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Mendelssohn's Trio opus 49:  
A Study of the Composer's Change of Mind

Volume III:

**Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy**

**Piano Trio in D Minor**  
**Draft Version – Completed in July 1839**

Critical Performance Edition

Edited by Ron Regev

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree**

**May 2005**

**The Juilliard School**



## Preface

As documented in his letters, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847) expressed his wish to write piano trios several times to different people during the 1830s. In 1839 he finally got to writing one, mostly during a vacation he took in Frankfurt in the summer. At the end of July he sent letters to family members and friends, announcing the completion of the Trio. The manuscript of the piece is currently held in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. It is not, however, the manuscript of the work we now know as Mendelssohn's first piano trio in D minor, op. 49. During the fall and winter of 1839-1840 Mendelssohn performed the Trio several times on private occasions, and subsequently he kept revising it. Sir George Grove (1820-1900) dated the second version of the Trio to September 23, 1839; presumably he was referring to a manuscript that is now missing, and that was originally bound in the same volume as the first version, and then given by Mendelssohn's widow to violinist Ferdinand David (1810-1873), the concertmaster of Mendelssohn's orchestra in Leipzig. This too, however, was not the manuscript of the final version of the Trio.

Ferdinand Hiller (1811-1885), the 19<sup>th</sup>-century composer and pianist and one of Mendelssohn's closest friends at the time, gives a detailed account of a meeting he had with Mendelssohn, at which time Mendelssohn played the Trio for him. Hiller criticized his friend's style of piano writing as outdated. He recounts his success in persuading Mendelssohn to revise the piano part in order to conform to the more brilliant writing style of the new school of piano playing, as embodied by Chopin and Liszt. Although the scholarly community has tended to attribute the rejection of the first manuscript to Hiller's influence, the German scholar Friedhelm Krummacher established that the meeting between Hiller and Mendelssohn did not take place until the winter of 1839-1840. This suggests that two revisions of the piece took place: one of the continuity of the piece, and then one of the texture and style of the piano part. The other extant manuscript of the Trio supports this assumption: it is a piano part in Mendelssohn's hand, which was used by Breitkopf & Härtel for engraving the first edition, and which is essentially identical to the final version as far as the continuity is concerned, but shows extensive revisions of the piano texture. The date of submission of this manuscript is January 21, 1840; Mendelssohn's correspondence with the publishing house suggests that it was accompanied by the violin and cello parts, which are now missing. In the current edition this manuscript of the piano part is referred to as **A2**.

As close as this manuscript is to the first edition of the piece, it is not identical. This fact, along with another comment made by Hiller, supports the contention that the final version was created on the engraver's proofs, and that therefore the first edition, as published by Breitkopf & Härtel in April 1840 (plate no. 6320), should be regarded as the conclusive source for the final version of the Trio. Here the first edition will be referred to as **FE**.

A further study of the work's publication history, however, reveals that it was issued simultaneously by Breitkopf & Härtel in Germany, Richault in Paris, and Ewer in England – contracted independently by Mendelssohn himself. Whereas the Richault edition was based on the manuscripts Mendelssohn had sent to Breitkopf & Härtel on January 21, and did not incorporate his later revisions on the engraver's proofs, there is documented evidence to suggest that the Ewer edition was based on a more advanced manuscript, which is lost. The proximity of the date on which Mendelssohn sent that manuscript to the date of publication makes it likely that what he sent Ewer was a copy made of Breitkopf & Härtel's engraver's proofs. Mendelssohn entrusted pianist and composer Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) with the task of proofreading the English publication; the resulting edition was virtually identical to the version produced by Breitkopf & Härtel. Should the manuscript Mendelssohn sent Ewer be recovered, it

would need to be regarded as a source of equal importance and authority to the German first edition. Ewer also contracted Mendelssohn to transcribe the violin part for flute; it is difficult to determine from the correspondence alone whether Mendelssohn made the transcription himself or, rather, gave Ewer permission to do so. There is no extant manuscript of this version. If one ever surfaces, it would need to be consulted in any attempt to create a critical edition of the final version of the Trio.

