Introduction

The three pieces edited in this volume are arrangements by the composer of original sacred works for solo voices, four-part chorus and organ. Whereas the two pieces with English texts – the *Anthem* “Why, o Lord, delay for ever” MWV A 19 and the *Hymn* “Hear my prayer” MWV B 49 – were commissions, the orchestral transcription of the organ part of the “Ave Maria” op. 23 no. 2 MWV B 19 was practically necessitated by the unique conditions encountered by musicians in Düsseldorf.

*Anthem* “Why, o Lord, delay for ever” MWV A 19 for Solo (Alto or Mezzosoprano), Chorus and Orchestra

The *Anthem* MWV A 19 can be briefly described as an orchestration and revision of MWV B 33, written in 1840, which had been printed in 1841 both by Cramer & Co. and Simrock as *Drei geistliche Lieder* for solo, chorus and organ. The author of the libretto – a paraphrase of the 13th Psalm – had commissioned both the musical setting as well as the orchestration: Dr. Charles Bayles Broadley (1800–1866), Deputy Queen’s Professor of civil law at Cambridge University’s Trinity College. Ignaz Moscheles (1794–1870), who gave Broadley composition lessons, characterized him as a headstrong, engaging, yet commanding and learned presence.

From an entry of 1841 in her husband’s diary, Charlotte Moscheles estimates that: ‘Among the many students of the past years was the tirelessly original Mr. B.: ‘The huge figure strove to create huge works, with ideas bubbling forth from beneath a wig of curls. He brings me a freshly baked psalm, a motet, a hymn for perusal, and I correct by taking a white sheet of paper, putting to music his often eccentric texts and asking him: ‘Is not that what you meant to express?’ Whereupon he always replied with: ‘Oh yes and just so.’’’ Elsewhere, Felix Moscheles (1833–1917), the composer’s son, described Broadley as “an eccentric, wealthy music lover who unsuccessfully attempted to produce compositions of his own.”

Even before the publication of the work with organ accompaniment MWV B 33, Broadley had requested a prelude for this piece, as Moscheles informed Mendelssohn on 9 February 1841: “It is his [Broadley’s] wish to own a Prelude of yours (one page long, as it were) for this psalm, which he can conserve in his album, and would like to have a few measures following the chorale printed as a prelude to the last number. The curious manner in which he formulates his correspondence with me is simply too whimsical to deprive you of, and I am thus enclosing his letter. It is one of many of his strange, half-crazed nature.”

In the enclosed letter, Broadley had asked Moscheles a few days earlier: “With reference to the Prelude, you were kind enough to say you would name it M. Mendelssohn, I beg to say that Organists in England generally indulge on those occasions in a style rather florid – at one time with an extra-low pedal bass – at another time on the very top of the Instrument either in thirds, or after the manner of some of the ad libitum passages in the Gems a la Paganini of yours; I think this has a very good effect for organ Prelude, particularly on the *Swell*. If Mr. Mendelssohn will take the trouble to write me such a Prelude, for my own private Album, without his publishing the same, or letting it be known, I shall be happy to pay him a proportionate extra Fee. […] Perhaps you will intimate to Mr. Mendelssohn for his prelude, that English organs generally go from G to G 5 octaves: but that the York organ (with which I am acquainted) goes from C to C, six octaves (being half an octave higher, and half an octave lower than the G organ).”

Mendelssohn justifiably rejected this request, however, in a reply addressed to Moscheles, he inquired: “May I ask you […] to present my apologies to him [Broadley] (and to you) for not being able to send the desired *Praeludium*; it is not for the lack of good will, but I simply do not know how to write a Praeludium that is truly integral to the work, without altering its form and providing it with an appearance it does not deserve; I would rather leave it up to every organist to let his fingers revel in E flat major and related keys, to the extent that he is capable of, be it long or short, lovely or frightful.”

