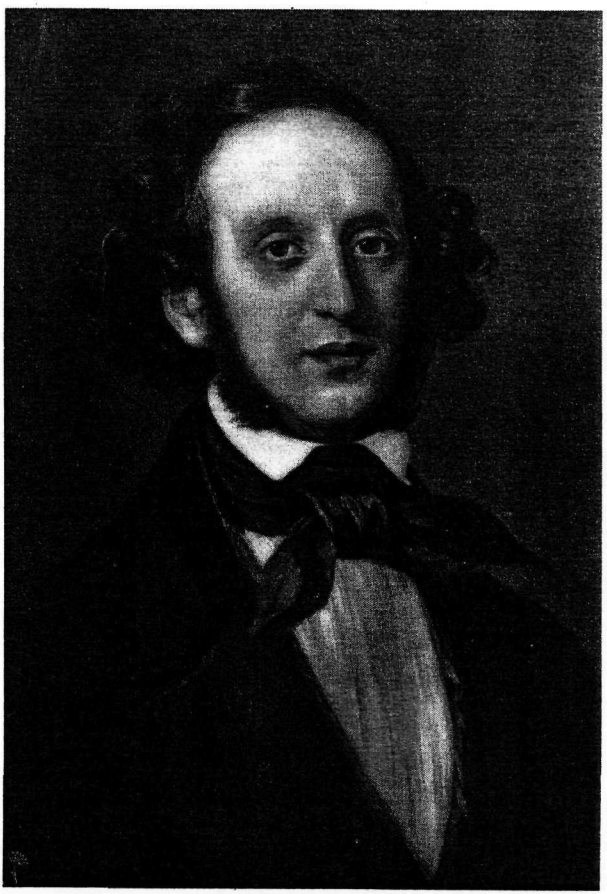

Felix Mendelssohn

200th Birthday Concert

Thursday, February 5, 2009
Recital Hall
7:30 p.m.

Program

Der 43ste Psalm: Richte mich, Gott, Op. 78

Chamber Singers

Welborn Young, conductor
Pam McDermott, accompanist

Three Marches for Harmoniemusik

Casella Sinfonietta

Flute: Julie Smith
E-flat Clarinet: Matt Libera
B-flat Clarinets: Kelly Austermann, Jacey Kepich
Bassoons: Leah Plimpton, Kristen Wright, Chris Akins
Horns: Kathryn Bridwell-Briner, Nick Lee
Trumpets: Christian McIvor, Jamie Dickens
Trombone: Brandon Slocumb
Tuba: Brad Slusarczyk

Kiyoshi Carter, guest conductor

Two Pieces for String Quartet, Op. 81
No. 2 – Scherzo
No. 3 – Capriccio-Fugue

Liberace Quartet

~ *intermission* ~

Nocturno, Op. 24

Casella Sinfonietta

Flute: James Miller
Oboes: Heidi Reed, Kandace Stephenson
Clarinets: Boja Kraguli, Matt Libera
Bassoons: Leah Plimpton, Kristen Wright, Chris Akins
Horns: Andrea Brown, Drew Phillips
Trumpet: Allyson Keyser

Kevin M. Geraldi, conductor

Konzertstuck, Op. 114, No. 2

Kelly Burke, clarinet and Jonathan Salter, Basset horn
Inara Zandmane, piano

Prelude and Fugue in B-flat, Op. 35, No. 6
Variations Sérieuses, Op. 54

Andrew Willis, piano

Biography

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
(b. Hamburg, 3 February 1809; d. Leipzig, 4 November 1847)

Of a distinguished intellectual, artistic and banking family in Berlin, he grew up in a privileged environment (the family converted from Judaism to Christianity in 1816, taking the additional 'Bartholdy'). He studied the piano with Ludwig Berger and theory and composition with Zelter, producing his first piece in 1820; thereafter, a profusion of sonatas, concertos, string symphonies, piano quartets and Singspiels revealed his increasing mastery of counterpoint and form. Besides family travels and eminent visitors to his parents' salon (Humboldt, Hegel, Klingemann, A.B. Marx, Devrient), early influences included the poetry of Goethe (whom he knew from 1821) and the Schlegel translations of Shakespeare; these are traceable in his best music of the period, including the exuberant String Octet op.20 and the vivid, poetic overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* op.21. His gifts as a conductor also showed themselves early in 1829 he directed a pioneering performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at the Berlin Singakademie, promoting the modern cultivation of Bach's music.

