

FELIX
MENDELSSOHN
BARTHOLDY

DG
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PIANO CONCERTOS 1&2

PIANO MUSIC



ELISABETH LEONSKAJA PIANO

CAMERATA SALZBURG · ILAN VOLKOV CONDUCTOR

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847)

Piano Concertos and Piano Music

Concertos pour Piano et Musique pour Piano

Klavierkonzerte und Klaviermusik

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

No. 1 op. 25 **20'04**

G minor / sol mineur / g-Moll

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|------|
| 1 | Molto Allegro con fuoco | 7'30 |
| 2 | Andante | 5'57 |
| 3 | Presto | 6'34 |

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

No. 2 op. 40 **22'33**

D minor / ré mineur / d-Moll

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|
| 4 | Allegro appassionato | 9'41 |
| 5 | Adagio. Molto sostenuto | 6'03 |
| 6 | Finale. Presto scherzando | 6'47 |

Live-Recording

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 7 | Wiegenlied op. 67, 6 | 2'32 |
| | E major / mi majeur / E-Dur | |
| 8 | Trauermarsch op. 62, 3 | 3'46 |
| | E minor / mi mineur / e-Moll | |
| 9 | Andante con moto op. 19b, 1 | 3'09 |
| | E major / mi majeur / E-Dur | |
| 10 | Volkslied op. 55, 5 | 2'49 |
| | A minor / la mineur / a-Moll | |
| 11 | Venetianisches Gondellied
op. 62, 5 | 2'32 |
| | A minor / la mineur / a-Moll | |
| 12 | Andante op. 102, 6 | 1'30 |
| | C major / ut majeur / C-Dur | |
| 13 | Venetianisches Gondellied
op. 19b, 6 | 2'18 |
| | G minor / sol mineur / g-Moll | |
| 14 | Venetianisches Gondellied
op. 30, 6 | 3'09 |
| | F sharp minor / fa dièse mineur / fis-Moll | |
| 15 | Frühlingslied op. 62, 6 | 2'37 |
| | A major / la majeur / A-Dur | |

Total Time: 67'47

Elisabeth Leonskaja, piano
Camerata Salzburg
Ilan Volkov, conductor

Production: Werner Dabringhaus,
Reimund Grimm
Tonmeister: Werner Dabringhaus
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Felix Mendelssohn was twenty-one when, fired by a great sense of anticipatory pleasure and expectation, he set out on his first great visit to Italy in May 1830, a visit that was to take him via Switzerland, France and England and not bring him back to his native Germany until June 1832. On 11 April 1830, immediately before setting out, he wrote to the Swedish composer Adolf Fredrik Lindblad to explain the reasons for his planned tour: »And so I am thinking of setting off again on my journey within the next few weeks, happy and pleased to be heading off in search of spring. But I'm also planning to have a good look round in order to discover what people look like and vice versa, so that I can feel freer, get to know the unfamiliar and learn to reappraise the familiar, in short, to become a human being or, to put it another way, a musician.« None the less, the young composer was not expecting to be lastingly influenced by Italian music: he was, after all, an ardent admirer of the music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. In spite of this, the southern climate fostered his creativity and he made good progress on *The Hebrides* (»Fingal's Cave«) op. 26 and his dramatic cantata, *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* op. 60, while his Symphony in A major (»Italian«) op. 90, which in the event was to remain unpublished until after his death, began to take shape in his thoughts. He was free from his daily commitments and not tied



down in any way, allowing him to realize his plans and pursue more nebulous projects. It is presumably no mere accident that it was to his own instrument, the piano, that he committed his new musical ideas, as well as his compositional principles and poetic images, while he was abroad. Six years after completing the Double Concerto in A flat major for two pianos, he now wrote his Piano Concerto in G minor op. 25, the first work to which he gave an official number and released for publication. (An early piano concerto in A minor that he wrote for his sister Fanny in 1822 remained unpublished until the 20th century.) The *Songs without Words* that he wrote at the same time were indebted, rather, to his feelings of the moment and as such are comparable to the numerous drawings and watercolours that he produced in the course of his journey.

