuation of the stops of the Great division. The second C on the pedal board was coupled to bottom C of the Great, and by this inconvenient arrangement, the organist could, at least, achieve a balance between the stops he selected to use on the Great, and the pedal part.²⁹ Here,

as recorded in Pearce's Old London City Churches is a brief description of this instrument and a list of its stops.³⁰

Christ Church, Newgate Street, London: rebuilt by William Hill, 1835, incorporating materials from the original organ by Renatus Harris (1690) and from an early 19th century rebuild by Elliot and Hill. Manual compass; CC to f in alt., 54 notes. Pedal compass: CCC to fiddle G, 32 notes (pedal stops: CCC to CC, 13 notes).

Great Organ

Double Open Diapason 16'
Open Diapason 8'
Open Diapason 8'
Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal 4'
Twelfth 2-2/3'
Sesquialtera 2', V rks.
Mixture 1-3/5, V rks.
Doublette 2', II rks.
Double Trumpet 16'
Posaune 8'
Clarion 4'

Swell Organ

Double Open Diapason 16'
Open Diapason 8'
Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal 4'
Flageolet 4'
Fifteenth 2'
Sesquialtera 1-3/5, V rks.
Horn 8'
Trumpet 8'
Oboe 8'
Clarion 4'

Choir Organ

Open Diapason 8'
Stopped Diapason 8'
Principal 4'
Stopped Flute 4'
Fifteenth 2'

Pedal Organ

Great Diapason 16' (wood)
Open Diapason 16' (wood)
Open Diapason 16' (metal)
Principal 8
Twelfth 6'
Fifteenth 4'
Sesquialtera VI rks.
Mixture V rks.
Posaune 16'
Clarion 8'

Couplers:

Sw./Gt; Sw./Ch.; Ch./Gt.; Gt./Ped.; Sw./Ped.; Ch./Ped.

Another instrument with even more restricted resources in the Pedal division was that of St. John's, Waterloo Road, a London church where Mendelssohn was invited to play on a Sunday morning in 1840. Hamilton's Catechism

of the Organ provides the information that this instrument was built by Bishop in 1824.³¹ The stop list of this organ, as given by Hamilton, suggests that it must have possessed pull-down pedals.³² Based on the limited information preserved by Hamilton, and a comparison with the specifications of other Bishop instruments from the early 1820s,³³ one is led to conclude that the pedal compass was probably confined to one octave.

Great Organ

- 1 Stop Diapason
- 2 Open Diapason
- 3 Open Diapason
- 4 Principal
- 5 Twelfth
- 6 Fifteenth
- 7 Sesquialtera, 3 rks.
- 8 Mixture, 2 rks.
- 9 Trumpet
- 10 Clarion
- 11 Pedal pipes, 16 feet

Swell Organ

- 1 Stop Diapason
- 2 Open Diapason
- 3 Dulciana
- 4 Principal
- 5 Horn
- 6 Trumpet
- 7 Hautboy

Choir Organ

- 1 Stop Diapason
- 2 Flute
- 3 Dulciana
- 4 Principal

Great Organ: 787 pipes
 Choir Organ: 342 pipes
 Swell Organ: 329 pipes

Beginning in 1837, Mendelssohn performed for several seasons on the organ of the Birmingham Town Hall as part of his contribution to the musical activities of the Birmingham

Festival. This instrument, one of the most ambitious works of Hill, was built in 1834. Three years later, he augmented its resources with several new stops, including the first heavy pressure reed to be used in the entire history of organ building. The "Grand Ophicleide," on 12 in. wind, survives to the present day on the Birmingham organ as the Tuba Mirabilis.³⁴ Mendelssohn's Bach performances at the Birmingham Festivals of 1837 and 1840 exposed some of the weaknesses of the instrument, resulting in further reconstruction by Hill and Gauntlett. This work, which brought the organ more in line with the "German System," was undertaken in 1842-1843, and as a final touch, Hill subsequently added a thirty-two foot Contra Trumpet to the Pedal division in 1845.³⁵

The information following comes from a booklet entitled A Short Description of the Grand Organ in the Town Hall, Birmingham, written by James Stimpson in 1846. The Combination Organ, a feature unique to this instrument, was played from a fourth manual.

. . . upon which, by a most ingenious contrivance can be played any stop or stops in the Choir or Swell Organs, without interfering with their previous arrangement. Some of the stops on this [Combination] Organ have pipes of their own; these it will be found are enumerated in their proper place.³⁶

Grand Organ

- 1 Open Diapason 54 pipes
- 2 Open Diapason 54 pipes
- 3 Double Open Diapason 54 pipes
- 4 Open Diapason 54 pipes
- 5 Stop Diapason 54 pipes
- 6 Quint 54 pipes
- 7 Principal 54 pipes
- 8 Principal 54 pipes
- 9 Twelfth 54 pipes
- 10 Doublette, 2 rks. 108 pipes
- 11 Fifteenth 54 pipes
- 12 Sesquialtera, 5 rks., 270 pipes
- 13 Mixture, 3 rks., 162 pipes
- 14 Fourniture, 5 rks., 270 pipes
- 15 Posaune 54 pipes
- 16 Contra or Double Trumpet 54 pipes
- 17 Clarion 54 pipes
- 18 Octave Clarion 54 pipes
- 19 Great Ophicleide 54 pipes

Swell Organ

- 1 Open Diapason 54 pipes
- 2 Double Diapason 54 pipes
- 3 Stop Diapason 54 pipes
- 4 Principal 54 pipes
- 5 Sesquialtera 270 pipes
- 6 Fifteenth 54 pipes
- 7 Horn 54 pipes
- 8 Trumpet 54 pipes
- 9 Clarion 54 pipes
- 10 Hautboy 54 pipes

Choir Organ

- 1 Open Diapason 54 pipes
- 2 Cornopean 54 pipes
- 3 Dulciana 54 pipes
- 4 Stop Diapason 66 pipes
- 5 Principal 54 pipes
- 6 Oboe Flute 54 pipes
- 7 Flute 54 pipes
- 8 Fifteenth 54 pipes
- 9 Wald Flute 54 pipes

Combination or Solo Organ
(Choir)

- 1 Open Diapason 23 pipes
- 2 Cornopean 21 pipes
- 3 Dulciana 23 pipes
- 4 Stop Diapason 23 pipes
- 5 Harmonica 54 pipes
- 6 Flute 23 pipes
- 7 Vox Humana 54 pipes
- 8 Bells (30)

(Swell)

- 9 Hautboy 18 pipes
- 10 Clarion 34 pipes
- 11 Trumpet 18 pipes
- 12 Horn 21 pipes
- 13 Fifteenth 30 pipes
- 14 Claribella 54 pipes
- 15 Principal 30 pipes
- 16 Stop Diapason 21 pipes
- 17 Open Diapason 21 pipes

Pedal Organ

- 1 Contra-Open Diapason 32, metal 30 pipes
- 2 Contra-Open Diapason 32, wood 30 pipes
- 3 Contra Posaune 16', wood 30 pipes
- 4 Open Diapason 16' wood, 30 pipes
- 5 Open Diapason 16', wood 30 pipes
- 6 Open Diapason 16', wood 30 pipes
- 7 Stop Diapason 8', wood 30 pipes
- 8, 9 Principal 8', wood 60 pipes
- 10 Twelfth 6', wood 30 pipes
- 11 Fifteenth 4', wood 30 pipes
- 12 Sesquialtera 5 rks., wood 150 pipes
- 13 Mixture, 5 rks., wood 150 pipes
- 14 Contra Trumpet 32', wood 30 pipes
- 15 Clarion 8', wood 30 pipes
- 16 Octave Clarion 4', wood 30 pipes

Copulas

- 1 Swell keys to the Grand Organ
- 2 Choir keys to the Grand Organ
- 3 Pedals to Grand Organ
- 4 Pedals to Choir Organ
- 5 Pedals to Swell Organ
- 6 Pedal Organ only
- 7 Combination Choir
- 8 Combination Swell

The organ of St. Peter's, Cornhill, another London church, was built by William Hill in 1840. Mendelssohn enjoyed playing this instrument and gave two public performances on it: one in 1840, and the other in 1842. The St. Peter's organ had several divided stops, controlled by two stop-knobs,³⁷ a curious throw-back to the days of the pull-down pedals.³⁸ Despite the ample size of the instrument, it had only one octave of pedal pipes which repeated on the second octave of pedals one octave lower than normal pitch.³⁹ The specifications of this instrument were as

follows:⁴⁰

Grand Organ (C-f³)

Tenoroon diapason to c 16'	Stopped flute 4'
Bourdon from c 16'	Twelfth 2 2/3'
Principal diapason 8'	Fifteenth 2'
Stopped diapason treble 8'	Tierce 1 3/5'
Stopped diapason bass 8'	Sesquialtera 3 rks.
Dulciana to c 8'	Mixture 2 rks.
Claribel flute to c 8'	Doublette 2 rks.
Principal octave 4'	Corno trombone 8'
Wald flute 4'	Corno clarion 4'
Oboe flute 4'	Cromorne to c 8'

Swell Organ (C-f³)

Tenoroon dulciana to c 16'	Fifteenth 2'
Bourdon from c 16'	Piccolo to c 2'
Principal diapason 8'	Sesquialtera 3 rks.
Stopped diapason treble 8'	Mixture 2 rks.
Stopped diapason bass 8'	Echo Dulciana cornet 5 rks.
Principal octave 4'	Cornopean 8'
Suabe flute to c 4'	Tromba 8'
Flageolot to c 4'	Oboe 8'
Twelfth 2 2/3'	Clarion 4'

Pedals (CC-d¹)

Grand diapason 16'
 Grand trombone 16'
 Pedal stops only on the bottom octave.

Couplers: Sw/Gr; Gr/Ped; Sw/Ped; Oct/Ped; 4 composition pedals.

In 1842, Mendelssohn played in a concert at the Exeter Hall before an enthusiastic audience of 3000. The console of this organ was placed in such a way that the performer faced the conductor and audience, rather than sitting with his back to them.⁴¹ The 1842 edition of

Hamilton's Catechism provides the following information and specifications for the instrument:⁴²

This organ, which is the largest in London, was built for the Sacred Harmonic Society in 1839, by J. Walker. . . . It was opened by Mr. Thomas Adams, in two performances, on the 19th and 23rd of December, 1839. The following is a list of the stops, and the number of pipes contained in each stop.

Great Organ

FFF to G in ALT.

- 1 Open Diapason, large metal throughout, 63 pipes.
- 2 Open Diapason, small wood last 12 notes, 63 pipes.
- 3 Stopped Diapason, 63 pipes.
- 4 Principal, 63 pipes.
- 5 Twelfth, 63 pipes.
- 6 Fifteenth, 63 pipes.
- 7 Sesquialtera, 3 rks., (no tierce), 189 pipes.
- 8 Mixture, 2 rks., 126 pipes.
- 9 Furniture, 2 rks., 126 pipes.
- 10 Trumpet, 63 pipes.
- 11 Clarion, 63 pipes.

Three Composition Pedals.

Swell Organ

FF to G in ALT

- 1 Bourdon, one octave, 51.
- 2 Tenoroon Dulciana, 51.
- 3 Open Diapason, 51 pipes.
- 4 Dulciana, 51 pipes.
- 5 Stopped Diapason, 51.
- 6 Principal, 51 pipes.
- 7 Twelfth, 51 pipes.
- 8 Fifteenth, 51 pipes.
- 9 Sesquialtera, 102 pipes.
- 10 Corno, 51 pipes.
- 11 Oboe, 51 pipes.
- 12 Clarion, 51 pipes.

Choir Organ

FFF to G in ALT

- 1 Open Diapason, metal 71.
- 2 Dulciana to FF, 51 pipes.
- 3 Stopped Diapason, 71.
- 4 Principal, 71 pipes.
- 5 Flute, 71 pipes.
- 6, 7 Cromorne to G, Bassoon Bass, 71 pipes.

Pedals

CCC to EE; 8ve and its 3rd.

- 1 Wood Open Double Diapason, 16', 17 pipes.
- 2 Metal Open Diapason, 16' 17 pipes.
- 3 Principal, 16', 17 pipes.
- 4 Fifteenth, 4', 17 pipes.
- 5 Mixture, 3 rks., 51 pipes.
- 6 Posaune, 16', 17 pipes.
- 7 Trumpet, 4', 17 pipes.

Manual Couplers

- 1 Swell to Great
- 2 Choir to Great

Manuals to Pedals

- 3 Great to Pedal
- 4 Swell to Pedals
- 5 Choir to Pedals

Total Number of Pipes: 2187

In contrast to this large instrument, the next and last to be considered is Prince Albert's small house organ, which was built by Gray and Davison in 1841. Mendelssohn played on it when he visited Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at Buckingham Palace in 1842. Hamilton's Catechism provides this descriptive information:

It stands in a handsome room in the Prince's private apartments, in the left wing of the Palace; it is divided and in appearance resembles two beautiful cabinets, standing on each side of the fireplace, at one end of the room. There is no apparent communication between these two parts, the connection being ingeniously contrived behind the pier glass, over the fireplace. The bellows is not in the room, but is placed in an adjoining passage, where it appears like a table. It is a fine instrument, on the German plan, the keys being to CC, 8 feet, and the pedals to CCC, 16 feet. It contains: Open Diapason, Principal, Fifteenth, Hautboy,--enclosed in a swell box. The pedal pipes are Bourdon, or stopped; and there are four composition pedals.⁴³

Despite the diversity of the various English organs on which Mendelssohn played, there are certain common characteristics among them. None of these instruments possessed string-toned stops. While the Dulciana of the present day may be perceived to approach string colour, contemporary writers frequently likened the early nineteenth-

century Dulciana to a miniature Diapason. Few of these organs possessed 16 foot stopped registers in the Pedal division, the preference being for open 16 foot pedal pipes. The action of the organ was, of course, mechanical throughout.⁴⁴ One need not even take the time to examine the specifications of these instruments in order to conclude that each had at least one manual enclosed in a swell box. This device, which was introduced by Jordan in 1712 and subsequently improved by Samuel Green,⁴⁵ quickly became and remained a sine qua non for all British organs until the recent revival of the classical organ.

In 1841, Hill brought to fruition his goals as an organ builder through the production of a fine 52-stop instrument for the George Street Chapel in Liverpool. Here was an instrument which could accommodate all schools of organ music. Its German compass pedal board controlled a fully developed and independent Pedal division. Other builders, especially Walker and Gray and Davison, speedily followed the example set by Hill and Gauntlett, and for the next two decades, the independent Pedal organ became an important feature of all instruments to be built by their firms.⁴⁶

With the coming of age of the British organ, there emerged an interest in larger and more opulent instruments. Civic pride demanded that each city have a town hall organ larger than that of the neighbouring city. A revival of

interest in the Church of England in the 1840s necessitated the building and rebuilding of many organs.⁴⁷ It was a good and prosperous time for the art of organ building.

At the Great Exhibition of 1851, where the works of both British and continental organ builders were displayed, many found the entry submitted by Henry Willis (1821-1901) to be most remarkable. His 70-stop instrument appeared to be both a continuation of the tradition established by William Hill, and the beginning of the Victorian Romantic organ.⁴⁸

While classical influences shaped the work of Hill, Willis was a product of his own time. The specifications of the organs built by these two men often appear similar, but Willis employed voicing techniques which produced a more "romantic" sonority. Putting aside personal preferences (classical vs. romantic organ tone), his type of instrument was logically conceived and based on good traditions, though it is best suited for the proportions and acoustical environment of the English cathedral.⁴⁹

The accomplishments of such builders as Hill and Willis were both courageous and admirable. Theirs was work of integrity, unmarred by the unfortunate excesses yet to come in the final decades of the century.

Mendelssohn's influence did not bring about the re-establishment of the "Bach organ"--the times were not conducive for such a venture. But, through his recitals

and his consultations with progressive organ builders and organists, he undoubtedly helped to effect the revolution which brought the British organ into its "second golden age."

NOTES

- ¹Kratzenstein, Organ Literature and Editions, p. 117.
- ²Clutton and Niland, The British Organ, p. 81.
- ³Pohl-Gerhard Andersen, Organ Building and Design, trans. Joanne Curnutt (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1969), p. 169.
- ⁴Cited by George Ashdown Audsley in The Art of Organ Building, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1905; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1965), 1:72.
- ⁵Andersen, p. 169.
- ⁶Audsley, p. 74.
- ⁷Clutton and Niland, p. 46.
- ⁸Andersen, p. 170.
- ⁹Clutton and Niland, p. 70.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 71.
- ¹²Gleason, Method of Organ Playing, p. 276.
- ¹³Austin Niland, An Introduction to the Organ (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 122.
- ¹⁴The first primitive swell device in England was introduced by Samuel Jordan. He incorporated it into the organ of St. Magnus' Church, London in 1712.
- ¹⁵Sumner, The Organ, p. 184.
- ¹⁶Williams, A New History of the Organ, p. 139.
- ¹⁷Clutton and Niland, p. 82.
- ¹⁸Andersen, p. 177.
- ¹⁹Williams, pp. 138-39.
- ²⁰Cited by Andersen, p. 176.
- ²¹Williams, p. 139.