One and a half years later, in October 1842, Moscheles once again contacted Mendelssohn at Broadley’s behest, and once again concerning the Anthem: “Mr Broadley begs me to ask you to orchestrate the Psalm which you wrote for him, and to send him the manuscript score, for which he offers you 10 guineas.” This time the composer replied in the affirmative: “I shall try to see whether I can drape Broadley’s piece in an orchestral garment, and in the event that it works, I shall send it to you post-haste;” Broadley was apparently endeavoring – most likely since the summer of 1842 at the latest – to have all three commissioned psalm settings available at hand, and scored for chorus and orchestra. Louis Spohr also later orchestrated his Psalm 128 “O Bless’d for ever, bless’d are they.” He completed a version

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for organ in April 1841, and the manuscript of the version with full orchestra is dated September 1842. Here, too, only the version with keyboard instrumentation was printed with differing opus numbers, first by Cramer, Chappell & White in England, then, in autumn 1842, by Simrock in Germany. With the setting of Psalm 93 that had been assigned to him, “Robed in pow’r Jehovah reigneth”, Ignaz Moscheles approached his task in a more leisurely way. By February 1841 he had nothing but a few sketches to show for himself. Incidentally, he had considerable trouble completing the work, as he intimated to Mendelssohn: “As you can see, he [Broadley] was envisioning the building of a cloverleaf of psalms, in that, thanks to me, he had Spohr be asked to write one as well. I dare not even think of the role I am to play here. I have completed the draft of my piece (Psalm 93) […] Ah! if only I had the benefit of your advice and opinion! If only I had the same luck as F. Hiller, who is able to work close by you, and must certainly get advice from you! I am confident, at least, that my efforts can be sung and that no one will confuse it with a stage work – but that is not enough!” Even though Mendelssohn comforted him with the words “[…] if only I could hear your Psalm right away, and immediately take pleasure in it; you surely know how valuable it would be to me; yet how could I dare, as I stand before you, offer you any kind of advice or think of the most beautiful parts that I would find within it, and what I and we owe you in such a vast measure.”

But it took more than another year until Moscheles was able to play his finished work to Sigismund Neukomm (1778–1858): “I had a strange conversation with Neukomm. I played him my Psalm (93), and he often said: ‘lovely, lovely! good, good!’ and declared the richly melodious Chorus no. 2 as his favorite piece. I asked for a critique, and he pointed out a few harmonic progressions that he felt were too audacious (I was reminded of how useful his well-written but often so monotonous works could be), but merely replied: “The unreachable Beethoven was even bolder.” In keeping with Broadley’s concept, the piece was composed in an orchestral version; nevertheless, the publication took place in a version with the accompaniment of a keyboard instrument as opus 100 in 1842 or early 1843. In addition, all three works by Mendelssohn, Moscheles and Spohr contain chorales or chorale-like segments, which let us assume that Broadley also expressly wished for this, as chorales did not usually belong to the inventory of English church music. Mendelssohn did not simply settle for orchestrated the piece as stipulated, but used the opportunity to write an expansive choral fugue on the slightly altered wording of the last lines of the poem. Joining the woodwinds and strings in this closing fugue are trumpets and timpani. The work was completed on 5 January 1843, the copy transcribed by Eduard Henschke was brought to an end on 14 January; two days later Mendelssohn sent it to Moscheles with a cover letter: “Herewith enclosed is a score for Mr. Broadley. I inserted an additional fugue and feel that this is now the best piece of the lot. It is like the little shopkeeper who throws in an extra biscuit. […] Now I’ve completed it, and beg you to kindly pass it on to him with my greetings; I shall also write him a few lines that I will enclose herewith.” In his note of thanks, Broadley addressed himself directly to Mendelssohn: “I have received from Mr. Moscheles the Orchestral Parts to your Anthem composed to my version of the 13th Psalm and feel much obliged by the additional Fugue, which I think exceedingly beautiful. The three first movements of the Anthem are frequently performed at the Chapel Royal, Windsor, by her Majesty’s Command. M’. Moscheles has been good enough to arrange the Fugue for the Organ.” Performances at Windsor Castle cannot be verified, but as for those mentioned by Broadley, they apparently still took place in the version with organ accompaniment (MWV B 33).