Despite the elaborate process of composition and revision, the piece exists essentially in only two versions: the one brought here, which was completed during the summer of 1839, and the one that was heavily reworked during the ensuing winter, and was published as Mendelssohn's op. 49 by Breitkopf & Härtel and Ewer in April 1840.

The current volume was created in 2004 by the editor as part of his doctoral work at the Juilliard School. This work also included the preparation of a facsimile of the Trio's earlier manuscript from a microfilm provided by the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, a comparative study of the Trio's two versions, and a recording of both versions. The current edition is presented here for the benefit of performers and music scholars who may wish to study this early version on their own. This version, however, should in no way be regarded as a finalized conception of this piece; if Mendelssohn ever thought of it as such, he did so for a period of time not longer than a few days in late July of 1839.

## Editorial Comments

This edition is based on one source only: the composer's autograph of the Trio, which is dated July 18, 1839, and which is housed in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, as part of the volume referred to as Mus.Ms.Autogr. Mendelssohn 31. Consequently, it strives to represent this manuscript in printed form in the most accurate way possible. The following guidelines were observed:

- Any editorial decisions and alterations of the original autograph are detailed in elaborate footnotes.
- The locations of dynamic markings are preserved, as much as possible, to reflect their locations in the autograph.
- Mendelssohn frequently beamed eighth notes and sixteenth notes with some of the members of the group above the beam and some below it. His beamings have been preserved whenever possible.
- Mendelssohn was very economical in his use of accidentals, and sometimes of clefs. He did not indicate things he considered obvious. Any additions of accidentals or clefs, inferred by harmonic and textural contexts, are parenthesized.
- Other parenthesized additions occur only in two cases: when one part includes material that is closely related to that of another part, but missing dynamic indications or articulation marks; and when such indications and marks appear later in the same part, and should therefore be reflected in earlier appearances of similar materials. In all other instances the performers should use their judgment to complete missing indications.

Ron Regev  
*New York City, October 2004*

# Trio

1839

**Allegro molto agitato**  $\text{♩} = 80^{1)}$

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy

Violino

15

25

35

46

54

63

70

76

83

91

100

Vc.

7

4

Pno.

*p*

*cresc.*

*sf*

*sf cresc.*

*dim.*

*p*

*dimin.*

*sf*

*f*

*sf*

*sf*

*cresc.*

*f*

*sf*

*sf*

*sf*

*ff*

*tr*

*sf*

1) M. M. according to A2 and FE. *Molto Allegro agitato* in A2 and FE.

107

114

121 *dim.* 9 Vc. *dolce*

137 *sf* *p*

146 2) *cresc.* *sf* 2

156 Vc. *(p)* *pp* 3)

165 *sf* *dim.* 3 *p*

176 *cresc.* 4)

184 5) *f* 6) *f* 7)

191 *pp* *cresc.* *f*

198 *p* *sf* *crescendo*

207 *sf* *ff*

- 1) The slurs in both the violin and the cello parts leave room for the possibility that they are supposed to extend to the *b*<sup>1</sup>.
- 2) Compare slur to m. 145 in the piano part as well as to other instances of this phrase.
- 3) This barline separates two systems in the manuscript. Whereas the cello's tie appears at the beginning of the new system (but not at the end of the previous one), there is no tie at all in the violin part.
- 4) The slur in the manuscript extends to the third beat. However, a comparison with mm. 181 and 185 reveals it to be a probable oversight.
- 5) Considering that the cello part does not have a slur when it plays the same rhythmic pattern, and the escalating dynamics, one feels that it is possible that here Mendelssohn left the slur out intentionally.
- 6) Originally the second beat included an eighth note and a rest; Mendelssohn neglected to cross out the rest, but the new quarter-note stem is clear.
- 7) The *f* may be misplaced; phrasing, as well as the *sf* in the piano part of the previous measure, suggests it belongs there.