²²Sumner, p. 185.

²³Cited in Grove.

²⁴H. J. Gauntlett, "Mendelssohn as an Orgnist," n.p.

²⁵Niland, pp. 122-23; Nicholas Temperley, "Victorian Organ Music," Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800-1914, ed. Nicholas Temperley (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p. 444.

²⁶J. J. Seidel, The Organ and its Construction: A Systematic Handbook, 2d ed. (London: Ewer, 1855; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo, 1982), p. 89. The original German edition was published as Die Orgel und ihr Bau (Breslau: 1843).

²⁷Gleason, p. 276.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 276-77. See also Chapter II above for details of Mendelssohn's performances on the various English organs discussed in the present chapter.

²⁹Clutton and Niland, p. 82.

³⁰Charles W. Pearce, Notes on Old London Churches, Their Organs, Organists and Musical Associations (London: Vincent, 1905), p. 28.

³¹James Alexander Hamilton, Hamilton's Catechism of the Organ, 2d ed., revised, corrected and enlarged by Joseph Warren (London: R. Cocks and Co., 1842), p. 70.

³²See #11 of the Great stops in Hamilton's list.

³³See especially the specifications of the St. Paul's Cathedral organ as discussed above.

³⁴Clutton and Niland, p. 81.

³⁵Nicholas Thistlethwaite, "The Organ in the Birmingham Town Hall," Musical Times, October 1984, pp. 593-95.

³⁶James Stimpson, A Short Description of the Grand Organ in the Town Hall, Birmingham (Birmingham: B. Hall, 1846), p. 14.

³⁷Gleason, p. 273.

³⁸Clutton and Niland, p. 83.

³⁹Pearce, p. 70.

⁴⁰Gleason, pp. 273-74.

⁴¹E. J. Hopkins and E. F. Rimbault, The Organ: Its History and Construction, 3d ed. (London: R. Cocks, 1877; reprint ed., Amsterdam: Frits R. M. Knuf, 1972), p. 462.

⁴²Hamilton, p. 57.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 61-62.

⁴⁴Murray, "A Performance Style for Mendelssohn,"
p. 7.

⁴⁵Clutton and Niland, p. 72.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁴⁷Sumner, p. 228.

⁴⁸Andersen, p. 178.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 178-80.

IV. AN AUTHENTIC PERFORMING STYLE FOR MENDELSSOHN

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest certain general guidelines for the performance of Mendelssohn's organ works. Topics to be discussed will be confined to two aspects of musical expression: registration and dynamics, and the use of rubato. Other performance problems which are unique to specific works will be reserved for succeeding chapters.

The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the development of the symphonic organ. Not only did organs become increasingly larger with the addition of many solo stops of Romantic colour, but the application of electric action opened up the possibility of seemingly endless "improvements." Among these, one could mention multiple expression pedals, the crescendo pedal (or its German equivalent, the Rollschweller or Walze), sub and super-octave couplers, and pistons. Organists and organ builders everywhere, and especially in England, became obsessed with the multitude of colours and tonal gradations made available by the new technology.¹

Most of these innovations were introduced into England by Robert Hope Jones (1859-1914), whose influence plunged the art of organ building into a period of decline which lasted until the middle of the present century. He emigrated to America in 1903, after having licensed a number

of British organ companies to use his inventions. In the United States he worked with the Skinner Organ Company in Boston, and in 1907 founded his own company. Three years later, his factory and patents were purchased by the Wurlitzer company, which produced both theatre and church organs based on his tonal concepts.² Hope Jones has been aptly described by Clutton and Niland as "an electrical engineer who unfortunately strayed into organ building, to which he first applied an electric action of more ingenuity than reliability, and then a tonal scheme of tasteless vulgarity."³ He caused irreparable damage to many existing masterpieces of the organ builder's art, and his ill-founded ideas worked to the detriment of organ building on both sides of the Atlantic. Since his method of tonal design excluded all upper work above a two foot piccolo, few of the newer instruments possessed adequate choruses.⁴ Through the influence of Hope Jones, the English organ was transformed into a synthetic symphony orchestra--an instrument more suited to the performance of orchestral transcriptions than the great organ literature of the past.

Coincident with the development of this new type of organ, there emerged a new type of organist--the professional virtuoso. These musicians often held salaried positions in the employ of a city, their chief function being to provide weekly organ recitals which would display the powers of the town hall organ to great advantage.

Their audiences, who were largely uninformed in matters of organ repertoire, demanded the performance of orchestral, vocal and operatic transcriptions. These came to dominate concert programmes almost exclusively, with the rare exception of the traditional extemporization or an occasional organ work by J. S. Bach.⁵

The registrational practices of this school of playing were, and still are, often mistakenly applied to the works of Mendelssohn, resulting in a complete distortion of the composer's intentions. The excesses of this approach have been handed down to the present age through the misguided editors of some of the commonly used performing editions of these works.⁶ In order to arrive at an acceptable registrational practice, it becomes necessary to examine both the specifications and tonal characteristics of the instruments for which Mendelssohn wrote, his own instructions for the registration of his music, and contemporary accounts of his own performances of his works.

The previous chapter examined in detail the English organs on which Mendelssohn is known to have played. Since most of the objectionable editions of Mendelssohn's organ works were the work of late nineteenth-century British organists, or are the result of their influence, it cannot be stressed too strongly that the symphonic concert instrument and its accompanying school of playing did not exist in England at the time of Mendelssohn's performances

there.

The British organ of the period spanning 1830-1860 was characterized by its clear, elegant Diapason chorus, delicate flutes and the bright, refined quality of its reeds. On these instruments, the Full Organ which Mendelssohn specifies for FF passages, was always a beautifully balanced sound, and never tiring when heard over prolonged periods of time.⁷

Of the three German organs on which Mendelssohn is known to have played his Six Sonatas, Op. 65, those of the Catherinenkirche in Frankfurt and the Johanniskirche in Kronenberg may provide some further clue to the tonal characteristics which he envisioned for his works. The instrument of the Evangelical Church of Ober-Liederbach, where he played these pieces for his sister, may be discounted, since on this one manual instrument the composer's indications for manual changes would have had to be ignored.⁸

The organ of the Catherinenkirche was well known to Mendelssohn; he had practiced on it daily in the summer of 1839,⁹ and probably at other times as well. This instrument, built by the brothers J. P. and J. H. Stumm in 1779-1780, was unfortunately destroyed by an American bomb during World War II; however, through careful and arduous research, Theodore Peine has been able to reconstruct its probable specifications.¹⁰ Based on Peine's research,

the instrument with which Mendelssohn was familiar would have been very close to the following:¹¹

<u>Hauptwerk</u>	<u>Positiv (Oberwerk)</u>
Prinzipal 8'	Prinzipal 4'
Octave 4'	Octave 2'
Superoctav 2'	Quinte 2 2/3'
Mixtur VI 2'	Terz 1 3/5'
Cimbel III 1'	Mixtur IV 1'
Bordun 16'	Grob Gedackt 8'
Gedackt 8'	Rohrflaut 4'
Kleingedackt 4'	Waldflöt 2'
Cornett 5-fach 5 1/3'	Flaut travers 8'
Gemshorn 8'	Gemshorn 4'
Quintatön 8'	Solicional 8'
Gamba 8'	Cromorne 8'
Solizional 4'	Vox humana 8'
Trompete 8'	Tremulant
Vox angelica-bass 2'	
<u>Echo (Hinterwerk)</u>	<u>Pedal</u>
Octave 2'	Prinzipalbass 16'
Quinte 1 1/3'	Superoctavbass 4'
Hohlpfiefe 8'	Mixturbass 6-fach 2'
Flauto 4'	Subbass 16'
Gemshorn 2'	Violonbass 16'
Flageolet 1'	Posaune 16'
Solicional 2'	Clarinetbass 4'
Hautbois-Cromorne 8'	
Vox humana 8'	

The organ of the Johanniskirche in Kronenberg, where Mendelssohn played the Six Sonatas for Emil Naumann, was also a Stumm instrument. Its specifications were as follows:

Hauptwerk

Principal 8'
 Bourdon 16'
 Gedackt 8'
 Viola da Gamba 8'
 Octav 4'
 Quintathön 8'
 Flaut 4'
 Quint 3'
 Cornet V 8'
 Superoctav 2'
 Mixtur IV 1'
 Trompete 8'

Positiv

Principal 4'
 Hohlflaut 8'
 Flautraver im Discant 8'
 Klein Flaut 4'
 Quint 3'
 Octav 2'
 Solicinal 2'
 Mixtur III 1'
 Cromorne 8'
 Vox humana 8'
 Tremulant

Pedal

Principal 8'
 Supbass 16'
 Octavbass 8'
 Violonbass 16'
 Posaunbass 16'

Couplers: Pos./Hp., Hp./Pd.

Although there is no available information concerning the tonal characteristics of these particular organs, the general characteristics of instruments built by the Stumm brothers include:

. . . a North German Schnitger-type balancing principle of sound (each division is based on a principal chorus, and each has its own mixtures, mutations and reeds, resulting in an interplay among divisions which sound unique because of their physical location) together with a Baroque, Middle German scaling which results in a relatively serene behavior of the principal choruses and the broader voices. Unlike Middle or South German tendencies, however, Stumm organs have narrow scalings in the string voices, and there are no sharp breaks or strong changes in sound through any of the ranks. The resulting sound complex is full, sharp and varied, resulting from the agreeable combination of traditional Baroque characteristics and late 18th and early 19th-century French and South German developments.¹³

Mendelssohn provided us with a guide to the registration

of his works in the preface to his Six Sonatas, Op. 65. There is every reason to assume that these suggestions apply equally to his Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, and his lesser known works. The following is the exact wording of his "Prefatory Remarks" to the original Coventry and Hollier edition of the Sonatas, published in 1845:

Much depends in these Sonatas on the right choice of the Stops; however, as every Organ with which I am acquainted has its own peculiar mode of treatment in this respect, and as the same nominal combination does not produce exactly the same effect in different Instruments, I have given only a general indication of the kinds of effect intended to be produced, without giving a precise List of the particular Stops to be used.

By 'Fortissimo,' I intend to designate the Full Organ; by 'Pianissimo,' I generally mean a soft 8 feet Stop alone; by 'Forte,' the Great Organ, but without some of the most powerful Stops;¹⁴ by 'Piano,' some of the soft 8 feet Stops combined; and so forth.

In the Pedal part, I should prefer throughout, even in the Pianissimo passages, the 8 feet and the 16 feet Stops united; except when the contrary is expressly specified; see the 6th Sonata.

It is therefore left to the judgement of the Performer, to mix the different Stops appropriately to the style of the various Pieces; advising him, however, to be careful that in combining the Stops belonging to two different sets of keys, the kind of tone in the one, should be distinguished from that in the other; but without forming too violent a contrast between the two different qualities of tone.¹⁵

It is possible, utilizing the information contained in this preface and additional information found in the Sixth Sonata (MP - 8' and 4'; MF - 8' and 4'),¹⁶ to construct a general scheme of registration for each dynamic level in Mendelssohn's organ works.

FF - Full Organ [Organo pleno, with or without reeds]¹⁷

F - Great Organ [Principals 8', 4', 2'] or Full Organ without some of the more powerful stops

MF - [Principals 8', 4']

MP - [Flutes 8', 4', or other gentle stops at 8' and 4' pitch]

P - Some of the soft 8' stops combined

PP - A single soft 8' stop

Pedal 16' and 8' (except where otherwise specified) in corresponding strength¹⁸

Mendelssohn's indications for changes in dynamics always appear at the beginning of a clearly defined section within the musical structure. They usually (in the Six Sonatas) coincide with his directions for a change of manuals, thus pointing to the fact that he adhered to the Baroque concept of terraced dynamics. This is further corroborated by two contemporary accounts of his playing. The first is found in Emil Naumann's report on his Kronenberg performance of the Six Sonatas:

There was no coarse or crude sensationalism in changing of registrations, yet these never became boring . . . the instrument was changed into a full-toned rich orchestra, where one would imagine first a solo singer, then an entire choir.¹⁹

The second commentary is cited by Sir George Grove from an article on Mendelssohn's organ playing which appeared in the Musical World on February 16, 1838: "He settled upon his combinations of stops before starting,

and steadily adhered to the plan on which he had set out."²⁰

Mendelssohn frequently indicates that some of the fugues and other vigorous movements are to be played Organo pleno, Full Organ or Volles Werk. Since these terms are synonymous, and as he explains in his preface, he equates them with a Fortissimo marking, all FF movements may be registered along the lines of the late Baroque Organo pleno. A further adaptation of Baroque registrational procedures occurs in some of the slower pieces of the "religious Adagio" type. Here, we see the use of both terraced dynamics, and/or, as the preface requests, terraced textures. A good example of this procedure may be found in the second movement of the First Sonata.

Many organists, when performing Mendelssohn's works, introduce changes of manuals which are not indicated in the score. However, F. G. Edwards, who had the opportunity to examine the autograph of the Six Sonatas, points out that Mendelssohn originally provided for thirty-eight manual changes in the Finale of the Fifth Sonata. He subsequently crossed all of them out with pencil.²¹ These, and other similar changes in the autograph, indicate that the composer gave a good deal of thought to exactly where he wanted manual changes made; it is always the primary duty of the performer to be faithful to the composer's final text. Mendelssohn wrote these pieces for organs which probably had no mechanical registrational aids, and his use of a

registrant assistant is never mentioned in contemporary accounts of his own performances of his organ works.²² It would therefore appear that a simple approach to this music is the one which Mendelssohn intended. Performers would be well advised to follow the example set by the composer--choose an appropriate scheme of registration before starting to play, and "steadily adhere to the plan."

One final matter pertaining to dynamics remains to be discussed--the use, or non-use of the swell pedal. While it is true that all of the English instruments on which Mendelssohn played had at least one division under expression, none of the documentation concerning his performances mentions his use of the swell pedal. The device was extremely awkward to operate; it was controlled by an unbalanced pedal of the hitch-down variety, which, unless left wide open, would close of its own accord as soon as the player's foot was removed.²³ Peine makes no mention of the inclusion of such a device on the organ of the Catherinenkirche. The Stumm brothers did, however, include a swell mechanism on the organ which they built in 1776 for the Mannheim Lutheran Church.²⁴ Based on this scanty evidence, the only conclusion we can reach is that the Stumms were familiar with the device. Although we cannot be certain, it seems unlikely that Mendelssohn used the swell pedal in his own performances. He was quite meticulous in the manner in which he set out the dynamic

markings in his organ works, and it would seem that he would have been equally particular about crescendo and diminuendo indications if he had intended the swell pedal to be used in these pieces.

The problem of rubato in Mendelssohn's organ works is a perplexing one. The composer's own use of this expressive device is not mentioned in any of the accounts of his organ playing. However, his thoughts on the matter are documented in accounts of his teaching and conducting.

Mendelssohn's English pupil and biographer, Rockstro, has this to say in reference to his master's attitude to expressive playing in general:

With regard to special forms of expression, one of his most frequently reiterated maxims was, 'If you want to play with true feeling, you must listen to good singers. You will learn far more from them than from any players you are likely to meet with.'²⁵

Carl Reinecke also studied briefly with Mendelssohn. While in Leipzig, Reinecke was permitted to observe Mendelssohn's rehearsals for the Gewandhaus concerts. He later wrote that Mendelssohn

. . . possessed the finest rhythmical feeling; the slightest wavering in time was always greeted by him in the rehearsals with the cry: 'Tempo, tempo, meine Herren!' When in concerts, however, he wished to introduce unexpected variations in tempo, such as quasi-improvised accelerandi and ritardandi, he was able to bring them about in so finished a manner that one could not but believe them to have been prepared in rehearsals.²⁶

Finally, Sir George Grove provides us with these observations on Mendelssohn's use of rubato:

His adherence to his author's meaning, and to the indications given in the music, was absolute. Strict time was one of his hobbies. He alludes to it, with an eye to the sins of Hiller and Chopin, in a letter of May 23, 1834, and somewhere else speaks of 'nice strict tempo' as something peculiarly pleasant. After introducing some ritardandos in conducting the Introduction to Beethoven's Second Symphony, he excused himself by saying that 'one could not always be good,' and that he had felt the inclination too strongly to resist it. In playing, however, he never himself interpolated a ritardando, or suffered it in anyone else. It especially enraged him when done at the end of a song or other piece. 'Es steht nich da!' he would say; 'if it were intended it would be written in--they think it expression, but it is sheer affectation.' But though in playing he never varied the tempo when once taken, he did not always take a movement at the same pace, but changed it as his mood was at the time.²⁷

When attempting to evaluate the seemingly contradictory information presented above, it is perhaps wise to examine the use and abuse of rubato in a broader frame of reference. It is known that a certain degree of rhythmic freedom in the performance of music has been expected since the early seventeenth century, and the practice may have existed even earlier. Frescobaldi gave detailed instructions for the use of rubato in the prefaces to his Toccate e Partite (1614-1615) and Il primo libro di capricci (1623). Among musicians who, in eighteenth-century treatises, advocated its use were Couperin (1717), Tosi (1723), Quantz (1725), C. P. E. Bach (1753) and Leopold Mozart (1756).