By November 1830 Mendelssohn had already told his sister about his plans to write a piano concerto for his own use. If possible, he wanted to perform it during his tour. On 18 October 1831 – less than a year later – he was able to inform his father of the work's overwhelming success in Munich: »Then I came to my concerto, was received in a very lively manner and at length, the orchestra accompanied well, and the composition was also fantastic enough; it gave people a lot of pleasure; they wanted to coax me out afterwards with their applause, as is the

fashion here, but I was modest and did not appear.« Mendelssohn later dedicated the concerto to the successful pianist Delphine von Schauroth, with whom he performed duets on frequent occasions in Munich in 1830 and to whom he additionally dedicated his *Venetianisches Gondellied*, the sixth of his *Songs without Words* op. 19b. The Piano Concerto was apparently written down in a matter of only a few days, a »stroke of great boldness« that none the less reveals a well-planned concept in terms of its very special handling of the medium, reflecting on the one hand the composer's consciousness of the tradition within which he was working and on the other his attempt to introduce new ideas into the genre while maintaining a high technical standard, albeit one that never descends into superficial virtuosity. Mendelssohn avoids the schematised form of the usual virtuoso concerto and treats soloist and orchestra as equal partners in the musical argument. In terms of its overall design, the work is cast in first-movement sonata form, but the elements one normally expects to find in the development section are not confined to the central section. Rather, other sections are also drawn into this process. The recapitulation, moreover, is much curtailed. Novel *attacca* transitions reminiscent of Carl Maria von Weber's *Concertstück*, as well as motivic links between the movements, all contribute to the overall impression of homogeneity

that the piece creates: it seems to form a coherent whole, its freshness and vitality proclaiming its creator's barely repressible youthful exuberance.

So successful was the op. 25 Concerto and so great the sense of pressure that it placed on Mendelssohn that he hesitated before writing a successor, and it was not until six years later that an invitation from the 1837 Birmingham Music Festival provided him with the incentive to compose a further concerto, this time in D minor. Most of his work on it was undertaken during his honeymoon, which took him via southern Germany to the Rhine. He completed the score of his op. 40 Concerto in August 1837. On 24 July his young wife, Cécile, had written proudly to her sister-in-law Rebecka Dirichlet to announce that Felix »is sitting opposite me and trilling with his fingers, writing, singing, playing the trumpet and flute, everything at once, then he again walks up and down the room with his manuscript paper, beating time or playing the bass fiddle with his arm, all these efforts are directed at his piano concerto, which is bound to be very beautiful.« Mendelssohn himself gave the first performance in Birmingham on 21 September 1837, and once again he was acclaimed. The piece remained in the concert repertory until the 1870s but was then progressively overshadowed by the more popular G minor Concerto, a situation that only very recently has shown

signs of changing. Not least as the result of a review by Robert Schumann, the D minor Concerto in particular fell victim to the negative attitudes towards Mendelssohn that began to emerge at the end of the 19th century, when the apparent effortlessness and cheerfulness of his music were equated with superficiality and excessive facility. It is impossible to find any objective reasons for such an assessment of the D minor Concerto in particular. Picking up from the principles that he had already put into practice in his op. 25 Concerto, Mendelssohn set store by an even greater motivic reworking of his material within the individual movements, the final sonata-rondo being cast in a form found from the Classical period onwards and one that was essentially experimental in character. In terms of both their structure and their idiom, the lyrical and extremely intimate passages in the outer movements and the whole of the second movement are in places very close to the composer's piano music and ultimately similar to specific manifestations of his *Songs without Words*.

As we may expect, Mendelssohn needed to capture his impressions of his visit to Italy not just in images and letters: he also required an open musical form that he could shape according to his own ideas and that allowed him to note down those ideas in the form of brief sketches. In the circumstances it made sense for him to fall back on the genre of songs without

words, a genre that he had already used for a handful of occasional pieces. He can hardly have suspected that the term, which was probably coined by his sister, Fanny, would subsequently become virtually synonymous with his name as a composer and produce a vast army of imitators. The first of a total of six sets of pieces, each of them containing six individual »songs without words«, was published in 1832, while Mendelssohn was still in England. The remaining volumes appeared at intervals throughout his life, while two more, including the op. 102 set, were published posthumously. In writing them, Mendelssohn drew on his storehouse of ideas, while refusing to leave their arrangement to chance. In his wish to achieve unity in variety, he juxtaposed contrasting pieces that complement one another in terms of their character. Even during his lifetime, the inherently paradoxical concept of »songs without words« was interpreted by many as an indication that these works contain a hidden programme or a tacit textual basis. But only five of the forty-eight pieces that were published during the 19th century had additional titles, and these include the three famous *Venetianische Gondellieder* and the *Volkslied* op. 53 no. 5. Although we cannot exclude the possibility that other titles once existed, Mendelssohn always vehemently rejected such ideas. For him, no verbal description, no matter how polished,

