

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)

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

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



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

Mendelssohn on the Mall

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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

The calendar of concerts and events
continues on the inside back cover.

The Sixty-seventh Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell
and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

National Gallery of Art

2,704th Concert

February 1, 2009

Ulrich Urban, pianist

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Three Songs without Words

Allegretto, op. 85, no. 5

Andante tranquillo, op. 67, no. 3

Molto allegro e vivace ("Jägerlied"), op. 19, no. 3

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Sonata in E-flat Major ("The Great"), Hob. 52 (1794)

Allegro

Adagio

Finale: Presto

Mendelssohn

Three Fantasies or Caprices, op. 16 (1829)

Fantasy in A Minor (Andante con moto; allegro vivace)

Fantasy in E Major ("The Rivulet") (Andante)

Caprice in E Minor (Scherzo: Presto)

INTERMISSION

Elizabeth R. Austin (b. 1938)

Four Puzzle Preludes on Classical Themes (1994–2009)

Vivace-Adagio (Mendelssohn)

World Premiere Performance

Andante con moto (Brahms)

Allegro (Beethoven)

Andante (Schubert)

Mendelssohn

Variations sérieuses, op. 56 (1841)

This concert is made possible by funds provided by the
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Musician

Born in Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany, Ulrich Urban studied piano at the Leipzig Conservatory with Günter Kootz, and conducting with Rolf Reuter. From 1969 to the present, he has taught at that institution, where he was promoted to full professor of piano in 1991. His first performances of Bach garnered glowing reviews, and his repertoire includes works by composers associated with Leipzig's musical traditions such as Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Max Reger (1873–1916), and Richard Wagner (1813–1883). He has also introduced new works by Elizabeth R. Austin, Gernot Grohs, and Erle Ninow as well as the complete works of the English composer Clement Harris, which he recorded in 2004. His concert tours have taken him to Europe, Japan, South Africa, South America, and the United States, where he has also conducted master classes. Urban has performed piano concertos with more than forty orchestras, including the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, the Dresden and Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and the Weimar Staatskapelle, as well as orchestras in other parts of Europe and South Africa.

German Radio productions account for 20 of the 35 piano concertos Urban has played in more than 160 broadcasts. His spoken commentaries that accompany his radio performances add new insights into the music as well as the specially featured pianos by the German manufacturers Blüthner and Irmeler. His numerous CD recordings encompass all musical styles, with emphasis on the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His CDs are available on the Ambitus, Berlin-Classics, Beoton, Capstone, Eterna, Hänssler, Koch-Schwann, Magna, Querstand, and vms labels.

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.

Mendelssohn composed incidental pieces that he titled “Songs without Words” throughout his career, resulting in a total of eight volumes of pieces that received wide distribution. With these songlike and lyrical short interludes, the composer seems to be contrasting his masterful symphonies and oratorios with the inflection of folksong and the mood and expectations of the early Victorian period. The *Allegretto in A Major* comes from the seventh volume and signals the onset of evening by its heraldic chords. The *Andante tranquillo in B-flat Major*, from volume six, carries suppressed emotion almost to the point of austerity, yet portends the melodic style of Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). The famous “Jägerlied” (Hunting Song) is found already in the first volume. It makes its impression by means of rhythmic forcefulness and pianistic brilliance.

Haydn’s *Sonata in E-flat Major* is one of his last piano sonatas. It represents an amalgam of all of his previous experiences with the sonata form and points ahead to the more virtuosic style of early romantic composers such as Mendelssohn. The first movement projects majestic dignity in its opening measures, but as it unfolds, it indulges in extremes, ranging from jocular and joyful exuberance to deeply dramatic diversions. The detachment from the world that seems to prevail in the E-flat minor portion of the *Adagio* is overtaken and reversed by the change of key to E major. The theme for the

final movement (*Presto*) sounds like a popular street ballad. It proceeds at such a breakneck pace that the composer sees fit to insert periodic fermatas as points at which to catch one’s breath. Haydn wrote the sonata in 1794 in London, but did not publish it there. He took it with him when he returned to Germany in 1795, and submitted it for publication to the Leipzig firm Breitkopf & Härtel.

Mendelssohn wrote his three *Fantasies or Caprices* while on a grand tour of England and Scotland at age twenty. This was the same year (1829) in which the young composer organized and conducted the first “modern” performance of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion*, a notable achievement for its time and for a person of his age. The dark beginning in A minor of the first fantasy (*Andante con moto; allegro vivace*) intimates how Mendelssohn will later begin his “Scottish” *Symphony*. The famous *Presto* in E minor is the second fantasy, and the triptych is completed by the *Andante*, a hymn to nature. These three pieces are no less mature than the incidental music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which Mendelssohn completed a few years earlier.

Born in Baltimore in 1938, Elizabeth R. Austin received her early musical training at The Peabody Conservatory, studying under Grace N. Cushman. Austin was a student-composer when the famous French composer and master teacher Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979) visited Goucher College in Towson, Maryland. Boulanger awarded Austin a scholarship to study at the Conservatoire Americaine in Fontainebleau, France, after hearing her *Drei Rilke Lieder* (Three Rilke Songs). Later in her career, Austin taught composition and music theory at various music institutions in Hartford, Connecticut, including the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford, where she earned a master of music degree while on the faculty. While studying for her Ph.D. at the University of Connecticut, Austin won first prize in the Lipscomb Electronic Music Competition for her *Klavier Double* for piano and tape. Other awards have included a Connecticut Commission on the Arts grant, an award from GEDOK (The Society of Women

Artists in German-speaking Countries), first prize in the International Association of Women Musicians' 1998 Miriam Gideon Competition, and a Rockefeller Foundation award for a month-long residency at Bellagio, Italy, in 2001. Austin's music has been broadcast worldwide, including repeated broadcasts on Germany's Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk in collaboration with Ulrich Urban, who has also performed her works in the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Austin is organist and choir director at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, Windham Center, Connecticut, and she serves on the Alumni Board of the Walden School for Young Composers in New Hampshire.

With *Four Puzzle Preludes on Classical Themes*, Elizabeth Austin has reworked a motive from classical music in her own "American" style, thereby building a bridge between the "old" and "new" worlds. In the first prelude, which Austin composed specially for this concert, there is a reference to Mendelssohn's *Presto*, op. 16, no. 2, giving a new perspective to this witty piece. The original themes in the other preludes also take on new meaning as they appear in an atonal setting or in a camouflaged form.

Mendelssohn first performed his *Variations sérieuses* in 1841, while visiting Robert and Clara Schumann in their Leipzig apartment. Written at the apogee of Mendelssohn's creative life, the variations are today regarded as his most important contribution to piano literature. They elaborate on a theme in D minor that is presented earnestly and dispassionately, but each subsequent variation adds a new level of movement and stormy virtuosity. The slower variations that appear toward the middle of the work provide rest and composure. They are followed by a short fugue, so masterfully crafted that the listener wishes it were much longer. After one more quiet and remarkably simple variation — the only one in D major — the work rushes to a dramatic close.

Program notes by Ulrich Urban, translated by Stephen Ackert

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.

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