

restored edition of the famous “Per la gloria” (also, in the correct original key!), and you will never want to go back to the ironed-out rhythms of the familiar version.

Mozart

Being an art historian by training, I was delighted by the cover of the *12 Mozart Songs*, a painting of Vienna by Bernardo Bellotto, a Venetian view-painter, which was done around 1760, shortly before the Mozart family first came to Vienna. This picture, showing the cross-fertilization of Italian and German culture that inspired Mozart, seemed to capture the kind of authenticity *without preciousness* which Paton is seeking in the Alfred editions. There are fewer revelations here, and one gains little in the way of “corrections” relative to, say, the familiar Peters edition of the Mozart lieder scores. But the big plus is the little essays that precede each piece.

The first number in the book gave your reviewer a welcome jolt. “Ridente la calma” is an Italian *da capo aria* (an air in the a-b-a form) which had always puzzled me—it simply did not fit into my notion of Mozart at any point in his development. Not being a Mozart scholar, this misgiving remained an unarticulated “hunch,” but I had avoided teaching or singing the piece because it seemed so oddly un-Mozartean, and also, because the text does not fit the notes very well. According to Paton, the opening theme is not by Mozart at all, but is rather his adaption to a different text, of an aria for soprano and orchestra by his good friend, the Czech composer Josef Myslivecek. What is by Mozart, other than the adaptation to piano and the new words, is the middle section, which is audibly the most akin to Mozart’s operatic music.

In addition, we learn that the strophic song “Die Zufriedenheit” was originally set to be accompanied by mandolin before Mozart adapted it for piano, that the poem had been published first with music by Neefe (Beethoven’s first teacher), and that there is an unfinished sketch for a setting by Beethoven himself. Paton also comments, refreshingly, that the optimism of the poem, written in 1776, expressed the spirit of the times as seen in the events of Philadelphia that year. We learn that the “pp” marking at the end of the sublime “Abendempfindung” is the only pianissimo Mozart ever wrote in a song score. In another celebrated Mozart song, “Das Veilchen,” Paton notes that we cannot know whether Mozart himself intended the three tempo changes that are marked in the first printed edition, and also makes the surprising assertion that Mozart may not have known that the poem was by Goethe, since one of the two anthologies in which it was published, did not list the author’s name.

In the preface, Paton reports on the guidance for interpretation of the ornaments called *appoggiaturas* which is given in a violin method book written by Mozart’s father Leopold in 1757. Paton shows how these ornaments would be written, and on a staff below, how they should be played. Unfortunately the second example is reversed, a proofreader’s lapse which should get fixed in future printings.

Handel’s way to learn figured bass

Continuo Playing According to Handel: His Figured Bass Exercises

with a commentary by David Ledbetter
Clarendon Press, Oxford, U.K., 1990
106 pages, hardbound, \$44.95;
paperbound, \$24.95

“Nobody who has acquired the ability to accompany baroque music from a figured bass will be satisfied to return to using written-out realizations,” remarks David Ledbetter in his introduction to this book. He adds, “The main advantage is in fact one of the reasons why the system of bass figuring was originally devised—it allows flexibility

Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn’s Opus 8 and 9, published respectively in 1827 and 1830, each contained 12 songs, but the Paton edition is the first to rectify an injustice done to his gifted older sister Fanny. She was the actual composer of three songs in each set. Born into a wealthy family with a leading social position in Berlin, Fanny Mendelssohn had compliantly accepted her family’s decision not to publicize her great talent.

Fanny (1805-47) and Felix (1809-47) were grandchildren of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. As described by Paton, “Rising from complete poverty, [Moses] was able, as a silk merchant to support his wife and six children and to entertain the frequent visitors who sought him out for his wisdom. Moses was the first Jew who wrote books in German and the first German who translated the first five books of the Bible directly from Hebrew. In a time when most Jews were not accorded civil rights or citizenship, Moses’ intellect brought him universal respect. He was often heralded by those who supported full civil rights for the Jewish population.” Felix’s mother, Lea Solomon Mendelssohn, had studied music with a pupil of J.S. Bach, and numerous unpublished Bach scores were handed down in the family. She gave the children their first piano lessons. Through Karl Zelter, a friend of Goethe, the two youngsters learned to write strophic songs (with the same music repeated for each stanza of text).

