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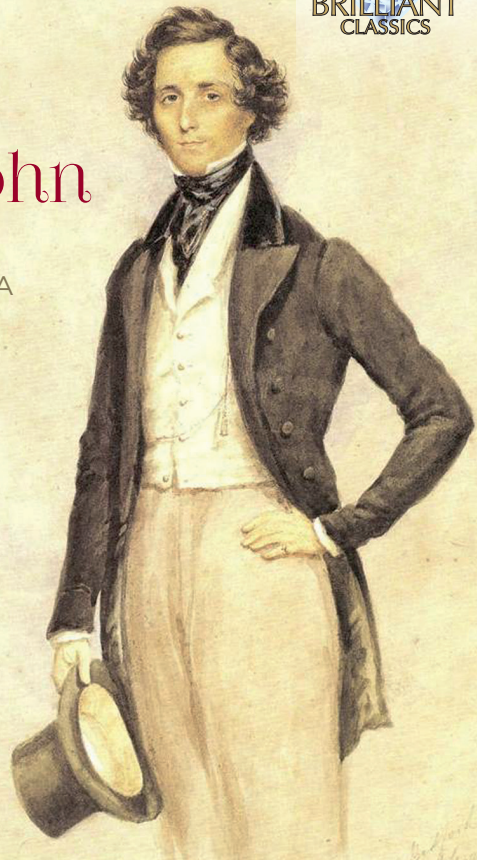
# Mendelssohn

CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN  
AND STRING ORCHESTRA  
IN D MINOR

CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN,  
PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

Solomiya Ivakhiv *violin*  
Antonio Pompa-Baldi *piano*

Slovak National Symphony  
Orchestra  
Theodore Kuchar *conductor*



## Felix Mendelssohn 1809-1847

### Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra in D minor MWV03 (1822)

1. I. Allegro 9'40
2. II. Andante 11'11
3. III. Allegro 4'41

### Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra MWV04 (1823)

4. I. Allegro 19'25
5. II. Adagio 11'02
6. III. Allegro molto 10'09

Solomiya Ivakhiv *violin*  
Antonio Pompa-Baldi *piano*

Slovak National Symphony Orchestra  
Theodore Kuchar *conductor*

**UConn**

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Recording: 15-19 November 2017, The Fatra House of Art, Ziliny, Slovakia  
Recording session Producer and engineer: Jaroslav Stráňavský  
Producer, Editor and Mastering Engineer: Da-Hong Seetoo  
Cover: Portrait of Mendelssohn (1829), by James Warren Childe (1780-1862)  
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As R. Larry Todd makes clear in his magisterial biography of the composer (Oxford University Press, 2003), few composers have suffered such extreme and unjust swings in their reputation as Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). He was lionized in his lifetime, particularly in Victorian England. But even before his death, the rise of anti-Semitism in German culture (first highlighted in Mendelssohn's case by the attacks of Richard Wagner and culminating in the banning of his music by the Nazis), and later a broader anti-Victorian backlash, fueled by Romantic and modernist sensibilities obsessed with rejectionist originality, all took a heavy toll. It is only in recent decades that we have begun to develop a fuller and more complex picture of this multi-faceted genius, not least through the rediscovery of works such as the two early concertos featured here. Written when the composer was only just entering his teens, they remind us that Mendelssohn was a child prodigy of a brilliance that in some ways eclipses even that of Mozart, at least in producing two indisputable masterpieces, the Octet for Strings and the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when he was just sixteen and seventeen years old, respectively.

Part of the problem with fully appreciating Mendelssohn's achievements (which extended well beyond the musical domain into the visual arts, poetry, and scholarship) is their astounding range and impact. He was a virtuoso pianist, violinist, and organist, and a seminal figure in the emerging discipline of conducting. Even leaving aside the influence of his own compositions, his broader fascination with Baroque music, and with J.S. Bach in particular (most notably his 1829 revival of the St Matthew Passion, which like much of Bach's music had by that time fallen into obscurity), had enormous implications for the subsequent development of Western music.

Mendelssohn's most famous and frequently performed orchestral work is the Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64, premiered in 1844. He completed eight concertos across his relatively short life, and five of them before his sixteenth birthday. While these early works are certainly not masterpieces at the level of the Op.64 concerto, they are important nonetheless and worthy additions to the repertoire, particularly for the rare combination of piano and violin soloists. Mendelssohn developed extraordinarily

rapidly after progressing, apparently late in 1819, from imitative student exercises to composing his own music. Over the next two years, he tackled increasingly ambitious large-scale works, including a number of string symphonies, a *Singspiel*, and his first concerto, in A minor for piano, written early in 1822. The Concerto for Violin and Strings in D minor followed later that year, and the Concerto for Violin and Piano, again in D minor, in the spring of 1823; the latter was also initially accompanied by strings only, but Mendelssohn later added parts for wind and timpani, in which version it is heard here. Even between these two concertos one can hear a striking advance in the young composer's sense of originality and mastery.