could achieve the clarity of which music was capable: »People normally complain that music is so ambiguous, claiming that what they might have to think about it is so dubious, whereas everyone can understand words. But I myself feel exactly the opposite,« Mendelssohn told Marc-André Souchay in a letter of 15 October 1842. »What a piece of music expresses for me and what I like about it are not the ideas that are too *vague* to be put into words but those that are too *precise*.«

Variety is a feature not just of the character of these piano pieces but also of their musical form. Only the opening numbers in each set of pieces follow the famous prototype of a dominant upper voice and an animated accompaniment. Other vocal models may be sought in the duet and the contemporary choral song. But almost a quarter of the total eschew these influences and are purely instrumental in nature. Generally speaking it is the idea of *cantabilità* that dominates all these pieces, pieces in which the north German lieder tradition attempts to merge with the development technique inherited from Beethoven. The essentially poetic nature of Mendelssohn's works was emphasized by Schumann, who was in many respects a kindred spirit. For him, these works were »children of a burgeoning imagination«.

Annegret Rosenmüller
Translated by Stewart D. Spencer

Elisabeth Leonskaja is considered to be one of the great artists of our time. She was born in Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, where her parents awakened in her an early love for the piano. Her first concerts in Tiflis at the age of 11 attracted widespread attention and led to her studying from 1964 on with Prof. Jacob Milstein at the Moscow Conservatoire. While still completing her studies she won prizes at international competitions in Bucarest, Paris and Brussels.

Before Elisabeth Leonskaja left the Soviet Union in 1978, choosing Vienna as her permanent residence, she took part in several concerts as a duo partner with Svyatoslav Richter. This encounter had a decisive effect on her artistic development.

Her appearance at the Salzburg Festival in 1979, laid the foundation for her career in the Western musical world. Since then, Elisabeth Leonskaja appears regularly in all the musical centres of the world, giving recitals as well as appearing as soloist with the leading European and American orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig, the Czech Philharmonic, the Radio Orchestras in Hamburg, Cologne and Munich, the Orchestre de Paris, the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Cleveland Orchestra.

Elisabeth Leonskaja is also a welcome guest at major summer festivals such as the

Salzburg Festival, the Vienna Festival and the Lucerne Festival.

Elisabeth Leonskaja is a much sought after chamber music partner. Soloists and ensembles such as Heinrich Schiff, Viktor Tretjakow, the Alban Berg Quartet, the Borodin Quartet and the Guarneri Quartet invite her regularly .

A large number of recordings bear witness to the high-ranking quality of this artist. Many of her recordings have received awards (Grand Prix du Disque, Prix Caecilia, Diapason d'Or).

Camerata Salzburg »In search of excellence«

Hitting the right note is paramount for any speaker. But for musicians it is existential. The art, the challenge and the essence are to be found beyond interpreting the »visible« of a score. This guiding principle of the legendary Sándor Végh shaped the stylistic identity of the Camerata, founded in 1952 by Bernhard Paumgartner, and remains the artistic credo of the ensemble.

Over 50 years of orchestra history have matured the Camerata into a tradition-filled chamber orchestra. Yet it consists of young, motivated musicians who, according to the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* »play with a commitment and a joy in music-making which is infectious...«. The Camerata Salzburg is exceptional – musically, socially and

organisationally. The ensemble is a mirror image of the international world through which it travels. Its 24 nationalities reflect various their cultures, but all are united by the universal language of music. This is underscored by a considerable achievement: the 80 plus concerts which they play each year are nearly all privately financed - a rarity in Europe. Their current sponsors in Austria are the Salzburger Sparkasse, a savings bank, as well as its insurance company subsidiary, the s-Versicherung.

