



## ABOUT THIS EDITION

Perfect for teaching and performing, this collection from Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* is based on the first complete edition edited by Julius Rietz and published by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig between 1874 and 1877. Nineteenth-century editions by Theodore Kullak, Karl Klindworth and Franklin Taylor, and 20th-century editions by Oliver Ditson, Constantin von Sternberg, Kullak-Niemann, Ignaz Friedman and the Henle edition have been consulted for textual differences.

All fingerings, metronome marks, pedal indications and markings in parentheses are editorial unless indicated otherwise in footnotes. Because pianos today are quite different from those of Mendelssohn's day, his pedal indications should be modified for more resonant instruments. The effectiveness of Mendelssohn's and the editor's pedal suggestions will be directly related to the pianist's ability to balance musically the various textural layers with a well-projected melody. Experiment with partially depressed pedal. Foot touch should be as delicately adjusted as that of the arm and hand. "Finger pedaling," the technique of holding notes through with the fingers during a time when no pedal is used (or when the pedal must be changed frequently), may be used to assist legato pedaling and give the effect of longer, unbroken pedals. Mendelssohn's *sempre pedal* direction should be interpreted as "always with pedal" rather than "leave the pedal down continuously."

## ABOUT THE SONGS WITHOUT WORDS

Composed over a period of two decades and published in eight groups of six each, the 48 *Songs without Words* reflect the sunniest qualities of Mendelssohn's melodiousness, spontaneity and invention. In October of 1841, when asked about the meaning of some of the *Songs without Words*, the composer replied that it is difficult to explain music using words: "[Words can be] ambiguous, vague, and so easily misunderstood in comparison with real music, which fills the soul with a thousand things expressed better than words." He believed that a piece of music evoked different feelings in each listener, and words were unnecessary.

The groups of pieces were published at irregular intervals in 1832, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1841, 1844 and 1845; Op. 85 and Op. 102 appeared only after Mendelssohn's death, in 1851 and 1868 respectively. The first book was so successful that Mendelssohn composed seven more books. The title *Songs without Words* seems to have been invented by Mendelssohn for a short, melodic piano solo, generally in strophic (verse) form. The titles for these pieces are always subjective; most were assigned by his friends.

The title *Songs without Words* is first found in a letter from Mendelssohn's older sister, Fanny, to a family friend, Karl Klingemann, in 1828. This title eventually came to be applied to pieces of an especially intimate character, which linked them closely to the person to whom they were dedicated. Of the six books that appeared during Mendelssohn's lifetime, five contain dedications, all to upper-class women: Elise von Woringen, Rosa von Woringen, Sophie Horsley, Clara Schumann and Sophie Rosen. The pieces were intended mainly for "the ladies," as Mendelssohn made clear in an unpublished letter to Fanny.

Mendelssohn's 48 *Songs without Words* can be classified into four different types: solo song, where the melody flows continuously over an accompaniment of arpeggios and simple chords; accompanied duet; choral song, with sections in four- or five-part harmony; and more instrumental type, with less vocal melodies that are not as interesting as the accompaniment. Many of the pieces fit into more than one of these types, and most are short piano pieces in three-part song form, whose theme is songlike in character and whose mood is uniform throughout. Each piece concludes with a coda.

Mendelssohn made the piano sing in these pieces, which offer a wide variety of moods and emotions. Their superb lyrical quality gives pianists the opportunity to use much expressiveness. The *Songs without Words* are a significant and valuable contribution to the piano repertoire.



## ABOUT THE MUSIC IN THIS COLLECTION

### ***Tarantella (Presto), Op. 102, No. 3*.....6**

An instrumental piece, this useful staccato study and dainty bagatelle suggests a hunting song more than a tarantella. The downward leaps in measures 9–10, 13–14 and 17–20 suggest the gallop of a horse. Three eighths per group are maintained throughout most of the piece. Keep the touch light, playing only from the finger, with a somewhat firm hand.

