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**AN EXAMINATION OF A CONDUCTOR'S PERFORMANCE
PREPARATION OF THE MENDELSSOHN VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E
MINOR**

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AN EXAMINATION OF A CONDUCTOR'S PERFORMANCE PREPARATION
OF THE MENDELSSOHN
VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E MINOR

Doctoral Thesis

A doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

AN EXAMINATION OF A CONDUCTOR'S PERFORMANCE PREPARATION OF THE MENDELSSOHN VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E MINOR

The music of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-47) has earned a prominent position in the orchestral repertoire. One of his greatest works, and certainly one of the most performed, is his Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64. The work enjoys much popularity with, and recognition by, soloists, orchestras, and conductors alike. Even with its fame and familiarity, it remains a work that must be carefully studied and prepared by the conductor. This document presents an examination of a conductor's performance preparation of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto. The purpose of this examination is to equip the conductor with a depth of knowledge that will yield rehearsals and performances of the concerto that are stylistically appropriate, well informed, and efficient. Major sections include an examination of the concerto's 1844 and 1845 versions and available performance materials, tempo selection and execution, size, balance and composition of the orchestra, stylistic traits, and aspects of performance practice.

KEYWORDS: Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Conducting Mendelssohn,
Mendelssohn Scores, Mendelssohn Score Study,
Score Preparation

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JULY 27, 2014

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Chapter One: Introduction

The music of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-47) has earned a prominent position in the orchestral repertoire. One of his greatest works, and certainly one of the most performed, is his Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64. Since its composition in 1844, the work has enjoyed much popularity with, and recognition by, soloists, orchestras, and conductors alike. Even with its fame and familiarity, it remains a work that must be carefully studied and prepared by the conductor.

A detailed performance preparation of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor is necessary so that the conductor is equipped with a depth of knowledge that will yield stylistically appropriate, well-informed, and efficient rehearsals and performances. This document aims to assist conductors in their score preparation by providing an examination of relevant aspects of score selection, score study, performance considerations, and performing practices. A detailed comparison of readily available orchestral scores is included. Specific conducting issues are addressed, especially those related to the selection of tempi and transitions between movements, as are relevant aspects of performance practice.

The concerto received its premiere with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1845. Primary differences between the orchestra of the early and middle Romantic and the modern symphony orchestra are discussed. Mendelssohn's treatment of orchestral texture, as well as specific elements of performance practice, such as the use of vibrato and bowing style, are included as part of the conductor's performance preparation of the concerto.

Dating from 1844, the concerto is founded on formal and orchestral conventions from the late Classical Era. It is composed in three movements and is scored for an instrumentation that was typical of orchestra in the late Classical era, often referred to as the “Classical Viennese” (or “high Classical”) orchestra. By 1844, the instrumentation of the symphony orchestra commonly included an additional two French horns, three trombones, and percussion instruments, beyond the two timpani. Mendelssohn did score for an orchestral complement including these instruments in his second and fifth symphonies as well as in his oratorios and other orchestral works. Interestingly enough, his first, third, and fourth symphonies are scored for the same instrumentation as the Violin Concerto (two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets with timpani and strings). Perhaps as a means by which to allow the solo violin to be more present, or because the concerto is founded on many Classical conventions, Mendelssohn chooses to omit the additional horns, trombones, and percussion in his concerto.

While the concerto owes its heritage to the late Classical masters, it is an innovative early Romantic work in several respects. The placement of the cadenza, the direct (*attacca*) transitions between movements, and the virtuosic nature of the solo violin are three examples of this concerto’s forward-looking nature. An additional example may be found in Mendelssohn’s rather drastic departure from the established sonata-allegro form. He includes only one and a half measures of orchestral introduction before the solo violin enters. The main thematic material of this opening section is exposed in the solo violin alone as

opposed to a proper, more Classical, introduction (or exposition) in which the orchestra presents most, if not all, of the thematic material before the solo instrument enters.

The great violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) commented that the Germans have four violin concertos. “The greatest, most uncompromising is Beethoven's. The one by Brahms vies with it in seriousness. The richest, the most seductive, was written by Max Bruch. But the most inward, the heart's jewel, is Mendelssohn's.”¹ Joachim made this statement on his seventy-fifth birthday in June of 1906. By this point, Mendelssohn’s violin concerto had been in the repertoire for more than sixty years. Today, as in 1906, the concerto remains a canonic work.

Goals, Methodology, and Delimitations

One of the central goals of this document is to provide a guide for the selection of a full score to be used in performance as well as the selection of additional scores to be consulted during the score study process. The methodology for this section was a comparison of many published scores to the concerto, both currently in print and those that are no longer in print. Physical copies of practically all readily available published scores to the concerto were obtained and examined. Chapter Two contains the information compiled from this examination, as well as a table detailing many aspects of published orchestral

¹ “San Francisco Symphony Program Notes and Articles,” last modified September, 2010 <http://www.sfsymphony.org/Watch-Listen-Learn/Read-Program-Notes/ProgramNotes/BRUCHConcerto-No-1-in-G-minor-for-Violin-and-Orch.aspx>.

scores of the concerto. The autograph score (dated September 16, 1844), now available digitally in the online database IMSLP: Petrucci Music Library², as well as in facsimile from Garland Publishing,³ was consulted and compared with published scores.

Another central goal of this document is to address the most significant differences between the modern symphony orchestra and that of Mendelssohn's day. The section of this document devoted to these differences is limited to aspects that the conductor may wish to address during rehearsals and performances of the concerto with modern-day orchestras. These distinctions are discussed in relation to the caliber of musicians, orchestral configuration, number of musicians, and basic differences between instruments of the early and middle Romantic and their modern equivalents.

This document is not intended as a comprehensive theoretical study of the concerto. Additionally, it is not a detailed study of the performance practices associated with the concerto. Certainly, it is essential to include elements of both theory and practice in the preparation of the score. This document limits the inclusion of these elements to those most pertinent to the conductor in his or her preparation of the score for performance as well as collaboration with the solo violinist. The basic performance history, including information about the premiere

² "Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor Digital Autograph Score," last modified August 22, 2013 http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/e/e0/IMSLP293074-PMLP04931-Mendelssohn_-_Violin_Concerto_-_Autograph-.pdf.

³ Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor Op. 64*. foreword H.C. Robbins Landon et al. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991).

of the concerto, is included. However, a detailed and complete performance history of the concerto, and its recorded legacy, is not addressed.

Review of Literature

The important literature about Mendelssohn's orchestral works, and their performance, is vast, including biographies, essay collections, and several editions of the composer's letters. John Michael Cooper's Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: A Guide to Research was an excellent point of departure when compiling a list of references for this paper. The appendices of Cooper's book are concise sources for many aspects of Mendelssohn research, including the principal editions of Mendelssohn's works, facsimiles, and other publications of the composer's works.

Biographies, such as those by Peter Mercer-Taylor, Roger Nichols, and Heinrich Eduard Jacob, offer context to the concerto, especially within the lineage of Mendelssohn's compositional output. Mendelssohn's interactions with Ferdinand David are at least generally explored but contain little detailed information about the concerto itself. An exception to this is an early biography, Ferdinand David und die Familie Mendelssohn-Bartholdy by Julius Eckardt.

While no English translation of the entire book is available, much of the text regarding Felix Mendelssohn's interactions with David, especially the letters in which the former expresses his desire to compose a violin concerto for the latter, have been translated and are included in essays, studies, and prefaces. The preface to the newly published 2005 edition of the concerto by R. Larry Todd

is a particularly useful example of such a translation. Todd extracts relevant passages from Eckardt's text, relating them in a general fashion to the concerto, as well as to specific musical examples contained in the score.

Three collections of essays proved incredibly useful and pertinent during the construction of this document. Mendelssohn in Performance, edited by Siegwart Reichwald, Mendelssohn Essays, edited by R. Larry Todd, and The Mendelssohn Companion, edited by Douglass Seaton, each contain information specific to the concerto's composition or performance. Even so, there is little information, if any, offering a viewpoint or examination of the score from the perspective of the conductor.

There are many studies of nineteenth-century performance practice available. Those authored by Clive Brown, David Boyden, John Michael Cooper, and David Milsom were most relevant to this document. Among these studies, several focus specifically on the Violin Concerto or violin performance in general. Examinations of a particular passage or series of passages may be present, but detailed information specific to the conducting of this concerto is not included.

Dissertations, and other such studies, containing short discussions related to the conducting of Mendelssohn's works do exist,⁴ but they are not specific to this concerto. These documents do not contain a compiled section of the orchestral scores available to the concerto or the specific performance

⁴ José Antonio Bowen's dissertation "The conductor and the score: The relationship between interpreter and text in the generation of Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Wagner" is an excellent examination of theories concerning the relationship between orchestral conductors and scores in the mid-19th Century. Mendelssohn is specifically discussed, but there is no detailed examination of the Violin Concerto.

considerations addressed in Chapter Three. This document represents the first study of the concerto from the perspective of the conductor's performance preparation.

