

Mendelssohn

Violin Concerto in E minor Op. 64 - Violin Concerto in D minor MWV O3

F. Mendelssohn - Bartholdy - Concerto in E minor Op. 64 per violino ed orchestra

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1) Allegro molto appassionato | 13:38 |
| 2) Andante | 08:21 |
| 3) Allegretto non troppo - Allegro molto vivace. | 06:49 |

Gabriele Pieranunzi, violin - Fabrizio Ventura, conductor - Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana

Recorded on 16 July 1994 in Palermo at the Teatro Politeama.

F. Mendelssohn - Bartholdy - Concerto in Re min per violino e d archi , MWV O3

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|------------|-------|
| 4) Allegro | 09:59 |
| 5) Andante | 08:33 |
| 6) Allegro | 04:32 |

Gabriele Pieranunzi, violin - Francesco Fiore, conductor - Archi del San Carlo

Recorded on 28 January 2016 in Naples at Atelier Napolitano Pianoforti.

Total time: 51:55

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Gabriele Pieranunzi, violin
Fabrizio Ventura, conductor
Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana
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Few composers embody one of the nineteenth century's most fertile apparent contradictions as naturally as Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809–1847): being fully Romantic without renouncing a concern for form; cultivating the urgency of expression without giving way to excess; speaking the language of modernity while remaining firmly anchored in the Classical ideal of balance. In Mendelssohn, poetry and architecture do not stand in opposition; on the contrary, they coexist in a synthesis as rare as it is perfect, in which structural clarity becomes the *conditio sine qua non* of expressive intensity. The two violin concertos brought together in this recording—the youthful *Concerto in D minor for Violin and Strings, MWV O3*, composed in 1822, and the celebrated *Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*, of 1844—bear witness to this dual nature of Mendelssohn's art. Separated by more than twenty years, they almost define the entire arc of the composer's creative life: the first belongs to the extraordinary period of adolescence, the second to the full maturity of his artistic achievement. Yet, beyond the chronological distance and the different formal and instrumental ambitions of the two works, there appears to be no break between them. The Mendelssohn of the *Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*, does not contradict the young composer of the *Concerto in D minor*; rather, he brings him to completion. To understand the significance of this artistic journey, it is necessary to place Mendelssohn within the history of the violin concerto. Between Viennese Classicism and full Romanticism, the genre underwent a radical transformation. On one side stands Ludwig van Beethoven's *Concerto, Op. 61* (1806), a genuine turning point in the history of the genre, which gave the concerto an architectural dimension of symphonic breadth; on the other, a brilliant, virtuosic and cantabile style of violin writing developed, represented by Louis Spohr and Niccolò Paganini, in which the solo instrument enormously expanded its expressive and technical vocabulary. Mendelssohn occupies a position precisely between these two poles, although he does not fully belong to either. His ideal avoids both severe monumentality and pure spectacular virtuosity. The violin is not a protagonist set in opposition to the orchestra, but rather a privileged voice integrated into a musical organism of perfect coherence. Virtuosity, far from being an end in itself, remains subordinate to expression. This conception is already remarkably clear in the *Concerto in D minor* of 1822, composed by a Mendelssohn barely thirteen years old for Eduard Rietz, the violinist and central figure in the young composer's musical formation. Rediscovered in 1952 by the great violinist Yehudi Menuhin, the work is striking for the maturity that runs through this youthful composition, both in the confidence of its violin writing and in the clarity and skill with which the composer masters formal balance and thematic development. The reduced forces of the work, limited to strings alone, place it in an intermediate position between concerto and *sinfonia concertante*, deliberately restricting the timbral palette entire musical universe. The development section represents one of the peaks of nineteenth-century concerto writing. Here, the transformation of the theme is intertwined with a harmonic instability that is continuously nourished by sequences, chromatic tensions and modulations. It is within this perspective that the extraordinary modernity of the cadenza becomes apparent,



Francesco Fiore, born in Rome, studied at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia under Lina Lama and Massimo Paris, before further refining his artistry with Bruno Giuranna at the Stauffer Academy in Cremona. A prize-winner at numerous international competitions, he quickly established himself as one of the most versatile and compelling musicians of his generation. His extensive concert career has taken him to major venues and festivals throughout Italy and abroad, where he has collaborated with artists such as Salvatore Accardo, Bruno Canino, Rocco Filippini, Antonio Meneses, Boris Belkin, Renata Scottò, Antonio Pappano, Bruno Giuranna, Aloys Kontarsky, Alexandre Mazdar, Pierre Amoyal, Rainer Kussmaul, Gabriele Pieranunzi, and many others. For nearly three decades, Fiore has worked closely with Salvatore Accardo on numerous chamber music projects and is a member of the Accardo Quartet. From 1990 to 2015, he held the position of Principal Viola of the Orchestra of the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, and has also served as Principal Viola with the Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the Teatro alla Scala Orchestra in Milan, and the RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Turin. At Accardo's invitation, he has been Principal Viola of the Orchestra da Camera Italiana since its founding. In 2015 he chose to leave orchestral life, winning first prize in the national professorship competition and taking up the position of Professor of Viola at the "Claudio Monteverdi" Conservatory in Cremona. He has also been appointed curator of the historic violas housed at the Stradivari Museum in Cremona. His discography includes recordings for Decca, RCA, Aulicus, ASV, Amadeus, Fonè, and Fonit Cetra. Together with Salvatore Accardo, he produced a television programme for NHK Tokyo, performing on the celebrated and unique Stradivari viola of the Royal Palace in Madrid. Active as a composer, his works include the world premiere of *Il canto della Fabbrica*, commissioned by Pirelli and performed by Salvatore Accardo with the Orchestra da Camera Italiana at the MITO Festival. In recent years, he has also appeared as a conductor and harpsichordist, directing from the keyboard. More recently, Fiore has developed an increasingly close collaboration in the viola and piano repertoire with Yevheniya Lysohor; this recording is the result of their shared artistic journey. He performs on an Étienne Vatelot viola (Paris, 1987).



