



Zoe Knighton
'cello

Amir Farid
piano

Mendelssohn
Cello

move

Mendelssohn is often regarded as a composer who lived a charmed life and therefore whose compositions lack a certain integrity or depth of expression. The gloriousness of his music, its likeability and his creativity in celebrating humanity are certainly primary reasons for his music's longevity. Felix Mendelssohn came from a wealthy family and one that supported Felix's and indeed, his sister Fanny's creative endeavours. These two are perhaps the most famous sibling team in Western classical music. Should one have to endure hardship in order to discover one's inventive and expressive potential? It is easy to forget that Felix died at the extremely tender age of 38 and having just outlived Mozart and Schubert, he certainly deserves his place in the musical hall of fame. (Indeed, his wedding march from 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream' will forever place him in that hall of fame as many a bride has walked down the aisle to those fateful bars.) As with all premature deaths, the question remains – "What if?"

His cello works are largely inspired by his brother, Paul, who was an amateur cellist. Imagine the family get together with such siblings! One can only be jealous of the flies on those walls.

Sonata for Cello and Piano, No. 1 in B flat major, Op. 45

1. *I. Allegro vivace*
2. *II. Andante*
3. *III. Allegro assai*

Opening with the first sonata in B flat, we meet Mendelssohn when he is 29 years old. He has been married for six years and has a number of children. It is a happy marriage and things are going well for the Mendelssohns. Felix has already brought Bach's magnificence back into public favour with a performance of St Matthew Passion.

The sonata begins with the optimism and sense of anticipation for which Mendelssohn is so famous. Here the cello underpins the crystal clear piano melodies as Mendelssohn weaves through the thematic material. This sonata really highlights his craftsmanship. Not one note out of place (and there are a lot of notes!) One of the most delicious moments is the return to the exposition after the repeat. His use of gently unexpected harmonies has such a wonderful effect on the inherent structure in this movement. One even forgets that it is in standard sonata form, its inventiveness is so deceptive.

After the lilting second movement which again takes us into deep harmonic waters, we find ourselves in a third movement which is in traditional rondo form. The delightful ending shows Mendelssohn at his simplistic best.

4. Variations concertantes, Op. 17

The Variations Concertantes is the youngest work. Felix was a mere 20 years of age when he wrote it, although he had already accomplished

far more than most people do in their lifetime! Its theme is cleverly dissected through many guises before we hear the piano break out from the confines of 19th century bourgeois in a cascade of octaves. With an almost tango sense expectancy and tension, this variation forms the centrepiece in this little known work.

Sonata for Cello and Piano, No. 2 in D major, Op. 58

5. *Allegro assai vivace*
6. *Allegretto scherzando*
7. *Adagio*
8. *Molto allegro e vivace*

While the second sonata is in fact dedicated to Russian music patron and cellist Count Matvei Wielhorski, it was also written for Paul Mendelssohn. The time was hectic for Mendelssohn – he was in between jobs and setting up his own conservatorium of which he would be Director. This sonata exposes his fascination and love of JS Bach in the third movement (Adagio) with its following of the chord structure of the aria 'Es ist vollbracht' from St John Passion.

It is the outer movements that really show the Mendelssohn that the public adore. Quick-witted and with a lightness of touch which is indelibly Felix, one fails to recognise any sense of stress one might expect of someone about to found and direct a new conservatorium.

The first movement uses a simple arpeggiated figure to propel the music forward. The last is a flurry of runs and quick silver work for which Mendelssohn is so famous. Perfectly structured and with the harmonic language in the same straight forward manner

as the B flat sonata, Mendelssohn once again shows his genius at exploring creativity within certain boundaries of conservatism and convention.

9. Song without words for Cello and Piano in D major, Op. 109

The final work on the CD is the stunningly beautiful Song without words opus 109. It is dedicated to one of the few female cellists of the time, Lisa Cristiani. Born in 1827, Cristiani was a french cellist who had a short but rewarding career.

Zoe Knighton

Zoe is at the fore of a new generation of performer intent on forging an innovative path for the enjoyment of 'classical' music. A founding member of Flinders Quartet, she has toured internationally through Sweden, Canada and the UK and appears regularly at Australian festivals as well as their own celebrated subscription series.

In 2008, Zoe founded the Melbourne Chamber Feast, a biannual festival celebrating the wealth of chamber music talent in Melbourne and in 2009 was the Artistic Director of the Montsalvat 20 concert series. She is currently a board member of 3MBS FM and on the Musica Viva review panel.

A passionate pedagogue, Zoe and the Flinders Quartet are regular tutors for the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Mount Buller Chamber Music Summer School. Zoe coaches chamber music and cello studies at the Victorian College of the Arts and the University of Melbourne where in 2008, she was Acting Co-ordinator of Strings. She has been guest lecturer at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music and guest principal cellist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Zoe plays with the Melbourne Symphony

Orchestra and is a core member of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

With pianist Amir Farid, the duo made an impressive debut at the Melbourne Recital Centre to great critical acclaim. Their partnership continues with recordings for the ABC and concerts throughout Australia.

Amir Farid

Winner of the 2006 Australian National Piano Award, pianist Amir Farid has been described as "a highly creative musician – a pianist of great intelligence and integrity. He brings strong musical substance to all that he does, imbuing it with his own particular experience and understanding", and who "in a well-populated field...distinguishes himself for all the right reasons".

In 2004 Amir completed his B.Mus (Hon) at the University of Melbourne under the guidance of Ronald Faren-Price, and later attended the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) studying with Rita Reichman, Geoffrey Tozer and Timothy Young. In 2009, he graduated with distinction as a Scholar supported by the Gordon Calway Stone Memorial Award at the Royal College of Music London, studying with Andrew Ball.

He has performed concerti with the Sydney Symphony, Melbourne Symphony, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Melbourne Youth and ANAM Orchestras, including Rachmaninoff's 2nd Piano Concerto at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl with the Melbourne Symphony in front of a capacity 13,000 strong crowd.

As a chamber musician, Amir is pianist of the acclaimed Benaud Trio (www.benaudtrio.com), winning the Piano Trio prize at the 2005 Australian Chamber Music Competition. As an associate artist, he was winner of the prize for best



pianist at the 2006 Mietta Song Recital award, and the 2007 Geoffrey Parsons Award.

www.amirfarid.com

Acknowledgments

Photographs: Simon Bailey

This recording project would not have been possible without the vision and generosity of Richard Gubbins. Thanks Richard!

Recorded at Move Records studio on 18, 19, 21, 22 December 2009

Mendelssohn Cello

Sonata for Cello and Piano, No. 1 in B flat major, Op. 45

1. *I. Allegro vivace* 15'23"
2. *II. Andante* 7'55"
3. *III. Allegro assai* 7'56"

4. Variations concertantes, Op. 17 11'13"

Sonata for Cello and Piano, No. 2 in D major, Op. 58

5. *Allegro assai vivace* 8'42"
6. *Allegretto scherzando* 7'42"
7. *Adagio* 5'55"
8. *Molto allegro e vivace* 8'04"

9. Song without words for Cello and Piano in D major, Op. 109 5'36"



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