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A Conductor’s Guide
to the Interpretation of Mendelssohn's *Elijah:*
A Theologically-Informed Approach

A dissertation is submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

by

Carlene Younghae Kim

2015
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Conductor’s Guide
to the Interpretation of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*:
A Theologically-Informed Approach

by

Carlene Younghae Kim
Doctor of Music Arts
University of California, Los Angeles, 2015
Professor Michael Dean, Chair

Felix Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* exists in many different performing versions. Conductors often edit the work due to its length; in its original version, *Elijah* lasts almost two and one-half hours, far longer than today’s audiences are accustomed to listening. Also, many people believe the work contains redundant scenes within the storyline that interrupt its dramatic flow. Therefore, all conductors today face a dilemma: perform the work in its entirety, or make cuts to the score. While this issue has been researched by many scholars, my paper further expands on their work by considering *Elijah*’s musical and dramatic structure in the context of their theological functions.

First, I analyze the structure of *Elijah* by dramatic scene, considering in particular how
the choruses function within the work’s overall scheme and affect the flow of the musical drama.

Second, I offer a discussion concerning the most common edits and cuts made by four renowned conductors—Robert Shaw, Donald Neuen, Robert Page, and Daniel Delisi—and provide commentary on their decisions. By considering the textual history of *Elijah*, as well as the ideas that Mendelssohn and his librettist, Pastor Julius Schubring, had at the outset of its composition,

I present a theological context that can help conductors decide which scenes to abridge and which movements to delete. I conclude with a discussion of performance practice issues, mainly with regard to diction and rhythmic articulation. I suggest ways to effectively convey the text, which is sometimes difficult for listeners to understand, particularly during passages of fast recitative or archaic Biblical verse. Thus, this paper will provide practical advice for prospective conductors on how to use the work’s structure and intentions of the composer and librettist to decide which parts of *Elijah* to edit.
The dissertation of Carlene Younghae Kim is approved.

Lily Chen-Hafteck

David Samuel Lefkowitz

Edward Parson

Donald Neuen

Michael E. Dean, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my professor, Donald Neuen, who taught me what great music should be. His teachings will stay with me forever, leading my musical career. I will always be grateful for his enthusiastic teaching and inspirational encouragement.
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I would also like to thank Pastor Kenneth Kim who gave me professional advice about Chrisotology. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents and my family for supporting me to fulfill my dream of studying. Most of all, I bring glory to Christ, Jesus through my dissertation and life.
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INTRODUCTION

Felix Mendelssohn’s (1809-1847) Elijah is one of the most important choral works of the nineteenth century. He made initial plans for the oratorio in 1836 but it was not completed until 1846 after he had received a commission from the Birmingham Festival, at which it premiered on August 26. The first performance was so successful that Elijah continued to be featured at nearly every subsequent festival, achieving status as a musical "bookend" on the same level as George Frideric Handel’s Messiah.

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, music festivals in England, including the Birmingham Festival and the Three Choirs Festival (at Worcester, Gloucester, and Hereford), had a tradition of singing mostly oratorios by Handel—that is until the birth of Elijah. That these large-scale music festivals lasted so long is due to social changes. Through the decline of aristocratic patronage, the center of music making moved from courts and churches to homes and public venues. While the orchestra in the nineteenth century was becoming an increasingly professional organization, the choir consisted of mostly semi-professional and amateur musicians. Organized as a choral society, the amateur choir was becoming increasingly active throughout the cities of Western Europe. In Germany, the Berlin Singakademie, one of the first choral societies, had over 350 members in 1832 under the direction of Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), who was a teacher of Mendelssohn. It was under the auspices of Zelter’s leadership that Johann Sebastian Bach’s Passion according to St. Matthew¹ could be famously revived at a Singakademie performance conducted by Mendelssohn in 1829.

¹ For convenience purposes, I will refer Passion according to St. Matthew as St. Matthew Passion.
At the ever-expanding festivals the oratorio became the best genre for amateur singers to interact with large-scale orchestras and top-level soloists. In addition, it provided audiences with dignified and dramatic musical entertainment. With the intention of raising money for local charities—and to commemorate Handel’s oratorios as the central component of their programs—the festivals started commissioning new oratorios and other instrumental works. In 1830 the Birmingham Festival became the first to initiate this idea and has since maintained a consistently high level of new commissions focused on oratorios. Other festivals quickly followed this trend. Even though many of these works have been performed only once or twice in the composers’ lifetimes, the focus on new commissions nevertheless stimulated many others to produce large-scale works for these festivals. This is the context in which *Elijah* was created in 1846—as a commission for the Birmingham Festival—and it was specifically intended as a successor to Handel’s oratorios and Bach’s passions.

From the age of seven, Mendelssohn had been thoroughly instructed in the exercises of chorales, fugues, and canons in the Bach style by his teacher, Zelter, who was himself taught by Carl Friedrich Christian Fasch (1736-1800) and Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1721-1783), both of whom were pupils of Bach. Studying such an important compositional tradition became the foundation for Mendelssohn’s strong interest and respect for music of the past. In addition to his role in the revival of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* as conductor, Mendelssohn also abridged the score considerably in order to make the lengthy work concise, accessible, and dramatically continuous. He also arranged and edited several of Handel’s works, such as *Acis and Galatea* and *Israel in Egypt*, which further increased his familiarity with Baroque music.
In *Elijah*, Mendelssohn employed various eighteenth-century oratorio conventions in order to maximize drama: Handel’s wide range of the choral textures; the use of the chorus in various narrative functions, such as crowd scenes (turba choruses) and commentary (chorales) in Bach’s passions; delivering comforting or spiritual messages from a Christian perspective, etc. Mendelssohn fused these with early Romantic styles to intensify the effects of the music: recitative accompanied by orchestra; unifying motives and links between movements; the expression of emotional changes through delicate dynamic effects. To these we could add other nineteenth-century elements: a big and powerful chorus; extended forms and textures of the chorus (especially mixtures of homophonic, homorhythmic, and canonic textures); and greater use of the narrator’s role; a large orchestra; and the concept of program music. This was the choral and symphonic tradition Mendelssohn inherited.

In addition to these compositional features, *Elijah* delivers a theological message similar to those found in Bach’s passions and Handel’s *Messiah*. This message is that the key of all covenants and prophesies of the Old Testament is the Christ, Jesus in the New Testament. Since throughout *Elijah*, Mendelssohn, a converted Christian, allows this message to flow under the work’s surface, the texts are either chosen from the Bible or newly written by the librettist or composer. In any event, they should be read and understood in the context of Christ.
CHAPTER I

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Elijah consists of two parts. Part One addresses the Elijah’s mission during a prolonged drought in Israel; and Part Two focuses on his inner struggles and the continuation of his work after receiving God’s call. Each part is divided into five scenes except the addition of a Prologue and Epilogue, and a beginning section in the second which provides commentary. The scene division in both parts is, interestingly, systematic and symmetrical. Each scene generally proceeds in the following order: open with a recitative and close with a chorus, as shown below in Figure I-1.

Figure I-1. Structural Analysis according to dramatic scene

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene # (Number of movements in each scene)</th>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Scene # (Number of movements in each scene)</th>
<th>Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue(2)</td>
<td>Bass Solo Commentary (2)</td>
<td>No. 21 Aria (Soprano)</td>
<td>No. 22 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1 (2)</td>
<td>Overture</td>
<td>#6 (2) No. 23 Recitative (Bass &amp; Alto)</td>
<td>No. 24 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 1 Chorus &amp; Recitative</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 23 Chorus (w/Duet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 24 Recitative (Bass &amp; Alto)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 25 Recitative (Tenor &amp; Bass)</td>
<td>No. 29 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3 Recitative (Tenor)</td>
<td>#7 (5)</td>
<td>No. 25 Chorus (w/Duet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 29 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 30 Recitative (Alto &amp; Bass)</td>
<td>No. 32 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 6 Recitative (Alto)</td>
<td>#8 (3)</td>
<td>No. 30 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 9 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 32 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>#9 (3) No. 33 Recitative (Bass &amp; Soprano)</td>
<td>No. 34 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 10 Recitative (Bass)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 33 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos.11&amp;12 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 34 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 13*</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 35 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4a (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 36 Recitative (Chorus)</td>
<td>No. 39 Aria (Tenor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 14 Aria (Bass)</td>
<td>#10 (4)</td>
<td>No. 36 Chorus</td>
<td>No. 41 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 16 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 39 Aria (Tenor)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 18 Arioso (Alto)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 39 Aria (Tenor)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5 (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Epilogue (3)</td>
<td>No. 40 Recitative (Soprano)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 19 Recitative (Tenor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 40 Recitative (Soprano)</td>
<td>No. 42 Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 19 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 41 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 20 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. 41 Chorus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Although Nos. 11-13 are considered one set expressing the same content, No. 13 is still the closing chorus of scene #4.
Most scenes start with a recitative that introduces the content, and close with the chorus. The choruses, Nos. 1, 9, and 20 in Part One and Nos. 22, 32, and 42 in Part Two, function as the structural skeleton and contain the main components of the plot.

Figure I-2. Each part’s skeletal structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening</th>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 1</td>
<td>“Help, Lord”</td>
<td>No. 22 “Be not afraid”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 9</td>
<td>“Blessed are the men who fear Him”</td>
<td>No. 32 “He that shall endure”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 20</td>
<td>“Thanks be to God”</td>
<td>No. 42 “And then shall your light break forth”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these choruses, Nos. 9, 22, and 32 are contemplative pieces that are not involved in the flow of the plot. Their role is special in that they allow the audience to reflect the scene by providing corresponding spiritual messages before moving onto the next major event.

No. 9 (scene #3): before the battle between Elijah and Baal’s Prophets (scene #4)
No. 22 (beginning of Part Two):
  before the confrontation of Elijah and Queen Jezebel (scene #6)
No. 32(scene #8): before God’s appearance on Mount Horeb (scene #9)
All choruses in *Elijah* can be categorized by one of five functions, as shown below.

