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by

Kirk Michael Rich

November 2018

TO LIFT OR NOT TO LIFT:
SLURS AND ARTICULATION IN MENDELSSOHN'S ORGAN WORKS

A Document

Presented to the Faculty of the
Moores School of Music
Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

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Abstract

A salient feature of Felix Mendelssohn's organ works is the presence of many slur markings; these encompass as few as two notes and as many as several measures. Confusion surrounds the interpretation of these slurs. Some organists, particularly those trained in performance practices of earlier music, view Mendelssohn's slurs as indications of articulation, as they would have been in the Baroque Era. Primary source evidence, however, suggests a shift in the meaning of slurs by the time Mendelssohn's organ works were published. The study of these sources, primarily keyboard and violin methods from the last decades of the eighteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth century, paints a picture of articulation practices during Mendelssohn's lifetime. Although previous scholarship on the topic has focused on organ methods, Mendelssohn's relatively limited organ study suggests he may have never consciously attempted to acquire a proper organ technique. Therefore, piano methods of the day can shed light on Mendelssohn's organ playing vis-à-vis his piano training. Analysis of select Mendelssohn organ works based on contemporaneous keyboard methods provides an idea of the general keyboard articulation appropriate to unmarked pieces, those without slurs. This, coupled with a catalogue of slur types and examples of each drawn from Mendelssohn's organ pieces, provides a valuable resource for approaching this music in a historically informed way.

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For My Parents

Introduction

Published in 1837, Felix Mendelssohn's Three Preludes and Fugues, op. 37, and the Six Sonatas, op. 65, published in 1845, were among the most significant organ works to appear after the death of J. S. Bach. Although these pieces have become a mainstay in the repertory, some confusion surrounds the element of articulation in them, especially in the interpretation of slurs. Due to the pervading influence of the early music revival in the twentieth century, some organists interpret Mendelssohn's music anachronistically, as if viewed through a Baroque lens. This approach seems reasonable at first, considering the composer's early study with the musically conservative Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), who instilled in Mendelssohn a lifelong love of early music; however, such an approach fails to consider the considerable stylistic changes that occurred before Mendelssohn's birth.¹

The rules of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries required notes under a slur to be played legato, and the value of the last note under the slur was slightly shortened in length. However, due to the sheer number of slurs in Mendelssohn's music, applying such an interpretation creates many accentuations that seem to defy the logical phrase divisions in the music. Issues of interpretation aside, the situation of Mendelssohn's slurs in the organ sonatas is further complicated by the existence of multiple manuscripts and first editions. Mendelssohn's slurring in these works varies from one source to the next.

¹ Zelter's teachers included Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1721-1783), a student of J. S. Bach. In 1786, Zelter served as concertmaster in the Berlin premiere of Handel's *Messiah*. From 1791 until his death, he served as a member and later as conductor of the Singakademie in Berlin, leading performances of oratorios and promoting the works of J. S. Bach. His students also included Fanny Mendelssohn and Giacomo Meyerbeer.

The two principal manuscript sources reveal inconsistencies in slurring, as do the two first printed editions of Coventry and Hollier and Breitkopf & Härtel. While knowledge of the differences in slurring among these sources is important, it cannot bring one to an understanding of what the slurs mean and how they are to be realized in performance.

Mendelssohn's notation has led a number of organists to surmise that the composer may have applied slurs haphazardly. This notion is not quite justified if we consider Mendelssohn's desire for accuracy in his scores. In an 1845 letter sent to his German publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, Mendelssohn wrote, "Enclosed please find my six organ sonatas.... I must insist on a final proof for this work, all the more because it depends greatly on accuracy. I have therefore been as attentive as possible in my inspection of the enclosed manuscript, since I would like to have a quite clear, correct engraving of it."² It seems reasonable, therefore, that Mendelssohn's desire for accuracy and clarity included the proper placement of slurs.

Despite the fervency and exactitude with which Mendelssohn hounded his publishers, his slurs were already misunderstood half a century following his death. As in the music of many other composers, Mendelssohn's was subjected to the whims of various editors; indeed, one finds several editions of his organ music in which the slurs are modified or removed. In 1899, the London firm of Joseph Williams produced a "Student's edition," edited by Henry Hudson. The prefatory remarks reveal the confusion surrounding Mendelssohn's slurring, noting an "Absence of proper attention to

² Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Briefe an deutsche Verleger*, ed. Rudolf Elvers (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1968), 161, quoted in Jon Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing Part Two: Organs and Organ Playing in the Romantic Period from Mendelssohn to Reger and Widor*, trans. Christopher Anderson (Stuttgart: Carus, 2010), 232.

phrasing.”³ Hudson refers to the slurs as “phrase marks,” revealing a development after Mendelssohn’s death. The editor asserts that “Mendelssohn’s phrase-marks are most difficult to understand, and can only be put down as ‘bowing’ marks such as found in violin music....Young students constantly get it wrong in trying to follow these directions, the older players disregard them altogether.”⁴ Hudson’s solution was to replace Mendelssohn’s slurring with his own, reflecting the conventions of the late nineteenth century. One finds a similar approach in other editions from the period. The 1896 Schirmer edition of the organ works already revealed an overhaul of Mendelssohn’s original slurring, in which editor Samuel P. Warren lengthened the slurs to reflect then-contemporary ideas about slurs and phrasing. The most extreme example of editing came much later in Marcel Dupré’s 1948 Bornemann edition, in which the slurs are simply removed, and commas are inserted to indicate breaths.

From these posthumous editions, we can infer that the slurs in Mendelssohn’s music were already misunderstood by the end of the nineteenth century. The slur had taken on too many meanings, to the point that Dupré eradicated it from his notational palette.⁵ In particular, the idea of slurs representing phrasing, a practice that developed after Mendelssohn’s death, colored the way in which later composers viewed the music of their forbearers.

The last three decades have sought to purge earlier Mendelssohn editions of various corruptions and add-ons through the publication of several new Urtext editions of

³ Henry Hudson, preface to *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Six Sonatas Composed for the Organ*, op. 65, (London: Joseph Williams, 1899), 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ludger Lohmann, “Notated Slurs in Organ Music: Approaches to Interpretation,” *GOArt Research Reports* 1 (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1999), 215.

his organ works. These latest editions include Novello (1987-1990), edited by William Little; Henle (1988), edited by Wolfgang Stockmeier; Bärenreiter (1993-1994), edited by Christoph Albrecht; and Breitkopf & Härtel (2004-2005), edited by Christian Martin Schmidt. Nevertheless, due to a general misunderstanding of Mendelssohn's notation, misinterpretation continues to abound. In the introduction to a filmed lecture, Malcolm Bilson, the Frederick J. Whiton Professor Emeritus of Music at Cornell University, opines on this topic:

These basic concepts are what are transmitted to us in the form of, more or less, precise musical notation by composers. Today, almost everyone plays from so-called Urtext editions. The best ones endeavor to show us as clearly as possible just what the composer wrote with no emendation or additions. But do we still know how to read these as they intended them to be read?⁶

A disagreement in how to interpret Mendelssohn's use of the slur has resulted in a polemic with essentially two camps espousing opposite views. The first, and the one which this study seeks to corroborate, supports the notion that legato was already the basic keyboard articulation by the time of Mendelssohn's published organ works. Within this understanding, slurs were no longer necessary simply to indicate legato and, therefore, took on additional meanings. The opposing camp, promoting a sort of "Baroque lens" approach, believes there was a gradual shift in keyboard articulation that took place during Mendelssohn's lifetime, such that he would have played the organ in a more non-legato manner early on, adopting the legato style later in life. Those who adhere to this view believe the presence of slurs indicates a legato touch for the passages

⁶ Malcolm Bilson, "Knowing the Score: Do We Know How to Read Urtext Editions and How Can This Lead to Expressive and Passionate Performance?" (video of lecture, Cornell University, 2005), accessed November 17, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVGN_YAX03A&t=94s

they encompass; therefore, an absence of slurs in Mendelssohn's music would be an indication to play non-legato.

The most current research espousing either of these opposing views has focused primarily on information gleaned from late eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth-century organ methods. However, considering Mendelssohn's relatively brief period of organ study,⁷ it seems appropriate in reassessing the composer's approach to articulation and slurring that piano-related sources should play an equal, if not greater role. Jon Laukvik cites changes in piano construction and design in this transitional period as a pivotal factor in the gradual shift from a primarily non-legato playing style to a more consistent legato articulation:

The spread of legato playing in the nineteenth century stands in close relation to the particular characteristics of the *Hammerklavier* or fortepiano. An increased key resistance, related to a heavier way of playing and a greater keyfall, requires a playing technique that makes more use of arm weight. From such a technique proceeds . . . the pressing of the key into the keybed with the fingers, an approach which results in legato. Since in the nineteenth century the piano was for most organists the primary practice instrument, piano technique exercised a strong influence on organ playing.⁸

It is, then, from this perspective that the present thesis endeavors to aid performers in their attempt to understand Mendelssohn's notation as he and his contemporaries may have read it, inasmuch as it pertains to slurring and articulation in his organ compositions.

⁷ William A. Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26.

⁸ Jon Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing, Part Two: Organs and Organ Playing in the Romantic Period from Mendelssohn to Reger and Widor*, trans. Christopher Anderson (Stuttgart: Carus, 2010), 13.

Chapter One lays the groundwork for the interpretation of slurs in Mendelssohn's organ works by first establishing the basic articulation of Mendelssohn's day. This basic articulation is what one might call the ordinary touch of a particular era, employed for passages or whole pieces without slurs. Since slurs often have consequences for articulation, their proper execution depends entirely on how they behave within the overall touch. Information gleaned from various primary sources, including piano and organ methods from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as recorded accounts of keyboard playing during the period, will be consulted. Two categories of unmarked works (those with no slurs) with particular significance to Mendelssohn and articulation will be discussed: the chorale and the fugue.

After establishing legato as the basic keyboard articulation of Mendelssohn's day, Chapter Two will consult primary source materials for commentary on how slurs were realized in performance. This includes slurred groups of everything from two-note pairs to longer groupings. Rather than moving chronologically, this chapter will be organized by slur type, including all possible varieties found in Mendelssohn's organ music.

Chapter Three offers an analysis of slurs and articulation possibilities in specific organ works of Mendelssohn based on the sources discussed in Chapters One and Two. First, we will consider several of Mendelssohn's unmarked works, with a particular focus on his fugal writing. Early variants of several works will be examined to shed light on Mendelssohn's compositional process, including how he may have altered or developed ideas about articulation. Then, we observe examples of various slur types found throughout his total *oeuvre*.

This study seeks to offer plausible solutions arising when Mendelssohn's notation is unclear. It is a pleasure to offer, for the first time, information gleaned from one nineteenth-century German organ method and three articles previously unavailable in English.⁹ My own experience playing the Silbermann organs in Rötha, which were known to Mendelssohn, as well as a brief period of private study with internationally renowned organist, professor, and specialist in this repertory, Dr. Ludger Lohmann, also inform this thesis. Overall, this study should be viewed as a practical resource to performing organists, hopefully one that will lead to more enlightened performances of this beloved repertory.

⁹ Ludger Lohmann's "Regarding the Interpretation of Mendelssohn's Organ Music," has only been published in Japanese and German in *Organ-Kenkyu: Annual Report of the Japan Organ Society* 37 (2009). Conny Restle's "Was für ein Clavier? That is the Question" was published in German in the *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung* (Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 2010). Both of these articles have now been translated into English by Seraphina Weber and made available to the author. Hans van Nieuwkoop's "Bogen en metronoomcijfers in de orgelmuziek van Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" was published in the Dutch journal *Het Orgel* (1997). New English translations by Paul Tegels and Sander Maarsman-Bayer, respectively, have been made available for this study.

Chapter 1

Basic Articulation in Mendelssohn's Organ Works

A Case for Legato

Confusion surrounds not only the interpretation of slurs in Mendelssohn's organ works, but also the appropriate articulation for unmarked passages or whole movements lacking slurs or other articulation marks. A slur's function depends almost entirely on the general articulation of the period; therefore, establishing this framework is key to deciphering the manner in which Mendelssohn's slurs function.

A foundational issue that has led to some of the misperceptions surrounding the slurs in Mendelssohn's music centers around the shift from a generally non-legato playing style to a more thoroughly connected approach. Convenient though it would be, it is simply naïve to believe keyboard players of continental Europe collectively decided upon legato as the standard articulation beginning January 1, 1800. While some keyboard methods were already promoting legato in last decades of the eighteenth century, others, including Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Daniel Gottlob Türk, still advocated a nuanced non-legato as the general touch.¹

The early nineteenth century was therefore a period of transition, and this is reflected in the musical notation of the period. Due to a multiplicity of practices, it can be difficult for organists and other keyboard players to know the appropriate articulation for unmarked pieces. It is possible, however, to identify general trends.

On the whole, nineteenth-century composers began including more slurs in their scores. Some also used various articulation directives, such as “legato” or “non-legato.”

¹ Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 56.

Unfortunately, a survey of various composers' approach to indicating articulation reveals a lack of uniformity. While the majority of Mendelssohn's organ works contain many slurs of varying lengths, the few unmarked pieces, such as the Fugue in D Minor, op. 37, warrant a closer look at performance conventions of that time. This is all-the-more-true due to the occasions in which Mendelssohn left articulation directives in two other unmarked organ works—both of which are also fugues.

As mentioned in the introduction, previous research on this topic has revealed a polemic, and the various opinions on Mendelssohn's basic organ articulation fit, more or less, into two categories. The first of these presents the idea of a gradual shift towards legato occurring c.1800-1850. Jon Laukvik promotes this view, although he maintains that a persistent legato touch, especially in unmarked works, would not have been the norm for organists in Mendelssohn's day.² Hans Fagius concurs, asserting that Mendelssohn "obviously played in the classically-trained manner, crisp and clear."³ The second view, held by Ludger Lohmann, argues that legato was well-established as the basic organ articulation already in the late eighteenth century, long before Mendelssohn took his first organ lessons in Berlin.⁴ Laukvik and Lohmann both cite the same organ methods published in Germany ca. 1795-1858, one of which Mendelssohn owned,⁵ yet

² Ibid., 61.

³ Hans Fagius, "The Organ Works of Mendelssohn and Schumann and Their Links to the Classical Tradition," *Proceedings of the Göteborg International Organ Academy*, ed. Hans Davidsson (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1994), 342.

⁴ Ludger Lohmann, "Regarding the Interpretation of Mendelssohn's Organ Music," *Organ-Kenkyu, Annual Report of the Japan Organ Society* 37 (2009): 2.

⁵ William A. Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 27.

they draw vastly different conclusions. In light of this polemic, a closer examination of these organ methods is in order.

While studying organ methods from the early part of the nineteenth century can paint a picture of what organ playing was like in Mendelssohn's lifetime, previous scholarship on this topic has neglected the fact that Mendelssohn was primarily trained as a pianist. His organ lessons with August Wilhelm Bach took place over a period of fewer than two years and were, at best, inconsistent.⁶ Hans Fagius associates Mendelssohn with three other contemporaneous German organists for whom non-legato supposedly prevailed: Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809), Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770-1846), and Adolf Friedrich Hesse (1809-1863).⁷ Kittel, who died the year Mendelssohn was born, was a student of J. S. Bach. From 1786 to 1789, Rinck was a pupil of Kittel, and Hesse studied with Rinck for six months in the winter of 1828-29.

That Fagius draws a parallel between Mendelssohn's organ playing with this lineage of organists is problematic. Kittel, Rinck, and Hesse were all professional organists, having significantly more training at the instrument than Mendelssohn. While one might assume that, of the three, Kittel would have been the most likely to play with a non-legato articulation, the advice he gives for playing the organ pedals in the foreword to his *Choralbuch für Schleswig-Holstein* (1803) includes the use of the heel and toe of either foot, a hallmark of legato playing.⁸ In Rinck's second organ method, the

⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁷ Fagius, "Organ Works of Mendelssohn," 330.

⁸ Johann Christian Kittel, *Choralbuch für Schleswig-Holstein* (Altona: Hammerich, 1803), 76, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 115.

Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen (Theoretical-Practical Handbook on Organ Playing), op. 124, he asserts:

Since the organ, by its very nature, is primarily suited to slow, connected movements, the organ-player must thus pay special attention that he joins the notes together in his performance; that is, he must proceed from one note to the next in such a way that the ear cannot detect the slightest separation or gap between the tones.⁹

It is also significant to consider that Hesse's student, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, whose period of study was admittedly short-lived, later became the founder of the French Romantic organ school, the basic articulation of which was undeniably legato. In his *École d'orgue* (Organ School) of 1862, Lemmens, in speaking about articulation, opines on "the connected style, which lies in the particular character of the organ."¹⁰ This should be evidence enough to at least question any association Mendelssohn, Hesse, Kittel, and Rinck might have had with a generally non-legato touch.

What separated Mendelssohn from the likes of other organists was his status as a virtuoso pianist; his piano training was as consistent and thorough as his organ training was lacking. Beginning in 1817, the young Felix studied under Berlin's most important pianist, Ludwig Berger (1777-1839), who had himself been a student of Muzio Clementi and John Field. After five years of rigorous study, Mendelssohn's time with Berger came to an end. Although greatly saddened to lose his protégé, Berger inferred that Mendelssohn's training was more or less complete:

Felix is certainly going to be one of the most significant composers and improvisers who have ever composed or improvised, and by great good fortune he is now so far along, that he cannot be spoiled by bad or even

⁹ Christian Heinrich Rinck, *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen*, op. 124 (Darmstadt: Diehl, 1839), 43, quoted in Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 3.

