

Einleitung

Ende Juni 1834 schrieb Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy an seinen Freund Ignaz Moscheles: „Dieser Tage kam der Dr. Franck, den Du kennst, nach Düsseldorf, und ich wünschte ihm einiges aus meiner adur Sinfonie zeigen zu können; da ich sie nun nicht habe, so fing ich an das Andante wieder aufzuschreiben und kam dabei gleich an soviele errata, daß michs interessirte und ich auch die Menuet ud das Finale aufschrieb, aber mit vielen sehr nöthigen Verbesserungen und wenn mir solch eine Stelle auffiel, so mußte ich immer an Dich denken, der Du mir niemals ein tadelndes Wort darüber gesagt, und das Alles doch gewiß deutlicher und besser gewußt hast, als ich jetzt. Nur das erste Stück habe ich nicht dazu geschrieben, denn wenn ich da mal drüber komme, so fürchte ich, ich muß vom 4^{ten} Tact an das ganze Thema verändern, und somit ziemlich das ganze erste Stück, wozu ich jetzt aber keine Zeit habe. Mir scheint die Dominante im 4^{ten} Tact ganz unangenehm; ich glaube es muß die Septime (a, g) sein. Habe aber vielen Dank, daß Ihr beim Philharm. so viel von meinen Sachen gebt; mir ist es sehr lieb, wenn nur das Publikum nicht drüber brummt.“¹

So beginnt die Revisionsgeschichte der Mendelssohnschen A-Dur-Sinfonie. Wie im ersten Band dieser Ausgabe dargestellt, war Mendelssohn zu deren Komposition während seines Italienaufenthaltes in den Jahren 1830 und 1831 inspiriert worden, hatte sie Anfang 1833 aufgrund eines Kompositionsauftrags der Londoner Philharmonic Society in der Tat zu Papier gebracht und die Uraufführung in London am 13. Mai 1833 in den Hanover Square Rooms selbst dirigiert.² Von Anfang an zeigte sich der ewig selbstkritische Komponist zwar mit der Aufführung zufrieden³, aber nicht im selben Maße mit dem Werk an sich, wie Carl Klingemann bemerkte: „Nur ein Kenner, freilich der größte Kenner in Europa, tadelte und war nicht zufrieden, – indessen der Kenner ist der Componist selber, – und was kümmern wir uns um den?“⁴

Eine Publikation der Sinfonie hätte daher den für Mendelssohn üblichen umfassenden Revisionsprozess vorausgesetzt. Dieser aber konnte zunächst nicht erfolgen, da der Komponist durch seine im Sommer 1833 angetretene Stelle als Musikdirektor in Düsseldorf alle Hände voll zu tun hatte und außerdem ab Herbst desselben Jahres die Arbeit am Oratorium *Paulus* alles

andere in den Hintergrund rücken ließ. Somit blieb die Sinfonie erst einmal liegen, zumal die Philharmonic Society ohnehin die Aufführungsrechte für zwei Jahre besaß und Mendelssohn die autographe Partitur nicht bei sich hatte: Sie war bei Ignaz Moscheles, dem Freund des Komponisten und Direktoriumsmitglied der Society, in London verblieben. So musste Mendelssohn eine zweite Niederschrift beginnen, um, wie er selbst im eingangs zitierten Brief vom 26. Juni 1834 schreibt, Dr. Hermann Franck das Stück zeigen zu können. Dasselbe geht auch aus einem Brief an Klingemann vom 28. Juni 1834 hervor: „Als ich Deine freundlichen Worte über meine Sinf. las, machte ich mich sogleich dran für Franck die 3 letzten Stücke aufzuschreiben und umzuarbeiten, ich wollt' ich könnt sie Dir eben vorspielen, sie sind viel besser geworden. Namentlich No 2 ud 3.“⁵ Moscheles, dem das Werk in seiner originalen Gestalt offenbar sehr ans Herz gewachsen war, konnte diese Auffassung nur schwerlich teilen und reagierte in seiner Antwort vom 15. Juli entsprechend überrascht: „Ich will Dir nur noch sagen daß ich mich wundere u staune wie Du beÿm Ueberschreiben Deiner Adur Sinfonie noch viele Veränderungen u Verbesserungen anbringen konntest – was meinst Du aber mit dem 4^{ten} Tact des 1^{ten} Stücks? wo statt der Dominante eine Septime a, g angebracht werden soll?“

ich kann nicht recht verstehen ob Du das meinst:

Verständige und belehre Deinen treuen Freund I. Moscheles.“⁶

- 1 Brief vom 26. Juni 1834 an Ignaz Moscheles, Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection, *Mendelssohn's Letters to Moscheles 1826–1847*, Nr. 17, gedruckt in: *Briefe von Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy an Ignaz und Charlotte Moscheles*, hrsg. von Felix Moscheles, Leipzig 1888, S. 95–100, das Zitat S. 95–96.
- 2 Siehe Serie I, Band 6 dieser Ausgabe.
- 3 „[...] die Leute sagten es sey das beste Concert, das die Gesellschaft je gegeben habe [...]“, in Gemeinschaftsbrief mit Klingemann vom 14. Mai 1833 an die Familie, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (im Folgenden: New York Public Library), *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, letter No. 163, gedruckt in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, Bd. 3, hrsg. und kommentiert von Uta Wald unter Mitarbeit von Juliane Baumgart-Streibert, Kassel etc. 2010, S. 171–172, das Zitat S. 172.
- 4 Klingemann in Gemeinschaftsbrief mit Mendelssohn vom 14. Mai 1833, New York Public Library, *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, letter No. 162, gedruckt ebd., S. 172–174, das Zitat S. 174.
- 5 Brief vom 28. Juni 1834 an Carl Klingemann, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, *MSS 77, The David and Fanny Opochnsky Collection*, Box 3, Folder 82, gedruckt in: *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann in London*, hrsg. und eingeleitet von Karl Klingemann [jun.], Essen 1909, S. 134–135, das Zitat S. 135.
- 6 Brief vom 15. Juli 1834 von Moscheles an Mendelssohn, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (im Folgenden: BLO), *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 29*, Green Books III-213.

