

VIOLIN VIOLA CELLO BASS FIDDLE
STRINGS

Music@Menlo Live 2009: Being Mendelssohn. Various artists. (musicatmenlo.org)

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Music@Menlo Equipped with a lovely title and lofty purpose, to illuminate Mendelssohn's art from multiple perspectives, Music@Menlo's seventh annual set of live performances, documenting performances held at the 2009 festival (co-founded by Emerson Quartet cellist David Finckel and his wife, pianist Wu Han), is a generous treasury of music by the Mendelssohn-Schumann circle. The selections—from Bach to Ligeti—trace Mendelssohn's influences and those he influenced, fully capturing the romantic musical power of that brief time nearly two centuries ago when Felix was king.

The firepower in this set is formidable. Violist Paul Neubauer and pianist Gilbert Kalish show up for Brahms; violinist Joseph Swensen, cellist Paul Watkins and pianist Jeffrey Kahane take care of Schumann's D minor piano trio; and cellist David Finckel and Emerson violinist Eugene Drucker partner with pianist Menahem Pressler for the two Mendelssohn piano trios. I'm a sucker for every Mendelssohn Octet that comes along, and this one, Op. 20 in Eb, led by violinist Sibbi Bernhardsson, runs like a charm.

Beethoven also fares well: The Pacifica Quartet does a bang-up job on Op. 18, No. 6, and violinist Arnaud Sussmann and pianist Wu Han give a riveting performance of the Kreutzer Sonata. Other featured string players include the St. Lawrence String Quartet and bassist Scott Pingel.

The superb sound is engineered and produced by Da-Hong Seetoo using state-of-the-art 24-bit recording technology.

The six discs are available as a box set or individually.