Drawing closer to Mendelssohn's own time, other sources attesting to the use of rubato in the Classical period are worthy of our attention. The first of these

is a letter which Mozart wrote to his father on October 22-24, 1777. In connection with his own employment of rubato in organ playing, he wrote:

The fact that I always maintain the beat accurately, amazes everyone. They simply cannot understand the idea that the left hand goes on as usual during tempo rubato in an Adagio. They imagine that the left hand always follows along.²⁸

Daniel Gottlob Türk, in his Clavierschule of 1789, offers the following cautious advice on the use of rubato:

If the composer of the required expression conveys it as well as possible throughout the work and in specific places . . . , there still remain particular cases in which the expression can be heightened by exceptional means. I count here as preferable (1) playing without strict measure, (2) hurrying and drawing back, (3) the so-called Tempo rubato--three methods, which can be employed with great effect only rarely and in the right places.²⁹

Carl Czerny (1791-1851), a pupil of Beethoven, contributes this information on the subject in his Vollständige theoretische praktische Pianoforte-schule (1839):

Every composition must be played in the tempo prescribed by the composer and adhered to by the executant, notwithstanding, however, that in almost every line there are certain notes and passages where a little ritardando or accelerando is necessary, to beautify the reading and to augment the interest.³⁰

It is apparent from the foregoing quotations that there are two distinct types of rubato: melodic and structural. Melodic rubato (the type described by Mozart), is usually associated with music in a slow tempo. Here, the rhythm of the accompaniment is kept in strict time, while

very minute rhythmic deviations occur in the melodic line. In structural rubato (as described in the quote from Czerny), both the melody and accompaniment are allowed to deviate from the strict tempo. It is commonly employed in the performance of most music, and can be anything from a scarcely detectable delay to a broad accelerando or ritardando. Structural rubato is used both as an expressive device and as a means to help define phrasing and structure.³¹

It is most unlikely that a performing artist of Mendelssohn's genius would have played absolutely metronomically. When advising his students that listening to good singers is the best way to learn to play expressively, it is reasonable to assume that he was, in part, referring to the use of rubato. That subtle "timing" of certain notes, the essence of expressive singing, when successfully applied to organ playing, distinguishes the artist from the routine player. His negative comments concerning "the sins of Hiller and Chopin" could well be attributed to the fact that Mendelssohn, the Classicist, was reacting against what he perceived to be the musical excesses of his own time, and in particular, the use of ritardandi for no justifiable musical reason. We must not forget that Mendelssohn himself felt bound to admit that he "could not always be good." It is probable that the subtle and discreet use of rubato--one which does not distort the formal structure of his music through undue attention to the lyrical aspect--is an

approach which would have won the approval of the composer.

NOTES

¹Kratzenstein, Organ Literature and Editions, p. 117.

²Sumner, The Organ, pp. 241-43.

³Clutton and Niland, The British Organ, p. 96.

⁴Ibid., pp. 96-97.

⁵Temperley, "Victorian Organ Music," pp. 444-45.

⁶A readily available example of this type of performing edition is the following: Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Organ Compositions, ed. and revised Edwin H. Lemare (New York: Schirmer, 1910). This edition suppresses Mendelssohn's own prefatory remarks on registration, replacing them with "stop indications . . . in accordance with the organ of the present day" (see Lemare's "Preface," n.p.). Lemare also calls for the use of the tremulant in several of the more lyrical movements, adds expression marks, unwarranted signs of articulation and often substitutes his own indications for manual changes in place of the original markings. In short, here is a perfect example of the symphonic treatment of these pieces. This is definitely an edition to be avoided.

⁷Murray, "A Performance Style for Mendelssohn," p. 18.

⁸Butler, "The Organ Works of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy," pp. 113-14.

⁹Grossman-Vendrey, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Musik der Vergangenheit, p. 186.

¹⁰Theodore Peine, "Der Orgelbau in Frankfurt am Main und Umgebung von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart" (Ph.D. dissertation, Frankfurt am Main University, 1956), pp. 138-43.

¹¹Ibid., p. 148.

¹²Butler, p. 121.

¹³Moorehead, "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," p. 33.

¹⁴In the Breitkopf und Härtel edition, which was released almost simultaneously with the Coventry and Hollier edition, this line reads as follows: ". . . beim Forte volle Orgel ohne einige der stärksten Register" (" . . . Forte as

indicative of the full organ without some of the loudest stops").

¹⁵Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Six Grand Sonatas for the Organ (London: Coventry & Hollier, [1845]), "Prefatory Remarks," n.p.

¹⁶See the Sixth Sonata, first movement, variation I - bar 6, and variation II - bar 1.

¹⁷It is interesting to note the similarity of this table to one which was drawn up by Joseph Rheinberger (1839-1901) as a guide to the registration of his twenty organ sonatas, the first of which was composed in 1868.

"FF - Full Organ

F - Full Organ without mixtures

MF - Principals 8', or 8' and 4', or full Swell manual

P - Several soft stops

PP - Salicional, or similar 8' stop alone

PPP - Softest 8' stop

Pedals in corresponding strength"

Cited by E. Harold Geer in Organ Registration in Theory and Practice (Glen Rock: Fischer, 1957), p. 163.

¹⁸Each period in history has had its own Organo pleno; from the late nineteenth century to the present, the term has been left to the organist to interpret in his own way. Organo pleno, during the time of Bach and until the late nineteenth century, directed the player to register a piece in the following manner: Principals 8', 4', 2 2/3', 2', and mixtures. The performer was permitted to mix Principals and flutes together; also, reeds and stops including the Tierce could be added to the plenum. The Oberwerk (without the Tierce) might also be coupled to the Hauptwerk. The pedal registration would be chosen to correspond in strength with the manuals. Gleason, A Method of Organ Playing, p. 10; Williams, A New History of the Organ, p. 216.

¹⁹Emil Naumann, Nachklänge (Berlin: 1872), pp. 45-46. Cited by Grossman-Vendrey, pp. 189-90.

²⁰Grove.

²¹Edwards, "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," p. 13.

²²The only known account of Mendelssohn's use of a registrant assistant appears in a letter to his mother (19 July 1842). This letter tells of his visit to Buckingham Palace, on which occasion, Prince Albert pulled stops for him while Felix played his own transcription of a chorus from St. Paul. It seems logical that Mendelssohn would have

allowed himself more liberty with registration in attempting to emulate the sound of a chorus with orchestral accompaniment than in a work composed expressly for the organ. See the quotation from this letter in chapt. II above.

²³Murray, p. 7.

²⁴Williams, The European Organ, p. 93.

²⁵Rockstro, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, p. 108.

²⁶Carl Reinecke, "Mendelssohn and Schumann: Personal Recollections of Them as Teachers," Etude, December 1901, p. 803.

²⁷Grove.

²⁸Cited by Ruth Halle Rowen in Music Through Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 228.

²⁹Cited by Carol MacClintock in Readings in the History of Music in Performance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 340.

³⁰Cited by Frederick Dorian in The History of Music in Performance (New York: Norton, 1942), p. 205.

³¹Howard Ferguson, Keyboard Interpretation (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 48-49.

V. THREE PRELUDES AND FUGUES, OP. 37

Mendelssohn's first published organ compositions, the Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, appeared in 1837. The present chapter is devoted to the exploration of specific performance problems which are encountered in these works, together with a discussion of pertinent historical and analytical considerations.¹

Although Mendelssohn was a leader of the early Romantic school of composition, he remained, in certain respects, one of the last of the Classicists. His compositional style is characterized by a unique fusion of the lyricism and sentimentality of Romanticism, with the clarity and logic of a Classical approach to harmony, counterpoint and form. He stated his case eloquently, when at the age of twenty-one, he wrote:

No one can forbid me to enjoy and to develop all that the great masters have left behind them, for there is no sense in everyone's beginning at the beginning again; but it must be a development to the best of my ability, not a lifeless repetition of what has already been.²

He was ever conscious that his conservative stand could cause difficulties for him, but he remained nonetheless convinced of its validity. Both Brahms and Max Reger were later to steer a similar course.

In a letter to Ferdinand Hiller, dated January 10, 1837, he announced the impending publication of his Six Preludes and Fugues for piano, Op. 35, and his Three

Preludes and Fugues for organ, Op. 37. It is apparent from this letter that he was somewhat apprehensive about the reception these works would receive:

I have sent my six Preludes and Fugues to the printer to-day; they will not be much played, I fear; still I should very much like you to look through them sometime, and tell me if anything pleased you in them, and also anything to the contrary. The Organ Fugues are to be printed next month; me voilà perruque! I wish to goodness that some rattling good pianoforte passage would come into my head, to do away with the bad impression. Oh dear!³

The Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, dedicated to Thomas Attwood, were published simultaneously by Novello in England and Breitkopf und Härtel in Germany. Susanna Grossman-Vendrey states that Mendelssohn began to work on these compositions as early as 1829.⁴ The individual pieces were definitely written at different times. The autograph of the original version of the first fugue (C minor) is dated Düsseldorf, July 30, 1834,⁵ but Mendelssohn made some alterations in the version which was published in Op. 37. The second fugue (G major) was composed in Leipzig on December 1, 1837. The third fugue (D minor), in its original form, was written for Vincent Novello on March 29, 1833, in Berlin, and was subsequently revised in 1837 for inclusion in the publication of Op. 37.⁶ While Mendelssohn and his wife were on their honeymoon trip in 1837, they spent a few days at Spires. On April 10, in a letter to his mother, the composer announced: "I composed at Spires three organ preludes, which I think

you will like."⁷ Thus, at two day intervals, the preludes of Op. 37 were completed; prelude number one is dated April 2, number two bears the date April 4, while number three was written on April 6.

In Op. 37, Mendelssohn adapts the older Baroque formal structures of prelude and fugue to the more lyrical aesthetic ideal of his own time. Robert Schumann's critical comments on the Preludes and Fugues for piano, Op. 35, could apply equally well to the Preludes and Fugues for organ:

It is not my present purpose to praise blindly, for I know right well that Bach wrote, nay created, fugues of quite another sort. But were he now to arise from the grave he would certainly--after perhaps having laid about him right and left because of the general condition of music--rejoice that a few composers at least still are gathering flowers from the field where he had planted such giant oak forests. In a word, these fugues have much of Sebastian and might deceive the sharp-sighted reviewer, were it not for the melody, the finer bloom, which we recognize as modern; and here and there those little touches peculiar to Mendelssohn, which identify him among a hundred other composers. . . . That he . . . avoid[s] all useless imitations and small artificialities, allowing the melody of the cantilena to predominate while holding fast to the Bach form--is very much like him.⁸

These works were the first important compositions for the organ to appear since the death of J. S. Bach; their publication marked an important step in establishing the German organ style of the future.⁹ The organ works of Brahms, Rheinberger and Reger are built upon the foundation which Mendelssohn laid down through the composition of Op. 37, and which he later brought to a greater degree of refinement in the Six Sonatas, Op. 65.

Prelude and Fugue No. 1

The Prelude and Fugue in C minor appears to be a well-integrated work, despite the fact that the two pieces were composed at different times. The Prelude (4/4, Vivace, forte) is rhythmic and virile, and as Eric Werner has noted, Mendelssohn achieves a sense of breathlessness and urgency in this piece through his use of strettii at short intervals of time.¹⁰ The sole dynamic marking, forte, indicates that the Prelude is to be played on one manual throughout, with no changes of registration. In the Fugue which follows (12/8, Con moto, legato), the frequent use of ties, and Mendelssohn's direction to the performer to play legato, suggest that any interpretation which attempts to evoke the characteristic lightness of a Baroque gigue is inappropriate. Mendelssohn calls for only two levels of dynamics: forte and mezzo-forte. The forte sections correspond to the various entries of the subject (bars 1-23, 29-44, 51-65), while the mezzo-forte markings are reserved for the episodes (bars 24-29, 45-51). This scheme clearly implies the use of terraced dynamics.¹¹

Prelude and Fugue No. 2

A finely conceived balance between Prelude and Fugue is a notable feature of this work. The Prelude in G major (6/8, Andante con moto, mezzo-piano), is a contrapuntal Pastorale, infused with the spirit of Romanticism--pure

Mendelssohn at his most lyrical. The composer has chosen to cast this delicate character piece in ternary form (ABA with Coda). Since mezzo-piano is the only dynamic marking, the Prelude should be played on one manual throughout, with no stop changes. The masterfully crafted Fugue in G major (4/2, mezzo-forte) is built on a chromatic subject of considerable beauty. The sole dynamic marking is mezzo-forte, indicating performance on a single manual with no stop changes.

Prelude and Fugue No. 3

The sectional structure and improvisatory style of the Prelude in D minor (2/2, Allegro, forte), are reminiscent of the Baroque toccata. An interesting feature of this expansive and virtuosic piece is the fact that it already contains its own little fugue (bars 23-60), quite apart from the Fugue which follows. Many organists, because of the sectional structure of this Prelude, choose to perform it on two contrasting registrations; however, if Mendelssohn's "Prefatory Remarks" to the Sonatas are followed, one must conclude that the composer intended it to be played on a single forte registration throughout.

A study of the directions for the performance of trills in contemporary treatises reveals that the trills in this Prelude (bars 59, 99, 133, 152) should be played beginning on the principal note. Johann Nepomuk Hummel,

with whom Mendelssohn studied for a short period, stated in his Anweisung zum Pianoforte Spiel (1828) that although his predecessors advocated the upper-note approach to trills, the main note should receive greater emphasis than the subsidiary note. He further observed that the principal-note approach is more easily accomplished at the keyboard, and therefore, all trills should begin on the main note unless otherwise specified. Hummel also insisted that all trills should be terminated with a turn (whether or not it was indicated), and directed that the turn should be played at exactly the same tempo as the trill.¹² Ludwig Spohr, in his Violinschule (1832), adapted this practice to the violin and stated that Hummel was the first to promote the idea.¹³ Carl Czerny, in his Vollständige theoretische praktische Pianoforte-Schule (1839), also called for the main-note approach to the trill.¹⁴

As is the case with the Prelude, the lengthy and majestic Fugue in D minor (4/4, Full Organ) imparts a feeling of improvisation. It should be played on a single manual, following the directions for an Organo pleno registration as discussed in the previous chapter.

It seems appropriate, before concluding this discussion of the Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, to turn our attention to the various editions of these works. The following critical evaluation of editions of Op. 37 is

confined solely to those which are presently in print and readily available. All editions here discussed have been compared with the original Novello edition of 1837, and an unedited modern reprint of the Breitkopf und Härtel edition of the same year,¹⁵ both of which are identical in all respects. It is not surprising, but nevertheless disheartening, to discover that the majority of the commonly used editions of these works are misleading and woefully inadequate.

Worst, by far, is the 1910 Schirmer edition (Vol. 976), edited and revised by Edwin H. Lemare.¹⁶ It includes instructions for symphonic registrations and calls for many manual changes not found in the original edition. Lemare also adds crescendo and decrescendo marks and indications for staccato articulation in louder passages. Mendelssohn's own legato marking in the C minor Fugue is omitted, and ornamentation has been added to the D minor Prelude.¹⁷ There is no indication, by means of brackets, lighter type, etc., that these are editorial suggestions, rather than the composer's own markings.

An earlier Schirmer edition (Vol. 227), though far from ideal, is preferable.¹⁸ The Canadian organist, Samuel P. Warren edited this "student's edition," which first appeared in 1896. Though Warren suggests registrations which do not coincide with Mendelssohn's "Prefatory Remarks," he attempts to justify them by explaining that

"They are not intended in the slightest degree to forestall the general directions of the composer, but rather to aid the student in more readily carrying them out."¹⁹ This edition also departs occasionally from the original text in matters of phrasing, changes of manual, and marks of articulation. Warren's editorial suggestions, however, usually appear in brackets, making them easily distinguishable from the composer's own indications.