Chapter Two: Versions of the Concerto and Performance Editions

John Michael Cooper states, “Musical notation mediates between composers and audiences. The reading, studying, and synthesis of music must be, in effect, realized from the score and parts.”⁵ Additionally, the full score and orchestral parts must be effective during the rehearsal process. The mediation between composers and audiences, and the goal to utilize effective performance materials can, at times, seem to compete for the conductor’s attention. Additionally, the conductor, orchestra, and soloist are, most certainly, important components of this mediation. The selection of a score is only one task of many when considering the mediation between composers and audiences. The selection of the score, and corresponding orchestral parts, may be the most important decision that the conductor makes.

The choice of a score for the concerto can be daunting. There are many orchestral scores in a variety of formats available for purchase from various publishers. Along with those that are available for purchase, there are scores that have gone out of print but are widely available. The scores are principally reprinted or derived from two versions of the concerto: Mendelssohn’s original version of 1844 and his revised version of 1845.

The 1844 version never received a premiere. Until recently, there was no attempt to even publish this version. Today, the 1844 version is available, as well as a plethora of reprints and assorted editions of the overwhelmingly favored

⁵ John Michael Cooper. “From Notation to Edition to Performance: Issues in Interpretation.” in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 171.

1845 version. These two versions of the concerto, as well as the two principal sources of available orchestral scores, are discussed in the following paragraphs. A table of selected published orchestral scores of the concerto is included in this chapter.

Until 2005, there had been no major attempt to compare the 1844 and 1845 versions and create a newly typeset score and set of orchestral parts of the first version. This task was accomplished when Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH & Co. published R. Larry Todd's edition of both versions of the concerto in full score. Previous to the 2005 Todd edition, the scores and parts of the concerto, although numerous, were directly reprinted or derived from only one source: the first collected works of Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn's compositional process, as described by R. Larry Todd, was governed by an uncompromising self-criticism.⁶ The result of this process, more familiarly acknowledged in composers such as Bruckner and Schumann, is the existence of multiple versions of any given work. With Mendelssohn, it is often the case that revisions of works are limited to articulation markings, minor changes in orchestration, or alterations to the solo line rather than major, architectural changes in form, harmonic progression, or instrumentation.

Much like his fourth symphony and the "Hebrides" overture, there are few major differences in form, harmonic progression, or orchestration when the two versions of the concerto are compared. The violinist Ferdinand David (1810-73), for whom the concerto was composed, suggested the bulk of the revisions to the

⁶ Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. *Konzert in e-Moll für Violine und Orchester, Op. 64 1844/1845*. ed. R. Larry Todd. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2005), VI.

1844 version. Mendelssohn's incorporation of these suggested revisions resulted in the 1845 version. In this respect, it is arguable that the 1844 version is more of a first draft of the concerto, rather than a completely different version of the work.

In the words of R. Larry Todd, the editor of the newly published 1844 version, a comparison of the two versions opens a "revealing window into Mendelssohn's compositional workshop and adds considerably to our enjoyment and appreciation of this concert-hall standard."⁷ The published score to the 1844 version certainly has scholarly value and can add much insight, should the conductor wish to study this version. However, this version may also be viewed as an unfinished, or unrefined, composition, thus favoring the 1845 version in scheduled performances.

On March 13, 1845 the concerto received its premiere in Leipzig with the Gewandhaus Orchestra and Ferdinand David, the orchestra's concertmaster, as soloist. Because Mendelssohn was ill, his assistant, the Danish composer Niels Gade (1817-90), conducted. The first performance of the concerto under Mendelssohn's baton was given on October 23, 1845 with the same soloist and orchestra.⁸ Both of these performances, and, indeed, practically all performances of the concerto from the premiere to 2005 are of the 1845, revised version. Breitkopf und Härtel published the first printed orchestral score of the concerto in 1845. This printing of the score is difficult to find, as it became somewhat obsolete after the publication of Mendelssohn's collected works.

⁷ Felix Mendelssohn, *Konzert in e-Moll*, VII.

⁸ Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 189.

Mendelssohn's works are found in two principal collected editions. The first, **Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Werke – Kritische durchgesehene Ausgab (FMW)** was published by Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig between 1874 and 1882, under the editorship of Julius Rietz. The edition consists of 19 series in 34 volumes and is the only collected edition of Mendelssohn's works that has been completed. Gregg International Publishers, Limited reprinted this edition in its entirety in 1968 (with a second printing in 1969). Edwin F. Kalmus, beginning in the 1970's, also reprinted the FMW, in miniature score format, but the original series and volume numbers were not retained.

The second edition of Mendelssohn's Collected Works is currently open-ended. Under the auspices of *Sächsische Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* in Leipzig, the **Leipziger Ausgabe der Werke von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (LMA)** has been published by Breitkopf und Härtel since 1997.⁹ Previously, the LMA was published by Deutscher Verlag für Musik (DVfM), with volumes first appearing in the 1960s. DVfM was taken over by Breitkopf und Härtel in 1992.¹⁰

Several volumes of the LMA originally published by DVfM are now out of print and no longer available. In general, the LMA, under the editorial board of Christian Martin Schmidt (chairman), Rudolf Elvers, Peter Ward Jones, Friedhelm Krummacher, R. Larry Todd, and Ralf Wehner, is more scholarly than the FMW in that the LMA takes into consideration all available sources of a work, clearly traces the revisions present in any given volume, and examines all known

⁹ "History of Breitkopf und Härtel" last modified July 9, 2014 <http://www.breitkopf.com/history>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

manuscripts of a composition. Both the score and critical apparatus (Kritische Bericht) to a given work, or group of works, are presented in a single volume, rather than the score appearing in one volume and the critical notes in a separate volume. The editorial principles are generally given in the preface, prior to the score, and critical notes follow the score, at the end of the volume.

Currently, the LMA has not issued the Violin Concerto in E minor. It will be released as Series II, Volume 7 and edited by Salome Reiser. This volume is listed as “Bände in Arbeit” (volumes in progress, meaning volumes currently being edited) on the Sächsische Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften’s website. No certain release date is given. Volumes in the LMA currently in the early planning phase, for which no editor has been selected, are listed as “Bände in näherer Planung” (Volumes in immediate planning).¹¹ Thus, the implication is that the Violin Concerto in E minor will be published within the next several years because it is currently being edited and is beyond the planning phase.

The Violin Concerto appears as No. 18 in Series 4, Volume 8, of the FMW.¹² This score is the basis for most all editions of the full score currently available. The majority of scores of individual pieces by Mendelssohn currently available from Edwin F. Kalmus, Luck’s Music Library, Broude Brothers Limited, and Breitkopf und Härtel are reprints of the FMW. The scores available from these publishers often contain added rehearsal letters and measure numbers (or

¹¹ “Leipziger Ausgabe der Werke von Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy” last modified January 2014 <http://www.saw-leipzig.de/forschung/projekte/leipziger-ausgabe-der-werke-von-felix-mendelssohn-bartholdy/die-werke-mendelssohn>.

¹² “Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Werke,” last modified April 9, 2013 http://imslp.org/wiki/Felix_Mendelssohn:_Felix_Mendelssohn-Bartholdys_Werk.

they reprint a later Breitkopf und Härtel edition that included added rehearsal letters and measure numbers).

The original FMW did not include rehearsal marks or measure numbers of any sort in the majority of volumes. This omission is true of Volume 8, thus, any score that is directly reprinted from the FMW will prove difficult to utilize during the rehearsal process, unless the conductor adds rehearsal marks and/or measure numbers.

The newest edition of the concerto is published by Bärenreiter (2005), and is edited by R. Larry Todd. Unique to this edition is its inclusion of both the 1844 and 1845 versions of the concerto as well as an extensive critical commentary and a clear list and comparison of sources consulted. Small inconsistencies found in the FMW, such as those in notation style, use of dynamic indications, and misplacement of accidentals, have been corrected and are consistently applied. See the following table for detailed information on selected scores of the Violin Concerto and the bibliography of this document for detailed citations on the scores included in the table.

