

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN

### Sinfonia No. 10 in B minor

**BORN:** February 3, 1809, in Hamburg

**DIED:** November 4, 1847, in Leipzig

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1823

**WORLD PREMIERE:** Unknown, but possibly at the Mendelssohn home shortly after its completion, by a small ensemble drawn from friends and relatives of the composer and his family.

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The main portion of the composition presents three themes: the first agitated, the second soothing, the third buoyant. The latter provides material for much of the central development episode and for the accelerated coda at the close.

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Felix Mendelssohn was, and remains, the most remarkable child prodigy in the history of music. His standing as such rests on a series of adolescent compositions that many a mature musician might envy. Two of Mendelssohn's early works, the Octet for Strings and the Overture to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are well known. Others have received comparatively few performances; but as they have come to be known, they have shown just how precocious Mendelssohn actually was.

One of the chief products of Mendelssohn's apprenticeship was a group of 13 sinfonias for string orchestra. They date from the composer's early adolescence, and it seems unlikely that any musician, even Mozart, ever produced such sophisticated work at so early an age.

The tenth of these pieces unfolds as a single movement with an introduction in slow tempo. That prelude moves from darkness to light: from the low register of the string choir in the opening moments to its bright upper range near the close, and from searching B minor harmonies to the more serene major mode. The ensuing *Allegro* begins with a return to the minor mode and a stormy initial theme, but two further ideas follow to expand and deepen the music's complexion.

*Scored for strings alone.*

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