

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

2,701st Concert
January 11, 2009

Ma'alot Quintet

Stephanie Winker, *flute*
Ulf-Guido Schäfer, *clarinet*
Christian Wetzel, *oboe*
Volker Tessmann, *bassoon*
Volker Grewel, *horn*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Arranged by Ulf-Guido Schäfer

Ein Sommernachtstraum (A Midsummer Night's Dream), op. 61

Intermezzo

Auftritt der Handwerker (Entrance of the Tradesmen)

Elfenmarsch (March of the Elves)

Lied und Elfenchor (Song and Elves' Chorus)

Marcia funebre (Funeral March)

Scherzo

Notturmo

Tanz der Rüpel (Dance of the Boors)

György Sándor Ligeti (1923–2006)

Six Bagatelles

Allegro con spirito

Rubato; lamentoso

Allegro grazioso

Presto ruvido

Adagio; mesto

Molto vivace; capriccioso

INTERMISSION

Samuel Barber (1910–1981)

Summer Music, op. 31 (1956)

Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)

Arranged by Ulf-Guido Schäfer

Suite

Primavera porteña (from *Estaciones porteñas*)

Café (from *Histoire du tango*)

Verano porteño (from *Estaciones porteñas*)

Scott Joplin (c. 1867–1917)

Arranged by Ulf-Guido Schäfer

Ragtimes

The Ragtime Dance

Fig Leaf Rag

The Musicians

The Ma'alot Quintet was founded in 1986 and quickly gained international recognition after winning four first prizes in major music festivals: Deutscher Musikrat, Bonn; Jeunesse Musical, Belgrade; Martigny, Switzerland; and the Munich ARD Competition (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland). Though its repertoire ranges from the classics to contemporary material, the Ma'alot Quintet especially champions new music, often in close collaboration with living composers, introducing audiences to new sounds and ideas and thereby expanding the chamber music repertoire. In addition, the ensemble also presents arrangements specially prepared for them by its members Ulf-Guido Schäfer and Volker Grewel. All members of the ensemble hold positions in major German orchestras or serve as professors at German music schools.

The ensemble regularly appears in the major concert halls of Germany and has been invited to many of Europe's capitals, including Amsterdam, Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Bern, Dublin, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, and Vienna. It has made extended tours throughout Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, and Turkey. Recent festival engagements include the Beethovenfest Bonn, the Bodensee Festival, Kissinger Sommer, and the Kuhmo, Mozartfest Augsburg, and Rheingau music festivals. In North America, the ensemble has performed in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and New York City.

The Ma'alot Quintet has made six critically-acclaimed recordings for Glissando, and now records exclusively for the MDG label. Its CD of chamber works by Dvořák won the 2005 Echo Klassik prize, and its Piazzolla recording, *Tangos für Bläserquintett*, was released in 2006. The Quintet appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Shupp Artists Management of Port Jefferson, New York.

The Composers

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 38.

Until the late nineteenth century, it was a tradition to arrange operas and symphonies for wind ensembles. This so-called *Harmoniemusik* made the music from large productions available to a wider audience. Mendelssohn composed incidental music for an 1843 production of William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with a full pit orchestra in mind. In this arrangement for woodwind quintet, Ulf-Guido Schäfer recreates the old tradition of reducing the original orchestration to an ensemble of five wind players. The character and virtuosity of the woodwinds convey the atmosphere of a fantastic midsummer night’s dream even more effectively than the full orchestra does. The arrangement does not include Mendelssohn’s original overture, wedding march, or finale, and the order of movements differs from the original. The work takes the form of a serenade that immediately carries the listener into the affairs of the fairy kingdom.

Born in Transylvania to Hungarian-speaking Jewish parents, György Sándor Ligeti was educated at the Kolozsvár Conservatory. After enduring severe hardships during World War II, including the death of his father and brother in concentration camps, he went on, like his countrymen Bartók and Kodály before him, to pursue research in folk music, particularly that of Romania. He is considered to be one of the outstanding avant-garde composers of the twentieth century.

Ligeti composed a set of eleven *bagatelles* (trifles) for piano solo in 1951. Two years later, he re-orchestrated six of them for wind quintet. In 1956 the Hungarian government banned a complete premiere of the opus, claiming that the chromaticism was dangerous to the public. Minimalistic yet intense would be the best way to describe these six short pieces. Most are no longer than two minutes in duration, and the longest is just over three minutes. Ligeti also paid homage to Bartók in these pieces, dedicating number five to him.

Samuel Barber was not a prolific composer of chamber music, and this single-movement work is his only wind quintet. Much of Barber's music—*Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, for example—evokes a certain nostalgia, a longing for a past that cannot be relived, and *Summer Music* is one of these pieces. At times lackadaisical and drowsy, and at others full of energy and activity, it can be seen as a recollection of Barber's adolescent days in the suburbs of Philadelphia.

Piazzolla's *Estaciones porteñas* is a composition depicting the four seasons in Buenos Aires. The pieces were originally composed as individual works, with relatively large spaces of time separating the composition of one from the next. In addition to the version for piano by Piazzolla himself and various arrangements, there is a version that he wrote for his own quintet

for the bandoneon, violin, guitar, piano, and double bass. The arrangement for wind quintet follows the lead of these animated and passionate Piazzolla documents: the spring with its tempestuous animation and the oppressive humidity in the summer. In contrast to the *Estaciones porteñas*, *Histoire du Tango* is a work for a set instrumentation. Originally composed for flute and guitar, it offers a highly atmospheric overview of the development of the tango. In *Café*, which revives the tango of the 1930s, the music conveys unfulfilled yearnings and a melancholy world-weariness.

Scott Joplin, the “King of Ragtime,” is best known for being the first composer to develop the genre. Born in Texas and raised there and in the Midwest, Joplin showed a talent for playing the piano at a young age. After years of studying piano, harmony, and theory, he found his niche playing in dance halls and brothels. He combined elements of European classical music with African rhythms and Creole sounds to make his piano rags uniquely American.

Program notes on Mendelssohn and Piazzolla by Ulf-Guido Schäfer

Program notes on Ligeti, Barber, and Joplin by Danielle DeSwert

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 Amadi Hummings
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 lecture 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

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

WEDNESDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

19 Lecture 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, and Mozart

FRIDAY, 8:00 PM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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

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2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

www.nga.gov

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