

SECOND PLACE WINNER

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64

Felix Mendelssohn (b. Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809; d. Leipzig, Germany, November 4, 1847)
Allegro molto moderato

Jane Story, violin

The concerto is scored for solo violin, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, is Mendelssohn's last concerto and has remained among the most prominent and highly regarded violin concertos. It holds a central place in the violin repertoire and has developed a reputation as an essential concerto for all aspiring concert violinists to master. The concerto is regularly performed in concerts and classical music competitions.

Mendelssohn originally proposed the idea of the violin concerto to Ferdinand David, a close friend and then concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. The concerto was first performed in Leipzig on March 13, 1845, with Ferdinand David as soloist. While composing the concerto, Mendelssohn maintained a regular correspondence with David, who gave him many suggestions. In fact, this violin concerto was the first of many to have been composed with the input of a professional violinist and would influence many future collaborations.

"This violin concerto ... proved to be one of his principal works," writes Heinrich Eduard Jacob in his book *Felix Mendelssohn and His Times* (translated from the German by Richard and Clara Winston). "The great composers had long known that it was possible to sing jubilantly in the minor key," continues Jacob. "But the principle was most gloriously embodied in the passionate allegro with which the Mendelssohn concerto begins."

The famous violinist Joseph Joachim said in June 1906, "The Germans have four violin concertos. The greatest, the most uncompromising, is Beethoven's. The one by Brahms vies with it in seriousness. The richest, most seductive, was written by Max Bruch. The most inward, the heart's jewel, is Mendelssohn's."

Tonight's performance of the concerto consists of one movement with the following tempo markings: **Allegro molto moderato**. Michael Steinberg describes the work in his book, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*: "Instead of an orchestral tutti, the concerto opens with the immediate entry of the solo violin. Following a bravura of rapidly ascending notes, the opening theme is then restated by the orchestra. There is then a frenetic chromatic transition passage as the music subsides and modulates into a tranquil second subject theme. The melody is initially played by the woodwinds with the soloist providing a pedal note," writes Steinberg.

"The tune is played by the solo violin itself before a short conclusion ends the exposition section of the opening movement. The opening two themes are then combined in the development section, where the music builds up to the innovative cadenza (a virtuoso solo passage inserted into a movement in a concerto), which Mendelssohn wrote out in full rather than allowing the soloist to improvise."

"This cadenza is famous!" continues Steinberg. "The cadenza builds up speed through rhythmic shifts, which require ricochet bowing from the soloist. This serves as a link to the recapitulation, where the opening melody is played by the orchestra, accompanied by the continuing ricochet arpeggios by the soloist."

During the recapitulation, the opening themes are repeated with the second theme being played before returning for the closing of the movement. The music gathers speed into the coda (the ending of the piece), which is marked "Presto," before a variant of the original chromatic transition passage ends the first movement.



Felix Mendelssohn

FIRST PLACE WINNER

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

Edvard Grieg (b. Bergen, Norway, June 15, 1843; d. Bergen, Norway, September 4, 1907)

Allegro molto moderato

Harold Fang, piano

The concerto is scored for solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

The **Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16**, composed by Edvard Grieg in 1868, was the only concerto Grieg completed. It is one of his most popular works, and is among the most popular piano concerto. Grieg was only 24 years old at the time of the composition. The concerto is in three movements yet we are only hearing the first movement tonight:

Allegro molto moderato. The first movement is noted for the first timpani roll that leads to a dramatic piano flourish, which leads to the main theme. Michael Steinberg says in his book *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*: "Grieg writes with the freshness of his voice. His themes have a deliciously personal cut culminating in a splendid cadenza. At the first performance, the soloist created such a firestorm of excitement with this cadenza that the audience burst into applause right in the middle of the movement!"

The work was premiered by Norwegian pianist and composer Edmund Neupert on April 3, 1869, in Copenhagen, with Holger Simon Paulli conducting. Grieg revised the work at least seven times, usually in subtle ways, but the revisions amounted to over 300 differences from the original orchestration. The final version of the concerto was completed only a few weeks before Grieg's death, and it is this version that has achieved worldwide popularity. Grieg worked on a transcription of the concerto for two solo pianos, which was completed by Hungarian composer Károly Thern. Grieg's concerto also provides evidence of his interest in Norwegian folk music (Grieg's native country).



Edvard Grieg

Additional Prize Winners

\$1,000 – 3rd Prize: The Jay and Dawn Jaehnke Award

William Feng, Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26 in C Major, Andante – Allegro

\$500 – The John Bolstad Honorable Mention

Cordelia Momo Fredrickson, Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op. 31 in D Major, Allegro vivacissimo

\$500 – The Bill Koutsky Honorable Mention

Noah Greenstein-Sheppard, movement of a Chopin Piano Concerto

\$100 – The Friends of the Symphony Honorable Mention

Christian Garner, Böhme Trumpet Concerto, Op. 18 in F minor, Allegro moderato

Introducing Students to the Fine Arts

Promoting an education program in the fine arts is part of a solid foundation for a city, such as La Crosse, and this includes instrumental music, dance such as ballet, as well as other endeavors.

This “Rising Stars Program” - as well as the annual LSO school music concert - helps introduce all area children to the performing arts. Happily, it has become routine. In fact, again in tonight’s LSO concert, student members of the La Crosse Area Youth Symphony Orchestra (LYSO) will join with members of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra in an opportunity to perform with professional musicians. Likewise, students learn appropriate performance etiquette, the need to be precise, as well as to experience performance in a major symphony hall setting. “This is providing a practical lesson in what music education is all about,” writes Franz Welser-Most, Music Director of the Cleveland Orchestra, giving an example about his own introduction to music.

And then there are the competition winners who will be able to perform a solo concerto with the orchestra – both professional and their student orchestra colleagues. Welser-Most continues in his book *From Silence – Finding Calm in a Dissonant World*, “I firmly believe that music should be a human right, and that it provides enormous support in times of instability. I don’t want to convert anyone to music, but I want everyone to have the opportunity to experience music. Music will find its fixed place in the community.”