

SCORE REVIEWS

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Lobgesang: Eine Symphonie-Kantate nach Worten der Heiligen Schrift (Hymn of Praise: A Symphony-Cantata after Texts from the Holy Scripture)*, MWV A 18 / Op. 52. Bärenreiter Urtext, 2020. xxxvii + 304 pp. Introduction, Tables, 3 facsimiles, Critical Report. Edited by John Michael Cooper.

Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* has been compared to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony almost since its inception, and not all of those observations have been flattering. John Michael Cooper has taken issue with that association over the years, and clearly believes that such juxtapositions dismiss the *Lobgesang* as a poorly composed, watered-down Beethoven. In the introduction to the edition under review here, Cooper states that "the *Lobgesang* is ... neither naïve or platitudinous, but rather ... the casualty of naïve and platitudinous attacks submitted through prejudice and incomprehension. The time is thus ripe for a new source-critical edition of the *Lobgesang*" (v). Because more than twenty years have elapsed since the most recent critical edition, the *Lobgesang* definitely calls for a new edition with updated sources and perspectives. But it is not clear, to me at least, why Cooper believes a new edition is required to quash such criticisms of the work as "naïve" and "platitudinous", and how precisely it will do that. Cooper cites studies by Mark Evan Bonds and R. Larry Todd that he believes fall prey to the lazy tendency to compare the *Lobgesang* to Beethoven's Ninth (xi, n.58). However, 26 and 18 years (respectively) have passed since those studies were published and the scholarly field on Mendelssohn has since expanded considerably. Mendelssohn was attacked in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century because of deep anti-Semitic fissures in European society. However, it does not follow that most comparisons to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony participate, whether purposefully or not, in a nefarious agenda against the *Lobgesang*.

In the absence of broader familiarity with Mendelssohn's works through most of the twentieth century, extending to the present, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony has served as a convenient generic reference to orient others to the work. For example, in an event advertised by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra planned for 3–5 March 2023, the *Lobgesang* will be performed three times:

Paul McCreesh joins the DSO to conduct a grand spiritual concert including vocal soloists, the Dallas Symphony Chorus and the Lay Family Organ. Also known as his Symphony No. 2, Mendelssohn described the work as a 'symphonic cantata'. Bearing a superficial similarity to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, it begins with three instrumental movements although on a much smaller scale and closes with a cantata-like structure for chorus, solo voices and orchestra.¹

The event could hardly be considered a negative reflection on the *Lobgesang*, but this description still relies on the comparison to Beethoven to help audiences understand what they can expect. There was surely some negative intent in

¹ Dallas Symphony Orchestra website, www.dallassymphony.org/productions/mendelssohns-lobgesang/.

much older comparisons with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but it may be safe to say that those opinions are no longer the majority, and so a new edition will not materially alter them.

This is certainly not to say Cooper's new edition was not needed. Cooper's edition shines, especially regarding use of archival sources and new performance indications. The music community still awaits the version of the *Lobgesang* from the *Leipziger Mendelssohn-Ausgabe* (LMA) by the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften (SAW), which will be hailed as the authoritative critical edition for generations to come. Our colleagues at the SAW are well known for their painstakingly detailed and accurate work, but the result is a slow release schedule, and we do not know when to expect their publication of the *Lobgesang*. In the meantime, there is an opportunity to publish new editions of the work that add something to the conversation for today's generation. Unless any landscape-altering new autograph sources for the *Lobgesang* are discovered, Cooper's edition is probably the last we will need until the LMA edition is released. Cooper has been beating the drum of the *Lobgesang* for quite some time (quite literally, since he is a timpanist!) and is regarded as an expert on the work. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that his new edition represents the most complete state of research on the *Lobgesang* to date.

Almost 150 years elapsed between Mendelssohn's first edition and the first critical edition, by Douglass Seaton, which is a vast gap for such a major work. Seaton was joined a decade later by Wulf Konold to round out the twentieth century, and now Cooper provides his edition another two decades into the twenty first century (See Table 1)

Like previous editions, much of Cooper's edition is based on the 1841 first edition. The 1841 edition forms a strong starting point because Mendelssohn authorized it. Mendelssohn's revision process to arrive at that first edition was highly complex and the surviving autograph sources are accordingly perplexing. Further confusing the situation was the clandestine movement of valuable manuscripts that took place during World War II; this is how one of the most central autograph manuscripts for the *Lobgesang* (listed below) ended up in Poland. Thus, the *Lobgesang* sources form a labyrinth familiar to any scholar or performer who has dug a little behind whichever edition they are using.