### ***Confidence (Moderato), Op. 19, No. 4*.....8**

This choral song is a favorite for church preludes and offertories. Do not rush the dotted quarter note in the melody at measures 6, 8, 10, 12 and 22. Notice the different treatment of the melody in measure 21, where the rests in the accompaniment should not interrupt the solidity of the tune. Pedal usage should be very subtle. No pedal should be used in the small cadenza in measure 24.

### ***Consolation (Adagio non troppo), Op. 30, No. 3*.....10**

Another choral song, this is frequently one of the first *Songs without Words* studied by young students. Its simple **A B A'** structure provides a good lesson in form (introduction = measures 1–3; **A** = 3–11; **B** = 11–17; **A'** = 17–25; coda [repeats the introduction] = 25–27). Be very careful to balance the hands at measures 11–15 so that the sonorous left-hand octaves provide a solid foundation but do not overshadow the melody. Take a little extra time at the *tranquillo* indication for measures 23–24. Measures 25–26 (arpeggios) should resume the tempo; slightly ritard the tempo of the final two chords.

### ***Regrets (Andante espressivo), Op. 19, No. 2* .....11**

The opening phrase of this solo song suggests violin bowing, as the first two measures should be connected across the bar line even though the phrasing (violin bowing) suggests a break at that point. Singing with the fingers, aim for a melodic tone, like that produced under the bow of a good violinist. When the opening melody divides into two voices (measure 3 forward), let them glide smoothly in fourths and thirds (measures 5–7). Play the grace notes (such as those at measures 2 and 10) leisurely before the beat. Emphasize the chord at measure 85 so that it will last for four measures, and resolve it quietly. The final eighth notes in measures 89–91 should be played short and light.

### ***Venetian Boat Song (Andante sostenuto), Op. 19, No. 6*.....14**

This accompanied duet might have been conceived as Mendelssohn was sitting in a Venetian gondola, perhaps being lulled to sleep by the recurrent sound and pull of the boat. The dots over the Gs in measure 7 indicate a slight emphasis rather than staccato. The tied Ds in measures 11–12 and 44–46 are reminiscent of a deep-toned church bell. The octave Ds in measures 36, 38 and 39 could represent the silver peal of a convent bell. The double notes of the accompaniment provide a smooth, lulling quality. Be sure the melody remains distinct during the *pp* sections beginning at measures 22 and 40. In measures 32–33, the imitation in the tenor and alto should be brought out. The D on the fourth beat of measure 33 belongs to both the alto and tenor, while the lowest D on the sixth beat of the measure should be played pianissimo. Play the right-hand octave Ds in measures 36, 38 and 39 pianissimo. Use the *una corda* pedal for the final two measures. In its way, this piece is a real gem of intimate piano music, comparable only to Chopin's *Preludes*.

TARANTELLA

OP. 102, No. 3

Presto (♩. = ca. 116)

The musical score is written for piano in 6/8 time. It consists of five systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 1, 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31 are indicated in boxes at the beginning of their respective systems. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, *f*, *sf*, and *dim.*. Articulation includes *sempre stacc.* and *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs.

Moderato (♩ = ca. 72)

The first system of the musical score is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with grace notes and fingerings: 5 2, 3, 1, 1 2, 1, and 5 4. A slur is placed over the final two measures. The left hand provides a simple accompaniment. A circled letter 'a' is positioned below the first measure.

The second system starts at measure 3. The right hand continues the melodic line with fingerings 2, 1, 5 2, and 1. Dynamics include *dim.* and *p*. The left hand accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern. A circled letter 'a' is positioned below the first measure.

The third system starts at measure 6. The right hand includes a triplet of eighth notes and a measure with a 34-measure repeat sign. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, and *f*. The left hand accompaniment consists of chords and eighth notes. A circled letter 'a' is positioned below the first measure.

The fourth system starts at measure 10. The right hand features a circled letter 'b' above a grace note. Dynamics include *dim.*, *p*, and *sfz*. The left hand accompaniment includes chords and eighth notes. A circled letter 'a' is positioned below the first measure.

ⓐ Mendelssohn indicated pedal from measure 29 to the end.

ⓑ Slurs on the grace notes have been added throughout to conform with modern notational practices.