

VICS-1023 STEREO

MENDELSSOHN
Incidental Music to
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
SCHUBERT
Music from
ROSAMUNDE
MONTEUX / VIENNA PHILHARMONIC



Master of the Utrecht Life of the Virgin, Ca. 1410-1415 — A Courtly Company



Mendelssohn

Incidental Music to A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Overture • Scherzo • Nocturne • Wedding March

In the remote tonality of mystery, magic and fantasy, Shakespeare sets his play, and Mendelssohn's music is miraculously consonant with it. There is indeed a magic in it—an elfin gaiety, an impalpable delicacy, compounded of dew and honey and the nectar of flowers, the scents of flowers on warm midnight airs, the rhythm of flowers and of tiny dancing feet beneath towering blades of grass.

The first part of Mendelssohn's music—the Overture—came into existence in 1826, the incredible work of a seventeen-year-old boy. Not another note of this music was written until Mendelssohn was thirty-four years old. He then completed thirteen pieces of incidental music to the play, and this without losing for a moment the freshness, delicacy and sense of wonder and delight that informs the Overture. (These thirteen pieces were

later reduced to five, one with a choral part; however, the suite which the composer extracted and orchestrated is nowadays usually represented by the four pieces presented here.)

The Scherzo is used as a prelude to Act II of the play. Here, as someone has written, Mendelssohn "disclosed the fairy world, with its chattering elves and their mischievous gambols, interrupted now and then by the griefs of the unfortunate and tormented lovers." The Nocturne comes at the end of Act III, when sleep has descended upon all in the drama. It embodies one of the loveliest passages for the horn in all music—and some of the loveliest music that ever came from the hand of Mendelssohn. The Wedding March is, of course, familiar to everyone.

Schubert

Music from ROSAMUNDE

Overture • Entr'acte in B-Flat • Ballet Music Nos. 1 and 2

Schubert wrote eleven pieces of music for a play which had a run of only two nights. The music thereupon disappeared, and was not seen nor heard again until after its discovery, many years later. The Overture here is not actually part of the *Rosamunde* music; it was written for another obscure play, *Die Zauberharfe*. Like the Entr'acte and Ballet Music, though, it is full of Schubertian melody; like all of his music, it is lovely, expressive and sometimes wistful in the Schubert manner; nothing more alluring could be written about it.

Oscar Bie, one of Schubert's biographers, feels that *Rosamunde* has become a symbol of Schubert's life:

"A commission from an unworthy source, difficulties of performance, false judgments . . . loss to the world. forgetfulness—these are typical of a life that had never been actually lived. But from it there rises music secretly, as a poem rises in the secret heart. It leaves earth and floats lightly through time in dance and song . . . blessing those who followed Schubert beyond his small life into his larger heaven."

—CHARLES O'CONNELL

The late Mr. O'Connell was the author of several books, among them The Victor Book of Symphonies and The Victor Book of Overtures, Tone Poems and Other Orchestral Works.

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PIERRE MONTEUX, renowned as a conductor of the symphonic literature, opera and ballet, is one of the most celebrated and beloved figures in the entire musical world. Since his podium debut in 1911 he has led virtually every great symphony orchestra both here and abroad. His first visit to the United States, 1916-24,

included two seasons with the Metropolitan Opera and five years with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Following a decade of activity in Europe, Monteux returned to America for sixteen years with the San Francisco Symphony. Since 1961 he has been conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

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