Fast gleichzeitig hatte auch Mendelssohns Schwester Fanny Hensel um einen Ausschnitt aus der Sinfonie nachgesucht: „Felix ich beschwöre Dich, schicke mir doch auf der Stelle eine Staffette mit dem Allegretto oder Mittelstückthema Deiner A dur Symphonie, ich quäle mich todt damit. Wahrscheinlich ist mir unterdessen schon längst eingefallen, aber never mind.“⁷ Mendelssohn erfüllte seiner Schwester ihren Wunsch – sie erhielt statt des Themas sogar den ganzen zweiten Satz, natürlich auch bereits in der revidierten Fassung: „Fanny ich schicke Dir durch Prinzens mein Andante der Adur Sinf. abgeschrieben, statt des bloßen Themas, das Du verlangtest. Sonderbarer Weise schriebst Du mir gerade drum, als ich daran arbeitete es wieder aufzuschreiben, um es Franck vorspielen zu können, ich stieß auf Stellen die ich verbesserte, dann interessirte mich es mehr, und ich schrieb auch Menuett und letztes Stück heran, oder eigentlich arbeitete sie um. Mit dem ersten will ich mich mal später befassen, die 3 letzten Stücke sind glaub ich, gut gerathen.“⁸ Die erwähnte Beilage zum Brief hat sich leider nicht erhalten; es handelte sich allerdings nicht um eine Partitur, sondern um ein Arrangement für Klavier zu vier Händen, wie das Begleitschreiben der Sendung vom 22. Juli belegt: „An Fanny | Das Sinfoniestück ist für Dich, mit Beckchen 4händig zu spielen. | Alles zur cmoll Sinfonie gehörige ist für Schlesinger. | Der Morgengesang gehört Marx. | Die Papiere an die Adresse (Hrn. Fürst Behrenstraße 33).“⁹

Der Dankesbrief Fanny Hensels von Anfang August belegt, dass sie ebensowenig wie Moscheles so recht begriff, warum ihr Bruder sich entschlossen hatte, das aus ihrer Sicht gelungene Werk überhaupt umzuarbeiten: „Und habe Dank für das Stück Symphonie das mir große Freude macht, ich habe es eben erhalten, ud gleich 2mal mit Beckchen gespielt [...]. Die Aenderung in der ersten Melodie gefällt mir nicht recht, warum hast Du sie gemacht? Um das viele a zu vermeiden? Die Melodie war aber natürlich u. schön. Die folgenden Veränderungen wollten mir auch nicht recht munden, indeß habe ich den weiteren Verlauf des Stücks doch nicht genau genug im Kopf, um eigentlich darüber urtheilen zu können. Im Ganzen glaub ich, gehst Du zu leicht daran, ein einmal gelungenes Stück später umzuarbeiten, bos weil Dir dies ud. jenes dann

besser gefällt. Es ist doch immer eine mißliche Sache, u. wer sich einmal an eine Version gewöhnt hat, geht schwer daran, eine Abweichung zu dulden. Bring mir doch das Alte mit, wenn Du herkommst, dann können wir drüber disputiren.“¹⁰

Falls eine solche ‚Disputation‘ der Geschwister über die Neufassung der Sinfonie je stattfand, haben sich darüber keine Zeugnisse erhalten. Zur Neukomposition des Kopfsatzes kam es nicht mehr, sei es, weil andere Werke in den Vordergrund rückten, sei es, weil Mendelssohn nie mit sich ins Reine kam, wie der erste Satz in seiner endgültigen Fassung aussehen sollte. Noch im Februar 1835 schrieb der Komponist an Klingemann: „Auch am ersten Stück der a-dur Sinfonie knabbere ich und kann es nicht recht kriegen – ganz anders werden muss es auf jeden Fall – vielleicht ganz neu – aber eben dieser Zweifel stört mich bei einem neuen Stück.“¹¹ Das „Knabbern“ fand keinen schriftlichen Niederschlag – jedenfalls keinen überlieferten¹² – und die zweite Fassung blieb ein dreisätziges Fragment,¹³ das weit davon entfernt war, das „Imprimatur“ des Komponisten zu erhalten.¹⁴ In den Jahren zwischen 1838 und 1840 erwähnt Mendelssohn in seinen Briefen zwar immer wieder eine Sinfonie. Es ist aber nicht klar, ob er sich dabei wirklich auf die Revision der A-Dur-Sinfonie bezieht oder aber (was letztlich wahrscheinlicher ist) auf die Fertigstellung der a-Moll-Sinfonie op. 56 MWV N 18 (der so genannten ‚Schottischen‘) bzw. auf die Pläne zu einer B-Dur-Sinfonie MWV N 17 (aus der 1840 die Sinfonie-Kantate *Lobgesang* op. 52 MWV A 18 hervorging), wenn nicht überhaupt auf noch eine ganz andere Komposition.¹⁵

Das Gerücht von der geplanten (bzw. halbfertigen) Revision war jedoch in der Welt, und Mendelssohn erhielt wiederholt diesbezügliche Anfragen. Am 23. Dezember 1837 schrieb etwa Moscheles: „Du hast uns Deine A dur Sinfonie in Deiner neuen Bearbeitung versprochen u wir halten dich beym Wort nur (bitte) lasse uns nicht lange warten. Sie ist mein Liebling und es köm̄t mir vor als sollte ich ein schönes Mädchen in einem neuen Kleide oder einem andern Costume begegnen u zweifle ob sie mir noch beßer als früher gefallen könne. Nous verrons! nous entendrons! Indeßen habe ich die Geliebte in ihrem ersten Gewande – die original Partitur in guter

7 Brief vom 18. Juni 1834 von Fanny Hensel an Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 29*, Green Books III-181 und 333, gedruckt in: *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, Collected, Edited and Translated with Introductory Essays and Notes by Marcia J. Citron, [Stuyvesant, N.Y.] 1987, S. 470–471, das Zitat S. 471.

8 Brief vom 5. Juli 1834 an Fanny Hensel, New York Public Library, *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, letter No. 204, gedruckt in: *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn* [Anm. 7], S. 149, Anm. 11.

9 Begleitzettel zu einer Sendung vom 22. Juli 1834 an Fanny Hensel, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, *MA Depositum Berlin 3,43*, gedruckt in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, Bd. 3 [Anm. 3], S. 482.

10 Brief von Fanny Hensel an Mendelssohn, um den 1. August 1834, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 29*, Green Books III-237, gedruckt in: *Fanny und Felix Mendelssohn*, „Die Musik will gar nicht rutschen ohne Dich“. *Briefwechsel 1821 bis 1846*, hrsg. von Eva Weissweiler, Berlin 1997, S. 173.

11 Brief vom 16. Februar 1835 an Carl Klingemann, Privatbesitz, zitiert nach: *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann* [Anm. 5], S. 171.

12 Vgl. zu möglichen Vorarbeiten John Michael Cooper, *Mendelssohn's ‚Italian‘ Symphony*, Oxford 2003, S. 39 f.

13 Vgl. für eine Beschreibung und einen Vergleich der beiden Fassungen ebd., *passim*, sowie Thomas Schmidt-Beste, „Wie meine Sinfonie wird? Ich weiß es selbst noch nicht“. *Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Mendelssohns A-Dur-Sinfonie*, in: „Vom Erkennen des Erkannten“. *Musikalische Analyse und Editionsphilologie. Festschrift für Christian Martin Schmidt*, hrsg. von Friederike Wißmann, Thomas Ahrend und Heinz von Loesch, Wiesbaden 2007, S. 257–272.

14 Noch am 14. April 1836 antwortete der Komponist auf die Anfrage seiner Mutter, was er „denn mit der ital. Simphonie gemacht“ habe (Brief von Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy an Mendelssohn, 12. April 1836, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 31*, Green Books V-73), „daß sie kein imprimatur bis jetzt besitzt, das ist aber ganz gewiß“, Brief vom 14. April 1836 an Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, New York Public Library, *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, letter No. 266.

