



FELIX MENDELSSOHN
Symphony no. 2 "Lobgesang"

Complete symphonies vol. 1

THE NETHERLANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Jan Willem de Vriend

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Jan Willem de Vriend

Judith van Wanroij soprano

Machteld Baumans soprano

Patrick Henckens tenor

Choir Consensus Vocalis

Choir conductor Klaas Stok

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

**Lobgesang. Eine Symphonie-Kantate nach Worten der Heiligen Schrift
(Symphonie Nr. 2) für Soli, Chor und Orchester opus 52**

Sinfonia

[1] Maestoso con moto – Allegro	12:08
[2] Allegretto un poco agitato	5:49
[3] Adagio religioso	6:09

Chor – Sopran solo

[4] Allegro moderato maestoso – Animato	1:37
[5] Allegro di molto	2:46
[6] Molto più moderato ma con fuoco	2:09

Tenor solo

[7] Recitativo	0:53
[8] Allegro moderato	1:59

Chor

[9] A tempo moderato	1:47
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Sopran I und II solo – Chor

[10] Andante	4:40
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Tenor solo

[11] Allegro un poco agitato	2:05
[12] Allegro assai agitato	0:40
[13] Tempo I, moderato	1:33

Sopran

[14] Die Nacht ist vergangen!	0:14
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Chor

[15] Allegro maestoso e molto vivace	4:03
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Choral

[16] Andante con moto	1:35
[17] Un poco più animato	2:26

Sopran solo, Tenor solo

[18] Andante sostenuto assai	4:29
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Schlusschor

[19] Allegro non troppo	1:56
[20] Più vivace	2:57
[21] Maestoso como I	0:37

total time 62:36

Symphony no.2 Lobgesang

Imagine . . . !

It is June 1840, you are in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, the church where the famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach was once kapellmeister. You are there to attend the premiere of a piece of music on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg. The successful composer Felix Mendelssohn will conduct his own music. Mild excitement takes hold of you; you feel that it is going to be a magnificent concert, with orchestra, choir, soloists. Finally, it starts. The trombones begin with a regal theme that resounds through the church. The orchestra takes over the theme. You are immediately swept up by,

immersed in the music – an overwhelming experience.

That must certainly have been the experience of the audience at this first performance of Mendelssohn's symphony-cantata, as he liked to describe it. That the beginning of the piece is so overawing, by the nature of the theme and scoring of wind instruments, is not something you immediately expect from a composer such as Mendelssohn. He is known more for refinement, a cultivated melancholy that is fascinating, but does not threaten to make off with you. And of course, there is the virtuosity, which never stoops to affectation and always remains functional.¹ As impressive as the regal trombone theme is, other passages of *Lobgesang* have probably moved audiences more deeply.

Robert Schumann wrote: "It was like looking into heavenly Raphaellesque Madonna eyes". He found himself transported to celestial heights at the premiere of *Lobgesang*, particularly upon hearing the duet, which is interrupted by the chorus: *Ich harrete des Herrn*. After this, according to Schumann, a buzz of whispering could be heard in the church, so much more telling than thunderous, concert hall applause. The composer and piano virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles attended the London premiere of *Lobgesang* and later wrote his wife, "When the chorale *Nun danket alle Gott* began, the audience suddenly rose to its feet, as they would have done only during the *Halleluja*".²

The third, instrumental movement, Adagio religioso, has an almost melancholy religiousness. Its structure and buildup are transparent and the harmonies demure, with frequent pinpricks of dissonance giving it a special musical tension. The melody is pure beauty that, performed with the right refinement and nuance, could never be overdramatic and would directly touch any listener. This is typical Mendelssohn. The annual report of London's Sacred Harmonic Society wrote of this movement at the time: "The Adagio religioso is overflowing with that melancholy feeling which Charles Lamb³ pronounces the essential quality of all high poetry."⁴

1. Thijs Bongers – from: *Componisten portretten: Mendelssohn*

2. Colin Eatock – uit: *Mendelssohn and Victorian England* – page 72

3. Charles Lamb: *English essayist who lived from 1775 to 1834*

4. From: *Annual report - Sacred Harmonic Society London (1844)*- page 45

The majestic trombone theme mentioned earlier returns at various times. After being introduced in the first movement, it comes back in the development section and again in the second movement – in the trio – as a counterpoint to the chorale melody in the wind instruments.⁵ It returns at the first entrance of the choir in the fourth movement: *Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn!* Through this, Mendelssohn forges a wonderful link between the instrumental movements that begin the piece and the cantata movements that follow. Also in the closing fugue – the very last bars – the theme re-emerges in striking fashion, closing the circle.

