Mendelssohn's "Hear My Prayer": A Comparison of the Original MS. with the Published Score

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Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 32, No. 576 (Feb. 1, 1891), pp. 79-82

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362077>

Accessed: 27-11-2015 16:46 UTC

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this stimulus my limited musical capacity loses its fertility; I become discontented, laborious, heavy, and producing becomes torture to me. I never had this feeling more vividly than since our last meeting. I have, therefore, but one desire—that of being able to visit you when I wish, and of living with you periodically." Upon the basis of this desire, Wagner, who was always impracticable, concocted a fanciful scheme. He had once before proposed a stolen visit to Weimar, under the very noses of the police; now he suggested taking up residence at Altenburg, where, as he could not live *incognito*, the Weimar Court might notice him—"If the Court wants anything of me, I am prepared to appear there in person, either reading my poems, or performing fragments of my music, such as the first act of the 'Walkyrie,' in conjunction with you, and after *our* fashion. I do not want to go before the public at all. Can this be arranged, and can the possibility of my visit to Weimar be accelerated?" Wagner evidently thought to prick the sides of the Grand Duke's intent by means of the attractions he held out; and then hurried another letter after the one just quoted from, in which he desired to know whether, if the Prussians invaded Switzerland, the Prince of Prussia would secure him from arrest: "If this is impossible, I should have to fly to France," &c., &c., but the best thing would be to find refuge at Weimar. Patient Liszt did all he could: spoke to the Grand Duke, who thought that nothing could be done just then, and wrote to the Prince of Prussia (afterwards William I.), not in fear of Wagner's danger, but because the occasion was an opportunity of calling the Prince's attention to his miserable exile. "In the meantime you ought, I think, to take no further step, nor waste a single word, because this would lead only to useless humiliation for you." But of what use was it to counsel patience and dignity to Wagner? We shall, in due course, find an answer to the question.

(To be continued.)

MENDELSSOHN'S "HEAR MY PRAYER":

A COMPARISON OF
THE ORIGINAL MS. WITH THE PUBLISHED SCORE.

By F. G. EDWARDS.

THOSE who are familiar with Mendelssohn's method of working know full well how exactly careful he was in revising and re-touching his compositions before he issued them to the world. Mr. Joseph Bennett has shown that the printed scores of "Elijah" and the "Hymn of Praise" are full of happy after-thoughts.* And the master's conscientious self-criticism was not confined to his larger creations. His smaller, but not less beautiful, works were subject to the same self-refining process. "The very best I can do, and nothing but the best," seems to have been Mendelssohn's guiding principle throughout his short life, and he spared no pains to attain this exalted ideal.

"Hear my Prayer"—"a trifle," as he modestly calls it—is one of Mendelssohn's most popular and widely-known choral works. It, too, shared the fate of its fellows in undergoing a thorough revision while the world knew it not. To reveal the extent to which it suffered at the improving hand of its revered author is the object of this paper.

"Hear my Prayer" was written at the request of Mr. William Bartholomew for a series of Concerts given at Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate Street, in the

"forties," by Miss Mounsey, who afterwards became Mrs. Bartholomew. The work was first performed at Crosby Hall on January 8, 1845, with Miss Mounsey at the organ, and was published in the same year by Messrs. Ewer and Co. The original MS. was presented by Mrs. Bartholomew in 1871 to the South Kensington Museum. The Museum authorities have kindly allowed me to examine their precious treasure for the purpose of comparing it with the published score.

The title-page of the autograph score, which is in Mendelssohn's usual neat handwriting, states: "A sacred Solo, for a Soprano and Chorus, with Organ accompaniment, composed for W. Bartholomew, Esq^{re}, by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy." In the letter to Mr. Bartholomew which accompanied the MS. (also at Kensington), dated "Berlin, 31 Jan., 1844," and written in English, Mendelssohn says: "I have only to observe that the bass of the organ accompaniment is always meant to be play'd either with the pedals, or with the lower octave in the left hand which I never wrote in it." Thus the work was originally written with organ accompaniment only; but Mendelssohn subsequently scored it at the request of Mr. Joseph Robinson, of Dublin. It is a question, however, whether the more ornate accompaniment is an improvement upon the simple original.