¹⁰ Jacques Lemmens, *École d'orgue basée sur le Plain-Chant Romain*, vol. 1 (Mainz: Le Fils de B. Schott, 1862), 4, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 57.

one-sided teachers, even though it might hold him back some in his virtuosity.¹¹

Fagius does not broach the topic of Mendelssohn's pianism. While not speaking directly to the composer's piano training, Laukvik propagates the idea that legato organ playing spread gradually due to the rise in popularity of the piano, which underwent substantial changes in construction and design between the death of Mozart and the mid nineteenth century. Increased key resistance and greater keyfall demanded a heavier playing style. As it became the practice instrument *de riguer* for organists, the piano's new technical demands undoubtedly influenced organ playing techniques and composition. Approaching Mendelssohn's organ music from this perspective would not be entirely inappropriate, as he was a pianist first and organist second.

About the state of the piano's development during Mendelssohn's lifetime, Conny Restle notes:

In contrast to the earlier generation of pianists such as Ludwig van Beethoven or Carl Maria von Weber, in Felix' young years, the exciting period of the changeover from the *Hammerflügel* of the Viennese Classicism to that of the Romanticism between about 1795 and 1825, was essentially completed.¹²

In reality, piano makers were anything but stagnant in their innovations after 1825. Along with Ludwig Berger's account from the end of Mendelssohn's study, one infers from Restle that the young pianist-composer's musical prowess entered its maturity just as the

¹¹ Dieter Siebenkäs, "Ludwig Berger: Sein Leben und seine Werke unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Liedschaffens," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* 5 (Berlin: Merseburger, 1963), 233-34, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 30.

¹² Conny Restle, "Was für ein Clavier? That is the Question," *Jahrbuch 2010 Staatliches Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, ed. Simone Hohmaier (Mainz: Schott, 2010), 20, trans. Seraphina Weber.

piano blossomed into a new era of construction and design. In contrast to theories put forward by Fagius and Laukvik, William Little makes the following observation:

Since it's fairly well established that Mendelssohn learned next to nothing from A.W. Bach, and certainly not technique, his keyboard technique and improvisatory skills on the organ were the same keyboard and improvisatory skills he had learned from his piano teacher, Ludwig Berger, as Berger himself averred. There is no evidence that Mendelssohn ever consciously set out to develop a keyboard technique specifically organ-oriented and distinct from his piano technique.”¹³

With this in mind, the present study will move beyond previous scholarship, which has focused solely on organ methods, and will explore piano methods from the same era, establishing a legato keyboard culture that was in place before Mendelssohn was even born. We will also challenge the commonly accepted belief that legato organ playing was only initiated after the development and popularization of the piano during the nineteenth century, as further perpetuated by Laukvik. While there is some truth to this view, primary source documentation seems to suggest that organists had acquired a legato touch by the late eighteenth century and adapted this manner of playing to the piano.

This culture of legato was not limited to the keyboard arts. Many of the primary sources consulted for this study make comparisons between keyboard playing and other musical activity, especially string playing. Changes in articulation practices from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries are inextricably linked to the evolution of the piano and string bows; alterations made to wind instruments had less significance, although those players followed general trends.¹⁴ Mendelssohn was a talented violinist, and while

¹³ William A. Little, email to author, February 24, 2017.

¹⁴ Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice, 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 169.

considering every violin method from his lifetime goes beyond the scope of this document, those with special significance to his practice will be mentioned.

Commonalities among string and keyboard methods only strengthen the case for Mendelssohn's organ works finding their rightful place in a thoroughly established culture of legato music-making.

Notational Practices: Score Directives

The most obvious way in which a composer can indicate the desired articulation is by means of a directive in the score, such as “legato,” “non-legato,” or “staccato.” The use of articulation directives in organ music is addressed by Johann Gottlob Werner (1777-1822). Born in Hoyer, Saxony, Werner eventually became the organist at the Merseburg Cathedral in 1819, the hallowed space in which Liszt's major organ works were later premiered. Published in 1807, Werner's *Orgelschule oder Anleitung zum Orgelspielen und zur richtigen Behandlung des Instrumentes* (Organ School or Manual on Organ Playing and the Correct Treatment of the Instrument) is considered one of the most significant sources for performance practice in early nineteenth-century Germany.¹⁵ Werner mentions the use of directives given in a score, saying, “At the beginning of a piece, the expression ‘staccato’ indicates that the work should be played detached throughout. ‘Legato,’ on the other hand, indicates a thoroughly connected or slurred approach.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 18.

¹⁶ Johann Gottlob Werner, *Orgelschule oder Anleitung zum Orgelspielen und zur richtigen Behandlung des Instrumentes*, (Penig: F. Dienemann und Compagnie, 1807), 17, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 59.

Jon Laukvik bases his ideas about non-legato articulation in Mendelssohn largely on this passage from Werner's method, which could be applied to three Mendelssohn organ fugues. The Fugue in D Minor, op. 37 features neither slurs nor directives. In the same opus, the Fugue in C Minor contains no slurs but is marked "legato." And from Sonata No. 6, op. 65, a second Fugue in D Minor exists with no slurs but includes the indication "sostenuto e legato." In comparing these three fugues, Laukvik and others have concluded that, in the absence of slurs, the directive "legato" was a necessary indication during this period, otherwise unmarked pieces would have been played non-legato.

Ludger Lohmann disagrees with this view, making the following observation:

When examining Mendelssohn's organ music where slurs are noted, it is, first of all, noticeable that the overwhelming majority of the notes are not marked with slurs. This fact is sufficient to invalidate the notion of many present-day organists coming from the baroque performance practice, that wherever no slur is noted, one must play non-legato. Such an assumption is forbidden in view of the legato-basis of organ playing that was clearly established in Mendelssohn's time.¹⁷

Drawing such an all-encompassing conclusion from Werner's information on score directives is problematic. Elsewhere in his method, Werner insists that "the organist must practice with great care the precise joining together of the notes."¹⁸ This desire for a precise, connected touch is further reinforced by manual and pedal exercises, both of which advocate finger and pedal substitution as a tool for acquiring a legato touch.¹⁹ Rather than insisting that articulation directives must be present, he seems merely to be providing an explanation of the Italian terms "legato" and "staccato" to German-speaking

¹⁷ Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 5.

¹⁸ Werner, *Orgelschule*, 16, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 56. For original German: "Das Genaue Aneinanderfügen der Töne muss der Orgelspieler mit Grosser Sorgsalt lernen."

¹⁹ Ibid., quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 123.

readers who were probably beginners. While organ pieces in this period could contain articulation directives, like Mendelssohn's Fugue in C Minor, op. 37, as well as the fugue from Sonata No. 6, the majority do not.

Earlier in his method, Werner contradicts himself by mentioning occasions in which the organist must discern the required articulation from the nature of the writing, rather than relying on directives:

In pieces of a sad, serious, or gentle character which are to be played slowly, one holds the notes for their full value, unless the opposite is indicated. But in pieces of a lively or happy character and with faster motion, the notes are played shorter. Of course, this must not be exaggerated or applied in the wrong context.²⁰

This statement alone is enough to refute the idea that Werner and organists of his time required the directive "legato" in a score to negate a player's otherwise instinctive non-legato approach, the only exception being pieces containing fast note values.

If one is to apply information from Werner's method to Mendelssohn so liberally, it should correspond more closely to the composer's notational practice. Mendelssohn only used directives relating to general articulation twice in his organ works, both of which call for legato; moreover, the directive "staccato" never once appears in his organ works. Rather, one movement from Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 5 and another passage from Sonata No. 6 contain dots to signify a staccato execution, and, in both instances, these are restricted to the pedal line.

Considering Mendelssohn's notation for organ music generally, one sees not only that the majority of pieces have no articulation directives, but also, as Lohmann observed, that the majority of notes in his organ works are not slurred. If one follows Laukvik's

²⁰ Ibid., quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 62.

application of Werner to the letter, are we to believe that Mendelssohn desired a non-legato execution for every passage without slurs?

Clive Brown notes that, by the end of the eighteenth century, “leaving the notes unmarked was nearly or exactly the same as putting them under continuous slurs.”²¹ Interestingly, while we find only two occasions of Mendelssohn using the directive “legato” in his organ works, several other nineteenth-century composers used the indication “non-legato,” including: Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Bruch, and Saint-Saëns.²² This suggests that musicians of the period would have normally assumed legato as the basic touch, not the other way around, as put forth by Laukvik and Fagius. The multiplicity of notational practices, including the use of slurs, directives, or a combination of both, reflects the transitional nature of the early nineteenth century.

Primary Sources (Keyboard and Violin)

In establishing a culture of legato keyboard-playing that predates Mendelssohn’s birth, this study examines keyboard methods published primarily in Germany and England. Mendelssohn made several extended visits to England, garnering celebrity status not only as a composer, conductor, and pianist, but also as an organ virtuoso.²³ Additionally, he published his organ sonatas in both London (Coventry and Hollier) and Leipzig (Breitkopf & Härtel). Through his friendships and many performances with

²¹ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 172.

²² *Ibid.*, 192-95.

²³ Glenn Stanley, “The Music for Keyboard,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165.

English musicians, he must have had a clear sense of performing styles in England, as well as in his native Germany.²⁴

One of the earliest keyboard sources advocating legato articulation is *Art of Fingering the Harpsichord* (1758) by Nicolo Pasquali (1718-1757), who, though Italian by birth, made his career and published this method in England. Pasquali's method is one of the earliest sources promoting a general legato touch at the keyboard. Describing it as "tied or equal,"²⁵ he lists legato as the first of five touches possible at the harpsichord, noting, "The Legato is the touch that this Treatise endeavours to teach, being a general Touch fit for almost all Kinds of Passages, and by which the Vibration of the Strings are made perfect in every Note."²⁶ Pasquali also specifies that all unmarked passages "must be played Legato, i.e., in the usual Way."²⁷ This directive is all the more interesting if we recall Fagius and Laukvik's assertion that, approximately ninety years after Pasquali's method, Mendelssohn's articulation in passages without slurs must have been non-legato.

Vincenzo Manfredini (1737-1799), a fellow Italian and younger colleague of Pasquali, wrote about the cantabile playing style in 1775. His commentary resonates with Pasquali: "One must be careful not to raise the finger from the key before having played the next note. This rule is not only followed in this instance, but on almost any

²⁴ R. Larry Todd, "Mendelssohn, Felix," *Grove Music Online*, accessed Nov. 23, 2018, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051795>>

²⁵ Nicolo Pasquali, *Art of Fingering the Harpsichord* (Edinburgh: R. Bremner, c. 1757), 26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

occasion.”²⁸ Manfredini’s fourteen preludes contain relatively few slurs over two to four notes; therefore, if following his advice, one would approach his music with a legato touch in unmarked passages, which make up the majority of his writing.²⁹

Another eighteenth-century author who promoted a legato keyboard touch was Alsatian composer Nicolas-Joseph Hüllmandel (1756-1823). It is possible he studied with C. P. E. Bach, and although active in Paris at one time, he fled to London at the outbreak of the French Revolution.³⁰ Hüllmandel’s *Principles of Music Chiefly Calculated for the Piano Forte or Harpsichord*, published in London in 1796, specifies as “one of the most essential rules”³¹ that unless notes are marked as staccato, the player should hold down a key “til the next is struck.”³²

The first of these three methods, that of Pasquali, relates keyboard playing to singing and string playing. Because of Mendelssohn’s abilities as a string player, which he cultivated before his organ studies, the present study considers how this background may have influenced his ideas about keyboard articulation. Mendelssohn’s violin studies are not as well documented as his keyboard training, but he received regular instruction in his youth.³³ Although it is not clear if he worked from Leopold Mozart’s *Violinschule*

²⁸ Vincenzo Manfredini, *Regole armoniche, o sieno Precetti ragionati* (Venice: Zerletti, 1775), 28, quoted in Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 153.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Rita Benton and Thomas Milligan, “Hüllmandel, Nicolas-Joseph,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed Nov. 23, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000013537>.

³¹ Nicolas-Joseph Hüllmandel, *Principles of Music Chiefly Calculated for the Piano Forte or Harpsichord* (London: Rt. Birchall, 1796), 20, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 153.

³² Ibid.

(Violin School) of 1756, this method was widely-known, enjoying numerous reprints even into the nineteenth century.³⁴ While the first several editions maintained non-legato as the standard articulation, Rosenblum has pointed out changes to the revised fourth edition (1804) that “purg[ed] . . . the earlier assumption that non-legato was the usual way of playing.”³⁵ (Alterations to the shape and balance of bows in this period also enabled a more effective legato.)

In 1778, Leopold Mozart recalled having heard “[Josef] Reicha, the ‘cellist, who plays the clavier very well and who had also previously been playing very legato [and] organ-like on our harpsichord.’”³⁶ This intriguing account raises several questions. One wonders if Mozart found Reicha’s legato touch out of the ordinary because others were not playing the harpsichord legato. While this is not possible to discern from the quotation, it is clear that Leopold Mozart associated legato touch with the organ.

Chorales

A number of other primary sources suggest that organists in certain regions mostly played legato as early as the 1770s, at least for certain genres. In spite of his insistence that Mendelssohn’s basic articulation was non-legato (at least for much of his

³³ Clive Brown, “The Performance of Mendelssohn’s Chamber and Solo Music for Violin,” in *Mendelssohn and Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), ed. Siegwart Reichwald, 59.

³⁴ Robin Stowell, “Leopold Mozart Revised: Articulation in Violin Playing During the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,” in R. Larry Todd and Peter Williams, *Perspectives on Mozart Performance* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 126-35.

³⁵ Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 154.

³⁶ W. A. Mozart, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Briefwechsel und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. E. H. Mueller, 2 vols. (Vienna: Verlag Franz Perner, 1949), vol. 2, 313-14, quoted in George Barth, *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42.

playing career), Hans Fagius nevertheless recognizes that organists were realizing chorales with a legato touch already in the eighteenth century.³⁷ Ludger Lohmann has pointed out that “chorale playing was the first area of organ performance in which legato had asserted itself as a basic articulation. The first sign of this dates back to the 1770s.”³⁸ The clearest example of this comes from Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814), a music critic, composer, violinist, and keyboardist. He mentions the following in his *Über die Pflichten des Ripien-Violinisten* (On the Duties of the Orchestral Violinists), published in 1776, two years before Leopold Mozart’s recollection of Reicha’s playing:

This imperceptible change of bow is also necessary for the correct execution of the chorales, which it is usual, quite wrongly, to execute in a detached style (*stoßweise*), which goes completely against the character of the chorale. The sounds must be connected to each other in such a way that the entire orchestra resembles an organ. In all kinds of pieces, notes of the same pitch which are connected by a tie must also be kept in an entirely equal manner, as a single note, the second not receiving any additional pressure.³⁹

Aside from the implications that a legato execution was necessary for bringing about the proper character of the chorale, the most interesting aspect of Reichardt’s commentary, written only two years before Leopold Mozart’s account of Reicha’s playing, is that the organ would serve as a recognizable model for this sort of articulation.

A number of German organ methods from the first half of the nineteenth century address chorale playing in detail, including one by Christian Heinrich Rinck. His *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen* (Theoretical-Practical Handbook on

³⁷ Fagius, “Organ Works of Mendelssohn,” 330.

³⁸ Lohmann, “Regarding Interpretation,” 6.

³⁹ Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *A propos des devoirs du violoniste ripiériste* (Pantin, 2016), 10, in the International Music Score Library Project Petrucci Music Library, accessed August 15, 2017, [https://imslp.org/wiki/%C3%9Cber_die_Pflichten_des_Ripien-Violinisten_\(Reichardt%2C_Johann_Friedrich\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/%C3%9Cber_die_Pflichten_des_Ripien-Violinisten_(Reichardt%2C_Johann_Friedrich)). Translation mine.

Organ Playing), op. 124, published in 1839, provides twenty-four pages on the subject.⁴⁰ Wilhelm Volckmar (1812-1887) devoted roughly one-third of his *Orgelschule*, op. 50 (1858) to discussing both the accompaniment of and preluding on chorales.⁴¹ And one of the earliest authors to promote legato as the organist's basic articulation, Justin Heinrich Knecht (1752-1817), devoted the entire third part of his 1798 *Vollständige Orgelschule für Anfänger und Geübtere* (Complete Organ Method for Beginners and Experienced Players) to chorale playing.⁴²

Not all German tutors in the first half of the nineteenth century prescribed legato as the basic articulation in organ playing, however. One such method is the 1838 *Handbuch zu der practischen Orgelschule* (Practical Organ School Manual) of Friedrich Wilhelm Schütze (1807-1888). Unlike most other methods from this period, Schütze continued to promote non-legato as a basic articulation, stating that “the teacher insists above all on correct, clean playing, in which the notes succeed one another like pearls.”⁴³ Nevertheless, Schütze's method still requires a strict legato for chorale playing and gives many pedal and finger substitutions, demanding legato even for consecutive octaves in the manuals. This method was widely known, enjoying several editions throughout the 1800s.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Jon Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice in Organ Playing Part Two: Organs and Organ Playing in the Romantic Period from Mendelssohn to Reger and Widor*, trans. Christopher Anderson (Stuttgart: Carus, 2010), 15.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Friedrich Wilhelm Schütze, *Handbuch zu der practischen Orgelschule* (Dresden and Leipzig: Arnold, 1838), 27, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 59.

⁴⁴ Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 19.

Music of the Bound Style

Sometime around 1800, legato playing associated with chorales seems to have been applied to music composed in the *gebundene Styl* (“bound style”).⁴⁵ Aside from “bound,” *gebundene* can mean “tied,” as in the tying over of prepared dissonances in the old polyphonic style. Sometimes also called the “strict” or “learned” style, this type of music was associated with the church. Writing in 1802, German theorist and violinist Heinrich Christoph Koch (1747-1816) lists several hallmarks of this writing, including a frequency of bound dissonances (suspensions).⁴⁶ Due to this among other characteristics, Koch proclaims that “the strict style is best suited for church music . . . the fugue is the principal product of this style.”⁴⁷

Knecht’s organ method lists the possible characters of pieces and their appropriate articulations, including the *gebundene Spielart*, or “legato playing style.”⁴⁸ We find one of the earliest references to this *gebundene Styl* in relation to legato keyboard articulation in Johann Peter Milchmeyer’s 1797 piano method, *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* (The True Art of Playing the Pianoforte).⁴⁹ And Johann Christian Friedrich

⁴⁵ Lohmann, “Regarding Interpretation,” 6.