The best-known movement of *Lobgesang* is to this day the one

Schumann mentioned with the chorus. It has been sung by many church choirs from Mendelssohn's time to today. *Lobgesang* itself, however, faded into obscurity. It is seldom performed nowadays, though, fortunately, it has regained a place in the concert repertoire. After all, since the premiere in 1840, this work has been a great success and has been counted among Mendelssohn's best compositions.

"Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* is undoubtedly the greatest work that has proceeded from any German composer since Beethoven. It is great in plan, great in development, and masterly in detail."⁶ That *Lobgesang* was nevertheless forgotten, despite its qualities and reviews such as

the previous, is largely due to comparisons with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which immediately sprang up, and the large vocal portion of the work. The comparison – see below – was unfavourable for Mendelssohn. Let alone that every symphony, regardless of who wrote it, was compared with Beethoven's masterpieces.

Mendelssohn was a famous and influential composer and conductor. He travelled constantly and was perhaps even better-known in England than in Germany. He conducted the Gewandhaus Orchester in Leipzig (and also the Sing-Akademie), founded the conservatory in Leipzig, and became kapellmeister in Berlin. He was always busy. *Lobgesang* was one of his later symphonies, and it enjoyed enormous success at the time of the premiere. That success

was hard for someone like Richard Wagner to reconcile himself with. He had once sent Mendelssohn his first symphony, and he never received a reply. That, and the fact that he was anti-Semitic, fed his antipathy for the German-Jew Mendelssohn. Shortly after Mendelssohn's death in 1847, Wagner wrote the essay *Das Judentum in der Musik*, in which he postulated that Mendelssohn may well have had talent as a composer, but that it was not possible to be truly emotionally touched by music written by a Jew. Those are very different sentiments than the ones expressed by Mendelssohn's friend and colleague Robert Schumann, who called Mendelssohn "a true god" and "the Mozart of the 19th century".

Through Wagner's poisonous, anti-Semitic tone and the words of other critics, the music of Mendelssohn continually faded into the background

5. R. Larry Todd about Symphony No. 2

6. From: Annual report - Sacred Harmonic Society London (1844) – page 45

and Beethoven was placed on an ever-higher pedestal. Yet, it is not fair to Mendelssohn – nor Beethoven, for that matter – to always compare his work to someone else’s when taking a closer look at it. His music should stand on its own.

Tom Service of *The Guardian* made a sensible observation about this: “Mendelssohn has become the biggest blind spot in classical music. Because of the brilliance of its craft, it is very easy to be beguiled by the surfaces of Mendelssohn’s music, to imagine that that’s all there is to it. The scandal is that there are still hundreds of pieces that haven’t been published, many of them jewels from Mendelssohn’s uniquely productive youth – as well as masterpieces from his maturity that we never hear in

concert programmes: the Psalm settings, which take Bach on at his own game; the bulk of the chamber music; and even the symphonies.”⁷ That includes *Lobgesang!*

According to Mendelssohn, the universal thought behind this symphony-cantata is: *Nun danket alle Gott mit Herzen, Mund und Händen* – expressing gratitude toward God. Four-hundred years after Gutenberg, the invention of the printing press was something to be thankful for. *Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin? Die Nacht ist vergangen* (Watchman, what of the night? The night has passed) comes in the fifth cantata movement. The dark night of the Middle Ages – for that is how the period was seen – had finally come to an end.

And perhaps this is also a form of awakening: the dawning of the rediscovery and re-appreciation of Mendelssohn. Jan Willem de Vriend and his orchestra make their contribution to this. Ferdinand David, the concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchester and a friend of Mendelssohn’s, has played a role in the first publications of sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and many other composers. He provided the fingerings and bowings for these editions. De Vriend got copies of the editions and closely studied them, learning much about how music was played at that time. Through this, he and his orchestra more fully assimilated Mendelssohn and have *their own Mendelssohn*. This CD will surely become *your own Mendelssohn*. Enjoy the music.