15 Siehe hierzu auch die Einleitung zu Serie I, Band 5 dieser Ausgabe.

Verwahrung und bleibe ihr befreundet.“¹⁶ Auch der Rezensent der *Musical World* deutet anlässlich der Aufführung des Werkes am 18. Juni 1838 an: „The new symphony by Mendelssohn is not yet understood; and as the Society may be said to have no opportunity of a genuine rehearsal, we cannot prognosticate the period when a revelation of the composer’s meaning may be vouchsafed them. The first movement is less striking than most of this composer’s efforts, and we understand so little satisfies M. Mendelssohn, that he has expressed his intention to write another in its place.“¹⁷

Der Philharmonic Society war dieses Gerücht ebenfalls bekannt, und so schrieb am 20. Oktober 1840 deren Sekretär, William Watts, einen Brief mit der folgenden Nachfrage an Mendelssohn:¹⁸ „Dear Sir I am commissioned by the Directors of the Philharmonic Society to request that you will do them the favor of sending directed as above the Overture you lately spoke of as having been performed on the Continent including the requisite number of Duplicate parts, viz. 8. Viol: 1.^{mo} 8. Viol: 2.^{do} 5 Violas and 8 Basses. They likewise desire me to remind you of your proposed intention of writing a new first movement to your Symphony in A which they are very anxious to possess when finished[.]“¹⁹ Während Mendelssohn die Bemerkung in der *Musical World* noch hatte ignorieren können, dürfte ihm diese direkte Anfrage nicht recht gewesen sein, wie der Entwurf einer Antwort bezeugt: „I also was not aware that I communicated to the Philh. Soc. my intention of writing a new 1st mov^t to my Symphony in A. Although I once thought of it, I can not tell at present whether or when I shall do so.“²⁰ An Klingemann heißt es dementsprechend am 26. Oktober 1840: „[...] heute erhielt ich einen Brief vom Philharmonic, der mich verdross, und auf den ich a cavallo antworten will. Watts schreibt in seiner gewöhnlichen diktatorischen Art, ich möge eine Overture mit 8fach doublierten Stimmen schicken, und zu meiner a dur-Symphonie einen neuen ersten Satz schreiben.

Das finde ich alles beides ungehobelt, und werde es ihnen in meiner Antwort ergebenst hören lassen.“²¹

Ein fertig ausformuliertes Antwortschreiben hat sich, falls Mendelssohn es je abgeschickt haben sollte, in den Papieren der Philharmonic Society nicht erhalten²². Die Reaktion des Direktoriumsmitglieds Charles Neate vom 18. Januar 1841 scheint darauf hinzudeuten, dass er von Mendelssohns Reaktion nicht brieflich, sondern mündlich durch Moscheles erfahren hatte: „My dear Friend I very much regret to find, by a communication from Moscheles, that there has been some misunderstanding between you and the Philharmonic Society, on the subject of your Symphony in A. It appears that you were surprised at the question, Whether you had written a new movement I do not wonder at your surprise, as it it [sic] seems you have forgotten the conversation with me, on our way home from Mrs Shaw’s in Berner’s Street when upon my observing that we – the Philharmonic – were going to perform your Symphony in A – you replied, No! do not perform it again yet, as I wish to make a new first (or last movement, I forget which) and therefore – it was not performed. I beg to assure you, that you must be under some error, if you imagine that there was any unwillingness on the part of the Directors to perform your Symphony, for we all admire it very much – and wished no alteration, but as, through me, they had understood you wished to make some; they considered that it would have been wrong in them to have done it without hearing from you. I hope my dear Friend that you will now call to mind, the conversation above alluded to – as nothing could be more painful to my feelings, than to have in any way caused you to think, that we are not inclined to treat you with all the respect and attention, that your distinguished talent demands [...]“²³ Nun fühlte sich der Komponist doch bemüßigt, das Gerücht der bevorstehenden Neukomposition ein für allemal aus der Welt zu räumen. Wie häufig bei wichtigen Geschäftsbriefen,

16 Brief vom 23. Dezember 1837 von Moscheles an Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 32*, Green Books VI-164, gedruckt in: *Briefe von Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy an Ignaz und Charlotte Moscheles* [Anm. 1], S. 149–150, das Zitat S. 150. Siehe auch die Einleitung zu Serie I, Band 6 dieser Ausgabe.

17 *The Musical World* 9 (= n.s. 2) (1838), Nr. 119 (21. Juni), S. 133, vgl. auch: Cooper, *Mendelssohn’s ‘Italian’ Symphony* [Anm. 12], S. 41.

18 Vgl. ebd., S. 42–44.

19 Brief vom 20. Oktober 1840 von William Watts an Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 38*, Green Books XII-103.

20 Ebd., auf der Rückseite des Briefes.

21 Brief vom 26. Oktober 1840 an Klingemann, Privatbesitz, zitiert nach: *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann* [Anm. 5], S. 248–250, das Zitat S. 250.

22 Im entsprechenden Band des Korrespondenzarchivs der Philharmonic Society – London, The British Library, *RPS MS 355* (olim *Loan 48.13(23)*) – finden sich zwar eine Reihe von Briefen des Komponisten, aber keine aus den Jahren zwischen 1839 und 1844.

23 Brief vom 18. Januar 1841 von Charles Neate an Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 39*, Green Books XIII-24. Siehe auch den zweiseitigen Briefentwurf von Charles Neate, in: Sotheby’s, Katalog zur Auktion vom 15./16. Mai 1967, lot 451 sowie Neates Schreiben vom 19. März 1841 [Anm. 29].

vor allem den in einer Fremdsprache verfassten, verfertigte Mendelssohn zuerst einen Entwurf,²⁴ bevor er letztlich wie folgt antwortete:²⁵ „I do not know Moscheles' communication to which you refer [...] but cannot deny that I felt rather surprised to receive an invitation from the Philharmonic Society to write a new movement to my Symphony in A, while I thought I had never acquainted the Society of my intention of doing so. I even confess that your letter does not alter my ideas on that subject²⁶; for although I am perfectly aware that I had once such a plan and spoke of it to you, as I did to many of my musical friends at that time, I very much doubt I have spoken the words which you mention in your letter; indeed I cannot have done so, or at least you cannot have considered that conversation as intended for the Philharmonic Directors, because I find the year after it had taken place the Symphony was performed at that Society, which circumstance you seem to have forgotten.“²⁷ Weiter unten heißt es: „But all this merely refers to the invitation to write a new movement to an old composition of mine. It is quite erroneous and far from what my true feelings are if you suppose in your letter, that I required the least explanation, why this Symphony ‚has not been performed‘. Of such a thing I shall never complain or express any regret, because I always consider it as a natural consequence of the real value of a composition, and you recollect that I often mentioned to you and to other friends how far from satisfied I feel with this, and indeed with almost all my other Compositions. I need hardly add that my personal feelings of high regard and esteem towards the Philharmonic Directors individually are and shall

always be the same; that I am well aware that I have amongst them some of my kindest and best friends in your country, friends to whom I am indebted for the benevolent reception which I so often met with in England which will ever remain a source of pleasure and pride to me; and that my gratitude to those friends will and can not be diminished as long as I live [...].“²⁸

