



**NORTHSTAR  
RECORDING**  
BY BERT VAN DER WOLF



**FELIX MENDELSSOHN**  
**Symphonies nos. 1 & 3**  
Complete symphonies vol. 2

**THE NETHERLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
Jan Willem de Vriend



SUPER AUDIO CD



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**FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)**

**Symphony no. 1 op. 11 in C minor**

<b>[1]</b> Allegro di molto	<b>10:20</b>
<b>[2]</b> Andante	<b>6:20</b>
<b>[3]</b> Menuetto: allegro molto	<b>6:01</b>
<b>[4]</b> Allegro con fuoco	<b>8:22</b>

**Symphony no. 3 op. 56 (Scottish) in A minor**

<b>[5]</b> Introduction und Allegro agitato	<b>15:38</b>
<b>[6]</b> Scherzo assai vivace	<b>4:17</b>
<b>[7]</b> Adagio cantabile	<b>8:25</b>
<b>[8]</b> Allegro guerriero und Finale maestoso	<b>10:20</b>

Total time: 69:50







## **Where is Mendelssohn?**

*Jan Willem de Vriend and the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra set out to record the complete symphonies of Felix Mendelssohn. Ruud Meijer talks to him about his love for one of the most neglected geniuses.*

## **What is so special about the Mendelssohn symphonies?**

“What is particularly amazing about the Mendelssohn symphonies is the fact that he is both harking back to old masters like Bach, and, as a child of his time, looking ahead. Especially his Italian and Scottish symphonies are pointing at the future, since, in my opinion, Mendelssohn lived in the era of discovery, of the Wanderer. Goethe came up with his young Werther, a guy who went away to discover the world and upon returning nothing looked the same. It’s a bit like the Wanderer in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich: the sea, the valley, the hills, the light – everything looked new, fresh and different. Mendelssohn was such a Wanderer. He had read Goethe, so he travelled a lot. He went to Scotland, Italy and England where he absorbed the newness of it all. And that is exactly what you can hear in his music: astonishment, translated into music using harmonies we knew but which in his hands sounded completely fresh and new. Having said that, you can also hear an old-school musical approach. Mendelssohn sometimes uses fugues or chorales we know from older styles. He was the first to bring back those trustworthy techniques – and that, in itself, was also new. He took those techniques on a journey and that is what made the music sound so lively and fresh. I, personally, cannot believe



that his music isn't being played more often. There are Beethoven, Brahms or Schumann programs all over the place, but where is Mendelssohn? Let me repeat: where is Mendelssohn?"

### **Why has Mendelssohn's music been neglected for so long?**

"Maybe it was hard for us to accept that a 15-year-old boy (or a 17-year-old, or a 19-year-old for that matter) was able to compose music in such a masterly way. He composed his first symphony when he was only 15 – and it is a masterly score. The funny thing is that we fully accept the fact that Mozart wrote his first symphony when he was only eight, no problem there. But in the case of Mendelssohn all of a sudden people become very critical. There is a famous quote of Goethe referring to the talents of the two composers. According to Goethe, who heard both child prodigies play during his lifetime, Mendelssohn bore "the same relation to the little Mozart that the perfect speech of a grown man does to the prattle of a child." The old poet, who befriended the young Mendelssohn, may have exaggerated a bit or maybe his memory failed him since he heard Mendelssohn sixty years after he had heard Mozart, but still it says a lot about Mendelssohn's incredible talent."

