

111 Years of Deutsche Grammophon - CD 32

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Mendelssohn: Symphonies Nos.4 "Italian" & 5 "Reformation"



Symphony No.4 in A, Op.90 - "Italian" 1 1. *Allegro vivace* [7:34] 2 2. *Andante con moto* [6:02]
3 3. *Con moto moderato* [6:54] 4 4. *Saltarello (Presto)* [5:52]
Symphony No.5 in D minor, Op.107 - "Reformation"
5 1. *Andante - Allegro con fuoco* [10:33] 6 2. *Allegro vivace* [5:22] 7 3. *Andante* [3:00] 8 4.
*Choral "Ein' Feste Burg ist unser Gott!" (Andante con moto - Allegro vivace - Allegro maestoso
- Più animato poco a poco)* [7:55]
Berliner Philharmoniker Lorin Maazel – conductor

The Symphony No. 4 in A major, Op. 90, commonly known as the Italian, is an orchestral symphony written by German composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847).

The work has its origins, like the composer's Scottish Symphony and the orchestral overture The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave), in the tour of Europe which occupied Mendelssohn from 1829 to 1831. Its inspiration is the colour and atmosphere of Italy, where Mendelssohn made sketches but left the work incomplete:

"This is Italy! And now has begun what I have always thought.. to be the supreme joy in life. And I am loving it. Today was so rich that now, in the evening, I must collect myself a little, and so I am writing to you to thank you, dear parents, for having given me all this happiness."

In February he wrote from Rome to his sister Fanny

“The ‘Italian’ symphony is making great progress. It will be the jolliest piece I have ever done, especially the last movement. I have not found anything for the slow movement yet, and I think that I will save that for Naples.”

The Italian Symphony was finished in Berlin, 13 March 1833, in response to an invitation for a symphony from the London (now Royal) Philharmonic Society; he conducted the first performance himself in London on 13 May 1833, at a London Philharmonic Society concert. The symphony's success, and Mendelssohn's popularity, influenced the course of British music for the rest of the century. However, Mendelssohn remained unsatisfied with the composition, which cost him, he said, some of the bitterest moments of his career; he revised it in 1837 and even planned to write alternate versions of the second, third, and fourth movements. He never published the symphony, which only appeared in print in 1851, after his death.

The Symphony No. 5 in D major/D minor, Op. 107, called the Reformation Symphony, was composed by Felix Mendelssohn in 1830 in honor of the 300th anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession. This Confession was a key document of Lutheranism and its Presentation to Emperor Charles V in June 1530 was a momentous event of the Protestant Reformation. The symphony was written for a full orchestra and was the second extended symphony that Mendelssohn had written. It was not published until 1868, 21 years after the composer's death - hence its numbering as '5'. Although the symphony is not very frequently performed, it is better known today than it was during Mendelssohn's lifetime.

The key of the symphony is stated as D major on the title page of Mendelssohn's autograph score. However, only the slow introduction is written in D Major, whereas the main theme and the cadence setting of the first movement are in D minor. The composer himself referred to the symphony on at least one occasion as in D minor.

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