A period of travel and concert-giving introduced Mendelssohn to England, Scotland (1829) and Italy (1830-31); after return visits to Paris (1831) and London (1832, 1833) he took up a conducting post at Düsseldorf (1833-5), concentrating on Handel's oratorios. Among the chief products of this time were *The Hebrides* (first performed in London, 1832), the g Minor Piano Concerto, *Die erste Walpurgisnacht,* the Italian Symphony (1833, London) and *St. Paul* (1836, Düsseldorf). But as a conductor and music organizer his most significant achievement was in Leipzig (1835-47), where to great acclaim he conducted the Gewandhaus Orchestra, championing both historical and modern works Bach, Beethoven, Weber, Schumann, Berlioz), and founded and directed the Leipzig Conservatory (1843).

Composing mostly in the summer holidays, he produced *Ruy Blas* overture, a revised version of the *Hymn of Praise*, the Scottish Symphony, the now famous Violin Concerto op.64 and the fine Piano Trio in c Minor (1845). Meanwhile, he was intermittently (and less happily) employed by the king as a composer and choirmaster in Berlin, where he wrote highly successful incidental music, notably for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1843). Much sought after as a festival organizer, he was associated especially with the Lower Rhine and Birmingham music festivals; he paid ten visits to England, the last two (1840-7) to conduct *Elijah* in Birmingham and London. Always a warm friend and valued colleague, he was devoted to his family; his death at the age of 38, after a series of strokes, was mourned internationally.

With its emphasis on clarity and adherence to classical ideals, Mendelssohn's music shows alike the influences of Bach (fugal technique), Handel (rhythms, harmonic progressions), Mozart (dramatic characterization, forms, textures) and Beethoven (instrumental technique), though from 1825 he developed a characteristic style of his own, often underpinned by a literary, artistic historical, geographical or emotional connection. Indeed it was chiefly in his skilful use of extra-musical stimuli that he was a Romantic.

(Excerpted from ***Grove Music Online****)*

Program Notes

Psalm 43, Richte mich, Gott (Judge Me, O God), is the second of three psalm settings grouped as Opus 78 within Mendelssohn's catalogue of works. Psalm 2, Why do the heathen rage, and Psalm 22, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me are the other two psalms in this opus. Composed for the cathedral choir of Berlin, Psalm 43 shows the influence of his recent trip to Italy and the study of early Italian composers. Mendelssohn illuminates contrasting vocal timbres with a four-part division of male voices against a four-part division of female voices in a quasi-Venetian style. Through varied and interesting harmonic features, this relatively conservative work still reflects the middle "Romantic" era.

Der 43ste Psalm: Richte mich, Gott

Richte mich, Gott, und Führe meine Sache wider
das unheilige Volk und errette mich
von falschen und bösen Leuten!
Denn du bist der Gott meiner Stärke;
warum verstössest du mich?
Warum lässet du mich so traurig gehn,
wenn mein Feind mich drängt?
Sende dein Licht und deine Wahrheit,
dass sie mich leiten
und bringen zu deinem heiligen Berge
und zu deiner Wohnung,

dass ich hineingehe zum Altar Gottes,
zu dem Gott, der meine Freude und Wonne ist,
und dir, Gott, auf der Harfe danke, mein Gott.

Was betrübst du dich, meine Seele,
und bist so unruhig in mir?
Harre auf Gott!
denn ich werde ihm noch danken,
das ser meines Angesichts Hülfe
und mein Gott ist.