Ignaz Moscheles’ arrangement of the closing fugue that Broadley had also referred to, and for which he arranged the orchestral parts to the organ as a kind of piano reduction, was printed by the arranger in the first half of 1843. The new final movement was published by Chappell & White in May 1843 and, in this form, was intended as an addition to the three-movement Anthem MWV B 33 published in 1841. This emerges from the pagination, which – taking into account the empty, final verso
Broadley's receipt voucher for the sum paid for the orchestral transcription also apparently contained the acquisition of the publication rights for the closing fugue. Mendelssohn commented on this to Moscheles: “I did not sign the receipt which he enclosed, but the enclosed one which he will have to be content with. In his receipt he had written: received for das copyright einer additional fugue and for arranging the whole Anthem for the Orchestra — and that is not right. For I gave him the fugue as a gift, and cannot certify that I obtained money for it. He also offered me that money through your solicitude for the orchestral arrangement, nothing of which should be found in the receipt. If he feels it is important to confirm the copyright of the aforementioned fugue, then I am ready to give it to him separately, in a form already found in my previous letter, and I should think that he is able to sufficiently prove his identity, even before a court of law. Should this not be the case, I shall, as I said before, gladly confirm the copyright; only, I neither want money for this, nor have I taken in any money for this. He can publish the fugue and the whole piece if he so wishes, whenever and however this takes place in England, as the piece should not be published with orchestral accompaniment in Germany. Many thanks for all the trouble I have caused you with this matter and similar ones. The money has been correctly entrusted to my brother by your father-in-law.”

Although it was already planned, a publication of the orchestral version in England did not come about during Mendelssohn's lifetime.25 Broadley turned to Mendelssohn one last time, albeit three years later and in another matter.26 From Moscheles' arrangement of Eduard Henschke's score for string orchestra,27 it can be inferred that the piece was performed in England at least in this reduced orchestral version for strings until 1846, the year in which Moscheles left London for Leipzig. In Germany, the work, now designated as *Hymne*, remained widely unknown up into the second half of the 20th century, and thus also misunderstood, despite the German vocal text that was also underlaid to the posthumous German editions of the orchestral version.28 Nonetheless, and thanks to recent analytical studies,27 it is now possible to attribute to this work the character of autonomous sacred music much more convincingly than that of a merely orchestrated version — a character achieved first of all through the addition of a completely new fugue that provides a new element of symmetry and balance. Consequently, this is also reflected in a separate entry in the Mendelssohn Work Catalogue (MWV). Mendelssohn's orchestration of the first three movements is anything but a transposition of the musical material of the organ to the orchestral instruments; rather, one is impressed by the will to clarify one more time and with greater intensity than in the organ version, albeit solely through means of sound, both the text and the structure of the *Verse Anthems* with their antiphony of soloist and chorus. For example, in the first movement the solo part is generally assigned only to the strings, before the wind instruments meld into the choral texture. For the accompaniment of the solo singers in the chorale of the second movement, Mendelssohn reduces the sound to the uncommon yet extremely charming instrumental combination of clarinets in a very low register, *divisi* violas with frequent double-stops, and violoncello. This combination is reprised once again at the beginning of the third movement, whereby the bassoons now add their particular sound to the group; by integrating trumpets and timpani in the closing movement, there is no room to doubt that here, in the sound as well, we have reached the pinnacle of majesty, the climax of the entire work.

“Ave Maria” MWV B 19

Within the framework of his duties as municipal Music Director in Düsseldorf, and starting in October 1833, Mendelssohn was also responsible for the musical organization of religious services. However, he had only few original choral pieces at his disposal which were suitable for use in a Catholic church; these were mainly a cappella pieces from the early 1820s, of which only the three pieces written in 1830 from the “Kirchen-Musik für Chor” op. 23 (1832) had been printed. If we consider that, in addition, the two chorales based on texts by Martin Luther “Aus tiefer Not” op. 23 no. 1 MWV B 20 and “Mitten wir im Leben sind” op. 23 no. 3 MWV B 21 were only suitable for the Catholic liturgy to a limited extent, the “Ave Maria” op. 23 no. 2 MWV B 19 necessarily assumes a weightier role. Due to the lack of singable music at hand for the Düsseldorf services, Mendelssohn had to undertake “archival journeys” to Elberfeld, Bonn and Cologne in order to assemble a basic stock of manuscript sacred pieces reflecting his taste, such as music by Palestrina and, above all, Lassus.29 There was a considerable number of religious services with music in Düsseldorf, and a substantial amount of works needed to fill these gaps: “The sacred works intended for performance are to be laid down by the priests and performed in alternation in the two parish churches for the most important