Table 1 – Selected Published Orchestral Scores of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64

Publisher	Edition Number	Format ^A	Date of original publication	Currently in print	Derivative Edition	Performing Material Availability	Rehearsal Letters	Measure Numbers	Notes
Breitkopf und Härtel	V.A. 184	Full Score	1845	No	Original Publication	No	No	No	First printing of the full score bearing the title, "Concert für die Violine : mit Begleitung des Orchesters : op. 64"
Breitkopf und Härtel	Plate M.B. 18	Full Score	1874-1882	No	Original Publication in FMW ^B	No	No	No	Title page reads (translated from the printed German): Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's Work Critically examined Edition by Julius Rietz With permission of the Original Publisher Series 4. for Violin and Orchestra.
Universal Edition – Philharmonia Pocket Score	No. 83	Miniature Score	1924	No	FMW-typeset specifically for this miniature format	No	No	Yes – every 10 measures, divided by movement	Contains basic information about the premiere and basic form analysis.
Eulenburg	ETP 702	Miniature Score	1930	Yes	FMW-typeset specifically for this miniature format	No	No	Yes – every 10 measures, continuously numbered	Prefatory remarks by Max Alberti.

Table 1 (Continued)

Publisher	Edition Number	Format ^A	Date of original publication	Currently in print	Derivative Edition	Performing Material Availability	Rehearsal Letters	Measure Numbers	Notes
Kalmus – Scarsdale	No. 145	Miniature Score	c. 1940	No	Reprint of Universal Edition Philharm. Pocket Score No. 83 Thus - FMW	No	No	Yes – every 10 measures, divided by movement	Contains basic information about the premier and basic form analysis.
Boosey & Hawkes	H.P.S. 239	Miniature Score	1942	No	Reprint of Universal Edition Philharm. Pocket Score No. 83 Thus - FMW	No	No	Yes – every 10 measures, divided by movement	Contains basic information about the premier and basic form analysis as well as a brief description of transposing instruments. Plate No. B.&H. 8703
Heugel et C ^{ie}	P.H. 42	Miniature Score	1951	Yes	FMW- typeset specifically for this miniature format	No	No	Yes – every 10 measures, divided by movement	Includes a 4-page insert of analytical notes in English and German by Marc Pincherle.
Breitkopf und Härtel	PB 4493	Full Score	1960	Yes	FMW – added rehearsal numbers and measure numbers	Yes ^C OB 4493	Yes	Yes – At the start of each system, divided by movement	This edition also available in study score format with edition number PB 3978. The 1960 printing bears the publisher mark “Breitkopf und Härtel, Wiesbaden” ^D

Table 1 (Continued)

Publisher	Edition Number	Format ^A	Date of original publication	Currently in print	Derivative Edition	Performing Material Availability	Rehearsal Letters	Measure Numbers	Notes
Edition Peters	EP 614	Miniature Score	1966	No	Reprint of Eulenburg ETP 702 Thus - FMW	No	No	Yes – every 10 measures, continuously numbered	While the musical text is reprinted from the 1930 Eulenburg edition, this score does not contain the prefatory remarks by Max Alberti.
Gregg International Publishers	SBN 0. 576.289 12.4	Full Score	1968	No	Direct Reprint of FMW	No	No	No	Violin Concerto plate number: M.B. 18
Kalmus – New York	No. 145	Miniature Score	1971	No	Reprint of FMW	No	No	No	Also contains the score to “March,” op. 108. Supersedes the c. 1940 Kalmus Miniature Score
Broude Brothers, Limited	523	Full Score	1980	Yes	Reprint of Breitkopf Edition PB 4493 Thus - FMV	Yes ^C BB 523 or 505	Yes	Yes – At the start of each system, divided by movement	
Editio Musica Budapest	Z. 40 049	Miniature Score	1984	Yes	FMW- typeset specifically for this miniature format	No	No	Yes – At the start of each system, continuously numbered	Prefatory remarks by Gábor Darvas.
Dover Publications	ISBN 0-486-24989-1	Full Score	1985	Yes	Reprint of Breitkopf Edition PB 4493 Thus - FMV	No ^F	Yes	Yes – At the start of each system, divided by movement	This is a compilation edition that also contains full scores to the violin concerti of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky.

Table 1 (Continued)

Publisher	Edition Number	Format ^A	Date of original publication	Currently in print	Derivative Edition	Performing Material Availability	Rehearsal Letters	Measure Numbers	Notes
Luck's Music Library	00520	Full Score	1990	Yes	Reprint of Breitkopf Edition PB 4493 Thus - FMV	Yes ^C LML No. 00520	Yes	Yes – At the start of each system, divided by movement	This edition is marked "Luck's Music Library – Madison Heights, Michigan." Earlier printings, marked " Luck's Music Library – Detroit, Michigan" are identical.
Kalmus – Boca Raton	A1706	Full Score	1995	Yes	Reprint of Breitkopf Edition PB 4493 Thus - FMV	Yes ^C Kalmus No. A1706	Yes	Yes – At the start of each system, divided by movement	This edition also available in study score format as Master's Music Edition MSS-0051. Previous printings of this score (i.e. Kalmus – Miami, Kalmus – New York) are identical.
Bärenreiter	BA 9050	Full Score	2005	Yes	Original Publication	Yes BA 9050	Yes ^F	Yes – At the start of each system, continuously numbered	Urtext Edition by R. Larry Todd Contains both the 1844 and 1845 versions. This score has a second printing date of 2007. There is no difference between the 2005 and 2007 printings.
Bärenreiter	TP 397	Study Score	2005	Yes	Bärenreiter edition BA 9050	Yes BA 9050	Yes ^F	Yes – At the start of each system, continuously numbered	Urtext Edition by R. Larry Todd Contains only the 1845 version.
Eulenburg	EAS 117	Miniature Score with Audio CD	2006	Yes	Newly Typeset, Based upon ETP 702 – Thus FMW	No	Yes	Yes – At the start of each system, divided by movement	Prefatory remarks by Richard Clarke. Includes an audio CD recording – Takako Nishizaki, Violin – Kenneth Jean conducts the Slovak Phil. Orch.

Table 1 (Continued)

^A **Miniature Score** measures approximately 5" x 7" – **Study Score** measures approximately 7" x 10" – **Full Score** measures 9" x 12" or larger

^B FMW = **Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Werke. Kritische durchgesehene Ausgab** published by Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig between 1874 and 1882, edited by Julius Rietz.

^C Because the current editions available from Breitkopf und Härtel, Kalmus, Luck's, and Broude are all reprinted from the same source, the scores and parts from these three publishers match each other and are interchangeable.

^D Breitkopf und Härtel publications bear the name of the city in which the score was printed. Scores marked "Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig" were most likely published before 1943. The Leipzig publishing house was destroyed in 1943 as World War II came to a close. In 1945, printing operations resumed, but were moved to the newly established Wiesbaden publishing house. Thus, most scores printed from 1945 to 1991 bear the marking "Breitkopf und Härtel, Wiesbaden". In 1991, the Leipzig publishing house was re-established. Thus, all scores currently printed bear the marking "Breitkopf und Härtel, Wiesbaden – Leipzig – Paris". (The Paris subsidiary of Breitkopf und Härtel was established in 1984.) ¹

^E Dover Publications does not publish sets of parts. However, the Dover Score will match the set of parts published by Kalmus, Luck's, or Broude.

^F Rehearsal letters found in the 1845 version of the concerto in the Bärenreiter scores will match those found in the scores and/or parts published by Kalmus, Dover, Luck's, and Broude. Because the Bärenreiter edition utilizes measure numbering that is continuous, the measure numbers found in the Bärenreiter scores will only match the Bärenreiter parts.

¹ "History of Breitkopf und Härtel" last modified July 9, 2014 <http://www.breitkopf.com/history>.

Selecting a Performance Edition

The conductor has a wide range of options when selecting a score and set of parts. Practical matters such as the size of the score and the current availability of parts will substantially limit the choices. Assuming that the conductor intends to have a score on the podium during rehearsals and at the concert, a full score, measuring at least 9" x 12", is a necessity.

Most orchestral libraries that own the concerto have a set of parts published by Breitkopf und Härtel, Kalmus, Lucks, or Broude Brothers. All of these parts are printed or reprinted from the same source (the original Breitkopf und Härtel edition, OB 4493), thus they are all identical. Should a conductor be invited to conduct a performance with an orchestra that already owns a set of parts, it would be best for the conductor to perform from a score that matches the set of parts.

When purchasing a new set of parts and a score, considerations such as cost and availability are important. One may wish to avoid the 2005 Bärenreiter score because it contains the 1844 version of the concerto, which may have limited use as a performance edition in most orchestral libraries. Indeed, audiences, soloists, and conductors alike most often expect the 1845 version. Cost may also be a deterrent. The Bärenreiter score and its matching set of parts are substantially more expensive than a reprinted version. While the cost is high, the new edition may be worth the extra expense. The parts are newly typeset and some, though minor, inconsistencies are standardized. The rehearsal marks

and measure numbering are matched between score and parts, allowing for a smoother rehearsal process.

