

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

2,702nd Concert
January 18, 2009

National Gallery Orchestra
Kenneth Slowik, *guest conductor*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
Symphony no. 4, op. 90 (“Italian”)

Allegro vivace

Andante con moto

Con moto moderato

Saltarello: Presto

INTERMISSION

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Symphony no. 9 in C Major, D. 944 (“Great”)

Andante; allegro ma non troppo; piu moto

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Finale: Allegro vivace

The Musicians

NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA

The National Gallery Orchestra was founded in 1943 and initially consisted of approximately twenty-five players drawn from the National Symphony Orchestra. Gradually growing in numbers, the Gallery orchestra eventually reached the size and status of a large chamber orchestra. The ensemble has undertaken the full range of chamber and symphonic repertoire and has frequently presented first performances of works by American composers, most notably the 1953 premiere of Charles Ives' *Symphony no. 1* under the direction of Richard Bales and the 1990 premiere of Daniel Pinkham's *Symphony no. 4* under George Manos. The orchestra recently completed a highly successful concert tour in North Carolina, under the direction of guest conductor Vladimir Lande.

KENNETH SLOWIK

Kenneth Slowik first established his international reputation primarily as a cellist and viola da gamba player through his work with Anner Bylisma's *L'Archibudelli*, the Axelrod Quartet, the Castle Trio, the Smithsonian String Quartet, and the Smithsonian Chamber Players. In 1988 he was named artistic director of the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society and became the conductor of the Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra and the Santa Fe Bach Festival. In 1993 he was appointed artistic director of the Baroque Performance Institute at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, and he led the Santa Fe Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra from 1999–2004. In recent years he has devoted increasing amounts of time to conducting orchestral, oratorio, and operatic repertoire with modern- and period-instrument ensembles on both sides of the Atlantic.

Slowik has been a featured instrumental soloist and/or conductor with numerous orchestras, among them the Baltimore Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the National Symphony, l'Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, and the Vancouver Symphony. A frequent guest artist with prominent

chamber groups as well as with most of the leading American early music ensembles, he enjoys providing the organ or harpsichord continuo for performances of large-scale baroque works at various festivals in the United States and abroad, and appears in recital both as harpsichord soloist and fortepiano collaborator for duo sonatas and Lieder. He previously appeared at the National Gallery in several of the above capacities in 2000, 2005, and 2006.

Slowik's impressive discography comprises more than sixty recordings featuring him as conductor, cellist, gambist, and keyboard player for music ranging from the baroque (Marais, Corelli, Bach) through the classical (Haydn, Boccherini, Beethoven, Schubert) and romantic periods (Mendelssohn, Gade, Spohr) to the early twentieth century (Schönberg, Mahler, Richard Strauss). Of these, many have won prestigious international awards, including France's Diapason d'Or and Choc, the British Music Retailers' Award for Excellence, Italy's Premio Internazionale del Disco Antonio Vivaldi, two GRAMMY® nominations, and numerous "Record of the Month" and "Record of the Year" prizes. Current projects include a twenty-CD traversal of the complete Haydn baryton trios with the ensemble Esterházy Machine, and a documentary DVD about Schönberg's *First Chamber Symphony* and *Verklärte Nacht*.

As an educator, Slowik has presented lectures at colleges and universities throughout the United States and has contributed to a number of symposia and colloquia at museums throughout the United States and Europe. He serves on the faculties of the University of Maryland and l'Académie internationale du Domaine Forget in Québec.

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 38.

Mendelssohn’s fourth and last symphony is dubbed “Italian” because he jotted down the first sketches for the work while he was traveling in Italy for the first time in 1830. There is a reference to music in the Italian style in the final movement, but the connection of this symphony to Italy has been drawn primarily by musicologists, who have compared the exuberance of the first movement with a letter Mendelssohn wrote on the occasion of his arrival in Italy, which includes the lines: “Italy, at last! What I have all my life considered as the greatest possible felicity is now begun.”

The second movement (*Andante con moto*) has given rise to speculation on the part of some famous musicologists as to possible inner meanings in the music. Sir Donald Francis Tovey (1875–1940) found it to be a religious testimony, tracing Mendelssohn’s “progress” from Judaism to Christianity (The Mendelssohn family converted secretly in 1816, when Felix was seven years old). Sir George Grove (1820–1900), principal editor of the famous *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, heard the two opening measures of the movement as “the cry of a muezzin from his minaret.”

The third movement (*Con moto moderato*) reveals Mendelssohn as the romantic classicist, a position in music history that he occupies more firmly than any other composer. It is a scherzo in the traditional manner, with the usual repeats and a contrasting middle section, or trio. A whimsical departure from the standard form occurs at the very end of the movement, when Mendelssohn slips in a brief recollection of the main idea from the trio.

The fourth movement's reference to Italian music comes in the form of a *saltarello*, a traditional dance marked by rapid rhythm and athletic movements that include impulsive leaps. The dancelike character of the movement becomes more intense as the rhythm evolves into the more feverish pulse of the *tarantella*. As the movement draws to a close, Mendelssohn blends the two dances, resulting in an exhilarating finish.

When Franz Schubert died in 1828, Mendelssohn—already an accomplished composer—was just nineteen years old. He was well acquainted with Schubert's works and a great admirer of them, especially the ninth and last, the *Symphony in C Major*, which Mendelssohn and others who revered Schubert came to identify as the "Great" symphony. It represented hero worship and a compositional crisis on Schubert's part, because, after the impact on the musical world of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, any other composer's ninth symphony would unavoidably be compared to that monumental work. Schubert responded to the challenge by extending the length of every part of the first movement, placing more than the usual number of beautiful melodies in each (the introduction alone has three themes), and developing the motifs with a passion, intensity, heroic breadth, and dramatic interest that surpassed anything he had previously written.

The lyrical second movement (*Andante con moto*) serves as a beautiful foil for the Beethovenesque first movement. Its reverie is interrupted by distant trumpet calls, which seem to come from another world, and disappear as mysteriously as they came. Both the cello and the oboe are given sublime melodies, which are eventually woven together in a duet.

In the third movement (*Scherzo: Allegro vivace*), Schubert elaborates at length in each repeated section and transforms the traditional triple meter of the scherzo into an accented waltz. The trio appears to have been inspired by an Austrian folk song, with a repeated note in the horns perhaps calling to mind the alphorn.

The final movement (*Allegro vivace*) bursts upon the listener like a storm, propelled along its course by an ebullient triplet figure that first appears in the strings. As in the Scherzo, the horns are given the honor of prefacing each new theme with a fanfare. The movement has two themes, both of which return with great effect in the recapitulation that ends the symphony with triumph and conviction.

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