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23 The posthumous first edition (published in Bonn in 1852 and in London in 1855 as “op. 96”) oriented itself along the autograph (Source A) and did not take into consideration the autograph revision of the piece in the Henschke copy made for Broadley (Source B).
24 Letter from Charles B. Broadley to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Ignaz Moscheles of 7 January 1846, GB-Ob, *MS. M, Drehe Mendelssohn d. 49, Green Books XXIII-8.* The topic here is a planned visit to Leipzig by the composer and organist Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1846).
26 Paul Mies delivers a typical judgment in his *Über die Kirchenmusik und über neu entdeckte Werke bei Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy*, in: *Musica Sacra* 83 (1963), Vol. 7 (July), pp. 217: “Seen from a sacred perspective, this sometimes rather weak work is not at the height of the previously named [Works for solo voices, chorus and orchestra]. The fugue seems more academic than others in Mendelssohn's hand.”
The holidays of the liturgical year – Mendelssohn listed them in one of his notebooks – were, specifically: Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost (Whitsunday), Corpus Christi, the feast of Peter and Paul (29 June), the city’s feast day St. Apollinaris (Sunday after 20 July), the Assumption of Mary (15 August), the patron saints’ holidays in the Maximilian church (Sunday after 12 October) as well as All Saints and All Souls Day (1/2 November); the feast of St. Cecilia on 22 November was usually celebrated with a church concert. The partly – for the period from May 1834 to July 1835 – extant rehearsal schedules of the Gesang-Musik-Verein33 contain only two original pieces by Mendelssohn: “Verleih uns Frieden” MWV A 11 and “Ave Maria”.34 Actually, Mendelssohn had already ordered the score and parts of the “Ave Maria” and the motet “Ausetiefer Not” from Simrock on 17 November 1833 “for the society based here.”35 One liturgical performance of the “Ave Maria” ascertainably took place within an archiepiscopal solemn mass along with Luigi Cherubini’s Messe solemnis (1816) in one of Düsseldorf’s two principal churches, St. Maximilian, possibly on 4 May 1834, since Mendelssohn reports home: “[…] we truly began to edify the people with our singing when we took on Cherubini’s C-major Mass, into which we inserted my Ave Maria as a graduale, so outstandingly sung by Woringen. The Archbishop even had someone ask me where one could obtain the graduale, and I had someone answer him […] that it came out in his very own diocese, and costs &c. Indeed, church music on the whole seems to be thriving […]”.36 Whereas an organ was able to serve as an accomplishment at this performance, this was not possible at the performances in the second main church, St. Lambertus. There the organ was defective and in urgent need of renovation. In early 1834 Mendelssohn personally committed himself to this issue by sending a sketch to the acting mayor Joseph von Fuchsius, and asked him: “[…] to be so kind as to present this to the church committee when it next convenes. Everyone who loves church music must know how important a good organ is, and how it can contribute to the edification of the congregation; it will thus leave no one indifferent upon hearing, in this city’s principal church, an instrument that is entirely ruined and nearly unusable. […] If the repairs are postponed now, it is foreseeable that the instrument will ultimately deteriorate to the point of being irreparable, and a great deal of money will have to be spent on a new organ chest.”37 The enclosed cost estimate of 7 November of the previous year put together by the Düsseldorf organ builder Anton Weitz38 – his costs totalled altogether somewhat more than 534 Reichsthaler – included, among other items, the replacement of the keyboard manuals, the disassembly and transfer of the Rückpositiv in the Hauptwerk, the extension of the pedal keyboard and the windchest, and the replacement of many pipes. This hints at the desolate condition in which the organ must actually have been. Yet it was not until 17 November 1834 that the church committee produced a contract with the organ builder.39 The work was scheduled for completion by Easter 1835. However, the restored instrument was not inspected and approved until 13 March 1838. According to the expertise on the instrument in question, additional work – recommended by Mendelssohn and accepted by the church committee – had become necessary; the costs for these improvements were estimated at a considerable 196 thalers, which then rose to another 70 thalers for three new pedal stops.40 Thus, during his entire tenure in Düsseldorf, Mendelssohn was unable to use the organ in the principal church of St. Lambertus, firstly, due to its condition, not for the accomplishment of choral singing, and later not at all because of the extensive renovations. 