Watts und Neate reagierten auf diesen Brief am 19. März 1841 mit einem gemeinschaftlichen Schreiben.²⁹ Während Watts sich im Namen der Society für die entstandenen Missverständnisse entschuldigte,³⁰ fügte Neate einige persönliche Worte an den Komponisten hinzu: „I cannot allow this letter to pass through my hands, without assuring you how much I was gratified to find by your letter, that you remembered the making [of] an observation to me, about writing a new movement to your Sinfonia in A, as I have a perfect recollection of the circumstance, although I could not venture to pronounce the exact words you made use of. I must however beg to assure you, that I only considered it as a conversation, and that I did not communicate it, officially, to the Philharmonic Society, but I may have alluded to it, in private, to some of my Bretheren, and so it may have travelled to the Directors, for at the commencement of the present season, and not before, I was asked if I had not heard you say, that you intended to write a new movement, and I answered in the affirmative, but that is the only communication I ever made, and I certainly did not remember the date of the last performance of the Sinfonia, or of our conversation.“³¹

24 Undatierter Entwurf auf der Rückseite des Briefes vom 18. Januar 1841 von Charles Neate an Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 39*, Green Books XIII-24, in dem es u. a. heißt: „My dear Sir I have received your friendly letter of the [18. Januar 1841] for which I beg to say my best thanks to you. I do not know the communication of Moscheles which you refer to in the beginning but I felt indeed some astonishment to receive and [sic] invitation from this Soc. to write a new movement to my Symp., while I thought I had never acquainted the Soc. my intention of doing so. I confess even that your letter does not alter my impression in that respect, for I am perfectly aware that I had once such an idea [and] spoke to you on that subject, as I did to many of my musical friends at that time [...]. But it appears that neither I nor you considered that conversation of ours as anything like a message to the Philh., for I find a year after it had taken place the Symp. has been performed at the Philharm. Soc., which circumstance you seem to have forgotten. Accordingly as you had not told the Philh. in June 1838 of what I might have said to you in September 1837, it must either not have been intended for this Soc., or you must give me credit for some astonishment to find them mention a fact in 1840 of which I had not given them a direct notice. But all this merely refers to the invitation of a new movt. to an old Composition of mine, and it is quite erroneous and far from my true feelings if you suppose in your letter that I wished any explanation why this Symp. has not been performed. Of such a thing I shall never complain, or express any regret for indeed I always considered it as a natural consequence of the true value of a composition & you will recollect how often I expressed to you & to others that I felt far from satisfied with this, and indeed many other Compositions of mine. I need hardly add that my personal feelings of high regard & esteem towards the the [sic] Philh. directors individually are & shall always be the same; that I have amongst them some of my kindest & best friends in your country, friends to whom I am indebted &c. & that my gratitude shall to those persons“. Ein weiterer fragmentarisch erhaltener Entwurf desselben Briefes an Neate (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig, *MT/2011/407*) belegt, wie sehr Mendelssohn um die endgültige Formulierung dieses für ihn offenbar sehr wichtigen Briefes rang.

25 Brief vom 25. Februar 1841 an Charles Neate, Sotheby's, Katalog zur Auktion vom 29./30. April 1980, lot 400 (mit Faksimile der 2. Seite auf S. 175); La Scala Autographs, Inc., Hopewell, N. J., Katalog 67 (1993) „Classical Music Autographs“, lot 37 mit Teilfaksimile.

26 Zitiert nach Katalog-Beschreibung von La Scala Autographs [Anm. 25].

27 Zitiert nach Katalog-Beschreibung von Sotheby's [Anm. 25].

28 Zitiert nach Teilfaksimile im Katalog Sotheby's [Anm. 25].

29 Brief vom 19. März 1841 von William Watts und Charles Neate an Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 39*, Green Books XIII-133, gedruckt in: Cooper, *Mendelssohn's ‚Italian‘ Symphony* [Anm. 12], S. 44.

30 Er sei von der Philharmonic Society beauftragt, „to state their sincere regret that you should have so entirely mistaken their meaning respecting the desire manifested for any new Composition held out to them by you, and which with respect to the Symphony in A, arose from your having, as you acknowledge, mentioned your intention of re-writing one of the Movements to Mr. Neate and several other professional friends. They are the more surprised at the umbrage you seem to have taken at them collectively, after having expressed so strong a feeling for the welfare of the Society to those gentlemen who had the pleasure of meeting you last year at Birmingham, when you gave them reason to hope they would be favoured with one of your M.S. Overtures for the ensuing Season, not yet published.“ Ebd.; bei der erwähnten ungedruckten Ouvertüre handelt es sich um die Ouvertüre c-Moll (zu *Ruy Blas*) MWV P 15.

31 Ebd.

Mendelssohn betrachtete die Sache damit offenbar als erledigt, und die Spur der A-Dur-Sinfonie verliert sich im Sand. Sie war am 18. Juni 1838 in London zum letztenmal aufgeführt worden, und nach dem Tod des Komponisten blieb seinem Nachlassverwalter Julius Rietz nichts anderes übrig, als die (eigentlich verworfene) Erstfassung von 1833 der Publikation zuzuführen, da es sich bei der späteren Fassung zwar um das chronologisch letzte Stadium von Mendelssohns A-Dur-Sinfonie handelte, aber eben um einen Torso aus drei Sätzen, die zudem – wiewohl vollständig aufgezeichnet – keineswegs ‚fertig‘ waren, da der Komponist sie dem (immer als nötig empfundenen) internen Revisionsprozess nie unterzogen hatte. Die Publikation als ‚opus 90‘ im Jahr 1851 war dementsprechend die der Erstfassung,³² und sie war es auch, die als ‚Italienische‘ Sinfonie den Siegeszug durch die Konzertsäle antrat. Das erhaltene Autograph der revidierten Fassung stand zwar seit der Überstellung des Mendelssohnschen Nachlasses an die Preußische Staatsbibliothek im Jahr 1878 der Forschung zur Verfügung, erfuhr dort aber lange Zeit kaum Beachtung, was sich erst mit dem Aufkommen einer seriösen Mendelssohn-Quellenphilologie gegen Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts änderte. Donald Mintz untersuchte in seiner Dissertation aus dem Jahr 1960³³ unter anderem die Quellen zur A-Dur-Sinfonie, kam allerdings zu dem irrigen Schluss, es handele sich bei dem dreisätzigen Torso um eine Frühfassung; erst Wulf Konold³⁴ und kurz nach ihm John Michael Cooper³⁵ wiesen die korrekte und auch durch den oben beschriebenen Kontext gedeckte Entstehungsreihenfolge nach. Im Druck erschien die Fassung von 1834 erst 2001,³⁶ während bereits seit 1997 ein exzellentes Faksimile beider Fassungen vorliegt, einschließlich der aus der Partitur der Erstfassung entfernten Einzelblätter.³⁷ Damit steht die ‚Italienische‘ sowohl der Forschung als auch dem Konzert-

publikum nunmehr in einer ‚vollständigen Frühfassung‘ und einer ‚unvollständigen Endfassung‘ zur Verfügung – ein ‚Fassungsproblem‘, das in pragmatischer Hinsicht womöglich unbefriedigend ist, aber doch philologisch wie künstlerisch tiefe Einblicke gewährt und im Œuvre Mendelssohns so auch einmalig ist.