Novello and Co. long ago replaced their original 1837 edition of Op. 37 with a heavily edited version by Ivor Atkins.²⁰ Alterations have been made in the placement of Mendelssohn's slurs, and as is the case with Warren, Atkins suggests manual and stop changes not indicated by the composer. He also adds instructions for the use of the swell pedal, but the editorial markings (with the exception of phrase marks) are set apart from the original text by means of brackets.

In 1948, the Paris music publisher, Bornemann, published Marcel Dupré's performing edition of Op. 37.²¹ The greatest strength of Dupré's editorial work lies in his excellent fingering and pedal indications. Although this is the least offensive of the edited versions, it is not without fault. Some minor changes in Mendelssohn's slurs, and the addition of indications for articulation are the chief problems. The only objectionable aspect of Dupré's unique editorial method lies in the fact that it

is impossible to differentiate his work from that of the composer. The registrational suggestions are always tasteful, and probably represent as close an approximation to Mendelssohn's instructions as can be obtained on the French symphonic organ. Conspicuous oversights are the omission of Mendelssohn's legato marking in the C minor Fugue, and his *ad libitum* instruction for the introductory section of the D minor Prelude.

The only edition of Op. 37 which can be recommended without reservation is published by C. F. Peters (no. 1744), and has also been reproduced by Kalmus (no. 3760).²² Although it has been available for a number of years, it remains an oasis in the driest of musical deserts. Here, at last, is an Urtext edition, derived from the original Breitkopf und Härtel publication of 1837. The sole addition to the original text are the well-conceived fingering and pedal indications--the contributions of an un-named, but thoughtful editor.

NOTES

¹For a detailed structural analysis of Op. 37, see W. G. Hathaway, An Analysis of Mendelssohn's Organ Works: A Study of Their Structural Features (London: Reeves, 1898).

²Cited by Heinrich Eduard Jacob in Felix Mendelssohn and His Times, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 96.

³Cited by Ferdinand Hiller in Mendelssohn: Letters and Recollections, trans. M. E. von Glehn (New York: Vienna House, 1972), p. 81.

⁴Grossman-Vendrey, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Musik der Vergangenheit, p. 182.

⁵The autograph of the original version of this fugue is in the holdings of the Hessischen Landes und Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt.

⁶Vincent Novello later presented the autographs of both forms of this fugue to the British Library. The autographs of all other movements of Op. 37 are housed in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, East Berlin.

⁷Cited by Hensel in The Mendelssohn Family, 2:34.

⁸Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians, ed. Konrad Wolff, trans. Paul Rosenfeld (New York: Pantheon, 1952), pp. 214-15.

⁹Werner, Mendelssohn, pp. 365-66.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹¹See my discussion on registration and dynamics in chapter IV above.

¹²The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1980 ed., s.v. "Ornaments," by Ralph Donnington.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Ferguson, Keyboard Interpretation, p. 123.

¹⁵Mendelssohn, The Complete Organ Works: Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, Six Organ Sonatas, Op. 65 (New York: Lea Pocket Scores, 1954).

¹⁶Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Organ Compositions: Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, Six Sonatas, Op. 65, ed. and revised by Edwin H. Lemare (New York: Schirmer, 1910).

¹⁷See bar five, p. 117.

¹⁸Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Organ Works: Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, Six Sonatas, Op. 65, ed. and fingered by Samuel P. Warren (New York: Schirmer, 1896).

¹⁹See "Note by the Editor," below "Prefatory Remarks by the Composer," n.p.

²⁰F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, ed. Ivor Atkins (Borough Green: Novello, n.d.).

²¹Felix Mendelssohn, Oeuvres complètes pour Orgue: Trois Préludes et Fugues, Six Sonates, revised, fingered and ed. Marcel Dupré (Paris: Bornemann, 1948).

²²Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Kompositionen für die Orgel: Drei Praeludien und Fugen, Sechs Sonaten (New York: Peters, n.d.); Felix Mendelssohn, Organ Works: Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, Six Sonatas, Op. 65 (Melville, N.Y.: Belwin Mills, n.d.).

VI. SIX SONATAS, OP. 65

In his Six Sonatas, Mendelssohn emerged as the first great innovator among organ composers to appear after the death of J. S. Bach. A number of major studies have been published on Opus 65; in most cases, a detailed bar-by-bar analysis has been the end result. Since this aspect of scholarly work on the Six Sonatas has been dealt with exhaustively by others,¹ it need not be duplicated here. Instead, the present study will approach these works from the perspective of performance practice. Contemporary accounts of Mendelssohn's organ playing, the organs on which he is known to have played, and various performance practice procedures relating to his organ works as a whole have been discussed in the preceding chapters. This chapter will, therefore, deal with specific performance problems encountered in the Six Sonatas. It is also germane to our purpose to point out some of the stylistic characteristics and peculiarities of these works, from both the historical and structural points of views.

During Mendelssohn's several concert tours to England, he astonished his audiences with his performances of Bach's "pedal-fugues" and his own organ extemporizations. Many of the leading British organists expressed the hope that he would compose some organ pieces in a similar style to his wonderful extemporizations, and on Mendelssohn's

eighth visit to England in 1844, Mr. Coventry of the music publishing firm Coventry and Hollier relayed this request to him. Accordingly, Coventry commissioned the composer to write three organ voluntaries to be published by Coventry and Hollier.²

After his exhausting two-month stay in England, Mendelssohn joined his wife and family for a vacation at Soden, near Frankfurt-am-Main. From Soden, on July 24, 1844 he wrote:

After my mad, most mad life in England . . . this life at Soden, with its eating and sleeping, without dress-coat, without piano, without visiting-cards, without carriages and horses; but with donkeys, with wild flowers, with music-paper and sketch-book, with Cecile and the children is doubly refreshing.³

It was in this idyllic setting that Mendelssohn began to compose the three voluntaries which Mr. Coventry had requested. This project was completed in Frankfurt the following year, by which time, the composer had produced not three voluntaries, but a set of six sonatas for the organ.

The English voluntary had its genesis in pre-Reformation times as a liturgical, improvised organ piece; throughout its history it had no set formal structure. In the eighteenth century, English church composers began to write down and publish collections of their pieces in this genre, and by the second half of the century, the voluntary assumed a typical, but by no means universal two-movement formal structure. The opening movement was usually

a slow, homophonic piece for the diapasons, while the second movement became a fast piece in fugal texture, or a display piece designed to show off a brilliant solo stop such as the trumpet or cornet. The voluntary was not only played for pre-service and post-service music (the so-called introductory and concluding voluntaries), but it also occupied a prominent position in the liturgy of the Church of England. It was customary for the organist to play an elaborate voluntary (the middle voluntary) either before or after the first lesson at Matins and Evensong. The voluntary served the further liturgical function of bridging the gap between Matins and the celebration of Holy Communion; the latter two services were traditionally held directly following each other, with no intervening break.⁴

The transformation of Mendelssohn's original commission for three voluntaries into six sonatas can be traced through his correspondence with Mr. Coventry.

Frankfurt, August 29, 1844.

I have also been very busy about the organ pieces and they are nearly finished. I should like to call them 'Three Sonatas for the Organ,' instead of Voluntaries. Tell me if you like this title as well, if not, the name of Voluntaries will suit the pieces also, the more so, as I do not know what it means precisely.⁵

Mr. Coventry replied on November 19, 1844: "I like the term Sonata just as well as Voluntary."⁶

On December 17, 1844, Mendelssohn, who had promised to send the sonatas, if possible, by the end of that year, wrote once more to Coventry: "I hope to send you soon the

promised organ-pieces. 9 are ready, but I want to have 12 before I make a parcel of them."⁷

May 1, 1845.

I beg you let me know whether a letter, which I wrote to you some weeks since, has reached you or not. It contained the communication that I had written a kind of Organ-school in Six Sonatas for the instrument, and the question whether you would like to have the whole work or only half of it.⁸

May 26, 1845.

I duly received your favour of the 29th April, and as I have no objection to your dividing my Sonatas into two books, I was very glad to see that they are to appear together at your house. . . . Pray, if you place it into the engraver's hands, let him be most careful in order to get a correct edition. I attach much importance to these Sonatas (if I may say so of any work of mine), and accordingly wish them to be brought out as correctly as possible. Perhaps some of my English friends and brother organ-players would look them over for me, besides the usual corrections of the proofs. Perhaps Mr. Gauntlett would do it?⁹

Opus 65 was published almost simultaneously by Coventry and Hollier in England and Breitkopf und Härtel in Germany. In arranging for the publication of the German edition, the composer wrote Breitkopf und Härtel:

The organ work which I originally mentioned this winter, I have now completed. It has become larger, however, than I had previously imagined. It is namely Six Sonatas in which I tried to write down the manner in which I treat the organ, and how I think for it. Therefore, I would now like them to be published.¹⁰

The pre-publication announcement for the English edition of Op. 65, which appeared in the Musical World of July 24, 1845, refers to the work as Mendelssohn's School of Organ-Playing.¹¹ This title was later withdrawn by the composer, but it suggests (as does his letter of May 1,

1845 to Mr. Coventry) that he approached the composition of these pieces with a didactic intent. It is probable that he was thinking of a school of organ playing, not in the sense of Rinck's Orgelschule (an organ tutor), but rather in similar vein to Bach's Orgelbüchlein.¹² The advertisement also stresses that the Sonatas are representative of Mendelssohn's own peculiar style of performance on the organ.¹³

By the time Mendelssohn set about to compose Op. 65, there were already indications that composers were breaking away from the use of stricter formal structures, choosing in their stead the shorter and freer forms.¹⁴ The individual movements of the Six Sonatas for Organ were first written as separate pieces which Mendelssohn later grouped together as sonatas, but these works share no common link with traditional sonata design. William S. Newman, in his definitive study, The Sonata Since Beethoven, explains:

Mendelssohn's preference for 'sonata' as the title of his organ pieces probably reflects their somewhat greater size, freedom, and exploitation of the organ as compared with the traditional English 'voluntary'. . . . This majestic music must be regarded as peripheral to the mainstream of sonata history, but central to--in fact, a major landmark in--the special and equally venerable branch of the organ sonata. Each 'sonata' is a cycle, to be sure, but the cycles, of from two to four movements nearly always in the same key, are highly irregular and foreign to the mainstream of the sonata. In fact, the separate movements seem originally to have been composed as independent organ 'studies' . . . and only after their completion were they grouped, without any premeditated unity, into cycles. More indicative are the forms of the movements, which scarcely ever approach 'sonata form,' but nearly always are those most encountered in the organist's, especially the church organist's literature. Among the latter are fugues,

chorale fantasias, and variations, and imitative or figured preludes. The polyphonic style and mastery at times take us very close to the music of J. S. Bach that Mendelssohn did so much to promote.¹⁵

Ambiguity toward formal nomenclature was not solely confined to Mendelssohn. Throughout the nineteenth century, the word "sonata" (sounding-piece) was still occasionally used in its original sense, a general term for any instrumental composition.¹⁶ Encyclopedias and dictionaries of music tended toward vagueness when defining the sonata. A case in point was the Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst (1838), edited by Gustav Schilling. In his entry on the sonata, Schilling did not devote a single word to the formal structure; rather, he confined his commentary to the various aspects of scoring and a general condemnation of the extra-musical programme.¹⁷ Among the many treatises which discussed the theoretical aspects of form without reference to actual musical compositions were: J. Georg Albrechtberger's Gründliche Answeisung zur Composition, Anton Reicha's Vollständiges Lehrbuch der musikalischen Composition, and Gottfried Weber's Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonkunst.¹⁸ Writing in 1837, Carl Czerny noted in the preface to his School of Practical Composition, Opus 600 that "in no treatise . . . which has yet appeared, has the manner of constructing a sonata . . . been fundamentally described."¹⁹ It was not until 1845 that sonata-allegro form was defined, explained and codified, with musical examples drawn from the

works of the Classical composers. This pioneering venture was accomplished by A. B. Marx in the third volume of his Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition.²⁰

While theorists were attempting to bring some sense of order to the subject of musical form, composers were consigning the work of these academics to the scrap-heap of historical theory, and fashioning new structures out of the old forms.²¹ The general attitude of many composers was cogently expressed by Robert Schumann. With regard to the naming of his C Major Fantasy, which he had originally called "Grosse Sonata," he wrote: "Thus be it that one writes sonatas or fantasias (what's in a name!), but may he not forget the music while doing it."²²

The German edition of Opus 65 was published in September 1845, with the English edition following it one month later. The latter, selling at one guinea per copy, was issued by subscription to a list of 190 subscribers. The work was dedicated to the Frankfurt lawyer and organist, Dr. Fritz Schlemmer, who later became Mendelssohn's relative by marriage.²³ In a letter dated March 28, 1884, Dr. Schlemmer shared with the Brighton organist, Dr. F. H. Sawyer, some previously unpublished facts concerning the nature of Mendelssohn's Six Organ Sonatas:

The Sonatas originated little by little, and I had no idea that such a long work would appear when he [Mendelssohn] surprised me with a copy of it. He carried them 'in his head' for many years, especially toward the end of the thirties and the beginning of

the forties, and then wrote them down.²⁴ . . . Chorales were introduced because of his love for J. S. Bach's works, especially the chorale preludes, and the treatment of the chorales in the church cantatas. The Sonatas were not extemporizations which were subsequently written down; these are well thought-out works.²⁵

According to Dr. Schlemmer, Mendelssohn intended the works to be more than merely voluntaries or suites, in spite of their departure from "standard sonata form." He observed: "The history of music shows us that the form of sonata or symphony was never a fixed one, but possessed a certain elasticity, within which genius was free to make its flights."²⁶

The Six Sonatas were well received by leading musicians of the time. Opus 65 was given a lengthy and glowing review from the pen of Dr. Gauntlett in the Morning Chronicle of March 12, 1846.²⁷ The eminent German theorist and composer, Moritz Hauptmann (1792-1868), praised the pieces highly for their "artful simplicity," which he said was admired everywhere.²⁸ Robert Schumann, who must have acquired an early copy of the German edition, wrote his appreciation to Mendelssohn on October 22, 1845:

Only the other day we became quite absorbed in your organ sonatas, unfortunately only at the piano, but even without the title page we should have found out they were by you. And yet you are always striving to advance still more, and for this reason you will ever be an example to me. These intensely poetical new ideas--what a perfect picture they form in every sonata! In Bach's music I always imagine him sitting at the organ, but in yours I rather think of St. Cecelia touching the keys. . . . Above all, Nos. 5 and 6 seem to me splendid. It is really a fact, dear

Mendelssohn, no one else writes such fine harmonies; and they keep getting purer and more inspired.²⁹

Despite the enthusiasm of such important musicians as Gauntlett, Hauptmann and Schumann, it was some time before the sonatas became well known in either England or Germany.³⁰ In his review of W. T. Best's performance of Sonata No. 1 on the Willis organ at the Great Exhibition of 1851, Henry Chorley wrote: "This noble organ sonata was new to us."³¹ That Chorley was unacquainted with the work six years after its publication is somewhat surprising, especially since he was not only an intimate friend of the composer, but one of the most ardent admirers of his music.

Two important studies on the Six Sonatas appeared around the beginning of the present century. From them, it would appear that the works began to assume their deserved position of importance in the repertoire shortly after the time Chorley wrote the review cited above. In 1894, F. G. Edwards presented a paper to the Musical Association, in which he referred to the Sonatas as "works which have long been accepted as 'classics' of the organ."³² Writing in 1917 for the Musical Quarterly, the English organist and composer, Orlando Mansfield, observed: "After more than half a century of keen criticism and constant performance the position and popularity of these works is assured."³³

Although forward-looking, Mendelssohn lacked the originality of such composers as Schumann, Chopin and Berlioz,

and his own innovations and idiosyncracies are often masked by his conventional technique. The origins of some of the general characteristics of Mendelssohn's mature compositional style, all of which characteristics can be found in the Six Sonatas, may be attributed to the influences of earlier composers whose work was much admired by Mendelssohn. Ease and logic of construction, together with transparent pseudo-polyphonic texture may be traced to Mozart; from Weber, Mendelssohn assimilated into his own style the elfin-like staccato effects which were so much a part of Weber's scherzo writing; his great love of the music of Bach is reflected in Mendelssohn's fugal writing and his use of chorales. An important aspect of the Mendelssohn style, the superimposition of new melodies over passages developed from the main thematic material, cannot be traced to any external influences, and probably springs from his own particular genius for form.³⁴

The individual movements of Op. 65 may be conveniently divided into three distinct stylistic categories: polyphonic or fugal movements, song-like religious Adagios and concert pieces in toccata style. Each of these shares stylistic elements with other works of Mendelssohn. Corresponding to the religious Adagios, one could mention the arias and duets from the oratorios, while the strictly polyphonic movements are analagous to the oratorio choruses. The toccata style does not appear in any of the choral works,

but a counterpart can certainly be found in the brilliant concert pieces for piano.³⁵ Toccatas requiring a pianistic performing technique were an important innovation which Mendelssohn introduced into the organ literature.

