

Vorwort

„Weißt Du, was ich in der vergangenen Zeit mit Passion komponiert habe? Variationen fürs Piano. Und zwar gleich auf ein Thema in d-Moll; und habe mich dabei so himmlisch amüsiert, daß ich gleich wieder neue auf ein Thema in Es gemacht habe... Mir ist, als müßte ich nachholen, daß ich früher gar keine gemacht habe...“¹

Dem Enthusiasmus, mit dem der Komponist die Entstehung seines Opus 54 im Brief an seinen Freund Karl Klingemann beschreibt, wird das Werk, das als Höhepunkt des Klavierschaffens Mendelssohn Bartholdys gelten kann, vollauf gerecht. Die kurz darauf entstandenen Variationen in Es-Dur op. 82 und B-Dur op. 83 werden nicht mehr für den Druck vorgesehen und erscheinen erst posthum. Die frühen „Variations concertantes“ D-Dur op. 17 für Violoncello und Klavier hingegen entsprechen dem Zeitgeschmack der „Variations brillantes“ viel eher. Schon im Titel – „ernste Variationen“ – bemüht sich Mendelssohn Bartholdy um eine Abgrenzung gegenüber den ihm oberflächlich erscheinenden Variationswerken der zeitgenössischen Klaviervirtuosen, wie z. B. Theodor Kalkbrenner oder des jungen Franz Liszt. In halb ironischem Ton bemerkt er: „Die Variations sérieuses gehen aus d-Moll und sind verdrießlich.“²

Mit seinen im Sommer 1841 entstandenen Variationen schafft Mendelssohn den Brückenschlag zwischen virtuos-figurativen Bearbeitungen und den strenger durchgeführten Choralvariationen seiner sechsten Orgelsonate op. 65/6. Durch ihre zahlreichen polyphonen Elemente bis hin zur fugierten Bearbeitung und zum Triosatz eignen sich die „Variations sérieuses“ zur Einrichtung für die Orgel besonders gut.

Als Grundlage der hier vorliegenden Ausgabe diente der Urtext der Klavierfassung. Die Bearbeitung verteilt die einzelnen Variationen auf Manual und Pedal. Die Angabe der Basis-Fußtonlage (16', 8', 4') trägt den Oktavierungen und Verdopplungen des Originals Rechnung, wobei in manchen Sätzen der in der Klavierfassung erklingenden „Normallage“ durchaus ein tieferes Fundament im Orgelpedal hinzugefügt werden kann, so z. B. im Thema oder in den fugierten Abschnitten. Im Einzelfall sei hier auf einen Vergleich mit dem Original verwiesen. In einigen Variationen wurde eine Pedalstimme ergänzt, z. B. um einen Klavierpedaleffekt auf den Orgelklang zu übertragen, die rhythmische Prägnanz der Orgel zu erhöhen oder eine orgelgemäße Einrichtung der Klavierfigurationen zu erreichen. Auch hier gibt die Gegenüberstellung mit dem Original nähere Einblicke in die Transkriptionstechnik.

Die Vortragsbezeichnungen des Originals wurden durchweg beibehalten. So kann der Interpret entscheiden, ob er sich bemühen will, sämtlichen dynamischen und artikulatorischen Raffinessen des Originals gerecht zu werden oder eine Einrichtung gemäß den Angaben der Orgelsonaten des Komponisten bzw. der romantischen Orgelpraxis vorzunehmen.

Kirchzarten, im Mai 2009

Martin Schmeding

¹ Brief Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys an Karl Klingemann, 15. Juli 1841.

² Brief Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys an seine Schwester Rebecca Dirichlet, geb. Mendelssohn, Ende Juli 1841.

Foreword

“Do you know what I have been passionately composing recently? Variations for piano. And I started straight in on a theme in D minor; and I enjoyed myself so immensely that I started right away on new ones on a theme in E flat... It’s as though I have to make up for never having done any at all before...”¹

A highpoint in Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s writing for piano, the work fully lives up to the enthusiasm with which the composer describes the creation of his Opus 54 in the letter to his friend Karl Klingemann. The variations in E flat major op. 82 and B flat major op. 83, written shortly afterwards, are not selected for publication and only appear posthumously, whilst the early “Variations concertantes” in D major op. 17 for violoncello and piano rather reflect the contemporary taste displayed in the “Variations brillantes”. The title itself – “serious variations” – shows Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s desire to distinguish them from what to his mind were superficial variations by contemporary virtuoso pianists like Theodor Kalkbrenner or the young Franz Liszt. Semi-ironically, he notes, “The Variations sérieuses start from D minor and are glum.”²

The variations he composed in summer 1841 form the bridge between figurative virtuoso arrangements and the more severely composed chorale variations in his sixth organ sonata op. 65/6. Thanks to their many polyphonic elements, as well as the fugal arrangement and the trio movement, the “Variations sérieuses” are especially suitable for transfer to organ.