Eine Edition wie die vorliegende ist nicht denkbar ohne die Kooperation vieler Institutionen und Personen. Der Herausgeber dankt zunächst allen Bibliotheken und ihren Mitarbeitern, die ausführliche Einsicht in die von ihnen aufbewahrten Quellen gewährten und die Reproduktion ausgewählter Seiten ermöglichten, vor allem der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, die die autographe Partitur aufbewahrt, und dem Leiter des dortigen Mendelssohn-Archivs, Dr. Roland Schmidt-Hensel. Daneben haben die folgenden Institutionen zum Gelingen des Bandes beigetragen: Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel; University of Leeds, University Library, Brotherton Collection; The British Library, London; Bodleian Library, University of Oxford; Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; Yale University, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, New Haven, Connecticut; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

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Bangor, den 1. Oktober 2010

Thomas Schmidt-Beste

32 Siehe Serie I, Band 6 dieser Ausgabe.

33 Donald M. Mintz, *The Sketches and Drafts of Three of Felix Mendelssohn's Major Works*, Ph. D. diss. (mschr.) Cornell University 1960.

34 Wulf Konold, *Die zwei Fassungen der ‚Italienischen Symphonie‘ von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, in: *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bayreuth 1981*, hrsg. von Christoph-Hellmut Mahling und Sigrid Wiesmann, Kassel 1984, S. 410–415; ders., *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Symphonie Nr. 4 A-Dur op. 90 „Die Italienische“*, München 1987 (= *Meisterwerke der Musik*, 48); und (weitgehend identisch dazu) ders., *Die Symphonien Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys. Untersuchungen zu Werkgestalt und Formstruktur*, Laaber 1992, S. 236–257, 271–282, 290–298, 308–322.

35 John Michael Cooper, *„Aber eben dieser Zweifel“: A New Look at Mendelssohn's „Italian“ Symphony*, in: *19th-Century Music* 15 (1991/92), S. 169–187; ders., *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and the Italian Symphony: Historical, Musical, and Extramusical Perspectives*, Ph. D. diss. (mschr.) Duke University 1994, überarbeitet publiziert als *Mendelssohn's „Italian“ Symphony* [Anm. 12].

36 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sinfonie A-dur op. 90. „Italienische“. Fassung 1833/1834. Edition nach den autographen Manuskripten Mus. ms. autogr. F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy 27 und 28 der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, hrsg. von John Michael Cooper, Wiesbaden 2001. Diese Ausgabe stellt allerdings in pragmatisch zwar nachvollziehbarer, aber doch philologisch problematischer Weise den drei Sätzen der Fassung von 1834 den Kopfsatz der Fassung von 1833 voran.

37 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sinfonie A-Dur op. 90 „Italienische“*. *Alle eigenhändigen Niederschriften im Faksimile, Partitur 1833*, „Oxford-Fragmente“, *Teil-Partitur 1834*, mit Kommentaren von John M. Cooper und Hans-Günter Klein, Wiesbaden 1997.

Introduction

In late June 1834 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy wrote to his friend Ignaz Moscheles: “The other day, Dr. Frank [= Franck], whom you know, came to Düsseldorf, and I wished to show him something from my A major Symphony. Not having it here, I began writing out the Andante again, and in so doing I came across so many errata that I got interested and wrote out the Minuet and Finale too, but with many necessary alterations; and whenever such a passage occurred I thought of you, and of how you never said a word of blame, although you must have seen it all much better and more clearly than I do now. The first movement I have not written down, because, if I began with that, I am afraid I should have to alter the entire subject, beginning with the fourth bar, – and that means pretty nearly the whole first movement, – and I have no time for that just now. The dominant in the fourth bar strikes me as quite disagreeable; I think it should be the seventh (A – G). But many thanks to you and the Philharmonic for playing so much of my music. I am sure I am delighted, if only the public does not grumble about it!”¹

Thus begins the story of the revision of Mendelssohn’s A major Symphony. As described in the first volume of this edition, Mendelssohn had become inspired to write the work while he was in Italy in 1830 and 1831. He had actually written it in early 1833 as a commission awarded him by the London Philharmonic Society, and conducted the world premiere himself at the Hanover Square Rooms in London on 13 May 1833.² Although the perpetually self-critical composer was initially satisfied with the performance,³ he was less pleased with the work itself, as Carl Klingemann noted: “Only one expert, albeit the greatest one in Europe, is critical and dissatisfied – but this expert being the composer himself, what do we care about him?”⁴

The publication of the symphony would have entailed a comprehensive revision process typical of Mendelssohn. The composer was unable to carry out this revision at the time, however, since he had too many obligations to fulfill as music director in Düsseldorf, a post he had assumed in the summer of 1833. Moreover, he began working on the oratorio *St. Paul* in the fall of that year, and this immediately caused all other

compositional matters to recede into the background. The symphony was thus laid aside. In any event, the Philharmonic Society owned the performing rights for two years, and Mendelssohn did not have the autograph score with him. He had left it in London with his friend Ignaz Moscheles, who was a member of the Society’s directorate. The composer thus had to begin writing down the work a second time in order to be able to show it to Dr. Hermann Franck, as he reported in the above-quoted letter of 26 June 1834. This is confirmed in a letter to Klingemann of 28 June 1834: “As I read your kind words about my symphony, I immediately sat down to write and revise the last three movements for Dr. Franck. I wish I could play them to you, as they have become much better. In particular nos. 2 and 3.”⁵ Moscheles, who had apparently taken quite a shine to the work in its original form, had great difficulty sharing this view and replied on 15 July with undisguised dismay: “I only wished to add that I am amazed and stunned at how you were able to make so many emendations and improvements while re-transcribing your A major Symphony – but what do you mean with the fourth measure of the first movement? Where a seventh A-G should replace the dominant?”



