

choly, enriched by a discreet arpeggiated accompaniment. This reflective, languid mood is suddenly shattered by the Allegro con fuoco, which starts with a nervous, kinetic cascade of arpeggios that eventually leads into the rather square, march-like principal theme. As a contrast to this theme, which is reiterated by both piano and orchestra, Mendelssohn introduces the truly capriccioso segments of the work, energetic bursts which are not easily defined as fully developed musical ideas. Nevertheless, the solo part, which showcases octaves, chromatic runs, and dizzying arpeggios, never lapses into technical display for its own sake. Mendelssohn's fluid virtuosity, even when listeners wonder where it might lead, possesses a truly satisfying charm which amply compensates for the work's conventional harmonies and predictable thematic development.



# Mendelssohn

## A Midsummer Night's Dream

### Incidental Music

Rudolf Kempe - The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

## Capriccio Brillant

Gary Graffman, piano

Charles Munch - Boston Symphony Orchestra



A Midsummer Night's Dream, incidental music by German composer Felix Mendelssohn written to accompany performances of Shakespeare's play A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Prussian royal court.

Mendelssohn became familiar with Shakespeare by reading German translations as a boy, and in 1827, at age 17, he was inspired to write a piece capturing the atmosphere of Shakespeare's comedy. The piece, a concert overture, quickly became a popular favourite throughout Europe.

Mendelssohn returned to Shakespeare in 1843 at the request of Prussian King Frederick William IV, an admirer of the overture, who wanted a set of incidental music for an upcoming production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Mendelssohn crafted 14 short pieces based on themes and moods from the earlier piece. The complete work was

first performed with the play on October 14, 1843.

Mendelssohn's new creations, such as the "Song with Chorus," a lullaby for the fairy queen Titania, and the "Wedding March," written to accompany the multiple weddings at the end of the play, recaptured the magical spirit of the overture. The complete set also includes a nimble fairies' scherzo, a haunting nocturne rich with horns, a buoyant clowns' dance, and a farewell finale. The best-known movement is perhaps the "Wedding March," which is often played in modern wedding ceremonies.

Written during the composer's second visit to England, Felix Mendelssohn's Capriccio brillante, Op. 22, is a charming example of the composer's pianistic art. The Andante introduction is a gentle, unassuming melody with a light touch of melan-

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A Midsummer Night's Dream - Incidental Music

1 Overture 12:00

2 Nocturne 6:32

3 Scherzo 5:03

4 Wedding March 5:15

5 Capriccio Brillant 10:26

A Midsummer Night's Dream released by EMI 1962

Capriccio Brillant released by RCA 1961

Engineer John Crawford Producer - Max Wilcox



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