

Mendelssohn on the Mall

January 11 – February 27, 2009

Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of
the birth of Felix Mendelssohn
(February 3, 1809 – November 4, 1847)



Presented by the Library of Congress,
the National Academy of Sciences, and the
National Gallery of Art under the gracious patronage
of His Excellency Dr. Klaus Scharioth, Ambassador
of Germany to the United States

Admission is free

The Sixty-seventh Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell
and F. Lammot Belin
National Gallery of Art

2,703rd Concert
January 25, 2009

Fine Arts Quartet

Ralph Evans and Efim Boico, *violins*
Chauncey Patterson, *viola*
Wolfgang Laufer, *cello*

Works by Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Capriccio in E Minor, op. 81, no. 3 (1843)

Scherzo in A Minor, op. 81, no. 2 (1827)

String Quartet no. 1 in E-flat Major, op. 12 (1829)

Adagio non troppo; allegro non tardante

Canzonetta: Allegretto

Andante espressivo

Molto allegro e vivace

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in D Major, op. 44, no. 1 (1838)

Molto allegro vivace

Menuetto: Un poco allegretto

Andante espressivo ma con moto

Presto con brio

The Musicians

The Fine Arts Quartet is one of the most distinguished ensembles in chamber music today. Founded in Chicago in 1946, and based at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee since 1963, the Quartet is one of the elite few to have recorded and toured internationally for over half a century. Three of the Fine Arts Quartet's current artists, Ralph Evans, Efim Boico, and Wolfgang Laufer, have been performing together for twenty-five years. Chauncey Patterson has joined them as interim violist for the 2008–2009 season, replacing Yuri Gandelsman, who recently retired.

Each season, the Fine Arts Quartet tours worldwide, with concerts in such musical centers as Beijing, Berlin, Istanbul, Jerusalem, London, Madrid, Mexico City, Moscow, New York, Paris, Rome, Tokyo, and Toronto. The ensemble also continues to record actively, with over sixty-five works recorded since 1985. The latest releases include not only the early string quartets of Beethoven but also the complete string quartets of Dohnányi, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. The Fine Arts Quartet has recorded quartets by American composers Antheil, Evans, Glass, and Herrmann, as well as chamber music by Glazunov, which *Musicweb International* named one of the “best recordings of the year 2007.” The Fine Arts Quartet's recordings have frequently been selected for GRAMMY® nominations and have been named “Critics' Choice” by *The American Record Guide*. The ensemble has also received the Award for Adventurous Programming, given jointly by Chamber Music America and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP).

The members of the Quartet have helped form and nurture many of today's leading young ensembles and have been guest professors at the conservatories of Paris and Lyon as well as the summer music schools of Yale University and Indiana University. They also appear regularly as jury members at the Bordeaux, Evian, and Shostakovich International Competitions. More information about the Fine Arts Quartet may be found at www.fineartsquartet.org. The ensemble appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Jonathan Wentworth Associates, Ltd., of Mount Vernon, New York.

Program Notes

Felix Mendelssohn was born on February 3, 1809. With “Mendelssohn on the Mall,” the Library of Congress, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Gallery of Art join musical presenters around the world in celebrating the bicentennial of the birth of a composer whose works have become essential to the Western canon. Art historians and cultural historians alike are fascinated by Mendelssohn because he was a “Renaissance man” who developed skills in many areas to a highly sophisticated level, including drawing and painting, sports, and writing. He was lionized in his own time as a composer, conductor, and performer, and the world mourned his untimely death in 1847 at age thirty-eight.

The group of four pieces that is today identified as Mendelssohn’s *String Quartet no. 7*, op. 81, contains two movements that the composer wrote shortly before his death, with the intent of completing a seventh string quartet. The other two “movements” are pieces that he had written earlier, which were incorporated posthumously into a four-movement work by the publisher Breitkopf and Härtel to create one more Mendelssohn quartet for the market. The *Capriccio in E Minor*, which was completed in 1843, consists of a slow introduction and a fugato. The *Scherzo in A Minor* was completed in 1827, and is thus a work of Mendelssohn’s prodigious youth. It has all the sprightly charm of the *Scherzo* that is associated with Puck in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, with the added attraction of a surprise coda.

Turning from Mendelssohn’s last work for string quartet to his first, the Fine Arts Quartet continues with the *String Quartet in E-flat Major*, op. 12. In 1823, at age fourteen, the young composer turned for inspiration and example to a quartet that his hero, Beethoven, had written in 1809—the *Quartet in E-flat Major*, op. 74 (“Harp”). Like its model, Mendelssohn’s quartet begins with a broad introduction that contains the motif—a rising diminished fifth—that will serve as a building block for the rest of the first movement. The second movement (*Canzonetta: Allegretto*), is the quick and light movement of the quartet; yet it reveals an unexpected reserve on the part of the teenage composer, who had already composed much more skittish fast

movements, and shows him sensitive to the shade of difference between a *canzonetta* and a *scherzo*. In the slow movement (*Andante espressivo*), the first violin carries the musical lead. The energetic finale (*Molto allegro e vivace*) follows directly on the heels of the *Andante*, as though the young athlete/composer — whose letters tell of his love of mountain climbing and other athletic activities — could hardly wait to get back onto the track for another good run. Not forgetting the formal lessons to be learned from the best quartets he had studied, Mendelssohn incorporates portions of the first movement into the last.

