The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

Wedding Recessional

Felix Mendelssohn 1809-1847

Felix Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, Germany, into a wealthy and educated Jewish family.

When Felix was two years old, the family had to flee to Berlin wearing disguises. The disguises were to hide the family from French fanatics seeking revenge on the wealthy Mendelssohns. Why? Felix's father, Abraham Mendelssohn, was owner of the Mendelssohn Bank, and the bank played a large role in bringing down the French leader, Napoleon. Thankfully, the disguises worked and the Mendelssohn family settled down into a comfortable and rich life in Berlin society.



From his childhood on, Mendelssohn was recognized as a musical genius and was often compared to Wolfgang Mozart. Felix's older sister, Fanny, was also a musical prodigy. (portrait to the left: Felix with Fanny)

Mendelssohn grew up in an intellectual environment. His parents organized soirees at the opulent family home on most weekends. An author once wrote of the Mendelssohn household: "Europe came to their living room."

Even though religion was not practiced in his family during his early years, his father renounced the Jewish religion and had Felix and his three siblings baptized as Lutheran Christians in 1816. Abraham and his wife, Lea, were baptized as Lutherans in 1822 and added to their last name the extra surname "Bartholdy." Felix's father later wanted Felix to drop the name "Mendelssohn" and use only "Bartholdy." But on Felix's many musical compositions, Felix deferred partially to his father's wishes and used the hyphenated surname: Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. In 1828, his sister, Fanny, wrote a letter to him in which she stated: *"Bartholdy—this name that we all dislike."* ("Bartholdy" was the surname of a rich uncle—mother Lea Mendelssohn's brother.)

Felix was greatly influenced by his aunt, Sarah Levy, who was a gifted keyboard player. She loved the Baroque music of JS Bach, but that style of music had been almost forgotten only fifty years after Bach's death. Germany was enjoying the "Romantic Period" of music! Thankfully, Sarah had the financial means to gather an impressive collection of many of the Bach family's manuscripts—before the music was thrown away by careless descendents. Sarah Levy later donated the original compositions to the Berlin Singakademie ("Sing Academy") where she and the Mendelssohn family were leading patrons. Because of

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her love for Bach's genius, young Felix began to love the intricate rhythms and patterns of the Baroque master's compositions. (portrait to the right: Felix Mendelssohn age 20 in 1829)



In 1825, Mendelssohn's grandmother, Bella Salomon, gave Felix a copy of the all-but-forgotten JS Bach masterpiece: *Saint Matthew Passion*. Mendelssohn arranged and conducted a performance in Berlin of this great work. The orchestra and choir for the performance were provided by the Berlin Singakademie. This was the first time *Saint Matthew Passion* had been performed since JS Bach's death in 1750. This performance tremendously helped the revival of JS Bach's music in Germany and throughout Europe. The twenty-year old Mendelssohn was given widespread accolades which he deserved. Mendelssohn later remarked: *"To think that it took a Jew's son to revive the greatest Christian music for the world!"*

Because of Mendelssohn's efforts and vast wealth, many of Bach's original manuscripts have been saved. Mendelssohn also revived interest in German composers George F. Handel and Franz Schubert.



Many of Mendelssohn's contemporary composers sent him music to gain his approval. Among those was Richard Wagner (pronounced *Vahg-ner*) who foolishly submitted the ***original*** manuscript of one of his early symphonies. Regretfully, Mendelssohn lost the manuscript which enraged Wagner. After Mendelssohn's death, Wagner would only conduct Mendelssohn's music while wearing white gloves — which he said showed his disdain for the great Jewish composer.

In 1837, Mendelssohn married Cecile Jeanrenaud, whose father was a Protestant clergyman. The couple had five children. Most of Mendelssohn's original manuscripts were left to the children of his two daughters, Marie and Lili. These papers are now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. (portrait to the left: Mendelssohn's wife Cecile in 1846)

Mendelssohn was prolific in his musical writings. In 1826, he wrote an overture to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Part of that overture includes the famous *Wedding March* that you are studying today.

Three years before his death, Mendelssohn formed a major music school in Leipzig, Germany (The Leipzig Conservatory). The school is still functioning—but as The University of Music and Theatre of Leipzig. Mendelssohn persuaded prominent musicians and composers of the day to join the faculty—including Robert Schumann and Joseph Joachim.

In 1847, Mendelssohn's beloved sister, Fanny, died. Her death caused him great distress. Six months later, Mendelssohn died of a series of strokes. He was only thirty-eight. His sister Fanny, his grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn, and both his parents had died from similar health problems. His pallbearers included Ignaz Moscheles and Robert Schumann. Felix Mendelssohn is buried in Berlin.

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Overture from Midsummer Night's Dream

(orchestrated accompaniment has a 2 measure count-in)



(wedding music)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Mayron Cole

Allegro (M.M. ♩ = c. 120)

f *cresc.* *ff*

con pedal

mp *ff* *mf*

Ped. ✻

(last time only)

Fine

mp *mf* *f*

(last time only)

mp *f* *mf*

D.S. al Fine

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