Figure I-3. The categorization of the choruses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Story line</strong></td>
<td>Nos. 1, 2, 5, 11-13, 16, 20</td>
<td>Nos. 24, 34, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climactic Moment</strong></td>
<td>Nos. 11-13, 16</td>
<td>Nos. 34, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contemplation</strong></td>
<td>Nos. 7, 9, 15</td>
<td>Nos. 22, 29, 32, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion of Part</strong></td>
<td>No. 20</td>
<td>No. 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Purpose</strong></td>
<td>No. 41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No. 41 in the Epilogue does not fit into any of the five categories. This chorus will be discussed in detail in Chapter II.

Of these categories the choruses in the ‘Climatic moment’ group—Nos. 11-13 and 16 in Part One and Nos. 34 and 38 in Part Two—are the most dramatic ones in *Elijah*. It is noticeable that these choruses are placed in the center of their respective scenes while most of the other choruses take place at the ends of scenes (refer Figure I-1). A symmetrical structure appears in two pairs: Nos. 11-13 corresponds with No. 34 and No. 16 corresponds with No. 38.

Figure I-4. The proportions of the climactic choruses’ position in Parts One and Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th><em>(the Chorus’ position)/(total number of Part)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climactic Moment-I</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Nos. 11-13</td>
<td>12/20 = 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>No. 34</td>
<td>14/22 = 0.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climactic Moment-II and Falling Action</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>No. 16</td>
<td>16/20 = 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>No. 38</td>
<td>18/22 = 0.818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure I-4 illustrates that Mendelssohn originally constructed the climactic moments in each part to be expressed by a powerful and dramatic chorus. We will look at how these choruses contribute to the dramatic pacing and flow of the story.

**Nos. 11-13 in Scene #4**

In the confrontation between Elijah and King Ahab in the No. 10 recitative with chorus, the chorus is constantly interrupting their dialogue. The chorus also repeats the soloists’ words with short and intense phrases. This kind of rapid antiphonal texture in the solo recitatives and choruses escalates the tension before the coming battle between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

The following choruses, Nos. 11, 12, and 13, portray the climax of Part One: the battle. The prophets of Baal call on their god three times, growing furiously in their rituals. Elijah precedes each call with a recitative that derides their gods as imaginary. Here, the number ‘three’ is particularly significant throughout the entire piece as an invocation of the Trinity. Mendelssohn employs it through various symbolic compositional gestures, such as the triple repetition of motives in the fugue of the overture. In addition, the three songs sung by the prophets of Baal (Nos. 11, 12, and 13) become intensified through the accelerating tempi, the raising of key by half-step, the vigorous motives of the orchestra, and the nearly-mad screaming of the furious chorus.

---

2 Here are some examples of Trinitarian symbolism in Elijah directly derived from the Bible verses:

(No. 8) 1 Kings 17:21, “Then stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord.”
(No. 10) 1 Kings 18:1, “After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah.”
(No. 16) 1 Kings 18:34, “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time.”
Figure I-5. Part One: Nos. 11, 12, and 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Andante grave e</td>
<td>Quarter note =84</td>
<td>4 / 4</td>
<td>F major</td>
<td>“Baal, we cry to thee”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maestoso</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Allegro vivace</td>
<td>Quarter note =160</td>
<td>4 / 4</td>
<td>F# minor</td>
<td>“Hear our cry, O baal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Presto</td>
<td>Dotted quarter note</td>
<td>6 / 8</td>
<td>F# minor</td>
<td>“Baal! Hear and answer, Baal”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By using these compositional devices, the audience gets absorbed deeply into the conflict being represented on stage.

No. 16 in Scene #4a, “The fire descends from heav’n!”

After the three frantic calls of Baal’s prophets have resulted in no answer, it is Elijah’s turn. He prays to God for fire from heaven in Scene #4a. Scenes #4 and #4a show a striking contrast in between the choruses of the two scenes. Nos. 11-13 show the large numbers (850) of Baal’s prophets, as well as the intensity of their frantic rituals.3 In contrast, Scene #4a (Nos. 14-18) contains only one major chorus (No. 16) in the center of the scene, which means Elijah is the sole prophet of God who prays for fire just once.4 By comparison, there are 850 prophets of Baal who call on their god three times. In a broader view of Christian theology, the significance of having only one major chorus throughout Nos. 14-18 represents the existence of only one true God.

3 1 Kings 18:26, “Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon.”
4 1 Kings 18:29, “Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice.”
4 1 Kings 18:36, “At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: ‘O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice...’”(1 Kings 18:36-38, NIV)
No. 34 in Scene # 9, “Behold, God the Lord passed by.”

Nos. 33-35 in Scene # 9 form the climax of Part Two in which Elijah stands on the mountain in the presence of God. Many people regard the first section of the No. 34 chorus as the most descriptive, magnificent and dramatic in the entire Elijah in its presentation of the tempest, earthquake, and fire. In contrast, the latter section of this movement shows God coming forth in “a still small voice” that is very gentle and ethereal. According to a biography of the composer written by Ferdinand Hiller, Mendelssohn’s friend and fellow-composer, the No. 34 chorus inspired Mendelssohn to write the rest of the oratorio: ⁵

One evening I found Felix deep in the Bible. ‘Listen’, he said; and then he read to me, in a gentle and agitated voice, the passage from the First Book of Kings, beginning with the word: ‘And behold, the Lord passed by.’ ‘Would not that be splendid for an oratorio?’ he exclaimed-and it did become part of Elijah”. ⁶

Mendelssohn places this powerful chorus at the center of Scene # 9 of Nos. 33-35.

No. 38 in Scene #10, “Then did Elijah the prophet break forth like a fire.”

Nos. 36-39 form the scene in which Elijah goes up to heaven in a whirlwind. The No. 38 chorus, “Then did Elijah the prophet break forth like a fire,” draws the story of Elijah to a close before the Epilogue. The syncopated chords and rushing sixteenth-note triplet figures in the strings provide an extraordinary amount of energy to the chorus and makes this scene very exciting, which corresponds to the hopeful feelings associated with Elijah’s ascension. Like the

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⁶ Ibid., 2.
other significant choruses, this is located in the center of the scene. However, it is similar to No.16 in that there is no closing chorus that follows.

In conclusion, the choruses contribute to build the entire structure and flow of the story with tension and relaxation. Especially, the choruses in the climactic moments of Elijah play a central and crucial role in establishing the dramatic pace of tension and excitement. This results from the combination of extremely powerful and dramatic choruses with their symmetrical placement within the work’s structure. A letter from Mendelssohn to Klingemann, the first librettist of Elijah, shows that the composer planned this from the beginning:

… Here comes my request. Do write for me [Mendelssohn] within the next few weeks the text for a Biblical oratorio, so that I can set to and compose it during the next summer. The last time we talked about it I mentioned to you [Klingemann] two subjects which I liked equally well-St. Peter or Elijah. What I would like best would be for you to take Elijah-divide the story into two or three parts, write it out in choruses and airs, either in verse or prose of your own; or, compile it from the Psalms and Prophets, with powerful big choruses… I am satisfied with anything you do… Just write out what you think best. Then I can compose it at once…”

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7 Ibid., 4.
CHAPTER II
TEXTUAL HISTORY

After achieving success with his first oratorio, *St. Paul* (1836), Felix Mendelssohn began planning a second. He thought of using the story of St. Peter or Elijah and commissioned a libretto from his friend Karl Klingemann. Their collaboration resulted in a rough outline of the work by August 30-31, 1837. Klingemann, however, had to withdraw from the project for personal reasons after nearly completing a prose draft. Mendelssohn subsequently asked Julius Schubring, a childhood friend and the librettist of *St. Paul*.

Schubring was given Klingemann’s draft, to which he made extensive cuts and rewrites between May and November of 1838. Mendelssohn was happy with the text since he felt Klingemann’s version was too long and contained so much detail that the composer could not produce “any kind of dramatic coherence or sense of direction”.

Although both agreed that the work should be composed in a “church music style,” the two men had conflicting priorities about whether to emphasize religious edification or dramatic content. Schubring wanted Mendelssohn to prioritize the former:

> [W]hat I hoped to avoid and wrote to you about has in fact come to pass; that the thing is becoming too objective—an interesting, even thrilling picture, but far from edifying the heart of the listener. All the curses, the scenes of the sacrifice and the rain, Jezebel, etc., in all this there is nothing which now-a-days would come from the heart, and therefore nothing which would go to heart […] Therefore you must carefully consider whether this time you prefer to turn away from *church music* (i.e., that which refreshes [the soul]) and creates a tone-picture […] Otherwise we must work with renewed effort to keep down the dramatic, and raise the sacred.

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On the other hand, Mendelssohn persuaded Schubring to consider prioritizing the dramatic content:

In my opinion, it is best to do full justice to the dramatic element, and, as you say, there must be no epic narration. I am also glad that you are searching out the basic, emotionally touching meaning of the scriptural words; but if I might make one observation, it would be that I would like to see the dramatic element emerge more succinctly and clearly here and there. Statement and response, question and answer, sudden interruptions, etc.— not that it disturbs me that, for example, Elijah first speaks of assembling the people, then forthwith addresses the assembled people—such liberties are the natural privileges of such a representation in an oratorio; but I would like such a representation itself to be as lively as possible… But we are no doubt likely to agree about this; I would only entreat you, when you resume your work, to think of this wish of mine.