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“Ave Maria” at the Lambertuskirche without organ can we assume that the composer prepared special instrumental parts for two clarinets, two bassoons and double bass, in the event that this had not already been carried out for the above-mentioned performance at St. Maximilian’s on 4 May 1834. After the “Ave Maria” had been printed by Simrock in Bonn in 1832 as part of his “Kirchenmusik für gemischten Chor” op. 23,39 the composer contacted the publisher on 25 April 1837 about a new printing: “At this occasion it occurred to me that you might perhaps be interested in publishing the entire accompaniment to my ‘Ave Maria’, which you have already published, but solely with the accompaniment provided in figured-bass numbers; first the fully elaborated organ part, and then the parts for the choral singers, who have no organ at their disposal – an orchestral accompaniment of the kind we always had to perform in Düsseldorf since we couldn’t use the organ. I think that this is the case at most places, and if a supplement should follow, this could be of great use in disseminating the work.”40 Simrock not only seemed to react very favorably to Mendelssohn’s suggestion of a revised new edition, but apparently also suggested supplying the other two numbers of opus 23 with a fully written-out organ accompaniment; Mendelssohn replied on 27 May of that year: “I, in my turn, shall craft the organ part for the Ave Maria with pleasure; I don’t know yet if I can do the same for the other two pieces, and I even doubt it, since neither of them lend themself particularly well to this purpose, unlike the other piece. However, I would like to try it, and would be grateful if you could send me the three short scores here to my attention, where I shall immediately come to a decision about this. Concerning the orchestral accompaniment of the Ave, I beg you to write to Herr von Wöringen in Düsseldorf, and to request a copy of the orchestral parts that I had arranged for use there (or a loan of these parts); I would then kindly ask you to send me these parts at this address so that I can provide you with more information on the edition and its form.”41 Simrock really does appear to have contacted Ferdinand von Wöringen and obtained the original parts or a copy of the instrumental parts, since on 9 June 1837 Mendelssohn acknowledged receipt of the contents: “I thank you most cordially for sending me the 3 pieces of sacred music and, in particular, for the score of the instrumental accompaniment which you had so kindly written out for me. I have not found enough time yet to devote myself more deeply to this, but I shall soon write you more extensively.”42 Finally, on 20 November of that year, Mendelssohn sent to Bonn the organ part and the instrumental parts which were to serve “only as a surrogate for the organ when one is lacking.”43 About a month later, Simrock answered: “Yesterday I also received the organ accompaniment to the Ave Maria which you were so kind as to send me on 20 November; I am most grateful for this and will use it along with the orchestral accompaniment, very meticulously, and according to the instruction you sent me; I would appreciate it if you could, at your leisure, tell me what I owe you for this?”44 Mendelssohn turned down an honorarium: “I do not expect an honorarium for this trifle, and thank you for your kind offer.”45 The autograph parts appear to have remained in Düsseldorf or to have been returned by Simrock from whence they came after the engraver’s copy was produced. In any event, Mendelssohn did not receive them again before publication; only one copy was available for proofreading. There was no more talk about arrangements of the two German-language sacred pieces from op. 23, which meant that the new edition of opus 23 no. 2 could finally be sent off to print by Simrock on 30 March 1838 in the form of the choral score with organ and five enclosed leaves with the instrumental parts.46

