

Concert: London Philharmonic Debut, May, 1844 (Beethoven/Mendelssohn) The Times, London

The Times, London, Issue 18621 (May 28, 1844), p. 4.



Joseph Joachim acknowledging the audience, drawing thought to be by Mendelssohn, ca. May 1844 (?),
with autograph texts by Julius Benedict and Felix Mendelssohn.
Brahms-Institut an der Musikhochschule Lübeck, D-LÜbi, ABH 6.3.97



PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

The fifth concert took place last night, and the following was the *programme*:—

Sinfonia in B Flat (No. 4)—Beethoven

Duet, “Stung by horror,” Miss Rainforth and Herr Staudigl (*Pascal Bruno*)—J. L. Hatton.

Concerto, violin, Herr Joachim—Beethoven.

Overture (*Faust*)—Spohr.

Duetto, “Pazzerello, O qual ardir,” Mr. Machin and Herr Staudigl (*Faust*)—Spohr.

Quintetto e Coro, “Ah! goda lor felicitatie,” the principal parts by Miss Rainforth, Miss A. Williams, Mr. Manvers, Mr. Machin, and Herr Staudigl (*Faust*)—Spohr.

PART II.

Overture (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Scherzo (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Song, with chorus, “You spotted snakes,” Miss Rainforth, and Miss A. Williams (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Notturmo, march, and finale chorus (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Song, with chorus, “Joy, 'tis a glorious thought,” Herr Staudigl (*Fidelio*)—Beethoven.

Hunting chorus (*The Seasons*)—Haydn.

Leader, Mr. Loader [*sic; recte:* (John David) Loder]; conductor, Dr. F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

The society may almost be said in this concert to have taken a new position; in the selection of the music and in the style of its execution it was one of the finest public performances we have ever attended. For once the character of the vocal may be said to have approached that of the instrumental music, and hence this perfect *ensemble*.

Beethoven's symphony is that one which, next to the Pastorale, may be said to be the most clear and obvious in its beauties. It has always, therefore, commanded public attention during its progress, and under the baton of Mendelssohn, might be said almost to chain down the

ears of the audience. The slow movement, the first portion of it, was played with a degree of perfection in which the nicest ear could not discover a fault.

Beethoven's violin concerto, which belongs to the class of symphonies, so grand and varied in its design, was played by young Joachim in a manner which caused astonishment in the oldest musicians and professors of that instrument, who discover in a boy of only 13 years of age [*sic*], all the mastery of the art which it has cost most of them the labour of a life to attain, if indeed any of them have reached to the same excellence by which he is in all respects distinguished. This concerto, however attractive and beautiful as an orchestral composition, has been seldom played by professors of the violin, because the passages, though excessively difficult, convey no notion of that difficulty to those who hear it played, and the merit of the performer has no chance of being appreciated by those who have listened through their attendances on concerts to the gorgeous displays of other writers. Joachim has contrived to throw all this aside, and by his clear and distinct articulation, his perfect intonation, and a conception of his subject which denotes almost a mind kindred with that of the composer, has produced a perfect whole, and so blended the solo instrument with the rest of the composition as to present this great masterpiece with the effect which the author intended. The piece is one of those of which Beethoven himself—and no one exercised a severer judgment on his own writings than he did—was proud. But the extraordinary talent of Joachim is but described in part by what has been said of his manner of playing this concerto. He appeared himself as a composer also, having constructed two beautiful cadences, one for the first and the other for the last movement, into which he has infused the spirit of the author; has varied while he adopted his subjects, introducing into them still greater difficulties of execution, yet never deviating from the main design. Many will hardly believe that Joachim could himself have written these cadences, but of the fact there is, we believe, no doubt; no other hand has touched them. The applause bestowed on him was great, but not more so than his deserts; one universal feeling governed the whole audience. He was interrupted by plaudits wherever they could be permitted, sometimes even to the injury of the composition; and at the close they lasted some minutes.