Some of the many interesting features of the Six Sonatas include: close imitation between parts; the frequent use of pedal points and sequences; the combining of themes; loosely constructed fugues;³⁶ crossing of parts; the filling out of harmonies with added voices; unresolved discords at ends of phrases; melodies built upon scale and arpeggio figures; the employment of staccato articulation for a complete section of a piece; responsive phrases assigned to different manuals, thus producing terraced dynamics; the frequent use of chromatic harmony at the approach to cadences; and pedal passages built upon ascending and descending scale patterns.³⁷ The Organ Sonatas were the first compositions for the instrument to be published with a fully phrased pedal part,³⁸ and among the earliest organ works to be published with metronome marks. These latter Mendelssohn pencilled into the proofs at the request of Dr. Edward J. Hopkins, then organist of London's Temple Church.³⁹

The complex subject of interpreting Mendelssohn's slurs or phrase marks has been left to this point, since it is in Op. 65 that the greatest difficulties arise. In order to begin to unravel some of the mysteries involved, one must

first set the problem in its historical context.

The piano emerged as the popular instrument for amateur music-making in the early years of the nineteenth century, and with this development, a ready market was created for instructional editions of keyboard music. Carl Czerny, in 1837, began to bring out an edition of the Bach *clavier* works which contained fingerings, tempo, dynamic and articulation marks, together with other indications intended to aid the amateur performer. Quickly, others followed suit, none of whom attempted to distinguish between the composer's markings and those which were strictly editorial.⁴⁰ Coupled with this was the tendency of engravers, for the sake of convenience, to end a slur at the bar line, rather than carrying it to the end of the phrase. The resulting confusion caused by these two factors, led to a general regression in the notation of phrasing.⁴¹ It is obvious that the first step for the performer is to procure a copy of the composer's score which is free from editorial intrusions. Regrettably, in the case of Mendelssohn's *Opus 65*, this will not bring about a complete solution to the problem.

In one of his unpublished letters, Mendelssohn alluded to his habit of making constant changes in his compositions as "a disease" from which he chronically suffered.⁴² In *Op. 65*, the composer continued to make improvements while the sonatas were still in press.⁴³ For this reason, both the English and German first editions are

of primary importance as sources against which all other editions must be compared. Hubert Meister, in the preface to his 1976 edition of Op. 65, states that in matters of phrasing and articulation, especially in the Fifth Sonata, "the two first editions are at extreme variance with each other. Gross inconsistency in fact appears to be a feature of the autograph as well."⁴⁴

Originally, there were two autographs of Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas. One of these, which the composer presented to Annette Preusser, is now housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. This score, which is written primarily on two staves (the pedal part is indicated by the word "Ped." below the bottom staff), contains five of the Sonatas in Mendelssohn's hand, while the A major Sonata is the work of a copyist. The other autograph, Mendelssohn's own personal manuscript, was probably the more important of the two; it was carefully preserved in the Regis Bibliothek, presently known as the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, East Berlin. Unfortunately, it was among several other Mendelssohn autographs to be lost toward the end of World War II. In addition to the two autographs of the Sonatas, the Mendelssohn family possessed a manuscript of the works, partially the work of a copyist, but much of it is in the composer's own hand. This manuscript is also housed in the Bodleian Library.⁴⁵ Each of these three sources contains various alterations which Mendelssohn made as the works evolved into

their final shape.⁴⁶

There appears to be no consensus of opinion on the part of scholars regarding the interpretation of Mendelssohn's slurs. Orlando Mansfield states that despite some "curious slips," the composer adhered to the Classical system of phrasing, in which a slur over three or more short notes, or two longer notes indicates that they are to be played legato. The final note under the slur is never shortened unless it is accented or immediately follows an accented note.⁴⁷ This appears to be a simple enough solution, but it makes no allowances for the many ambiguities in the score.

Douglas M. Moorehead presents a different point of view. While drawing attention to several inconsistencies in the notation of slurs in the Breitkopf und Härtel Urtext edition of Op. 65, he suggests a method of dealing with the problem. Moorehead's solution is not only workable, but probably offers the only means of compensating for the various factors which have contributed to the general confusion in this matter. He writes:

Mendelssohn certainly does not use any special signs to indicate articulation. He probably treats his long slur markings as phrasings, frequently leaving the performer to decide upon the exact articulation within the phrase. However, many of the shorter slurs . . . are inconsistent, leaving the performer with no choice but to fit the particular motive under the slur in question into the analysis and to articulate it in a similar way each time it returns. . . . The performer must realize that the engravers did not always distinguish between phrase markings and slurs; and even when many slurs were faithfully noted, other considerations would often come into play, such as the visual appeal to the amateur student.⁴⁸

Other aspects of performance practice in Mendelssohn's organ works have already been discussed at length: chapter four dealt with registration (dynamics) and rubato. It is left with the reader to apply this information to individual works. The fact that Mendelssohn provided metronome marks for the sonatas does away with the need for further discussion on the subject of tempo. One might only add that as is always the case with the organ, the acoustical environment in which the instrument is housed sometimes necessitates a slightly slower performance than indicated by the composer for some of the faster movements. The following commentary on each of the sonatas will be devoted to those performance problems which are unique to individual works, along with pertinent analytical and historical information.

Sonata No. 1 in F minor

Sonata No. 1, the most extended and varied of the six, was originally intended to be No. 3; for unknown reasons, Mendelssohn reversed the order when he corrected the proof copy.⁴⁹ The four movements of this work are dated as follows: Allegro moderato e serio - December 28, 1844; Adagio - December 19, 1844; Andante. Recit. - undated; and Allegro assai vivace - August 18, 1844.

The opening movement (Allegro moderato e serio) is in binary form. Section A, consisting of m. 1-40, may be sub-divided into two parts: a chordal introduction (m. 1-11), followed by a fugato which begins on the second beat of

m. 11. Mendelssohn specifies that the A section is to be played Full Organ on manual I. Section B begins at m. 40 with a statement of the opening phrase of the chorale, "Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh' allzeit," on manual II at a mezzo-forte dynamic level. The phrases of the chorale melody are elaborated by and alternated with figured passages based upon the thematic material of the fugato from section A. For the latter, Mendelssohn specifies a return to the Full Organ registration with which the movement began. The resulting terraced dynamics are an important feature of this and many other movements of Op. 65. Since Mendelssohn's indications for changes of dynamics evolve directly out of the formal structure of the music, a strict adherence to his directions for manual changes is crucial to a successful performance of this movement--and indeed, all of his organ works.

The song-like second movement in A flat major (Adagio) is an example of the religious Adagio type. The melodic contours of the opening phrases bear a striking resemblance to the soprano aria, "Caro Cibus Sanguis Potus," from the cantata, Lauda Sion (1846). Mendelssohn has chosen to cast this movement in binary form. Section A consists of m. 1-16, while the modulatory and recapitulatory section B begins on beat three of m. 16 and ends at m. 64. The movement is brought to a close with a Coda built upon the tonic pedal, commencing on the third beat of m. 64. The composer's

directions for manual changes create the effect of a dialogue between the softest 8' stops of manual I and manual II.

Movement three in F minor (Andante. Recit.) follows no definite formal design. Here, Mendelssohn juxtaposes imitative passages, played on a soft 8' registration on manual II, with massive fortissimo chords on manual I. The movement ends on an unresolved dominant seventh chord which leads directly into the conclusion of the sonata, suggesting that the composer may have envisioned movements three and four as a single unit.

The final movement (Allegro assai vivace) in F major is a brilliant toccata in binary form (section A - m. 1-55, section B - m. 55-122, Coda beginning at m. 122). The fortissimo dynamic marking indicates that the movement is to be played Full Organ throughout. The arpeggiated tonic chord in the right hand of m. 55 should begin on the beat.⁵⁰ Mendelssohn's pianistic use of arpeggios was previously unseen in compositions for the organ. It may have been, in part, this aspect of the piece which led the English organ virtuoso, Dr. A. L. Peace (1844-1912) to remark: " . . . the last movement in Mendelssohn's First Organ Sonata is one of the finest organ pieces ever written, but it is absolutely sui generis--the only thing of its kind."⁵¹

Sonata No. 2 in C minor

The four pieces which make up this work are dated as follows: Grave - undated; Adagio - December 21, 1844;

Allegro maestoso e vivace - undated; Fuga - December 19, 1844.

The sonata opens with a short, imitative Grave in C minor which is twenty-three bars in length. Ending as it does on the dominant, it is probably wise to regard it as an introduction to the adjoining Adagio. The entire Grave is to be played forte on a single manual.

The Adagio, again in C minor, is in binary form: section A - m. 1-15; section B - m. 15-37; Coda beginning on the second eighth note of m. 37. The plaintive right hand melody suggests a registration on an 8' solo stop of distinctive character, accompanied by a soft 8' flute.

The Allegro maestoso e vivace in C major concludes with the instruction, "attacca la Fuga," probably indicating that Mendelssohn envisioned it as a prelude to the Fugue which follows. This movement closely resembles a rondo in formal design. Broken down into its component parts, it is constructed as follows: A - m. 1-16; B - m. 16-25; A (shortened) - m. 25-33; B - m. 33-43; A (shortened) - m. 43-51; Coda commencing at m. 51. The fortissimo dynamic marking indicates a Full Organ registration throughout. The trill at m. 60 should begin on the principal note.⁵² This piece is actually a revision of the opening section of Mendelssohn's "Nachspiel" in D, composed at Rome in 1834.⁵³

The Fugue in C major is based on an earlier fugue in the same key, dated at Frankfurt on July 14, 1839. Although

Mendelssohn uses the same subject, the exposition and subsequent treatment of the fugue show substantial differences from the earlier version.⁵⁴ A single forte registration must be maintained over the course of this movement; many performers, acting contrary to Mendelssohn's directions, add reeds for the final thirteen bars. Although the temptation may be strong, it is well to remember that the concept of a tonal build-up toward the conclusion of a work belongs to the latter part of the nineteenth century, and not to this earlier period in which Mendelssohn composed and performed.

Sonata No. 3 in A major

While visiting England for the first time in 1829, Mendelssohn received a request from his sister, Fanny, to compose a Chorale and Prelude for her forthcoming wedding to Wilhelm Hensel. In a letter to Fanny on August 11, the composer expressed his annoyance that he had not been told the date of the wedding, and therefore had no idea how much time he would have to complete the task. Fanny's diary records the fact that the decision to hold the wedding on October 3 was not made until after September 2. Felix toured Scotland and Wales in July and August, and upon returning to England he injured his knee in a carriage accident. A period of enforced convalescence kept him in England until the end of November, making it impossible for him to attend the wedding. The organ piece which Felix had

completed did not reach Fanny in time for the ceremony, but undaunted by this turn of events, she composed her own music for the occasion--a Prelude in F major, dated September 28, 1829.⁵⁵

Sonata No. 3 was the first of the Six Organ Sonatas to be completed, and was originally intended to be published as No. 1. While preparing to compose this sonata, Mendelssohn remembered the piece he had written for Fanny's wedding and decided to incorporate part of it into his new work. From Soden, on July 25, 1844, he wrote Fanny the following letter:

Look for the organ piece in A major that I composed for your wedding, and wrote out in Wales, and send it to me immediately; you shall positively have it back, but I require it. I have promised an English publisher to furnish him with a whole book of organ pieces; and as I was writing out one after another, the former one recurred to me. I like the beginning, but detest the middle, and am re-writing it with another choral fugue, but should like to compare it with the original, so pray send it here. . . . Do not forget the organ piece, and still less its author.⁵⁶

Fanny was apparently unable to locate the music, for Mendelssohn wrote a second letter to his sister on August 15, 1844, asking her to make a further search for the piece.⁵⁷ The two movements of the sonata are dated respectively August 9 and August 17, 1844. The interval between Mendelssohn's second letter and the completion of the sonata would have been too short for Fanny to have replied; therefore, one must conclude that the composer finished the sonata without reference to the score of his earlier piece.

Concerning the formal design of the first movement

of Sonata No. 3 (Con moto maestoso), Sir C. Hubert H. Parry observed:

The form in its broadest significance amounts to a correspondence of well-defined sections at the beginning and end with a long passage of 'free fantasia,' fugally developed in the middle. . . . The corresponding divisions at either end are long, and strongly contrasted in the modern quality and more simultaneous motion of the parts, with the elaborate fugal structure of the middle division.⁵⁸

As Parry's description implies, the movement is in ternary (ABA) form:

A - The principal theme (m. 1-24) is binary in structure: a (m. 1-8), b (m. 8-24).

B - A double fugue (m. 24-112) to be played on manual I is combined with a cantus firmus treatment of the chorale "Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu Dir," in the pedals.

A - A free recapitulation of the principal theme (m. 113-126).

Coda (m. 127-134) containing two references to the fugal subject from section B.

The opening movement of this sonata presents some performance problems which are not encountered in either Op. 37 or any of the other sonatas which together make up Op. 65. The general scheme of registration in this movement is not especially unusual--a fortissimo dialogue between manual I and manual II. However, at m. 24 Mendelssohn has written, "Un poco meno forte," indicating a slight reduction in volume. It seems unlikely that a change of manuals is implied here, since all other manual changes are carefully

marked in the score. Presumably, this effect is to be accomplished by retiring some of the loudest stops on manual I, and later re-introducing them for the final fortissimo section at m. 113. This latter could be easily managed without assistance during the pedal solo which begins at m. 109.

A much larger puzzle is introduced at m. 58, at which point the composer has written, "da questa parte fino al Maggiore poco a poco più animato e più forte." Whether or not Mendelssohn intended this request for a gradual build-up in both tempo and volume to be followed literally, remains an unsolved mystery. The implied *accelerando* is easily accomplished, but the awkward mechanism which controlled the swell box in Mendelssohn's time would not have been capable of producing the desired crescendo with any degree of success.⁵⁹ One possibility is that the composer intended the stops which had been previously retired to be successively re-introduced, although none of the accounts of his own performances of the sonatas mentions his use of a registrant assistant. The most plausible explanation may exist in the writing itself. During this section of the piece, Mendelssohn makes use of two compositional devices which help to create a feeling of excitement and intensity: the sudden shift from movement in eighth notes to movement predominantly in sixteenths, and a thickening of texture in the part-writing. When these devices are coupled with a

gradually increasing tempo, the illusion of a prolonged crescendo is automatically produced. Mendelssohn definitely knew the limitations of the instrument, and although the evidence is by no means conclusive, it is conceivable that he may have consciously employed these various means in order to build the desired interpretive effect into the music.

This movement contains two ornaments: the trill and the upper mordent. The trill in measures 3 and 115 should begin on the principal note.⁶⁰ Written-out upper mordents are found in measures 10, 12, 14, 118 and 120. These should be played as quickly as possible and on the beat. Contemporary authorities who advocated this interpretation included Spohr, Hiller, Knecht and Pleyel.⁶¹

Later in the 19th century passages occur in which an upper mordent is written out in small notes before a main note bearing a sign of accentuation. In the more recent of such examples it appears that this notation is meant literally, and that the mordent is to precede the beat. But in the Romantics this method of execution can only be regarded as exceptional, and it has no place in the Classics, being alien to the natural character of the ornament.⁶²

Mendelssohn has chosen the key of A major for both movements of this work. The second movement (Andante tranquillo) is in binary form: section A - m. 1-8; section B - m. 8-26; and a Coda beginning at m. 26. Although the tempo marking is not Adagio, the movement possesses all the general characteristics of the religious Adagio type. The dynamic marking indicates that the piece should be performed on a single manual throughout, with a registration chosen

from among the softer stops.

Sonata No. 4 in B flat major

Shortly after their publication, Dr. Henry Gauntlett, one of the most important English organists of the day, reviewed the Six Organ Sonatas for the Morning Chronicle.

He was especially taken with Sonata No. 4:

The fourth sonata will be the favourite in England, and if not the most sublime or the most passionate, is yet the most beautiful of all the six. The first movement is a hymn of praise. It is a Bach prelude, and yet not Bach. . . . The epoch for expansion and extended analysis has passed away; the novelties of knotty points and subtle analogies are undesired; we want strong emotion, but it must be concentrated--it must strike sudden as the electric fluid--it must draw blood. And this is Mendelssohn, and this is the fourth sonata. Turn to the last page. Look at the second bar with its seventh on the F pedal; dwell on the last heart-quivering march up the pedal from the lower E flat to the F on the second and third staves, and then 'give thanks,' and those 'for ever!'⁶³

The four movements of this sonata are dated as follows: Allegro con brio, January 2, 1845; Andante religioso, January 2, 1845; Allegretto, undated; Allegro maestoso e vivace, undated.