In a letter sent by Mendelssohn to Heinrich Conrad Schleinitz on 31 May 1839, the composer confirms that a performance of the “Ave Maria” under his direction took place in Frankfurt am Main on 7 June 1839, during a concert given by the local Theaterkapellmeister Karl Wilhelm Guhr (1787–1848): “On Friday I shall be conducting half a concert here: my Hebrides, my Ave and my 42nd Psalm [...]”47 In view of the program, one can assume that it was the version with wind instruments. On 3 July of that year, Mendelssohn reported from Frankfurt to his mother about a “celebration” given by Christian Franz Eberhard, member of the Frankfurt Cäcilien-Verein, at which various “tableaux” with music were presented to honor the composer: “[...] then began an 8-part Ave chorus and the ap-

39 Moreover, this was Mendelssohn’s very first publication in this publishing house. On the very close relations that ensued with Simrock see Salome Reiser, “Weiss Gott wie so mich der Veränderungsteufel nun gerade bei Ihnen zum zweitenmale packt”. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und der Verlag N. Simrock in Bonn, in: Mendelssohn und das Rheinland [note 28], pp. 115–132.


42 Letter to Simrock of 9 June 1837, S-Smf, Nydahl Collection, 2570; printed in excerpts in: Wilhelm Altmann, Briefe an Simrock [note 40], p. 149.


44 Letter from Simrock to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy of 18 December 1837, GB-Ob, MS. M. Dencke Mendelssohn d. 32, Green Books VI-159.


Mendelssohn was apparently hoping for a greater diffusion of the piece with the new edition of the "Ave Maria" and its alternative instrumental accompaniment, for in a letter of February 1834 to his family, he had cautiously complained in connection with the authentication of a performance in St. Petersburg on 21 December 1833: "As far as the Ave Maria is concerned, I thank you very much for the program notes which I much enjoyed, as I most certainly have no personal acquaintances in Petersburg, and because the piece has a limited circulation in any event [...]."49 Both the separate print of the Latin Marian work as well as the elaborated organ part and the alternative instrumental accompaniment most likely contributed to increasing the appeal of the piece and, consequently, to encouraging additional performances. Already in 1850 or 1851 Simrock had the "Ave Maria" reprinted once again unchanged, with identical plate numbers and an identical title page,50 which suggests positive sales figures of the single print of op. 23 no. 2 of 1838.

"Hear my prayer" MWV B 49

In early 1844, Mendelssohn had set to music a paraphrase of the 55th Psalm by William Bartholomew. The work – now called Hymn – was published shortly after the first performance one year later. And, finally, the orchestration of the organ part was commissioned by Joseph Robinson (1815–1898), a composer, conductor, singer and teacher, who lived and worked throughout his life in Dublin, and co-founded the Philharmonic Society there; he and his elder brothers who also sang with him in a vocal quartet, were called in Dublin "the four wonderful brothers" and performed mostly German choral songs. Robinson had founded the Antient Concerts Society in 1834 and conducted them until 1862. Moreover, he belonged to the fellow founders of the Royal Irish Academy of Music and worked there from 1856 to 1876 as professor and conductor of choral and orchestral classes.51 He is described by his contemporaries as being highly cultivated, extraordinarily musical and a "modest man."

Indeed, notwithstanding his doctoral title and his many distinguished contributions to Dublin's musical life, he insisted on always being addressed as "Joe Robinson" in later years. The multi-talented Robinson had already undertaken his first attempt to contact Mendelssohn in 1842. In May of that year, as the composer was traveling to London, Robinson invited Mendelssohn to Dublin in order to conduct concerts there: "My friend Mr. Novello – (Alfred) – has informed me that your stay in England is likely to be for four or five weeks, if such [sic] is the case I hope you will allow me to induce you to extend your travels as far as Dublin in order to further the progress of classical music in this city. I may say that I am a stranger to you although I had the very great pleasure of meeting you at both the Birmingham Festivals, [...]. W. A. Novello and my friend W. Gauntlett will be able to inform you of my love for the music of the great ancient masters as also for the great modern Meister! [...] It was I who first made your Oratorio of St. Paul known in Ireland. I have also had your 42nd and 115th Psalms performed at the Ancient Concerts as well as a large selection from your Hymn of Praise.52 "And I beg of you therefore to be so kind as to let me know if £50– would compensate you for the trouble of coming to Dublin to conduct a concert which would consist almost entirely of your own compositions."

