

*TWO CONCERTS CELEBRATING
THE 200th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BIRTH OF
FELIX MENDELSSOHN*

*Tuesday, February 3, 2009
5:30 and 8:00 p.m.
Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Concert I - 5:30 p.m.

Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 49 (1839)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Molto Allegro agitato

Andante con moto tranquillo

Scherzo. Leggiero e vivace

Finale. Allegro assai appassionato

*Amanda Chamberlain, violin **

*Christine Kim, cello **

Brian Connelly, piano †

Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 66 (1846)

Felix Mendelssohn

Allegro energico con fuoco

Andante espressivo

Scherzo. Molto allegro quasi presto

Finale. Allegro appassionato

*Christina Wilke, violin **

*Reenat Pinchas, cello **

*Johannes Le Roux, piano **

PROGRAM

Concert II - 8:00 p.m.

Quintet in B-flat Major, Op. 87 (1845)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Allegro vivace

Andante scherzando

Adagio e lento

Allegro molto vivace

Kenneth Goldsmith, violin †

*David Huntsman, violin **

*Ellen Tollefson, viola **

Ivo-Jan van der Werff, viola †

Norman Fischer, cello †

Selected Songs

Felix Mendelssohn

Auf Flügeln des Gesanges, Op. 34 No. 2

Die Liebende schreibt, Op. 86 No. 3

Allnächtlich im Traume seh' ich dich, Op. 86 No. 4

Der Mond, Op. 86 No. 5

Andres Maienlied (Hexenlied), Op. 8 No. 8

Meghan Tarkington, soprano ◊

Jo Anne Ritacca, piano △

Variations sérieuses, Op. 54 (1841)

Felix Mendelssohn

Andante sostenuto

Variation 1

Variation 2. Un poco più animato

Variation 3. Più animato

Variation 4

Variation 5. Agitato

Variation 6. A tempo

Variation 7. (Con fuoco)

Variation 8. Allegro vivace

Variation 9

Variation 10. Moderato

Variation 11. (Cantabile)

Variation 12. Tempo del Tema

Variation 13. (Sempre assai leggiero)

Variation 14. Adagio

Variation 15. Poco a poco più agitato

Variation 16. Allegro vivace

Variation 17

Presto

Brian Connelly, piano †

INTERMISSION

Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20 (1825)

Felix Mendelssohn

Allegro moderato ma con fuoco

Andante

Scherzo. Allegro leggierissimo

Presto

Kenneth Goldsmith, violin †

Sonja Harasim, violin *

SoJin Kim, violin *

Cho-Liang Lin, violin †

James Dunham, viola †

Pei-Ling Lin, viola *

Gabriel Beistline, cello *

Lynn Harrell, cello †

* Current student. † Faculty member.

◇ Alumna (BM'08) △ Guest artist.

PROGRAM NOTES

Felix Jakob Ludwig Mendelssohn (Bartholdy)

b. Hamburg, February 3, 1809, d. Leipzig, November 4, 1847.

In 1809, just one year before the births of Frédéric Chopin and Robert Schumann, Beethoven was thirty-nine years old, Schubert was twelve, Berlioz was six, and three months after the birth of Felix Mendelssohn, Joseph Haydn died. The grandson of philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), Felix was born into a family of wealth and culture and had the benefit of a broad and enlightened education. Recognized early on as a prodigy, he grew to become one of the most influential artists of his time, and today he stands in the company of the greatest musicians of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Mendelssohn is the Mozart of the nineteenth century, the most illuminating of musicians, who sees more clearly than others through the contradictions of our era, and is the first to reconcile them.

— Robert Schumann, 1840, in a review of Mendelssohn's Trio in D Minor, Op. 49.

By the time that Mendelssohn composed his Octet, Op. 20, in 1825, at the age of sixteen, and his overture and incidental music to A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 21, in 1826, he had already composed thirteen string symphonies, five concertos, overtures, various stage works, sonatas for various instruments, quartets, choral works, numerous songs, and piano solo works.

Mendelssohn's early teachers were Carl Zelter in theory and composition, Marie Bigot and Ignaz Moscheles in piano, and Eduard Rietz on violin. From them and through his own study Mendelssohn learned well the lessons of the baroque and classic periods whose aesthetics greatly informed his own compositions. In 1823, he received a manuscript of J.S. Bach's **St. Matthew Passion**, a Christmas gift from his grandmother, which he assiduously studied for years, and in 1829, at the age of twenty, he conducted public performances at the Singakademie in Berlin.