The form of the opening movement is ternary:

A - m. 1-22

B - m. 22-48

A - m. 48-84; here, Mendelssohn has ingeniously combined the thematic material of sections A and B, ending with a near-verbatim recapitulation of the final six measures of the first section. The dynamic marking indicates that the entire movement is to be played forte on manual I.

The second movement, *Andante religioso* in B flat major, was originally marked "*Andante alla marcia*," and was written in note values of twice the duration of those in the final version.⁶⁴ Despite the composer's subsequent modifications, the martial quality of the original is to some degree retained in this religious *Adagio*, leading many organists to play the movement too quickly. This error could easily be avoided, if performers would take the trouble to consult the metronome marking which Mendelssohn has provided in the score. The movement unfolds in ternary form: A - m. 1-10; B - m. 10-24; A - m. 24-36. As in the *Adagio* of Sonata No. 1, this piece is constructed along the lines of a dialogue between manual I and manual II. The mezzo-forte registration on each manual must be carefully chosen to ensure an appropriate contrast of timbres.

The graceful third movement in F major (*Allegretto*) is cast in binary form: A - m. 1-23; B - m. 23-62; Coda beginning at m. 62. The A section should be played on manual I with a soft 8' registration, the left hand melody of the B section moving to a soft 8' stop of solo character on manual II. It has long been a tradition among performers to treat this entire movement as a trio, but the composer has clearly indicated that the A section is to be played with both hands on the same manual.

The sonata concludes with a vigorous and joyful movement in B flat major (*Allegro maestoso e vivace*). The

general plan of this movement is similar to the opening movement of the Third Sonata--a ternary design, in which the central section is a fugato, framed on either side by a subject of preludial character:⁶⁵

A - m. 1-22

B - m. 22-83

A - m. 83-91.

The composer calls for a Full Organ registration, with no manual changes throughout the course of the movement.

Sonata No. 5 in D major

The Fifth Sonata is made up of three movements, to be played continuously: a Chorale, thought to be of Mendelssohn's own invention (undated); Andante con moto (dated September 9, 1844); Allegro maestoso (dated September 9, 1844). The composer specifies that the short introductory chorale in D major is to be registered mezzo-forte (8' and 4'), with the addition of 16' manual tone--the only instance of its use in any of the sonatas.

The Andante con moto in B minor is in binary form: A - m. 1-16; B - m. 16-40; Coda beginning at m. 40. The manual parts are alternated between manuals I and II on contrasting soft registrations. An unusual and effective feature of this movement is the staccato pedal part, a device which Mendelssohn also uses in the second variation of the opening movement of the Sixth Sonata. Despite the

composer's instructions in his "Prefatory Remarks" concerning the use of 16' and 8' pedal registers unless otherwise indicated, there is documented evidence that Mendelssohn (on at least one occasion) played this movement with only an 8' stop in the pedals. W. S. Rockstro recorded: "We remember the wonderfully delicate staccato of the pedal quavers . . . , which he played on a single 8-ft. stop, with all the crispness of Dragonetti's most highly-finished pizzicato."⁶⁶

The Allegro maestoso in D major begins attacca. This movement is constructed in the form of a rondo: A - m. 1-30; B - m. 31-63; A - m. 63-79; B - m. 80-111; A (shortened) - m. 112-132; Coda beginning at m. 133. The arpeggiated chord in the right hand of m. 104 should be played on the beat.⁶⁷ The entire movement is to be performed on manual I with a forte registration.

Sonata No. 6 in D minor

The three movements of this sonata are respectively a chorale-partita on "Vater unser im Himmelreich," a fugue, and a religious Adagio. The two outer movements are undated, but the autograph of the second movement is dated January 27, 1845.

The harmonized chorale of the opening movement is followed by four variations. Great care must be taken to observe the metronome marks attached to the various sections

of this movement. The registrational scheme and disposition of manuals are clearly indicated in the score. Performers should note especially the omission of 16' tone in the pedal part of the first variation.

The Fugue in D minor (Sostenuto e legato) begins attacca, and is based on a subject derived from the opening phrase of the chorale. This movement should be performed forte on manual I.

The Finale in D major (Andante) is in binary form: A - m. 1-16; B - m. 16-30; Coda beginning on the final eighth note of m. 30. The "piano e dolce" marking indicates that the entire movement is to be performed on a single manual, the registration being chosen from a combination of the softer 8' stops. The similarity of the opening phrases of this religious Adagio to the contralto aria, "O Rest in the Lord," from Elijah, has been noted by many writers over the years.

When F. G. Edwards presented his oft-quoted paper, "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," at a meeting of the Musical Association in 1894, Sir John Stainer acted as chairperson. At the conclusion of Edwards' address, Stainer added the following timeless comments concerning editions of Opus 65 which were then available:

In reference to the editing of these sonatas, may I enter a protest against the manner in which some editors turn and twist the author's method of writing his works. Many editors have totally disregarded Mendelssohn's plan of writing. . . . Some editors attempt to excuse

themselves by saying that they try to make the music easier and more plain for young people. I only hope that these young people will soon get older.⁶⁸

Stainer could have easily been speaking today; most editions of Opus 65 which are now commonly used, have suffered a similar fate at the hands of editors. For purposes of critical evaluation, each edition of the Six Organ Sonatas presently available has been compared with a reprint of the original Breitkopf und Härtel edition⁶⁹ and a photocopy of the Coventry and Hollier edition. Several editions of Op. 65 are published along with Op. 37. Therefore, in order to avoid duplication of information, the reader is directed to the previous chapter for critical comments on the work of the following editors: Lemare, Warren and Dupré. Although Novello has published, under separate cover, an edition of Op. 65 by Ivor Atkins,⁷⁰ the editorial faults are identical to those in his edition of Op. 37. Relevant information on this matter may also be found in the preceding chapter.

Some of Mendelssohn's letters to Breitkopf and Härtel suggest a trace of annoyance with their edition of Op. 65; the proofs had evidently not been prepared and checked as carefully as he would have liked.⁷¹ This edition has long been considered the authentic Urtext, and has been faithfully reproduced by Peters (no. 1744), and Kalmus (no. 3670). In light of this information, these latter two editions should perhaps be approached with a degree of caution.

The most scholarly edition presently available is the Henle Urtext, edited in 1976 by Hubert Meister. In preparing this important publication, Meister consulted surviving manuscript sources, the English and German first editions, as well as the proofs of the English edition, corrected in Mendelssohn's own hand.⁷² In his prefatory remarks, Meister explains his editorial method:

Signs contained in the German first edition presumably omitted inadvertently in the English edition are given in parentheses. Otherwise, the text is free of all supplementary matter, editorial additions having been confined solely to fingering and pedalling.⁷³

Meister has made a significant contribution to Mendelssohn scholarship through the publication of his edition of the sonatas. The research continues; organists and musicologists may now look forward to the impending publication of the complete organ works of Mendelssohn. Dr. William A. Little, University of Virginia, has undertaken the enormous task of editing this work, which will include the Six Sonatas, Op. 65, Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, together with miscellaneous lesser known and unpublished works. This will be published as part of the Leipziger Ausgabe Werke Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. The editor promises that the work will include fragments, variants and other previously unpublished material.⁷⁴

It should never be forgotten that Mendelssohn was the father of modern organ composition; he singlehandedly averted the history of organ literature from a course of

utter decadence. After the works of J. S. Bach, the Mendelssohn organ works belong in the repertoire of every serious organist. Those of us who perform this remarkable music must do so with a sense of responsibility for the composer's intentions; great art has never existed solely to serve the performer's ego.

An historically accurate interpretation for Mendelssohn's organ works cannot be found without considerable effort. It does not come from musical insight alone; it is this very philosophy which has led us far away from the goal. The systematic study of the Six Sonatas from a reliable text is a good starting point. Research into contemporary sources relating to performance practice and organ building will also yield rich rewards. Modern musical scholarship presents us with an enormous challenge, and the opportunity to set right some of the wrongs of history. We cannot afford to ignore it.

NOTES

¹See Charles W. Pearce, Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, Technically and Critically Discussed (London: Vincent Music Co., [190?]); Butler, "The Organ Works of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy;" James W. G. Hathaway, An Analysis of Mendelssohn's Organ Works. For a fascinating study of unity in Op. 65, see Susanna Grossman-Vendrey, "Stilprobleme in Mendelssohns Orgelsonaten op. 65," in Carl Dahlhaus, Das Problem Mendelssohn (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1974).

²Edwards, "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," p. 2.

³Cited by Edwards, p. 1.

⁴Nicholas Temperley, The Music of the English Parish Church, 2 vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1:135-36; Pearce, p. 44.

⁵Edwards, p. 2.

⁶Pearce, p. 2.

⁷Edwards, p. 2.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰Cited by Grossman-Vendrey, p. 186.

¹¹Edwards, p. 3.

¹²The title page of the Orgelbüchlein explains Bach's purpose:

"Little Organ Book in which the Beginner at the Organ is given Instruction in developing a Chorale in many diverse ways, and at the same time in Acquiring Facility in the Study of the Pedal since in the Chorales contained therein the Pedal is treated as wholly Obbligato."

Cited in English translation by David and Mendel in The Bach Reader, rev. ed., p. 75.

¹³Edwards, p. 3.

¹⁴Charles F. Waters, The Growth of Organ Music: An Historical Survey (London: Musical Opinion, 1931), p. 21.

¹⁵William S. Newman, The Sonata Since Beethoven, 3d ed. (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 306.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 6; Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2d ed., s.v. "Sonata," by Willi Apel.

¹⁷Encyclopadie der gessamten musikalischen Wissen-
schatten, oder, Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst, s.v.
"Sonate," by Gustav Schilling. Reprint edition (Hildesheim:
Georg Olms Verlag, 1974).

¹⁸Chorzempa, "Julius Reubke: Life and Works," p. 173.

¹⁹Carl Czerny, School of Practical Composition, 3
vols. (London: Robert Cocks, 1848), 1:iii. Cited by Newman,
pp. 29-30.

²⁰Chorzempa, p. 173.

²¹Ibid., p. 174.

²²Robert Schumann, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Martin
Kreisig (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1914), 1:151. Cited
in English translation by Chorzempa, p. 174.

²³Edwards, p. 4.

²⁴This was not an uncommon practice for Mendelssohn.
Compare Dr. Schlemmer's account with the following excerpt
from an article which originally appeared in the London
music journal, Musical World:

"I went one morning into his [Mendelssohn's] room, where
I found him writing music. . . . I remained . . . and
we talked of all kinds of subjects, he continued to
write the whole time. . . . During all this, there was
no looking forwards or backwards, no comparing, no
humming over, or anything of the sort. . . . The whole
composition, to the last note, had been so thought over
and worked out in his mind, that he beheld it there as
though it had been actually lying before him."

J. Schubring, "Mendelssohn," reprinted in Dwight's Journal
of Music 27 (23 June 1866):260.

²⁵Cited by Butler, p. 122.

²⁶Ibid., p. 123.

²⁷Edwards, p. 4.

²⁸Cited by Werner in Mendelssohn, p. 426.

²⁹Cited by Edwards, p. 4.

³⁰Grossman-Vendrey, p. 185; Edwards, p. 5.

³¹Edwards, p. 5.

³²Ibid., p. 1.

³³Orlando A. Mansfield, "Some Characteristics and Peculiarities of Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," Musical Quarterly 3 (July 1917):575.

³⁴Louise H. Tischler and Hans Tischler, "Mendelssohn's Style: The Songs without Words," Music Review 8 (November 1947):271-72.

³⁵Werner, p. 426.

³⁶Concerning Mendelssohn's fugal method, the English theorist, Ebenezer Prout, remarked:

"Mendelssohn was in many respect so consummate a master of composition, that it is surprising to find the part-writing in his instrumental fugues very loose--we were almost going to say slipshod. Some of the fugues in the organ sonatas and in the pianoforte works defy all attempts to put them into score; the parts cross in the most perplexing way, or appear and disappear suddenly in the middle of a phrase."

Ebenezer Prout, Fugal Analysis (London: Novello, 1892), p. 77.

³⁷Mansfield, pp. 566-75.

³⁸Ibid., p. 574.

³⁹Edwards, p. 4.

⁴⁰Hermann Keller, Phrasing and Articulation: A Contribution to the Rhetoric of Music, trans. Leigh Gerdine (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 103-108.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 58.

⁴²Cited by Edwards, p. 7.

⁴³Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Orgelsonaten, Op. 65, ed. Hubert Meister (München: G. Henle Verlag, 1976). See Meister's "Preface," n.p. (hereafter cited as Meister).

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Private communication from Dr. William A. Little: letter to the present writer, 25 March 1985.

⁴⁶Edwards, p. 6.; Pearce, "Preface," n.p.

⁴⁷Mansfield, p. 574.

⁴⁸Moorehead, p. 31.

⁴⁹Edwards, p. 7. I possess a facsimile of the uncorrected proof copy of the Coventry and Hollier edition, and was therefore able to verify this. Dr. Wyatt Insko, a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, obtained a photo-copy from the New York Public Library for his own research, and graciously had it recopied for me.

⁵⁰Ferguson, Keyboard Interpretation, p. 126.

⁵¹Cited by Pearce, p. 18.

⁵²See my discussion on trills (in connection with Prelude and Fugue No. 3) in chapter V above.

⁵³Edwards, p. 14. For details concerning this work see appendix A.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁵Sirota, "The Life and Works of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel," pp. 47-48. The autograph of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's Prelude for Organ in F major is housed in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶Cited by Edwards, p. 10.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Cited by Pearce, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁹See my discussion on the use of the swell pedal in chapter IV above.

⁶⁰See my discussion on trills (in connection with Prelude and Fugue No. 3) in chapter V above.

⁶¹Moorehead, p. 32.

⁶²The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1980 ed., s.v. "Ornaments," by Ralph Donnington.

⁶³Cited by Werner, pp. 425-26.

⁶⁴Edwards, p. 10.

⁶⁵Pearce, p. 40.

⁶⁶Rockstro, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, p. 100.

⁶⁷Ferguson, p. 126.

⁶⁸Edwards, p. 16.

⁶⁹Lea Pocket Score (LPS-no. 48).

⁷⁰Mendelssohn, Six Sonatas for Organ, Op. 65, ed. Ivor Atkins (Borough Green: Novello, 1934).

⁷¹Little, letter of 25 March 1985. The letters to which he refers are "nos. 160, 167-69 et passim," published in Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Briefe an deutsche Verlanger, ed. R. Elvers (Berlin: 1968).

⁷²Meister, n.p.

⁷³Douglas L. Butler, "Mendelssohn Update: A Nachspiel and a Review," Diapason, February 1980, p. 11. Dr. William A. Little provides more recent information concerning the publication of this edition:

"The Leipzig edition of the organ works has been in the works for a long time now, and it should have appeared ages ago. Unfortunately, the publisher ran into a number of snags, but they have just written me that they will be sending me the proofs sometime this fall." Private communication from Dr. William A. Little: letter to the present writer, 6 October 1984.

APPENDIX A

THE MISCELLANEOUS ORGAN COMPOSITIONS

Although this thesis has been devoted to performance practice procedures in the Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37 and the Six Sonatas, Op. 65, Mendelssohn composed a number of other organ pieces between 1820 and 1844. In order to present a complete picture of his contribution to the organ repertoire, it is necessary to discuss briefly these compositions.

None of the miscellaneous organ works appeared in print during Mendelssohn's lifetime, but a few of these compositions were published in England toward the end of the nineteenth century. Recently, a renewal of interest in Mendelssohn's music, on the part of musicologists, has led to the rediscovery and subsequent publication of more of these pieces. It is promised that the forthcoming Leipziger Ausgabe Werke Felix Mendelssohn, Series IV will contain the complete works for organ which are presently available to scholars.

A foretaste of what may be expected is the Vorabdruck to the Leipzig edition, published in 1977.¹ Prepared under the editorship of Dr. William A. Little, organist, musicologist and professor of German, University of Virginia, this volume is devoted to the completed organ

works of Mendelssohn from the period 1820-1834. Dr. Little is also the editor of the impending Leipzig edition; in order that confusion may be avoided when discussing these two related publications, the 1977 volume will be referred to as the Vorabdruck throughout the remainder of this chapter.

The autographs of most of the miscellaneous organ compositions were housed in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, East Berlin, where they were preserved in a series of volumes bound in green leather. There, they remained intact and unharmed until World War II, at which time some were lost during the chaotic final months of the hostilities.² Presently, the Berlin collection consists of works composed between 1820 and 1839, the majority of these autographs dating from the 1820s. Beginning with the earliest of these pieces, the miscellaneous organ compositions will be discussed in chronological order.