⁴⁶ Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon, welches die theoretische und praktische Tonkunst, encyclopädisch bearbeitet, alle alten und neuen Kunstwörter erklärt, und die alten und neuen Instrumente beschrieben, enthält* (Frankfurt-am-Main: August Hermann der Jüngere, 1802), quoted in Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 23.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Jacques van Oortmerssen, “Johannes Brahms and the Nineteenth-Century Performance Practice in a Historical Perspective,” *Proceedings of the Göteborg International Organ Academy*, ed. Hans Davidsson (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1994), 369.

⁴⁹ Robert Rhein, “Johann Peter Milchmeyer’s *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen*: An Annotated Translation,” (DMA diss., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1993), 126.

Schneider (1786-1853), in his 1830 *Orgelschule*, declared the *gebundene Spielart* the most important.⁵⁰

In possibly the earliest critical review of Mendelssohn's Three Preludes and Fugues, op. 37 for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Eduard Krüger declared these pieces to possess "true edification and religious impulse . . . which in tone and form recalls the most glorious period of church music."⁵¹ Laukvik, however, argues that the unmarked Fugue in D Minor, op. 37 (Ex. 1) "gains energy and vigour if played non-legato."⁵² Nevertheless, this piece exhibits characteristics of the bound style, most notably with its prepared dissonances and suspensions, such as the alto voice from beat three of m. 11, the soprano voice beginning at beat four of m. 12, and the soprano voice from beat three of m. 15. Consequently, Lohmann favors a legato execution for this fugue, maintaining that "to denote it with slurs . . . would have been unnecessary."⁵³

⁵⁰ Oortmerssen, "Johannes Brahms," 369.

⁵¹ Eduard Krüger, "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Sechs Sonaten für die Orgel Opus 65," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 18 (1843), 70, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn*, 228.

⁵² Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 219.

⁵³ Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 6.

Example 1: Felix Mendelssohn, Fugue in D Minor, op. 37b, mm. 1-18. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Among pianists, the name Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is synonymous with the legato style. One of his most important and influential students, Carl Czerny (1791-1857), recalled of their piano lessons that “he (Beethoven) then went through the various keyboard studies . . . and especially insisted on legato technique; at that time all other pianists considered that kind of legato unattainable.”⁵⁴ The composer’s preoccupation with legato playing is revealed in personal commentary on his own works. In 1790, Beethoven remarked on the piano accompaniment to his lied, *Klage*, WoO 113: “throughout the notes must be smooth, sustained as much as possible, and slurred together.”⁵⁵ Additionally, an autograph inscription on an undated sketch of a keyboard

⁵⁴ Carl Czerny, “Recollections from My Life,” *The Musical Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (July 1956), 307, quoted in Reginald Gerig, *Great Pianists and Their Technique* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 90.

⁵⁵ Johann Baptist Cramer, *21 Etüden für Klavier: Nach dem Handexemplar Beethovens aus dem Besitz Anton Schindlers*, ed. Hans Kann (Vienna: Universal, 1974), iii, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 152.

composition reads: “the difficulty here is to slur this entire passage so that the putting down of the fingers cannot be heard at all; it must sound as if it were stroked with a bow.”⁵⁶ Whereas Reichardt’s treatise mentioned bowing in such a way as to make the violin sound as legato as an organ, here Beethoven desires a piano touch as smoothly connected as a string player slurring several notes under one bow stroke. This further reinforces the importance of considering non-organ specific sources in the matter of organ articulation, especially since Mendelssohn clearly had more training at the violin and piano.

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, Jon Laukvik proposes that piano playing, construction, and design over the course of the nineteenth century led to a gradual acceptance of legato articulation at the organ. While Beethoven’s role in this process was pivotal, his early career as an organist has been eclipsed by other facets of his practice. A closer look Beethoven’s organ playing offers an alternate perspective on Laukvik’s thesis.

Three authors writing on the subject of Beethoven as organist suggest an entirely different angle when looking at keyboard articulation during this time. In his 1939 article “Beethoven and the Organ,” Cecil Austin observed the following:

Beethoven’s knowledge of organ-playing enabled him to inaugurate an entirely new style in piano-playing, the legato-style. Considering that the greatest piano virtuosi of Beethoven’s day were exponents of the staccato school of playing, this innovation must be considered an outstanding achievement.⁵⁷

George Barth agrees with Austin. In *The Pianist as Orator*, Barth states, “By the [eighteenth] century’s end, Beethoven was creating a sensation with his general application of a legato touch at the fortepiano, something that had formerly been

⁵⁶ Theodor von Frimmel, *Beethoven-Studien*, vol. 2, (Munich: Müller, 1905-06), 214, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 152.

⁵⁷ Cecil Austin, “Beethoven and the Organ,” *The Musical Times* 80, no. 1157 (July 1939): 525-27.

associated mainly with organ playing.”⁵⁸ For most keyboardists, or at least to those trained in historic performance, the idea of eighteenth-century organists playing legato seems unlikely; however, Sandra Rosenblum believes that “Beethoven’s youthful study of both violin and organ undoubtedly contributed to his preoccupation with legato playing on the new fortepiano.”⁵⁹

Beethoven imparted accounts of Mozart’s piano playing to his student Carl Czerny:

Some years later Beethoven told me that he had heard Mozart play on several occasions and that, since at that time the forte-piano was still in its infancy, Mozart, more accustomed to the then still prevalent *Flügel*, used a technique entirely unsuited for the fortepiano. I, too, subsequently made the acquaintance of several persons who had studied with Mozart, and found that Beethoven’s observation was confirmed by their manner of playing.⁶⁰

Czerny relayed this account to Otto Jahn in 1852, adding that Beethoven also found Mozart’s touch “very strange, since he [Beethoven] was accustomed to treat[ing] the pianoforte like an organ.”⁶¹ Czerny, in his own monumental piano method of 1839, asserted, “Legato is the rule, and all the other modes of execution are only the exceptions.”⁶² After hearing several Mozart students, Czerny confirmed his teacher’s observation. These older pianists, holding fast to their by-then old-fashioned playing

⁵⁸ George Barth, *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 42.

⁵⁹ Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 152.

⁶⁰ Czerny, “Recollections,” 307, quoted in Gerig, *Great Pianists*, 90.

⁶¹ H. C. Robbins Landon and Donald Mitchell, eds., *The Mozart Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 33, 3n, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 24.

⁶² Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, trans. J. A. Hamilton, vol. 3 (London: R. Cocks & Co., 1839), 21.

style, also vexed Franz Schubert, who, after playing a concert, complained similarly in an 1825 letter to his parents:

What pleased especially were the variations in my new Sonata for two hands . . . since several people assured me that the keys become singing voices under my hands, which, if true, pleases me greatly, since I cannot endure the accursed chopping in which even distinguished pianoforte players indulge and which delights neither the ear nor the mind.⁶³

The idea of Beethoven's organ playing in the late eighteenth century as the genus for his legato piano-playing style is itself worthy of a dissertation. While it is impossible to elaborate further on this in the present study, the evidence presented here is enough to question the notion that legato organ playing developed gradually during the first half of the nineteenth century as a result of pianists playing an evolving instrument.

Beethoven owned a copy of the earliest German organ method promoting legato as the primary articulation, the previously mentioned *Vollständige Orgelschule für Anfänger und Geübtere* (1795-98) of Justin Heinrich Knecht. On the subject of articulation, Knecht writes:

As the organ is known to be composed of many kinds of pipes which are sounded by the wind coming from the bellows by means of an internal mechanics arranged for this purpose, and are therefore capable of a sustained and singing tone of the highest degree: so it is self-evident that the distinctive nature of the organ lies preeminently in a persistent, continually singing tone, and that it is her foremost and most noble purpose to play, first and foremost, elongated notes and chords.⁶⁴

Knecht continues:

Moreover, the notes must be played consistently, that is, when the practitioner lifts his fingers to move to the next notes, he must make effort that his fingers slide evenly from one key to the next, especially at a series

⁶³ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, trans. Eric Blom (London: Dent, 1946), 436, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 154.

⁶⁴ Justin Heinrich Knecht, *Vollständige Orgelschule für Anfänger und Geübtere*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1795-98), vol. 2, 53-54, quoted in Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 2-3.

of chords, so that the ear does not sense the slightest distinction between notes."⁶⁵

Knecht's method contains exercises with both finger and pedal substitutions in order to achieve this "persistent, continually singing tone."

In his own commentary on Knecht's articulation ideals, Jon Laukvik writes, "At the time around 1795, this view was new in German-speaking areas. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Daniel Gottlob Türk still taught a nuanced non-legato as the basic keyboard touch in their treatises."⁶⁶ Hans Fagius credits Knecht's playing as an influential factor in spreading the legato playing style, but he nonetheless maintains that the basic non-legato touch of the Baroque carried into the nineteenth century and retained primacy until after c. 1850.⁶⁷ Fagius also argues that the shift from non-legato to legato between 1800-1850 occurred gradually; however, other early nineteenth-century methods are sympathetic to Knecht in establishing legato as the basic articulation, including Werner's previously mentioned *Orgelschule*.

Perhaps the most significant organist of the period who promoted legato touch was Christian Heinrich Rinck. Hailing from Thuringia, he studied organ with Johann Christian Kittel, one of the last pupils of J. S. Bach. Rinck's *Practische Orgelschule* (Practical Organ School), op. 55 was published in four parts between 1819 and 1821, coinciding with the brief window in which Mendelssohn was studying organ with August Wilhelm Bach (1796-1869). Some of the exercises and pieces in Rinck's tutor are unmarked, while others include detailed fingering, pedaling, and articulations. In Ex. 2,

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 56.

⁶⁷ Fagius, "Organ Works of Mendelssohn," 330.

we find extensive articulation marks, with slur lengths ranging from two notes to two measures.

Example 2: Christian Heinrich Rinck, *Praktische Orgelschule*, op. 55 (1819-21)



That a copy of this method was included in an inventory of Mendelssohn's music library suggests he may have worked from it during his studies.⁶⁸

Although Mendelssohn had hoped to meet Rinck personally, it is unlikely such an encounter ever happened. The Mendelssohn family left Berlin in July of 1822 for an extended stay in Switzerland. Travelling south, they stopped briefly in Darmstadt, where Rinck was court organist. Young Felix had in his possession a letter of introduction penned by Carl Friedrich Zelter, his former teacher and director of the Singakademie in Berlin, and yet there is no mention of a meeting in Mendelssohn's otherwise detailed letters from this trip.⁶⁹

Rinck authored a second organ tutor in 1839, the *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen* (Theoretical-Practical Handbook on Organ Playing), op. 124,

⁶⁸ Little, *Mendelssohn*, 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

published in two volumes. Though his earlier method contains very little in the way of text, this source contains more explicit instructions, including exercises with detailed articulations. In this later work, Rinck asserts:

Since the organ, by its very nature, is primarily suited for slow, connected movements, the organ-player must thus pay special attention that he joins the notes together in his performance; that is, he must proceed from one note to the next in such a way that the ear cannot detect the slightest separation or gap between the tones.⁷⁰

As mentioned before, the increasing popularity of the piano, ever-evolving in its construction and design during this time, cannot be overestimated when considering organ performance practice in this period, especially regarding Mendelssohn. Some of the organ methods from this period seem to have been written in such a way to make things as accessible as possible for those coming from a background of piano study. Rinck, for example, advocated approaching the organ like the piano: “The position of the hands and fingers [at the organ] is the same as that in pianoforte playing.”⁷¹ Wilhelm Volckmar’s *Orgelschule* (1858) is even more explicit. An organist, theorist, and teacher admired by Spohr and those in Liszt’s Weimar circle, he declared that he had “taken it upon [himself] to offer exercises which aim at the highest degree of facility for organists, making allowance for piano playing technique (raised to such a high level of late) insofar as it proves useful at the organ.”⁷² This approach may have helped earn him the title “Czerny of the organ.”

⁷⁰ Christian Heinrich Rinck, *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen* (Darmstadt: Diehl, 1839), 43, quoted in Lohmann, “Regarding Interpretation,” 3.

⁷¹ Ibid., 12, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 20.

⁷² Wilhelm Volckmar, *Orgelschule* vol. 3 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1858), iii, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 20.

The statements of both Rinck and Volckmar lend credence to William Little's thesis that Mendelssohn not only failed to acquire a proper organ technique, but that he and many others at this time may not have even differentiated between piano technique and a specific, organ-oriented approach.

What then, was Mendelssohn's piano technique like, and from whom did he learn it? We gleaned from the methods of Pasquali, Manfredini, and Hüllmandel that legato keyboard playing was already in vogue in the second half of the eighteenth century. Moving into the nineteenth century, it should be no surprise that legato would become the norm. Like Pasquali, Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) was an Italian-born pianist who re-located to London. From 1766 until at least 1774, he lived with a patron, Peter Beckford, whose library contained a copy of Pasquali's method.⁷³ While it is difficult to know if Clementi was deeply familiar with the method, his ideas about keyboard articulation are in accord with Pasquali.

By 1801 Clementi had established the primacy of legato as the "normal" keyboard-playing style in his method *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Piano Forte*:

When the composer leaves the LEGATO and STACCATO to the performer's taste [i.e. when neither slurring nor staccato is indicated]; the best rule is, to adhere chiefly to the LEGATO; reserving the STACCATO to give SPIRIT occasionally to certain passages and the set off the HIGHER BEAUTIES of the LEGATO.⁷⁴

⁷³ Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 153.

⁷⁴ Muzio Clementi, *Introduction to the Art of playing on the Piano Forte* (London: Clementi, Banger, Hyde, Collard, and Davis, 1801), 9.

In the revised eleventh edition of his method, Clementi seems to have decided that even more emphasis was necessary, altering the phrase “the best rule is to adhere chiefly to the LEGATO” to the more succinct and dogmatic “let the LEGATO prevail.”⁷⁵

While Hans Fagius infers that Mendelssohn’s touch was, at least for some pieces, non-legato, and that the ordinary touch of the Baroque developed into the legato style over the course of Mendelssohn’s lifetime, a conversation between Clementi and his student, Ludwig Berger (1777-1839), calls Fagius’ assertion into question:

I asked Clementi whether in 1781 he had begun to treat the instrument in his present [1806] style. He answered ‘no’ and added that . . . ‘he had subsequently achieved a more melodic and noble style of performance after listening attentively to famous singers, and also by means of the perfected mechanism of English pianos, the construction of which formerly stood in the way of a cantabile and legato style of playing.’⁷⁶

Clementi played a pivotal role in the evolution of the English piano. As founding partner of a London music publishing and instrument manufacturing firm, known at one time as Clementi & Co., his hands-on experience with piano construction and design contributed to his cultivating the legato style of playing.⁷⁷ Clementi also provided advice to other piano makers such as John Broadwood.⁷⁸ Rosenblum notes:

In 1788, Broadwood divided the bridge to achieve equal tension through all the strings. He located the striking point at approximately one-ninth of the vibrating length of the string (with some latitude in the treble), thus suppressing the more dissonant harmonics.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 171.

⁷⁶ Eric Blom, ed., *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1954), 345, quoted in Gerig, *Great Pianists*, 57.

⁷⁷ Gerig, *Great Pianists*, 58.

⁷⁸ Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 39.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

The result of these alterations was a tone “more even throughout its compass and above all with increased dynamic flexibility.”⁸⁰

Among Clementi’s menagerie of famous pupils, Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) is notable, having been an occasional teacher to Mendelssohn.⁸¹ In his youth, Hummel studied with Mozart prior to a sojourn in England from 1790 to 1792, where he was a pupil of Clementi.⁸² His *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel* (A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instruction on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte), published in 1827, features a chapter describing differences in Viennese and English piano construction, specifically in key action.⁸³ Hummel favored the Viennese piano for its light and sensitive action, though he praises the English counterpart for its “fullness of tone.”⁸⁴ This is not surprising considering Czerny’s account of Hummel’s playing as “a model of cleanness, clarity, and the most graceful elegance and tenderness.”⁸⁵ Czerny viewed Hummel’s approach to the piano as a marriage between the styles of his teachers, Clementi and Mozart.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Stanley J. Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* vol. 3 (London: Macmillan, 1984), 324, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 39.

⁸¹ Kenneth Hamilton, “Mendelssohn and the Piano,” in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 23.

⁸² Gerig, *Great Pianists*, 68.

⁸³ Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical Course of Instruction on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte* (London: T. Boosey & Co., 1829), 39-41, quoted in Gerig, *Great Pianists*, 78-79.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Like Mendelssohn after him, Hummel's familiarity with Viennese and English pianos influenced his pianism. Czerny's description of his playing as a mélange of Mozart and Clementi makes it difficult to Hummel vis-à-vis keyboard articulation. He might have been among the Mozart students whose "chopping" drove Schubert to protest and therefore may be regarded as a transitional figure in the shift from non-legato to the legato style.⁸⁷ From Clementi's 1806 conversation with his later pupil, Ludwig Berger, we can infer that Hummel would not have had quite the same experience studying in England, as Clementi had yet to develop and refine his legato touch.

Beginning in 1817, Mendelssohn studied piano, improvisation, and composition with Ludwig Berger until 1822. As Berger became one of Mendelssohn's most influential music instructors, the lineage to Clementi and his playing style is relevant to this study. That Berger disseminated his teacher's legato style in Germany is likely. Clementi's method was published in other countries beyond England. For example, Jean Louis Adam's influential *Méthode du Piano du Conservatoire* (1804) seems to paraphrase Clementi's own method published shortly before:

Sometimes the author indicates the musical phrase which should be smooth, but if he abandons the choice of legato or staccato to the taste of the performer, it is best to adhere to the legato, reserving the staccato to make certain passages stand out and to make the advantages of the legato felt by means of a pleasant artistic contrast.⁸⁸

While Berger never published a detailed method of this sort, his contemporaries promoted legato. Austrian-born Henri Herz (1803-1888), in *A Standard Modern*

⁸⁷ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, trans. Eric Blom (London: Dent, 1946), 436, quoted in Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 154.

