## • PRINCETON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ROSSEN MILANOV, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Transcription Details:	
Recording Date:	October 29, 2017
Topic:	Pre-concert talk on Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Part of the All Mozart concert.
Speakers:	Rossen Milanov, Edward T. Cone Music Director Basia Danilow, PSO Concertmaster and member of LARK Quartet
<b>Transcription:</b> [00:00] Rossen Milanov:	And the main course on the program is going to be Mendelssohn's Reformation Symphony. Also known as number 5 even though it was the second one that was composed, if you look at it chronologically. The reason why it's number five [sic] because they didn't publish it until the 1860s and there are already the other four Symphonies [sic] were there. So, what are you going to do - you can't make it 2a or 1A
[00:27]	[Basia laughs]
[00:27] Rossen:	so that they just got this number five. Mendelssohn is a composer that is very similar to Mozart in many ways. Both of them are child prodigies. Both of them lived approximately the same amount of time - I think Mozart live for 35 years and Mendelssohn lived for 38 years. Their creative life span was incredibly short for the amount of music they wrote and the big impact that [sic] and in the case of Mendelssohn, we don't necessarily regard him only as a symphony composers [sic] composer. He wrote beautiful works, oratorios, and probably some of the best chamber music that I'm sure you play
[01:12] Basia Danilow:	Absolutely.
[01:13] Rossen:	in your quartet. And also the octet is one of my favorite piece
[01:16] Basia:	Yes. [laughs]
[01:16] Rossen:	for 8 instruments. But the Reformation piece for him had a very special significance because he was born into a Jewish family. But at the time in Germany, there is a very big sentiment [sic] - anti-Semitic sentiment. So, his father decided that it would be ultimately much better for his family and for the future of all the children that he had, for them to convert to Lutheran religion and they did. I think Mendelssohn was only 12 years old when he converted to Lutheran religion, Protestant religion one of the different varieties that existed. It happened that in 1830 there was a big celebration of the 300 years of the Reformation and on that occasion, he decided to write a piece which the main subject of that was the celebration of the [sic] of that new Protestant religion. Not only that but to show how the Catholic religion was modified and, in this case, actually conquered by the music that Martin Luther wrote.
[02:38]	And what a better way to do that because Martin Luther, we forget about that often, but he was a flutist himself and very accomplished musician. So, a lot

	of those hymns that we sing nowadays in the church were actually composed by him. And, in this case, what you're going to hear at the very last movement of the piece [sic] it starts with a solo flute that plays the hymn "Ein feste Burg ist" [hesitates] "unser Gott"
[03:14] Basia:	[laughs] "ist Gott"
[03:15] Rossen:	"Gott" is "Mighty Castle" [sic] "Mighty Fortress".
[03:20] Basia:	Oh, "God is my Mighty Fortress".
[03:23] Rossen:	"My Mighty Fortress". That's what it is. And, of course, Martin Luther was a flute player and then [sic] this starts with just a very [sic] single line and then more instruments add up. So, in the course of about two-and-a-half/three minutes the entire orchestra plays this tune gloriously in a sort of very majestic way as another way of [sic] sort of using a musical metaphor of how that reformation started with a single thought, with a single faith and that suddenly gathered so many supporters and followers after that. To a contrast, the very opening of the piece uses something that was used in Catholic religion, which is the forms of imitation. What we call counterpoint like from the time of Palestrina. All this [sic] Old Masters that were using that idea of imitation of one voice traveling to different sections of the orchestra and getting more and more complicated as it progresses. Sort of like a good analogy about the Catholic religion, I guess and [sic] versus the simplicity of the Lutheran religion.
[04:37]	So you're going to hear these two worlds that are in constant fight – particularly in the first and the last movement - and I think it's quite incredible to hear it in the work of a twenty-one-year-old composer
[04:51] Basia:	Wow.
[04:52] Rossen:	because he was only twenty-one when he wrote that. Barely [sic] I don't know what it would be, third year of college.
[04:58] Basia:	Yeah. [laughs]
[04:58] Rossen:	So, it's quite unbelievable. Then the middle movements - to me, they are my favorite ones because that's what we always think of Mendelssohn. You know the composer of Midsummer Night's Dream. The piece that everybody knows, of course, is The Wedding March from the Midsummer Night's Dream that's played at pretty much any wedding that I have attended [Basia laughs] no matter where you are – in Europe or on this part of the ocean. There's a certain lightness and there's a certain "Mozartian" quality about the music. So, you're going to hear that in the scherzo movement. And then the third movement is this beautiful, romantic confession of love or affection or whatever you will, that sort of leads without an intermission into the last movement of the piece.
[05:51]	Mendelssohn to me is a person that with one foot is stuck in the classic style - so the style of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven – and with the other foot he's already in the amazing magical world of the Romantic composers such as Schumann, Brahms, Wagner. So, you're going to hear this beautiful hybrid of things that are reflecting the past and things that are pointing towards a very interesting future answer. I always found those composers that function from the borderline of two periods quite fascinating because the music sounds

very fresh and there are things that we feel very comfortable with and there are things that stretch us a little bit farther as musicians.

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