Valentine Laoût- van Leeuwenstein
Translation: John Lydon/Muse Translations

7. Tom Service – quote from *The Guardian* May 5, 2009

Jan Willem de Vriend

Jan Willem de Vriend is the chief conductor and artistic director of The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra since 2006 and the artistic director of Combattimento Consort Amsterdam.

Since De Vriend was named chief conductor, The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has become a notable phenomenon on the Netherlands' musical scene. It has presented semi-scenic performances of works by Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and Mendelssohn. There were premieres of works by Offenbach, Say and Mahler. And by substituting period instruments in the brass section, it has developed its own distinctive sound in the 18th and 19th century repertoire. Recently, the orchestra caused quite a stir by performing music by Schumann at festivals in Spain. It has also recorded Beethoven's complete symphonies conducted by De Vriend. Its long

Mahler tradition is being continued in recordings and tours.

In addition to being the chief conductor of The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, De Vriend is the regular guest conductor of the Brabant Orchestra. He has conducted many distinguished Dutch orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra. De Vriend is also a welcome guest internationally and has conducted orchestras in China, Germany, Austria, Italy and France.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is based in Enschede, in the province of Overijssel. Performing at an international level, as evidenced by its highly acclaimed CDs and invitations for international tours, the orchestra is firmly rooted in society.

Jan Willem de Vriend has been its artistic director and chief conductor since 2006. Under De Vriend's leadership, the orchestra has expanded its repertoire to cover music from four centuries. Its use of period instruments in the Classical repertoire gives the orchestra a distinctive and highly individual character.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra performs amongst others in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Enschede, Zwolle and Deventer. In addition, it often works with the

Dutch National Touring Opera Company. In its home town Enschede, the orchestra builds on a symphonic tradition of more than 80 years, and it is known as one of the most modern and entrepreneurial orchestras in the Netherlands. Its international partners include the BBC Philharmonic and the Liszt School of Music Weimar.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra created a number of ensembles, such as a chamber orchestra, the Baroque Academy of the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (BANSO) and various chamber music ensembles. The orchestra's commitment to expanding its social relevance is also reflected in the large number of projects in which education is a key element.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra has made successful tours of the United States, Spain and England,

and it has performed in such famous venues as Carnegie Hall in New York and Birmingham Symphony Hall.

Its CDs of the complete Beethoven symphonies (for Challenge Classics) and music by Dutch composers such as Julius Röntgen and Jan van Gilse (for the CPO label) were very well received by the international music press.

The orchestra has worked with distinguished conductors, such as its former chief conductor Jaap van Zweden, Vasily Petrenko, Edo de Waart, Hans Vonk, Gerd Albrecht, Marc Soustrot, Eri Klas, Ed Spanjaard, Claus Peter Flor and Tan Dun.

It also has accompanied many celebrated soloists, including Gidon Kremer, Ronald Brautigam, Natalia Gutman, Charlotte Margiono, Antje Weithaas, Marie-Luise Neunecker, Hélène Grimaud, Robert Holl,

Fazil Say, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Thomas Zehetmair.

The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Province of Overijssel and the Municipality of Enschede, as well as annual contributions from sponsors.

www.nedsym.nl





Judith van Wanroij



Machteld Baumans



Patrick Henckens

Consensus Vocalis



Judith van Wanroij

Dutch soprano Judith van Wanroij studied with Margreet Honig at the Amsterdam Conservatory and at the Dutch National Opera Academy. She won several national and international prizes. Her opera debut she made in the title role of *La Périchole*; thereafter she has been singing a.o. *Junon (Platée)*, *Ilia (Idomeneo)*, *Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni)*, *First Lady (Die Zauberflöte)*, *Musetta (La Bohème)*, at opera houses such as De Nederlandse Opera Amsterdam, La Monnaie Brussels, Teatro Real Madrid, and Théâtre du Capitole Toulouse. Next to conductors such as Frans Brüggen, Andrea Marcon, Jérémie Rhorer, and Jaap van Zweden, she regularly works with William Christie and Les Arts Florissants, René Jacobs and his Akademie für Alte Musik, Berlin, Christophe Rousset and his Les Talens Lyriques, and Jan Willem de Vriend

and the orchestras he works with. She appeared on several recordings with these conductors and their ensembles, a.o. with Virgin Classics.