⁸⁸ Jean-Louis Adam, *Méthode du piano du Conservatoire* (Paris: L. Marchand, 1804), 151, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 173.

Preceptor for the Pianoforte, advises that slurs indicate “each note being held down its full length, and till the following note is actually struck. This is called the legato style of playing, and is that which is generally used.”⁸⁹ He mentions that “staccato is to be used only where it is expressly indicated by means of dots or strokes.”⁹⁰ Herz, by his own admission, was strongly influenced by Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), a lifelong friend and once-piano instructor to Mendelssohn.⁹¹

Mendelssohn as Performer

Speaking to Mendelssohn’s keyboard technique, Hans van Bülow (1830-1894) recalled, “His style of playing had a definitely modern character, it was interesting and poetical, whereas the style of those organists who could not play the piano was hard without energy – in short, dry and leathery.”⁹² While not going into the details of Mendelssohn’s basic articulation at the organ, let alone mentioning the way in which he might have played his own organ works, Bülow’s account seems to corroborate William Little’s notion that Mendelssohn never acquired the technique of a professionally trained organist, relying mostly on the piano technique instilled by Berger. This by no means suggests that Mendelssohn was perceived by his contemporaries as a mediocre organist,

⁸⁹ Henri Herz, *A Standard Modern Preceptor for the Pianoforte* (London: D’Almaine & Co., c. 1840), 7, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 173.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁹¹ Stephan D. Lindeman, “Herz, Henri,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed Nov. 23 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000012915>.

⁹² Hans van Bülow, *Ausgewählte Schriften, 1850-1892* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1896), quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 78.

rather, as Bülow suggests, that his prodigious piano technique enhanced his organ playing and set him apart from his contemporaries.

It is difficult to discern from eyewitness accounts what Mendelssohn's organ playing was actually like in terms of the articulation he employed for his own works. Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Kühnau (1780-1848), an organist in Berlin, admired Mendelssohn's organ playing, particularly his pedal technique, stating, "He was so adroit at using heel and toe at just the right time with just the right turn."⁹³ From this we may infer, at least, that Mendelssohn had acquired the basis of a legato pedal technique. However, accounts of his manual technique offer a different perspective. The violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), though probably in reference to Mendelssohn's piano playing, recalled, "His staccato was the most extraordinary thing possible for life and crispness."⁹⁴ And after Mendelssohn's performance of J. S. Bach's Fugue in A Minor, BWV 543, the music critic John Ella noted similarly:

Mendelssohn's organ performance appears to me to be distinguished by the purest and clearest intonation, and a fine staccato touch. He makes the theme distinct and comprehensive to the listener; and to do this is to achieve one of the best simplicities of genius. I have heard many finer players than Mendelssohn, but none to equal him in this respect.⁹⁵

In speaking of Mendelssohn's influence on English organists, Nicholas Thistlethwaite notes:

One contemporary remarked on Mendelssohn's "wiry, crisp, energetic character of delivery" and contrasted this with the technique of one of the

⁹³ Carl Freiherr von Ledebur, *Tonkünstler-Lexicon Berlin's von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (Tutzing, Germany: Hans Schneider, 1965), 305-6, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 80.

⁹⁴ Sir George Grove, "Mendelssohn," in *Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn* (London: Macmillan, 1951), 375, quoted in Donald Mintz, "Mendelssohn as Performer and Teacher," in *The Mendelssohn Companion*, ed. Douglass Seaton (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 110.

⁹⁵ John Ella, performance review, *The Morning Post*, September 24, 1840, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 79.

leading English players of the previous generation, Benjamin Jacob (1778-1827), who “played in the legato manner, and therefore never satisfied us in Bach’s organ music.”⁹⁶

In playing Bach, Mendelssohn’s touch was apparently more articulate in comparison to some English organists. There is, however, no evidence that he played his own works in this manner save for the few instances in which staccato passages are marked with dots.⁹⁷ A factor not mentioned in the accounts of Mendelssohn’s articulation was surely acoustics. The organist Edward Holmes, reflecting on Mendelssohn’s playing in 1832 and 1833, mentions hearing the composer frequently at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, a vast space with a reverberation in excess of ten seconds.⁹⁸ Organists performing in such an ambience must make adjustments in articulation for the sake of clarity. This was the case for Mendelssohn’s colleague August Gottfried Ritter, whose obituary recalls of his playing:

Probably in an effort towards greater clarity in the great cathedral [of Magdeburg], where the sound is easily blurred, he made rather frequent use of staccato, and by its various gradations he knew how to produce original effects and even crescendi.⁹⁹

These accounts suggest that Mendelssohn’s piano playing influenced his approach to the organ. Conversely, Henry Chorley described Mendelssohn’s piano playing as having “solidity, in which the organ-touch is given to the piano without the organ

⁹⁶ *The Musical World* 9, 1838, quoted in Nicholas Thistlethwaite, *The Making of the Victorian Organ* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 165-66.

⁹⁷ William S. Rockstro, *Mendelssohn* (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1884), 100, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 329.

⁹⁸ Edward Holmes, “Actual Organists of Germany,” *Atlas*, December 13, 1835, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 43.

⁹⁹ Anne Marlene Gurgel, “Komponist, Virtuose, Wissenschaftler: August Gottfried Ritter” *Zur deutschen Orgelmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (162. Veröffentlichung der Gesellschaft der Orgelfreunde de e.V.), Sinzig, 1998, p. 179ff, quoted in Laukvik, 82.

ponderosity.”¹⁰⁰ Attempting to reconcile these sometimes conflicting accounts of Mendelssohn’s playing style is an exercise in futility. One must remember that none of these references cite him playing his own works, but rather the works of Bach and his own improvisations. With respect to organ playing in England, these descriptions reveal an association between the organ and a certain heaviness of execution, perhaps not only in articulation but tempo and registration as well. By comparison, Mendelssohn’s approach, which surely took into account the acoustical factors of performance venues, was received as fresh, clear, and energetic.

Conclusion

Perhaps surprisingly, a significant number of English and German primary sources provide evidence of legato keyboard playing from the middle of the eighteenth century. While some contemporaneous methods continued to promote non-legato as a basic articulation, the existence of those supporting the legato style at least suggests another possibility for unmarked music in the decades leading up to 1800.

By the time of Mendelssohn’s birth and early studies, developments in piano construction and design, particularly by English makers, enabled older composers such as Beethoven and Clementi to raise the legato style to its zenith. Through Clementi’s student, Ludwig Berger, Mendelssohn would have been initiated into this legato-based playing style. Considering the brevity of his organ study with A. W. Bach, Mendelssohn the organist probably defaulted to the virtuoso piano technique nurtured under Berger.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Chorley, *Philadelphia National Gazette*, August 20, 1841, quoted in Kenneth Hamilton, “Mendelssohn and the Piano,” in *Mendelssohn in Performance*, ed. Siegwart Reichwald (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 28.

With the intentions of providing greater clarity of musical intention, composers of the early nineteenth century began incorporating more detailed score markings overall. Unfortunately, the lack of uniformity in practice has, in some cases, caused confusion. Like his contemporaries, Mendelssohn's output includes unmarked works, pieces with slurs, and, rarely, articulation directives. An understanding of general trends in the period, as well as a specific composer's habits, can help the performer make informed interpretive decisions.

In the case of the unmarked Fugue in D Minor, op. 37, applying the advice of only one method from Mendelssohn's lifetime may very well result in an energetic, vigorous performance, as Jon Laukvik suggests. An organist with a refined touch might play this piece convincingly in that manner, especially in a reverberant acoustic. On the other hand, further study of musical forms and their associated execution, such as fugues and the bound style, gives the performer another interpretation worth considering. Mendelssohn indicates "Volles Werk" in the score, meaning "full organ." In the preface to his Six Sonatas, op. 65, Mendelssohn equates "full organ" with a *fortissimo* dynamic level.¹⁰¹ The *affekt* produced by this marriage of Knecht's "persistent, continually singing tone" with a powerful registration is one of gravitas and severity.¹⁰²

Eyewitness accounts of Mendelssohn's playing, particularly at the organ, must not be considered out of the context of the larger European organ culture and the legato style that came to permeate not only keyboard playing, but all music making. Whether Mendelssohn was conscious of a generally more articulate approach for Bach's organ

¹⁰¹ Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, preface to *Sechs Sonaten für Orgel*, op. 65, ed. Gerd Zacher (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1980).

works is difficult to know; however, the accounts of his staccato application should not be separated from associated performance venues and their acoustical properties, which was true for other organists in the nineteenth century, such as Ritter. While the basic articulation for Mendelssohn and Ritter was undoubtedly legato, ultimately the ear was the final arbiter in determining the most appropriate execution.

Chapter 2

Towards an Understanding of Slurs in Mendelssohn's Organ Works

Deciphering the meaning of each slur in Mendelssohn's organ works is perhaps the most frustrating aspect of interpreting this music. For organists, especially those coming from a background formed by the study of earlier music, the confusion surrounding Mendelssohn's slurs stems from viewing the musical notation through "Baroque glasses," as Ludger Lohmann suggests.¹ These organists attempt to apply seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century performance practice to Mendelssohn's music, treating all slurs as indications of articulation. With such an approach, the last note under a slur is shortened, creating a space before the next note, regardless of whether or not that next note begins a new slurred group. However, as mentioned in this study's introduction, a shortening of the final note under every slur thwarts the musical line and seems to defy the logical phrase divisions in Mendelssohn's writing.

Part of the confusion surrounding slurs in this period also stems from the fact that most organists do not play a great deal of keyboard repertory composed between the death of J. S. Bach and the publication of Mendelssohn's works in the 1830s and 1840s; consequently, knowledge about performance practices from this transitional period is often lacking. Already by the second half of the eighteenth century, composers were using the slur in a number of different ways. This situation is further exacerbated by a number of theorists who reiterated rules from earlier authors, whether or not these accurately represented the notational habits of their contemporaries.²

¹ Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 1.

² Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 30.

In order to understand Mendelssohn's use of slurs, this chapter will explore the various slur types encountered in organ music before, during, and just after his lifetime. Having established in Chapter One that legato was already the basic articulation for unmarked organ music in Mendelssohn's day, this chapter will examine the ways in which slurs function within a legato texture. We will consider both piano and organ methods, including authors known to Mendelssohn as teachers or colleagues.

It is important to note that as slurs took on new meanings over time, they did not always necessarily shed their older implications. Indicating articulation, for example, is the oldest use of the slur in keyboard music, yet Mendelssohn and later composers continued to use slurs in this way while also adopting more modern uses. As slurs were assigned multiple notational functions, it became more difficult for performers to identify the composer's intent. Therefore, rather than organizing the material chronologically, this chapter presents the various slurs by type and function.

Articulation Slurs

From its first appearance in the seventeenth century, the slur in keyboard music was solely an indicator of articulation. Even as the same curved arc took on other meanings in subsequent centuries, it has nevertheless retained an association with articulation to the present day. In Mendelssohn's music, the challenge is determining whether or not a particular slur carries implications for articulation.

The first known appearance of slurs in keyboard music is found in Samuel Scheidt's *Tabulatura nova* (1624). This three-volume collection of organ pieces represented an apex in keyboard composition, establishing Scheidt as a leading German

composer of the early Baroque. At the conclusion of *Tabulatura nova*, vol. 1, the composer felt the need to explain his use of slurs (Ex. 3), including a musical example:

Example 3: Samuel Scheidt, *Tabulatura nova*, vol. 1 (1624): “imitatio violistica”



Alongside his example, Scheidt comments:

A special manner is used in which the notes are slurred together — as is shown here — as when gambists slur with the bow by playing several notes on one string with one bow. This manner, used by leading German gambists, produces a graceful and charming effect on organs, regals, harpsichords, and clavicords with a light and shallow action; therefore, I delight in applying such a manner myself to the keyboard instruments.³

Scheidt refers to this practice of slurring notes together as “imitatio violistica,” likening it to string playing. (The German word *Bogen* can mean both “slur” and “bow,” an important consideration when analyzing slurs in the music of Mendelssohn, who was

³ Harald Vogel, “Keyboard Playing Techniques Around 1600,” preface to Samuel Scheidt, *Tabulatura nova*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1999), 159. For original German, see Samuel Scheidt, *Tabulatura nova*, vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1624), 262: “Wo die Noten wie allhier zusammen gezogen sind ist solches eine besondre art gleich wie die Violisten mit dem Bogen schleiffen zu Machen pflegen. Wie dann solche Manier bey fürnehmen Violisten Deutscher Nation nicht ungebrauchlich gibt auch auff gelindschlägigen Orgeln, Regalen, Clavicymbaln, und Instrumenten einen recht lieblichen und anmutigen concentum, derentwegen ich dann solche Manier mir selbstem gelieben lassen und angeiwehnet.”

both a skilled keyboardist and violinist.⁴) In Ex. 3 one finds slurred groups of four repeated notes, a figuration not representative of Scheidt's typical practice. The slurred figures of two or four notes seen in Ex. 4 and Ex. 5, respectively, demonstrate more frequently encountered applications of *imitatio violistica*.

Example 4: Samuel Scheidt, *Tabulatura nova*, vol. 1, no.1: Cantio Sacra *Wir glauben all' an einen Gott*, Verse 4, p. 9, mm. 32-34. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Max Seiffert (1892)



Example 5: Samuel Scheidt, *Tabulatura nova*, vol. 2, no. 1: Fuga Contraria, p. 94, m. 5. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Max Seiffert (1892)



That Scheidt went to such lengths to notate and describe this slurred touch is indicative of the non-legato articulation in the Baroque, the so-called ordinary touch

⁴ Bernard D. Sherman, "Restoring Ingredients," *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 308.

organists apply to music before 1800.⁵ In order to imitate a fine gambist, the organist must first consider how string players use the bow to achieve different articulations. In *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction*, Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell observe the following on the subject of string bowing and articulation:

For bowed stringed instruments, management of the bow provided the main articulation resource . . . The natural stroke of most pre-Tourte bows was of an articulated, non-legato character . . . True legato bowing with most pre-Tourte bows was achieved only by slurring, due emphasis being given to the first note of a slur.⁶

Therefore, using separate strokes for each note with a pre-Tourte bow automatically accomplishes a non-legato articulation. In order to connect a group of notes with legato articulation, the string player had to slur, playing several notes on one string in one bow stroke, as described by Scheidt.

While Scheidt clearly associated *imitatio violistica* with specific musical figurations (slurred groups of two or four notes), he was nonetheless speaking about a method of playing.⁷ How does one technically accomplish *imitatio violistica* on a keyboard instrument? Lawson and Stowell point out that “keyboard articulation depended not only on the player but also to a great extent on the nature and quality of the instrument.”⁸ Scheidt seems to have applied *imitatio violistica* at all keyboard

⁵ Ordinary touch (*ordentliches fortgehen*) refers to the usual manner of keyboard playing in the Baroque, with a slight separation between every note. The term was first coined by German critic, theorist, and composer Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg (1718-1795) in his *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen der schönen Ausübung der heutigen Zeit gemäss* (1765).

⁶ Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 51.

⁷ Paul Kenyon, “‘Imitatio violistica’ in Scheidt’s ‘Tabulatura Nova,’” *The Musical Times* vol. 30, no. 1757 (Jan. 1989), 45.

⁸ Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 51.

instruments, and particularly those with a sensitive action. Slurring groups of notes together at the keyboard is simple enough, but the physical way in which a keyboardist must create articulation between notes involves lifting the finger from a key before playing the next note. A string player merely has to reverse the direction of the pre-Tourte bow, and the articulation is produced automatically.

Whereas keyboard treatises speak of lifting the finger for various degrees of articulation between notes, the articulation provided by the early bow is subtler, like a consonant in singing.⁹ In order to simulate the aural effect of a subtle bow change, the keyboardist should consider the concept of *Schnellen*. In his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Essay on the True Art of Keyboard Playing) of 1753, C. P. E. Bach explains the term *Schnellen* as “a quick retraction which occurs when each finger slides off the key as rapidly as possible so that every tone can be distinctly heard.”¹⁰ Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749-1818), in writing about J. S. Bach’s application of *Schnellen*, advises:

The finger should not be released perpendicularly from the key, but can be withdrawn gently and gradually towards the palm of the hand. . . . When passing from one note to another, a sliding action instinctively instructs the next finger regarding the amount of force exerted by its predecessor, so that the tone is equally regulated and the notes are equally distinct. . . . The touch is neither too long nor too short . . . but just what it ought to be.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Keyboard Playing*, trans. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1949), 148, quoted in Menno van Delft, “Schnellen: A Quintessential Articulation Technique in Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Playing,” in *The Keyboard in Baroque Europe*, ed. Christopher Hogwood (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 188.

¹¹ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art and Work*, trans. Charles Sanford Terry (New York: Harcourt, Bruce and Howe, 1920), 48-49, accessed Nov. 20, 2018, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35041/35041-pdf.pdf?session_id=3de7ebcfea7d6a3708cbc6fe26f46466238392a5.

In the descriptions of *Schnellen* by C. P. E. Bach and Forkel, one notes that the authors do not advise the keyboard player to raise or lift the fingers off the keys in order to articulate. Instead, the player is instructed to slide or glide the finger off the key, allowing a subtler inflection rather than a noticeable gap in the sound. The significance of *Schnellen* as a tool in the keyboardist's arsenal is confirmed by its appearance in numerous eighteenth- and some nineteenth-century methods, including those of Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, Georg Simon Löhlein, Daniel Gottlob Türk, Justin Heinrich Knecht, and Carl Czerny, all of which were consulted for and are referenced throughout this study.¹²

The use of the slur to indicate articulation continued throughout the Baroque. In the organ music of Johann Sebastian Bach, for instance, we find many examples of slurring. Like the Scheidt example, the first movement of Bach's Sonata No. 4 in E Minor, BWV 528 (Ex. 6) features slurs over two and four-note groupings throughout.