This version is based on the Urtext of the piano composition. The arrangement distributes the individual variations between manuals and pedals. The indication of the basic octave level of the registration (16', 8', 4') takes account of the octaving and doubling in the original, although in some movements the “normal position” heard in the piano composition can be supplemented by a deeper foundation in the pedals, e.g. in the subject or in the fugal sections. In individual instances, comparisons may be made with the original. In certain variations, a pedal line has been added, e.g. in order to transfer a piano pedal effect to the organ, to enhance the rhythmic definition of the organ or to adapt the figurative elements from the piano to the organ. Once again, a comparison with the original provides deeper insights into the transcription technique.

The performance indications used in the original are retained. This enables the performer to decide whether to endeavour to reproduce all the dynamic and articulatory subtleties of the original or to follow the approach taken in the composer’s organ sonatas or Romantic organ performance practice.

Kirchzarten, May 2009

Martin Schmeding
Translation: Andrew Sims

¹ Letter from Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy to Karl Klingemann, 15 July 1841.

² Letter from Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy to his sister Rebecca Dirichlet, née Mendelssohn, end of July 1841.



Variations sérieuses

op. 54

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
1809–1847

Orgelbearbeitung: Martin Schmeding

Andante sostenuto

Manual

II *p*

Pedal

8'+16'

6

11

Var. 1

II *sf*

I

17 *sf*

sempre p

8'+16'

sempre stacc.

Var. 5 Agitato

81

p legato ed espr.

85

dim. *cresc.*

89

sf *sf*

93

espr. *p* *rit.*

124

ff

126

sf

Var. 8
Allegro vivace

129

sf p *sf p* *sf p*

8'+16'

131b

sf p *sf p*

Var. 12
Tempo di Tema

199

8'+16' *sf*

f sf sf sf

This system contains measures 199 and 200b. It features three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The grand staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by sforzando (*sf*) accents. The separate bass staff starts with a dynamic marking of *8'+16' sf*. The music consists of rhythmic patterns with various note values and rests.

200b

sempre f sf

This system contains measures 200b and 203. It features three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The grand staff begins with a dynamic marking of *sempre f*, followed by a sforzando (*sf*) accent. The separate bass staff continues the rhythmic pattern from the previous system.

203

sf

This system contains measures 203 and 205. It features three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The grand staff begins with a sforzando (*sf*) accent. The separate bass staff continues the rhythmic pattern.

205

f sf

sf

This system contains measures 205 and 206. It features three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass clef staff. The grand staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a sforzando (*sf*) accent. The separate bass staff continues the rhythmic pattern.

Var. 16
Allegro vivace

267

p *cresc.*

This system contains measures 267 and 268. Measure 267 features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line. Measure 268 continues the triplet pattern in the right hand and the bass line. A wavy line in the bass staff indicates a tremolo effect.

269

f *p*

This system contains measures 269 and 270. Measure 269 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a bass line. Measure 270 features a sixteenth-note sextuplet in the right hand and a bass line. A wavy line in the bass staff indicates a tremolo effect.

271

cresc. *sf*

This system contains measures 271 and 272. Measure 271 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a bass line. Measure 272 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a bass line. A wavy line in the bass staff indicates a tremolo effect.

273

sf *sf*

This system contains measures 273 and 274. Measure 273 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a bass line. Measure 274 features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a bass line. A wavy line in the bass staff indicates a tremolo effect.

Presto

335

Musical score for measures 335-339. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in bass clef, the middle in bass clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The top staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *cresc.* marking. The middle staff features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The bottom staff starts with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a piano (*p*) dynamic.

340

Musical score for measures 340-344. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in bass clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The top staff features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The bottom staff has a simple bass line. Dynamics include *f* and *sf*.

345

Musical score for measures 345-349. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in bass clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The top staff features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The bottom staff has a simple bass line. Dynamics include *sf* and *p*.

350

Musical score for measures 350-354. The system consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in bass clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The top staff features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The middle staff has a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The bottom staff has a simple bass line. Dynamics include *cresc.* and *f*.