Mendelssohn began to study composition with Zelter at the age of eight. In 1820, after three years of Zelter's tuition, the youthful composer began to produce one composition after another at an amazing rate. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen, Mendelssohn composed numerous works in a wide variety of styles: among them were operettas, two operas, songs, fugues, a piano concerto, two violin concerti and the Piano Quartet in C minor, published as Opus 1.³ Since not all of these early

compositions are dated, the exact number of organ pieces composed in 1820 cannot be given with certainty. Manuscript and stylistic indications would suggest that there are six:⁴

- 1 Prelude in D minor, dated November 28, 1820
- 2 Prelude in D minor (incomplete) [1820?]
- 3 Minuetto in G major [1820?]
- 4 Allegro in E major (incomplete) [1820?]
- 5 Fugue in D minor, dated December 3, 1820
- 6 Fugue in G minor, dated December, 1820.

Another Fugue in D minor, similar in style to the two Fugues composed in 1820, is dated January 6, 1821.

The Prelude in D minor (November 28, 1820)⁵ is a pleasant and simple little piece in ternary form. It is chiefly of interest because it is Mendelssohn's first known attempt at writing for the organ; however, when viewed as the work of an eleven-year-old, it is a remarkable achievement.

The diminutive Minuetto in G major is somewhat reminiscent of Haydn's pieces for musical clock. Although catalogued by the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek as an organ composition, many scholars remain unconvinced that it was intended as such. Dr. Little explains:

After lengthy deliberations and consultations with other scholars, I recommended that the work be rejected as having been written for the organ. Consequently, it will not be included among Mendelssohn's organ works in the Leipzig edition. It is obviously a rather inept piece of juvenilia, but much less obvious is the instrument on which the composer intended it to be

performed, if, indeed, he intended it to be performed at all.⁶

In light of the foregoing, it is not surprising that this composition is also omitted from the Vorabdruck.

The three Fugues, dating from 1820 and 1821, show clearly the influence of J. S. Bach. These student-like pieces were composed during Mendelssohn's period of organ study with A. W. Bach. Written in three voices on separate staves, they could be regarded as organ trios. While they are catalogued among the organ works, Mendelssohn scholars hold disparate views on the matter. Little accepts them as organ compositions, while the French organist and musicologist, Jean Bonfils, has expressed the opinion that they were written for strings.⁷

One of Mendelssohn's most impressive early works is the incomplete Fantasia [and Fugue] in G minor. Modern sources do not agree on the year of this work's composition; most authorities suggest 1822-23, while others give 1827 as the date. The majestic and virtuosic Fantasia is in Baroque style, and could conceivably have been modelled after J. S. Bach's Fantasia in the same key (S. 542). The highly chromatic fugal subject was worked only to the end of the first exposition (a total of sixteen bars), and then abandoned by the composer. The Fantasia (see Example 1 for the opening bars), performed independently of the Fugue, would make a most welcome addition to the concert repertoire.

The work will appear in the Leipzig edition with the unfinished Fugue completed by Dr. Rudy Schackleford.⁸



Example 1.

The Andante in D major, Sanf, dated May 9, 1823, is an example of the religious Adagio type. Cast in a ternary design, the work exhibits many of the stylistic characteristics associated with the slow movements of the Six Sonatas. It will doubtless be found useful to many church organists as pre-service music.

On May 10, 1823, the fourteen-year-old Mendelssohn completed another important work--a Passacaglia in C minor. Like the G minor Fantasia, this brilliant concert piece appears to have been inspired by Bach's work which shares the same title and key (S. 582). Unlike the Bach example, however, it does not conclude with a fugue. The theme (Example 2), eight bars in length, remains unaltered throughout the work's twenty-one variations. It is kept in the bass for eleven variations; five variations show it in the soprano or middle voice; and the remaining five variations are treated in free style. This piece is not published in the Vorabdruck, but it will be included in the Leipzig edition.



Example 2.

Equally interesting is the chorale partita, "Wie gross ist des Allmächt'gen Güte," dated July 30-August 2, 1823. Penned in Mendelssohn's hand on the manuscript are the title of the chorale tune and its source: Fischers Choralbuch. Three variations follow the initial statement of the four-part chorale (see Example 3 for the soprano line). Variation one is a toccata with the chorale melody in the pedals; in variation two, the theme is treated canonically at various intervals; in the final variation, the chorale tune is heard in the soprano, accompanied toccata-style by broken chords and scalar passages. The introductory four-part chorale is not included in the Vorabdruck.



Example 3.

The first known organ work to come from Mendelssohn's more mature period is the "Nachspiel" in D major. The fascinating history surrounding the manuscript of this

piece is here recounted in the words of Dr. Little:

The composer's autograph of the Nachspiel is lost, and the work exists only in the copy made by Elizabeth Mounsey (now in the Bodleian [Library, Oxford]). As Miss Mounsey wrote (in a note accompanying her copy): 'In 1853, a M.S. Credo in D minor was sent from Mr. Paul Mendelssohn of Berlin to Mr. Samuel Smith at Bradford, for presentation to the Committee of the Opening Festival of St. George's Hall Bradford, in 1853; a copy of the Nachspiel was also sent--probably by mistake.' Somewhat later all the MSS were returned to Berlin. 'This copy of the Nachspiel was made by me at the time, 1853.' The copy gives March 8, 1831, Rome, at the conclusion.¹⁰

In her copy of the manuscript, Elizabeth Mounsey¹¹ wrote: "The 1st movement of this appears to be an early thought of the 3/4-time movement in C--in the 2nd of the composer's 6 Organ Sonatas."¹² The opening four bars of the "Nachspiel" (Example 4) are indeed identical (except for the dotted rhythm) to the opening of the 3/4 movement of Sonata No. 2. Subjoined to the forty-five bar introduction is a five-part fugue (see Example 5 for the subject), which was not incorporated into the sonata.¹³



Example 4.



Example 5.

The next extant organ compositions come from 1833 and 1834. The Fugue in D minor (pro Organo pleno), dated March 29, 1833 and dedicated to Vincent Novello, was considerably revised in 1837 for inclusion in the publication of the Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37. Similarly, the Fugue in C minor, dated July 30, 1834, was published in Op. 37, after slight alterations by the composer.¹⁴

Three additional fugues were produced in 1839. Jean Bonfils has suggested that these works remained unpublished during Mendelssohn's lifetime because he probably intended to compose preludes for them before allowing them to appear in print.¹⁵ The autographs, which are written on two staves (the pedal part being indicated by "Ped." below the bottom staff), contain neither dynamic markings nor indications for manual changes. All three fugues are presently available in modern performing editions.¹⁶

Fugue I in E minor, dated July 13, 1839, demonstrates a more disciplined approach to fugal writing than was seen in the Three Preludes and Fugues of 1837. It is, however, a lengthy work, and perhaps the least interesting of the set. The fugal subject is reproduced below (Example 6).



Example 6.

Fugue II in C major, dated July 14, 1839, was re-worked in 1844 and subsequently published as the final movement of Sonata No. 2.

Fugue III in F minor, dated July 18, 1839, is one of Mendelssohn's most lyrical and masterfully crafted works (see Example 7 for the opening bars). It was first published by the English firm, Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co. in 1885. It is astonishing that Fugue III has never been published in Germany. The composer must have been especially fond of this composition; he performed it and his Prelude and Fugue in C minor, Op. 37, along with a number of Bach's organ works in a recital at St. Peter's, Cornhill on September 30, 1840.



Example 7.

The Prelude in C minor, dated July 9, 1841, has a very interesting history. James Dibidin, one of Edinburgh's leading organists, was compiling a psalter for publication. He wrote to Mendelssohn, requesting that he compose a long-measure psalm tune, which Dibidin hoped to include in his book.¹⁷ On July 9, from Leipzig, Mendelssohn replied:

I thank you very much for your kind and flattering letter of the 19th of last month, and enclose the page of your album, on which I have written a little Prelude for the Organ, which I composed this morning on purpose. I am

very sorry I could not write exactly what you required me to do, but I do not know what a long-measure psalm tune means, and there is nobody in this place at present to whom I could apply for an explanation. Excuse me, therefore, if you receive something else than you wished.¹⁸

This short, chromatic prelude is contrapuntal in style, and was first published in Edinburgh by Paterson's in 1841. A facsimile of the autograph was also published in the journal of church music, Exeter Hall, March, 1868. The work later appeared as a supplement to the Scottish Musical Monthly in December, 1894. It is presently available in a number of modern editions.¹⁹

In 1842, a composition originally intended for the piano was published by Alfred Copenrath, Regensburg, as the Fugue in A major for keyboard or organ. In a simplified and shortened version, the work also appeared as No. 5 of the Seven Characteristic Pieces for Piano, Op. 7. In the latter form, this transcription was published by Novello, Ewer and Company (probably in 1842, and with the composer's consent), as Fughetta for the Organ.²⁰

While committing the Six Sonatas to paper in 1844, Mendelssohn produced four short organ pieces which he decided not to include in Opus 65.²¹ The autographs, which were housed in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, are among those lost at the close of World War II. Fortunately, two of these pieces were published by Novello in 1889.²² The Novello edition is no longer in print, but both pieces

exist in modern performing editions.²³

The Andante with Variations in D major, dated July 23, 1844, is a set of four variations on an original chorale-like theme (see Example 8 for the opening phrase). Though not one of the Mendelssohn's most inspired works, it is dignified and pleasingly lyrical, both of which qualities make it ideally suited for service music.



Example 8.

The second work to be preserved in the Novello publication is the Allegro in B flat major, dated December 31, 1844. Conceived along the lines of a "song without words," the homophonic texture of this piece is ill-suited to the nature of the instrument.

F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

M.M. $\text{♩} = 96$.

MANUAL.

f *G!*

PEDAL.

Example 9. The Novello edition of Mendelssohn's Allegro in B flat major (first page). This music is now in the public domain.

While a music student in Berlin between 1900 and 1902, the English organist and music critic, A. M. Henderson availed himself of the opportunity to study the manuscripts of Mendelssohn's unpublished organ compositions. During this period, and on a later visit in 1925, he made extensive notes on these works, also copying out the opening few bars of each piece.²⁴ The following are his impressions of the

two lost pieces from this set of four:

Two more manuscripts remain to be considered, and these come from Mendelssohn's maturity, being dated July 1844. The first, an Andante in F major [dated July 21, 1844], is one of the most attractive pieces in the group, and should have been published long before now. . . . The writing is in three parts, organ-trio style, and represents Mendelssohn at his best. Played on quiet, contrasted registers, this charming piece would give immediate pleasure.²⁵



Example 10. The opening four bars of the Andante in F, as copied by Henderson.

The last manuscript to be considered, an Allegro in D minor dated July 25, 1844, is one of the longer pieces in the set, and is in strict contrapuntal style. A semiquaver bass and a cantabile theme in the treble are treated in fugato style:



Example 11.

A contrasted middle section follows in the form of a chorale, and the work closes with a fugue.²⁶



Example 12. The fugue subject.

Other works, unrelated to those lost in the War, are known to exist in private collections, but to date, the owners have refused access to them. Among these is the piece in A major which Mendelssohn wrote in 1829 for the wedding of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel. Dr. Little knows where it is, but this information cannot be presently disclosed. He is also aware of more pieces which are similarly being withheld by the present owners. A case in point is the "Nachtszene," composed in 1821 or 1822.²⁷

One of Mendelssohn's unpublished letters, housed in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., documents the composition of two Fugues for organ duet. Neither the manuscripts nor copies of these pieces have yet been found. Written to Thomas Attwood from Düsseldorf on January 11, 1835, the letter reads as follows:

I take the liberty of sending to you two Fugues for the Organ which I composed lately, as I think you told me once that you wanted something in that way. The subject of the first Fugue is one which I played extempore one morning on your magnificent organ at St. Paul's and which occurred again to my memory, when I thought of the pleasure which I enjoyed there so often by your friendship and kindness to me.²⁸

In an interview which first appeared in the Fliegende Blätter für Musik, Leipzig in 1853, Mendelssohn provides the

probable explanation for the number of completed organ works which remained unpublished during his lifetime:

Unfinished works used to depress me very much, and render me timid about composing. . . . I have made myself a solemn promise never to abandon a work once commenced, . . . to finish every one, however it may turn out.²⁹

Many of the miscellaneous organ works have found their way into the recording studio. In 1977, some were recorded by Dr. Max Miller for the Musical Heritage Society (MHS 3731), and more recently (1982-83), Wolfgang Rübsam has recorded two volumes of these pieces for Schwann (Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Das Orgelwerk, Vols. 2 and 3. Schwann Digital, AMS 718 and 719). In the case of the Schwann recordings, a brief discussion seems necessary. Rübsam performs with accustomed elegance and taste throughout, but one work presented on Vol. 3 is something of a puzzle. The chorale, "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir," appears not to be an organ piece. An inquiry about this work to Dr. William Little yielded the reply, "To the best of my knowledge, Mendelssohn never composed an organ choral prelude on that melody." He suggests that it may be a transcription of a movement from Op. 23, no. 1, which is a motet for four mixed voices and organ accompaniment, based on this chorale.³⁰

During the past two decades, a revival of interest in Mendelssohn research has taken place on an international scale. It is one of the great ironies of history. In the

nineteenth century, the beginning of a movement to discredit Mendelssohn as a serious composer was signalled by the publication of Richard Wagner's anti-semitic essay, "Jews in Music" (1850 and 1868).³¹ The works of the composer, heralded by many as the successor to Beethoven, soon were regarded with indifference and contempt. The subsequent banning of Mendelssohn's compositions in the Nazi era produced a post-war generation of German musicians who were largely ignorant of his music. Even the churches had ceased to perform the extensive repertoire he had created for liturgical use. Curiously enough, it was this very period of censorship and neglect which made possible the present revival of interest in his life and works. Following the restoration of sanity in Europe, the next generation was able to re-discover and evaluate anew this wonderful music with minds and ears less impeded by religious and racial intolerance.³²

In matters directly related to the organ, it may be said that the Mendelssohn renaissance began in the German-speaking world in the 1960's with the scholarly writings of Susanna Grossman-Vendrey and Martin Weyer. The movement has taken root in North America, with Roger B. Wilson, Douglas Butler, and especially William A. Little contributing significantly to the ongoing research. Others of us, neophytes, proudly join their cause.

The lost organ works of Mendelssohn were accessible

to anyone interested in them for over seventy years; the fact that no one was foresighted enough to copy them speaks volumes. The recent rediscovery, publication and recording of the presently available miscellaneous organ compositions, give a clear indication of the changing attitudes toward Mendelssohn's music. As the number of scholars involved in this area increases, so also does the hope that the lost organ works may yet be found.

NOTES

¹Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Kompositionen für Orgel, ed. Wm. A. Little (Leipzig: Veb Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1977). (Hereafter cited as Vorabdruck).

²Private communication from Dr. William A. Little: letter to the present writer, 6 October 1984.

³Marek, Gentle Genius, p. 113.

⁴Butler, "The Organ Works of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy," p. 17.

⁵Prior to the publication of the Vorabdruck, this work appeared in Three Unfamiliar Organ Compositions by Mendelssohn, ed. Ludwig Altman, (Nashville and New York: Abington Press, 1969). (Hereafter cited as Three Unfamiliar Organ Compositions).

⁶Little, letter, 6 October 1984.

⁷Jean Bonfils, "Mendelssohn: Trois Fugues," prefatory note in Pièces romantiques ignorées).

⁸Private communication from Roger B. Wilson: letter to the present writer, 26 August 1984.

⁹Michael Gotthard Fischer, Choralmelodien der evangelischen Kirchengemeinden. The two volumes of this collection of chorales were respectively published at Gotha in 1820 and 1821.

¹⁰William A. Little, letter to Douglas L. Butler, 5 May 1978. Cited by Butler in "Mendelssohn Update," p. 10.

¹¹The London-born organist and composer, Elizabeth Mounsey (1819-1905), was organist of St. Peter's, Cornhill from 1834-1882. Mendelssohn performed on the organ of this church on two occasions: September 30, 1840, and June 12, 1842. Norris, A Musical Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland, p. 62.

¹²Cited by Little in "Bemerkungen zu den Quellen," Vorabdruck, n.p.

¹³Edwards, "Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas," p. 14.

¹⁴See my discussion of these works in Chapter IV.

¹⁵Bonfils, n.p.

¹⁶"Fugues I, II and III," ed. Jean Bonfils are included in Pièces romantiques ignorées. "Fugues I and III" appear in Samuel Wesley and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Three Organ Fugues, ed. Gordon Phillips (Wesley) and Ludwig Altman (Mendelssohn) (London: Hinrichsen/Peters, 1962).

¹⁷A. M. Henderson, "Mendelssohn's Unpublished Organ Works," Musical Times, November 1947, p. 347.

¹⁸Cited by Henderson, p. 347.

¹⁹Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Prelude in C minor, ed. Ivor Atkins (London: Paterson's, n.d.). See also the following anthologies: Three Unfamiliar Organ Compositions; The Progressive Organist, Book 4, ed. C. H. Trevor (Bourough Green: Elkin, 1963).