I don’t quite understand whether you mean this:



Please inform and instruct your faithful friend I. Moscheles.”⁶

- 1 Letter of 26 June 1834 to Ignaz Moscheles, Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection, *Mendelssohn’s Letters to Moscheles 1826–1847*, No. 17, printed in: *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles, translated from the originals in his possession and edited by Dr. Felix Moscheles*, Boston, 1888, pp. 111–116, quote on p. 111 f.
- 2 See Series I, Vol. 6 of this edition.
- 3 “[...] the people said that it was the best concert that the Society had ever given [...],” in the joint letter with Klingemann of 14 May 1833 to Mendelssohn’s family, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (hereafter: New York Public Library), *MNY++ Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, letter No. 163, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, Vol. 3, ed., with commentary, by Uta Wald with Juliane Baumgart-Streibert, Kassel etc., 2010, pp. 171–172, quote on p. 172.
- 4 Klingemann in the joint letter with Mendelssohn of 14 May 1833, New York Public Library, *MNY++ Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, letter No. 162, printed in *ibid.*, pp. 172–174, quote on p. 174.
- 5 Letter of 28 June 1834 to Carl Klingemann, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, MSS 77, *The David and Fanny Opoehinsky Collection*, Box 3, Folder 82, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann in London*, ed. with introduction by Karl Klingemann [Jr.], Essen, 1909, pp. 134–135, quote on p. 135.
- 6 Letter of 15 July 1834 from Moscheles to Mendelssohn, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (hereafter: BLO), *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 29*, Green Books III-213.

Almost at the same time, Mendelssohn's sister Fanny Hensel had requested an excerpt from the symphony: "Felix I beseech you, send me immediately a courier with the theme of the Allegretto or middle movement from your A major Symphony - I'm trying desperately to remember it. By the time you send it, I probably will have remembered it, but never mind."⁷ The composer fulfilled his sister's wish and sent her not just the theme, but also the entire second movement, obviously in the revised version: "Fanny, I'm sending you through the Prinzens a copied version of my Andante from the A major Symphony, instead of merely the theme, which you requested. Oddly enough you wrote me just at the time when I was in the midst of copying it again, in order to play it for Franck. I hit upon some passages which I improved, then I took a greater interest in it, and I additionally wrote down the Minuet and last movement, or rather rewrote them. I want to do more work on the first sometime later; the three other movements, I believe, have turned out well."⁸ This enclosure to the letter is unfortunately no longer extant. It was not a score, however, but an arrangement for piano four-hands, as confirmed by the cover letter of the dispatch from 22 July: "To Fanny | The symphonic movement is for you to play with Beckchen as a duet. | Everything belonging to the C minor Symphony is for Schlesinger. | The *Morgengesang* belongs to Marx. | The papers are to be sent to the address (Herr Fürst Behrenstraße 33)."⁹

Fanny Hensel's letter of thanks of early August shows that she was just as amazed as Moscheles as to why her brother had decided to revise the work at all, which she considered a success: "And thank you for the Symphony movement that just arrived; it gives me great pleasure. I immediately played it through with Beckchen twice [...]. I don't like the change in the first melody at all; why did you make it? Was it to avoid the many a's? But the melody was natural and lovely. I don't really agree with the other changes either; however, I'm still not familiar enough with the rest of the movement to be able to render a reasonable judgment. Overall I feel you are far too easily prepared to change a successful piece later on merely

because one thing or another pleases you more than. But these things are always awkward, and someone who has become accustomed to a certain version finds it hard to accept a new one. Do bring the old version along when you come and then we can argue about it."¹⁰

In the event that the two siblings ever did "argue" about the new version of the symphony, there are no documents to record their exchange. Ultimately, Mendelssohn never wrote a new opening movement, either because other works took priority or because the composer never came to terms with how he actually envisioned the definitive version of the first movement. As late as February 1835 Mendelssohn wrote to Klingemann: "I'm still struggling with the first movement of the A major symphony and can't seem to get it quite right. At all events, it has to become very different, maybe completely new, but it is precisely this doubt that gnaws at me if I were to write a new movement."¹¹ The results of his "struggle" were never put to paper, at least in any form that has survived,¹² and the second version remained a torso in three movements¹³ which was far from receiving the composer's *imprimatur*.¹⁴ Mendelssohn kept referring to a symphony between 1838 and 1840, but it is not clear whether he was referring to his revision of the A major Symphony or – more probably – to the completion of the A minor Symphony op. 56 MWV N18 (the "Scottish") or even to the plans for a Symphony in B flat major MWV N 17 (which ultimately became the symphony-cantata *Lobgesang* op. 52 MWV A 18 of 1840). Or maybe he was alluding to a different work altogether.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the rumour of the planned (or half-finished) revision had trickled into public awareness and Mendelssohn was repeatedly asked about it. On 23 December 1837, for instance, Moscheles wrote: "You have promised us your A major Symphony in its new shape, and we mean to keep you to your word, and hope you will not let us wait long. It is a great favourite of mine, and I feel as if I were going to meet a beautiful girl in a new dress, and were wondering whether that would make me admire her more than before. Nous verrons,

7 Letter of 18 June 1834 from Fanny Hensel to Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 29*, Green Books III-181 and 333, printed in: *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, Collected, Edited and Translated with Introductory Essays and Notes by Marcia J. Citron, [Stuyvesant, N.Y.] 1987, pp. 147–149, quote on p. 148 f.

8 Letter of 5 July 1834 to Fanny Hensel, New York Public Library, *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, letter No. 204, printed in: *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn* [note 7], p. 149, note 11.

9 Cover letter for a dispatch of 22 July 1834 to Fanny Hensel, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, *MA Depositum Berlin 3,43*, printed in: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Sämtliche Briefe*, Vol. 3 [note 3], p. 482.

10 Letter of Fanny Hensel to Mendelssohn, written around 1 August 1834, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 29*, Green Books III-237, printed in: *Fanny und Felix Mendelssohn*, "Die Musik will gar nicht rutschen ohne Dich". *Briefwechsel 1821 bis 1846*, ed. by Eva Weissweiler, Berlin, 1997, p. 173. English translation in: Citron [note 7], p. 151 f., quote on p. 151.

11 Letter of 16 February 1835 to Carl Klingemann, private collection, quoted from: *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann* [note 5], p. 171.

12 For possible preparatory work see John Michael Cooper, *Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony*, Oxford, 2003, p. 39 f.

13 For a description and a comparison of the two versions, see *ibid.*, *passim*, as well as Thomas Schmidt-Beste, "Wie meine Sinfonie wird? Ich weiß es selbst noch nicht". *Überlegungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Mendelssohns A-Dur-Sinfonie*, in: "Vom Erkennen des Erkannten". *Musikalische Analyse und Editionsphilologie. Festschrift für Christian Martin Schmidt*, ed. by Friederike Wißmann, Thomas Ahrend and Heinz von Loesch, Wiesbaden, 2007, pp. 257–272.

14 As late as 14 April 1836, he responded to his mother's query what "he had done with the Italian symphony," (letter of Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Mendelssohn, 12 April 1836, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 31*, Green Books V-73), "that it has not yet received an *imprimatur*, that is absolutely certain". Letter of 14 April 1836 to Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy, New York Public Library, *MNY++ *Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix*, letter No. 266.