The thusly invited composer not only felt honored, but also accepted the invitation with exuberance and inquired about short and economical ferry connections to Ireland: "Your very kind and friendly letter has given me so much pleasure & I should feel so happy to visit your country & thank you in person for your highly flattering invitation, that I should have liked best at once to accept your kind offers, and indeed, if circumstances do not prevent me, I certainly hope to do so. [...] The best days for me would be between the 15th and 20th of June. [...] And at

50 A copy of this reprint from the Simrock Archives has survived in: Leipziger Städtische Bibliotheken, Musikbibliothek, PM 8055. It differs solely according to the type and size of paper used, as well as a watermark that differs from the first edition.
52 Obituary: Joseph Robinson, in: The Musical Times 39 (1898), No. 667 (1 September), p. 609 (hereafter: Obituary: Robinson). The following characterization of his person can be found in Charles Villiers Stanford, Studies and Memories [note 51], p. 126: "His personality was unique. He had strong likes and dislikes. His heroes were 'giants,' and his enemies 'impostors.' His face, rather Jewish in type, was full of a kindly sardonic humour, which his rather jerky and nasal manner of speech exactly suited. He had [...] the grip of a field-marshal. He never brooked contradiction in his own business, and he was a martinet, though a kindly one."
last could you let me know how long the shortest passage from England to Dublin […] does usually last, and whether there are good boats on that station? […] At any rate accept my best, best thanks for the very great kindness you show to myself & to my music & for which I shall always feel sincerely indebted to you." It was only because a serious illness befell Robinson's brother John (1810–1844) that the men did not get together in Dublin. In a letter dated 10 June, Joseph Robinson communicated this with great regret — combined with the assurance that he would continue to work towards making Mendelssohn's works known in Ireland. On 26 December 1843 the publisher Edward Buxton asked for a "B[ook] of Songs for a bass voice to be dedicated to M[ister] Joseph Robinson of Dublin whom you may probably know[,] He has a splendid voice & is a great admirer of your music, but there are very few of your Songs, that will suit him." Mendelssohn replied succinctly and rather incidentally: "I […] shall think of Bass Songs if I possibly can," but does not seem to have found the time for this at a later date.