Psalm 43: Judge Me, O God

Judge me, O god, and lead my cause

against the unholy nation, and deliver me
from the deceitful and malicious people!
For you are the God of my strength.
why do you cast me away?
Why do you let me be so sorrowful
when my foe oppresses me?
Send your light and your truth,
that they might lead me
and bring me to your holy mountain
and to your dwelling

that I might enter unto the altar of God,
to the God who is my joy and my delight,

and give thanks to you, my Godd, on the harp.

Why are you so troubled, my soul,
and why are you so restless within me?
Hope in God!
for I will still give thanks to him,
because he is the salvation of my countenance
and my God.

The exact origin of the ***Three Marches for Hamoniemusik*** is unknown. Historical speculation, however places their composition during the period from 1833-1835 when Mendelssohn worked as Musicipal Music Director in Dusseldorf. In addition to his responsibilities as music director he was also in charge of the city's Protestant and Catholic church music. Perhaps the most important aspect of Mendelssohn's tenure at Dusseldorf is that he developed and maintained a healthy relationship with its Stadtpfeifer (municipal wind band) even after he left the city. In a letter dated 26 October 1833 he refers to a "solemn march in E-flat" for winds that he had composed, and that was used in the day's processionals.

> The history of my life for these last few weeks is long and merry. On Sunday, St. Maximilian's Feast day, [I led the music for] my first church Mass. The choir was full to overflowing with male and female singers, and the entire church dolled up with green branches and draperies; the organist played parallel fifths horribly up and down the keyboard; the Mass by Haydn was scandalously merry- and yet as a whole it was passable.
>
> Then came the processional with my solemn march in E-Flat, in which the lower instruments repeated the first part while the upper ones went on [i.e., with the second half] – but in the open air that was of no consequence, and by the time I encountered the processional later on they had played the march so often that it went quite well. I consider it an honor that the church-fair musicians have already invited me to compose a new march for them for the next church fair.

From this letter we can reasonably infer that at least one of the marches in this set was the march played for the church processional. The other two were mostly likely written later at the request of the municipal band.

After Mendelssohn's death in 1847, four pieces for string quartet (***Andante***, ***Scherzo***, ***Capriccio*** and ***Fugue***) were gathered and labeled as Opus 81. It is generally accepted that the *Andante* and *Scherzo* (both dating from 1847) may have been the beginning of a final string quartet, leaving the *Capriccio* and *Fugue* (1843 and 1827, respectively) unattached. Though the movements heard tonight do not represent part of a single cohesive piece for string quartet, they are both succinct examples of the styles and textures for which Mendelssohn is best remembered.

The Opus 81 *Scherzo* looks back to both the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture and the Scherzo of his *Octet*, both of which Mendelssohn wrote as a teenager. The *String Octet* (1825) is heralded as his first masterpiece. Within this work, he includes a scherzo movement that provides articulation challenges for the string players. This light and fantastical texture most famously characterizes the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture (1826). The impeccable articulation and texture that characterize the Overture present an infamous technical and stylistic journey for string players to this day.

The *Capriccio* precedes the *Scherzo* and apparently was not conceived as part of any larger work. In contrast to the *Scherzo* which exemplifies light and airy characteristics, the *Capriccio* ventures into darker harmonic colors and more diverse textures. The first section of the piece introduces a singing violin melody accompanied by rolling figures and a sustained bass line. This section is quite brief and before long, the first violin sings alone, presenting a tentative ascending line that the second violin continues as the fiery subject of the fugue. The fugue displays Mendelssohn's admiration for the works of J.S. Bach, which he closely studied. Each voice introduces the rumbling fugue subject and then moves on to its declamatory counter subject. The texture becomes thicker and more complex as the various statements of the subject weave about until they culminate in

its only unison declamation just before the urgent counter subject brings the piece to its powerful conclusion.

