



MUSIC OF FELIX MENDELSSOHN

God is light,
in whom there is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

AS THE HART PANTS, OP. 42, No. 1

SONGS WITHOUT WORDS, OP. 19, No. 1

HYMN OF PRAISE, OP. 52

NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FESTIVAL CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

MICHAEL DENHAM, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

SHERI JACKSON, SOPRANO

TESS OTTINGER, SOPRANO

JOANNA ZORACK-GREENE, SOPRANO

MAX ALEXANDER COOK, TENOR

GRACE MCFARLANE BOTTELIER, PIANO

TODD FICKLEY, ORGAN

PALM SUNDAY

MARCH 29, 2026 AT 5 PM

WASHINGTON DC

PROGRAM

PSALM 42, OP. 42, NO. 1

Chorus

As the hart pants after the water brooks, so panteth my soul for thee, O God.

Psalm 42

WELCOME

Dr. Ray Hylton, Sr.

OFFERTORY *Here an offering will be recieved.*



SONGS WITHOUT WORDS, OP. 19, NO. 1

Grace McFarlane Bottelier, piano

HYMN OF PRAISE, OP. 52

Chorus

All life, all that has life and breath sing to the Lord! Hallelujah, sing to the Lord!

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord with lute and harp, in joyful song extol him.

Praise 33

And let all flesh magnify his might and his glory.

Psalm 145

Solo and Chorus

Praise thou the Lord, O my spirit, all my soul declare, praise his great lovingkindness.

Praise thou the Lord, O my spirit, and forget thou not all his benefits.

Psalm 103

Solo

Sing ye praise, all ye redeemed of the Lord, redeemed from the hand of the foe,

From your distresses, from deep affliction, who sat in the shadow of death and darkness.

All ye that cried in trouble unto the Lord, sing ye praise, give ye thanks, proclaim aloud his goodness.

Psalm 103

Solo and Chorus

He counteth all your sorrows in the time of need, he comforts the bereaved with his regard.

Psalm 56

Duet and Chorus

I waited for the Lord, he inclined unto me. He heard my complaint. O blessed are they who hope and trust in the Lord. O blessed are they who hope and trust in him.

Psalm 40

Solo

Sorrows of death had closed all around me, hell in its terrors had got hold upon me, with troubles and deep heaviness, But said the Lord, "Come arise from the dead, and awake thou that sleepest! I will be to thee Light!

Psalm 116

We called through the darkness, "Watchman, will the night soon pass? Watchman, will the night soon pass? The watchman only said, "Though the morning will come, the night will come also. Ask ye, enquire ye, if ye will, enquire ye, return again, ask. Isaiah 21

"Watchman, will the night soon pass?"
"Watchman, will the night soon pass?"
"Watchman, will the night soon pass?"

Solo and Chorus

The night is departing!

The night is departing, the day is approaching. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us gird on the armor of light. Romans 13

Chorale

Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has led us in the way,
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today. Nun danket alle Gott

Glory and praise to God the Father, Son, be given,
And to the Holy Ghost, on high enthroned in heaven.
Praise to the triune God, with powerful arm and strong,
He changeth night to day. Praise him with grateful song. Doxology

Duet

My song shall be always thy mercy, singing thy praise, thou only, God.
My tongue shall declare the blessings hourly bestowed by thee.
I wander in night and thickest darkness,
And mine enemies stand threat'ning around.
Yet called I upon the name of the Lord,
and he redeemed me with watchful goodness. Psalm 89

Chorus

Ye nations, offer to the Lord glory and might!
Ye monarchs, offer to the Lord glory and might!
The whole earth offer to the Lord glory and might.
Thou heavens offer to the Lord glory and might! Psalm 96

All life give thanks to the Lord, praise him, all ye people, praise his holy name. 1 Chronicles 16

Sing to the Lord, and ever praise his holy name!

All that has life and breath, sing to the Lord. Hallelujah, sing to the Lord! Psalm 150

PROGRAM NOTES

Felix Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*, Op. 52 was first performed in the summer of 1840 in Leipzig, Germany's St. Thomas Church to enthusiastic public response. Composer Robert Schumann reported large performing resources at the premiere and considerable success. This was welcome news in view of Mendelssohn's spotty success in years prior with larger symphonic compositions. His "Reformation" symphony was performed but left unpublished, as was his "Italian" Symphony. His later "Scottish" Symphony was sketched but set aside.

He had begun work on another symphony in B-flat, but its initial movements lay fallow until new impetus came to him through a commission for a new work to commemorate Leipzig's 1840 celebration of the 400th anniversary of the invention of printing from moveable type and the appearance of Gutenberg's Bible. That development was a bombshell on the communication landscape arguably akin to the pervasive impact of the 20th century's computer chip. After each occurrence, nothing else would ever be quite the same.

Mendelssohn incorporated the prior symphonic movements in B-flat into his new conception which explored further frontiers with the amalgamation with them of choral and vocal music loosely following Beethoven's pattern in the *Ninth Symphony*. Mendelssohn however went further, appending or incorporating an entire cantata to the earlier symphonic movements, borrowing thematic and motivic material from them in the new and broader symphonic-choral entity. Indeed, he embraced the suggestion of a friend who characterized the work as a "Symphony-Cantata."

Following the general sense of new dawn that the printing press brought, Mendelssohn reframed this scientific achievement in existential terms to convey spiritual progression from darkness to light wrought by God's sovereign care of the created order, and the human opportunity to notice and respond. In Mendelssohn's treatment, salvation is understood both in its broadest implications for social and cultural holiness, and in its most intimate and personal ones through provision for all of God's needy children.