However, Schubring did not accept Mendelssohn’s suggestion:

I always thought that the Elijah would turn out all right, but it will not, and you must seek help elsewhere.
- Letter dated 2 February 1839, from Schubring to Mendelssohn

Their collaboration eventually broke apart when Schubring withdrew from the project in February 1839. Afterwards, Mendelssohn suffered from a bout of depression until he was commissioned by the Birmingham Music Festival committee in mid-July of 1845 to conduct an oratorio at their triennial event. Mendelssohn promptly began to compose music but did not ask

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9 Ibid., 122.
10 Ibid., 123.
11 Ibid.
Schubring to complete the libretto, choosing instead to write it himself. By December 1845, a prose draft of Part One had been completed and Part Two was nearly done.\(^\text{12}\)

Shortly after, however, Mendelssohn needed Schubring’s assistance in correcting and evaluating the text, and their collaboration resumed smoothly. This time Mendelssohn took Schubring’s comments to heart and the text incorporated some of his friend’s ideas for a religiously edifying work while still retaining a dramatic focus.

Even if they agreed that *Elijah* should conclude with a Messianic message, they differed in their conceptions of it. Schubring felt that *Elijah* had to end with a direct reference to the prophecy for the Messiah in the New Testament. Therefore, he suggested adding a scene before the ascension of Elijah, in which Elijah bestows a “double portion” of his spirit on his successor, Elisha. Mendelssohn did not accept this idea for the insertion of a new character, but nevertheless compromised by revising the prose draft to include a more obvious Messianic ending.\(^\text{13}\)

With a few months left before the scheduled premiere, Mendelssohn sent a completed Part I and most of Part II to William Bartholomew for translation into English. The remaining movements of Part II, Nos. 36 though 39, arrived ten days later. Mendelssohn originally planned not to include an overture at the beginning. He thought that it would be more dramatically effective if the chorus “Help, Lord!” followed immediately after the opening of Elijah’s curse “there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according my word.” However, Bartholomew

\(^{12}\) See Figure 5.1 in *Ibid.*, 118-20

\(^{13}\) *Ibid.*, 125.
suggested adding an overture immediately after Elijah’s curse as a symbolic expression of the three years of famine:

[Without an overture] the chorus [Help, Lord!]…comes so quickly and suddenly after the curse, that there seems to elapse no time to produce its results.
- Undated letter (ca. June 1846) from Bartholomew to Mendelssohn

Ultimately, Mendelssohn managed to give Elijah a strikingly unconventional opening by starting with recitative before the overture. At the same time, he managed to express the Israelites’ suffering at the hands of Elijah’s curse: "There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (1 Kings 17:1, NIV Bible). The phrase “In the next few years” refers to exactly three years as indicated in the next chapter of the Bible: “After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ‘Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land’” (1 Kings 18:1, NIV Bible). Therefore, Mendelssohn employs various techniques to express the numerical significance of three in the overture, such as repeating certain phrases three times. He also accompanies the main theme with chromatic ascending and descending lines to depict the Israelites’ suffering from drought.

Before arriving in London, Mendelssohn recomposed No. 31, the alto aria “O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him,” and eliminated the chorus “He will open the eyes of the blind people,” which was designed to come just before the No. 41b quartet “O come ev’ry one that thirsteth.”

The premiere of Elijah at the Birmingham Festival on August 26, 1846 was very successful. Mendelssohn expressed his pleasure in a letter to Jenny Lind:

14 Ibid., 206.
The performance of my *Elijah* was the best first performance that I have ever heard of any one of my compositions. There was so much go, and swing, in the way in which the people played, and sang, and listened.\(^\text{15}\)

Right after the premiere, Mendelssohn started revising *Elijah* for publication. He reworked the text of the widow’s scene (No. 8), Obadiah’s plea for rain (No. 19), Jezebel’s scene (Nos. 23-24), Obadiah’s farewell to Elijah (No. 25), and the introduction for God’s command to Elijah to recommence his mission (No. 36). In particular, he composed new music for the widow’s scene and revised the text even though Edward Bendemann, a friend and painter, suggested that it should be eliminated altogether.\(^\text{16}\)

The final version of *Elijah* was printed in England by Messrs. Ewer & Co. in June 1847 and in Bonn, Germany by Simrock. Mendelssohn premiered the final version at Exeter Hall in London on April 16, 1847 and conducted three further performances there on the 23\(^\text{rd}\), 28\(^\text{th}\), and 30\(^\text{th}\) of the month.

As this textual history shows, the process by which Mendelssohn and Schubring produced the work was a complex one that involved careful decisions about which scenes and texts to choose in order to structure the dramatic plot. The conflict between them concerning the priority of the work’s message had a decisive effect on the closing scene. In addition, the scenes and movements that Mendelssohn revised after the premiere suggests that Mendelssohn eventually chose to focus on the work’s dramatic and/or theological elements despite comments from his contemporaries that they were unnecessary. Therefore, if conductors attentively

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 127.
\(^{16}\) Ibid.
consider this textual history, they will gain valuable information that will give them greater understanding about the interrelation of structure and theological implications of certain scenes.
CHAPTER III
A DISCUSSION OF EDITING

Four Conductor’s Versions

The total performance time of the oratorio *Elijah* is approximately two and a half hours, which is quite long for the modern concert audience. Therefore, it is often shortened to make it less tiring for them. Daniel Delisi’s article *Mendelssohn’s Elijah: Dramatic and Musical Structure, Possible Cuts and Excerpts* and Robert Summer’s book *Choral Masterworks from Bach to Britten: Reflections of a Conductor* discuss the edits that modern conductors make. Summer lists three well-known American conductors’ versions, in particular, along with the ideas and reasons behind their decisions (Figure III-1).

Figure III-1. Suggested Cuts by Three Conductors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robert Shaw (1991)</th>
<th>Donald Neuen</th>
<th>Robert Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.5 (mm. 74-138)</td>
<td>No.5</td>
<td>No.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos.6, 7, 7a</td>
<td>Nos.6, 7, 7a</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nos.8, 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.11 (mm. 17-28)</td>
<td>No.11 (mm. 17-28 &amp; mm. 44-67)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.13 (mm.16-44)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.22 (mm.20-78)</td>
<td>No.22 (mm.21-82)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nos.23, 24</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.36 (mm 1-9)</td>
<td>No.35 to m. 10 of No. 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.40, 41, 41a</td>
<td>Nos.40, 41, 41a</td>
<td>Nos.40, 41, 41a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbering used here is based on that used by Dover Publications.
Figure III-2 shows Daniel Delisi’s “Summary of Suggested Cuts,” as presented in his article.

Figure III-2. Summary of Suggested Cuts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 5, Chorus (mm. 88-138)</td>
<td>No. 22, Chorus (mm. 21-78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 6, Alto recitative</td>
<td>No. 32, Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 7, Double chorus</td>
<td>No. 35, Chorus and quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 8, Alto/baritone duet</td>
<td>No. 36, Chorus (mm. 1-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 9, Chorus</td>
<td>No. 40, Soprano solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. 41, Chorus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From “Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*: Dramatic and Musical Structure, Possible Cuts and Excerpts,” p.30 by Daniel Delisi

*The entire movement is cut unless specific measures are indicated.

When the two lists are combined, the parts that are most commonly omitted can be categorized into four groups as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. 5</th>
<th>Shaw¹)</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Delisi¹)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nos. 6, 7, 7a, 8, 9</td>
<td>Shaw</td>
<td>Neuen²)</td>
<td>Delisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos. 35, 36 (mm. 1-9)</td>
<td>Shaw³)</td>
<td>Neuen</td>
<td>Delisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos. 40, 41, 41a</td>
<td>Shaw</td>
<td>Neuen</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹)Shaw cut No.5, mm.74-138. Delisi cut No.5, mm. 88-138.
²)Neuen deleted only Nos.6,7,7a.
³)Shaw omitted only Nos.36 mm.1-9.

A common theme among these scenes is that they were edited out because they were redundant or otherwise unrelated to the storyline. The question that arises is, for what reasons did the composer and librettist select these scenes and how did they connect them at the outset of the project? This paper seeks to discuss their artistic aims in the context of the work’s musical and dramatic structures and theological basis.
**Dramatic Structure**

This is the basic plot structure of Part One and Two.

**Part One**

1) **Exposition: Prologue - No. 5**

   Elijah predicts the beginning of a drought, and the people of Israel suffer from this disaster and shout out “Help, Lord.”

2) **Rising Action: Nos. 6-9**

   This section can be seen as foreshadowing the events of the exposition. God sends Elijah to the wilderness, which dries out, and then he is sent to a widow in Zarephath. The bread and oil served by the widow to Elijah keeps replenishing itself, and her dying son revives through Elijah’s prayers. These miracles allow Elijah and the widow to experience God’s omnipotent powers. (This strongly showcases the Messianic Prophecy.)

3) **Climatic Moment and Falling Action: Nos. 10-13 and Nos. 14-18**

   Three years later, God sends Elijah to King Ahab, and there is a battle between Baal and Jehovah to prove who the True God is. Although Baal’s Prophets put on an increasingly frantic performance, Baal does not answer their prayers. However, in answer to Elijah prayers, fire comes down to his altar, showing that Jehovah is the only True God. Baal’s 850 Prophets are slaughtered.
4) Resolution: Nos. 19-20

After Baal’s Prophets are eradicated, Elijah urges the Israelites to repent for their sin of leaving God and worshipping idols, and to return to God. Elijah prays three times to God for rain; finally, God makes it rain, and the Israelites sing a song of praise and gratitude.

Part Two

1) Commentary: Nos. 21-22

Part II, which is sung by solo soprano and chorus, starts with a commentary that the Israelites must observe God’s commandments and rely on Him without fear.

2) Exposition: Nos. 23-24

When Elijah demands that King Ahab repent for the sin of violating God’s commandments, Queen Jezebel tries to kill Elijah.

3) Rising Action: Nos. 25-29 and Nos. 30-32

Elijah, who flees to a desert, prays to God to take his life since he is the only one left among those who kept to God’s covenant. At that moment, an angel comforts him and sends him to Mount Horeb.