Example 6: J. S. Bach, Sonata No. 4 in E Minor, BWV 528, I. Adagio-Vivace, mm. 4-6.



¹² Menno van Delft, "Schnellen: A Quintessential Articulation Technique in Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Playing," in *The Keyboard in Baroque Europe*, ed. Christopher Hogwood (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 187.

Considering Scheidt's reference to imitating gambists while playing the organ, it is noteworthy that this sonata movement is Bach's own transcription of an earlier work, a sinfonia to the second part of the cantata *Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes*, BWV 76, scored for oboe d'amore, viola da gamba, and continuo.¹³ In his *Versuch*, C. P. E. Bach instructs: "Notes which are to be played legato must be held for their full length. A slur is placed above them . . . [and] applies to all of the notes included under its trace."¹⁴ Following these instructions, each note under a slur in Ex. 6 should be played with no separation between them. The end of each four-note group would be made audible by shortening the value of the last note under the slur; consequently, the first note of the next slurred figure would be articulated, making the beginning of each group distinct and audible.

Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German sources frequently refer to the *Abzug*, the practice of shortening the final note under a slur. Most authors associate the term especially with two-note slurred pairs, in which the first note is articulated and the second is somewhat weaker. Reichardt's string treatise, referenced in Chapter One, mentions the *Abzug* and how to produce it with the violin bow.¹⁵ Slurs of articulation, especially the two-note *Abzug*, remained part of the musical vocabulary well into the nineteenth century.

¹³ Interestingly, Bach altered the slurring in the viola da gamba part when adapting the piece to the organ. A future study might compare the slurring in the organ transcription with that in the original viola da gamba part and attempt to discern the reason for the changes.

¹⁴ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, ed. and trans. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1949), 154.

¹⁵ Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Über die Pflichten des Ripien-Violinisten* (Berlin und Leipzig: George Jacob Decker, 1776), 41-3, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 232.

Moving into the nineteenth century, we begin by considering a letter Mendelssohn sent to George Macfarren in 1845, coincidentally the year the Six Sonatas for Organ, op. 65, were published. Here we find the only instance of Mendelssohn himself addressing the topic of slurs, and specifically slurred pairs. Regarding the choral proofs from his edition of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, Mendelssohn was annoyed with the manner in which the engraver placed slurs over two-note pairs to be sung on one word or syllable:

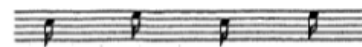
I am sure that slurs are used in such cases (in ancient, particularly in Bach's and Handel's music) as a characteristic sign for the expression, much as we would use this sign:



. If such a pause is not meant, they do not place the slur over the notes because it is quite unnecessary; the manner of uniting the quavers and semiquavers



instead of



indicating clearly enough that they are to be sung to the same syllable.¹⁶

William Little clarifies Mendelssohn's point, stated in the negative, by rephrasing it: "If a pause is meant, they place the slur over the notes because it is quite necessary."¹⁷ Mendelssohn seems to be implying that vocal melismas should be inferred by note beamings rather than slurs. This is perplexing, as the slur was used historically to indicate vocal melismas, which often appeared with notes beamed together.¹⁸ Curious, too, is Mendelssohn's choice of the English word "pause," which is probably too strong in this

¹⁶ Felix Mendelssohn and Herbert Thompson, "Some Mendelssohn Letters," *The Musical Times* 64, no. 967 (September 1923), 605-608.

¹⁷ Little, *Mendelssohn*, 284.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Chew, "Slur," *Grove Music Online*, accessed Nov. 28, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000025977>.

context. One might consider substituting the word “break,” “lift,” or “detachment,” all of which appear in the writings on this topic.

Nicholas Temperley infers from this letter that Mendelssohn and his contemporaries required a staccato dot for the last note under a slur to indicate a shortening of the usual value.¹⁹ Clive Brown infers from Mendelssohn’s commentary that many nineteenth-century composers had no expectation that even slurred pairs should be articulated, let alone longer slurred groups.²⁰ Unfortunately, when speaking of notation indicating a pause in the letter to Macfarren, Mendelssohn mentions only the slur and not the staccato dot. And while slurred pairs with a shortened final note indicated by a staccato mark appear in works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, no such articulation appears in Mendelssohn’s organ works. One wonders whether Mendelssohn added the dots merely to emphasize his point about slurs implying a pause or break after each pair of notes, as Little speculates.²¹

Since Mendelssohn’s letter refers to slurred pairs in choral music, let us consider what several early nineteenth-century organ methods prescribe for their proper execution. Werner’s *Orgelschule* (Ex. 7) states that “whether four, three, or two notes are slurred, this is made apparent by a slight detachment of the last note, so that it is separated, as if with a short rest, from the following note.”²²

¹⁹ Nicholas Temperley, “Berlioz and the Slur,” *Music & Letters* 50, no. 3 (July 1969), 388-92.

²⁰ Clive Brown, “Articulation marks” *Grove Music Online*, accessed Nov. 28, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040671>.

²¹ Little, *Mendelssohn*, 284.

²² Werner, *Orgelschule*, 183, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 235.

Example 7: Johann Gottlob Werner, *Orgelschule* (1807)



Friedrich Wilhelm Schütze's *Orgelschule*, appearing one year after Mendelssohn's first published organ works, concurs with Werner: "When . . . a slur connects only two or three or five notes out of four or eight, etc., the last note is released early, losing some of its value."²³ This final note under a slur was called the *Abschleiffen*, and Schütze believed the proper execution of it enabled the organist to play dynamically, giving accents to certain notes and the ability to play different articulations in the same hand simultaneously. He recommends playing the *Abschleiffen* "smoothly, without pushing or quickness."²⁴

While offering little commentary, Rinck's *Practische Orgelschule* (Ex. 2) features exercises with a variety of articulations. Here one finds slurs over four notes, entire measures, and even multiple measures. There are several examples of the *Abzug*,

²³ Friedrich Wilhelm Schütze, *Handbuch*, 151, quoted in Laukvik, 235.

²⁴ Schütze, *Handbuch*, 52. For original German, see Jacques van Oortmerssen, *Johannes Brahms and 19th-Century Performance Practice*, 370: "weich, ohne stossen oder schnellen geschehen soll." Translation mine.

including some that place the accented note on a weak beat of the measure, and, consequently, place the *Abschleiffen* on a strong beat, undermining the hierarchy of the meter. Rinck's later method, the *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen*, advises the beginner to play all his exercises "in a connected as well as detached manner," adding that "such a practice gives rise not only to a good touch, but also to clean playing."²⁵ This later method includes more explicit instructions and exercises with detailed articulations (Ex. 8), including slurs grouping two, three, and four notes, as well as notes with staccato dots.

Example 8: Christian Heinrich Rinck, *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen*, op. 124 (1839)



That Rinck's diversity of articulation was promoted by another important pedagogue can be seen in Wilhelm Volckmar's *Orgelschule*, op. 50 (Ex. 9). One of the most thorough pedagogical sources of the century, this tutor addresses issues of technique and interpretation in extensive detail. In it Volckmar advises that "notes in scale passages are usually a little detached. Accordingly, one at first should practice each scale so that

²⁵Christian Heinrich Rinck, *Theoretisch-practische Anleitung zum Orgelspielen* (Darmstadt: Diehl, 1839), 12, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 59.

the notes are somewhat detached. Then one should play them heavily detached, and then as connected as possible. Afterwards, one plays an alternation of detached and slurred notes.”²⁶

Example 9: Wilhelm Volckmar, *Orgelschule*, op. 50 (1858)



Of interest in Ex. 9 is Volckmar’s use of a dot on the final note under some of the slurs (35e, 36c, and 36d), as in the examples from Mendelssohn’s letter to Macfarren. According to most of the authors referenced in this study, this would not have been necessary to indicate that the second note under the slur is to be played short. Examples of staccato dots applied to the final note of slurred groups also appear in the *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, op. 500 (1842) of Carl Czerny (1791-1857). In a slurred group of two or three notes, Czerny recommends playing the last note detached.²⁷ He goes on to say, “This separation of the notes must still be more marked

²⁶ Volckmar, *Orgelschule*, 8, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 59. For original German: “Die Töne in Tonleiter gängen werden meistens ein wenig abgestossen. Man übe demnach eine jede Tonleiter zunächst so ein, dass die Töne ein wenig abgestossen werden. Dann nehme man sie stark abgestossen und darauf so geschleift, als möglich. Hierauf nehme man den den nachfolgend bezeichneten Wechsel des Schleifens und Abstossens.”

²⁷ Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, trans. J. A. Hamilton, 4 vols. (London: R. Cocks & Co., 1839), vol. 1, 187.

when a dot stands over the 2nd or 3rd note.”²⁸ The first two measures of Ex. 10 demonstrate this notation.

Example 10: Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, op. 500 (1839)



Reading Czerny’s commentary, we might infer that Volckmar wanted the last note under a slur to be played shorter than if the staccato dots were not present.

From the onset of the nineteenth century, piano methods address the performance of slurred pairs. As early as 1804, Louis Adam (1758-1848) observed:

When there are only two notes connected (slurred) together, and when the two notes have the same value, or when the second of them has half the value of the first, it is necessary, to express this slur, in playing *forte* as well as *piano*, to press the finger a little on the first and to lift it on the second, removing half of its value while playing the second more gently than the first.²⁹

Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849), writing in 1831, agreed. In the second edition of his piano method, published in side-by-side German and French, he explains that “two or

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Louis Adam, *Méthode de Piano du Conservatoire* (Paris, 1804), 151. For original French: “Quand il se trouve une liaison marquée sur plusieurs notes de suite, il faut lier les sons pendant toute la durée de la liaison, sans en détacher aucune; mais quand il n’y a que deux notes liées ensemble, et que ces deux notes se trouvent de la même valeur, ou que la seconde en a une moindre que la première, il faut, pour exprimer cette liaison, aussi bien dans le forte que dans le piano, appuyer un peu le doigt sur la première et le lever à la seconde en lui ôtant la moitié de sa valeur et en touchant la seconde note plus faiblement que la première.” Translation mine.

three slurred notes cannot be shown on the piano without pressing into the first and lifting out of the last.”³⁰

Example 11: Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Méthode pour apprendre le piano-forte à l'aide du guide-mains*, op. 108 (1831)



Kalkbrenner’s examples make clear the shortening of the final note under each slur (Ex. 11), whether it be the last in a group of two, three, or four notes.

In the preface to his *Etudes*, Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870), Mendelssohn’s piano instructor and lifelong friend, teaches that every note should be held its full length, giving the following exception: “There is again another case, where one must shorten the duration of the note, when two, three, or four notes are connected together by a slur; in this case the last note must be played as if it had been marked with a dot.”³¹ Czerny’s method limits detachment of the final note to slurred groups of two or three notes (Ex. 12).

³⁰ Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Méthode pour apprendre le piano-forte à l'aide du guide-mains*, op. 108, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Fr. Kistner, 1841), 18. For original French: “Deux ou trois notes liées ne peuvent se faire sur le piano qu'en appuyant sur la première et levant la dernière.” Translation mine.

³¹ Ignaz Moscheles, *24 Etudes*, op. 70 (Leipzig: H. A. Probst, 1843), 10.

Example 12: Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, op. 500 (1839)



In speaking of slurs encompassing more than three notes, Czerny states, “should the Composer desire the make [the final note under the slur] detached, he must place a dot or dash over it.”³²

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, we still find the concept of the *Abzug* mentioned by theorists such as August Gathy. His *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon*, which enjoyed three editions, defined the term as follows in the second edition of 1840: “A lifting or drawing away of the bow from the string on instruments of the violin family or of the finger from the key or from the hole on keyboard or wind instruments.”³³

Regarding the performance of slurred pairs, nineteenth-century musicians were in nearly unanimous agreement. English pianist and teacher Franklin Taylor (1843-1919), who, like Mendelssohn, was once a student of Moscheles, associated the term “slur” with paired notes *only*:

When two notes of equal length in quick or moderately quick tempo are joined together by a curved line they are said to be slurred, and in playing

³² Czerny, *Piano Forte School*, 187.

³³ August Gathy, *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Schuberth & Niemeyer 1840), art. “Abzug,” quoted in Brown *Classical and Romantic*, 232.

them a considerable stress is laid on the first of the two, while the second is not only weaker, but is made shorter than it is written, as though followed by a rest.³⁴

When compared to the host of nineteenth-century authors who continued to interpret slurred pairs with articulation as they had been in the previous century, the applicability of Mendelssohn's commentary in the letter to Macfarren to the slurs in his organ music is tenuous.

Accentuation Slurs

In the late Baroque and early Classical periods, the slur took on the added task of indicating accentuation, and as seen in the methods or commentary of Adam, Kalkbrenner, and Moscheles, retained this function well into the nineteenth century. The idea that the first note under a slur should be slightly accented appears in any number of keyboard methods, including German theorist and composer Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Klavierschule* (Keyboard School), published in 1789. In his method, Türk writes that "for notes that should be played legato, the finger must remain upon the key until the value of the note is completely expired, so that not the least separation (rest) results. . . . One should observe that the first note under the slur should be accented very little (almost imperceptibly)."³⁵ This slight accent on the first note of a slurred passage would occur naturally for a wind player in the eighteenth century, as they generally tongued only the first note of the group.³⁶

³⁴ In "Phrasing," in George Grove, ed., *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ii. 706 ff, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 34.

³⁵ Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende mit kritischen Anmerkungen* (Leipzig and Halle: Schwickert, Hemmerde und Schwetschke, 1789), 355, quoted in Lohmann, "Notated Slurs," 195.

German pianist, violinist, and composer Georg Simon Löhlein (1725-1781) discusses the use of slurs to indicate accentuation in his 1774 *Anweisung zum Violinspielen* (Instruction on Violin Playing), saying notes under slurs “must be performed in one bowstroke and softly connected to each other.”³⁷ But if playing a melody with text, he notes, “When two notes come on one syllable...both notes will be played in one bowstroke, but the first receives a special pressure, because the syllable will be enunciated on it, and the other, as it were, melts into it.”³⁸ Correspondingly, the Löhlein-Witthauer *Clavier-Schule* (Keyboard School), which was reprinted four times between 1765 and 1782 for a total of seven thousand copies, speaks of slurred groups “of which the first note always receives a somewhat stronger pressure.”³⁹

Although long slurs are rarer in the early part of the eighteenth century, some methods suggest an accent-diminuendo for slurred groups of any length. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, one finds more examples of longer slurred groups. Türk’s *Klavierschule* gives examples of up to eight slurred notes (Ex. 13a), while other methods recommend accentuation for groups of up to three or four notes under a slur.⁴⁰

³⁶ Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music*, 50.

³⁷ Georg Simon Löhlein, *Anweisung zum Violinspielen*, (Leipzig and Züllichau: Auf Kosten der Waysenhaus und Frommannischen Buchhandlung, 1774), 4th ed., ed. Johann Friedrich Reichardt (Leipzig and Züllichau: N. S. Fromann, 1797), quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 31.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Georg Simon Löhlein, *Clavier-Schule, oder kurze und gründliche Anweisung zur Melodie und Harmonie* (Leipzig and Züllichau: Auf Kosten der Waysenhaus und Frommannischen Buchhandlung 1765), 5th ed., ed. Johann Georg Witthauer (Leipzig: N.S. Fromann, 1791), 18, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 31.

⁴⁰ Türk, *Klavierschule*, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 31.

Example 13: Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (1789)



One eighteenth-century author seems to suggest that the slur's purpose is primarily to indicate accentuation, not necessarily a legato articulation that connects the notes under the slur. French composer and organist Jean-François Tapray (1738/9-1798), a student of Domenico Scarlatti, states in *Les premiers Éléments du Clavecin ou du Piano, Complément* (1789), "If two or more notes are under a slur, they should be connected, but primarily, the first of these notes should be accented."⁴¹

From these examples, we see that slurs could signify both articulation and accentuation. A series of several slurred pairs demonstrates this: a shortening of the second note automatically makes the first note of the next group louder, even on the organ where true dynamic inflection is impossible. The German theorist and violinist Heinrich Christoph Koch (1747-1816) maintained that it was not necessary for a pianist or violinist to even lift the finger or bow, respectively, after the second, weaker note of a slurred pair unless the composer had notated a rest following it.⁴² Decades later, in a

⁴¹ Jean-François Tapray, *Les Premiers Éléments du Clavecin ou du Piano, Complément* (Paris: Bonjour, c. 1789), 14, quoted in Lohmann, "Notated Slurs," 195.

⁴² Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, art. "Vorschlag," (Frankfurt-am-Main: August Hermann der Jüngere, 1802), quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 232.

letter to his favorite violinist, Joseph Joachim, Johannes Brahms suggests that one only lifts after slurred pairs.⁴³

Some piano methods contemporaneous with Mendelssohn continued to associate slurs with both articulation and accentuation, including: Hummel, Czerny, Moscheles, and Kalkbrenner (Ex. 11). As nineteenth-century composers expanded their notational palette, including accent and dynamic markings, “a distinction between the symbol (slur) as an indication for legato and as a sign for the accentuation and phrasing of short figures was rarely made with clarity either by composers or theorists.”⁴⁴ Similar to Tapray, who implied that the slur indicates primarily accentuation and not necessarily a legato articulation with a shortened final note, Charles de Bériot (1802-1870), as late as 1858, recommended a small accent at the beginning of slurred groups, but with no break between them.⁴⁵

Rosenblum denies the possibility of accentuation at the organ.⁴⁶ This view is reasonable enough, since greater force applied to the key will in no way amplify the sound. While mentioning nothing relating slurs to the practice of accentuation, Werner’s *Orgelschule* nevertheless states, “One indicates the good parts of a measure by applying somewhat more force to the keys.”⁴⁷ He seems to be advocating the use of agogic

⁴³ Johannes Brahms, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1907-22), 149-53, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 234.