In this quest Mendelssohn leans heavily on the Old Testament Psalms (excising from them in order: Psalms 150, 33, 145, 103, 107, 56, 40, 116, 89, and 96), but in arguably the central and pivotal movement he turns to St. Paul's greatest New Testament letter in Romans chapter 13: *The night is departing, the day is approaching. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us gird on the armor of light.*

Mendelssohn immediately follows this stirring call with a solemn rendition of the familiar and beloved chorale "Now Thank We All Our God," punctuated in a chorale-prelude-like treatment of the *Nun danket alle Gott* hymn conveying a fully Trinitarian theological formulation and doxology.

Mendelssohn's family of course was Jewish. His grandfather Moses was one of the great Jewish philosophers in Europe. But Felix's father Abraham became a highly successful banker and financier. He and the family embraced the prevailing Protestant Christian culture in Germany. How much of an actual spiritual conversion this was is debated, but Felix's new faith seems to have been genuine. In addition to his oratorio masterpiece *Elijah*, he later added to that genre with his *St. Paul* and *Christus*.

This makes even more perplexing the virulent antisemitism and hatred to which he was subjected by the likes of Richard Wagner, who also seethed over Mendelssohn's considerable success and popularity among wider audiences. People loved his music despite perceptions in some quarters of his relative conservatism in the pantheon of other more progressive Romantic Era composers. He was a classically-oriented Romantic with broad historical and musicological proclivities. Witness his deep admiration of J. S. Bach, and his rescue from languishing disinterest that composer's monumental *St. Matthew's Passion*. Mendelssohn was very aware of his heritage, and of the musical shoulders he stood on. It was indeed a loss that he passed at such a young age, leaving later generations only to ask, "What might have been?"

Our concert begins today with another of Mendelssohn's beautiful and beloved choruses, the first movement of his extended setting of Psalm 42, Op. 42, of the same name as the larger work: "As the Hart Pants." At the time of its writing and first performance, he indicated that he considered it his very best choral music to date. We have chosen it to serve both a framing and invocational role for our efforts this afternoon, and a fitting reflection for the Lenten season, pointing to our deep needs and God's gracious provisions for us.

The piano offertory is the first of Mendelssohn's intimate and expressive *Songs without Words*, Op. 19, No. 1.

Dr. Michael Denham

FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN I Sonya Hayes, Concertmaster Elizabeth Adams Ethan Hippe Solomia Gorokhivska Jean Baptiste Courtin	VIOLA Nina Kiken* Jennifer Ries Mary Ann Tortolano	FLUTE Andrei Pidkivka*	HORN Michael Hall*	TIMPANI William Richards*
VIOLIN II Bill Tortolano* Shaundra Culatta Ivan Hodge Pamela Lassell	CELO Chris Fiore* Samuel Swift Kathryn Hufnagle	OBOE Alicia Maloney*	TRUMPET Susan Rider*	ORGAN Todd Fickley
	BASS T. Alan Stewart* Paul Hunt	CLARINET Cheryl Sanborn*	TROMBONE Jeffrey Gaylord*	REHEARSAL PIANISTS Todd Fickley Jonathan Rajaseelan

FESTIVAL CHOIR

SOPRANO

Barbara Alexander Hayley Ashbaugh Margie Benson Sherry Brukbacher Linda Chen Janice Childress	Becky Cznadel Mary Alice Davidson Diane Fresquez Janet Gregory Cheryl Hatch Kristine Heine	Meimon Hsu Kathy Hughes Sheri Jackson Joanna Lam Phyllis Lauber Deborah MacKay	Debora Madsen Eve Moscicki Yoonhee Mun Holly Novak Lisa Orr Tess Ottinger	Leah Raymond Emily Tsai Sarah Williams Linda Zebooker Joanna Zorack-Greene
--	---	---	--	--

ALTO

Alison Adkins Carol Bartholomew Katelynn Boyd- Thompson Mary Ellen Cain	Catherine Clevenger Jenny Coneff Christine Feintheil Carolyn Gasarch Margaret Grosh	Mihal Gross Gerri Hall Carol Jackson Camilla Kerr Donna Kirk	Ruth A Kurzbauer Joan Lewis Carmel Mahan Joyce Martin Denise Miller	Dottie Seep Karin Strydom Marguerite Toscano Kathleen Trevnan
---	---	--	---	--

TENOR

Bianca Benincasa Scott Dickson	Morgan Dodd Pete Hulst	Neil Inglis Forrest Jones	Luke Schmidt Malik Tate	Kenneth Weeman
-----------------------------------	---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------------	----------------

BASS

Thomas Baucom Laing Bowles Serge Duss	Nizar Essahli Daniel Fleszar David Galligan	Ethan Greene William Gregory Paul Grosvenor	Michael Hamaide Harvey Handley Bruce Kuester	Andrew Markle David Prentiss Antonio Ulloa
---	---	---	--	--

LOGISTICS & PROGRAM

Devin Wulff

Dr. Michael Denham

Please join us for Holy Week Worship

Maundy Thursday
April 2, 7:00 p.m.
Sanctuary

Marking our Lord's last
supper with his disciples and
his loving example to them of
true servanthood.

Good Friday
April 3, 7:00 p.m.
Sanctuary

Meditations in word and
music on the seven last

Easter Sunday

April 5

8:30, 10, & 11:30 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary with exhilarating hymns and anthems featuring
the Chancel Choir and Soloists, Brass, Organ, and Timpani.

*Easter Egg hunt for the children in the Fountain Garden
after the 8:30 service and on the playground after the 10:00 service.*

Childcare available all morning in the main church building for children up to age 4.

NATIONAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
4101 NEBRASKA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20016
202-537-7553
WWW.NATIONALPRES.ORG