Over a lifetime of work, Cooper has assembled the scattered puzzle pieces of the *Lobgesang* to bring to us the most complete picture of those sources to date. To make it clear just how far Cooper has advanced the state of research on the sources in the

Table 1 Editions of Mendelssohn, *Lobgesang*

Date	Publication Information	Edition/Editor
1841	Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel; London, Novello	First edition
1882	Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel <i>Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdys Werke</i> , Series 14A	Julius Rietz
1989	Stuttgart, Carus Verlag Revised editions in 2001 and 2008 Minor updates	Douglass Seaton
1996–98	Wiesbaden, Breitkopf und Härtel	Wulf Konold
2020	Kassel, Bärenreiter	Michael Cooper
TBA	Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel <i>Leipziger Mendelssohn-Ausgabe</i> , Series VI, no. 9	TBA

past three decades, we can compare the sources Cooper used to those that Seaton used. The three sources in common to Seaton 1989 and Cooper 2020 are:

- First edition (Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel, 1841)
- Autograph sources in Poland (Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Krakow, Poland)
- First editions of the orchestral parts (Breitkopf und Härtel, 1841)

Cooper utilizes nine additional sources that include:

- Autograph compositional sketches
- Organ parts
- Copies with corrections in other hands (e.g., Eduard Henschke)
- Autograph piano-vocal arrangement
- Autograph Sinfonia (No. 1) arranged for piano solo
- First edition of the piano-vocal score
- First edition of the Sinfonia (Nr. 1) for piano solo
- First English edition of the piano-vocal score

Each source is identified, catalogued, and described in the introduction to the edition, as expected, for full reference and future research. Cooper's critical report, at the back of the full score (pp. 301–4), utilizes these nine additional resources to offer musicians the opportunity to compare editions and make informed performance choices reflecting the current state of research on the work, if they wish to do so. The critical report provides information exclusively about the musical score; information on the texts can be found in the tables "Texts and Translations" (pp. xxxiii–xxxvii).

Cooper identified several new interpretive possibilities based on these newer sources, which he outlines in his introduction. One that can be applied no matter which edition is used will make a noticeable immediate impact on a performance of the work: Cooper notes that there should be no pause between the end of No. 1 (Sinfonia) and No. 2 (Chorus, "Alles was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn!"), shown in his Example 5b (p. xv). He points out that in a typical performance today, when the *attacca* between the Sinfonia and the first chorus is not observed, the choir sits through the Sinfonia, then rises to begin singing the chorus (p. xv). This performance practice not only obliterates the intended "crucial musical linkage" (p. xv), but, as Cooper points out, adds quite a bit of both stage and audience noise. Mendelssohn was notoriously particular about how his works should be performed and was annoyed by the audience clapping between movements – so much so that he famously wrote his Symphony in A minor (op. 56) and his Violin Concerto in E minor (op. 64) as continuous movements. Choir directors today could choose to observe that *attacca* if they wish to present a historically informed performance.

Another significant update to the performance practice is unique to Cooper's new edition. He found that the version of the English text, as translated by Charles Henry Monicke and transmitted to the London publisher Novello by Carl Klingemann, was in fact authorized by Mendelssohn. Cooper has used the Monicke translation in this new edition and suggests that we may now "perform the *Lobgesang* in English, so long as [we] are using this edition, which reinstates Mendelssohn's own approved translation" (p. xvi). In addition, Cooper cites a letter from 1841 showing that Mendelssohn had someone make a copy of his autograph arrangement of No. 1, the Sinfonia, for piano solo which Mendelssohn then sent to Breitkopf und Härtel. This authorized copy is now lost, but Cooper concludes that the letter authorizes the 1843 first edition of the piano solo version

of the Sinfonia as a critical source for this new edition. Thus, Cooper used this piano solo version of the Sinfonia as a source for editing the Sinfonia in the piano vocal score for the present edition (p. xi). The piano vocal score must be purchased separately from the main score, so the impact of Cooper's discovery will not be observed in the full score under review here.