In 1837–1838, Mendelssohn found himself writing three quartets, all of which were published together as opus 44. Two of them were written at the behest of the violinist Ferdinand David (1810–1873), a fellow Berliner whose fine playing also inspired Mendelssohn to compose his one and only violin concerto. The *Quartet in D Major*, op. 44, no.1, begins robustly, with a measured *tremolando* that portends a piece of chamber music that has orchestral aspirations. But Mendelssohn does not indulge in any of the other devices that he sometimes uses when writing for orchestra, such as sweeping arpeggios or double stops. Instead, he uses imitation, long melodic lines, lush harmonies, and canon to add special interest and gravitas to this quartet and carry it to a level higher than that of his earlier quartets. The second movement (*Menuetto: Un poco allegretto*) marks the only instance where the composer limited himself to the classical minuet, where he could have used the more romantic *canzonetta* or energetic *scherzo*. In the fiery final movement (*Presto con brio*) the irrepressible and vibrant young man (now at the ripe old age of twenty-nine) comes once again to the fore.

Program notes by Stephen Ackert

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

Mendelssohn on the Mall

January 11–February 27, 2009

Concerts and Events

JANUARY

11 Ma'alot Wind Quintet

Mendelssohn: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, transcribed for wind quintet; music by Ligeti, Barber, and Piazzolla
Preceded at 6:00 pm by a preconcert lecture: *Mendelssohn and the Visual Arts*

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

**18 Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio
with guest artists Edwin Kaplan
and Sel Kardan, violas, and Kurt
Muroki, bass**

Mendelssohn: *Sextet for Piano and Strings*, op. 87; music by Sheng and Smetana

SUNDAY, 3:00 PM
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

**18 National Gallery Orchestra,
Kenneth Slowik, guest conductor**
Mendelssohn: *"Italian" Symphony*;
Schubert: *Symphony in C Major*
("Great")

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

25 Fine Arts Quartet

Mendelssohn: *Quartets*, opp. 12
and 44/1

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

FEBRUARY

Exhibition of Mendelssohn manuscripts, letters, watercolors, and the Mendelssohn family scrapbook

THROUGHOUT FEBRUARY 2009
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

1 Ulrich Urban, pianist

Mendelssohn: *Fantasies and Caprices*, op. 16; selected *Songs without Words*; *Variations sérieuses*, op. 54

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

6 Cypress Quartet

Mendelssohn: *Quartet*, op. 13; music by Beethoven and Puts

FRIDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

8 Josef Feigelson, cellist Peep Lassmann, pianist

Mendelssohn's complete works for cello and piano

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

10 Mira Trio

Hensel: *Piano Trio in D Minor*, op. 11; Mendelssohn and Hensel: *Songs without Words*; Mendelssohn: *Piano Trio no. 2 in C Minor*, op. 66
Preceded at 6:15 pm by a preconcert presentation by Susan Clermont, Music Division, Library of Congress

FRIDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

13 Atrium Quartet

Mendelssohn: *Quartet*, op. 80; music by Shostakovich and Borodin

FRIDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

15 University of Akron Concert Choir, Samuel Gordon, conductor

Mendelssohn: *Wie der Hirsch schreit*, op. 42; Chorale Cantata: *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*; hymn: *Hör mein bitten*

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

18 Trio con Brio Copenhagen with guest artist James Dunham, viola

Mendelssohn: *Piano Quartet in B Minor*, op. 3; Beethoven: "Archduke" Trio

Preceded at 6:15 pm by a preconcert presentation by R. Larry Todd, Duke University

WEDNESDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

19 Presentation by R. Larry Todd, Duke University

Reflections on the Mendelssohn Bicentenary

THURSDAY, 7:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

22 Mendelssohn Piano Trio

Mendelssohn: *Piano Trio in D Minor*, op. 49; music by Beethoven

SUNDAY, 6:30 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

27 Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh, Betsy Burleigh, director

Mendelssohn: *Psalm 55: Sechs Sprüche*, op. 79; music by Handel, Haydn, Herbert, and Rindfleisch

FRIDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Mailing address
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

www.nga.gov

National Academy of Sciences
Auditorium Entrance: 2100 C Street, NW
Admission free with photo ID
Additional information at 202-334-2436

www.nasonline.org/arts

For events at the Library of Congress,
advance reservation of tickets is recommended.
Tickets are distributed by Ticketmaster (202-397-SEAT).
The tickets are free, but there is a service charge
for the reservation.

www.loc.gov/concerts

COVER: Carl Joseph Begas, *Felix Mendelssohn*
Bartholdy, 1821, Private Collection