The modern revival of the D minor Violin Concerto began in the early 1950s with Yehudi Menuhin, who owned one of the manuscript copies of the work and published an edition. (Menuhin had himself been a remarkable child prodigy, of course). The concerto is in three movements. While it is, not surprisingly, strongly marked by classical models, particularly Mozart, it also reaches further back in the eighteenth century to pre-classical and Baroque influences. But it also draws on the more recent developments of the early nineteenth-century French violin school, which expanded the expressive range of the instrument through varied bowing techniques and other devices. Mendelssohn had been exposed to these developments by his violin teacher, Eduard Rietz, to whom the work is dedicated; Rietz was still a teenager himself at the time, and barely seventeen when in 1819 he was appointed leader of the Berlin court orchestra. (The two young men shared a passion for the music of J.S. Bach, and in 1829 Rietz would lead the orchestra in Mendelssohn's performances of the St Matthew Passion – tragically, he died just three years later.) The concerto, however, is in no way a patchwork of influences or a pale imitation of its models. It evinces in many respects a distinctive voice, and Mendelssohn essays some unusual formal gambits, such as in reserving the introduction of a lyrical second theme for the soloist in the first movement, or having the third movement burst out of the second *attacca*. There is some dazzling and delicate filigree writing for the solo violin, especially in the last movement, the volatile cadenza of which also contains a hint of wildness. In

marked contrast, the deeply expressive modulations of the slow movement suggest an emotional maturity surprising from a thirteen-year-old composer.

The Concerto for Violin and Piano (which also had to wait until the 1950s to be revived) is more conventionally structured in some ways, but laid out on a larger scale; it thus demands a more sophisticated control of its materials. While Mendelssohn had not yet attained the consistent maturity evidenced in the Concerto for Two Pianos in E major that would follow later in 1823 (written for Felix and his sister Fanny, also a remarkable composer in her own right), there is a compensatory exuberance and fantastical freshness to the invention that is hard to resist. The composer had already demonstrated his grasp of contemporary violin techniques in the solo concerto; here this is matched by a post-classical pianistic brilliance in the vein of Hummel (who was also a strong influence on the earlier A-minor solo concerto for the piano). But once again the composer puts a personal stamp on his models. An unusual feature, made possible by the combination of soloists, is the employment of extended passages for the violin and piano alone, without the orchestra. One such passage is the extraordinary central section of the slow second movement, a variation on the poignant main theme in which the violin soars above flowing piano figuration suggestive of a lyrical *perpetuum mobile* – it is as if this absorbed meditation could go on indefinitely. This is not the only passage in the work in which the young composer may seem occasionally at risk of getting lost in the beauty of his own ideas. Yet this listener at least is not inclined to write off such moments to youthful inexperience or self-indulgence – not least because an atmosphere of enchantment would resurface a few years later in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and go on to become a distinctively Mendelssohnian trait. The scintillating final movement that follows, its fiery main theme tinged with a Slavic accent, can also (with the benefit of hindsight) be heard to look forward to the mature Mendelssohn – it speaks eloquently of a composer on the threshold of greatness.

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Ukrainian violinist **Solomiya Ivakhiv** is known internationally for her work as a soloist and chamber musician. She has performed with Charleston Symphony, Istanbul State Symphony, Bach Festival Orchestra (Philadelphia), Hunan Symphony Orchestra in China, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, and the Lviv Philharmonic Orchestra. She has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, CBC Glenn Gould Studio, Concertgebouw Mirror Hall, and Curtis Institute Field Concert Hall, among others. Her performances have been broadcast on NPR's "Performance Today," China's Hunan Television, Moldova National Public Radio and Television, Ukrainian National Radio and Television, and Netherlands Public Radio. An avid supporter of contemporary music, she has premiered

numerous new works by composers such as Eli Marshall, David Dzubay, Bruce Adolphe, Bohdan Kryvopust, Yevhen Stankovych, and Oleksandr Shchetynsky.

Dr. Ivakhiv has been featured at many prestigious chamber music festivals worldwide, including the San Jose Chamber Music Society, Embassy Series, Ottawa Chamberfest, Newport Music Festival, Bach Festival of Philadelphia, Nevada Chamber Fest, Kyiv Fest, Festival of Modern Music "Contrasts" and Prussia Cove. A dedicated educator, she has conducted masterclasses and chamber music coachings at Yale University, Columbia University, Boston Conservatory, Oberlin College, and Curtis SummerFest.

Dr. Ivakhiv has been the Artistic Director of the "Music at the Institute" (MATT) Concert Series in New York City for nine years, where she also regularly appears as a performer. She is Associate Professor of Violin and Viola and Head of Strings at the University of Connecticut and Professor of Violin at Longy School of Music of Bard College. She performs on Tetsuo Matsuda, ex Joseph Silverstein violin.

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**Antonio Pompa-Baldi** is an Italian pianist. He won the Cleveland International Piano Competition in 1999 and embarked on a career that continues to extend across five continents. A top prize winner at the 1998 Marguerite Long Competition in Paris, France, he also won a silver medal at the 2001 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. Mr. Pompa-Baldi appears regularly at the world's major concert venues including New York's Carnegie Hall, Paris's Salle Pleyel, Milan's Sala Verdi, Shanghai's Grand Theatre, and Boston's Symphony Hall. He has performed in London, Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Kiev, Auckland, and Hong Kong, to name a few. Recent live performances include the 5 Beethoven Piano Concertos as well as the complete Rachmaninoff Piano Concertos and Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini.

