

WIGMORE HALL 125

Friday 14 November 2025
7.30pm

Vilde Frang violin
Baptiste Lopez violin, director
Basel Chamber Orchestra

Nina Čandik violin I
Valentina Giusti violin I
Matthias Müller violin I
Antonio Vinuales violin II
Jaume Angelès Fité violin II

Mathias Weibel violin II
Tamás Vásárhelyi violin, viola
Mariana Streiff-Doughty viola
Bodo Friedrich viola
Carlos Vallés García viola

Martin Zeller cello
Georg Dettweiler cello
Peter Pudil double bass
Sergio Ciomei harpsichord

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

String Symphony No. 3 in E minor (1821)
I. Allegro di molto • II. Andante • III. Allegro

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Concert in A for violin and orchestra after Harpsichord
Concerto No. 4 in A BWV1055 (1738) *arranged by Brian Clark*
I. Allegro • II. Larghetto • III. Allegro ma non tanto

Interval

Johann Sebastian Bach

Double Concerto for 2 violins in D minor BWV1043 (1730-1)
I. Vivace • II. Largo, ma non tanto • III. Allegro

Felix Mendelssohn

String Symphony No. 9 in C 'Swiss' (1823)
*I. Grave. Allegro • II. Andante •
III. Scherzo • IV. Allegro vivace*



Help us raise £125,000
for 125 years of music

To find out more visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate



Join & Support
Donations

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

Mendelssohn produced some of his most perfect works – such as the Octet for strings and the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – while still in his mid-teens. A vital part of his uncommonly privileged musical education was his parents' provision of a chamber orchestra drawn from the Berlin State Orchestra. In the Mendelssohns' family home in Berlin he was able to try out early compositions such as his string symphonies with these professional musicians.

Mendelssohn wrote all 12 string symphonies, plus one unfinished, between 1821 and 1823. His teacher, Carl Friedrich Zelter, engendered in him a deep devotion to JS Bach's music. He suggested to his precocious pupil that the composition of these string symphonies, in what was by then an old-fashioned style inherited from CPE Bach, Graun and others, would be an excellent discipline and improve his technique. The symphonies remained unpublished until their rediscovery in the East Berlin State library in the 1950s.

String Symphony No. 3 begins with a robust, incisive theme which is soon subjected to energetic contrapuntal writing. Zelter must have been gratified by Mendelssohn's skilful counterpoint and his even-handed part-writing. The graceful *Andante* in G major contrasts with the restless energy of the opening movement. As early as bar 4 Mendelssohn introduces the 'foreign' note E flat for expressive effect. The movement ends with a downward scale finishing on an inconclusive F sharp. Beginning with an assertive theme in unison, the finale has a trill in bar 2 which soon proliferates throughout a texture as contrapuntal as that of the opening *Allegro di molto*. The second half of the finale has more subdued dynamics, before a sudden *fortissimo* leads us to expect a strong ending, but here Mendelssohn surprises us with his understated wit.

Most of the works we know as **Bach's** Harpsichord Concertos are his own adaptations of concertos he originally composed for other instruments such as the violin or oboe. This A major concerto, originally for oboe d'amore but here readapted for violin, is believed to date from c.1738. As director of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum from 1729, Bach found renewed incentive to provide instrumental concertos. The two principal melodic elements of the opening movement are the delightfully buoyant arpeggio theme heard at the beginning and the slightly more vocal melody which the soloist introduces. The deeply expressive *Larghetto* in F sharp minor opens with a chromatically descending bass line establishing the emotional character of the movement, which is enhanced by the violin's eloquent, flowing lines. One of Bach's most joyfully uninhibited melodies begins the *Finale*, a movement of great rhythmic variety and dance-like vitality.

Of Bach's three familiar violin concertos, the one in D minor is for two violins and strings. One general feature of the solo parts of the three concertos is their much less virtuosic nature when compared with the unaccompanied violin music which he wrote for the

greatest German players of the day. The D minor Double Concerto begins in fugal style before the soloists introduce a new theme characterised by wide leaps of a tenth. In conventional manner the solo episodes alternate with sections of *ritornello* (little returns) – passages in which Bach recalls his opening material, often in shortened or modified form. In the sublime *Largo ma non tanto* in F major the accompaniment is completely subordinated to the unfolding of the soloists' melodic lines. The opening melody is almost imperceptibly passed from second violin to first, creating a special intimacy. Unlike the typical dance-like Baroque concerto finale, the final *Allegro* is restless and urgent in character, the two soloists entering in quick succession. Quite early in the movement Bach introduces a new figure of semiquaver triplets, effectively increasing rhythmic momentum. The orchestra returns to a more important role. Indeed, in two passages the soloists become accompanists, their repeated chords hammered out against the orchestra's vigorous semiquavers.

Mendelssohn's later string symphonies reveal a more mature and adventurous composer. He completed No. 9 in March 1823, just after the early Violin Concerto in D minor. The symphony opens with a *Grave* introduction, in the second half of which the cello/bass pizzicato enhances the texture. Typically energetic, the *Allegro* in C major is a substantial structure, monothematic in that the second subject in G major is exactly the same as the first. Having included a five-part fugato in the development section, Mendelssohn accommodates further development in the coda. In these symphonies in general Mendelssohn's writing for strings is thoroughly idiomatic, but in No. 9 he shows a more experimental approach to texture. One feature is the sub-dividing of the violas throughout, but in the genial E major *Andante* Mendelssohn shows further originality in juxtaposing a passage for violins only, sub-divided into four parts, with a central section for lower strings, a sombre, rather other-worldly fugal passage in E minor. Even the double-bass part enjoys some independence – still uncommon for this instrument in 1823. In July 1822 the Mendelssohn family had embarked upon a three-month trip to Switzerland, where Felix was more impressed with the mountains than with the national folk-music. Nevertheless, the trio section of this symphony's scherzo is based on a Swiss folk-song, with gentle yodelling at the end of each phrase – a genial contrast with the highly strung scherzo sections in which Mendelssohn is obsessed with repeated notes. Beginning in G minor, the finale includes some brilliant fugal writing, a well-defined second subject with rapid triplet accompaniment, and a strenuous development section. Near the end Mendelssohn switches to C major and twice increases the tempo (*Presto*, then *più stretto*) for the conclusion of what is one of the very finest of these string symphonies.

© Philip Borg-Wheeler 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.