## Violino

217 Pno. *ff sf sf sf sf*

226 *sf sf*

233 *sf sf sf*

238 1) 2) 1 2 3 4

249 5 6 3) 4 Pno. Vc.

263 *p*

270 4) *p sf p p*

281 *p*

289 *cresc.*

298 *ff*

308 *f*

317

326 *ff* (3) (3) (3)

- 1) The changes of registers and dynamics, as well as the cello's tie, would make a repeat here sound extremely forced. Mendelssohn may have been paying tribute to tradition by including it; the fact that he chose to remove it in the revision further suggests it should not be executed.
- 2) In the manuscript the *p* is not given until the beginning of the next measure. However, it was written before a revision, when the upbeat was a rest. After having revised the rest, Mendelssohn may have forgotten to change the location of the *p*.
- 3) The manuscript has a system break here. Whereas the piano part has clear indications of the continuation of the slur in both systems, the violin and the cello parts have such indications only in the new system.
- 4) There is a page break here, and the slur appears only on the new page.

333 *fp* *f dim.* 1 2

339 3 4

345

351 2 *pp*

359 6 Pno. *cresc.* *sf* 1)

373 9 Pno. *ff*

389 *sf*

397 *sf*

407 *sf* 3

416 5 Vc. *(p)*

429 *sf* *p* *sf*

439 *f* *p* *f*

449

1) The slur does not extend all the way to the *f!*; it was modified here to match the cello's slur, as well as most appearances of this phrase.



## Violino

459 Vc. <sup>1)</sup> *f* <sub>2)</sub> *tr*

468 *tr* **12** Vc.

488 *cresc.*

496 *f* *p*

505 *pp* <sup>3)</sup> *dim.*

517 *mp* **3** Vc. *sf* *f* *sf*

529 *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

538 *p* **2** Pno. *sf*

548 *p* *cresc.* *sf*

557 Pno. *f* <sup>4)</sup> *sf*

570 *f*

578 *sf* *sf*

585 *sf*

1) The beginning of the slur is not indicated clearly in the manuscript. It is possible that it is intended to begin on the second eighth note; however, a separate bow on the first eighth note would cause it to stand out far beyond its accompanying role in the current texture.

2) Part of the *f* extends in the manuscript below the first beat.

3) These slurs are across a system break in the manuscript. It is most likely that Mendelssohn intended both measures to be played with the same bow.

4) See articulation in mm. 222 and 224.

594 *dim.* 3 3 *p*

601 *dimin.* 12 Vc.

620 *p* *cresc.*

629 *sf* *sempre crescendo* *f* *sempre cresc.* 1)

639 *sf* *ff*

649 2)

657 3)

668 6 *mf* 4) *cresc.*

683 1 2 3 4 *ff* 5)

694 *sf*

**Andante**  $\text{♩} = 80$ <sup>6)</sup>

Pno. 4 *p*

11 *cresc.*

- 1) The slur is over a system break. It appears to continue to the downbeat in the previous system, but does not appear in the new one. However, compare with the following measures.
- 2) Slurs follow the manuscript and are consistent between the violin and the cello parts.
- 3) In both the violin and the cello parts, the slurs do not extend all the way to the downbeat, but do extend beyond the last note of the previous measure, and suggest the connection.
- 4) The slur originally connected to the downbeat, but when the following measure was revised to go up an octave, another slur was added, and the extension of the previous slur (over a system break) was crossed out.
- 5) It is hard to ascertain whether the *ff* is intended to include the upbeat, since Mendelssohn used a measure repetition sign in the previous measure rather than write it out.
- 6) M.M. according to A2 and FE. *Andante tranquillo* in A2; *Andante con moto tranquillo* in FE.