When Felix was 12 years old, he was taken by Zelter to Weimar, where he played Bach fugues for the old poet Goethe. In 1822, during a family visit, Goethe indicated his approval of Fanny Mendelssohn’s songs to his poems. She

in the choice of accompanying instrument, and the same part can be used for organ, harpsichord, lute, or the oboe, each of which has its own accompaniment style. The texture and tessitura of the accompaniment can also be adjusted to suit the instrument accompanied. In the many baroque sonatas which allow alternative instrumentation the accompaniment will not be the same for the quiet flute or recorder as it is for the more extrovert oboe or violin." By extension, one might assume that in the 17th- and 18th-century Italian songs and arias, a different accompaniment would be used for a light soprano as opposed to a dramatic voice, for example.

This book reproduces the exercises which George Frederick Handel devised between 1724 and the mid-1730s, when he was harpsichord teacher to the Daughters of King George II of England—Princesses Anne, Caroline, Amelia, and Louisa. Princess Anne was a lifelong friend of the composer and a gifted musician, and he took the trouble to devise a comprehensive course for her. This course takes you from simple root-position triads all the

way through exercises in fugue. Handel's exercises are interspersed with brief commentaries by Ledbetter which explain the purpose of each exercise. Since the book was produced in England, some of the terminology takes a bit of getting used to, for example the word crotchets for what are usually called quarter-notes on this side of the Atlantic. At the back of the book there are nearly 40 pages of specimen realizations of the exercises.

In Paton's *26 Italian Songs and Arias*, the bass line is always the original bass line of the composer, whereas the other notes are the editor's realization. Quite a few of these arias are available in facsimile editions of the originals now—some of which are partially reproduced, as illustrations, in the Paton volume. If one takes the trouble to learn bass figuring as taught by Handel, then it will be possible to make one's own accompaniments to the Italian songs, possibly by the expedient of copying out the bass line and vocal line onto a separate score. It's all good exercise for developing a capability for the lost art of classical composition.—*Nora Hamerman*

was then just 17. One of these, the duet "Suleika und Hatem," is published in Opus 8; interestingly, Felix Mendelssohn never dared publish any of his settings of Goethe until after the poet had died. While the Mendelssohn songs are not at the level of the greatest German lieder, they are worthy of being sung much more than they are, and they played a very important role in his development as a composer, along with the influence of J.S. Bach. As Paton points out, they were also very important as the jumping-off point for Robert Schumann's lieder. A good example of the importance of vocal music for Felix Mendelssohn's instrumental composing is Op. 9, No. 1, "Frage" ("Question"). The striking phrase on the three opening words, "Ist es wahr?" ("Is it true?") was used by him several months later as the basis of his A major string quartet. One is reminded of Beethoven's use of the question, "Muss es sein?" ("Must it be?") as the theme for a movement in one of his late string quartets, a theme whose answer, "Es muss sein!" ("It must be!"), he also wrote as a canon. Although Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn were apparently unfamiliar with Schubert's songs when they wrote Op. 8 and 9, Felix was keenly aware of the compositional method of Beethoven.

Paton comments that in Opus 8, Fanny Mendelssohn's songs had an expressiveness that Felix's lacked, and that he took the leap to her level only in Opus 9. If this is right, then the "historical injustice" being rectified here goes well beyond the issue of putting Fanny's name on some songs.

One anecdote recounted in the book underscores Fanny Mendelssohn's achievement. During a visit to Britain's Queen Victoria and her German consort, Prince Albert, in 1842, Mendelssohn played the organ at Buckingham Palace

while Albert and Victoria sang. Felix Mendelssohn found a copy of his Opus 8 songs, and to his embarrassment, the queen chose "Italien," a setting of a poem by Grillparzer. When the queen praised the song, Mendelssohn had to admit that his sister had composed it. Later he wrote to his mother that the queen had the best "long high G" he had ever heard from an amateur. Anglophiles and monarchists should reflect on the following process of degeneration: In the 16th century, English royals (Henry VIII and Elizabeth I) composed polyphonic music; in the 18th, they learned figured bass accompaniment (the daughters of George II); even in the 19th, they mastered bel canto singing. Whereas today. . . .

The issue of keys

The Paton Italian songs come in "medium high" and "medium low" keys, pedagogical categories which have little to do with real tessituras of real singers. As long as A=440 and even higher pitches prevail, and musicians passively accept them, it is hard to argue with these sometimes capricious transpositions. In the Mozart book, the "high" book carries all pieces in the original keys, while in the "medium" book they are transposed down usually by a major or minor third, with the exception of two which are only brought down one whole-step, apparently in the desire—mistaken, in my view—of avoiding the extremes in range. From the standpoint of respecting the composer's intentions of vocal register as an important part of his musical ideas, if a song written for a high voice (soprano or tenor) has a "low" quality, it should have a symmetrically low quality for the low voice (contralto or bass), should it not? These transpositions are