### **Some claim that anti-Semitism had a lot to do with it...**

"I don't know if his being a Jew had anything to do with it. If I think of other great Jewish composers like Mahler or Johann Strauss: their careers didn't suffer much because of their heritage. The Nazis even tried to hide the fact

that the Strauss family was of Jewish decent. The Nazis loved their music, because it was so typically German. They banned Mahler's and Mendelssohn's music as 'degenerate' – but it was impossible to do the same with Strauss. And after the war Mahler's reputation – in spite of his Jewish decent - only kept on growing. But I do believe that Mendelssohn, by means of religious forms like chorales, wanted to communicate to the world that he had converted to the Christian faith. That was very important to him. Wagner, a notorious anti-Semite, slipped in a quote from Mendelssohn's fifth symphony in his opera Parsifal and every Friday Mendelssohn, Schumann and Wagner got together to drink beer and talk. Wagner often tended to beat around the bush talking about Mendelssohn being a Jew. He called him a bit nervous, like most of the Jews, but all in all he wasn't such a bad guy."

**Mendelssohn was, like yourself, also a well-respected conductor.  
What was his fame based on?**

"He was very energetic. He conducted the Gewandhausorchester in Leipzig and especially his energy with that particular orchestra must have been amazing. Mendelssohn hated moments of rest and silence between the movements of a symphony. You can hear that for instance in his Scottish and Italian symphonies. He was like: 1st movement finished? Let's get started with the 2nd immediately! Turn your page and woosh! On with it. It's the ongoing flow that counts. There's an anecdote about him conducting Rossini's William Tell, a heavy piece of work for the orchestra with that storm in it and all. The crowd went wild: people climbed on their chairs, hollered and shouted – they loved it and

wanted an encore of the same piece. Mendelssohn obliged. Same result: the audience went crazy. The musicians were getting a bit tired but Mendelssohn decided to play the music for the third time. After that the orchestra was exhausted. But they still had to play a complete Schumann symphony. But Mendelssohn had the gift to convey so much energy to the players and inspire them to play in incredible tempi with unbelievable contrast and dynamics that he succeeded in creating an even more exhilarating performance. And this style of conducting, that form of electrifying energy, can also be found in the way he composed his symphonies. That's very Mendelssohnesque."

**Mendelssohn started composing his 3rd, 'Scottish', symphony in 1829. He didn't finish it then. It was only ten years later that he returned to it. Can you, as a conductor, spot the 10-year hiatus while studying the score?**

"It's not in his expression or musical 'message' that I can spot it. It's something else. The development of the music and the instruments went so fast. They were always tinkering with their instruments. It's almost like people used to do with old cars. You want it to go faster, but when it's faster it makes more noise so you have to work on that too... It was the same with instruments in those days. Nowadays we have reached a form of standard instruments. At the time they were still in full development. Oboes, trumpets, one piston, two pistons, three pistons, tubes, natural horns, valves: the changes were enormous. With the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra we had to decide which instruments to use, since there was too much going on. So it's in technical

things you can spot the period he wrote certain passages. Like: oh, he must have written this in a later stage, because there were more possibilities on the trumpet then. We decided to stick to the instruments that came closest to Mendelssohn: natural horns – very important, especially in the Scottish – but trumpets with pistons and so on.”

### **Whilst conducting his music: do you have to become an incarnation of Mendelssohn to get his symphonies right?**

“First of all: I don’t even come close to the masters whose music I am allowed to conduct. Having said that: in preparation to this project I wanted to know everything there is to know about this composer. I wanted to see, yes even smell, the instruments he played on. I went to museums and libraries to absorb each and every snippet of Mendelssohn that was available. Even if I may have the same amount of energy as Mendelssohn, I cannot pretend to be him, because I’m not. But I think it’s the energy thing that connects us. It can also be found in silly things that could become very important. I remember a letter from his sister Fanny in which she writes about the beautiful velvet gloves her brother received as a present. One night he was sitting at home and a friend came by and asked him to come with him and have a good time. Mendelssohn didn’t feel like going out at all, but it offered him the opportunity to show off his beautiful new gloves, so he went along just the same. The utter bliss of the beauty of velvet gloves. Sometimes when I conduct a beautiful phrase of his, I see those gloves in my mind’s eye. Because whatever they may say: there’s nothing wrong with beauty, is there?”