His extensive recording catalogue features 30 CDs and is constantly growing. His

albums include the complete music for solo piano and chamber music of Edward Grieg and discs dedicated to Schumann, Rachmaninoff, Liszt, and Brahms, among many others. He is the founder and artistic director of Todi International Music Masters, an Italian pedagogical summer camp featuring concerts and masterclasses for talented young musicians. A Steinway artist, Mr. Pompa-Baldi is on the piano faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music and serves regularly on the juries of major piano competitions such as Cleveland, Grieg (Bergen), Minneapolis (E-Competition), Hilton Head, San Jose, Lang Lang (Shenzhen), and BNDES Rio de Janeiro. He is an honorary guest professor at many institutions, including the China National Conservatory in Beijing.

**The Slovak National Symphony Orchestra** was developed on the foundation of the Slovak Sinfonietta Žilina and is one of the best known professional orchestras in Eastern Europe, holding a very important position in Slovak musical life. It was founded in 1974 as the only “Classical period” chamber orchestra in Slovakia and is universally regarded as that country’s finest orchestra outside of Bratislava.

Its members are graduates of the major Czech and Slovak music academies and conservatories, and many of them are winners of international competitions and active both as soloists and chamber musicians. The founding music director and conductor was Eduard Fischer, and subsequent chief conductors were Jan Valta, Leoš Svárovský and Oliver von Dohnányi. The Principal Conductor of the Slovak Sinfonietta is Theodore Kuchar; Leoš Svárovský was appointed the Honorary Chief Conductor of the orchestra.

By 1977, the orchestra attained international recognition when it was invited to the Salzburg Festival and designated the official orchestra. Soon after followed appearances at the Prague Spring Festival and the major festivals throughout Europe, including Wiener Festwochen, Spring Festival and Haydn Festival in Vienna, Sofia’s

Musical Weeks, Festa Musica Pro in Assisi, Festival de Catalunya in Spain, Festival El Djem in Tunisia, Festival de Bonaguil in France, Music in Old Krakow, Budapest Spring Festival, Bratislava Music Festival, Melos Ethos Bratislava, Mozartfest Schwetzingen, Mozart Sommer Schloss Salem, Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Festival de Manaus in Brasilia, Festival van Vlaanderen, Aspekte Salzburg, Johann Strauss Festival in Vienna, Bodensee Festival in Switzerland, Ankara Musik Festival, Slovenian Music Days, NCPA Festival Beijing, and many others.

The orchestra has performed in prestigious international venues including the Musikverein and Konzerthaus, Vienna; the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; the Philharmonie, Konzerthaus, and Komische Oper in Berlin; the Mozarteum Salzburg, and the Tonhalle Zürich, among others. They have given more than 3000 concerts in almost every country of Europe, Japan, China, South Korea, Brazil, Canada, and the USA, appearing on numerous recordings on the Brilliant Classics, Naxos and Marco Polo labels, among many others.

The multiple award-winning conductor **Theodore Kuchar** is the most recorded conductor of his generation and appears on over 130 compact discs for the Naxos, Brilliant Classics, Ondine, Marco Polo and Toccata Classics labels. He has served as the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of two of Europe’s leading orchestras, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine and the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra (formerly the Czech Radio Orchestra) while also serving as the Principal Conductor of the Slovak National Symphony Orchestra and Slovak Sinfonietta. In the 2011-12 season, he commenced his tenure as the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfonica de Venezuela; prior to that, he served as the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra in Brisbane, Australia. In addition to his conducting activities, he has served as the Artistic Director of two of the world’s most important chamber music festivals, The

Australian Festival of Chamber Music (1991-2007) and the Nevada Chamber Music Festival (2003-2018).

Conducting engagements during the 2018-19 season include the major orchestras and opera houses of Ankara, Antalya, Beijing, Buenos Aires (Teatro Colon), Helsingborg, Helsinki, Istanbul, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odessa and Prague, among others. Highlights



of the past several seasons have included a four-week, twenty-concert tour of the USA with the Czech Symphony Orchestra as well as guest conducting engagements, including the BBC Symphony, BBC National Symphony Orchestra of Wales (filling in on one day's notice to conduct Josef Suk's epic Asrael Symphony), English Chamber Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, Israel Symphony Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, and the National Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela. He has collaborated with major artists, including James Galway, Shlomo Mintz, Jessye Norman, Lynn Harrell, Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Sarah Chang, Mstislav Rostropovich, Joshua Bell, Robert Levin, and Frederica von Stade, among others.

*This album was funded in part thanks to the University of Connecticut School of Fine Arts Dean's Grant supported by Dean Anne D'Alleva, and the University of Connecticut Office of Global Affairs Fund (Vice President Daniel Weiner, Assistant Vice Provost Yuhang Rong). Additional funding was provided by the University of Connecticut Scholarship Facilitation Fund from the Office of Radenka Maric Vice President for Research, John and Jean Lenard, and the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.A. (President Albert Kipa).*