4) Climactic Moment and Falling Action: Nos. 33-35 and Nos. 36-39

On Mount Horeb, Elijah does not see God in the wind or earthquake, or even in the fire; later, God’s presence emerges in a still, small voice. God tells Elijah to resume his mission since
He preserved seven thousand followers of the covenant. After Elijah completes his mission, he goes up to heaven on a chariot of fire.

5) Resolution: Nos. 40-42

Elijah is a prophet similar to John the Baptist, who is prepared for the coming of Jesus Christ. According to the Old Testament those who observed the covenant by risking their lives would be redeemed by Christ, who comes to save all human beings. God is thus praised forever.
Discussion of Suggested Cuts by Four Conductors

1. Nos. 6, 7, 7a, 8, 9

This section applies to the Rising Action sequence. This part is divided into two sections, the first of which consists of Nos. 6, 7, and 7a—Elijah’s wilderness and the Angels’ double quartet, “For He shall give His angels.” The second section is No. 8 the widow and Elijah’s Duet, “What Have I to do with thee” and No.9 Chorus, “Blessed are the men who fear Him”. Donald Neuen deleted Nos. 6-7 while Shaw and Delisi deleted Nos. 6-9. All three argue that these parts were unrelated to the plot and had no influence on the musical and dramatic flow. Robert Summer judges this section, in particular the widow’s scene (Nos. 8-9), as follows:

One scene, which many conductors eliminate or to which adjustments are made, is the scene of Elijah with The Widow and her dying son. This scene can be omitted without affecting the progression of the story if someone is concerned about the overall length of the performance.17

Daniel Delisi also expresses the same idea in his article:

The dramatic continuity of Part One can be made more apparent through cuts in two places. The second scene (nos. 6-9), which includes Elijah's wanderings and the scene of the widow's son, is completely unrelated to any of the other action in Part One. In effect, the scene stops the dramatic flow, and therefore can be cut without losing any of the continuity of the oratorio. Some fine music is lost, but the overall dramatic and musical flow of Part One is not hindered. Recitative no. 6 can be left in if desired to make reference to the journeying of the prophet. It is short, but again is not essential to any other action in Part One.18

After the premiere of Elijah in 1846, Edward Bendermann, a friend of Mendelssohn’s who sent suggestions to him throughout the project, indicated that the widow’s scene should be

17 Robert J. Summer, Choral Masterworks from Bach to Britten (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2007), 72.
deleted. Even the renowned Mendelssohn scholar Eric Werner assesses it “as one of the weakest in the oratorio, it might be better to leave it out”.  

If the general consensus among scholars and conductors is that this section is “completely unrelated to any of the other action in Part I,” as Delisi says, what was Mendelssohn and Schubring’s idea with this section in the first place? After the premiere, Mendelssohn revised the widow’s scene. He was so seriously concerned about this scene that he almost recomposed new music. However, if this scene was unnecessary to Elijah’s story, then Mendelssohn could have just removed it before the publication of the final version. So then why did he polish it even more? To find the answer to this question, one needs to look at the Biblical context. First, we can look at the corresponding Biblical passages to movements Nos. 6, 7, and 7a.

a. No. 6, 7, 7a

Elijah was a prophet during the time of the Israelite King Ahab. King Ahab, along with Queen Jezebel, caused the people of Israel to commit the biggest sin against the God of Israel.

Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him. (1 Kings 16:30-33, NIV)

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19 Sposato, p.127
20 Summer, p.72
In 1 Kings 17:1, it is recorded that Elijah told King Ahab that there would be a drought because of the sinful idol worship. This scene is the prologue in *Elijah*. Because of this, King Ahab became furious and tried to get rid of Elijah. Therefore, God sent Elijah to the wilderness, where no one could find him until it rained again.

As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master [King Ahab] has not sent someone to look for you [Elijah]. And where a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. (1 Kings 18:10, NIV)

Reading the Bible provides the essential context for the Exposition of *Elijah*. However in the oratorio, the scene where King Ahab orders Elijah’s death is omitted before Nos. 6-7, and only the Israelites’ suffering and supplication (Nos. 1, 2, & 5) and Obadiah’s imploration to the Israelites follow the prologue. If there were a scene before No. 6 depicting King Ahab ordering that Elijah be killed, the scene of Nos. 6 and 7 would be regarded as absolutely necessary to provide a solid reason why Elijah has to be in the wilderness. Delisi agrees with this point, writing, “Recitative no. 6 can be left in if desired to make reference to the journeying of the prophet”.21

The Angels’ Double quartet (No. 7) shows Elijah, who is in hiding from King Ahab, that God has provided protection by surrounding him with eight angels. This is not indicated in the Bible. If No. 6 were to function as a narration of the situation, then the audience would regard the incident and scene in No. 7 as a purely religious experience. This is one of the important functions of the conventional oratorio: it provides religious edification, often through fictional

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21 Delisi, p.30.
supplements to the drama’s original plot, allowing listeners to imagine the scene in a more exuberant way.

Even though this scene has much importance, the entire story does not appear to be fully conveyed in general. Otto Jahn describes this scene as one of “disjointedness”:

What we find in Elijah is not true action, which develops steadily, but rather a series of situations in which Elijah is the focus, and which show his originality from various points of view. This is the source of the work’s unity. But these individual scenes must also be externally connected; since the simplest means for this—namely narrative—has been discarded, the result is a certain disjointedness, sometimes even in distinctness, as one is introduced unexpectedly into the midst of a situation that only gradually becomes comprehensible, as it develops.22

b. Nos. 8-9

“Disjointedness” also applies to the widow’s scene (Nos. 8-9) that follows. As mentioned already, many have deemed the widow’s scene unnecessary to Elijah’s dramatic flow. However, it is unlikely that Mendelssohn and Schubring would have chosen this scene simply because it was in the Bible, despite its lack of relation to the work’s main story. It seems that Mendelssohn wanted to make Elijah into a symbolic work rather than a historical one, as he did with his first oratorio, St. Paul:

As I see it, the subject [of St. Paul] absolutely must not be treated historically… In a historical treatment, Christ would have to appear in the earlier part of St. Peter’s career, and where he appears, St. Peter could not lay claim to the chief interest. I think, therefore, it must be symbolic—though all the historical points should probably be included, the betrayal and repentance, the keys of heaven given him by Christ, his sermon at the feast of Pentecost—but all of that not historical, but prophetic.23

22 Sposato, p.128.
23 Sposato, p.129.
Elijah is an Old Testament’s prophet. His actions foreshadow the coming of the Messiah or Christ, who was to appear in the New Testament. From this perspective—that is from the Christological perspective—the encounter between Elijah and the widow is an important incident that foretells to Christ’s ministry of salvation. As evidence, Jesus uses this encounter while preaching at the Jewish’s synagogue: “Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon” (Luke 4:26, NIV).

Why was this verse quoted by Jesus in his preaching? The Israelites had thought of themselves as the only chosen people of God and did not think that foreigners would be subject to the grace of salvation. Zarephath’s widow was a Gentile. Therefore, they could not understand why the prophet of God, Elijah, went to a Gentile. There, food did not run out even during extreme famine and the widow’s dying son was revived through Elijah’s prayer. It is the prefiguration of Christ’s salvation, of God coming to save people of all nations, not just the Israelites but Gentiles as well. This is a significant value within Christological perspective.

From the perspective of Christology, what does the widow’s scene have in common with the battle between Elijah and Baal’s Prophets that comes afterward?

According to the Bible, the raising of the widow’s son was the first miraculous answer that Elijah received from his prayers to God. After experiencing God’s omnipotent power, Elijah regained his confidence, stood in front of King Ahab, and engaged in battle with the Prophets of Baal. This incident allowed him to develop unconditional conviction regarding God. From the audience’s viewpoint, it would seem that it is Mendelssohn and Schubring’s intention to show how God’s transcendent work and Elijah’s corresponding faith becomes adamantly—from the
widow’s scene to the battle and the rain—related to the Messianic Prophesy. Therefore, in this context it is understandable why Mendelssohn did not eliminate this scene during the revision process after the work’s premiere but, rather, recomposed almost entirely new music, even though Bendemann suggested the whole thing was unnecessary. Jacob’s commentary reinforces this point:

It has the dramatic value of an interior scene. Moreover, the death of the child and the grief of its mother affect us far more than the deaths of thousands who have perished in the drought. And when, thrice-repeated, with rising intensity: the prophet’s prayer recalls the child’s departed soul to the body, it is as if he has done the same for thousands.24

Mendelssohn and the author of his text have been criticized for having included this episode [the widow scene] in the oratorio. They could not have chosen a more effective one! For this scene is the only that does not take place under the open sky.25

Sposato mentions that there is more evidence that Mendelssohn tried to emphasize the association of the New Testament with Christology, as shown below.

- The Beatitudes

The last line of text in the widow’s scene (No. 8), “Blessed are they who fear“ is the same as those in the No. 9 Chorus, “Blessed are the man who fear Him, they ever walk in the ways of peace.” This is a textual parallel with Jesus’ beatitudes in the New Testament.26

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”(Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-22, NIV)

- Christ’s greatest commandment

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25 Ibid, 252.
26 Sposato, p.136.
Another Christological addition is found in the text of No. 8. After the widow’s son rejuvenates through Elijah’s prayer, the widow asks Elijah what she shall render to the Lord. Elijah answers with Christ’s greatest commandment, which originates from the Old Testament (Deut. 6:5).

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27)

The material of the widow’s scene is Christological in order to present Elijah’s Messianic prophesy. I argue that if it is omitted, the climactic moment of the oratorio comes too early without the proper rising action. Therefore, including this section would further increase the expectation of the climactic moment in a dramatic way. Furthermore, by connecting this scene with the battle and the rain, it portrays Mendelssohn’s viewpoint of theology: that God continuously prepared the work of Christ’s salvation through Elijah’s Messianic Prophecy.

