



Composer Focus

Felix Mendelssohn

(February 3, 1809 - November 4, 1847)

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was a German composer of the early Romantic period. Born into a wealthy family, he was encouraged to study music and began composing at a young age. He published his first piece, a piano quartet, when he was only 13 years old. He wrote his first symphony at the age of 15.

Felix's sister, Fanny Mendelssohn, was also a gifted pianist and composer. However, her family didn't consider it "proper" for a woman to become a professional musician. She composed over 450 pieces of music, and some of her pieces were published under Felix's name.

Mendelssohn loved to travel, and he often wrote works inspired by his visits to other countries, like his "Scottish" and "Italian" symphonies. He was also a gifted artist who enjoyed creating sketches in both pencil and watercolor.

In addition to the many wonderful works Felix Mendelssohn composed, he is also credited with inspiring a resurgence in the popularity of the music of J.S. Bach. In 1829, Mendelssohn conducted a performance of Bach's oratorio *St. Matthew Passion*. The performance of this work, which had been all but forgotten since Bach's death, was such a success that it led to a renewed interest in the works of Bach in Germany and across Europe.

Mendelssohn died in 1847, just six months after the death of his beloved sister Fanny, after suffering a series of strokes. He was only 38 years old. During his lifetime, Mendelssohn composed around 750 works, including works for piano solo, choral music, symphonies, string quartets, and concertos. A few of Mendelssohn's best known compositions include his *Songs Without Words* for piano, his music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (which includes the famous "Wedding March"), and his *Violin Concerto in E Minor*. He also wrote the melody that is now used in the well-known Christmas song "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."