



Felix Mendelssohn and Queen Victoria listen as Prince Albert plays a chorale on the organ

# Mendelssohn

## Octet F# E Flat Op.20



# Vienna Octet



Mastered in DSD256

In 1825, when Mendelssohn completed his Octet, Op. 20, he had already produced his first numbered symphony a year earlier, but the octet is more sophisticated and may safely be considered a full blown symphony, even though written for only eight string players. Mendelssohn's own words, written on the autograph score in his own hand, are proof of this: "The Octet must be played in the style of a symphony in all parts; the pianos and fortes must be precisely differentiated and be more sharply accentuated than is ordinarily done in pieces of this type."

Not merely a doubled quartet, the piece is a true octet in which counterpoint, texturing, and harmonic complexity are every bit as sophisticated as in any symphony. In four movements, the work unfolds like a symphony, with a brilliant first movement allegro giving way to a marvelously dreamy second movement andante. A third movement scherzo is chamber-like in its texture and transparency but, again, symphonic in scope and size. It in fact develops a near-diabolical complexity due to Mendelssohn's brilliant use of eight voices instead of four or even fewer.

The presto finale opens with outright bizarre chuffing from the cellos, but explodes immediately into a vigorous romp which plunges ahead, barely taking a breath, to a large, truly symphonic finale.

The piece is particularly significant in Mendelssohn's career as it was one of two singularly brilliant works considered to be a signpost of his genius in his teenage years. (The other work thus identified is the equally brilliant Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream.) It was also the first string octet to be written as a true eight-part work and to this day remains the finest work in that form extant. It bridges the gap between Mendelssohn the chamber composer and Mendelssohn the symphonist in a particularly effective way.

The third movement scherzo was subsequently scored for full orchestra by the composer and presented to the London Philharmonic Society in 1829 as a separate, complete work.

# Mendelssohn

## Octet In E Flat Major Op.20

### Vienna Octet

1. Allegro Moderato Ma Con Fuoco 14:22
  2. Andante 7:16
  3. Scherzo – Allegro Leggierissimo 4:41
  4. Presto 6:29
- Total Time: 32:48

Producer: James Mallinson Engineers: Gordon Parry & Tryggvi Tryggvason  
Recorded by Decca 1972 at Sofiensaal, Vienna



For more info e-mail us:  
[admin@highdeftapetransfers.com](mailto:admin@highdeftapetransfers.com)  
or visit our website:  
[www.highdeftapetransfers.com](http://www.highdeftapetransfers.com)