

March 18, 2023

7:30 pm

"Romeo and Juliet and Rising Stars!"

Three Concerto Movements with Piano and Instrumental Finalists

Student Competitors

INTERMISSION

"The Walk to the Paradise Garden" from *A Village Romeo and Juliet*

Frederick Delius (1862 – 1934)

Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 13, "Italian"

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

- I. Allegro vivace
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Con moto moderato
- IV. Presto and Finale: Saltarello

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**“The Walk to the Paradise Garden” from *A Village Romeo and Juliet*
Frederick Delius (b. Bradford, United Kingdom, January 29, 1862; d. Grez-sur-Loing, France, June 10, 1934)**

This interlude from an opera is scored for two flutes, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, harp, and strings. Performance time is about 8 minutes.

The lyricism in Delius's early compositions reflected the music he had heard in America while living there, and the influences of European composers such as Grieg and Wagner. As his skills matured, he developed a style uniquely his own, characterized by his individual orchestration and his uses of chromatic harmony. Yet, Frederick Delius was a composer like French composer Gabriel Fauré in many respects: highly personal, sometimes delicate, elegant, and traditional without being academic. Harold C. Schonberg in his book, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, writes “Delius did not compose a large body of music, and he had to wait a long time for recognition.”

As a child, Delius showed an aptitude for music and took violin lessons. Yet, his father wanted young Frederick to enter the family business in Manchester, England, when he matured. Delius did join the company but was so unhappy that he left and went to Florida in 1884 to make his fortune growing oranges. Settling in Solano Grove, near Jacksonville, Delius concentrated on music instead of selling fruit. However, this may be the place where the concept of “The Walk to the Paradise Garden” originated, since Florida is many times thought of as a paradise.

After learning harmony and composition from a local organist, Delius taught music in Jacksonville for a while, and later in Virginia. Then, after spending some time in New York, he went to the Leipzig Conservatory to study music. He was composing all the while and wrote the opera, *A Village Romeo and*

Juliet, which was produced in Berlin in 1907. "The Walk to the Paradise Garden" is an orchestral segment of this opera. The work is an intimate opera (and the piece shows his preference for a life of privacy). While the opera has rarely been staged, the orchestral interlude between Scenes 5 and 6, "The Walk to the Paradise Garden," is heard separately in concerts and has been recorded many times. Interestingly, the opera was performed by the St. Paul Opera (Minnesota) in the summer of 1974.



Frederick Delius

Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 13, "Italian"

Felix Mendelssohn (b. Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809; d. Leipzig, Germany, November 4, 1847)

- I. Allegro vivace
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Con moto moderato
- IV. Presto and Finale: Saltarello

The symphony is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings. Performance time is about 27 minutes.

Felix Mendelssohn was a talented child. In fact, he wrote 13 symphonies for strings as he was just entering his teens (at least 12 years old and we now refer to these early works as *sinfonias*) for training exercises to show his composition teacher. These pieces demonstrate Mendelssohn's development while he matured musically as discussed by Karl-Heinz Köhler in *The New Grove Early Romantic Masters* 2. Köhler continues that the first six *sinfonias* show the Viennese Classical style with influences of Bach and Handel while the later ones give hints of his future strength.

As Mendelssohn developed, he continued to write music for all ensembles, including major symphonies for full orchestra. This *Symphony No. 4* was completed after Mendelssohn had a vacation in Italy in the winter of 1832. First performed in London on May 13, 1833, it has remained Mendelssohn's most popular symphony. He wrote that the impressions he envisioned when creating the work came from the realm of personal experience and contacts he had with the vitality of the Italian people. "The spirit of Italian song and dance is evident in this work," writes Karl Haas in his book, *Inside Music*. The *Italian Symphony* was not published until 1851.

Berlioz called this symphony "admirable, magnifique, and that it deserved a gold medal," reports Michael Steinberg in his book, *The Symphony*. It is a perfectly poised symphony.

In fact, Mendelssohn himself wrote that "it was the most cheerful piece I had yet composed."

“Mendelssohn’s grandfather was a philosopher whose views played a significant part in the education and thoughts of young Felix,” continues Karl-Heinz Köhler. Grandfather Moses Mendelssohn “helped lay the foundation stone of German national literature.” The Mendelssohn children had every advantage money could provide. Both Felix and his older sister, Fanny, started piano lessons at an early age from Marie Bigot, who was “highly esteemed by Haydn and Beethoven.”

Felix continued to study piano with an admired pianist and teacher of his time. And when he was ten years old, he began composition and music theory studies with Friedrich Zelter, a friend of Goethe and teacher in the Berlin Singakademie. “Among his other teachers were the violinist Carl Wilhelm Henning,” who presumably gave Mendelssohn the fundamentals of violin and string technique and performance practices.

Zelter took young Mendelssohn to meet Goethe, the German poet, playwright, novelist, scientist, statesman, theatre director, and critic. During that visit, Mendelssohn also had the opportunity to meet Mozart’s young pupil, Johann Hummel (LSO audiences heard Hummel’s *Bassoon Concerto* in the 2022 Rising Stars Concert).

Mendelssohn later studied with one of the best pianists of the day, Ignaz Moscheles.

Mendelssohn’s third phase of youthful development began after his first meeting with Goethe. He started to compose in larger forms including concertos and preparatory studies for symphonies.

“His parents encouraged his progress and hired an orchestra for him to try out his new works and to gain conducting experience,” writes Harold C. Schonberg in *The Lives of the Great Composers*.

By 1842, “on top of all his conducting and concertizing, not to mention composing, Mendelssohn established the Leipzig Conservatory,” continues Schonberg. “It opened April 3, 1843. He and Robert Schumann taught composition and piano.”

Mendelssohn died at the age of 38, but he is one of the greats! Enjoy tonight’s *Italian Symphony*.



Felix Mendelssohn