In any event, the two composers were not unknown to one another by the time they personally met in August 1846. As emerges from Robinson's first letter to Mendelssohn, Robinson attended the Birmingham Music Festival several times. In 1846 he was not only present at the concerts, but also traveled to London, where the orchestral rehearsal for Elijah took place at the Hanover Square Rooms on 20 and 21 August, one week before the world premiere. Mendelssohn's obituary in the Musical Times reported about this event and the posthumous world premiere of the version of "Hear my prayer" MWV B 49 with an orchestral accompaniment on 21 December 1848: "It was at the request of Mr. Robinson that Mendelssohn orchestrated his 'Hear my Prayer.' Meeting the composer at the band rehearsals — held at the Hanover Square Rooms — for the production of Elijah at Birmingham in 1846, Robinson asked Mendelssohn to score this favourite work. Mendelssohn was pleased with the suggestion, and in carrying it out it is understood that he adapted himself to Mr. Robinson's orchestra in Dublin — hence the scoring for 'small orchestra' […] The first performance of 'Hear my Prayer,' in its orchestral form, took place at the Antient Concert, Dublin, December 21, 1848." Leaving from Dublin, Robinson had set off for London with the barrister and singer John Stanford (1810–1880) and continued the journey to Birmingham with him, where, in the Woolpack Hotel, Robinson, Stanford and William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875) dined with Mendelssohn after the rehearsal on the evening of 25 August 1846. Stanford's son, the composer Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) fondly recalled this relaxed get-together: "They [Robinson and Stanford] have both frequently described to me his [Mendelssohn's] very boyish fun and his delight in a good joke; how he extemporised a double fugue to a few friends on the subject of 'the horse and his rider' at the organ of the Town Hall; how, after the final rehearsal of Elijah, he slid down the banisters of the long staircase with his feet in the air, and wound up the day by a supper with them at the Woolpack Inn, where my father rather shocked the serious Sterndale Bennett by performing Punch and Judy over the door with his fingers clothed in napkins, and introduced a Mozartian ghost to the music of the Commendatore. On this occasion Mendelssohn promised Robinson to orchestrate 'Hear my Prayer' for the Antient Concerts." Since the terms concerning the arrangement of the piece were only agreed upon verbally; Mendelssohn produced a score — in the style of an orchestral short score — that contained only the instrumental parts. On 17 February 1847 he sent it to Edward Buxton along with parts of Elijah MWV A 25: "I send to-day […] an Orchestrascore of my Hymn which I hope will reconcile you to the trouble you had for my & my alterations sake […]" Buxton did not immediately pass on this orchestral score to Robinson, who had ordered it, but had another score put together from this one and from the printed version with organ accompaniment; this score was with near certainty the one intended to serve as the printer's copy for the orchestral version. It was only after Mendelssohn's death that Buxton sent the complete score to Robinson. The client was satisfied with the results, which faithfully respected the agreements that had been laid down. Charles Villiers Stanford reported: "Shortly after his [Mendelssohn's] death, […] Robinson received the score from his executors; it was written exactly for the band which Robinson had enumerated to him, and he had taken his hint to 'be sure to use the kettledrums in the second movement;' with what effect anyone who glances at the score will appreciate." The score most likely also served as the basis for the premiere performance at the Antient Concert of 21 December 1848 in
Dublin. The engraver’s copy for the first edition of the orchestral version, which was not published until 1880, was, in its turn, no doubt a score newly produced by Edmund Thomas Chipp (1823–1886) in 1852 but no longer extant today. It is difficult to judge whether, or to what extent, this version was disseminated in manuscript form prior to its publication in the English-speaking world; on its own, thus chiefly in the version with organ accompaniment, it enjoyed exceptional popularity in Great Britain and Ireland. Owing to a great quantity of English prints in the Anglo-Saxon musical world, it continued to be performed in parts as well as in the form of various arrangements throughout the entire 19th century and beyond.66 As late as 1891 the Musical Times was still reporting: “‘Hear my Prayer’ – a trifle,’ as he modestly calls it – is one of Mendelssohn’s most popular and widely-known choral works.”67 Friedhelm Krummacher stated: “The work remained quite unknown in Germany, and one would hardly need attribute it much weight – if it had not achieved such exceptional prominence in England.”68 The discrepancy between the two major poles of reception cannot be ignored and calls for an explanation. “If we consider the work’s form, scoring and writing, the work makes no impossible demands on the performer. And as to its character, it represents a type of songful lyricism that was either praised as intimate and sincere – or damned as overly sweet and sentimental. […] What ultimately remains incomprehensible is why it became so popular in England.”69 It would hardly be possible to explain this with differing claims, preferences or musical developments; rather, the fact that “Mendelssohn’s music remained incontestably in England’s musical repertoire need not evidence a reactionary taste – unless one would be so reactionary as to allow only the validity of German norms. Instead, the situation is the following: music in England was not repressed by anti-Semitism, and thus remained in the context of its reception, which made it possible to understand it without the burden of prejudices deriving from ignorance.”70

Compared with the version for organ accompaniment, the orchestral version, derived from the music by Armin Koch,71 reveals hardly any notable changes, and even fewer structural ones, apart from a few notes in a lower octave position in the orchestral bass. Nevertheless, here too the woodwind entry determined by the sound is characteristic, in particular through a conspicuous coupling of solo part and clarinets. Moreover, the instruments are used both independently of the chorus as well as in connection with it, and thus serve to differentiate the dynamics and create an instrumental balance.

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Clemens Harasim

66 Up to this day one finds adaptations of melodic segments from the piece, just as from the Anthem “Why, o Lord, delay for ever”, supplied with new texts, in sacred and secular hymnals in the United Kingdom and the United States.
67 F. G. Edwards, Mendelssohn’s “Hear my Prayer”: A comparison of the original ms. with the published score, in: The Musical Times 32 (1891), No. 576 (1 February), pp. 79–82, here on p. 79.
69 Ibid., p. 149.
70 Ibid., p. 151.
71 Armin Koch, Musik und Text [note 27], p. 45.