Conversely, generations of violinists and orchestras have performed the concerto from the older Breitkopf und Härtel edition (derived from the first collected works edition of Mendelssohn), or a reprint of this edition, with no major problems. Vast numbers of scores and parts of this edition are owned by orchestras world wide, and many violinists use any one of a number of editions edited by prestigious or celebrated violinists. Orchestra libraries own sets of parts with bowings and performance notes penciled in. These markings are invaluable to the orchestra musicians who will, in many instances, request the part they have utilized in previous performances.

However compelling the arguments may be to conduct from one edition or another, the conductor must rely upon personal preference when selecting a score. It is possible to conduct from the Bärenreiter score even if the orchestra is supplied with Breitkopf und Härtel reprinted parts. The conductor would need to cross cue the score with several important markings.

While the rehearsal letters do match between the Bärenreiter score and Breitkopf und Härtel parts, the measure numbers do not. After measure number 528 (the conclusion of the first movement), the Breitkopf und Härtel parts begin measuring at "1" for the start of each movement. This is not so in the continuously numbered Bärenreiter score (with the entire concerto numbered "1" to "885"). This difference is easily reconciled by neatly penciling the Breitkopf und Härtel numbering into the Bärenreiter score.

It is also prudent for the conductor to consult with the soloist as to what measure numbering system and rehearsal-lettering scheme is present in the soloist's edition. By being prepared with any possible numbering or rehearsal system, the conductor can truly be a unifying factor, even if the performance materials vary. This is essential for effective rehearsing and performing.

Perhaps more tactile considerations may also be warranted when selecting a score. The Bärenreiter score is stitched in signatures, resulting in a very durable and long lasting bind. The scores published by Breitkopf und Härtel, Kalmus, Lucks, or Broude Brothers are staple bound. While somewhat durable, these scores contain pages that may easily separate. All said, if the economic means exist, the best option for a conductor purchasing a new score would appear to be the Bärenreiter score with the appropriate cross cues from the Breitkopf und Härtel score penciled in.

Chapter Three: Performance Considerations

At the heart of any preparation of a score should be the desire to create a performance that is compelling. The American conductor Karl Krueger (1894-1979) concisely surmises that music making has one valid point: the recreation of a composer's work.¹³ Achieving this straightforward goal is daunting, but it does give focus to the conductor and can lead him or her to various aspects of score preparation. The following sections explore some of these aspects.

While these considerations are separated into sections, it is impossible to completely isolate any given aspect of score preparation from another while still gaining a complete understanding of the piece. These sections will merely serve as a point of departure for a plethora of considerations a conductor may entertain during his or her preparation of the score.

Tempo and Transitions Between Movements

Mendelssohn's lack of specific tempo markings in most of his works leaves much to the conductor's discretion. Siegwart Reichwald suggests that the majority of the metronome indications in Mendelssohn's compositions were only placed as a means by which to prevent wrong tempi.¹⁴ Indeed, Mendelssohn wrote metronome indications in his autograph scores when another conductor would lead a performance, or when any given orchestra tended to misinterpret his writing. These indications would rarely be included in the published versions

¹³ Karl Krueger, *The Way of the Conductor* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 58.

¹⁴ Siegwart Reichwald, "Mendelssohn's Tempo Indications." in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 191.

of his works, particularly for those works composed before 1842, when Mendelssohn received a metronome as a birthday present from his friend, Karl Gottlieb Kyllmann (1803–78).¹⁵

A decade earlier, Mendelssohn seemed to condemn the use of the metronome when he met with Hector Berlioz (1803-69) in March of 1831. Berlioz recounts, in his memoirs, a conversation with the young Mendelssohn regarding the metronome and the use of metronome markings.¹⁶

One day, when I spoke of the metronome and its usefulness, Mendelssohn said sharply, "What on earth is the point of a metronome? It's a futile device. Any musician who cannot guess the tempo of a piece just by looking at it is a blockhead".

Berlioz commented further that any talk about the metronome irritated Mendelssohn. Although Mendelssohn's early aversion to the device seemed to soften occasionally for use in performances, his omission of metronome indications in published scores means that the conductor must glean tempo indications from within the score itself (such as basic tempo markings, time signatures, musical phrases, etc.).

The selection of the opening tempo is enormously important as the conductor prepares the concerto for rehearsals or performances. In all practicality, perhaps the very first consideration for the opening tempo should be requested from the soloist. He or she will certainly have a specific preferred tempo, or range of tempi. But, the conductor should be prepared to offer a tempo

¹⁵ Reichwald, "Mendelssohn's Tempo Indications," 194.

¹⁶ Hector Berlioz et al., *Memoirs of Hector Berlioz from 1803 to 1865: Comprising His Travels in Germany, Italy, Russia, and England* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1932), 278.

suggestion from the orchestral standpoint, should a soloist wish to consult the conductor when selecting a tempo.

The first printed indication of *Allegro molto appassionato* does not allow for any measurable tempo selection. In a letter dated July 30th, 1838 to Ferdinand David, Mendelssohn wrote "... I would like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor remains in my mind, the beginning of which allows me no peace."¹⁷ This important clue suggests that Mendelssohn may have already had the stormy, foreboding, and restless opening in mind while forming his early ideas for the concerto.

In this opening, attention should be paid to the violins and viola. Their moving E minor arpeggios must be fluid and able to be played, as notated, with one bow for every two measures of music (See Figure 1). It is the case that slurs, ties, and bowing indications constitute the majority of the differences between the 1844 and 1845 versions of the concerto. In this instance, however, the slurs connecting every two measures at the opening of the concerto are present in both versions. It is logical that the conductor should realize the effect of an indication so seemingly vital to Mendelssohn.

¹⁷ Julius Wilhelm Albert von Eckardt, *Ferdinand David und die Familie Mendelssohn-Bartholdy* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888), 94.

Figure 1 – Movement I (Measures 1-4)

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violino I, Violino II, and Viola. The score is written in treble clef for the violins and alto clef for the viola. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The music consists of a continuous sixteenth-note pattern across four measures. Each instrument part is marked with a dynamic of *p* (piano). The notes are grouped in pairs of eighth notes, and the pattern repeats every two measures.

Maintaining this bowing, in two-measure units, requires a tempo fast enough to execute all sixteen notes in one bow, but not a tempo that is so fast that the concerto seems frantic. At this point, attention is drawn to an important difference between the 1844 and 1845 versions, when considering the opening tempo. The 1844 version bears the indication *Allegro con fuoco*; the 1845 version *Allegro molto appassionato*. Perhaps a tempo that allows for *appassionato* with a distinct forward-moving force is appropriate.

Additionally, with only one and a half measures of introduction before the solo violin enters, the tempo must immediately be established and maintained. The haunting and lamenting solo violin line is lyrical and must, as with the opening orchestral lines, be played with a fluid motion. These considerations lead the conductor to a tempo selection that is dually a matter of practicality and one of effective mood. A tempo marking of 84 to 100 for the half note would meet these objectives, assuming the soloist is agreeable.

The second movement is performed *attacca*, being linked to the first movement by a single, sustained “B” played by the first bassoon. Setting the

tempo of the second movement can be treacherous, as the 6/8 Andante could be conducted in 6 or in 2. The conductor would be well advised to think the tempo during the fermata. Furthermore, it is quite logical for the fermata to be held for six beats in the new tempo of the second movement. This sustained “B” is held through the first dotted quarter note of the second movement. Even though there is no movement or addition of other instruments here, the conductor should beat three eighth notes here, setting the tempo of the movement (See Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Movement I into Movement II

During this fermata, the conductor thinks “1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6” in the new tempo.

Here, the conductor beats 1, 2, 3 (continuing 4, 5, 6) to clearly establish the new tempo.

The image shows a musical score for six instruments: Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, and Trumpets. The score is in 6/8 time and marked *Andante*. The first measure of the second movement features a fermata over a sustained note. Two arrows originate from text boxes above the score. The first arrow points to the first measure of the second movement, where the conductor is instructed to think of six beats in the new tempo. The second arrow points to the first dotted quarter note of the second movement, where the conductor is instructed to beat three eighth notes to establish the new tempo.

A tempo in which the eighth note equals 84 to 100 is very logical. This is a direct tempo conversion where the half note of the first movement equals the eighth note of the second movement. It is not vital to maintain this tempo beyond the first eight measures of the movement. In fact, it is preferable to allow tempo fluctuations, especially as the soloist moves through the melodic lines of this movement.

The goal, just as in the first movement, is to establish the tempo at which the soloist intends to play when he or she enters in the ninth measure of the movement. Whatever the tempo in the first eight measures happens to be, the tempo could easily be altered to accommodate the soloist, if necessary. This is most easily accomplished when the conductor beats in 6 and keeps the pattern and ictus small and precise. Most certainly, the conductor can conduct in 2, or alter any other aspect of conducting, throughout the movement. However, in these critical opening measures of the second movement, the conductor is well advised to be clear and precise.