18 Pno. *p* *cresc.* *f*

29 *sf* *dim.* *p* 1) *cresc.* *p*

34 (cresc.) 2)

38 *p*<sup>3)</sup> *cresc.* *f*

43 *f* *fp* *cresc.*

47 *f* *p* *sf* *sf* *f*

52 4) *dim.* *p*

58 (cresc.) *f* *pizz.*

64

69 *c.a.* *cresc.*

74 *f* *dim.* *p* *cresc.* *f* *sf*

80 *dim.* 5) 6)

1) Although the slur clearly starts on the  $c^2$ , a comparison of the phrase to mm. 29, 74, and 76 suggests it may have been intended to start on the  $d^2$ .

2) The slur extends in the manuscript to include the  $a^2$ . However, being that it is the only instance in which it does, it is most probably an oversight.

3) The *p* in the manuscript is positioned after the first quarter note, since originally the first beat was a rest.

4) In the manuscript the middle of this measure is a system break. Whereas the slur at the end of the previous system appears to be continuing into the next one, the slur in the next one appears to be starting with the first eighth note.

5) The slur may have been intended to extend into the next measure. There is a page break after this measure, and the next one starts its own slur, but this is typical of Mendelssohn; it is the length of this phrase, as well as the slurring of the cello imitation of this line, that makes it logical not to extend this slur beyond the end of this measure.

6) The slur here may have been meant to start on the second sixteenth note, like the one in the following measure of the cello part.

84 *pp*

86

89 *pp*

91 *cresc.* *dim.*

**Scherzo** ♩ = 120<sup>4)</sup>

Pno.

9

14 *sf* *sf* (*f*) *p*

20 *sf* *sf*

26 *p*<sup>7)</sup>

32 *f* *cresc.* *dim.*

38 *p*

44 *p* *cresc.* *f*<sup>8)</sup> *p*

1) Mendelssohn neglected to include many needed slurs in this section. It seems likely that from the second half of m. 85 to the end of m. 90 every two beats are meant to be slurred.

2) Although Mendelssohn indicated that the first three beats of this measure are under one slur, a comparison with the following measures, as well as an examination of the phrasing, suggests it may be better to change bows in the middle of the measure rather than on the last beat.

3) Mendelssohn may have intended to keep the first sixteenth note separated from the others, as is the case with the first sixteenth note in the cello part.

4) M.M. according to A2 and FE. *Scherzo / Leggiero e vivace* in A2 and FE.

5) The articulation and slurring of this motive are not consistent in the manuscript. This edition follows Mendelssohn's original indications; however, it is likely that he intended the more frequent articulation of this motive (a *staccato* mark above the slur on the last eighth note) to prevail throughout the movement.

6) This part of the manuscript page is not clean, and consequently it is difficult to ascertain whether the *staccato* dots on the upbeat and the following downbeat are intended. What seems to be an additional dot appears above the first of the sixteenth notes of the next measure.

7) The location of the *p* is not clear. Mendelssohn's handwritten *p* is diagonal, with the top part being under the eighth-note rest, and the bottom being under the  $a^2$ . A reasonable interpretation would be that the grace note  $a^1$ , being the resolution of the previous dynamic build-up, is still within the previous dynamic indication, whereas the  $a^2$ , which starts the new phrase, is within the new *p*.

8) Mendelssohn had an oversight here, which also affected his beaming (maintained here): instead of the logical  $c^1$ , he gave the violin a  $b$ . Compare with the cello part.

50 Pno. 4 *p*

59 (*cresc.*)<sup>1)</sup>

64 *f*

70 *f*

75 *f*

81 *ff* *p*

87 *f* *sf* *p* *f* *sf*

94 *sf* *sf*

100 *p*

106 *p*

113

118 <sup>2)</sup>

123

1) The *cresc.* for the cello here is written above the staff, and is possibly intended for the violin as well. The fact that the piano part has the same indication and the same textural role as the violin supports this assumption (the piano also has a *cresc.*).

2) The slur starts between the  $d^2$  and the  $f\#^2$ . It may have been intended to start from the  $d^2$ .