Till last night there has been no performance from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* in this country, except the overture. The curtain is now raised, and we are made acquainted with some pieces which are blended with Shakespeare's play as incidents merely, for the Germans have not tortured it into an opera, and which may take rank with any of the compositions of this master. The scherzo is a most original movement, intricate and difficult, and taxing the powers of the orchestra to the utmost; the march, a magnificent piece, simple yet new. Both of these were encored. With respect to the latter and incident occurred, too characteristic of the great care of Mendelssohn in conducting an orchestra to be passed over. The desire of the audience to have the march repeated had been shown in the usual manner, and could not be doubted. At the moment when it was expected to recommence, the conductor suddenly disappeared from his post, and was seen slowly advancing to the top of the orchestra, the audience all the time keeping silence. Some notes had been omitted, which he must set right before he could allow it to begin again. He then resumed his station, raised his baton, and the

march was resumed amidst a thunder of applause. In the finale he returns to that subject which closes the overture, and interweaves the chorus with it, and nothing of the kind could be more perfect. We must adopt these things on our stage, or allow that the Germans go beyond us in their illustration of our own great bard.

The opera of *Pascal Bruno*, from which the duet of Miss Rainforth with Staudigl is taken, is the work of a countryman, Mr. J. L. Hatton, who has just returned from Vienna, where the entire piece has been performed with a degree of success which has raised the estimation of English talent in that refined capital. The specimen given proves that the success was well deserved. He has formed himself, in his orchestral combinations, upon Mozart, and commits the fault of overlaying the voice by the fulness of them, but many of his effects are quite his own, and his general talent is undoubted. The duet was very finely sung, both by Miss Rainforth and by Staudigl.

In the selections from *Faust* also the boundary of the overture was passed to introduce us to the opera itself, and the acquaintance with it was most satisfactory. The overture is one of the finest Spohr has written; the hint of the double orchestra, employed in the minuet which leads from the overture into the opera itself, is taken obviously from *Don Giovanni*, but he has worked the subject after his own admirable manner.

We ought not to take leave of this concert without noticing the marked improvement in the discipline and general effect of the orchestra in the short time since Mendelssohn has become the conductor and assumed the absolute control over it. Except perhaps in some portion of the vocal music, when the accompaniment was too powerful for the voices, not a fault, not a slip was to be detected. All lovers of music and all professors must acknowledge their great obligation to him; he has solved the great problem of the occasional inefficiency of this orchestra in showing that its component parts were most excellent, and that nothing was wanted but a good conductor who could acquire their confidence, and bring out their inherent powers. He has proved, what has often been asserted, that the same conductor must act uniformly in order to insure the success of a great concert. That there are artists already here, English as well as foreign, who could accomplish this, is not to be denied; but to produce willing obedience a great name is wanted, and that name is Mendelssohn. He was received with the most cordial and vehement applause, not only on his first appearance, but whenever he presented himself in the orchestra.

Deutsche Übersetzung

PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

Das fünfte Konzert fand gestern Abend statt, und das Programm lautete wie folgt:—

Sinfonia in B-Dur (Nr. 4)—Beethoven

Duett, „Stung by horror“, Miss Rainforth und Herr Staudigl (*Pascal Bruno*)—J. L. Hatton.

Konzert, Violine, Herr Joachim—Beethoven.

Ouvertüre (*Faust*)—Spohr.

Duetto, „Pazzerello, O qual ardir“, Mr. Machin und Herr Staudigl (*Faust*)—Spohr.

Quintetto e Coro, „Ah! goda lor felicitate“, die Hauptpartien gesungen von Miss Rainforth, Miss A. Williams, Mr. Manvers, Mr. Machin und Herr Staudigl (*Faust*)—Spohr.

TEIL II.

Ouvertüre (*Ein Sommernachtstraum*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Scherzo (*Ein Sommernachtstraum*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Lied mit Chor, „You spotted snakes“, Miss Rainforth und Miss A. Williams (*Ein Sommernachtstraum*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Notturmo, Marsch und Finalchor (*Ein Sommernachtstraum*)—Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Lied mit Chor, „Joy, 'tis a glorious thought“, Herr Staudigl (*Fidelio*)—Beethoven.

Jagdchor (*Die Jahreszeiten*)—Haydn.

Konzertmeister: Mr. Loader (sic; recte: (John David) Loder); Dirigent: Dr. F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

Man kann fast sagen, dass die Gesellschaft mit diesem Konzert eine neue Position eingenommen hat; in der Auswahl der Musik sowie in der Art ihrer Ausführung war es eine der besten öffentlichen Darbietungen, die wir je besucht haben. Fürs Erste kann man sagen, dass sich der Charakter der Vokalmusik dem der Instrumentalmusik annäherte, woraus dieses perfekte Ensemble resultierte.