Machteld Baumans

Dutch soprano Machteld Baumans studied with Cora Canne Meijer at the Sweelinck Conservatorium in Amsterdam and continued her training with Lucia Meeuwse. She debuted as *Pamina* in *The Magic Flute* with Stichting Kamer Opera Nederland. She has sung with Opera Zuid, Nationale Reisopera, De Nederlandse Opera and has been a guest at the Early Music Holland Festival, The Early Music Festival San Antonio (USA) and the Bachtage in Berlin.

She has worked with the Amsterdam Bach Soloists, the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, string quartet Archibudelli, the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, the Netherlands Radio

Chamber Philharmonic and The Hague Philharmonic under conductors such as Hartmut Haenchen, Christian Zacharias, Kenneth Montgomery and Jaap van Zweden. Machteld Baumans has made many radio and television recordings for Dutch, Belgian and British broadcasting organisations. Her CDs include *Julius Röntgen's 'Aus Goethes Faust'* with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra and *Bach's St John Passion* with Concerto d'Amsterdam conducted by Nico van der Meel.

Patrick Henckens

Patrick Henckens first studied school music and conducting, before studying voice in Maastricht. After winning prizes at the Cristina Deutekom Competition, engagements led him to the opera houses of Enschede, Ghent, Essen, Berlin and Bonn, where he has sung mostly the classical roles of Mozart and Rossini. Since his Salzburg

Festival debut in „*Le Nozze di Figaro*“ under Nikolaus Harnoncourt, lyric tenor Patrick Henckens has been reinvited every year. He also sang *Tamino* at Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires.

On the concert podium he has been working with renowned conductors, such as Helmut Rilling, Jeffrey Tate and Claudio Abbado. With Marc Minkowski he recorded *Charpentier's Te Deum* for Deutsche Grammophon. Also available on this label is the CD and DVD recording of „*Le Nozze di Figaro*“ in which Patrick Henckens sings the role of *Basilio*.

The works of Händel occupy a special place in Patrick Henckens's repertoire. He performed many oratorios and operas at the Händelfestival in Karlsruhe among others.

Consensus Vocalis

The semi-professional choir Consensus Vocalis and the professional choir Capella Isalana together form the Nederlandse Koor Academie. Consensus Vocalis was founded to perform the major works of Johann Sebastian Bach: the St Matthew Passion, the Christmas Oratorio and the Mass in B minor. Performances have been accompanied by ensembles such as Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, Concerto d' Amsterdam, Musica Amphion and the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra and have been held in such diverse places as Enschede and Amsterdam in the Netherlands, and beyond the Dutch borders, Zagreb, Palma de Mallorca and Valencia. In 2008, the St Matthew Passion was twice performed in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

Together with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, the choir took part in performances of Mozart's Requiem, Ein deutsches Requiem by Brahms, Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Die Fledermaus by Johann Strauss and Beethoven's Symphony no. 9. Their repertoire includes not only Baroque, classical and romantic compositions, but also modern works such as the Berliner Messe by Arvo Pärt. The choir's artistic director is Klaas Stok.

www.nederlandsekooracademie.nl

Sinfonia

1. *Maestoso con moto – Allegro*

2. *Allegretto un poco agitato*

3. *Adagio religioso*

Chor – Sopran solo

4. *Allegro moderato maestoso – Animato*

Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn!

Halleluja, lobe den Herrn!

5. *Allegro di molto*

Lobt den Herrn mit Saitenspiel,

Lobt ihn mit eurem Liede!

Und alles Fleisch lobe seinen heiligen
Namen.

Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn!

6. *Molto più moderato ma con fuoco*

Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele,

Und was in mir ist, seinen heiligen Namen.

Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele,

Und was in mir ist, seinen heiligen Namen,

Und vergiß es nicht, was er dir Gutes getan.

Tenor solo

7. *Recitativo*

Saget es, die ihr erlöst seid durch den Herrn,

Die er aus der Not errettet hat,

Aus schwerer Trübsal, aus Schmach
und Banden,

Die ihr gefangen im Dunkeln waret,

Alle, die er erlöst hat aus der Not.

Saget es! Danket ihm und rühmet seine

Güte!