⁴⁴ Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 32.

⁴⁵ Charles de Bériot, *Méthode du violon* (Paris: Schott, 1858), 90, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 32.

⁴⁶ Rosenblum, *Performance Practices*, 159.

⁴⁷ Werner, *Orgelschule*, 18, quoted in Lohmann, “Regarding Interpretation,” 5.

accents. Within a legato context, a more forceful attack with a slight lingering in the keys can create the sense of dynamic shading. Lohmann argues that composers in Mendelssohn's day did not use slurs in such a manner, noting that accent marks (>) were beginning to appear in piano music at this time.⁴⁸ Some organ composers also adopted the accent mark (Ex. 14), including August Gottfried Ritter (1811-1885) who, like Mendelssohn, had been a piano pupil of Ludwig Berger.

Example 14: August Gottfried Ritter, Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, op. 23. I. Rasch, p. 7, mm. 14-18. Edition Sulzer (1881)



As the slur's role in showing articulation lessened throughout the nineteenth century, the introduction of accents and other markings in organ music became a necessity for showing articulation in a predominantly legato style.

Continuous Legato Slurs

The most ambiguous slurs to modern performers are those appearing over consecutive measures. These "continuous legato" slurs, or *Dauerlegatobögen*, are quite common in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century keyboard writing, appearing frequently in the organ music of Mendelssohn. Perhaps more than any other slurs, these

⁴⁸ Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 5.

cause the greatest frustration to organists who believe they must interpret them as slurs of articulation. Such an approach is clearly one based on seventeenth and eighteenth-century practice; however, if one looks to the notational habits of late eighteenth-century composers, one finds numerous examples of slurs spanning consecutive measures.

The use of these consecutive-measure or “legato” slurs in keyboard music is first described in Türk’s *Klavierschule*. He mentions the possibility of using either directives or slurs, asserting that “if all tones of a composition or most of its parts are to be slurred, then this manner of treatment is indicated at the beginning by the word ‘legato.’”⁴⁹ Then he adds, “Often curved lines are written only over the first measures and serve to indicate to the player that he should continue to use this form of execution, until the contrary is designated by strokes or rests.”⁵⁰ According to Türk, the passages in Ex. 15a should not be performed with separations between the slurs, as indicated in Ex. 15b.

Example 15a: Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (1789)



Example 15b: Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (1789)



⁴⁹ Daniel Gottlob Türk, *School of Clavier Playing* trans. Raymond H. Haggh (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 344, Adobe PDF eBook.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

In the keyboard music of Mozart, one rarely finds the directive “legato” but frequently encounters consecutive-measure slurs. Perhaps more so than with other slurs, the use of consecutive-measure slurs in keyboard music seems to reflect string writing. As Clive Brown has noted, it is rare to find slurs extending beyond what is playable in one bowstroke before 1800.⁵¹ Despite a keyboard player’s ability to play a legato passage well beyond a classical bowstroke or a wind player’s natural limitations, the connection between slurs and string bowing remained strong for eighteenth-century musicians. Paul and Eva Badura-Skoda, in their book *Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard*, reinforce the notion of cross-pollination between string playing and keyboard notation, noting that “the Viennese classical composers, Mozart above all, adopted a notation typical of the violin throughout their music. The rarity of long slurs is an obvious consequence of the limited length of the violin bow.”⁵² When explaining the use of slurs and articulation, Löhlein remarked, “The keyboard is not so perfect with respect to expression as string and wind instruments; however, uniform notes can be performed in a variety of ways, and one can imitate some kinds of bowstrokes.”⁵³

The clearest description of continuous legato slurs as they may pertain to Mendelssohn comes from Carl Czerny’s piano method, which covers a variety of topics from improvisation to concert decorum and basic instrument maintenance. Appearing in Vienna in 1839, the method was simultaneously published in London in an English

⁵¹ Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 235.

⁵² Paul and Eva Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), 55.

⁵³ Löhlein, *Clavier-Schule, oder kurze und gründliche Anweisung zur Melodie und Harmonie* (Leipzig and Züllichau: N.S. Frommann, 1765), 2nd ed., 69, quoted in Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 235.

translation, suggesting a widespread respect for Czerny's teaching. On the subject of continuous legato slurs, Czerny provides the following example (Ex. 16) with an explanation:

Example 16: Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Pianoforte School*, op. 50 (1839)

§ 24. When, however, slurs are drawn over several notes, although the slurs are not continuous, but are broken into several lines, they are considered as forming but one, and no perceptible separation must take place. Ex:



Here the last note of each bar must not be played short or detached; but it must, on the contrary, be connected with the following one. Should the Composer desire to make it detached, he must place a dot or dash over it.

As a Beethoven pupil and later a teacher of Franz Liszt, Czerny's standing in the musical community of his day should not be underestimated. Although they never met, Mendelssohn and Czerny enjoyed a relationship based on mutual admiration. Czerny made piano-duet arrangements of several Mendelssohn works and dedicated to him the *Schule des Fugenspiels*, op. 400, a set of twelve preludes and fugues. R. Larry Todd suggests that this collection may have inspired Mendelssohn's own cycle of piano works, the Six Preludes and Fugues, op. 35.⁵⁴

Slurs of Negative Function

Ludger Lohmann proposes a category of slur that tells the performer not so much how to execute the notes appearing under it, but rather how to perform the unmarked

⁵⁴ R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 180-84.

notes appearing in proximity to slurred groups. As they negate the usual legato touch for unmarked notes in this period, Lohmann has dubbed them slurs of “negative function” (*negative Funktion*).⁵⁵ This idea, though not called as such, is presented by August Gottfried Ritter in his *Kunst des Orgelspiels* (Art of Organ Playing), which appeared in 1845, the same year in which Mendelssohn’s Six Sonatas for Organ, op. 65 were published.⁵⁶ In his commentary on J. S. Bach’s Duet in A Minor, BWV 805 from *Clavierübung* III, Ritter notes:

The slurs over groups of two notes of the *Zwischenharmonie* (the non-functional embellishing notes in a fugue), which are seen here for the first time in m. 18, indicate less that the notes beneath them should be more connected, but much more so imply that the two following notes should be *staccato* (that is, played with a repelling, or pushing off, from one to the next).⁵⁷

Example 17: J. S. Bach, Duetto in A Minor, BWV 805, mm. 16-21, in August Gottfried Ritter, *Kunst des Orgelspiels*, op. 10 (1845)



Interestingly, Ritter’s edition of this piece differs from the original; the two unmarked notes to which he advises applying a staccato touch are, in fact, already marked with staccato dots in the first edition of *Clavierübung* III. Nevertheless, Ritter’s commentary

⁵⁵ Lohmann, “Regarding Interpretation,” 3.

⁵⁶ August Gottfried Ritter, *Kunst des Orgelspiels* (Erfurt and Leipzig: Verlag der Schulbuchhandlung von Gotth. Wilh. Körner, 1845), 39.

⁵⁷ Ibid., trans. Philip Fillion. For original German: Der Bogen, der über je zwei und zwei Noten der sogenannten Zwischenharmonie steht (zum ersten Mal im 18[.] Takte), bezeichnet weniger einen noch mehr gebundenen Vortrag derselben, als er vielmehr einen weniger gebundenen, ein *staccato* (Abstossen) der beiden folgenden Töne andeuten soll.

has implications for Mendelssohn's own application of slurs and will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Phrasing Slurs

For modern performers, the idea of slurs indicating phrasing is now pervasive; however, they were rarely used in this way until after Mendelssohn's death. In fact, Mendelssohn's organ music, in which slurs almost never seem to align with the so-called "natural" or intuitive phrase divisions, is evidence enough that slurs are of little consequence for phrasing in this music. To illustrate, in the uppermost line of Ex. 18, Mendelssohn has notated five slurs within the first five measures of the movement, the contents of which form only the first significant phrase of the work.

Ex. 18: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 3 in A Major, op. 65. II. Andante tranquillo, mm. 1-5. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



The German music theorist Hugo Riemann (1849-1919) sought to clarify musical notation and, in particular, detested the use of the so-called "legato" slur, the application

of which he found to be “unplanned or at least inconsistent.”⁵⁸ In the Introduction to his *Lehrbuch der musikalischen Phrasierung* (Textbook on Musical Phrasing), Riemann asserts that the use of slurs to denote phrasing is relatively recent.⁵⁹ Writing in 1884, this comment, while conceivably a bit of an exaggeration, should nonetheless be considered by those who associate slurs with phrasing in Mendelssohn’s music.

Russian-Israeli pianist Zvi Meniker, writing on the subject of slurs in Chopin’s piano music, argues not only that the use of the slur as an indication for phrasing was introduced by Hugo Riemann, but that this practice was never adopted by major composers such as Verdi, Wagner, Franck, Brahms, and Debussy. Rather, he believes Riemann’s practice was taken up by music editors in an effort to “educate the players”⁶⁰ who could not determine phrase structure on their own. Like certain editions of Chopin’s piano works, Mendelssohn’s organ music has suffered the fate of revisions by editors who misunderstand the composer’s notation.

Conclusion

In summary, the first slurs in keyboard music, seeking to imitate string playing, had consequences for articulation. All notes under a slur were to be played with a connected touch, and the last note under the slur would be shortened. A cessation of sound following the shortened note, if even slight, would automatically articulate the

⁵⁸ Ludger Lohmann, “Hugo Riemann and the Development of Musical Performance Practice,” *Proceedings of the Göteborg International Organ Academy 1994*, ed. Hans Davidsson and Sverker Jullander (Göteborg: Department of Musicology, Göteborg University, 1995), 261.

⁵⁹ Lohmann, “Notated Slurs,” 214.

⁶⁰ Zvi Meniker, “Aspects of Performance Practice in Frédéric Chopin’s Piano Works: Slurs, Pedaling, Mazurka Rhythm” (DMA diss., Cornell University, 2001), 18.

subsequent note. Authors through the nineteenth century continued to use slurs in this way, usually in groups of two, three, and sometimes four notes.

Although slurs continued to carry implications for articulation under certain circumstances, they later took on the additional role of indicating accentuation, wherein the first note of a slurred group would be slightly accented, with each successive note becoming weaker in the context of a diminuendo. This dual function obviously continued for pianists into the nineteenth century, as demonstrated in the method of Kalkbrenner (Ex. 11), wherein the author shows the first note of the slur with an accent mark (>), and the last note of the group is shortened and followed by a rest.

Finally, with examples from Türk and Czerny, we discover the most foreign use of slurs to our modern eyes. These continuous legato slurs appear over consecutive measures or at the half measure. However, the deciding factor in identifying these particular slurs seems to be more contingent upon consistent rhythmic values of the groupings, as is clear in the examples of both Türk (Ex. 15a/15b) and Czerny (Ex. 16). In Chapter Three, we will demonstrate that identifying continuous legato slurs enables one to more easily recognize slurs implying articulation.

Chapter 3

An Analysis of Articulation and Slurs in Mendelssohn's Organ Works

A survey of keyboard methods in Chapter One established legato as the primary keyboard articulation for Mendelssohn's time. Now, having reviewed the variety of slur types found in keyboard music, from Scheidt's earliest examples in 1624 through methods contemporaneous with Mendelssohn, we have a basis for understanding how the slur functions within an overall legato texture. Therefore, this study's final chapter examines several unmarked pieces, i.e., those without slurs, for which the prevailing touch would have been legato. Next, we will analyze Mendelssohn's use of slurs according to the various types discussed in Chapter Two, providing examples of each from his organ works. Finally, we conclude with a discussion on exceptions to the rule of legato in unmarked music.

Unmarked Works - Chorales

Several organ works of Mendelssohn draw upon the tradition of chorale playing. Although born into a Jewish family, Mendelssohn's father had his children baptized in the Lutheran Church.¹ Therefore, Mendelssohn would have been familiar with the vast repertoire of Lutheran chorales from an early age and drawn inspiration from them. Some pieces incorporate chorale melodies as thematic material or as a *cantus firmus*, as is the case with Sonatas No. 1 and 3, respectively; Sonatas No. 5 and 6 begin with fully-harmonized chorales. The chorale in Sonata No. 5 in D Major (Ex. 19) is an original composition, not drawn from a familiar tune as in the opening movement of Sonata No. 6

¹ R. Larry Todd, "On Mendelssohn's Sacred Music, Real and Imaginary," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 196.

in D Minor (Ex. 20), which borrows a well-known chorale melody associated with the Lord's Prayer, *Vater unser im Himmelreich*.

Example 19: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 5 in D Major, op. 65, I. Andante, mm. 1-10. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



Example 20: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, op. 65, I. Choral-Andante sostenuto, mm. 1-10. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



One notices immediately that the chorales in Ex. 19 and Ex. 20 contain no slurs, unlike the other movements of Mendelssohn's sonatas. In Chapter One, we established that organists in certain regions had applied a legato articulation to chorales as early as the 1770s. Many organ methods discuss chorale playing in detail, including those of Knecht, Rinck, and Volckmar, all of whom also promoted a general legato touch. The only element of notation suggesting any sort of articulation in Mendelssohn's chorale movements is the occasional fermata, which is actually used to mark phrase endings. (Defined as a "corona" in Walther's *Musikalisches Lexikon* or "Musical Lexicon" of

1732, later German authors adopted the term “fermate.”)² That a breath or cessation of sound is desired and, indeed, quite necessary after these fermati is confirmed by the laboriously-slow chorale performance practice in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century:

The role of organ accompaniment became more crucial. The increasing use of the organ in the church service from the end of the 17th century was accompanied by increasing slowness in the tempo of chorale performance; this reached its extreme when the pastor and theoretician K.W. Frantz (1773–1857) suggested a tempo of four seconds per melody note.³

Mendelssohn’s tempo indications for the chorales of both Sonata No. 5 and Sonata No. 6 give the quarter note equal to 100. Although a bit slow by modern standards, this was typical of chorale singing in the nineteenth century, and, compared with Frantz’s suggestion, possibly on the fast side.⁴

Two other Mendelssohn organ sonatas utilize chorale melodies, although they are presented in a much less overt manner than the previously mentioned examples. The first movement of Sonata No. 3 in A Major incorporates *Aus tiefer Noth ich schrei zu dir* as a cantus firmus in the pedal, providing the grounding for a rather agitated fugue reminiscent of the composer’s overture to the oratorio *St. Paul* (Ex. 21). While the manual parts contain many slurs, the chorale melody in the pedal is completely unmarked.

² David Fuller, “Organ point,” *Grove Music / Oxford Music Online*, accessed Nov. 2, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000020444>

³ Robert L. Marshall and Robin A. Leaver, “Chorale,” *Grove Music / Oxford Music Online*, accessed Nov. 2, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005652>.

⁴ Lohmann, “Regarding Interpretation,” 8. Lohmann believes Mendelssohn actually wanted to give the tempo indication of the half note equal to 50; however, as this would have been on the extreme side of slow tempi, metronome technology was not sufficiently developed and, therefore, inaccurate.

Example 21: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 3 in A Major, op. 65, I. Con moto maestoso, p. 25, mm. 12-16. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



One could argue that the presence of slurs in the manuals suggests a non-legato articulation for the unmarked chorale tune in the pedal; however, the performance tradition of chorales from already seventy years prior to Mendelssohn's published organ works suggests otherwise. The composer may well have assumed that organists of the day would have automatically played this *cantus firmus* legato.

An exception to these three examples of unmarked chorale tunes in Mendelssohn's organ works comes from Sonata No. 1 in F Minor (Ex. 22). Beginning in m. 40 of the opening Allegro, the melody *Was mein Gott will* appears for manuals only with slurs spanning the length of each phrase of the chorale (four measures), some of the longest in Mendelssohn's organ works.

Example 22: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 65, I. Allegro, mm. 40-44. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



These slurs are not necessary to indicate the assumed legato articulation, especially in light of the theme drawn from a chorale; however, unlike those of Ex. 19 and Ex. 20, this chorale is not presented as a stand-alone movement, nor is it incorporated into a contrapuntal context, as in Ex. 21. (Mendelssohn does not even identify the chorale in any way in the score.) Instead, Mendelssohn utilizes the chorale melody as a second theme, weaving it into the work's larger compositional thread. Here, the chorale tune is incorporated into a "symphonic context," an idea suggested by Ludger Lohmann.⁵ In Mendelssohn's own time, this sonata struck his contemporary, August Gottfried Ritter, as more orchestral than organ-like.⁶ In that sense, using *fermati* to demarcate the chorale melody's phrase endings would have been incongruous, which could explain the decision to use slurs. Consequently, these are possibly a rare example of true phrasing slurs in Mendelssohn's organ works.

Fugues

Appropriate articulation in Mendelssohn's fugues has become a point of contention among various scholars. This is the second important genre of unmarked works in Mendelssohn's output, of which there are several examples. Mendelssohn's first publication for the organ, *Three Preludes and Fugues*, op. 37, published in 1837, contains two fugues that are unmarked. In Chapter One, the *Fugue in D Minor*, op. 37, a work with neither slurs nor directives, was considered in the context of the bound style, to which keyboard players of Mendelssohn's time applied a legato articulation. Two other fugues, however, appear without slurs but are indicated "legato." Unlike the *Fugue in D Minor*, op. 37, these other works have earlier variants containing slurs, suggesting an evolution in the way Mendelssohn conceived articulation, or at least in how he notated it.

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 6 (Feb. 11, 1846), cols. 97-102, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn and the Organ*, 336.

The Fugue in C Minor, op. 37 originated from an improvisation theme given to Mendelssohn for the closing voluntary at an 1833 service in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and was recorded in the composer's diary (Ex. 23).⁷

Example 23: Improvisation theme in Mendelssohn's diary (1833), from Hans Fagius, "The Organ Works of Mendelssohn and Schumann and Their Links to the Classical Tradition," in *Proceedings of the Göteborg International Organ Academy*, ed. Hans Davidsson (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1994), 337.