Fabrizio Ventura was born in Rome. After studying in Rome and Vienna, he worked at theatres in Baden, Klagenfurt and at the Vienna Volksoper. In 1989, he was appointed musical director at the Theatre in Biel (Switzerland) and subsequently served as principal conductor at the State Theatre in Braunschweig from 1994 to 1998. This was followed by an appointment as principal conductor at the Nuremberg Opera, and in 2002 he was appointed General Music Director at the South Thuringian State Theatre in Meiningen. In September 2005, he was appointed General Music Director of the Istanbul State Opera. From 2007 to 2017, he was General Music Director of the Münster Theatre and the Münster Symphony Orchestra. During his time as General Music Director in Münster, he was Artistic Director of the 'Tage der Barockmusik Münster' and founded the 'Musica Sacra Münster' festival in 2012. Together with his wife, the pianist Rada Petkova, he has been Artistic Director of the Société Philharmonique de Bienne in Switzerland since 1990. As a guest conductor, Fabrizio Ventura has worked with such renowned orchestras as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Bavarian State Orchestra Munich, the Munich Radio Orchestra, the MDR

Symphony Orchestra Leipzig, the Stuttgart State Orchestra, the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, the Southwest German Radio Orchestra, the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, the Residentie Orkest The Hague, the European Union Youth Orchestra, the Klangforum Wien, the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra Bratislava and the Krakow Philharmonic Orchestra. Fabrizio Ventura has directed opera productions at the Royal Opera Houses in Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo, the Vienna Volksoper, the Royal Opera House in London, the Prague State Opera, the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, the Teatro Verdi in Trieste, the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, the Fondazione Arena di Verona, the Opéra de Nice, the Aalto Theatre in Essen, the Australian Opera in Sydney, the Opéra de Montréal and the Greek National Opera. In the field of early music, he founded the ensemble LA FONTE – Westphalian Baroque Orchestra in 2022 and has been invited to perform at events including the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music and the Göttingen Handel Festival. Fabrizio Ventura has performed with soloists such as Nelson Freire, Alexander Lonquich, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Christian Tetzlaff, Arabella Steinbacher, Daniel Müller-Schott, David Geringas, Sabine Meyer, Albrecht Mayer and Benjamin Grosvenor. In the opera sector, he has worked with singers such as Leo Nucci, Mariella Devia, Rolando Panerai, Siegfried Jerusalem, Bernd Weikl and Christiane Oelze, as well as with directors such as Claus Guth, Sebastian Baumgarten and Brigitte Fassbaender. His CDs, released by ARS, have been praised by the international press. Fabrizio Ventura teaches orchestral conducting at the Conservatory in Frosinone (Italy).

while highlighting the purity of the solo violin's melodic design. The writing already reveals a mind of remarkable structural discipline, capable of conceiving music as the dynamic articulation of tensions and resolutions. The opening *Allegro*, in D minor, moves within essentially Classical coordinates, yet is animated by an entirely personal inner vitality. The thematic material does not live so much through clearly defined oppositions as through continuous transformation; Mendelssohn already demonstrates a natural tendency to conceive musical discourse as an organic flow, avoiding schematic juxtapositions. The harmonic tension is built around the axis of tonic and dominant, but what is most striking is the fluidity of the modulations. The solo violin does not present itself as an antagonist to the ensemble, but is woven into the orchestral texture through a constant relationship of dialogue. Even in passages of greater technical brilliance—scales, arpeggios and trills—the writing resists purely decorative impulses. The central *Andante* opens a lyrical space of luminous tranquillity. The transition from D minor to a more expansive harmonic sphere, that of D major, produces a change in expressive perspective: the musical discourse becomes more intimate, more restrained, more cantabile. The final rondo, *Allegro*, in duple metre, brings the musical discourse back within a framework of renewed energy; here the writing acquires a new mobility, almost aerial in character. The semiquaver passages entrusted to the solo violin progressively lighten the density of the material, anticipating that quality of vibrant, rapid and luminous lightness which would become one of the most recognisable characteristics of the mature Violin Concerto. Everything that appears in the youthful concerto as promise and prefiguration finds its complete realisation in the *Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*. Conceived between 1838 and 1844 in very close dialogue with the German violinist Ferdinand David, the *Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*, is not only Mendelssohn's masterpiece in the concerto genre, but one of the highest syntheses of the entire Romantic concerto. Its greatness lies not solely in the beauty of its melodies, the perfect idiomatic quality of its violin writing or the elegance of its orchestral writing, but above all in the extraordinary modernity of its formal conception. This innovation is evident from the very first bars. The traditional Classical double exposition is abolished: the violin enters almost immediately, and through this the entire internal balance of the concerto is reconsidered. We no longer hear an orchestra presenting the material and a soloist responding to it; instead, there is a single musical organism that comes into being as a unified whole. The celebrated opening theme of the *Allegro molto appassionato*, in E minor, represents one of the composer's most inspired moments: a melodic line of extraordinary expressive concentration, which condenses lyrical impulse, dramatic tension and formal nobility into a single phrase. With astonishing economy of means, Mendelssohn constructs the movement: a few melodic ideas that generate an placed not at the end of the movement but before the recapitulation, it ceases to be merely a space for suspension and virtuosic display, becoming instead a decisive structural turning point, the architectural climax of the entire construction. Without any