128 1) *sforzando* *sforzando* 2)

134 *sforzando* *f* *cresc.*

142 *p*

148 2 Vc. *3)*

155 *(dim.)* *espress.* *p*

162 *4)*

169

175

180

186 *pizz.*

**Allegro vivace**  $\text{♩} = 100$  <sup>5)</sup>

Pno.

*p* *sforzando* *sforzando*

8 *6)* *pp* *cresc.* *f* *sforzando* *p*

1) The beginning of the slur is not distinct; it is probable that it is intended to include the grace note.

2) No *sforzando* is indicated here. It may be an accidental omission, or an intentional attempt to have the cello part dominate this passage.

3) This slur extends over a page break. In the first page it is clearly extended beyond the barline, but in the second page it does not appear. Still, the following measures suggest this interpretation is the correct one.

4) The slur may be intended to start on the  $d^2$ .

5) M.M. according to A2 and FE. *Allegro assai appassionato* in A2 and FE.

6) The manuscript has a system break at the end of the previous bar. This is probably why the wedges do not continue here.

15 *pp* *cresc.*

22 *f* *ff* *f*

29 *sf*

35 *sf* *f* *sf* *sf*

41 *sf*

47 *sf* 1) 1) 1)

53 *fp* *fp*

63 *sf* 2) 3)

73 Pno. Vc. *sf* *sf* 3) *p*

79 *pp* *cresc.* *f* *sf*

87 *f*

94 *p*

1) The inconsistencies in the articulations of the violin part in mm. 48-50 are reproduced here as they appear in the manuscript. Once again, it should be mentioned that often Mendelssohn is not careful about clearly distinguishing between dots and wedges.

2) The slurs in both the violin part and the piano part start above the second quarter note of the bar; their angles in the manuscript, however, suggest the possibility that they were intended to start above the first quarter note.

3) The *staccato* dot is missing in the manuscript.

102 *(dim.)*<sup>1)</sup> *pp*

109 Pno. Vc. *sf sf*

115 *sf sf (p)*<sup>2)</sup> 4 Vc.

125 *cantab.*

134 6 Pno. *(p)*<sup>3)</sup>

147 *pp*

157 *cresc. p*

166 *f*

173

180 *8va* *ff*

185 *sf sf*

190 *sf*

196 *fp fp* 4)

1) In the manuscript the *dim.* indication is located between the violin and the cello parts.

2) *p* suggested by comparison to m. 14.

3) The grace note in the violin part is not slashed in the manuscript. This must be an oversight, since it is slashed in the cello part and in all of the parallel passages.

4) The tie appears only at the beginning of a new system, and not at the end of a previous one.



203 *fp* *fp* 1)

210 3 Pno. *p* 2)

220 3) 4)

226 2 Pno. Vc. *p* *f*

235 *sf*

242

250 *sf* 5) *(sf)* 5)

256 8 Vc. *f*

273 6) 7) *p* *sf* *p* *sf* *p*

283 *cresc.*

292 *sf* *f* *cresc.*

300 *ff* *ff*

307

1) Dot missing in the manuscript. Compare with the piano part of m. 199.

2) The slur here follows the manuscript. It is likely that dots were intended above the  $d^2$ s.

3) The spacing of the e-flats in the manuscript suggests that they were afterthoughts. It is probable, then, that they were intended to share the articulation of their surrounding notes.

4) The manuscript has an unclear slur here, most likely the result of ink bleeding through the page. However, the performer may decide to articulate this phrase similarly to the manner in which it is indicated in parallel passages (slurring the first two notes and dotting the third).

5) Since Mendelssohn does not repeat the slur that appears in m. 250, it is up to the performers to decide whether they want to play these notes with the same bow or not.

6) The slur in the manuscript starts above the middle of the second quarter note; it is corrected here to follow the cello part.

7) Slurs shown here as they appear in the manuscript.