2. No. 35 and No. 36 (mm. 1-9)

a. No. 35 Quartet and Chorus, “Holy is God the Lord.”

God does not reveal himself only in powerful miraculous ways but appears to Elijah in “a still small voice” in the Chorus (No.34) “Behold, God the Lord passed by”. The following Quartet with full Chorus (No.35), “Holy is God the Lord,” is a praise of the seraphim around God. This movement is similar to the double Quartet (No.7) of Part One, “For He shall give His angels charge over thee,” in two ways: the first is that both portray the realm of God; the second is that both scenes do not exist in the story of Elijah in 1 Kings but are instead added by the composer and librettist to heighten listeners’ spiritual experiences of the events. One important
difference between the two movements is that No. 7 is narrated from the third-person perspective, while No. 35 sings in the first-person perspective opening with an alto recitative, “Above Him stood the Seraphim, and one cried to another”. In the Double Quartet (No. 7) the angels act as narrators, providing annotative interpretations of the scene and stirring up listeners’ imaginations. In No. 35, the seraphim function as actors singing the text from the Book of Isaiah.

Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory (Isaiah 6:2-3, NIV).

No. 35, in contrast to the preceding movement (No. 34) where God came onward in “a still, small voice,” follows with the magnificent and overwhelming praise of numerous angels. Not surprisingly, Mendelssohn employs here the largest force of performances in the entire work: four individual voices—organized as S1, S2, A1, A2—and the full chorus. The use of such an ensemble for the role of the seraphim is especially appropriate given the description of them from the Book of Revelation by John the Apostle:

What sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah!” (Revelation 19:6, NIV).

Coincidently, No. 35 of *Elijah* occupies a similar proportional position within the whole work as the No. 44 Chorus “Hallelujah” of Handel’s *Messiah*, as shown below:

No. 35 “Holy is the God the Lord”

35/42 (total number of movements in *Elijah*) = .833

No. 44 “Hallelujah”

44/53 (total number of movements in *Messiah*) = .830
If Mendelssohn deliberately modeled this structural position on that of the “Hallelujah” chorus, it can be assumed that he tried to import a similar corresponding theological meaning from Handel’s chorus to his own.

b. No. 36 Chorus-Recitative (mm. 1-9)

The first nine measures of the Chorus-Recitative (No. 36), flow seamlessly by *attacca* from the No. 35 Chorus. They are deleted in the versions by Shaw, Neuen, and Delisi. These nine bars are only a small amount of music, but they have great significance in that the text reveals the background of *Elijah* as well as its key theme: Because God’s people, the Israelites, disregarded the covenant and served Baal instead, God punished them with a drought to persuade them to convert back. This relationship—one by covenant—is the most important theme of *Elijah*. Here, we will examine how it is presented in the entire piece.

The movements that deal with the “Covenant of God” are as follows:

i) Prologue: Elijah, “As God the Lord.”

[Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab], "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (1 Kings 17:1, NIV).

Elijah predicts that there will be no dew or rain for years on the land of Israel due to the transgression of King Ahab and the Israelites. According to 1 Kings 17:1, this prediction is proclaimed by Elijah to King Ahab.

ii) No. 3 Recitative: Obadiah, “Ye people, rend your hearts.”
Obadiah urges the Israelites to forsake their sins and come back to God. More specifically, they are deviating from the covenant they made to serve only God and are instead worshipping idols. Thus, he points out that Elijah has sealed the sky according to God’s words.

iii) No. 5 Chorus: Israelites, “Yet doth the Lord.”

(Section A) “Yet doth the Lord see it not: He mocked at us; His curse hath fallen down upon us till He destroy us, pursue us!”

(Section B) “For He, the Lord our God, He is a jealous God: And He visiteth all the fathers sins on the children to the third and the fourth generation of them that hate Him. His mercies on thousands fall, His mercies on thousands fall, fall on all them that love Him and keep His commandments” (Exodus 20:5-6, NIV).

In the first section, the Israelites resent God for cursing them and leading them to ruin through drought. As the musical texture changes in Section B, the text explicitly exposes which sin the Israelites commit against the covenant between them and God. This comes from the beginning of the Ten Commandments with a quote from Exodus 20: 5–6 in which God gives an order to the Israelites through Moses.

iv) No. 10 Recitative and Chorus: Elijah, “As God the Lord.”

“I never troubled Israel’s peace: it is thou Ahab, and all thy father’s house. Ye have forsaken God's commands, and thou hast follow'd Baalim” (1 Kings 18:18, NIV).
Three years later, Elijah meets with King Ahab and tells him that his sin of discarding God’s commands and serving Baal has led Israel to suffer from drought. Then, a contest is held with 850 prophets from Baal to determine which of the two (Baal or the Lord) is the True God.


“When the heavens are closed up because they have sinned against Thee: yet if they pray and confess Thy name, and turn away from their sins when Thou dost afflict them: then hear from heaven, and forgive the sin. Help, send Thy servant help, O God!”

The frantic sacrifice of the Baal prophets ends with no response, and a fire falls upon the altar of Elijah, proving that the Lord is the True God. As a result, all 850 prophets are killed. After that, Elijah urges King Ahab and the Israelites to return to the covenant. Then it rains again.

vi) No. 21 Aria: Soprano solo, “Hear ye, Israel.”

“Hear ye, Israel, hear what the Lord speaketh: ‘Oh, hadst thou heeded my commandments! Who hath believed our report! To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed!’” (Isaiah 48:1, 18; 53:1, NIV).

Part Two begins with an admonition to the Israelites, again to “Listen to God’s words” (or, in other words, “Obey my orders and covenant”). Even though it has rained again, Israel’s worship of idols has not ended, and God’s prophets are still being killed.

vii) No. 23 Recitative and Chorus: Elijah, “The Lord hath exalted thee from among the people.”

“The Lord hath exalted thee from among the people, and o’er his people Israel hath made thee King. But thou, Ahab, hast done evil to provoke him to anger above all that were before thee: as if it had been a light thing for thee to
walk in the sins of Jerobeam. Thou hast made a grove, and altar to Baal, and
serv’d him and worshipp’d him. Thou hast killed the righteous and also taken
possession. And the Lord shall smite all Israel as a reed is shaken is the
water; and He shall give Israel up, and thou shall know He is the Lord” (1
Kings 16:30-33, NIV).

The plot of Part Two begins with a confrontation between Elijah and Queen Jezebel.
Here, Elijah mentions in detail the sins of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, such as
worshipping idols and killing God’s prophets.

viii) No. 26 Aria: Elijah, “It is enough.”

“It is enough! O Lord, now take away my life, for I am not better than my
fathers! I desire to live no longer: now let me die, for my days are but vanity.
I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for the children of Israel
have broken Thy covenant, and thrown down Thine altars, and slain all Thy
prophets, slain them with the sword. And I, even I only am left: and they seek
my life to take it away!” (1 Kings 19:4, 10, NIV).

When Queen Jezebel tries to kill Elijah, he prays to God that he will die. He believes
that, despite the great victory of the Battle on Mount Carmel and his success in
stopping the drought, there is only one remnant who will remain in God’s covenant:
himself. Therefore, he thinks that there is no hope left.

ix) No. 36 Chorus: “Go, return upon thy way” and Recitative: Elijah, “I go on my way.”

“Go, return upon thy way! For the Lord yet hath left him seven thousand in
Israel, knees which have not bow’d to Baal. Go, return upon thy way! Thus
the Lord commandeth.”(1 Kings 19:18, NIV).

God does not make an appearance even after the tempest, earthquake, and fire, but He
reveals his existence with “a still, small voice.” Here, God tells Elijah to continue his
mission, as presented in mm. 1-9 of No. 36, because He left behind 7,000 disciples
who have not yet yielded to Baal.
Thus, we see that the key theme in *Elijah* is to maintain the covenant between God and the Israelites. As shown above, the contents of the covenant are constantly revealed in a direct and straightforward way before and after major events, mainly in recitatives, through the Prologue, and Nos. 3, 5, 10, 19, 21, 23, 26, and 36. The numerous instances of this reminder serve as the thematic skeleton of *Elijah*.

The mention of the 7,000 disciples in the first nine measures of No. 36 is highly symbolic of Elijah’s mission to maintain the covenant. Here, it is necessary to look at what the theological meaning of the 7,000 disciples is. The battle between Elijah and Baal’s prophets, which is developed throughout 1 Kings 17-19, emphasizes that Jehovah is the one, true God of all creation, including rain and drought. Through his victory, Elijah demonstrates that Baal is just an “idol” without the ability to alter the weather or even respond to the abusive rites of its followers (1 Kings 18:20-46).27

The phrases “Baal and the false prophets” and “Elijah and Yahweh” portray this battle as one of Jehovah, rather than that of Elijah. Therefore, even though Elijah collapses with exhaustion, Jehovah hides 7,000 disciples, who have not knelt in worship of Baal, to fight on His behalf (1 Kings 19:18).28 As a result, the battle with Baal shifts to these disciples. They receive no mention in 1 Kings 19, but reappear whenever Jehovah finds it necessary (1 Kings 19:10, 14,

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28 See Obadiah’s devotion (1 Kings 18:2-5). Here, kneeling down means “obeying” (1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; 2 Kings 1:13). Some scholars say that there are not sufficient grounds to assume that this indicates worship of Baal. See Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries Vol. 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 454.
This idea of “remnants” runs throughout Isaiah (see the “remnant” idea in Isaiah 7:14) as they are delivered to the apostle Paul in the New Testament (Romans 11:3-4), and forecast God’s final victory through the body of the “church,” headed by the “true remnant”: Christ (Ephesians 1:10, 4:15-16; Colossians 1:24, 2:19; Revelation 1:5). Therefore, the 7,000 disciples is an Old Testament prefiguration that describes “Christ’s church.” Consequently, we must not overlook the importance of the disciples as a remnant, as they play an absolutely necessary role in the battle between Elijah and Baal as Elijah’s successors. Because the covenant is the only condition for the salvation of humanity it must be maintained by the Israelites until the Messiah comes.