David Milsom, while researching Mendelssohn's conducting style, comments that "Whenever during a performance [Mendelssohn] allowed himself to make occasional small alterations in tempo by means of improvised ritardandos or accelerandos, these were realized in such a way that one would have believed they had been prepared in rehearsal."¹⁸ This observation could be interpreted to mean that slight changes in tempo were logical and well placed.

¹⁸ David Milsom, "Mendelssohn and the Orchestra." in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 87.

This logical placement of tempo alterations is critical in the second movement. Too many alterations, or changes that are exaggerated, can lead to a sluggish, ponderous movement. Making no allowances in tempo will result in a boring, seemingly passive execution of the movement. As with all aspects of score preparation, the conductor should strive for balance and tasteful execution. In most instances, a skilled soloist will clearly show where he or she intends to place tempo alterations.

Mendelssohn employs a unique 14-measure transition between the second and third movements. The tempo indication of this transition, *Allegretto non troppo*, allows for a variety of tempo interpretations, but as before, the most logical tempo seems to be a direct conversion from the second movement to this transitory section where the eighth note now equals the quarter note (quarter note equals 84 to 100 beats per minute).

While there are no direct instructions contained in the score, the employment of this transition seems to suggest that this section be performed *attacca*. The conductor should release the fermata, concluding the second movement, then immediately execute a preparatory gesture, on beat 3, as the soloist enters on beat 4. Another possibility, if the soloist so desires, allows the conductor to release the fermata, and the soloist execute the pickup notes during the preparatory gesture to the transition section. In this case, the conductor should breathe and lift as the soloist plays the pickup notes.

A third possibility exists where the release of the fermata is executed as a preparatory gesture, with no pause at all. In this instance, the conductor breathes

during the release of the fermata, and the soloist enters with the two pickup notes as the conductor lifts and breathes. No matter what execution is chosen, the conductor must minimize the lift, and clearly show the downbeat so that the orchestra enters at the correct moment. Figure 3 demonstrates the three possibilities.

**Figure 3 –
Executing Movement II into the *Allegretto non troppo* Transition Section**

Flutes
Oboes
Clarinets
Bassoons
Horns
Trumpets
Timpani
Solo Violin
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello/Bass

Release fermata, keeping the baton low in the beat plain

Preparatory gesture arches down, to the right, executed with a breath, as a silent beat

Lift into beat 4 as the soloist plays the two pickup notes

- OR -

Release fermata, keeping the baton low in the beat plain

Preparatory gesture lifts, with a breath, as the soloist plays the two pickup notes

- OR -

Release Fermata, down, to the right, executed with a breath – The release is the preparatory gesture

Lift into beat 4 as the soloist plays the two pickup notes

Clearly show downbeat to Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello

Allegretto non troppo.

Allegretto non troppo. p

The final movement, marked *Allegro molto vivace*, needs to be bright, buoyant, and bubbly, in a style particularly characteristic of Mendelssohn. Tempo in this movement must be contoured to the soloist. Should a particularly fast tempo be selected, the solo violin passages may become technically unplayable. A sluggish tempo would destroy the character. Because Mendelssohn employs a rather simple fanfare-like opening to this movement, an effective tempo could be anywhere from 132 to 154 for the quarter note.

The movement should be, as with the other movements and sections, performed *attacca*. The conductor has two basic options when transitioning between the previous section, and the third movement. First, the fermata could be completely released, a new preparatory gesture and breath given, and a clear downbeat executed. The second employs the release of the fermata as the preparatory gesture, executed with a breath, followed by a clear down beat.

The great violin teacher and pedagogue Leopold Auer (1845-1930) suggested that the motto “Music exists because of the virtuoso” has been disavowed.¹⁹ This is evident in the multitude of performances given of the concerto by an enormous variety of amateur, student, and professional violinists and orchestras. Consequently, the conductor may be working with a soloist who, for one reason or another, does not want to take a particularly fast tempo in the final movement.

It is magnificent to realize that, in this final fast-paced movement, even a slower tempo can yield an effective and exciting performance. Unlike the first movement, the final movement does not call for an increased tempo as it

¹⁹ Leopold Auer, *Violin Playing as I Teach It* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1921), 89.

reaches the conclusion. A *piu Vivace* could, most certainly, be utilized at the end of the movement, perhaps around rehearsal mark “Z”, but this is not essential. Mendelssohn’s skill with orchestration, balance, and melodic line, among many compositional skills, allows for a variety of tempo choices.

Any tempo consideration by the conductor should be approached with as much knowledge as possible about the soloist and orchestra. A planned tempo is exactly that, only something that is planned. The execution may require a change to the plan. Should a soloist or orchestra require a faster or slower tempo to execute a movement, one might surmise that the composer would be amiable to this adaptation. The alternative is to strictly select and execute a tempo that, ultimately, is unplayable, resulting in some ambiguous approximation of the composer’s musical intent.

Tempo and the transitions between movements constitute a large portion of the score preparation for this concerto. In addition to these, there are other areas of particular concern for the conductor. One such place is at the conclusion of the cadenza (located in the first movement at measure number 298). The orchestra sustains a dominant seventh chord as the cadenza begins. The soloist emerges from this sustained note, already in motion at the release of the orchestral tutti.

The concerto’s cadenza is unique in that it occurs at the end of the development, rather than at the close of the movement, as was customary at the time. Eduard Jacob suggests that the placement of the cadenza, and its seamless transition into the recapitulation, allows the recurring first theme to

make a fresh beginning.²⁰ Maintaining the flow of the cadenza directly into the orchestra entrance is vital so that this fresh beginning is executed seamlessly.

Homer Ulrich (1906-87) suggests, in his Symphonic Music, that many cadenzas in works prior to the Mendelssohn's violin concerto offer the soloist an opportunity to elaborate upon the composer's thematic manipulations or even "indulge in meaningless display".²¹ Ulrich argues that in Mendelssohn, the cadenza found a new function: one of structural importance. Indeed, this cadenza, composed by Mendelssohn himself, is mentioned in Ulrich's book as an example of orchestral evolution among the other purely orchestral works of Mendelssohn. Thus, the cadenza is incredibly important, from an orchestral and architectural standpoint, and should be carefully considered by the conductor as he or she prepares the score.

Throughout the cadenza, the conductor must keep track of the soloist, so that the orchestra can be cued upon the cadenza's conclusion. Simply meeting the soloist at the end of the cadenza is not an option in the Mendelssohn. Clive Brown suggests that music dating from the time of the concerto encouraged "extempore embellishment," and that additional performance items, such as portamento, tempo fluctuations, and additional harmonics, are stylistically

²⁰ Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Felix Mendelssohn and His Times*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), 305.

²¹ Homer Ulrich, *Symphonic Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 173.

appropriate.²² This could be problematic to the conductor who is attempting to follow the soloist during the cadenza.

Making this task more difficult is the fact that many scores that reprint the Breitkopf edition (Kalmus, Luck's, Broude) contain a particularly troublesome page turn for the conductor during the cadenza (See Figure 4). Making a copy of the cadenza and taping it in the score so that the conductor can make the page turn during the cadenza will easily remedy this problem. The Bärenreiter scores do not contain this problem. In these scores, the page turn is during the cadenza, allowing ample time and opportunity to prepare the orchestra for their entrance.

Following the soloist in the last moments of the cadenza can be a difficult task. The arpeggiations are often performed with *accelerando*. The cadenza segues directly into the entrance of the orchestra, leaving no room for error. One possible tactic is for the conductor to lock into the base note of each arpeggio. In measure 331, on the second beat, the violin plays an A-sharp before returning to a series of arpeggios based on B. When the solo returns to the B, the conductor could begin a series of counting, from 1 to 8, keeping in mind that the orchestra enters on the eighth count. Figure 5 demonstrates this tactic for exiting the cadenza.

²² Clive Brown, "The Performance of Mendelssohn's Chamber and Solo Music for Violin." in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 66.

Figure 4 – Page Turn in Movement I Cadenza (Measures 299-336)

Page turn here, with only half of a measure after the page turn before the orchestra entrance must be cued.

The image shows a musical score for a cadenza. The top part is labeled "Cadenza ad libitum." and features a complex, flowing melodic line. Below this, the tempo changes to "Tempo I" and then "a tempo". The score includes various dynamics such as *pp*, *ff*, and *ppp*. A large black arrow points from the text box above to a specific measure in the score, indicating the page turn point. To the right, a separate system of staves shows the orchestral accompaniment, with dynamics like *pp* and *ppp* and the word "segue" written below the notes.

A copy of the cadenza can be taped, as a foldout, to page 18.

This image shows a page of musical score, likely page 18 as mentioned in the text. A small inset box on the left side of the page contains a copy of the cadenza section from the previous image. The main score consists of multiple staves of music, including vocal lines and orchestral accompaniment. The page number "18" is visible in the top right corner.