## **Jan Willem de Vriend**

Jan Willem de Vriend is the chief conductor and artistic director of The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra since 2006. Since de Vriend was named chief conductor, The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has become a notable phenomenon on the Netherlands' musical scene. It has presented semi-scenic performances of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and Mendelssohn. There were premieres of works by Offenbach, Say and Mahler. And by substituting period instruments in the brass section, it has developed its own distinctive sound in the 18th and 19th century repertoire. It has recorded Beethoven's complete symphonies conducted by de Vriend.

Opera conducting has come to play a significant role in de Vriend's career. He has led Combattimento Consort Amsterdam (being artistic director from 1982 – 2013) in unknown operas by Gassmann, Rameau, Heintzen and Haydn, among others, as well as familiar operas by such composers as Monteverdi, Handel, Rossini and Mozart. For the opera houses of Lucern, Strasbourg, Barcelona, Moscow and Enschede, he has conducted operas by Handel, Mozart, Verdi, Strauss and others. De Vriend is music director of Opera St. Moritz.

De Vriend has conducted many distinguished Dutch orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra. De Vriend is also a welcome guest internationally and has conducted orchestras in China, Germany, Austria, Italy and France.

## **The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra**

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is based in Enschede, in the province of Overijssel. Performing at an international level, as evidenced by its highly acclaimed CDs and invitations for international tours, the orchestra is firmly rooted in society.

Jan Willem de Vriend has been its artistic director and chief conductor since 2006. Under De Vriend's leadership, the orchestra has expanded its repertoire to cover music from four centuries. Its use of period instruments in the Classical repertoire gives the orchestra a distinctive and highly individual character.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra performs amongst others in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Enschede, Zwolle and Deventer. In addition, it often works with the Dutch National Touring Opera Company. In its home town Enschede, the orchestra builds on a symphonic tradition of more than 80 years, and it is known as one of the most modern and entrepreneurial orchestras in the Netherlands. Its international partners include the BBC Philharmonic and the Liszt School of Music Weimar.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra created a number of ensembles, such as a chamber orchestra, the Baroque Academy of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (BANSO) and various chamber music ensembles. The orchestra's commitment to expanding its social relevance is also reflected in the large number of projects in which education is a key element.



The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has made successful tours of the United States, Spain and England, and it has performed in such famous venues as Carnegie Hall in New York and Birmingham Symphony Hall. Its CDs of the complete Beethoven symphonies (for Challenge Classics) and music by Dutch composers such as Julius Röntgen and Jan van Gilse (for the CPO label) were very well received by the international music press.

The orchestra has worked with distinguished conductors, such as its former chief conductor Jaap van Zweden, Vasily Petrenko, Edo de Waart, Hans Vonk, Gerd Albrecht, Marc Soustrot, Eri Klas, Ed Spanjaard, Claus Peter Flor and Tan Dun.

It also has accompanied many celebrated soloists, including Gidon Kremer, Ronald Brautigam, Natalia Gutman, Charlotte Margiono, Antje Weithaas, Marie-Luise Neunecker, Hélène Grimaud, Robert Holl, Fazil Say, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Thomas Zehetmair.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Province of Overijssel and the Municipality of Enschede, as well as annual contributions from sponsors.

[www.nedsym.nl](http://www.nedsym.nl)



Netherlands Symphony Orchestra

Enschede · Overijssel



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**The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra - Jan Willem de Vriend** conductor

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



**NORTHSTAR**  
**RECORDING**  
by **BERT VAN DER WOLF**

[www.northstarconsult.nl](http://www.northstarconsult.nl)



Executive producers: Anne de Jong & Marcel van den Broek

Recorded at: Muziekcentrum Enschede (NL)

Recording dates: No. 1 3-6/12/2012 & No.3 18-20/11/2013

Recorded by: Northstar Recording Services

Recording Producer, editing & mastering: Bert van der Wolf

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Product coordination: Boudewijn Hagemans

Graphic Design: Natasja Wallenburg

Cover Design: Juan Carlos Villarroel

Art direction: Marcel van den Broek

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