And so it is not surprising that a whole host of well-known international artists are delighted to accept the orchestra's invitation to play. This season's guests include Howard Shelley, Heinrich Schiff, Christian Muthspiel, Angelika Kirchschlager, Barbara Bonney, Lang Lang, Rudolf Buchbinder, Sir Neville Marriner.

Last season the orchestra was on tour in the USA, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Greece with Sir Roger Norrington, their Chief Conductor since 1997, and Leonidas Kavakos, their Principal Guest Artist since the 2001/02 Season.

Ilan Volkov was born in Israel in 1976 and is one of the leading conductors of his generation. He was nineteen when he was appointed Young Conductor in Association with the Northern Sinfonia in Newcastle. Two years later he took over the position of Principal Conductor of the

London Philharmonic Youth Orchestra and in 1999 became Seiji Ozawa's assistant at the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In January 2003 he succeeded Osmo Vänskä as Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, in which capacity he conducts twenty-six performances during a twelve-week period each season, devoting himself in particular to contemporary music and at the same time making guest appearances at all the leading festivals in Great Britain.

Among the orchestras with whom Ilan Volkov has appeared are the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Sydney Symphony, the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Hallé Orchestra, the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the German Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, the North German Radio Orchestra of Hamburg, the Russian National Orchestra and Het Residentie Orkest of The Hague. Among the eminent soloists with whom he has worked in the course of his conducting career are Daniel Barenboim, Mstislav Rostropovich, Emanuel Ax, Viktoria Mullova, Heinrich Schiff, Thomas Zehetmair and Stephen Kovacevich.



Konzertes gefördert, das »wie aus einem Guss« gemacht erscheint und in seiner Frische und Lebendigkeit vom kaum zu bremsenden jugendlichen Überschwang seines Schöpfers kündet.

Der Druck einer hohen Erwartungshaltung nach dem Erfolg seines Konzerts op. 25 ließen Mendelssohn mit der Komposition eines neuen Klavierkonzertes zögern. Erst sechs Jahre später nahm er die Einladung zum Birminghamer Musikfest 1837 zum Anlaß, ein weiteres Werk in d-Moll in Angriff zu nehmen, um es in England zur Uraufführung zu bringen. Die Hauptarbeit an seinem op. 40 leistete er während seiner Hochzeitsreise, die ihn über Süddeutschland an den Rhein führte. Im August 1837 konnte Mendelssohn die Partitur abschließen. Eine reichliche Woche vorher berichtete seine junge Frau Cécile stolz an ihre Schwägerin Rebecka: »Der [Felix] sitzt mir gegenüber und trillert mit den Fingern, schreibt, singt, bläst die Trompete und Flöte, alles auf einmal, dann geht er wieder im Zimmer auf und ab mit dem Notenblatt, schlägt den Tackt, oder spielt Baßgeige mit dem Arm, alle diese Anstrengungen kostet ihm sein Clavierconcert, das aber auch gewiß sehr schön wird.« (Brief vom 24. Juli 1837) Auch diesmal wurde der Komponist, der sein Werk selbst vortrug, bei der ersten Aufführung gefeiert. Obwohl es bis in die 1870er Jahre im allgemeinen Konzertrepertoire verblieb,



Elisabeth Leonskaja
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Mendelssohn: Piano Concertos - Leonskaja

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Mendelssohn: Piano Concertos & Piano Music

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Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847)MUSIKPRODUKTION
DABRINGHAUS UND GRIMM**Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*****No. 1 op. 25 20'04**

G minor / sol mineur / g-Moll

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|------|
| 1 | Molto Allegro con fuoco | 7'30 |
| 2 | Andante | 5'57 |
| 3 | Presto | 6'34 |

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra***No. 2 op. 40 22'33**

D minor / ré mineur / d-Moll

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------|
| 4 | Allegro appassionato | 9'41 |
| 5 | Adagio. Molto sostenuto | 6'03 |
| 6 | Finale. Presto scherzando | 6'47 |

Live-Recording**Elisabeth Leonskaja, piano**
Camérata Salzburg
Ilan Volkov, conductorGefördert von der Stadtgemeinde
Deutschlandsberg

* Aufgenommen im Wiener Konzerthaus

- | | | |
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Total Time:**67'47**no picture / only music
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