Figure 5 – Exiting the Cadenza (Measures 323-336)

The image displays a musical score for measures 323-336. The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth notes with various articulations and dynamics. Vertical lines are drawn below the staff to indicate counts from 1 to 8. A box on the left contains the text "Conductor listens for this A sharp, then counts" with an arrow pointing to the first measure. Two boxes on the right contain the text "Preparatory gesture moves down, with a breath on count 7" and "Cue orchestra entrance on count 8", with arrows pointing to measures 7 and 8 respectively. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *ppp*, and articulation markings like *mi*, *nu*, *en*, *da*, *al*, and *ppp*. The word *segue* is written above the staff at the end of measure 8.

Conductor listens for this A sharp, then counts

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Preparatory gesture moves down, with a breath on count 7

Cue orchestra entrance on count 8

Homer Ulrich's quote about "meaningless display" aside, the cadenza served an important improvisatory role for soloists in the Classical era. Mendelssohn's departure from this type of cadenza to one that is written out by the composer himself, along with its placement at a more impactful architectural moment, represents a rather progressive evolution. The conductor must understand its significance and be able to execute calmly the orchestra's entrance without causing the soloist to falter during this demanding cadenza.

Orchestra Size and Configuration

Mendelssohn was able to write for very large orchestras, and did so for performances of his oratorios and other larger works. Just before his appointment as Conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1835, he conducted a music festival in Cologne with an orchestra of 204 musicians and a chorus of 476.²³ Mendelssohn was certainly aware of the sound and texture of large orchestras, but practical concerns, among other considerations, limited the size of his orchestral forces in the Violin Concerto.

Mendelssohn's scoring for the concerto was that of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1844. The concerto is scored for two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets as well as timpani and strings. The number of strings employed during Mendelssohn's tenure varied, but there is

²³ Daniel J Koury, "Orchestral Performance Practices in the Nineteenth Century." (PhD diss., Boston University, 1981).

no evidence to suggest a drastic change in a more or less standard string count of 9 first violins, 8 second violins, 5 violas, 5 cellos, and 4 basses.²⁴

Most modern orchestras employ at least this number of string players. The temptation for the conductor may be to use more violas and cellos, and, perhaps, reduce the count of the first violins. This could make the string count 8-8-6-6-4, a division that is utilized very often in concerts, especially when the orchestra is performing works of the early Romantic Era. Keeping the string count at 8-8-6-6-4 may be practical, but there is evidence to suggest that altering this count to a smaller or larger complement could be successful, depending on the skill of the orchestra.

Mendelssohn's orchestra in Leipzig consisted of musicians possessing varying degrees of skill and strength. Within each section, there were a few important musicians demonstrating great skill and strength. Also in each section, were a greater number of musicians that David Milsom describes as "dutiful, but not outstanding."²⁵ So many orchestras today, especially regional, amateur, and college orchestras, are composed of musicians with a great variety of skill.

In these orchestras, larger numbers of players could be utilized, especially if some players do not produce a particularly full sound. Conversely, professional orchestras, and those of a similar quality, could, potentially, use fewer strings, especially if the strongest members of the orchestra are employed. In any event, the key consideration is one of balance and clarity. Even if some members of the

²⁴ Milsom, "Mendelssohn and the Orchestra," 91.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

string section are less skilled than others, a minimum level of competency is required to execute the orchestral material with clarity and poise.

The Gewandhaus Orchestra, today, has a roster that includes 31 first violins, 26 second violins, 20 violas, 18 cellos, and 14 basses.²⁶ Most certainly, this number of strings is infrequently, if ever, utilized on a single program. However, performances given by the orchestra often include large string sections exceeding Mendelssohn's string count of 9-8-5-5-4. The very orchestra that premiered the concerto utilizes expanded string sections in modern performances. Thus, it is possible to use large string sections, so long as the conductor is aware of balancing issues and strives to keep the concerto properly proportioned.

The Mendelssohn Violin Concerto features orchestral tutti passages that are not as involved or extensive as composers of the later Romantic. A higher string count is required in concerti such as those by Tchaikovsky, Bruch, and Brahms because the orchestral writing is elaborate and requires a larger string complement. As addressed before, the Mendelssohn could be performed with larger strings. Should this option be exercised, it may be necessary to ask some stands of strings to be tacet during some of the solo violin passages.

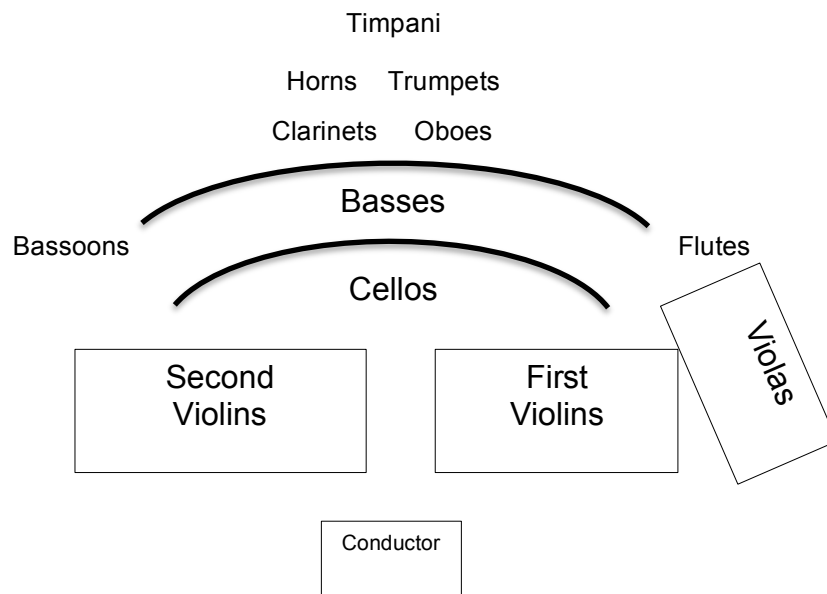
The configuration of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra during Mendelssohn's tenure was different than most orchestras today. The 1845 configuration featured violins in the front, with first violins to the conductor's right, seconds to the left. Cellos and basses formed an arch behind the violins, and

²⁶ "Gewandhaus Orchestra: Musician Roster," last modified May 28, 2014
<http://www.gewandhaus.de/gewandhaus-orchestra/>.

violins were to the right, behind the first violins. Woodwinds, brass, and timpani were centered at the rear of the orchestra, with woodwinds in a single row.²⁷

Figure 6 illustrates this configuration.

Figure 6 – Configuration of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, c. 1844²⁸



Note: Only the instrumentation for the Violin Concerto is shown.

This configuration would prove foreign and perhaps even confusing to most modern orchestras. Even the modern day Gewandhaus Orchestra is seated in a different configuration when compared to its 19th century ancestor. The violins are still located in the front, but are inverted so that the first violins are to

²⁷ Milsom, "Mendelssohn and the Orchestra," 91.

²⁸ Figure constructed after review of diagrams found in:
Milsom, "Mendelssohn and the Orchestra," 91.
Elliot Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1988), 153.

the left, seconds to the right. Between them are cellos and violas, with basses behind the violas. The woodwinds and brass are seated in pairs, with flutes and oboes in one row, clarinets and bassoons in the second, and horns and trumpets in the third row. Timpani are placed at the back of the orchestra.

This configuration, while modern, is still different from most American orchestras. While the woodwinds, brass, and timpani are similar, the string configuration is placed, from left to right, first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, and basses. Notable exceptions to this seating can be found, even in American orchestras, such as the Boston Symphony. Thus, perhaps, it is best to assume that no configuration is truly standard.

Any modern configuration works well for the concerto, but the conductor must be acquainted with the seating. The proper delivery of cues in the proper location is essential. If at all possible, the conductor should know the seating of the orchestra before he or she begins their score preparation for any given performance. Should the conductor be able to choose, the best seating arrangement is, logically, the one that provides the most comfort for the orchestra so that visual communication is enhanced.

Orchestral Balance and Texture

Mendelssohn inherited a symphony orchestra that was heavily developed in the Classical era by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The tradition of performing these masters went unbroken at the Gewnadhhaus well into

Mendelssohn's time as conductor.²⁹ It is logical to surmise that the Classical Viennese symphony orchestra, utilized and developed by the Classical masters, was both practical and convenient for Mendelssohn. The concerto is scored for this orchestral complement (two each of the woodwinds, horns, trumpets, and timpani plus strings), as are many of Mendelssohn's other works.

This scoring creates an almost perfectly balanced concerto. The solo violin can be heard clearly and the prominent orchestral passages are executed with seemingly perfect balance. The conductor should strive to maintain this delicate balance, even though so much of this task seems to be solved by Mendelssohn's exquisite orchestration. An important part of this balance is maintained by selecting the proper number of musicians in the orchestra. This aspect has been discussed in the section *Orchestra Size and Configuration*.

