



Felix MENDELSSOHN

Concerto for violin and orchestra in E minor

Felix Mendelssohn (3 February 1809 – 4 November 1847) was a German composer, pianist, organist, and conductor whose music bridges the Classical and Romantic eras, combining formal clarity, lyrical elegance, and profound emotional expression. Born into a cultured and intellectually vibrant family in Hamburg, Mendelssohn displayed prodigious musical talent from a very young age. By the age of nine, he was composing substantial works, and his early exposure to literature, visual art, and philosophy helped shape the sensitivity, poise, and sophistication evident in his mature compositions. He studied under Carl Friedrich Zelter in Berlin, who nurtured his knowledge of counterpoint and classical form, and he later absorbed the influence of Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, creating a style that balances structural rigor with Romantic expressivity.

Mendelssohn's career was characterized by an extraordinary range of compositional activity, including symphonies, concertos, chamber music, choral works, and operas. He was also a gifted conductor and pedagogue, deeply committed to musical education and performance standards, and he played a pivotal role in reviving interest in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. His compositional style is marked by seamless melodic invention, transparent textures, harmonic refinement, and rhythmic vitality. Mendelssohn's works often convey an effortless elegance, blending virtuosic demands with expressive depth and structural coherence.

The Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, completed in 1844, is one of the most beloved and frequently performed violin concertos in the repertoire. Commissioned by the eminent violinist Ferdinand David, who also assisted in its technical and structural development, the concerto exemplifies Mendelssohn's skill in creating a close partnership between soloist and orchestra, balancing lyrical expression, virtuosic passages, and orchestral color. Unlike many Romantic concertos that rely on a display of the soloist's technical prowess, Mendelssohn's concerto integrates the violin seamlessly into the orchestral texture, allowing thematic material and expressive dialogue to unfold naturally.

The concerto is structured in three movements: *Allegro molto appassionato*, *Andante*, and *Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace*. The first movement immediately presents the solo violin with a lyrical, singing theme, accompanied delicately by the orchestra. Mendelssohn innovatively omits a traditional orchestral introduction, allowing the violin to enter directly with the principal theme, which gives the movement an immediate sense of intimacy and expressivity. The solo writing combines elegance with technical brilliance, including intricate passagework, double stops, and harmonics, while remaining deeply melodic and emotionally communicative.

The second movement, *Andante*, offers lyrical respite, emphasizing Mendelssohn's gift for song-like melody and expressive nuance. The violin's lines unfold with warmth and grace, supported by harmonically rich yet transparent orchestration. Here, Mendelssohn's contrapuntal skill is evident in the interplay between soloist and orchestra, as motifs are passed, transformed, and woven together to create a sense of continuity and intimate dialogue. The movement exudes a quiet introspection, contrasting with the energetic drive of the outer movements while maintaining structural and thematic cohesion.

The final movement, *Allegretto non troppo – Allegro molto vivace*, begins with a lyrical introduction before bursting into a lively, rhythmically buoyant finale. Mendelssohn incorporates dance-like themes, intricate violin figurations, and clever orchestral interplay, culminating in a jubilant and virtuosic conclusion. Throughout the concerto, recurring motifs from the first movement subtly reappear, unifying the work and providing thematic coherence. Mendelssohn's orchestration ensures that the soloist is always supported without being overshadowed, highlighting the violin's expressive and technical capabilities.