Beethovens Symphonie ist diejenige, die nach der *Pastorale* in ihren Schönheiten am klarsten und offensichtlichsten sein dürfte. Sie hat daher während ihres Verlaufs stets die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums gefesselt, und unter dem Taktstock Mendelssohns vermochte sie die Ohren des Publikums beinahe zu fesseln. Der langsame Satz, dessen erster Teil, wurde mit einem Maße an Perfektion gespielt, in dem selbst das feinfühligste Gehör keinen Fehler entdecken konnte.

Beethovens Violinkonzert, das zur Gattung der Symphonien gehört und in seiner Anlage so grandios und vielfältig ist, wurde von dem jungen Joachim in einer Weise gespielt, die bei den ältesten Musikern und Professoren dieses Instruments Erstaunen auslöste. Sie erblickten in einem Knaben von nur 13 Jahren (sic) all die Meisterschaft der Kunst, deren Erlangung die meisten von ihnen die Arbeit eines ganzen Lebens gekostet hat, sofern überhaupt jemand von ihnen dieselbe Exzellenz erreicht hat, durch die er sich in jeder Hinsicht auszeichnet. Dieses Konzert, so attraktiv und schön es als Orchesterkomposition auch ist, wurde von Violinprofessoren bisher selten gespielt, da die Passagen, obwohl außerordentlich schwierig, den Hörern keinen Begriff von dieser Schwierigkeit vermitteln, und das Verdienst des Ausführenden kaum eine Chance hat, von jenen gewürdigt zu werden, die bei ihren Konzertbesuchen den prachtvollen Darbietungen anderer Autoren gelauscht haben.

Joachim hat es verstanden, all dies beiseitezuschieben, und durch seine klare und deutliche Artikulation, seine perfekte Intonation sowie eine Auffassung seines Gegenstands, die fast von einer dem Komponisten verwandten Seele zeugt, ein vollkommenes Ganzes geschaffen. Er hat das Soloinstrument so mit der übrigen Komposition verschmolzen, dass dieses große Meisterwerk mit der vom Autor beabsichtigten Wirkung präsentiert wurde. Das Stück ist eines von jenen, auf die Beethoven selbst stolz war – und niemand übte ein strengeres Urteil über seine eigenen Schriften aus als er. Doch das außergewöhnliche Talent Joachims ist mit dem, was über seine Art, dieses Konzert zu spielen, gesagt wurde, nur unvollständig beschrieben. Er trat selbst auch als Komponist in Erscheinung, indem er zwei wunderschöne Kadenzen verfasste, eine für den ersten und eine für den letzten Satz, in die er den Geist des Autors einfließen ließ; er variierte die Themen, während er sie übernahm, fügte noch größere spielerische Schwierigkeiten hinzu und wich dennoch nie vom Hauptentwurf ab. Viele werden kaum glauben wollen, dass Joachim diese Kadenzen selbst geschrieben haben könnte, aber an der Tatsache besteht, wie wir glauben, kein Zweifel; keine andere Hand hat sie angerührt. Der Beifall, der ihm zuteilwurde, war groß, aber nicht größer als seine Verdienste; ein universelles Gefühl beherrschte das gesamte Publikum. Er wurde, wo immer es zulässig war, von Applaus unterbrochen, manchmal sogar zum Schaden der Komposition; und am Schluss dauerte dieser einige Minuten an.

Bis gestern Abend gab es in diesem Land, abgesehen von der Ouvertüre, keine Aufführung aus Mendelssohns *Sommernachtstraum*. Der Vorhang ist nun gelüftet, und wir werden mit einigen Stücken bekannt gemacht, die lediglich als Zwischenfälle in Shakespeares Schauspiel eingeflochten sind, da die Deutschen es nicht zu einer Oper gequält haben, und die sich in die Reihe der Kompositionen dieses Meisters einfügen dürfen. Das Scherzo ist ein höchst origineller Satz, kompliziert und schwierig, der die Kräfte des Orchesters bis aufs Äußerste