In 1835, Mendelssohn composed a fugue for organ duo using this theme as its subject and dedicated it to his friend, Thomas Attwood, organist of St. Paul's (Ex. 24). The composer removed the eighth-note rests in the original improvisation theme from the subject's head and added three slurs to its tail.

Example 24: Felix Mendelssohn, Fugue in C Minor (duo version, 1835), mm. 1-3. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Christian Schmidt (2005)

Volles Werk

⁷ Fagius, "Organ Works of Mendelssohn," 337.

With the addition of slurs in the duet version, it seems obvious that Mendelssohn wanted an articulation between the head of the subject and the tail. Following that line of reasoning, the length of the B natural in m. 1 would be slightly shortened, allowing an articulation for the subsequent G, the first note of the first slurred group.

What is less clear in Ex. 24 is whether Mendelssohn really intended an articulation between each of the slurred groups. There are many examples of four notes clustered together under a slur in the music of Mendelssohn and his contemporaries. Lohmann has observed that groups of four slurred notes appearing consecutively occur almost as frequently as consecutive-measure slurs in organ music of the first half of the nineteenth century, and that they should probably be treated in a similar way, without articulation between them.⁸ (We have already seen an example of such slurring in Ex. 21.) While Kalkbrenner's method recommends shortening the final note under a slur if it encompasses two, three, or four notes (Ex. 11), Czerny's suggestion, that slurs over four or more notes require a dot if the last slurred note is to be played short, could also be considered in this instance.⁹

But what of this fugue subject's head? Although Mendelssohn removed the rests in the original improvisation theme for the duet (Ex. 23), this portion of the subject could still have been a candidate for non-legato execution, even in the 1830s. Seeing a compound duple meter, leaping intervals, and iambic rhythmic patterns (short-long), a trained musician of this period may have intuitively played with a non-legato touch upon

⁸ Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 4.

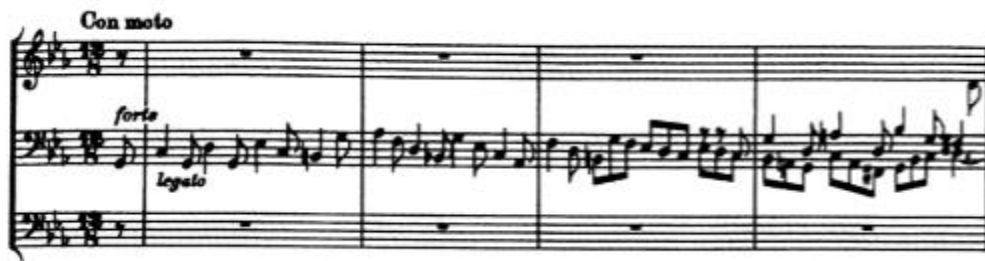
⁹ Czerny, *Piano Forte School*, 187.

recognizing a Baroque-type gigue. With the cavernous acoustics of St. Paul's Cathedral, London in mind, Mendelssohn may have envisioned the necessity of a non-legato articulation when writing this duet for the cathedral organist, Thomas Attwood.

For the final version of the Fugue in C Minor, as published in 1837, Mendelssohn removed the slurs and added the directive “legato” (Ex. 25). The combination of a consistent “legato” touch with the dynamic indication “forte” suggests a certain amount of profundity in Mendelssohn's final conception of the work, something different than the typical Baroque gigue. Yet, the composer also indicates “con moto,” reminding the player not to allow the full registration and connected touch to thwart forward motion. One is reminded of Henry Chorley's aforementioned description of Mendelssohn's piano playing, citing a solidity of touch without being ponderous.

As in the case of the earlier duet, acoustical ambience may have played a factor in Mendelssohn's decision to indicate a general legato articulation in the final solo version of the Fugue in C Minor. One encounters a vast reverberation period like that of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, infrequently; a persistent legato execution in most other venues does nothing to hinder a convincing performance of the piece.

Example 25: Felix Mendelssohn, Fugue in C Minor, op. 37 (final solo version, 1837), mm. 1-4. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Gerd Zacher (1982)



As previously noted, Hans Fagius argues that Mendelssohn's works with no slurs are to be played non-legato, with the ordinary touch of the Baroque.¹⁰ Citing an isolated comment from Werner's *Orgelschule*, Jon Laukvik concurs, arguing that organists of this period would not have automatically played legato unless seeing slurs or the directive "legato" in the score. Laukvik cites the Fugue in D Minor, op. 37 as an example of such a piece, as it lacks both slurs and directives to play otherwise.¹¹ However, in Chapter One, we put forth an alternative interpretation based on a closer reading of Werner, taking into account the notation habits of Mendelssohn and his contemporaries, as well as the performance practices associated with music of the bound style. In light of this, the present study maintains that a legato execution is the most appropriate for the Fugue in D Minor, op. 37.

Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, op. 65, includes a fugue as its second movement. Like the Fugue in C Minor, op. 37, it is unmarked and contains the directive "sostenuto e legato" (Ex. 26). This directive has been used as further ammunition to support a non-legato execution for unmarked works such as the Fugue in D Minor, op. 37. The two works are more similar to one another than either is to the Fugue in C Minor. If Mendelssohn and his contemporaries would have recognized the fugue from his sixth sonata as belonging to the bound style and automatically assumed a legato articulation, why did the composer bother to include the directive?

¹⁰ Fagius, "Organ Works of Mendelssohn," 331.

¹¹ Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 59.

Example 26: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, II. Fuga, mm. 1-12. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



Slurs and directives aside, we again consider general performance conventions in Mendelssohn's time as they applied to particular genres. Writing on the sometimes complex relationship between a composer's notation and desired execution in the first half of the 1800s, Clive Brown asserts:

Much may depend on the extent to which the composer relied on the performer's understanding of the conventions that applied to particular circumstances and contexts. . . . Although nineteenth-century composers were generally more inclined to notate their articulation with greater precision, there is still considerable scope for misunderstanding in the music of that period, especially where notes were left with neither articulation marks nor slurs.¹²

He continues, asking "whether or not unslurred notes that the composer has left without articulation marks would have been played any differently if they did have these markings."¹³ Additionally, in the case of the fugue from Mendelssohn's sixth sonata (Ex. 26), one must consider if the absence of the directive "sostenuto e legato" would elicit a different performance. If that were the case, this fugue, which Douglas Butler has

¹² Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 169.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 170.

described as “cast in vocal terms, not unlike the qualities of a Baroque chorale-based motet,”¹⁴ would not be so different from the earlier Fugue in D Minor, op. 37, and thus a candidate for legato articulation.

Similar to the Fugue in C Minor, op. 37, there exists an early variant of the Fugue in D Minor from the sixth sonata (Ex. 27).

Example 27: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, II. Fuga (early variant), mm. 1-9. Novello Edition, ed. William Little (1988)



This pre-publication version lacks any sort of directive, and it contains five slurs, four of which appear in the opening eight bars. The fifth appears in bar sixty-four almost as an after-thought (Ex. 28).

Example 28: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 6 in D Minor, II. Fuga (early variant), mm. 56-65. Novello Edition, ed. William Little (1988)



¹⁴ Douglas Butler, “The Organ Works of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1973), 166, quoted in Little, *Mendelssohn*, 327.

If one chose to interpret the short slurs in mm. 1, 3, and 8 of Ex. 27 as articulation marks, the final note under the slur would be slightly shortened, thus articulating the long notes in mm. 2 and 4. These short slurs each encompass three notes of relatively long value compared to the examples of three-note slurred groups found in the majority of keyboard methods surveyed in this study, most of which are notated as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets (Ex. 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11). At first sight, one might not be inclined to classify these as continuous legato slurs because they do not encompass each consecutive measure; however, Mendelssohn would have had no reason to notate a slur in mm. 2 or 4 because, in each case, there is only one notated pitch followed by a rest. We recall from Türk's *Klavierschule* that slurs notated over the first few measures in a piece indicate legato until the appearance of a stroke or rest.¹⁵

The long slur of Ex. 27, encompassing m. 5 through the downbeat of m. 8, is somewhat unusual for Mendelssohn, at least when considered as its own entity. But when viewed in the larger context of this passage, one possible theory emerges. The fact that Mendelssohn abandoned the slurring after bar eight, where the second voice enters, suggests the composer simply used slurs to outline the fugue subject as a sort of visual aid. There was no need to continue beyond the entrance of the second voice, because the performer could then apply the same slurring to every other subject entry.

Admittedly several decades later, we find an example of Max Reger (1873-1916) similarly using slurs to indicate the subject entries in his Fugue in D Major, op. 59, no. 6 (1901). The slurs end as another voice enters with its own slur (Ex. 29).

¹⁵ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, 344.

Example 29: Max Reger, Fugue in D Major, op. 59, no. 6. C. F. Peters Edition (1950)



At the end of the first slur in m. 4, Reger’s indication “sempre ben legato” confirms these cannot possibly be articulation or continuous legato slurs. Although this may be viewing Mendelssohn retroactively through a late Romantic lens, the situation here is not so different from the slurring in the early version of Mendelssohn’s Fugue in D Minor, op. 65.

Those who do not subscribe to Mendelssohn’s basic articulation being legato could argue that he might have used the original slurs in the early version of the Fugue in D Minor, op. 65 to show the articulation for the initial fugue subject, after which the performer could apply the same articulation throughout the piece. However, numerous contemporaneous sources suggest no articulation for the entire subject, as we have attempted to demonstrate. While it is probably impossible to know Mendelssohn’s reasoning for removing the slurs from the original version of the fugue and adding the directive “sostenuto e legato” in the final, published work, the extant manuscript is mired with revisions, suggesting an arduous composition process.¹⁶ If we accept the notion that the original slurs could be visual aids highlighting the fugue subject, or even if one

¹⁶ Little, *Mendelssohn*, 269.

chooses to interpret the slurs as articulation marks (resulting in only minimal articulation), the overall touch would still be legato.

Even a preliminary study of early variants to the sonata movements shows a majority of works without slurs, to which Mendelssohn later added many. With the fugue from the sixth sonata, we have almost the opposite procedure, in which the composer economizes his notation. Perhaps publishing the finished work without even a directive seemed too extreme. In the larger context of notation in this period, one must remember that the majority of published organ works from this period do not contain articulation directives, and this is true for Mendelssohn as well. Therefore, whatever the reason, Mendelssohn's decision to indicate "legato" in the fugue from Sonata no. 6 but not the one from op. 37, although frustrating, becomes a minor detail when considering the broader issues of style and context, as well as the composer's notational habits.

An altogether different sort of fugue is found as the final movement of Sonata No. 2 in C Minor, op. 65 (Ex. 30). Like many pre-publication versions of Mendelssohn's organ works, the early variant of what would become this final, published work contains no slurs. If the final published version of this fugue had remained without slurs, a legato approach would be assumed, as in the fugues mentioned thus far. However, in the final published work, Mendelssohn added numerous slurs, the result of which is one of the most frustrating in his *oeuvre*. Remembering the early variant to the fugue from Sonata No. 6 (Ex. 27), one notes that, in the fugue from Sonata No. 2, Mendelssohn was careful to slur the subject the same way in each entry. This is unusual for a composer who has been criticized for altering the slurring for a particular motive over the course of the same piece.

Example 30: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata II in C Minor, op. 65, III. Fuga – Allegro moderato, mm. 1-11. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



The slurring here presents a dilemma. Czerny's two rules for slurs stand in contradiction: in mm. 1-3, we find groups of two or three notes slurred together, which at first glance would be candidates for articulation (Ex. 12); however, they are also consecutive-measure slurs, which would call for a continuous legato approach (Ex. 16).

One must be careful about applying Czerny's ideas too literally. His example of continuous legato slurs contains generic figurations, such as ascending and descending scalar patterns, as well as arpeggios. In the example from Mendelssohn's second sonata, we are dealing with a fugue subject, something a bit more sophisticated. Here we might consider advice on playing counterpoint from August Gottfried Ritter, an organist contemporaneous with Mendelssohn and fellow Berger pupil. It stands to reason that Ritter's ideas about playing counterpoint on the organ might be applicable to Mendelssohn.

Ritter's three-volume method, *Kunst des Orgelspiels* (Art of Organ Playing), first appeared in 1845, the year Mendelssohn's Six Sonatas for Organ, op. 65 were published.

In a discussion about double pedal-playing, or playing two voices in the pedals, Ritter mentions the following:

The actual musical, multi-voiced pedal playing brings about more difficulties. Each foot is executing an independent melody which has to be performed according to its character. The points of light and shadows are not represented by shifting from *forte* to *piano* when playing the organ, but rather through a preferentially decisive and separating touch of those notes which should stand out, as opposed to those which (shall we say) are of a second rank, and must be handled in a lighter and more flowing way. In the former case [of the notes to be brought out], it is not only permissible, but also sometimes very necessary, to play several keys with the toe of the foot, so that one can more easily achieve a decisive and distinct performance, whereas for the latter (i.e. the notes of second rank) you have to employ all possible means in order to maintain an equal thread of tones. This technique is also used to advantage when a foot must play the *Cantus firmus*. When this occurs, the other foot must simultaneously carry out an accompaniment, which would be of the second rank, and must be handled in a way that is lighter, more subdued, and legato.¹⁷

As an example of these techniques, Ritter offers Bach's massive, six-part setting of *Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu dir*, BWV 686 from *Clavierübung* III.

¹⁷ August Gottfried Ritter, *Kunst des Orgelspiels* (Erfurt and Leipzig: Verlag der Schulbuchhandlung von Gotth. Wilh. Körner, 1845), 65-6, trans. Philip Fillion.

Example 31: Johann Sebastian Bach, *Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu dir*, BWV 686, mm. 9-13. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Carl F. Becker (1853)



Here we gain insight into a nineteenth-century organist's ideas about playing Baroque music. We can already assume that Ritter's basic articulation was legato; he makes this clear in speaking of the lower pedal voice, which "must be handled in a way that is lighter, more subdued, and legato."¹⁸ If that were not obvious enough, this entire discussion deals with making a chorale melody audible in a dense contrapuntal texture through non-legato articulation. This is all the more imperative if the overall touch is legato, and playing the upper pedal voice with one foot (i.e. non-legato by virtue of physical possibility) would result in a "decisive and distinct"¹⁹ audibility.

Ritter suggests a similar sort of idea for interpreting the Duetto in A Minor, BWV 805 from J. S. Bach's *Clavierübung* III: "The first four bars of the theme, in every voice and

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

at every occurrence, require a certain brusqueness [*Schroffheit*] in expression. . . .

Everything else, if not expressly so marked, will be played legato, i.e., connected.”²⁰

Example 32: J. S. Bach, Duetto in A Minor, BWV 805 (*Clavierübung* III), mm. 1-13.
Edition Breitkopf, ed. Carl F. Becker (1853)



Looking back at Mendelssohn's second sonata (Ex. 30), one notes that, at times, the concluding fugue's counterpoint is quite dense, and it is not always easy to hear the subject (see Ex. 33, in which the subject appears in the tenor voice).

²⁰ Ibid., 39, quoted in Laukvik, *Historical Performance Practice*, 75.

Example 33: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 2 in C Minor, op. 65, III. Fuga – Allegro moderato, mm. 21-26. Coventry and Hollier edition (1846). Fugue subject in tenor voice.



Here a legato execution would render the subject lost to the listener. While the presence of slurs forbids applying a non-legato or staccato articulation to the notes of the fugue subject, Ritter's desire to bring out the primary theme or cantus firmus within contrapuntal textures should be the goal. We also recall the London music critic John Ella, who marveled at Mendelssohn's ability to make the subject of a Bach fugue distinct and intelligible to the listener. If one interprets the slurs of the subject as indications of articulation while keeping all the other voices legato, the resulting articulation for the first note of each slurred group helps the subject to become more distinct, asserting itself through the counterpoint. Since Mendelssohn was so meticulous to slur the subject the same way in practically every instance, performers might consider articulating every slur, but only for the subject, and merely playing the rest of the texture legato, no matter the slurring.

Exceptions to the Rule of Legato

As discussed in Chapter One, the legato style was already being promoted by numerous keyboard and violin methods in the last several decades of the eighteenth

century. By the nineteenth century it was well-established as the default articulation, although exceptions to the rule could be made when demanded by the musical material. These same methods offer examples of when one might apply a non-legato articulation. We recall Werner's *Orgelschule* allowing a non-legato touch for lively pieces with fast passages. Knecht's method concurs, stating, "If one now wants to or should play fast-moving runs, then only a few fast-responding stops must be selected. But for a clear expression of such runs, a certain speediness of the fingers is very much required, which an organ-player must obtain first and foremost."²¹ In the original German, Knecht uses the word *Schnellkraft*, literally "speed-strength." *Schnellen*, a term described in Chapter One, means "to shoot up" or "to flick" (as in a rubber band), so Knecht is not only talking about how one gets the keys down, but also how one leaves them. If the fingers are supposed to shoot up, a legato touch would be impossible.

As pointed out in Chapter Two, Rinck recommended beginners play the exercises in his method with both a legato and a non-legato touch. Like Knecht and Werner, Rinck gives the possibility of a non-legato execution for particular situations: "Risoluto, determined, courageous; with these words, one denotes a mode of presentation in which the notes do not melt into each other but are just as if they are being separated from one another."²² Volckmar's *Orgelschule* mentions the possibility of non-legato playing in an example with dotted rhythms (Ex. 34), explaining that "both the short and the longer tone which follows it are played staccato. [This] is used most often useful in rapid, marked [marcato] passages, or in leaping [springing] notes."²³

²¹ Knecht, *Orgelschule*, vol. 1, 57, quoted in Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 3.

²² Rinck, *Theoretisch-practische*, 45, quoted in Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 3.

Example 34: Wilhelm Volckmar, *Orgelschule*, op. 50 (1858), p. 77



While not mentioning the necessity of including staccato dots for dotted rhythms, Volckmar includes them in the example, probably for emphasis. In the first movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 4, one finds a passage similar in style to what Rinck and Volckmar describe in the second thematic area (Ex. 35).