Even though, this section of No. 36 is only nine bars long, the text receives special attention immediately after Angel’s Chorus of No. 35, “Holy.” The narration is not in solo-recitative, but is sung in unison by the tenors and basses of the chorus. This passage is also noticeable in that it is one of four parts—in addition to Jezebel’s scene, Obadiah’s farewell to Elijah, and the Widow’s scene—revised by Mendelssohn after the premiere. This demonstrates that the composer must have carefully considered including the text about the 7,000 disciples because it was an important way of connecting the events of Elijah’s ascension (No. 38) and Christ’s coming (No. 41) in the Epilogue. In other words, this added scene is structurally and dramatically necessary to ensure plot flow and enhance the work’s theological message.

30 Sposato, p.127.
3. No. 5, “Yet doth the Lord” (mm. 66-137)

In a similar manner to the first nine measures of No. 36, 72 measures from No. 5 are omitted in the versions by Shaw, Delisi, and Page (the latter of whom deletes the entire movement). Yet, I argue that Mendelssohn and Schubring afforded this passage much importance. The content of this text refers to the first and second of the Ten Commandments, which together form a key theme in Elijah. The problem of the drought, which has been presented in Elijah’s prologue, is caused by King Ahab’s and the Israelites’ idol worship, would be solved if they would forsake their sin and return to the covenant of God.

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments (Exodus 20:4-8, NIV).

Mendelssohn therefore emphasizes the content of the covenant through a chorale-like texture that the listeners in the audience can clearly identify with. The phrase “Yet doth the Lord see it not” in the first section of No. 5 (mm. 1-65) combines canonic and homophonic styles, expressing feelings of ire in a fast Allegro vivace tempo. In contrast, “For He the Lord our God, He is a jealous God,” in Section B of No. 5 (mm. 66-137), is given special emphasis through the chorale texture in a Grave tempo, which makes each and every word of the text very clear.

No. 5 is also positioned structurally as the conclusion of a dramatic exposition comprising movements Nos. 1-5. According to Robert Summer, Robert Page omits the entire No. 5 chorus because he thought “the ideas expressed in No. 5 have already been introduced in
previous movements; in No. 1, the people complain that ‘no power cometh to help us,’ and in No. 3 (‘Ye people, rend your hearts’), the soloist describes the Lord as ‘slow to anger, merciful, kind, and gracious’.”

The omission of No. 5 needs to be considered from a different angle, however. If we think in terms of structural drama, No. 1-5 form an exposition, as I have previous stated, which concludes with the No. 5 chorus before continuing on to the rising action. If this movement is omitted according to Page’s reasoning, the scenes from Nos. 3 to 8 might sound monotonous because there are no choruses in between. It seems that Mendelssohn and Schubring would have wanted to use the chorus strategically to deliver the content of God’s covenant to the audience.

4. Nos. 40, 41, and 41a

These three movements are often omitted by the four conductors I have mentioned earlier. They assert that Elijah’s ascension in the No. 38 Chorus is a satisfying conclusion to his story and that the subsequent movements, Nos. 39–41a, are not closely related to the main story. Furthermore, they claim that these movements contain no distinguishable musical features that make them worth performing. According to Delisi:

Dramatically, the weakest scene in the oratorio is the final one. Elijah has already ascended to heaven in his fiery chariot, and Nos. 39-42[41a] take the form of a final sermon with no new action... Although the soprano has sung least often of the soloists, she will be heard again in the unique and beautiful quartet for soloists, No. 42[41a]. The Text of her aria, No. 40, and of the following chorus,

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31 Summer, p.73.
No. 41, are nothing more than general summaries of events from earlier in the oratorio, with morals attached. Both of these numbers can be cut.\textsuperscript{32}

Even if this were true, it would be worth reexamining what purpose Mendelssohn and Schubring had in mind for this section at the time of composition. Although Mendelssohn did not accept any of Schubring’s suggestions for the closing scenes, he did nevertheless describe Elijah as “an Old Testament Christ,” as shown by his selection of texts from the Old and New Testaments for movements Nos. 39-41a. I would now like to examine these texts and the musical contexts in which they were used.

\textbf{a. No. 39 Aria (Tenor)}

Then, then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun is their heav’nly Father’s realm (Matthew 13:43, NIV).

No. 39 is a tenor aria that follows the No. 38 Chorus, “Then did Elijah the prophet break forth,” and it concludes the scene of Elijah’s ascension. This tenor aria is rarely omitted by conductors. As Delisi explains: “The tenor aria, No. 39, flows so logically from chorus No. 38—connecting the penultimate —and the tenor has been silent for so long, the aria easily sustains interest and should be retained”.\textsuperscript{33} The text in No. 39 pairs so well with the music’s lyricism and gentle mood that it relieves the tension and excitement from the previous climactic moment.

The text of No. 39—in particular the phrase “the righteous”—is an analogy of Elijah’s ascension. By selecting this text and especially the allegorical phrase “the light from the sun” from Matthew, Mendelssohn created a smooth link between Elijah in the Old Testament and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Delisi, p.31.}
\footnote{Delisi, p.31.}
\end{footnotes}
Christ in the New Testament. This is a key theme of the subsequent movements (Nos. 40-41a) and even the final chorus, No. 42, discussed below.

No. 39, “the righteous shine forth as the sun” (Matthew 13:43) = Elijah
No. 41, “who, from the rising of the sun” (Isaiah 42:25) = Christ
No. 42, “your light will break forth like the dawn” (Isaiah 58:8) = The people of God’s covenant

This is not unusual, however. There is evidence that such an “allegorical approach was typical of oratorio practices during Mendelssohn’s time. As Sposato explains:

Mendelssohn’s decision to make Elijah not merely symbolic, but also Christological, was no doubt determined by his continued adherence to contemporary oratorio practices. These conventions, as noted in relation to Moses, demanded that Old Testament works orient themselves in some way toward the New. Indeed, Schubring would later remind the composer of this convention, stressing that Mendelssohn, of all people, could not afford to ignore it:

“I [Schubring] recognize now with perfect clarity that the oratorio can have no other than a New Testament ending; the Old Testament (Malachi) and also the New Testament definitely demand it. Elijah must help to transform the old covenant into the new, that is his great historical importance.”

b. No. 40 Recitative (Soprano)

Behold, God hath sent Elijah the prophet [John the Baptist] before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6).

The text in No. 40 cites Malachi 4:5-6 and connects the New Testament with the last verses of the Old Testament. Therefore, “Elijah the prophet” refers to John the Baptist, who prepares for “the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” This latter phrase functions as an introduction to the next movement, the No. 41 Chorus, which refers to Christ/Jesus (Life

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*Sposato, p.129.*
Applicable Bible, 1633). I believe this short recitative (No. 40) plays an important role in connecting the story of Elijah to Christ in the New Testament.

In terms of structure, as with previous scenes (refer to Figure I-1 in Chapter I), the Epilogue begins with a recitative (No. 40) and closes with the final chorus (No. 42). In the center of this scene, the Chorus (No. 41) sings about the most significant theme, Christ.

c. No. 41 Chorus

But the Lord from the north hath raised one, [Christ] who, from the rising of the sun, shall call upon His name, and come on princes.(Isaiah 41:25) Behold my servant and mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth (Isaiah 42:1).

On him the Spirit of God shall rest – the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of might and counsel, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2).

For nearly ten years, from August 1837 to March 1847, Mendelssohn pondered with Schubring, his librettist, on how to set up the text.35 Part II and the closing scene, in particular, occupied both men were from the summer of 1845 to June 1846, only two months before the work’s premiere.36 As they agonized over the closing scene, Schubring suggested adding the character of Elisha and the transfiguration scene with John the Baptist/Christ and the three disciples, Peter, John, and Jacob. However, since Mendelssohn did not want new characters to appear suddenly in the closing scene, he selected instead Scriptures from the Old and the New Testament that confirmed Elijah’s ministry and the coming of Christ.

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35 There was no progress with Elijah from February 1839 to the summer of 1845 due to Schubring’s resignation from his collaboration with Mendelssohn.
36 Sposato, p.118.
According to Sposato, Schubring continued to push Mendelssohn to incorporate blatant Christological symbolism in the oratorio. Examination of the drafts reveals additional material as well as markings for deletion of passages that, in the librettist’s mind, had no clear New Testament or Lutheran significance. Although Mendelssohn agreed to transform *Elijah* into a Christological work, nevertheless he wanted to maintain an Old Testament flavor. Consequently, he made a request to Schubring on May 23, 1846, for one final “rich harvest of fine Bible texts.” The librettist later recounted that:

> He [Mendelssohn] always proved himself a thoughtful artist, and strove to obtain a clear appreciation of each separate point — such, for instance, as the admissibility of the chorale, of the narrative, recitatives, etc. He rejected, also, much that was suggested, being so well acquainted with his Bible, that he obtained a great deal of valuable material himself. He was, however, extremely grateful for any assistance.

As a result, Mendelssohn concluded *Elijah* with a statement of Christ in the No. 41 Chorus as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and the light of salvation for all humankind, following it with a gentle public invitation in the No. 41a Quartet for “Anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.”