Every edition has errors and infelicities, including Mendelssohn's authorized first edition. So we certainly expect this new edition to have its fair share. Most do not affect the function of the musical score, except for perhaps a handful of typos in both the German and English texts, which may cause some choir members to stop and ask for clarification during rehearsal. Others are more cosmetic, such as the publisher's arrangement of the score. Cooper shared details of how Mendelssohn wanted the score to be designed, with a motto that "should be placed on the inner front cover, although his preference would be for it to appear on a page of its own after the title page" (pp. x–xi). The present edition missed an opportunity to honour Mendelssohn's wishes, which were driven in large part by his deep appreciation of and engagement with visual arts and aesthetics. Instead, unfortunately, we find that the last page of the full texts that Cooper provides in a table (pp. xxxiii–xxxviii) are on the page facing the first page of the full score. Even without the motto printed as Mendelssohn wished, a page left intentionally blank before the full score would have helped to separate the full score from the introduction. Navigation of the introduction would be eased by adding captions to the musical examples (xiv–xv) and by placing labels at the top of each column of text, on each new page, for the four side-by-side translations provided on pages xxxiii–xxxviii. For a nearly identical analysis, see Cooper's "'Inner Necessity': Fabulation, Frame, and Musical Memory in Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang*", in *Rethinking Mendelssohn*, ed. Benedict Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 60–90. One also finds the captions to the musical examples in that version.

Cooper's edition of Felix Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* might well be his *Schwanengesang* to the work. Throughout his career Cooper has been largely focused on Mendelssohn's life and works, in four books, 19 critical editions of large format symphonic/choral works, 21 articles and invited essays, and 33 conference presentations and invited lectures, not to mention countless classroom lectures, numerous conferences organized and other service to the profession. But, since publishing this edition in 2020, Cooper has taken a hard turn to focus on Margaret Bonds and Florence Price. In just two years he has produced 11 editions of works by Bonds, and no fewer than 61 editions of works by Price. I had the pleasure of accompanying Cooper to a premiere performance event of several of these works by the Post Classical Ensemble in partnership with Howard University (Washington, DC) in November 2021. Those of us in the Mendelssohn field see Cooper as a true Mendelssohnian, who has contributed an invaluable life's work to the field. When we consider the work he has put forward to refereed conferences, just under half of them are actually on Mendelssohn. However, of the invited conference presentations, three quarters are on Mendelssohn. The same applies to the invited lectures: before 2020, the majority were on Mendelssohn. His earlier Mendelssohn work and later non-Mendelssohn work tend to include words like "little known", "discoveries", "rediscovered", "reconsidered" and "recovered". Thus, the pattern that emerges is that Cooper finds his passion in working on more obscure composers and topics. Mendelssohn was once obscure, but perhaps Mendelssohn studies have come so far along now that he wishes to turn his attention elsewhere. So, will we see more on Mendelssohn from

Cooper? Most likely, yes – we are not going to let him off that easily! But this edition may be his last major publication in the field, unless he has other plans for us.

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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, *Symphony in A Minor Opus 8: With the Earlier Finales and Idyll Opus 44*. Edited by John L. Snyder. Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, N060 (Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, 2013). xv + 343 pp.

Recent scholars have gone to great lengths to dispel the perception of late nineteenth-century British musical culture as a barren wasteland. As well as a more nuanced study of the oeuvre of British composers during this period, scholars have explored the complex relationship between British music and the publishing industry, societal development, gender, domestic life, pedagogical methods and colonial expansion.¹ The music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912), a famous and popular composer on both sides of the Atlantic in his day, sheds light on the role of black composers in British and American society at the turn of the twentieth century and highlights some of the pedagogical approaches to learning the art of composition at London's Royal College of Music.

The son of a Sierra Leonean migrant, Coleridge-Taylor was born in Holborn on 15 August 1875. He studied violin and composition at Royal College of Music between 1890 and 1897. His most famous work, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, was premiered to great acclaim on 11 November 1898 and continued to be regularly performed until after the Second World War.² Coleridge-Taylor was one of the participants at the first Pan-African Conference (London, 1900); that same year *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* received its American premiere in Boston. In Washington DC, in 1901, the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society was founded 'for the purpose of performing Coleridge-Taylor's music, with a particular goal of doing so with entirely black forces under the composer's direction' (p. viii). He was praised by Edward Elgar as by 'far and away the cleverest fellow going amongst the young men' and by members of the New York Philharmonic as the 'African Mahler';³ and contemporary reviews of Coleridge-Taylor's works were generally positive.⁴

¹ On these topics refer to the *Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain* book series, edited by Bennett Zon and published by Routledge.

² For more on this subject see Geoffrey Self, *The Hiawatha Man: The Life and Work of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), 74–9, 94–7 and 103–8.

³ The phrase 'African Mahler' is discussed in W.C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: His Life and Letters* (London: Cassel, 1915; repr., Chicago: Afro-Am Press, 1969), 238–43.

⁴ Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters to Nimrod: Edward Elgar to August Jaeger 1897–1908* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965), 3–4.