15 See also the Introduction to Series I, Vol. 5 of this edition.

nous entendrons. In the meanwhile I hold in safe keeping my darling attired as I first knew her (the original score), and remain faithful to her.”¹⁶ The reviewer of the *Musical World* also alludes to this on the occasion of the performance of the work on 18 June 1838: “The new symphony by Mendelssohn is not yet understood; and as the Society may be said to have no opportunity of a genuine rehearsal, we cannot prognosticate the period when a revelation of the composer’s meaning may be vouchsafed them. The first movement is less striking than most of this composer’s efforts, and we understand so little satisfies M. Mendelssohn, that he has expressed his intention to write another in its place.”¹⁷

The Philharmonic Society was also aware of this rumour, and thus on 20 October 1840 its secretary, William Watts, addressed a letter to Mendelssohn with the following request:¹⁸ “Dear Sir I am commissioned by the Directors of the Philharmonic Society to request that you will do them the favor of sending directed as above the Overture you lately spoke of as having been performed on the Continent including the requisite number of Duplicate parts, viz. 8. Viol: 1.^{mo} 8. Viol: 2.^{do} 5 Violas and 8 Basses. They likewise desire me to remind you of your proposed intention of writing a new first movement to your Symphony in A which they are very anxious to possess when finished[.]”¹⁹ Whereas Mendelssohn had still been able to ignore the comment in the *Musical World*, he seems to have been quite annoyed with this direct request, as can be seen in the draft of a reply: “I also was not aware that I communicated to the Philh. Soc. my intention of writing a new 1st mov^t to my Symphony in A. Although I once thought of it, I can not tell at present whether or when I shall do so.”²⁰ Accordingly, he wrote to Klingemann on 26 October 1840: “[...] today I received a letter from the Philharmonic which annoyed me, and to which I wish to reply by return post. In his usual dictatorial manner, Watts writes that I am to send an overture with 8-fold duplicate parts, and to write a new first

movement to my A major Symphony. I find this all rather unmannerly and will not fail to point this out to them in my reply.”²¹

No fully formulated answer letter has ever been found in the papers of the Philharmonic Society, and it is possible that Mendelssohn never even sent it.²² The reaction of the directorate board member Charles Neate of 18 January 1841 seems to suggest that he had not learned about Mendelssohn’s views by post, but orally, from Moscheles: “My dear Friend I very much regret to find, by a communication from Moscheles, that there has been some misunderstanding between you and the Philharmonic Society, on the subject of your Symphony in A. It appears that you were surprised at the question ‘Whether you had written a new movement’ I do not wonder at your surprise, as it it [sic] seems you have forgotten the conversation with me, on our way home from Mrs Shaw’s in Berner’s Street when upon my observing that we – the Philharmonic – were going to perform your Symphony in A – you replied, No! do not perform it again yet, as I wish to make a new first (or last movement, I forget which) and therefore – it was not performed. I beg to assure you, that you must be under some error, if you imagine that there was any unwillingness on the part of the Directors to perform your Symphony, for we all admire it very much – and wished no alteration, but as, through me, they had understood you wished to make some; they considered that it would have been wrong in them to have done it without hearing from you. I hope my dear Friend that you will now call to mind, the conversation above alluded to – as nothing could be more painful to my feelings, than to have in any way caused you to think, that we are not inclined to treat you with all the respect and attention, that your distinguished talent demands [...]”²³

Now the composer felt obliged to quell the rumours about a forthcoming “new” composition once and for all. As he so often did with important business letters, especially those

16 Letter of 23 December 1837 from Moscheles to Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 32*, Green Books VI-164, printed in: *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles* [note 1], pp. 163–165, quote on p. 164 f. See also the Introduction to Series I, Vol. 6 of this edition.

17 *The Musical World* 9 (= n.s. 2) (1838), No. 119 (21 June), p. 133, see also: Cooper, *Mendelssohn’s ‘Italian’ Symphony* [note 12], p. 41.

18 See *ibid.*, pp. 42–44.

19 Letter of 20 October 1840 from William Watts to Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 38*, Green Books XII-103.

20 *Ibid.*, on the back of the letter.

21 Letter of 26 October 1840 to Klingemann, private collection, quoted from: *Briefwechsel mit Legationsrat Karl Klingemann* [note 5], pp. 248–250, quote on p. 250.

22 The volume in question of the Correspondence Archive of the Philharmonic Society – London, The British Library, *RPS MS 355* (olim *Loan 48.13(23)*) – contains a number of letters of the composer, but none from the years between 1839 and 1844.

23 Letter of 18 January 1841 from Charles Neate to Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 39*, Green Books XIII-24. See also the two-page letter draft of Charles Neate, in: Sotheby’s, catalogue of the auction of 15/16 May 1967, lot 451 as well as Neate’s letter of 19 March 1841 [note 29].

written in a foreign language, Mendelssohn began by writing a draft²⁴ before finally replying as follows:²⁵ “I do not know Moscheles’ communication to which you refer [...] but cannot deny that I felt rather surprised to receive an invitation from the Philharmonic Society to write a new movement to my Symphony in A, while I thought I had never acquainted the Society of my intention of doing so. I even confess that your letter does not alter my ideas on that subject²⁶; for although I am perfectly aware that I had once such a plan and spoke of it to you, as I did to many of my musical friends at that time, I very much doubt I have spoken the words which you mention in your letter; indeed I cannot have done so, or at least you cannot have considered that conversation as intended for the Philharmonic Directors, because I find the year after it had taken place the Symphony was performed at that Society, which circumstance you seem to have forgotten.”²⁷ Further he writes: “But all this merely refers to the invitation to write a new movement to an old composition of mine. It is quite erroneous and far from what my true feelings are if you suppose in your letter, that I required the least explanation, why this Symphony ‘has not been performed’. Of such a thing I shall never complain or express any regret, because I always consider it as a natural consequence of the real value of a composition, and you recollect that I often mentioned to you and to other friends how far from satisfied I feel with this, and indeed with almost all my other Compositions. I need hardly add that my personal feelings of high regard and esteem towards the Philharmonic Directors individually are and shall always be the same; that I am well aware that I have amongst them some

of my kindest and best friends in your country, friends to whom I am indebted for the benevolent reception which I so often met with in England which will ever remain a source of pleasure and pride to me; and that my gratitude to those friends will and can not be diminished as long as I live [...]”²⁸ Watts and Neate reacted to this letter on 19 March 1841 with a joint missive.²⁹ Whereas Watts apologized on behalf of the Society for the misunderstandings that had occurred,³⁰ Neate added a few personal words to the composer: “I cannot allow this letter to pass through my hands, without assuring you how much I was gratified to find by your letter, that you remembered the making [of] an observation to me, about writing a new movement to your Sinfonia in A, as I have a perfect recollection of the circumstance, although I could not venture to pronounce the exact words you made use of. I must however beg to assure you, that I only considered it as a conversation, and that I did not communicate it, officially, to the Philharmonic Society, but I may have alluded to it, in private, to some of my Bretheren, and so it may have travelled to the Directors, for at the commencement of the present season, and not before, I was asked if I had not heard you say, that you intended to write a new movement, and I answered in the affirmative, but that is the only communication I ever made, and I certainly did not remember the date of the last performance of the Sinfonia, or of our conversation.”³¹