There are several passages throughout the concerto that could, potentially, cover the solo violin if care is not taken to balance the orchestra. One such passage is found in the last movement at measure number 133, or rehearsal letter "X." Here, the violin has a technically demanding line atop arco lines in the first violins, viola, and cello. Basses and second violins have pizzicato notes, and the woodwinds, and first horn, have various sections of the solo violin melody.

Mendelssohn's texture throughout this passage is rather thick, especially when compared to other similar passages (such as those found at rehearsal letter "W" or rehearsal letter "T"). It is imperative that the conductor considers the various roles of the orchestra here, and strives to dynamically balance them

²⁹ William Weber, "The Rise of the Classical Repertoire in the Nineteenth-Century Orchestral Concerts." in *The Orchestra*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986), 367.

properly. Essentially, there are two melodies competing for the listener's attention. There is a legato line, counter to the solo violin line, found in the first violins, violas, cellos, and first horn. There is a spry, lively line found in the solo violin, with fragmented support from the woodwinds, which is like an obbligato passage, when compared to the legato melody in the strings and horn.

The conductor must achieve balance here. The legato melody is enhanced by short passages featuring rapid crescendo, closely followed by rapid diminuendo. This dynamic arc is commonly referred to as hairpin dynamics ($\langle \rangle$). Mendelssohn does not indicate the loudest dynamic level, at the widest part of the hairpins. It is logical to surmise that these swells are modest, not extreme and are, at most, "*mp.*" The dynamic marking at the start of this legato line is a very delicate "*pp.*" Mendelssohn skillfully places the first violins in the lower register of their range, the cellos in their upper register, and the violas and horns securely in their middle range. This tactic keeps the octave displacement of these instruments minimal, and allows for a similar timbre from each of the sections that is more easily blended and balanced.

The obbligato line being played by the solo violin is marked "*pp.*" The various woodwind passages that support the solo violin are marked "*p.*" Thus, all instruments playing the passage at rehearsal letter "W" are marked with a delicate, soft, dynamic. Perhaps it is simply easier to ask the solo violin to play louder, allowing the line to speak clearly over the orchestra. However, this is most likely not Mendelssohn's intent here.

The conductor must delicately balance these two lines, forming a perfectly married pair. In this instance, the duality of the orchestra groupings and the solo violin create a subtle texture that is different from any of the previous passages. The solo violin and woodwinds maintain the lively, spirited quality of this movement, but this quality is momentarily tempered by the lush, legato melody in the strings and horn. Figure 7 illustrates this passage and relevant considerations.

Figure 7 – Movement III, Rehearsal Letter “X” (Measures 133-138)

The musical score for Movement III, Rehearsal Letter "X" (Measures 133-138) is presented. The score includes parts for Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, Trumpets, Timpani, Solo Violin, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Bass. Three callout boxes with arrows point to specific musical features:

- Legato melody in Violin I, Viola, Cello, and Horn I**: This box points to the string and horn parts, which feature a lush, legato melody.
- Lively obbligato melody in solo violin and woodwinds**: This box points to the Solo Violin and woodwind parts, which maintain a lively, spirited quality.
- Hairpins indicating moderate swell**: This box points to the dynamic markings (hairpins) in the Solo Violin and woodwind parts, indicating a moderate swell.

The passage examined above contains a marking that Mendelssohn often utilized that bears further investigation. His use of hairpins as markings that indicate dynamic contour is important and often misinterpreted. John Michael Cooper suggests that, upon examination of the autograph score, one can see that Mendelssohn recognized a clear distinction between open and closed hairpins.³⁰ Indeed, when viewing the autograph score, it is clear that Mendelssohn utilized hairpins that are closed, and, in other instances, ones that are open.

Hairpins that are open suggest a more gradual crescendo and diminuendo, with, perhaps, the middle portion of the musical line, that portion in “the gap,” sustained at the loudest dynamic level. The publishers of even the earliest printed editions of Mendelssohn’s works reproduced open hairpins faithfully, as Mendelssohn prescribed. Figure 8 illustrates a passage from the first movement, both in the autograph (reproduced in facsimile by Garland Publishing³¹) and the FMW (the first collected works of Mendelssohn, published by Breitkopf und Härtel).

³⁰ Cooper, “From Notation to Edition to Performance: Issues in Interpretation,” 184-185.

³¹ Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor Op. 64*. foreword H.C. Robbins Landon et al. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991).

Figure 8 – Autograph and Printed Score of Movement I (Measures 148-153)



The image displays two versions of a musical score for measures 148-153. On the left is the autograph manuscript, and on the right is a printed score. Both versions show a piano part with five staves. The autograph features open hairpins (wavy lines) for dynamics, while the printed score uses closed hairpins (curved lines). A black box at the bottom contains the text "Open hairpins in the autograph and printed scores", with two arrows pointing upwards to the hairpin markings in both the autograph and the printed score.

As faithfully printed as the open hairpins are, many full scores of the concerto do not print closed hairpins as Mendelssohn notated them. In fact, one of the most used editions of the score (that of the FMW, reprinted today by many publishers) makes no distinction between open and closed hairpins. Figure 9 illustrates a comparison of such an instance in the final movement of the concerto. (This is the same passage utilized in Figure 7.)

Figure 9 – Autograph and Printed Score of Movement III (Measures 133-138)



Closed hairpins in the autograph score that are not reproduced accurately in the printed score.



Closed hairpins meant, for Mendelssohn, a rapid crescendo and diminuendo, in effect a much quicker swell than open hairpins. The conductor would be well advised to compare the autograph along side his or her printed score and note these important distinctions between open and closed hairpins. These two seemingly insignificant markings can make a stark change in the sound of the orchestra when open and closed hairpins are treated as individual, and different, effects. It should be noted, and perhaps warned, that the 2005 critical score published by Bärenreiter, alas, makes no distinction between open and closed hairpins.

John Michael Cooper provides one further note about the use of closed hairpins. Musicians in the nineteenth century, especially performers of stringed instruments, both solo and orchestral, could interpret these markings as a moment where vibrato could be applied.³² Clive Brown corroborates this use of vibrato by pointing out that a number of eighteenth and nineteenth-century writings suggest that the closed hairpin over individual notes may have implied the application of vibrato.³³

This use of vibrato, used sparingly as an ornament, is of particular importance when one considers that the concerto was composed in the mid-nineteenth century. During this time, orchestral instruments predominantly played without the extended use of vibrato present in modern orchestras. The next section of this paper examines this aspect of performing the concerto.

³² Cooper, "From Notation to Edition to Performance: Issues in Interpretation," 184.

³³ Clive Brown, "Bowing Styles, Vibrato and Portamento in Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 113, No. 1 (1988): 118.

One of the most attractive aspects of the concerto is its tendency towards natural perfection. There are limited passages that may require extra attention, but the majority of the concerto is well balanced, and can be performed with no major adjustments from the conductor in this realm. This balance is, of course, dependent on a proper orchestra size and configuration. (See the section *Orchestra Size and Configuration*.)

Mendelssohn, unlike his Classical predecessors, began scoring his symphonic works with an increasing prominence given to orchestration.³⁴ Rather than sketching his main melodic ideas in short form, or in a piano score, and then elaborating the material for full orchestra, Mendelssohn began favoring another approach. He carefully selected what instruments in his orchestra would present any given melodic or harmonic component, giving increased prominence to the act of orchestration. This practice made orchestration a part of the creative act of composing, rather than an afterthought.³⁵

This skillful orchestration should be well studied by the conductor. Because Mendelssohn crafted the concerto in almost perfect proportions, the conductor should maintain the composer's orchestral balance and texture. There is often a well-meaning attempt by conductors to "help the composer" by altering dynamics or other markings so that the work is more effectively conveyed. This could, truly, devastate this concerto. The opposite should be the goal of the conductor: remain faithful to Mendelssohn and strive, throughout the rehearsal

³⁴ R. Larry Todd, "Orchestral Texture and the Art of Orchestration." in *The Orchestra*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986), 214-215.

³⁵ Ibid.

process, to perform what the composer has already so intricately balanced and orchestrated.

Aspects of Performance Practice

So much of score preparation of any piece of repertoire requires knowledge of certain aspects of how the work would have been performed during the composer's lifetime. Certainly, for Mendelssohn, this is true. There are two aspects of performance practice that bear special examination, as they are substantially different in the modern orchestra. As this document examines the conductor's preparation of the orchestral material, the comments that follow will be focused mainly on the orchestral strings, rather than the solo violin.