With the above as a preliminary, we will now enter upon the comparison.

On the first page of the MS. Mendelssohn has written "Psalm 55"; and on the title-page is the following pencil note: "This is the original MS. of 'Hear my Prayer' which its dear and lamented author composed for me to my paraphrastic version of the 55 Psalm.—W. BARTHOLOMEW." With this authoritative information the designations "Hymn" and "Motet," which are usually given to the work, are misnomers.

First movement ("Hear my Prayer").—The first change is a very slight one in the melody at bar 6.* It stands thus in the original—

At bar 11 the harmony is a little different, and the phrase "Thyself from my petition" is repeated—

* See MUSICAL TIMES, 1882-3 ("Elijah"); 1888 ("Hymn of Praise").

* N.B.—The numbering of the bars throughout refers to the *printed* version, and not to the MS.

The high G to the word "mourn" (bar 15) is anticipated in the previous bar in the MS., thus—

The movement proceeds with scarcely any change till bar 26 is reached, where, not only is the return of the first subject delayed by a bar, but it comes back on *tonic*, instead of *dominant*, harmony. The after-thought clothes the re-appearance of the initial theme with great beauty. Here is the passage as Mendelssohn first wrote it—

Henceforward there are no changes of importance. *Second movement, E minor, 3-8.*—This is headed "*con moto.*" The bass of bars 36, 38, and 39 begins with crotchet E's, followed by quaver rests, as in bar 37. Instead of the familiar "The enemy shouteth," we have "The enemy cries," with a corresponding response by the chorus, *e.g.*—

It would be interesting to know whether Mendelssohn or Bartholomew suggested this textual alteration. At bar 63 (in which the chorus enters in harmony) the solo soprano has a high F sharp throughout the bar, instead of E, D, C sharp. The chord at bar 78 is *minor*, both in the voice and organ parts; the D sharp, however, is inserted in the first chord of the following bar, which is like the printed version.

Between bars 86 and 87 Mendelssohn at first inserted twelve new bars, but these he afterwards rejected. They are beautifully deleted in diamond shape pattern—Mendelssohn was artistic even in his erasures—but it is quite easy to decipher his first intention. Here it is, * to *, with bars 85 and 86 to show the place—

At bar 89 there is a change for the better in the published score, as the following will show—

That agonising top A (rather too agonising when attempted by untrained singers) to the word "cry" (bar 111) does not appear in the original, where, although the chord to the word "cry" is lengthened

to three bars, the effect is nothing like so fine as in the published score. The reader, however, may judge for himself—

110 *sf*
hear my cry,

113 114 115
hear my cry, O God,

There are no more changes of importance in this movement, except that in bar 128 the tenor notes are E (not F); and in the two following bars the low, and not the high D, is inserted in the tenor part.

Recitative.—This has undergone such a complete revision that it is necessary to quote the entire movement. With this before him the reader will enjoy making his own comparison—

RECIT.
131 132
my heart is sore-ly pain'd with-in my breast,

133 134
my soul with death-ly ter-ror is op-press'd,

135
Trem-bling and fear-ful-ness up-on me

136 137 *Andante e tempo.*
fall, With hor-ror o-verwhelm'd, Lord, hear me
Andante e tempo.

138 139
call, Lord, hear me call, With hor-ror
CHORUS. *f* With hor-ror
Lord, hear me call, With
f Lord, hear me call,

140 141 142
o-ver-whelm'd, . . . Lord, hear me
o-ver-whelm'd, . . .
With hor-ror o-ver-whelm'd,
hor-ror o-ver-whelm'd, . . .
. . . With hor-ror o-ver-whelm'd,
dim. *p*