break, the *Andante* in C major introduces a contrast of remarkable delicacy with the first movement. The tonal distance from the initial key of E minor creates an almost unreal effect of suspension. The slow movement is not a simple lyrical parenthesis, but rather the poetic and expressive heart of the entire concerto. Here Mendelssohn works through a process of reduction: a few elements, minimal chromatic inflections and imperceptible harmonic shifts continuously transform the emotional colour of the movement. The transition towards the finale dissolves any division between the movements and, beginning with the *Allegretto non troppo* (fifteen bars in the key of E minor), leads with carefully judged continuity towards the concluding *Allegro molto vivace*. With the move to E major, the entire tonal trajectory of the concerto reaches its own luminous resolution. The finale bursts forth with an almost unreal lightness, in that sparkling, mobile and transparent dimension. It is an echo of the world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (composed in 1842): a universe in which technical brilliance, rhythmic imagination and formal perfection coincide. Yet beneath this apparent lightness lies a musical idea of impressive rigour. Behind the elegance of the phrasing, the fluidity of the melodic line and the transparency of the sonority emerges a devotion to form, nourished not only by the lessons of Mozart and Beethoven, but also, and above all, by the contrapuntal genius of Johann Sebastian Bach. The historic performance of the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829 did not represent merely an epoch-making cultural event; it also marked a decisive stage in the definition of Mendelssohn's artistic identity. The Bachian inheritance can be perceived in the linear coherence of the musical discourse, in the vitality of the inner voices, and in the ability to allow complex structures to emerge from small thematic cells. It is therefore unsurprising that the *Concerto, Op. 64*, exerted a profound influence on the Romantic concerto that followed: from the structurally compact lyricism of the violin concertos of Max Bruch (1866), to the powerful symphonic synthesis of Johannes Brahms (1879), and finally to the expansion and transformation of melodic and dramatic expression in Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1881). Heard today alongside one another, the *Concerto in D minor* and the *Concerto in E minor* therefore tell us much more than the story of a stylistic evolution. They bear witness to the profound coherence of a musical conception which, from the adolescent prodigy to full maturity, never abandoned the pursuit of the same ideal: a perfect balance between form and song, between rigour and freedom, between architecture and poetry. And perhaps it is precisely in this rare, almost miraculous synthesis that the inexhaustible fascination of the art of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy resides.

Luigi Raso



Gabriele Pieranunzi, one of the most representative Italian violinists of his generation, a former pupil of Salvatore Accardo and later of Stefan Gheorghiu, soon came to the attention of the public and critics, being awarded prizes in some of the major international competitions: Premio Paganini (Genoa, 1988 and 1990), Tibor Varga (Sion), Ludwig Spohr (Freiburg). Invited several times by the City of Genoa to play the famous Guarneri del Gesù 'Il Cannone' that belonged to N. Paganini, regular guest of the most important Italian and international concert institutions. Recently published are Kurt Weill's *Concerto op.12* under the conduction of Jeffrey Tate and the winds of the San Carlo Theatre in Naples (Concerto Classics), Mendelssohn's quartets for piano and strings (Decca-Universal) and Chausson's *Concerto op.21* for violin, piano and string quartet (with pianist Jin Ju and or Philharmonia Chamber Players - Aulicus Classics). He plays a Ferdinando Gagliano instrument (1764) that belonged to Gioconda De Vito and was kindly made available to him by Fondazione Pro Canale Onlus.

Archi del San Carlo

First Violins: Salvatore Lombardo - Loana Stratulat - Antonella D'Andrea - Giovanna Maggio

Second Violins: Nicola Marino - Flavia Salerno - Olga Kuzma

Violas: Giuseppe Navelli - Filippo Dell'Arciprete

Cellos: Marco Vitali - Silvano Fusco

Double Bass: Gianluigi Pennino