It will most likely not be the case that a conductor will lead rehearsals and performances of the concerto that are performed by an ensemble composed of instruments whose design dates from the early 1800's. The modern incarnations of metal flutes, b-flat clarinets, pedal-tuned timpani, and chromatic horns and trumpets will most likely be included in whatever orchestra the conductor leads. That said, it is possible to create a more authentic orchestral sound, that of the early and middle 1800's, even with modern instruments. There are two specific aspects that can be addressed with the stringed instruments in this realm.

Clive Brown, who has extensively researched the performance practices of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, brings attention to the fact that, by the early 1800's, stringed instruments, and their bows, achieved, essentially, the

form most recognized today, although still utilizing gut strings.³⁶ This most certainly aids in the conductor's understanding of the stringed instruments.

The conductor must know what type of bow stroke is to be used. The conductor does not necessarily have to go so far as to suggest the style of bowing to the concertmaster or any of the principal strings. It is a matter of understanding and an ability to describe the sound desired. Mendelssohn's compositions align with an important period in the evolution of the bow.

The hatchet-headed bow, developed in the later half of the eighteenth century, featured a stronger and more elastic wooden stick, resulting in hair that was under greater tension when compared to early Classical and late Baroque bows. The result was a bow capable of a true spiccato, that is, a bow stroke where the hair slightly leaves the string between notes.³⁷

Earlier works of Mendelssohn included clear indications when the composer desired separation between notes, resulting in a short bow stroke. By placing rests after each note in succession, Mendelssohn clearly demonstrates his intent. It is logical to find these notations in Mendelssohn's early works because he began composing in a richly Classical tradition. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven all utilized these indications and all were composing for instruments bowed with the earlier pike's head bow. This bow, while capable of producing

³⁶ Brown, "Bowling Styles, Vibrato and Portamento in Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing," 98-99.

³⁷ Ibid.

spiccato, did so with less separation because of its initial “give” as a result of the hair’s softness.³⁸

Mendelssohn’s String Quartet, Op. 13, dating from 1827, demonstrates his usage of alternating notes and rests in succession, as well as dots, to indicate space between notes (see Figure 10), requiring a short, separated bow. Spiccato is not implicitly required in this passage, although many performers do perform it as such.

**Figure 10 –
String Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 13:
Movement III – Intermezzo (Measures 31-46)**

(Allegro di molto)

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello

Short notes with space indicated by alternating notes and rests.

Short notes with space indicated by dots.

³⁸ Brown, “Bowing Styles, Vibrato and Portamento in Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing,” 99.

Mendelssohn did not use the notation with alternating notes and rests in his later music where an off-string, or spiccato, bowing was required, perhaps because by this stage the springing bow stroke was more likely to have been understood as a matter of course.³⁹ This rationale, suggested by Clive Brown, logically applies to any score preparation of the concerto. Aside from passages that practically require an off-string bowing, so that the line is technically playable, there are numerous instances in the concerto where the conductor may, logically and appropriately, suggest a separated, off-string bowing.

One such instance can be found in the first movement where the first violins play the main theme (measures 47-61). There are numerous examples of two isolated quarter notes with no staccato or indication of separation. More modern interpretations of these notes would be to give them length. But, perhaps considering Mendelssohn's familiarity with a shorter bow stroke, these notes could be played with a shorter articulation (see Figure 11).

Figure 11 – Movement I – Violin I Part (Measures 47-53)

Isolated quarter notes that could be played with length, or, conversely, shorter such as:

³⁹ Clive Brown, "The Performance of Mendelssohn's Chamber and Solo Music for Violin." in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 71.

A variety of possible bowing lengths and styles within the orchestra is valid when performing the concerto. The utilization of a shorter bow stroke, producing greater separation, may, to some, produce more energy and forward momentum. To others, it may sound too terse and break the melodic lines. Of most importance is that the conductor be aware of the possibilities and be able to converse with the string players and the soloist in regard to performance practices.

It should be noted that the woodwind, brass, and timpani articulations must be matched to those of the strings. In most instances, the conductor can ask the woodwinds, brass, and timpani to lengthen, or shorten their notes, or, even more simply, ask them to match the style of the strings. Even if the non-string sections cannot instantly match the strings, it is certainly a valuable ensemble building practice to teach them to do so.

In addition to bowing styles, the use of, or absence of, vibrato within the orchestra must be considered when preparing the score of the concerto. Most vibrato techniques in the early and middle nineteenth century were essentially for soloists.⁴⁰ This restriction did not completely preclude the use of vibrato within the orchestra, but, as a general tendency, all instruments capable of the device utilized a predominantly non-vibrato tone.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 552.

⁴¹ Milsom, "Mendelssohn and the Orchestra," 96.

Vibrato was viewed as an ornament that was to be used sparingly.⁴² Mendelssohn's music can sound much more transparent and clean when performed with minimum vibrato. It has become standard practice for string sections of the modern orchestra to use vibrato. This practice is used to enhance tone, creating what can be described as a warming effect.

As with all aspects of score preparation, vibrato requires consideration from all points of view. Indeed, asking an orchestra to eliminate vibrato, or to use it only sparingly, may create an effect that is foreign to the modern orchestra. Too much vibrato could lead to a ponderous and heavy orchestral texture that is not characteristic of Mendelssohn. Furthermore, too much vibrato within the orchestra could make balancing the soloist with orchestra a difficult task.

Of most importance is the application of vibrato when it is effective, rather than, as Leopold Auer stated, "...eternal vibrato that is a pitifully misguided attempt at soulful playing."⁴³ The autograph score can prove to be a useful tool when considering vibrato. As discussed earlier, Mendelssohn utilized closed hairpins for a rapid rise and fall in the dynamic level of isolated notes or passages. It is logical to surmise that the moments marked with closed hairpins are excellent passages in which to apply vibrato.⁴⁴ This heightens the effect of the hairpin and also creates a change in orchestral color, rather than only a change in dynamics.

⁴² Milsom, "Mendelssohn and the Orchestra," 96.

⁴³ Brown, "The Performance of Mendelssohn's Chamber and Solo Music for Violin," 111.

⁴⁴ Cooper, "From Notation to Edition to Performance: Issues in Interpretation," 18.

Despite any amount of research in the realm of score preparation, there are practices associated with the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto that have stabilized during the past century and are, arguably, regarded as tradition. Striking a balance between tradition and research is vital. As a general rule, any conductor preparing a score to a concerto should, in most instances, plan the majority of his or her final preparations with the soloist. The essential task for the conductor is to be aware of the possibilities and have a rationale for the ideas that he or she offers.

The variety and depth of available technology will, assuredly, play a role in the conductor's performance preparation. Digital technology can provide, along with the recorded legacy of the concerto, a practically limitless amount of considerations. Historical performances can be heard, or even viewed, simply by searching the Internet. How much influence this has on the conductor is a matter of personal preference. It may be desirable for one conductor to prepare the score without first listening to a single recording. For another conductor, listening to many recordings may be a vital first step.

So much of the recorded performance history of the concerto provides context for the traditional and evolutionary aspects of the work. The use of digital and social media is, in the twenty-first century, seemingly inseparable from any research, including score preparation. Again, the goal is a balanced study that uses digital resources wisely as one tool of many in the score study process. Despite the array of modern study techniques and interpretations, there is, and one hopes always will be, a timeless quality to Mendelssohn's music.

The first edition of Sir George Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians (edited by John Alexander Fuller-Maitland), states of Mendelssohn that "It is well in these modern days to be able to point to one perfectly balanced nature, in whose life, whose letters, and whose music alike, all is at once manly and refined, clever and pure, brilliant and solid."⁴⁵ It is the conductor's preparation of the score that will allow the preservation of Mendelssohn's perfectly balanced nature and the brilliantly refined soul of his Violin Concerto to speak.

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⁴⁵ Stanley Bayliss, "Mendelssohn: A Present-Day Appraisal," *The Musical Times* 100 No. 1392 (1959): 76.

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Current Positions

Music Director/Conductor: Johnson City Symphony Orchestra (2008-Present)

Music Director/Conductor: Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra (2008-Present)

Director of Orchestras and Conductor of Opera: University of South Alabama
(2008-Present)

Previous Positions

Assistant Conductor of Orchestras and Opera: University of Kentucky
(2005-2008)

Instructor of Orchestral Conducting: University of Kentucky (2006-2008)

Music Faculty: Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts (2001-2009)

Director of Orchestras: Lafayette High School (2007-2008)

Cover Conductor: Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra (2006-2008)

Assistant Conductor: Bowling Green Philharmonia (2003-2005)

Instructor of Arts and Science: Bowling Green State University (2003-2005)

Assistant Conductor: Youngstown Symphony Youth Orchestra (1998-2003)

Conductor/Music Director: Dana Brass Ensemble, Youngstown State University
(1998-2004)

ROBERT JOSEPH SEEBACHER