

Concert: London, Philharmonic Society Debut, May, 1844 (Beethoven Concerto/Mendelssohn)

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Philharmonic Society.

...Joachim, the boy violinist, astounded every amateur. The Concerto in D, Op. 61, is the only one that Beethoven composed for the violin. It was written shortly after the Symphony No. 4, and came within the second period of Beethoven's existence, according to the divisions in his biography made by Schindler. This fact is worthy of notice, because the concerto in question has been generally regarded by violin players as not a proper and effective development of the powers of that instrument. [...] Despite of these criticisms, kindred genius will now and then spring up, and eloquently illustrate what a mastermind has created — chaos to mediocrities, of course, but clear and intelligible to the highly-gifted executant. The celebrated Baillot — now also no more — did not find the concerto a sealed book. In his hands it was a grand and inspiring work; it has been essayed at the Philharmonic, but with chequered success. But there arrives a boy of fourteen [*sic*] from Vienna, who, after astonishing everybody by his quartet-playing, is invited to perform at the Philharmonic, the standard law against the exhibition of precocities at these concerts being suspended on his account. He is asked what concerto he will play. "That of Beehoven," is the youth's reply, and he submits to the conductor, for his revisal and approbation, the cadences that he had ventured to compose for the concerto. Mendelssohn on seeing them sheds tears of joy at the refined taste and marvelous invention of Joachim, for the violinist has penned cadences which are a masterly *résumé* of the movements of the composer; he has entered into the spirit and character of the concerto, and his executive dexterity is employed to carry out the themes of his master, not for the mere display of individual power, but to give consistency and coherency to the whole. Modern fantasia manufacturers might derive a valuable lesson from Joachim's manner of treating the imaginings of a master spirit. As for his execution of this concerto, it is beyond all praise, and defies all description. This highly-gifted lad stands for half-

an-hour without any music, and plays from memory without missing a note or making a single mistake in taking up the subject after the *Tutti*. He now and then bestows a furtive glance at the conductor, but the boy is steady, firm, and wonderfully true throughout.

“In the slow movement in C — that elegant expanse of melody which glides so charmingly into the sportive rondo — the intensity of his expression and the breadth of his tone proved that it was not merely mechanical display, but that it was an emanation from the heart — and the mind and soul of the poet and musician were there, and it was just in these attributes that Joachim is distinguished from all former youthful prodigies. One suggestion, caused by the reminiscence of Baillot’s execution of this concerto, Joachim will, no doubt, be thankful for, as he is modest as well as clever. In the opening subject of the rondo, he should lead off on the fourth string with more energy and animation, so as to form a marked contrast when he takes up [the subject] *in alto*. This spirited reading of Baillot rendered the violin a dangerous rival to the horns in the same theme. Joachim executes it playfully and gracefully, but the [illegible] of more vigor in the opening passage would tell immensely. Joachim’s performance was altogether unprecedented, and elicited from amateurs and professors equal admiration.

Mendelssohn’s unequivocal expression of delight and [concertmaster] Loder’s look of amazement, combined with the hearty cheering of the band as well as the auditory, all testified the effect young Joachim had produced.”

<https://josephjoachim.com/2014/10/17/concert-london-philharmonic-debut-may-1844-beethoven-concertomendelssohn/>

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