In conclusion, it is neither unusual nor mysterious that the closing scene presents Christ. However, this was never explicitly stated by the composer or librettist as the ultimate goal of the oratorio. This is largely due to Mendelssohn’s preference for symbolic and metaphorical approaches without using an overt narrative. With regard to criticism by Mendelssohn’s

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37 Ibid, 146.
38 Ibid, 125.
contemporaries and modern-day scholars that the composer failed to deliver the Christological intention overtly, Jacob defends with the statement:

But who was there in the oratorio to tell the story? The epic narrator is no longer on the scene. Direct action in Handelian manner might have been employed to show events as they took place. But Mendelssohn distrusted such a method; his reverence for the Biblical text was too great to allow him to invent action not based upon the authentic words of Scripture. Hence the listener is obliged to deduce what actually took place from arias and phrases from the psalms, and this is a matter of some difficulty.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Sposato described Mendelssohn’s methods in a different manner:

For as Handel and Jennens did with Messiah, Mendelssohn’s ultimately created in Elijah a musical riddle, in which listeners with a strong New Testament competence would be able to unravel the work’s Christological program.⁴¹

It is true that the closing scene is a musical riddle for many people. The core of Elijah’s story is the recovery of God’s covenant and its Messianic conclusion with Christ. Knowing this will help modern conductors interpret and achieve a more profound understanding of this oratorio. I do not believe that a successful performance depends on whether one is performing the original or an edited version. Rather, it depends on the conductor’s understanding and conception of the work, and whether or not s/he is able to convey that expressively and powerfully to the audience and performers. In order to achieve this, the conductor should decide on the purpose of the performance before s/he begins preparation.

I would suggest the following as an example if one wishes to convey a strongly theological message at the conclusion. To begin with, the Epilogue should be treated at the same level as any other previous scene, not only as a summarizing coda. As seen in Figure I-1 of

⁴⁰ Jacob, p.254.
⁴¹ Sposato, p.146.
Chapter I, this scene begins with a recitative, No. 40, and closes with a chorus, No. 42. In between, chorus No. 41 takes place in the center of the scene in a manner similar to the other dramatic choruses I have discussed earlier (Nos. 11-13, 16, 34, and 38). Therefore conductors should imbue this middle chorus with a sense of desperate energy, as if a whole new scene is being started, rather than simply letting it transition to the final chorus.

As another example, conductors who wish to focus more on dramatic flow rather than conveying a theological message can consider Donald Neuen’s cutting of the repeated sections of certain movements. This approach can be particularly advantageous to those who have a restricted time window in which to perform the work, and the cuts do not hinder the dramatic or musical flow (Figure III-3). Other versions by Robert Shaw will be shown in the Appendix.

Figure III-3. List of suggested cut sections by Donald Neuen (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 11 mm. 17-28</td>
<td>No. 22 m. 20 (the 3\textsuperscript{rd} beat) -m. 83 (the 2\textsuperscript{nd} beat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 43-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 13 mm. 16-43</td>
<td>No. 38 mm. 11-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 20 m. 27 (the 3\textsuperscript{rd} beat) -m. 53 (the 2\textsuperscript{nd} beat) mm. 100-128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list does not include omitted movements: Part One: Nos. 6, 7, 7a Part Two: Nos. 23, 24, 33, 35, 36, 37, 40, 41, 41a

This version (2013) is different from Neuen’s 2005 version shown in Figure III-1.
The last example is a list of my suggested cuts, along with my reasoning.

Figure III-4. List of suggested cuts by Carlene Y. Kim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part One</th>
<th>Cut sections</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 11</td>
<td>mm. 17-28</td>
<td>This section is the second of three repetitions. Even though it corresponds to the three frantic rituals of Baal’s prophets as a symbolic compositional gesture, it is still musically unnecessary and will sound fine repeated only twice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm. 43-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>This is a chorale between Nos. 14 and 16 in a similar manner as Bach’s Passions. Because Elijah’s aria, “Draw near, all ye people” (No. 14) is similar to the No.15 chorale in terms of reflection and religious edification, the latter can be omitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Two</td>
<td>No. 22</td>
<td>This section is structured primarily in ABA form. The text of the B section is nearly twice the length of the A section and the preceding aria (No. 21). Thus, if the A section is sung without the contrasting B section, the result would be better integration of the texts of this passage into a single musical theme rather than two separate themes. For the sake of brevity in the Introduction of Part Two, I would suggest omitting this section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm. 21- 83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 31</td>
<td></td>
<td>This alto aria is very gentle and contemplative. However, its dramatic function is the same as the next chorus, No. 32, the latter of which is structurally important as a lead-in to the climactic moment of Part Two. Therefore, the aria can be omitted if one wishes to shorten the duration of the performance while also maintaining a driving dramatic pace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

AND

EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR CONVEYING TEXT

Diction and Rhythmic Interest

When considering aspects of performance practice with *Elijah*, the main priority should be dramatic expression. In particular, Mendelssohn wanted to magnify this “with powerful big choruses.” The advantage of a large chorus is its wide range in dynamics. Mendelssohn’s markings on the score show how he utilized this resource to bring greater dramatic meaning to the text and music. On the other hand, it is not easy for such an ensemble to achieve clear diction and rhythms for delicate and lively expression. In vocal music, it is no exaggeration to say that diction is the biggest factor with regard to dramatic expression, especially if one wants to impress listeners with his/her abilities to deliver the meaning, emotion, mood, and atmosphere of the words. Naturally, diction is directly related to rhythm because the latter is an important means of achieving clarity. In this chapter, the main discussion will be about how one can focus on diction and rhythm in two of *Elijah*’s major choruses to achieve maximum dramatic expression.

1. No. 1, “Help, Lord”

a) The last phrase of the overture is followed by the words “Help, Lord” (mm. 1-5) — a desperate cry of pain by the chorus complaining of the sufferings brought on by drought. When

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42 Werner, 4.
singing at a forte dynamic, one should pay special attention to the consonants because the first phrase of the text needs to be heard clearly by the audience. In particular, if the last consonants in “Help, Lord”—“p” and “d”—are not articulated, the phrase sounds like [Hel-Law], which is quite funny. Neuen explains in detail how to enunciate the final consonants:

Words that end in D, T, B, P and to lesser degree, V, M, N need to be enhanced by setting them with a dotted rhythm or grace note. Pronounce them as though they were followed by “uh.” Generally speaking, we pronounce these letters as though they were followed by an “h” or “ih” and not an “uh.” However, in almost every case, the “uh” is needed: Duh vs. Dh or Dih.43

Likewise, “Help, Lord” needs to be pronounced with intentional exaggeration, such as [puh] and [duh], so that it can be heard by the audience over the full fortissimo sound of the orchestra. At this time, the rhythm of [puh] (mm. 1, 3, and 5) should act as a grace note to “Lord.”

Figure IV-1. No. 1, mm. 1-2

b) With regard to the half note on “us” in m. 7, it should be changed to a quarter note and a quarter rest because of the successive phrase “Help, Lord” in the basses in m. 8. This makes the

ending consonant “s” of “us” in all parts (S, A, T, B) sound clear at the fourth beat before the basses begin their next phrase.

Figure IV-2. No. 1, mm. 7-8

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{stray} & /\text{us}^?\text{?} \\
\text{stray} & /\text{us}^?\text{?} \\
\text{H lp. Lord!}
\end{align*}
\]

c) Especially in mm. 9-11, the phrase is first introduced by the tenors. In order to convey the meaning clearly, one should be careful to avoid eliding the words.

Figure IV-3. No. 1 mm. 9-11

As Neuen advises vowel articulation:

The single most important rule in effective English diction is: never elide the last consonant (or vowel) of one word onto the beginning of the following word.
When a word begins with a vowel, give it its own slight glottal attack [...] This rule, when adhered to, will improve not only diction, but also pitch and rhythm. Although we don’t speak this way, we must sing this way.\textsuperscript{44}

The following example is a comparison of how this phrase (mm. 9-11) would sound if it were spoken normally versus if we applied Neuen’s rule of diction.

Example. No. 1, mm. 9-11

[Wrong diction] The har-vest now \textit{is }\textit{o-}ver, the summer days \textit{are} gone.
[Right diction] The har-vest now \textit{/is/} o-ver, the summer days \textit{/are} gone.

However, one should be mindful of the glottal attack and take care not to let it disturb the soft and lyrical mood. Therefore, gentle glottal attacks will help express the desperation of the words. At the same time, one should shape the crescendi and dimuendi according to the inflections of the syllables.

Figure IV-4. No. 1, mm. 9-11

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
The phrase “The harvest now is over, the summer days are gone” is repeated continually by the four voice-parts in counterpoint from m. 9 to m. 35 as a main theme. Whenever a text is repeated this much, rhythm should take priority over diction. Therefore, the dotted rhythms should be emphasized by accentuating the shorter sixteenth note on “-vest” and “are” even if singing is legato as shown above.

The tenors’ phrase in m. 12, “And yet no power cometh to,” starts on an off-beat. Putting a stress on “And” can add vital rhythmic energy.

The words “no power” in the sopranos at m. 24 is another phrase that begins on an off-beat. In general performance practice “no” is not accentuated and “power” is diminished according to syllable inflection. However, accentuating the off-beat “no” and stressing the first syllable of “power” [po], while diminishing the two syllables of “power,” can express the phrase artistically as well as clearly convey the meaning of the word “no.” This expression is the key to ensuring beauty and vividness in such an off-beat phrase of consecutive eighth notes.
d) Measure 41 starts a new musical idea with the phrase “The harvest now is over” in the tenors. It is challenging to sing clearly with at a forte dynamic. This is because its first note, on “the,” comes immediately after the last note of the preceding phrase. Therefore, one should change the second beat—“-on” from “Zion”—of all voices (S, A, and B) to an eighth-note rest so that the tenors can sing their new phrase strongly and clearly. If one wishes to create a full triad at this point, the altos can split their part into ‘g4’ and ‘e4.’ Furthermore, allowing the basses to join the tenors at this point can make the phrase audible over the loud sound of the orchestra.
e) Measures 59-69 is a section that describes the pain of drought. We can apply the same rule mentioned above: the off-beat phrase with a stress on the first note of “The deep” in m. 59 and “The suckings” in m. 62; the accent on the sixteenth note of the dotted rhythm in mm. 59 and 61; the slight glottal attack on the beginning vowel after the consonant of the preceding word; and the syllable inflection on “water” in mm. 59 and “exhausted” in m. 61.

