

DLA Dissertation Abstract

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Felix Mendelsshon-Bartholdy:
Six Preludes and Fugues for piano op. 35

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I. Background

Felix Mendelssohn's piano and organ music has been researched by many, but there has not yet been a study that exclusively examines the *Six Preludes and Fugues*. My dissertation is particularly important in the sense of analysing his work as kind of a border area and show the exciting duality that concerns a performer: in many aspects of op. 35, Mendelssohn follows the practice of the Baroque style, but in terms of articulation, he breaks the Baroque rules.

In my work, I mainly refer to the writings of R. Larry Todd, whose comprehensive works on Mendelssohn's education and family background helped me to understand the environment that inspired Mendelssohn to compose the preludes and fugues. Although these books e.g. *Mendelssohn's Musical Education* and the monograph on Mendelssohn's life, also written by Todd, focuses solely on music history and do not discuss interpretational issues.

It is also important to mention Kenneth Hamilton's book *After the Golden Age*, which deals with the 19th-century performance practices and points out

IV. Results

Although my dissertation extensively deals with the composer's biography, both the biographical and analytical parts converge on one idea: should we approach the *Six Preludes and Fugues* from the perspective of Romanticism or Baroque traditions? By examining Fuchs' principles, we find numerous notations that clearly contradict the Baroque rules. Additionally, Kenneth Hamilton's work confirms that these pieces are rather virtuos pieces by Mendelssohn, who originally named his preludes as *etudes* but for some reason they were published under the title of *preludes and fugues*.

V. Performances

I have also included Felix Mendelssohn's *Prelude and Fugue in D major*, op. 35 No. 2, in my doctoral final concert program, which I previously performed during my studies. However, after conducting the research, it has taken on a completely different perspective for me.

Mendelssohn's compositional ideas. Additionally, Michael Heinemann's essay *Die Bach-Rezeption von Franz Liszt* greatly helped me to learn more about the Bach studies of Romantic pianists. However, this work only provides an overview of the era's piano concerts, and there is no analysis of Mendelssohn's pieces here.

The third direction was represented by the literature on the 19th-century Bach cult: Bernd Sponheuer's work *Music and German National Identity* highlighted on the relationship between the era's national awakening and Bach's work. Based on these three main pillars, I conducted my research.

II. Sources

The primary sources for my work were the writings of R. Larry Todd, such as *Mendelssohn's Studies*, *Mendelssohn's Musical Education*, and the monograph summarizing Mendelssohn's life. Additionally, Josef Rainerius Fuchs' publication *Studien zu Artikulationsangaben in Orgel- und Clavierwerken von Johann Sebastian Bach* was helpful in terms of articulation analysis. The edition of op. 35 published by

Henle proved to be the most authentic edition in terms of articulation.

III. Method

During my work, I applied several methods: the first part of the dissertation aims to present the composer's childhood, the principles of his teachers, and his aesthetic views with the help of the aforementioned literature. In the second part, we can read about the analysis of a few selected fugues that are interesting from an interpretational perspective. In this latter part, I relied on Fuchs' six principles and examined the notation based on these:

1. Intervals, the direction of melody
2. Rhythm, value of the notes
3. Ornamentation, harmony
4. Beaming, bar lining, emphasis, tempo
5. Groups, motifs, phrases, themes
6. Playing technique