²⁰Roger B. Wilson, "Collecting for Recording the Organ Works of Mendelssohn: A Personal Odyssey," Diapason, June 1973, p. 3; Butler, "The Organ Works of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy," p. 101.

²¹Edwards, p. 4.

²²F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Two Pieces for the Organ (London: Novello, 1898).

²³The "Andante with Variations" is published in the following: Mendelssohn and Hummel, Two Andantes for Organ, ed. Ludwig Altman (London: Hinrichsen/Peters, 1966); Organ Book No. 1, ed. C. H. Trevor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). The "Allegro" in B flat major is available in Three Unfamiliar Organ Compositions. Altman's editing of this piece is less than satisfactory.

²⁴Henderson, p. 347.

²⁵Ibid., p. 348.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Butler, "Mendelssohn Update," p. 10.

²⁸Mendelssohn's letter supplied through the kindness of the Library of Congress, Music Division, Washington, D.C.

²⁹The name of the author of this interview entitled, "Conversations with Mendelssohn," is not given. It is reprinted in English translation in Dwight's Journal of Music 7 (25 August 1854):162-63.

³⁰Little, letter, 6 October 1984.

³¹Richard Wagner, "Jews in Music," in Wagner on Music and Drama: A Compendium of Richard Wagner's Prose Works, ed. Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn, trans. H. Ashton Ellis (New York: Dutton Paper Backs, 1964), pp. 51-59.

³²John Horton, Mendelssohn Chamber Music, BBC Music Guides (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 64; The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1980 ed., s.v. "Mendelssohn, Felix," by Karl-Heinz Köhler and Eveline Bartlitz.

APPENDIX B

RECORDINGS OF OP. 37 REVIEWED

This critical evaluation of recorded versions of Op. 37 is confined to those currently available recordings which contain the entire opus.

Das Orgelportrait: Die Heidenreich-Orgel in St. Michaelis, Hof/Saale, Werner Jacob, organist. Jacket notes by Wolfgang Stockmeier (Psallite, Psal 80/240 669 PET).

This recording, one of a series showcasing various historical instruments, is more to be valued for the glorious sound of the organ itself than for Werner Jacob's playing. The instrument was built between 1827 and 1834 by Heidenreich, who followed the organ building tradition established by Silbermann. It was subsequently enlarged by two other builders; however, the original Heidenreich pipework remains intact and unaltered.

The first side of this recording is devoted to compositions by Bach, Pachelbel and Walther, while side two consists of Mendelssohn's Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37. Jacob's approach to these works of Mendelssohn is disappointing in the extreme. The C minor Prelude and Fugue, the first of the set, is subjected to a less than tidy performance. The interpolated cadential trill at the close of the Prelude is completely out of style for music

of this period. The Fugue is played in a choppy, non-legato manner, and manual changes are introduced at places other than those indicated by the composer.

The second Prelude and Fugue fares little better. The Prelude is badly distorted by Jacob's excessive use of rubato, and the Fugue is not only over-articulated, but inconsistently articulated as well. The registrations chosen for both Prelude and Fugue are tasteful, and in keeping with the composer's directions.

Unfortunately, Jacob does not redeem himself in the last Prelude and Fugue of the set; this is probably the least successful of his performances. He chooses separate registrations for the individual sections of the Prelude, and plays the trills according to the Baroque convention, beginning them on the upper, rather than the principal note. Again, the Fugue is much over-articulated (the articulation also lacks consistency), and several manual changes are substituted for Mendelssohn's directions to perform the Fugue Organo pleno throughout. One wonders if Werner Jacob is aware that an Urtext edition of these pieces exists.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Das Orgelwerk. Kurt Rapf, organist. 2 disks. (Acanta, EB 20. 095 Stereo).

For his recording of Mendelssohn's Op. 37 and Op. 65, Kurt Rapf has chosen to perform on the 1968 Marcussen organ in the Immaculata Cathedral of Linz. The instrument, one of the world's largest to be built with mechanical action, is

in many respects sonically impressive. However, as captured on this set, its somewhat strident tonal characteristics seem ill-suited to Mendelssohn's organ works.

The C minor Prelude and Fugue is taken at a slightly slower pace than usual, possibly due to the long reverberation period in this cathedral. The registrations of both the Prelude and Fugue are chosen according to Mendelssohn's directions, but the general effect of this performance is lacklustre.

In the G major Prelude, Rapf adheres to his rock-steady tempo with such rigidity that the phrases lack a sense of direction. His registration substitutes an almost glassy clarity for the warmer, yet still clear sonorities usually chosen by other organists. The accompanying Fugue is played in a precise, matter-of-fact manner, leaving the listener longing for a less emotionally detached approach.

The ad libitum introduction of the D minor Prelude is executed with admirable freedom, but these opening few bars prove to be the strongest part of the performance. Rapf's playing lacks the technical brilliance characteristic of most recorded interpretations of the work. Manual changes, uncalled for in the score, are employed with abandon, and the upper-note approach to the trills is obviously the preference of the performer. An overly-cautious tempo coupled with static, directionless phrases make for a thoroughly uninspiring performance of the Fugue

in D minor.

Orgelwerke Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Drei Präludien und Fugen, Op. 37, Sechs Sonaten, Op. 65. Heinrich Gurtner, organist. Recorded September 1977, jacket notes by Dr. Max Fauve and Heinrich Gurtner. 2 discs. (Claves, D 715/16).

This recording features the restored Friederich Has organ of the Berne Cathedral, originally built in 1846 and restored by Kuhn in 1930. Heinrich Gurtner approaches the Three Preludes and Fugues of Op. 37 in a straightforward manner, which, at the same time, is never less than musical.

The Prelude and Fugue in C minor is performed here with great rhythmic vitality. Gurtner's legato and clean part playing in the Fugue are exemplary, and his choices of registrations follow the composer's suggestions to the letter.

The G major Prelude is played on a lovely flute registration which is well suited to the Pastorale-like style of the piece. Gurtner employs very little rubato, but always manages to impart to these lyrical phrases a feeling of movement and direction--a quality which is decidedly lacking in the recorded performance of Kurt Rapf. The accompanying Fugue is appropriately registered, and again we are treated to another example of Gurtner's excellent legato. The playing is steady, but never mechanically so, and the parts are clearly defined.

Technical brilliance comes to the fore in this virtuosic performance of the D minor Prelude. Heinrich

Gurtner's only departures from Mendelssohn's dynamic markings are found in this final Prelude and Fugue; reeds are added for the Prelude's coda, and the Fugue is likewise treated to an increase in volume at the close. Despite this complaint, the D minor Fugue is beautifully shaped and remains one of the most musically significant endeavours on this recorded set.

This approach to Mendelssohn will not meet with universal approval; it relies more heavily upon intellect than emotion, but there is much to be admired here, not the least of which is the strong sense of conviction which permeates these unmannered and honest performances.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Das Orgelwerk*, Vol. I, Wolfgang Rübsam, organist. Recorded 1981, jacket notes by Carl de Nys. 2 discs. (Schwann, AMS-716/717).

This recording, from one of the more recent sets devoted to the Three Preludes and Fugues and the Six Sonatas, is performed on the magnificent Silbermann organ of St. Pierre-le-Jeune in Strasbourg. Wolfgang Rübsam's distinguished reading of Op. 37 results from a near-perfect blend of personal musical involvement and sound musicological scholarship. No mere exercise in historical performance practice, Mendelssohn's music is brought to life through Rübsam's superb artistry.

In all three Preludes and Fugues, Mendelssohn's registrational instructions are followed with precision. Among the many commendable features of this recording are

Rübsam's excellent tempi, his seamless legato and the elegant manner in which he shapes the phrases. His use of rubato in the Prelude in G major is a veritable lesson in subtlety for all performing musicians. Each playing of this version of Op. 37 reveals new delights; it deserves a place in every serious organist's record library.

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *The Organ Music: Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, Six Sonatas, Op. 65.* Hans Fagius, organist. Recorded 1980, jacket notes by Hans Fagius. 2 discs. (Bis LP-156/157 Stereo).

Performing on the 1975 Christensen organ of Härnösand Cathedral, the young Swedish organist, Hans Fagius has added a welcome contribution to the growing list of recordings of Mendelssohn's Op. 37. The instrument, a compromise between Baroque and Romantic ideals, proves to be sonically well suited to Mendelssohn's music.

Fagius gives a spirited, cleanly articulated reading of the Prelude and Fugue in C minor. His tempi are excellent and the playing, admirable from the technical point of view, is always rhythmic and energetic. The registrations are chosen with care, although he does make an uncalled for addition of stops toward the end of the Fugue--his sole departure from Mendelssohn's markings in the entire opus.

The Prelude in G major is played with befitting lyricism, and rubato is employed with a subtlety which avoids sentimentality. This performance of the G major Fugue is notable both for its warmth of expression and its

architectural clarity.

Fagius provides one of the most technically brilliant interpretations of the D minor Prelude and Fugue to appear on record. In his hands, the work takes on the freshness and spontaneity of an improvisation.

APPENDIX C

RECORDINGS OF OP. 65 REVIEWED

The recordings of Op. 65 reviewed in this appendix represent only those complete sets which are currently available.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Das Orgelwerk*. Kurt Rapf, organist. 2 discs. (Acanta, EB 20. 095 Stereo).

The Marcussen organ of the Immaculata Cathedral, Linz, proves to be an unfortunate choice for Kurt Rapf's recording of Op. 65. The strident Full Organ tone of the instrument, coupled with an over-reverberant acoustic frequently cause a serious loss of clarity and definition in the playing. Rapf's rather athletic tempi in some movements, together with his strong symphonic tendencies and a matter-of-fact approach to the music, do not present a true picture of these masterpieces of the organ repertoire. Serious balance problems between manual and pedal registrations are heard in several movements, adding further cause for dismay. Most successful is Rapf's performance of the opening movement of the Second Sonata, but taken as a whole, this recording of Op. 65 cannot be recommended.

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Les Six Sonates pour Orgue* Op. 65. Hans Vollenweider, organist. Recorded 1983,

jacket notes by Hans Vollenweider. 2 discs. (Rodolphe Productions, RP 12397-98).

The warm tone of the organ of the Reformed Church, Richterswil, as captured on these recordings, serves Mendelssohn's music well. Alas, the same cannot be said for Vollenweider's playing; these are highly Romantic interpretations, frequently sinking to the level of drawing-room sentimentality. In his jacket notes, Vollenweider shares with his readers his conviction that although Mendelssohn did not include indications for the use of the expression pedal in the score, he intended the interpreter to exercise freedom in its employment. This he does with decided abandon. In light of our present knowledge concerning the mechanical limitations of the swell pedal in Mendelssohn's day, most of the effects which are thus achieved would not have been possible, and it is doubtful whether any of them are desirable. Excessive use of rubato, many departures from the text in matters of manual and registration changes, and the performer's less-than-brilliant technique add further to the problems on this recorded set.

Despite this litany of complaints, the opening movements of the First and Third Sonatas emerge relatively unscathed from Vollenweider's eccentric treatment. It is only here that an acceptable performing style for Mendelssohn is remotely approached.

Orgelwerke Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Drei Präludien und Fugen, Op. 37, Sechs Sonaten, Op. 65. Heinrich Gurtner, organist. Recorded September, 1977, jacket notes by Max Fauve and Heinrich Gurtner. 2 discs. (Claves, D 715-16).

Heinrich Gurtner performs the Six Sonatas on the Berne Cathedral organ, an instrument built in 1846 and subsequently restored in 1930. Taken as a whole, this is not the most exciting of currently available recorded sets, but it has much to recommend it. For the most part, Gurtner performs with integrity, allowing the music to speak for itself. There are, however, occasional annoying lapses into the symphonic style; the final movement of the Fourth Sonata, as here recorded, is a case in point. A further example is found at the conclusion of the Second Sonata. In the latter case, it would be unjust to single this artist out for such a transgression without mentioning that this fault may be found, in varying degrees, in all five of the recorded sets presently under discussion. Gurtner's meticulous and tasteful readings of the First and Fifth Sonatas stand out as exceptional; they deserve to be ranked among the better performances of these works presently committed to disc.

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, The Organ Music: Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37, Six Sonatas, Op. 65. Hans Fagius, organist. Recorded 1980, jacket notes by Hans Fagius, 2. discs. (Bis, LP-156-157 Stereo).

The modern compromise organ of Harnösänd Cathedral, which combines the clarity of Baroque voicing with the

breadth of tone associated with early nineteenth-century developments, proves to be a good choice for Hans Fagius' recording of Op. 65. This artist is one of the most dynamic organists of our time; his formidable technique coupled with a fine musical mind cannot help but lead to an exciting performance of these works. There is no lack of technical brilliance here. In fact, it is probably because of his remarkable technical prowess that Fagius has ill-advisedly elected to play certain movements at overly-quick tempi; one could cite the Andante con moto from the Fifth Sonata as but one example of several.

Fagius is unpredictable in his adherence to the appropriate conventions of performance practice for Mendelssohn's music. The majority of individual movements are models of style, but few complete sonatas are performed without some minor transgression against the rules. By his own admission (in his jacket notes), he has "readily emphasized the symphonic tendencies present in these works." Just such a treatment may be heard in his performances of the Fugues from the Second and Fifth Sonatas, and further instances may easily be found in which manual changes, unsanctioned by the composer, are introduced. Nonetheless, from the strictly musical point of view, these are exceptional recordings. For sheer listening pleasure, they are highly recommended; as documents of historically accurate performance practice, they must be approached with a certain

degree of caution.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Das Orgelwerk*, Vol. I. Wolfgang Rübsam, organist. Recorded 1981, jacket notes by Carl de Nys. 2 discs. (Schwann, AMS-716-717).

It is our good fortune that the superb Silbermann organ of St. Pierre-le-Jeune, Strasbourg, was made available to Wolfgang Rübsam for this recording. Though several other instruments serve the music admirably on disc, this organ is the embodiment of tonal perfection.

Not only is the Silbermann organ the ideal sonic medium for the Six Sonatas, but Rübsam may well be the ideal interpreter. Scholarly performances are seldom presented with such elegance, refinement and delicacy of nuance. The only disappointing moments, and they are few, occur in his performance of the Second Sonata. Here, one would prefer a solo stop of more distinctive colour for the right hand melody of the Adagio, thus eliminating the slight problem of balance which results from Rübsam's choice of registration. The addition of stops at the conclusion of the Fugue is a departure from Mendelssohn's markings, and although this indulgence is shared by each of the other performers previously discussed, it is no more excusable for Rübsam than for the others.

These minor complaints having been dealt with, one must hasten to add that this set, above all others, is unexcelled as a recorded guide to performance practice for these works. It is recommended with great enthusiasm.

APPENDIX D

ILLUSTRATIONS

Donnerstag, den 6. August 1840.

ORGEL-CONCERT

in der Thomaskirche

gegeben von

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

Erster Theil.

Introduction und Fuge in Es dur.

Phantasie über den Choral „Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele“.

Grosses Præludium und Fuge (A moll).

Zweiter Theil.

Passacaille (21 Variationen und Phantasie für die volle Orgel) (C moll).

Pastorella (F dur).

Toccata (D moll).

Freie Phantasie.

Sämmtliche Compositionen sind von Sebastian Bach; die Einnahme ist zur Errichtung eines Denksteins für ihn in der Nähe seiner ehemaligen Wohnung, der Thomaschule, bestimmt.

Billets à 8 Groschen sind in den Musikalien-Handlungen der Herren Dreikopf und Härtel, Küstner und Hofmeister und an den Eingängen der Kirche zu haben.

Anfang 6 Uhr.

Illustration 1. Programme of Mendelssohn's organ concert to raise funds for the Bach memorial.



Illustration 2. This interesting Facsimile of the conclusion of the Andante Recit. and the beginning of the final movement of the First Sonata is taken from the manuscript now housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

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- _____. Minuetto in G major. Undated.

- _____. Allegro in E major. Incomplete and undated.
- _____. Fugue in D minor. Dated 3 December 1820.
- _____. Fugue in G minor. Dated December 1820.
- _____. Fugue in D minor. Dated 6 January 1821.
- _____. Andante in D major, Sanf. Dated 9 May 1823.
- _____. Passacaglia in C minor. Dated 10 May 1823.
- _____. Chorale Partita, "Wie gross ist des Allmächt'gen Güte." Dated 30 July-2 August 1823.
- _____. Fantasia in G minor. Incomplete and undated.
- _____. Fugue in C minor. Dated 1 December 1836.
- _____. Fugue in G major. Dated 1 December 1836.
- _____. Prelude in C minor. Dated 2 April 1837.
- _____. Prelude in G major. Dated 4 April 1837.
- _____. Prelude in D minor. Dated 6 April 1837.
- _____. Fugue I in C major. Dated 14 July 1839.
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