Above of all, however, all expressions should maintain the soft and lyrical legato mood, as well as legato phrasing, because this section is meant to describe dying people and their suffering from the endless drought.

Figure IV-8. No. 1, mm. 59-62

2. No. 20, “Thanks be to God!”

This movement is a song that expresses gratitude to God for sending the rain in response to Elijah’s prayers. Therefore, the most important compositional element in this passage is the dotted rhythm through which the fountain of life is expressed with a sense of vitality and vigor. In particular, this vigor should sound like rushing water.
a) The basses need to be especially careful with regard to rhythm, pitch, and diction at mm. 2-5. The dotted rhythms can be performed in the manner Neuen suggests:

Sing the dotted eighth note, extending the vowel “to the right” as far (long) as possible. Then accent the sixteenth note. We would like the sixteenth to be exactly one fourth of the beat, but in allegro tempi it is very safe (within the tempo-pulse/beat) to think of really extending the vowel, and then energetically accenting the sixteenth into a solid relationship with the following note.45

Figure IV-9. No. 20, mm. 1-5

The vowels of “be,” “He,” “-veth,” and “thir-” on the eighth notes should be held as long as possible. On the other hand, the sixteenth notes of “to,” “He,” “the,” and “-sty” should be delayed as long as possible and sung with a slight accent. This will prevent the dotted rhythm from becoming a triplet figure, which would reduce the sense of vitality necessary at an Allegro tempo, as well as the mood of this movement.

b) The last consonants—“s” of “thanks” and “d” of “God” and “land”—should be clearly audible in order to express exultation. The dotted half note of m. 5 should be changed to a half note followed by a quarter-note rest so that the basses can sing the following phrase strongly with enough breath. This happens again with basses on the second beat of m. 11, except that the half note should be changed to a quarter note on “land” followed by a quarter rest so that the third beat on “Thanks” can be accentuated. At mm. 15 and 72, the quarter note in the basses prior

45 Donald Neuen, Choral Concepts (Belmont: Schirmer, 2002), 100.
to the phrase of the main motive should be shortened to an eighth note, quarter note, and quarter-note rest to ensure that they have enough breath. In all these cases, however, the articulation of the shortened notes should not be made into a staccato with accent because these notes are the endings of the phrases, which should generally be treated with a diminuendo.

Figure IV-10. No. 20, m. 11, m. 15, and mm. 72-73

c) The off-beat start of the phrase at m. 21 needs careful attention. Because a strong accent would normally be placed on the first down beat of the following measure, m. 22, the off-beat eighth note on “The,” which starts the phrase of the new musical idea, tends to come late without any accent. As a result, the listener barely hears the off-beat on this word even though it is the beginning of a new phrase. Therefore, the eighth-note off-beat should come quite a bit earlier than one thinks is correct and with a strong accent at a fortissimo dynamic. The phrase should otherwise be treated in the same manner as any other in ¾ meter, as seen below.
Placing an emphasis on the off-beats results in added rhythmic interest. According to Neuen, it makes music interesting and artistic, especially when paired with an emphasis on forward motion and sensitivity to phrasing with crescendo-stress-diminuendo patterns.46

d) The off-beat phrases are the most distinct feature of the canonic section at mm. 65-99. Every entrance should be accented, especially since Mendelssohn marks them with f. In addition, the eighth note following the dotted quarter note (i.e., the shorter second note of the dotted rhythm figure) should not be ignored but rather accentuated for increased rhythmic interest. This can be achieved efficiently if the quarter notes before the accented off-beats of the basses in m. 68 and the altos and tenors in m. 69 are shortened to eighth notes (followed by eighth-note rests) and the voices sing the last consonances with strong diction and a slight glottal attack as shown in Figure IV-12.

46 Ibid., 77.
e) The two measures at mm. 70-71 present a hemiola that should be treated in the same manner that I have been describing with off-beats. As shown below in Figure IV-13, the third beat of m. 70 and the second of m. 71 should be accented the same way as the first down beat of m.70.
Effective Program and Supertitles

1. Effective Program

The most convenient way to deliver the text is through a program. Nowadays, it is very common, even among prominent conductors and professional performing groups, to find a program that does not include the numbers and titles of movements, or even the entire text, but rather fills the space with performer profiles and advertisements by the sponsors. Whether or not the language of the words being sung is the audience’s native tongue, it is nearly impossible for listeners to understand the content of the drama and to appreciate the music in depth if they can rely only on what they hear.

It would be more appropriate if the program contains the numbers, titles, and soloists of all the movements of the work along with the full text and relevant translations. This is especially essential in the performance of oratorios because they contain recitative, through which most of the story is narrated, but remain foreign to modern audiences who are unaccustomed to this kind of music.

2. Supertitles

Another way to communicate with the audience is to project the text over or next to the stageas “supertitles” or “surtitles,” respectively. Since the Canadian Opera Company began using them in 1983 the practice has spread throughout many major concert halls and opera theatres. Because oratorios, like operas, have libretti it is very beneficial for the audience to have the words in translation so they can understand the text. Have supertitles displayed at the same time
as the music is certainly easier for the audience than having to read the text in a printed program in the dark.

However, there are many limiting factors: the venue must already have a projector set up; the operator must be well-versed in music especially in matching it with the libretto in real time; and an ample budget is needed. In addition, translation should be done accurately so as not to degrade the quality of the performance. In the case of *Elijah*, the dialogues are written in literary style, due to their direct quotation from the Bible.

Although supertitles have been effective, many people have complained about aches from craning their necks for the duration of the performance, captions passing by too fast, and supertitles being obscured from vision. New technology, the Figaro Simultext®, was developed in response. This is an individual system where small screens similar to televisions are built into the backs of every seat and are used to show the libretto and/or its translation according to the audience members’ wishes. It offers much more functionality than the supertitle system since it can display scene synopses, program notes, and translations in up to six languages.

If any kind of supertitle system is provided during a performance of *Elijah*, it would be helpful for the audience to understand the music not only superficially but deeply because the text is one of the most important elements of the work. The words play a vital role in constructing the flow of the drama and conveying the composer’s ideas of the musical content.
CONCLUSION

Mendelssohn systematically constructed *Elijah* according to a symmetrical structure. In the work’s frame, he symbolically intertwined dramatic dynamism and meditative depth. However, despite the composer and librettist’s careful deliberations over it, the theological message is not externally exposed, and the result is that *Elijah* is often performed in abridged versions by conductors who do not understand fully the original idea behind the work. Even in the rare instance that the oratorio is presented in its entirety, if the director only has a partial understanding of the relationships between the scenes with regard to dramatic meaning, the resulting performance can cause the listeners and even performers to underestimate the work’s artistic value.

Therefore, in this paper, I have endeavored to illustrate how the scenes or movements most commonly edited out are in fact closely related to the work’s main theme: the recovery of the covenant between God and the Israelites. As seen in my discussion of the textual history, the work’s conclusion presents all of Elijah’s miraculous works as a preparation for the coming of the Messiah. This theme permeates all the events of each scene.

Although Mendelssohn and his librettist, Schubring, disagreed whether *Elijah*’s emphasis should be on religious edification or theatrical drama, Mendelssohn’s progressive impetus on the latter eventually prevailed, and thus *Elijah* is one of the most dramatic oratorios in the entire choral repertory. The composer wanted to create a new and dramatic church-style oratorio with his second work in this genre:

> At the moment the choral society is in good form and longing for something new; I’d like to give them something that I like better than my previous oratorio [...]
For that reason, I would really like to write something in the church style soon, since an opera does not seem to be in the offing.”  

However, his lack of a narrator function, which was used widely during the Baroque and Classical eras, as well as Mendelssohn’s allegorical approach to Biblical text have caused many to regard certain sections of Elijah as unrelated or unnecessary. As Jacob and Sposato state, this is because there is a musical riddle in the work in that one should interpret the interrelation of scenes through the lens of Christology. It is an entirely different matter to assert that performing the original version of Elijah would be best for both performers and listeners. According to Schonberg, even Mendelssohn himself did not conduct the original version of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion:

Like all musicians of the day, he had no hesitation about modernizing older music; and he thoroughly modernized the St. Matthew Passion to make it more palaFigure for his audiences. He chopped, recomposed, edited, romanticized and introduced special effects, such as in the recitative, “Und der Vorhang im Tempel Zerreiss”, where a lighting flash of sound ran through the orchestra. Mendelssohn used a chorus of 400 and a greatly augmented orchestra.

As Mendelssohn did himself, modern conductors should develop the ability to edit the work according to the dramatic focus of their performances. Most people agree that the duration of Elijah, at about two and a half hours, is too long for modern audiences in general. To resolve this problem, one might cut certain repetitive sections as suggested in the last part of Chapter III. In my judgment, however, the most important consideration should be the combination of the theological and dramatic aspects of all events in the plot. In order to achieve the best result, I believe that conductors should understand first the main theme regarding the covenant between

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God and the Israelites as well as its role as the structural skeleton. Then, conductors should consider all of these in relation to the context of the Christian theology. For this purpose, parts within the plot of *Elijah* that seem unclear should not be deleted as simply unrelated moments since they are theologically important ones. This paper will be useful to future conductors who are eager to discover the work’s original meaning and how to apply it to modern-day audiences, as well as those who wish to find useful ways of altering *Elijah* while still honoring Mendelssohn’s conception of this oratorio—a work that is dramatic as well as theologically informative.
APPENDIX

From “Choral Masterworks from Bach to Britten: Reflections of a Conductor,” by Robert Summer

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<td>No. 23 (mm. 57-70: stop on &quot;perish&quot; in m. 56)</td>
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