Example 35: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. I. Allegro con brio, mm. 22-28. Coventry and Hollier Edition (1846)



²³ Volckmar, *Orgelschule*, 77, trans. Philip Fillion.

Although lacking articulation marks, applying Rinck and Volckmar's advice and playing this passage with a sharp, non-legato touch has a commanding effect, making the second thematic area even more commanding and distinctive.

In the first movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 3 in A Major we find a fugue subject in which the head is unmarked and the tail is slurred (Ex. 36), a similar situation to the duet Fugue in C Minor (Ex.24). In the sonata movement, however, the subject's head, with its dotted rhythms, would be a candidate for a more detached articulation according to Knecht, Rinck, and Volckmar, and this would provide an interesting contrast to the softer, more lyrical tail of the subject.

Example 36: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 3 in A Major, op. 65. I. Con moto maestoso, mm. 24-30. Coventry and Hollier Edition (1846)



Articulation Slurs

Dating back to Scheidt's examples in 1624 (Ex. 3-5), Mendelssohn and his contemporaries continued using slurs to indicate articulation in which the final slurred note is somewhat shortened. The challenge for organists trained in earlier performance practices is learning to identify which of Mendelssohn's slurs indicate articulation. From the various nineteenth-century keyboard methods surveyed in Chapter Two, we can be

certain that most slurred pairs necessitate articulation. The *Abzug* figure, in which the first note acts as an appoggiatura and receives more accent or pressure than the second, weaker note, continued to be discussed in various keyboard methods of the early and mid-nineteenth centuries (Ex. 7, 10, and 11). A particularly beautiful use of this figure can be found in mm. 11, 12, and 14 of Ex. 37, in the Allegretto from Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 4.

Example 37: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. III. Allegretto, mm. 10-15. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



These slurred, two-note gestures should be executed like those demonstrated in Kalkbrenner's piano method (ex. 11), in which the second slurred note's value will be shortened. Czerny describes the second note as being "detached" (ex. 12). Organists could also create the illusion of dynamic shading by leaning into the first note of each pair, making it seem louder through an agogic accent.

There are several examples in Mendelssohn's organ works when a slurred pair is immediately followed by a rest (Ex. 38). In these instances, it is imperative that the second

note of the slurred pair not be held full value, otherwise the slur is rendered meaningless. In the recitative-inspired movement of Sonata No. 1, the pathos of the opening motive, a descending fifth, would lack the proper *affekt* if the second note was made equal to the first in rhythmic value.

Example 38: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 65. III. Andante Recit., mm. 1-8. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



Virtually all the methods surveyed in Chapter Two also suggest shortening the last note in slurred groups of three. Mendelssohn's Allegretto contains many such figures, usually functioning as an anacrusis leading into the next measure, as in m. 12 and m. 14 (Ex. 37). Shortening the third note under each of these slurs results in too many accents on the downbeats of subsequent measures. Here, we must recall the musical example Czerny provides in his explanation of the continuous legato slur (Ex. 16). Although not indicated, the time signature is clearly simple duple, and the only rhythmic values are eighth-notes. In Mendelssohn's Allegretto, three-note groupings, whether occurring on the downbeat of the measure or on the second big beat, as is the case frequently in this piece, are a naturally occurring by-product of the compound duple time signature. In this

regard, the slurred three-note groups could be recognized as continuous legato slurs occurring at the half-bar, the equivalent to slurred groups of four notes, which appear frequently in this period (Ex. 36).

Continuous Legato Slurs

Continuous legato slurs (*Dauerlegatobögen*) appear frequently in Mendelssohn's organ works. An understanding of this notational habit, described in keyboard methods first by Türk (Ex. 15a/15b) and later by Czerny (ex. 16), solves a host of issues when deciphering the slurs in this music. In addition to appearing over entire consecutive measures, we frequently encounter examples of two slurs per bar (Ex. 36). Jon Laukvik points out the commonality in these consecutively slurred passages of four notes or more being that "the slurred notes are of the same value, and that the figuration remains the same for several bars."²⁴ Likely the most frequently cited Mendelssohn work in which continuous legato slurs appear is the aforementioned Allegretto from Sonata No. 4. In Ex. 39, Mendelssohn breaks the pattern of slurring in m. 30, extending the slur beginning in m. 29 across the barline to the downbeat of m. 30, confirming the end of a particularly long phrase. This also confirms to the player that an articulation is necessary for the first note of the subsequent slurred group.

²⁴ Laukvik, *Performance Practices*, 240.

Example 39: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. III. Allegretto, mm. 25-30. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Gerd Zacher (1980)



Slurs of Negative Function

Ludger Lohmann's concept of negative function slurs, discussed briefly in Chapter Two, grew out of Ritter's use of articulation to make certain voices or important themes heard in a contrapuntal texture. As we saw in the Bach Duetto (Ex. 32), slurred pairs are followed by two unmarked notes. Since the basic articulation was legato and slurs were no longer necessary to merely show a legato connection between a group of notes, Ritter believed slurs could indicate a non-legato execution for proximal unmarked notes. Using the Bach Duetto as a model, this concept could only apply to passages in which fairly short slurred groups are surrounded by unmarked notes.

Lohmann has applied Ritter's idea to a passage in the opening Allegro con brio of Mendelssohn's fourth sonata (Ex. 40). The slurred passage in the pedal, beginning with the pickup to m. 10, encompasses four notes, followed by two that are unmarked, a G rising up a fourth to C. An identical pattern of articulation occurs for the subsequent phrase, beginning with the pedal B-flat slurring into m. 12. Following Ritter's procedure for the Bach Duetto, the slurred passages would be played legato, with a slight shortening of the final notes, and the subsequent unmarked notes would be played non-legato. In this

case, the quarter note pedal G on beat four of m. 10 would be played short, giving an articulation to the long C in m. 11. As the next pedal note begins a new slurred passage, the dotted half note C must be released a little early, thus articulating the B-flat that leads into m. 12. The F-sharp terminating the slur should be played somewhat short, and the subsequent F-sharp to G would be detached.

Example 40: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. I. Allegro con brio, mm. 8-16. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



As observed by Lohmann, the application of Ritter's idea reveals a motive that might otherwise be lost in a totally legato approach. He elaborates:

Through a non-legato, the Fourth G-C is singled out of its setting and thus appears more striking, like a signal, which is particularly useful when this motif is similarly articulated in the following measures, in which it

appears several times in different voices. Only in this way can the listener perceive a genuine meaning of the motif.²⁵

One could continue showing the motive of the rising fourth through articulation, even though the slurs no longer appear. In m. 13, the soprano B-flat on beat two would be shortened, followed by the pedal E-flat on beat four. The same procedure would apply in m. 14 on the tenor C and the pedal F on beat four.

Ritter's approach might also apply to a similar situation in which several measures of unmarked notes are then followed by several with slurred groupings. The fugue from Sonata No. 3 (ex. 36) features a subject with an unmarked head and continuous legato slurs over the tail. We have already shown that the dotted rhythms in the fugue subject's unmarked opening qualify it as a candidate for a non-legato execution. The slurs in the second half can reinforce this theory, suggesting that the unmarked portion of the subject be played non-legato instead of implying anything about the actual slurred groups.

There are other examples in Mendelssohn's organ works in which a particular slur seems unnecessary, yet it can reveal a significant purpose upon closer investigation. In the final movement of Sonata No. 4 (Ex. 41), we find examples of the longest slurs in Mendelssohn's organ works.

²⁵ Lohmann, "Regarding Interpretation," 4.

Example 41: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65.
IV. Allegro maestoso e vivace, mm. 1-5. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



At first glance, one might be tempted to classify the long slur over the pedal line as an indication of phrasing. Yet, in the reprise of this opening motive near the end of the movement, Mendelssohn stops the slur just shy of the F in m. 88 (Ex. 42), even though it had initially been the final note of the slurred group at the piece's commencement (Ex. 41, m. 5).

Example 42: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. IV. Allegro maestoso e vivace, mm. 83-88. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



While this sort of inconsistency in slurring the same motive is found throughout Mendelssohn's organ works, the long slur could actually serve a different purpose not related to phrasing at all. Assuming legato as the basic touch, the pedal slur is not necessary to show a general articulation. The writing in the upper two staves, however, features a series of slurred pairs requiring articulation. In this light, the long pedal slur in Ex. 41 could serve as a warning to performers not to match the pedal articulation to the manuals. In Ex. 42, Mendelssohn seems to have intentionally altered the articulation in the manuals beginning in m. 84 at beat three, so that, rather than streams of two-note pairs, there is now an alternation of two unmarked notes followed by a slurred pair. This situation closely resembles that which Ritter describes in the Bach Duetto, suggesting these be classified as slurs of negative function.

Phrasing Slurs

Any association between slurs and phrasing is difficult to prove until after Mendelssohn's lifetime. We saw in Chapter Two the music theorist Hugo Riemann's intriguing statement, writing some forty years after Mendelssohn's death, that the use of slurs to indicate phrasing was (in Riemann's day) fairly recent.²⁶ While perhaps an exaggeration, one wonders how anyone could speak of phrasing slurs when analyzing Mendelssohn's notation.

In the Andante religioso of Sonata No. 4 (Ex. 43), we find several instances in which slurs end before the phrase, as in mm. 4-5. If this were a true phrasing slur, the corresponding slurs above the pedal and soprano voice would extend to the downbeat of m. 5 as in Ex. 44.

Example 43: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. II. Andante religioso, mm. 1-11. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



²⁶ Lohmann, "Notated Slurs," 214.

What we find in the 1896 G. Schirmer edition (Ex. 44), edited by Samuel Prowse Warren (1841-1915), are slurs that correspond to more recent ideas of phrasing. Warren studied the organ in Berlin during the 1860s with Carl August Haupt, a student of Mendelssohn's organ teacher, August Wilhelm Bach.

Example 44: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. II. Andante religioso, mm. 1-5. G. Schirmer Edition, ed. Samuel P. Warren (1986)



Just as one might glean information about Mendelssohn's slurs from contemporaneous authors discussing Bach performance, such as Ritter, late nineteenth-century composers' views on slurs can be assembled from studying editions of earlier music published in that period, when editors frequently altered the composer's original notation. The way in which Mendelssohn's slurs were modified suggests that, only forty or fifty years after his death, the slurs in his music were largely viewed as signs of articulation, requiring a shortening of the final note in the slurred group. Clive Brown spoke to this issue, noting that "there seems to have been an assumption that slurs merely meant to show legato groupings within larger phrases were to be articulated, distorting

the contours of the musical structure.”²⁷ This could explain Warren extending the slurs in Ex. 44 across bar lines, aligning the slur with the last note of the obvious phrase (mm. 3 and 5).

By the advent of long phrasing slurs, there can be no doubt that the legato style permeated all music making. One could argue that replacing Mendelssohn’s continuous legato slurs over several consecutive measures with one phrasing slur would not negatively affect the performance. This assumes a sort of mindlessness on the part of nineteenth-century composers who regularly notated continuous legato slurs. However, subtleties of expression can get lost in translation.

Example 45: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. III. Allegretto, mm. 5-11. Edition Breitkopf, ed. Julius Rietz (1874-82)



²⁷ Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 238.

To illustrate, we see in Ex. 45 the same slurring found in the original German edition of 1845. The slurs in mm. 7 and 9 show that Mendelssohn wanted no separation between the first and second notes of the soprano voice in either instance. In the 1896 Schirmer edition, the editor has grafted his own ideas about phrasing onto the piece, changing the slurring so that there is a break before the soprano A in m. 7 and before the high F in m. 9 (Ex. 46). While following his reasonable instincts on phrasing, the editor's alteration of these slurs results in the elimination of two phrase elisions Mendelssohn clearly intended through his original notation.

Example 46: Felix Mendelssohn, Sonata No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 65. III. Allegretto, mm. 6-11. G. Schirmer Edition, ed. Samuel P. Warren (1896)



Conclusion

That the slur in Mendelssohn's lifetime had already taken on such varied implications demonstrates the crux of the problem explored in this thesis. As composers sought to provide greater clarity of musical intention in their scores, their notation habits were less uniform than in the previous century and became more personal. This requires one to consider general trends of the period vis-à-vis the composer's nationality, training, and the instruments in which he specialized.

As for the issue of determining appropriate articulation in unmarked works, Mendelssohn's chorale-type movements are straightforward. Fugues, on the other hand, are another matter. The lack of score directive for the unmarked Fugue in D Minor, op. 37 is curious in light of the Fugue in C Minor, op. 37 and the fugue from Sonata No. 6, both of which are indicated as "legato" in the score. Rather than drawing broad conclusions from one method with possibly no significance for the composer, one must consider larger issues of context, style, genre, and general performance practices of the period.

While the examples of slur types encountered in Mendelssohn's organ works included in this final chapter are by no means exhaustive, they can serve as a spring board for further analysis and application. Most crucial is an understanding of the continuous legato slurs that permeate this music; the ability to identify these from slurs requiring articulation is essential in order make certain motives and gestures distinctive in an otherwise legato texture, as Ritter suggests.

Conclusion

While it is probably impossible to determine the intent behind every slur in Mendelssohn's organ music, it is nonetheless within the modern performer's grasp to gain a more thorough understanding of the composer's notational habits, as well as the general performance practice in this period of transition. Through studying German organ methods from the period just before, during, and after Mendelssohn's lifetime, we can at least get a glimpse of what professional organ playing was like in the first half of the nineteenth century. And while recent scholarship on the topic of slurs and articulation in Mendelssohn's organ works has not focused primarily on piano-related sources from this period, these materials can shed light on how Mendelssohn's pianism might have informed his approach the organ.

On the role of piano construction and design in Mendelssohn's lifetime, we saw in Chapter One Conny Restle's description of developments that had already occurred by the time Mendelssohn was establishing himself in the musical world. Pianos continued to undergo changes in construction throughout his career, and the instruments being built at the time of his published organ works were not the same as those he would have encountered as a student. One must also consider Mendelssohn's activity in both Germany and England, where piano building traditions were quite distinct at that time. In a discussion on these differences, Malcolm Bilson notes:

It is illuminating to see that Chopin and Liszt (although they were by no means the same) were doing in Paris something different from what Schumann and Brahms (also not the same, of course) were doing in Germany, and that a great deal of this has to do with piano aesthetics, so different in those two places. Mendelssohn seems to be somewhere in the

middle; both types of pianos were important for him and play a role in his keyboard music.¹

The English piano already had a longer tone life than its Viennese counterpart by the end of the eighteenth century, and while Mendelssohn's early training was in Berlin, his teacher, Ludwig Berger, was a protégé of Clementi, who by 1776 had settled in London where he played a decisive role in piano design and developing the legato style for piano. Future study in this area might examine the role of English versus Viennese pianos in Mendelssohn's life, and in particular how their distinctive action and tone life might have affected his approach to keyboard articulation and notating slurs. Additionally, research into the life, performing career, and musical compositions of Ludwig Berger should be pursued, especially in how the study with Clementi influenced his later teaching.

This study referenced the most significant of the first printed editions of Mendelssohn's Sonatas, op. 65 (those of Breitkopf & Härtel, published in Leipzig, and Coventry and Hollier, published in London), as well as the two manuscripts sources now housed in the Bodleian Library (MS. A, MS. M. Deneke Mendelssohn c.48.1 and MS. B, MS.M. Deneke Mendelssohn c.48.4). However, this thesis did not set out to compare and study the differences in slurs among these sources, as that topic has been undertaken previously.² Preliminary research revealed that any attempt to interpret issues of Mendelssohn's articulation and his use of slurs would be futile without a grounding in the performance practices of his time.

¹ Sherman, "Restoring Ingredients," 308.

² Carolyn Schott Haury, "Slur Markings in Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, Opus 65: A Study of the Earliest Prints and Manuscripts" (DMA diss., The University of Cincinnati, 1984).

Concerning the various editions of Mendelssohn's organ works, a number of new Urtext editions are now available, as mentioned in the introduction. The original German publisher of Mendelssohn's organ works, Breitkopf & Härtel, released a new edition in 2005 and edited by Christian Martin Schmidt based on the *Leipziger Ausgabe der Werke von Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*. However, Breitkopf's 1980 edition of the sonatas, edited by Gerd Zacher, is an exact photographic reprint of their original 1845 publication, and this is still available. While the differences in slurring between the two are minimal, the possibility of studying and playing from the same publication the composer knew is a somewhat rare opportunity.

An original printing of the 1845 English edition of the sonatas by Coventry and Hollier is housed at the Bodleian Library. The 1990 Novello edition, edited by William Little, retains the slurs from Coventry and Hollier's initial publication. Additionally, Novello went to great lengths in order to show all possible slurs based on MS. A, MS. B, and the original German edition. A system of "hatched" slurs was adopted to indicate variants.³ While this could be initially confusing to some, particularly students, the system encourages a process of experimentation in which one compares all possible slurs Mendelssohn notated for a given passage. Some performers might eventually feel comfortable being spontaneous, choosing different slurs for each performance. Others, in selecting their preferred interpretation among several legitimate options, may find this brings a sense of personal ownership while remaining faithful to the composer's intentions. This situation is not so different from that of violinist Ferdinand David (1810-

³ William A. Little, "Articulation - Slurs," critical commentary to *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Complete Organ Works*, vol. 4 (London: Novello & Company Limited, 1999), viii.

1873), who ostensibly felt no qualms about altering or adding new bowings to the works of his friend, Felix Mendelssohn.⁴

Unfortunately, this study is not able to offer a solution for every question relating to Mendelssohn's slurs or the articulation appropriate for his organ music. However, it hopefully creates a basis for understanding Mendelssohn's notation in the context of the early nineteenth century. It is the author's hope that this study provides a grounding with which one can make artistic decisions based on historical evidence, enabling and inspiring more enlightened performances of Mendelssohn's beloved repertory.

⁴ Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 182.

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