Program note by Lena Timmons

The ***Nocturno*** was composed in 1824 for the resident wind ensemble at Bad Doberan, a fashionable seaside resort near Rostock in northern Germany. Mendelssohn, age 15, was vacationing there with his father when he heard the group perform. In a letter home to his sister Fanny, young Felix listed the instrumentation as 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 C clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 C horns, 1 C trumpet, and English bass horn, which he described as a large brass instrument with a beautiful deep tone that looked like a big jug or syringe. He even included a drawing of the instrument. The English Bass Horn or Corno di Basso is a conically bored upright instrument in a shape of a bassoon, sometimes called a Russian bassoon. The instrument is fingered like a woodwind and played with a brass mouthpiece. In a relatively short period during the first half of the nineteenth century, the English bass horn was superseded by the ophicleide, a bass keyed bugle, which in turn was replaced by the valved tuba.

The original 1824 score to *Nocturno* was lost but recopied (apparently from memory) by the composer in 1826. The recopied score was also lost until the early 1980s when it was discovered, after a time lapse of more than 150 years, in a West-Berlin library.

Mendelssohn wrote the **Concertpieces for Clarinet, Basset Horn, and Piano** in 1833. The piece was written for Heinrich and Carl Baermann, a father and son duo of clarinetists who were also known to be accomplished chefs. Mendelssohn agreed to write the pieces if the Baermanns would make their special dumplings (dampfnudel and rahmstrudel) for him. While the Baermanns worked in the kitchen, Mendelssohn wrote the first Concertpiece, Op. 113, inscribed: "The Battle of Prague: a Great Duet for Noodles and Cream Pastry, composed and humbly dedicated to Baermann senior and Baermann junior by their completely devoted Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. (All's well that ends well.)" The evening was such a success they repeated it another night and Mendelssohn completed tonight's work, the second Concertpiece, Op. 114.

The piece opens in dramatic fashion, followed by a lyrical second section which Mendelssohn described: "I wanted to give you a memory of the last dinner, when I had to write it, the clarinet depicts my feelings of longing, while the basset-horn adds the rumbling of my stomach." The piece ends in a virtuosic allegro grazioso.

Program note by Jonathan Salter

Mendelssohn the pianist/composer is represented on tonight's program by two works, one obscure and one famous – the **Prelude and Fugue in B-flat, Op. 35, No. 6**, and the **Variations Sérieuses, Op. 54**. Other parts of his little-known homage to Bach in the form of six Preludes and Fugues may smack more of diligence than inspiration, but the B

flat major finale of the set distinguishes itself, leaving a memorable impression through the sustained swelling of harmony in its prelude and the manic enthusiasm of its fugue (evocative of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier?"). In exploring the paradox of "serious" variations, Mendelssohn employs the traditionally "light" form to probe a poignant theme in D minor, demonstrating that fertile invention can accumulate emotional impact when applied to a suitably touching subject. These variations have long been recognized as the apex of his achievement as a piano composer.

Program note by Andrew Willis

Chamber Singers

James Bates
David Blalock
Winnona Borawski
Rachel Bowman
Clara Burrus
Cary Cannon
Lucas Cecil
Patrick Darab
Laura Dewalt
Sidney Dixon
Logan Haggard
Justin Hazelgrove
Christopher Juengel
Katherine Jackson
Amanda Keith
James Keith
Pamela McDermott
Megan Parrott
Katie Spaan
Neal Sharpe
Matthew Webb
Nana Wolfe

Liberace Quartet

Julianne Odahowski, violin
Deborah Woodhams, violin
Kate Middel, viola
Lena Timmons, cello

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Please wait for break in the performance to enter or leave the hall.

Coming Events

Sunday, February 8, Liberace Quartet, 7:30 p.m., Recital Hall

Friday, February 20, Symphonic Band & Wind Ensemble, Kevin M. Geraldi and John R. Locke, conductors; 7:30 p.m., Aycock Auditorium

Monday, February 23, University Symphony Orchestra, Kevin M. Geraldi, conductor, Andres Mila-Prats, guest conductor; 7:30 p.m., Aycock Auditorium

Emergency Exit Information & Concert Etiquette

Patrons are encouraged to take note of exits located on all sides of the auditorium. In an emergency, please use the nearest exit, which may be behind you or different from the one which you entered. Please turn off cellular phones, pagers, and alarm watches. As a courtesy to other audience members and to the performers, please wait for a break in the performance to enter or exit the hall.