

STEREO

MCS 2045



Felix
Mendelssohn
Sonatas
for
'Cello
and
Piano
played by
David
'CELLO
Soyer,
Harriet
Wingreen,
PIANO



DAVID SOYER and HARRIET WINGREEN

Play MENDELSSOHN

Sonatas for Cello and Piano

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Side One	
SONATA NO. 1 in B Flat, Op. 45 For Cello and Piano	
1. <i>Allegro vivace</i>	8:35
2. <i>Andante</i>	6:09
3. <i>Allegro assai</i>	6:00
Side Two	
Sonata No. 2 in D Major, Op. 58 For Cello and Piano	
1. <i>Allegro assai vivace</i>	7:30
2. <i>Allegretto scherzando</i>	4:40
3. <i>Adagio</i>	4:45
4. <i>Molto allegro e vivace</i>	6:45

Jakob, Ludwig, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was born in Hamburg, in the Grosse Michaelisstrasse No. 14, on February 3, 1809. As the grandson of the distinguished scholar, Moses Mendelssohn, and the son of a highly successful banker, Abraham Mendelssohn, Felix was fortunate in being able to enjoy a life rich in social and cultural contacts — a life quite free of the cares and trials which practical necessity imposes on those less fortunately endowed.

Lea Mendelssohn, Felix's mother, possessed a limited knowledge of music and gave the youngster some rudimentary training. His later teachers included a Mme. Bigot (she worked with Felix on the occasion of his trip *en famille* to Paris in 1816), Ludwig Berger (a pupil of Clementi and Field), Henning (the violinist), Zelter (a famed teacher of composition) and Hummel (the noted pianist and composer).

Chamber music was Mendelssohn's earliest love, the Sunday morning musicales in the family's ancestral home on the Neue Promenade, and later in the hall or garden house at No. 3 Leipzigerstrasse, acting as a powerful stimulus on the musically talented youth. It is therefore not surprising that the fifty or sixty works belonging to Mendelssohn's youth (from about 1820 on include sonatas for violin and piano, a trio for piano and strings, 'sinfonies' for string quartet, two piano quartets (Ops. 1 & 2), the violin sonata dedicated to Rietz (Op. 4), and similar concerted pieces. In 1826, when the publisher Nageli wrote to Mendelssohn asking for some piano pieces, the composer found it necessary to admit that he had nothing to offer because "... sonatas with violin or tenor, quartets, etc., have always had more attraction for me."

All of the Mendelssohn children were musically talented. Fanny and Felix were pianists, Paul played the violoncello, and Rebecca sang. To be sure, Felix had also studied the violin in his childhood but, it must be admitted, he never rose much above the amateur stage with this instrument — probably as much because of the lack of serious work in this direction as for any other reason. After all, he was a fairly good violinist, at least by the standards of his own times.

With the exception of some music for clarinet written for his friend Heinrich Barman, Mendelssohn never evinced much interest in chamber music with winds — he obviously preferred strings (with and without the piano). His warm spacious cello melodies in the *Hebrides* and *Ruy Blas* overtures as well as in certain sections of *Elijah*, and the two cello sonatas (as well as a set of *Variations in D*, Op. 17, written for Paul) provide adequate testimony to his love for the cello in both solo and orchestral settings.

The *Violoncello Sonata in B-flat (Op. 45)* — written for Paul Mendelssohn — was composed at Leipzig in 1838, the same year in which both Bizet and Bruch were born. As is the case with the sonata Op. 58, this earlier work is mature, interesting to both players, and demonstrates Mendelssohn's mastery of the cello-piano medium. Noteworthy is the composer's ability to write music characteristic of each individual instrument, and then to combine them in a texture of startling lucidity. Although this is not music of extreme technical difficulty, it is music which is hard to play well.

The andante movement of Op. 45 is unusual (at least for Mendelssohn) in that it is held together by a simple rhythmic motif $\text{3\8} \text{3\8} \text{3\8} \text{3\8}$ which can be heard throughout. The first and last movements are somewhat alike, the former being the more strongly knit despite the broad, attractive main theme and the lovely quiet coda of the finale.

Op. 58 is in four movements, the first sonorous and impressive; the second a highly-polished scherzando which contrasts delicacy in tone and register with tempestuous octaves; the third (among Mendelssohn's most original movements) presenting a dignified chorale-melody in the piano to be answered by an impassioned cello recitative (certainly this foreshadows Franck's treatment of a chorale-like theme!); and the fourth *molto allegro e vivace* being a facile and brilliant display in which the composer follows his oft-repeated practice of avoiding the tonic chord for as long as possible. Like its predecessor, it is among the most effective works in the cello-piano repertoire.

Notes by Leonard Altman

David Soyer

David Soyer, eminent American cellist, is a native of Philadelphia. He made his debut as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy and has played recitals in New York's Carnegie and Town Halls. He has been heard in concert throughout the U.S.A. and Canada, and is well-known for both chamber music and solo playing. "There are not many cellists today who share Soyer's tone, technical facility, and musicianship." (*Washington Times Herald*).

Harriet Wingreen

Miss Wingreen, a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, has concertized and recorded extensively in this country and abroad. As a member of the New York Chamber Soloists and the Musical Art Quartet, she has participated in many performances of classical and contemporary chamber music. With Gerald and Wilfred Beal, violinists, she has recorded for Monitor works by Telemann, Handel and Milhaud (Monitor MC 2008).

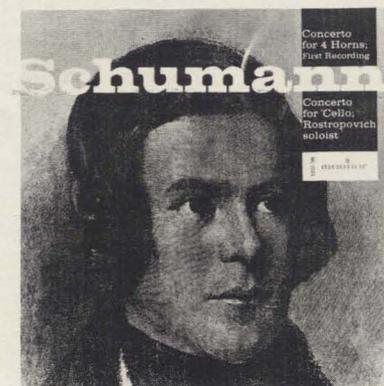
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