Mendelssohn now apparently considered the matter closed, and we lose all trace of the A major Symphony. It was performed in London one last time, on 18 June 1838, and after the composer’s death, the executor of his estate, Julius Rietz, had

24 Undated draft on the back of the letter of 18 January 1841 from Charles Neate to Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 39*, Green Books XIII-24. There we read: “My dear Sir I have received your friendly letter of the [18 January 1841] for which I beg to say my best thanks to you. I do not know the communication of Moscheles which you refer to in the beginning but I felt indeed some astonishment to receive and [sic] invitation from this Soc. to write a new movement to my Symp., while I thought I had never acquainted the Soc. my intention of doing so. I confess even that your letter does not alter my impression in that respect, for I am perfectly aware that I had once such an idea [and] spoke to you on that subject, as I did to many of my musical friends at that time [...]. But it appears that neither I nor you considered that conversation of ours as anything like a message to the Philh., for I find a year after it had taken place the Symp. has been performed at the Philharm. Soc., which circumstance you seem to have forgotten. Accordingly as you had not told the Philh. in June 1838 of what I might have said to you in September 1837, it must either not have been intended for this Soc., or you must give me credit for some astonishment to find them mention a fact in 1840 of which I had not given them a direct notice. But all this merely refers to the invitation of a new movt. to an old Composition of mine, and it is quite erroneous and far from my true feelings if you suppose in your letter that I wished any explanation why this Symp. has not been performed. Of such a thing I shall never complain, or express any regret for indeed I always considered it as a natural consequence of the true value of a composition & you will recollect how often I expressed to you & to others that I felt far from satisfied with this, and indeed many other Compositions of mine. I need hardly add that my personal feelings of high regard & esteem towards the the [sic] Philh. directors individually are & shall always be the same; that I have amongst them some of my kindest & best friends in your country, friends to whom I am indebted &c. & that my gratitude shall to those persons”. A further fragment of a draft for the same letter to Neate (preserved today in Leipzig, Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, *MT/2011/407*) demonstrates how Mendelssohn struggled with the definitive wording of this letter which was obviously very important to him.

25 Letter of 25 February 1841 to Charles Neate, Sotheby’s, catalogue of the auction of 29/30 April 1980, lot 400 (with facsimile of the second page on p. 175); La Scala Autographs, Inc., Hopewell, N. J., catalogue 67 (1993) “Classical Music Autographs”, lot 37 with partial facsimile.

26 Quoted from catalogue description of La Scala Autographs [note 25].

27 Quoted from catalogue description of Sotheby’s [note 25].

28 Quoted from partial facsimile in Sotheby’s catalogue [note 25].

29 Letter of 19 March 1841 from William Watts and Charles Neate to Mendelssohn, BLO, *MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn d. 39*, Green Books XIII-133, printed in: Cooper, *Mendelssohn’s ‘Italian’ Symphony* [note 12], p. 44.

30 He was commissioned by the Philharmonic Society “to state their sincere regret that you should have so entirely mistaken their meaning respecting the desire manifested for any new Composition held out to them by you, and which with respect to the Symphony in A, arose from your having, as you acknowledge, mentioned your intention of re-writing one of the Movements to Mr. Neate and several other professional friends. They are the more surprised at the umbrage you seem to have taken at them collectively, after having expressed so strong a feeling for the welfare of the Society to those gentlemen who had the pleasure of meeting you last year at Birmingham, when you gave them reason to hope they would be favoured with one of your M.S. Overtures for the ensuing Season, not yet published.” *Ibid.*; the unpublished overture in question is the Overture in C minor (to *Ruy Blas*) MWV P 15.

31 *Ibid.*

no choice but to have the (actually rejected) first version of 1833 published. For while the later version chronologically represented the last stage of Mendelssohn's A major Symphony, it remained a three-movement torso which, moreover, was not at all "finished" – even though it was fully notated – since the composer had never subjected the three movements to his internal revision process, which he always considered to be indispensable. Accordingly, the version published as "opus 90" in 1851 was the first version,³² which then went on to conquer the world's concert halls as the "Italian" Symphony. The surviving autograph of the revised edition had been available to scholars ever since the transfer of Mendelssohn's estate to the Preußische Staatsbibliothek in 1878, but little attention was paid to it there for a long time. This only changed with the inception of a serious Mendelssohn source philology in the late 20th century. In his dissertation of 1960,³³ Donald Mintz examined (amongst others) the sources to the A major Symphony, but erroneously concluded that the three-movement torso was an early version; the correct sequence of the work's genesis, which is also authenticated by the previous discussion, was not proven until the publication of the research by Wulf Konold³⁴ and, shortly after him, John Michael Cooper.³⁵ The 1834 version did not appear in print until 2001,³⁶ while in 1997 an excellent facsimile of both versions was published, which included the single sheets that had been removed from the score of the first edition.³⁷ The "Italian" Symphony is thus now available both to scholars and the concert public in a "complete early version" and an "incomplete final version." The "version" problem may be

irksome from a pragmatic point of view, but the existence of two versions provides profound philological and artistic insights, and, as such, makes the work unique in Mendelssohn's oeuvre.

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Bangor, 1 October 2010

Thomas Schmidt-Beste
(Translation: Roger Clement)

32 See Series I, Vol. 6 of this edition.

33 Donald M. Mintz, *The Sketches and Drafts of Three of Felix Mendelssohn's Major Works*, Ph. D. diss. Cornell University, 1960.

34 Wulf Konold, *Die zwei Fassungen der 'Italienischen Symphonie' von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, in: *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bayreuth 1981*, ed. by Christoph-Hellmut Mahling and Sigrid Wiesmann, Kassel, 1984, pp. 410–415; *ibid.*, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Symphonie Nr. 4 A-Dur op. 90 "Die Italienische"*, Munich, 1987 (= *Meisterwerke der Musik*, 48); and (broadly identical to preceding entry) *ibid.*, *Die Symphonien Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys. Untersuchungen zu Werkgestalt und Formstruktur*, Laaber, 1992, pp. 236–257, 271–282, 290–298, 308–322.

35 John Michael Cooper, "Aber eben dieser Zweifel": *A New Look at Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony*, in: *19th-Century Music* 15 (1991/92), pp. 169–187; *ibid.*, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and the Italian Symphony: Historical, Musical, and Extramusical Perspectives*, Ph. D. diss. Duke University, 1994, published in revised form as *Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony* [note 12].

36 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sinfonie A-dur op. 90. "Italienische". Fassung 1833/1834. Edition nach den autographen Manuskripten Mus. ms. autogr. F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy 27 und 28 der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, ed. by John Michael Cooper, Wiesbaden, 2001. This edition places the opening movement of the version of 1833 before the three movements of the version of 1834 in a pragmatically comprehensible but philologically questionable manner.

37 Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sinfonie A-Dur op. 90 "Italienische"*. Facsimile Edition. Commentaries by John M. Cooper and Hans-Günter Klein, Wiesbaden, 1997.