In addition to his lessons in music, Mendelssohn was educated in Greek and Latin, he was fluent in French and English, and he was an accomplished artist in drawings and watercolors, to which his beautiful manuscript scores attest. A virtuoso pianist and organist, he was a fine violinist as well as being able to play most other instruments. Friends of the family relate that Mendelssohn was an expert gymnast, a fine horseman, swimmer, and avid player of chess.

By his middle twenties, Mendelssohn was one of the most influential musicians in Germany. In 1835, he was appointed the conductor and music director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, and in 1843, he founded the Leipzig Conservatory. He used his influence and power to revive forgotten works and to promote new works of contemporary musicians. At the Gewandhaus he conducted many works of Bach and Handel, the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, and works of Viotti, Cimarosa, Salieri, et. al. In 1839, he conducted the premiere of Schubert's **Symphony in C Major**, the manuscript of which had been sent to him by Robert Schumann. Of his contemporaries, Mendelssohn promoted the works of Robert Schumann, the Danish composer Niels Gade, Carl Maria von Weber, Ferdinand Hiller, and Julius Rietz.

Equally generous in his support of his performing colleagues, he presented Liszt, Thalberg, Moscheles, Anton Rubinstein, Vieuxtemps, and Joachim at the Gewandhaus. Mendelssohn took an early interest in the young violinist Joseph Joachim, a prize student of Ferdinand David who was the concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and a close friend of Mendelssohn. At the age of twelve, Joachim had performed in Mendelssohn's **Octet** in a private concert, and a year later, Mendelssohn recommended him to London concert promoters whom he knew from his own concerts in London. Mendelssohn was especially supportive of Clara Schumann, whom he had known since her early days as a young piano virtuoso. He conducted twenty-one of her concerts at the Gewandhaus, and he frequently performed with her in private and public concerts.

Mendelssohn's own compositions were widely performed in Germany and London during his lifetime. It is estimated that he composed 250 works, including five major symphonies; concertos for violin and piano; overtures; incidental music and stage works; piano trios and quartets; string quartets, quintets, a sextet, and an octet; sonatas for violin, viola, cello, clarinet, and organ; oratorios, psalms, and motets; numerous songs; and solo piano works. Perhaps most exceptional and enduring are his **Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op. 64**, his oratorio **Elijah, Op. 70**, the three final **Symphonies, Opp. 56, 90, 107**, the **Octet, Op. 20**, the **Piano Trios, Opp. 49 and 66**, the **Two-Viola Quintet, Op. 87**, and **Variations sériueses, Op. 54**.

Mendelssohn's rich and productive life was cut short when, devastated by the death of his beloved sister Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel in May 1847, he died not quite six months later, leaving his bereaved widow Cécile Jeanrenaud and their five children. Clara Schumann wrote in her diary:

He died from the effects of three strokes which came one after another in the course of a fortnight, just as happened with his sister Fanny... Our grief is great, for he was dear to us, not only as an artist, but as a man and a friend! His death is an irreparable loss for all those who knew and loved him ... A thousand cherished memories rise, and one feels tempted to exclaim, "Why has heaven done this?" But it has taken him from earth in the full splendour of his powers, in the flower of his age ... as an artist he stands at the highest summit of his fame ... We saw him last on March 25th, and the last time he conducted in the hall of the Gewandhaus was at my concert on Nov. 16th last year, when I played his G minor concerto. If I tried to put into words everything that one loved in him, and of his, I should never make an end. I feel that our grief for him will last all our lives.

Many years later, Clara Schumann reminisced about Mendelssohn's playing which she so admired:

My recollections of Mendelssohn's playing are among the most delightful things in my artistic life. It was to me a shining ideal, full of genius and life, united with technical perfection. He would sometimes take the tempi very quick, but never to the prejudice of the music. It never occurred to me to compare him with virtuosi. Of mere effects of performance he knew nothing – he was always the great musician, and in hearing him one forgot the player, and only revelled in the full enjoyment of the music. He could carry one with him in the most incredible manner, and his playing was always stamped with beauty and nobility. In his early days he had acquired perfection of technique; but latterly, as he often told me, he hardly ever practised, and yet he surpassed every one. I have heard him in Bach, and Beethoven, and in his own compositions, and shall never forget the impression he made upon me.

– Clara Schumann, quoted in Sir George Grove's
Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1880 edition).

The Érard piano was manufactured in Paris in 1845, and it was restored by Frits Janmaat in Amsterdam during the 1990s. From his letters to Ignaz Moscheles, it is clear that Mendelssohn's Érard piano became his favorite. He commented to Moscheles that, "There be none of Beauty's daughters with a magic like Érard's."

– Notes by Jo Anne Ritacca



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