



A Portrait of Mendelssohn

Clive Brown

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Since his death in 1847, Felix Mendelssohn's music and personality have been both admired and denigrated to extraordinary degrees. In this study Clive Brown weaves together a rich array of documents - letters, diaries, memoirs, reviews, news reports and more - with the aim of presenting a balanced picture of the composer and his work. Rejecting the received view of Mendelssohn as a facile, lightweight musician, Brown demonstrates that he was in fact an innovative and highly cerebral composer who exerted a powerful influence on musical thought into the 20th century. Brown discusses Mendelssohn's family background and education; the role of religion and race in his life and reputation; his experiences as practical musician (pianist, organist, string player, conductor) and as teacher and composer; the critical reception of his works; and the vicissitudes of his posthumous reputation. The text also includes a range of hitherto unpublished sketches made by Mendelssohn. The result is a portrayal of the man and his achievements as viewed through his own words and those of his contemporaries.

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