fordert; der Marsch ein prachtvolles Stück, einfach und doch neu. Beide wurden encoriert. In Bezug auf Letzteren ereignete sich ein Vorfall, der zu charakteristisch für die große Sorgfalt Mendelssohns bei der Leitung eines Orchesters ist, um übergangen zu werden. Der Wunsch des Publikums nach einer Wiederholung des Marsches hatte sich in der üblichen Weise gezeigt und stand außer Zweifel. Im Moment, als der Wiedereinsatz erwartet wurde, verschwand der Dirigent plötzlich von seinem Posten und man sah ihn langsam an die Spitze des Orchesters vortreten, während das Publikum die ganze Zeit über Schweigen bewahrte. Einige Noten waren ausgelassen worden, die er korrigieren musste, bevor er den Beginn wieder zulassen konnte. Dann nahm er seinen Platz wieder ein, hob den Taktstock, und der Marsch wurde unter donnerndem Applaus fortgesetzt. Im Finale kehrt er zu jenem Thema zurück, das die Ouvertüre beschließt, und verwebt den Chor damit, und nichts dergleichen könnte vollkommener sein. Wir müssen diese Dinge auf unserer Bühne übernehmen oder eingestehen, dass die Deutschen uns in der Illustration unseres eigenen großen Dichters übertreffen.

Die Oper *Pascal Bruno*, aus der das Duett von Miss Rainforth mit Staudigl stammt, ist das Werk eines Landsmannes, Mr. J. L. Hatton, der gerade aus Wien zurückgekehrt ist, wo das gesamte Stück mit einem Erfolg aufgeführt wurde, der das Ansehen des englischen Talents in jener kultivierten Hauptstadt gehoben hat. Die dargebotene Probe beweist, dass der Erfolg wohlverdient war. Er hat sich in seinen Orchesterkombinationen an Mozart orientiert und begeht den Fehler, die Stimme durch die Fülle derselben zu erdrücken, aber viele seiner Effekte gehören ganz ihm selbst an, und sein allgemeines Talent ist unbestreitbar. Das Duett wurde sowohl von Miss Rainforth als auch von Staudigl sehr schön gesungen.

Auch in den Auszügen aus *Faust* wurde die Grenze der Ouvertüre überschritten, um uns in die Oper selbst einzuführen, und die Bekanntschaft mit ihr war höchst zufriedenstellend. Die Ouvertüre ist eine der feinsten, die Spohr geschrieben hat; die Andeutung des Doppelorchesters im Menuett, das von der Ouvertüre in die Oper selbst überleitet, ist unverkennbar aus *Don Giovanni* entlehnt, aber er hat das Thema nach seiner eigenen bewundernswerten Manier verarbeitet.

Wir sollten uns nicht von diesem Konzert verabschieden, ohne die deutliche Verbesserung in der Disziplin und Gesamtwirkung des Orchesters in der kurzen Zeit zu erwähnen, seit Mendelssohn Dirigent geworden ist und die absolute Kontrolle darüber übernommen hat. Abgesehen vielleicht von einigen Teilen der Vokalmusik, in denen die Begleitung für die Stimmen zu mächtig war, war kein Fehler, kein Fehltritt zu entdecken. Alle Musikliebhaber und alle Professoren müssen ihm ihren großen Dank aussprechen; er hat das große Problem der gelegentlichen Ineffizienz dieses Orchesters gelöst, indem er zeigte, dass seine Bestandteile ganz hervorragend waren und nichts weiter vonnöten war als ein guter Dirigent, der ihr Vertrauen gewinnen und ihre inhärenten Kräfte zum Vorschein bringen konnte. Er hat bewiesen, was oft behauptet wurde: dass derselbe Dirigent einheitlich agieren muss, um den Erfolg eines großen Konzerts zu sichern. Dass es bereits hier Künstler gibt, sowohl englische als auch ausländische, die dies leisten könnten, ist nicht zu leugnen; aber um bereitwilligen Gehorsam zu erzeugen, wird ein großer Name gebraucht, und dieser Name ist Mendelssohn. Er

wurde nicht nur bei seinem ersten Erscheinen, sondern jedes Mal, wenn er sich im Orchester zeigte, mit dem herzlichsten und stürmischsten Beifall empfangen.

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