8. *Allegro moderato*

Er zählet unsre Tränen in der Zeit der Not,

Er tröstet die Betrübten mit seinem Wort.

Saget es! Danket ihm und rühmet

seine Güte!

Chor

9. *A tempo moderato*

Sagt es, die ihr erlöset seid

Von dem Herrn aus aller Trübsal.

Er zählet unsere Tränen in der Zeit der Not.

Sopran I und II solo – Chor

10. *Andante*

Ich harrete des Herrn, und er neigte sich
zu mir

Und hörte mein Flehn.

Wohl dem, der seine Hoffnung setzt auf
den Herrn!

Wohl dem, der seine Hoffnung setzt auf
ihn!

Tenor solo

11. *Allegro un poco agitato*

Stricke des Todes hatten uns umfassen,

Und Angst der Hölle hatte uns getroffen,

Wir wandelten in Finsternis.

Er aber spricht: Wache auf!

Wache auf, der du schläfst,

Stehe auf von den Toten,

Ich will dich erleuchten!

12. *Allegro assai agitato*

Wir riefen in der Finsternis:

Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin?

13. *Tempo I, moderato*

Der Hüter aber sprach:

Wenn der Morgen schon kommt,

So wird es doch Nacht sein;

Wenn ihr schon fraget,

So werdet ihr doch wiederkommen

Und wieder fragen:

Hüter, ist die Nacht bald hin?

Sopran

14. *Die Nacht ist vergangen!*

Die Nacht ist vergangen!

Chor

15. *Allegro maestoso e molto vivace*

Die Nacht ist vergangen,

Der Tag aber herbeigekommen.

So laßt uns ablegen die Werke der Finsternis

Und anlegen die Waffen des Lichts,

Und ergreifen die Waffen des Lichts.

Choral

16. Andante con moto

Nun danket alle Gott
Mit Herzen, Mund und Händen,
Der sich in aller Not
Will gnädig zu uns wenden,
Der so viel Gutes tut,
Von Kindesbeinen an
Uns hielt in seiner Hut,
Und allen wohlgetan.

17. Un poco più animato

Lob, Ehr' und Preis sei Gott,
Dem Vater und dem Sohne,
Und seinem heil'gen Geist
Im höchsten Himmelsthronen.
Lob dem dreiein'gen Gott,
Der Nacht und Dunkel schied
Von Licht und Morgenrot,
Ihm danket unser Lied.

Sopran solo, Tenor solo

18. Andante sostenuto assai

Drum sing' ich mit meinem Liede
Ewig dein Lob, du treuer Gott!
Drum sing' ich mit meinem Liede
Ewig dein Lob, o Gott!
Und danke dir für alles Gute,
das du an mir getan.
Und wandl' ich in Nacht und tiefem
Dunkel,
Und die Feinde umher stellen mir nach,
So rufe ich an den Namen des Herrn,
Und er errettet mich nach seiner Güte.
Und wandl' ich in Nacht,
so ruf ich deinen Namen an,
Ewig, du treuer Gott!

Schlusschor

19. Allegro non troppo

Ihr Völker, bringet her dem Herrn Ehre und Macht!
Ihr Könige, bringet her dem Herrn Ehre und Macht!
Der Himmel bringe her dem Herrn Ehre und Macht!
Die Erde bringe her dem Herrn Ehre und Macht!

20. Più vivace

Alles danke dem Herrn!
Danket dem Herrn und rühmt seinen Namen
Und preiset seine Herrlichkeit!

21. Maestoso como I

Alles, was Odem hat, lobe den Herrn,
Halleluja, lobe den Herrn!

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The Netherlands Symphony Orchestra - Jan Willem de Vriend conductor

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS Converters.



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Executive producer: Anne de Jong
Recorded at: Muziekcentrum Enschede
Recording dates: 19 & 20 December 2011 / 5 & 7 July 2012
Recording Producer, Mix & Editing: Bert van der Wolf
Recording Assistent: Martijn van der Wolf
Recorded by: NorthStar Recording Services
A&R Challenge Records International: Wolfgang Reihing
Liner notes: Valentine Laoût- van Leeuwenstein
Translations: John Lydon, Muse Translations
Booklet editing: Wolfgang Reihing
Cover photo: Marcel van den Broek, new-art.nl
Art direction: Marcel van den Broek, new-art.nl

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