

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a vibrant red sleeveless dress, stands in a field of orange poppies. She is looking off to the side with a serene expression. The background is a lush green forest, and the lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is peaceful and romantic.

PIANO  
CLASSICS

FANNY  
MENDELSSOHN  
PIANO MUSIC

MARTINA FREZZOTTI

## FANNY MENDELSSOHN 1805-1847

### PIANO MUSIC

#### Das Jahr H.385 (1841)

1. January. <i>Ein Traum</i>	2'45	11. November	5'04
2. February. <i>Scherzo</i>	3'02	12. December	3'42
3. March	5'27	13. Postlude. <i>Choral</i>	2'02
4. April. <i>Capriccioso</i>	3'09		
5. May. <i>Frühlingslied</i>	3'04	14. Nocturne	
6. June. <i>Serenade</i>	3'26	in G minor H.337 (1838)	3'43
7. July. <i>Serenade</i>	3'29	15. Nocturne Napolitano	
8. August	4'47	in B minor (1839-40)	3'01
9. September. <i>Am Flusse</i>	4'06	16. Introduction and Capriccio	
10. October	3'24	in B minor H.349 (1840)	6'53

Martina Frezzotti *piano*

"This is a family, the like of which I have never known [...] Felix Mendelssohn is already a mature artist, and he is still only fifteen! [...] His elder sister Fanny, also immensely talented, played some of Bach's fugues and passacaglias by heart and with admirable precision. I believe she can justifiably be called 'a good musician'..."

Thus Moscheles wrote down in his journal, in 1818. Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel was born in Hamburg in November 1805, the eldest of four siblings (the second was Felix, followed by Rebecca and Paul). The Mendelssohn family, of Jewish lineage, and belonging in the upper bourgeois class, gave a brilliant cultural education to their four children. Fanny was not only an exceptional pianist, but also an exceptional composer; her style is very close to that of Felix, the best known of her siblings. Her output is very abundant not only in the field of piano music; her works include more than four hundred pieces, comprising *Lieder*, organ works, chamber music, cantatas, an oratorio and an orchestral overture. In spite of her prolific creative output, some of her works remain still unpublished. This album focuses on a part of her piano works – in detail, on her compositions written between 1838 and 1841, which are particularly interesting.

The two *Nocturnes* (the *Nocturne in G minor H.337* of 1838 and the *Notturmo Napolitano in B minor* of 1839-40; the latter is unpublished) are two exquisite miniatures. Even though the two works are thematically independent from each other, in both pieces the style is equally enthralling.

The piano cycle *Das Jahr* (1841) is the main thematic body of this collection. "We shall soon meet again, and then the year of separation will be over, but a year of life as well! *La vita fugge e non s'arresta un'ora* [Italian in the original: Life flees and does not stop even for an hour], and never was life

dearer to me than it is now". Thus Fanny Mendelssohn wrote to her parents in 1840, at the end of her Italian journey, from which originated her piano cycle *Das Jahr*, "The Year".

It is made of twelve pieces, each bearing the name of a month, and of an epilogue, which is one of the heights of her compositional opus. Written in the last months of 1841, the cycle was dedicated by Fanny to her husband, Wilhelm, as a Christmas gift. The opening piece, *January*, was actually the last to be written; in spite of this, it keeps the character of an introduction to the entire piano cycle. Several themes which will be used in the other twelve pieces are presented here; this underpins the concept of circularity which was so cherished by Fanny. For example, the descending octave motion opening this piece seems to allude to the variation on the theme of the *Allegro moderato con fuoco* which concludes *March*, when the variation appears in the upper part, creating a contrapuntal texture with the bass line. There are also numerous references to Bachian roots, connected to the music typical for the Lutheran worship: in both *March* and *December* we can find citations from German Chorales (*Christ ist erstanden*, Passau 1090, in the former, and *Von Himmel hoch* in the latter). *April*, instead, is written in the form of a capriccio, whereas *May* is one of those *Songs Without Words* which are typical for the art of the two Mendelssohn siblings. *June* is an Italian-style serenade, whose utterly sweet and desolate tune flows uninterruptedly until the closing sighs, which are vaguely reminiscent of the F-minor Prelude from the second book of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Similarly, *July*, after a luminous landscape, offers a section of unquiet drama, where elements of programme music seem to surface. *August* announces itself with a kind of call, followed by a joyful pastoral march culminating in the *Allegro assai*, where sequences of semiquavers dazzle in arpeggiated chords of great

lightness; all is played on curious dynamic choices, alternating *piano* and *forte* in nearly golden proportions, up to the *Coda* with its arpeggiated chords. The motion begins almost immediately again, with the waves of *September*: the piece's subtitle is *Am Flusse*, alluding precisely to the river's flow (*Fluss*). Here, the right hand's semiquavers are framed by the melody, in longer note-values, enshrined in the piano's central register, with a daring but elegant line. *October* has a still different character, with its full chords in octaves, and with the progressive appearance of a more delicate melodic line, which is always countered, however, by the bass with its vigorous octaves; the piece closes in a very poignant fashion. At this point, *November* represents a clear opposition: in the minor mode, this piece begins with a dramatic and solemn theme, of an almost Beethovenian mold. Then, the composer introduces an *Allegro appassionato* which imparts a new élan to the sad key of F-minor; later, for a mere seven bars, we go back to an enigmatic *Adagio*, followed by the return of the preceding *Allegro*. C minor is the key of *December*, dominated by imperious semiquaver and quaver quadruplets, with virtuosio passages requiring particularly intense dynamic levels, alternating with moments of unique simplicity and fascination. The conclusion is entrusted to a *Nachspiel*, an epilogue of striking beauty, which, once more, has the perfect and circular structure of a Bach Chorale. Its solemnity reminds us of the diptych constituted by the A-minor Prelude and Fugue No.20 (in second volume of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*), even though Bach's work ultimately develops on different, and mysterious, tracks. Each month is treated by the composer in an individual fashion, and always with the utmost mastery of both compositional and instrumental technique; this reveals her unshakable harmonic feeling, as well as another detail: it is clear, in fact, that Fanny probably had an uncommonly large hand,

allowing her to perform chords in very extended positions, thus expanding the harmony texture until it becomes wide and sometimes mysterious. (This analysis of *Das Jahr* has been researched on Rosamaria Li Vecchi's *Fanny Mendelssohn: viaggio, cambiamento, creatività*).

The *Introduzione und Capriccio* in B minor H.349 (1840) concludes this compilation with its two-headed thematic and expressive features. Here we can observe the layered *summa* of Fanny's coloristic self-citations. It is impossible not to notice the capricious and obsessive character which the two siblings, Fanny and Felix, had in common. If it is true that Felix, more famous and perhaps cumbersome, has overshadowed and possibly hindered his sister's career, we have to admit that she was influenced by him.

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## MARTINA FREZZOTTI

Italian pianist, born in 1986, Martina Frezzotti studied with Lazar Berman at the Piano Academy of Imola and later with Elisso Virsaladze at the prestigious Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, where she obtained her Doctorate in Music with full marks in 2012, the first Italian in history of this prestigious university.

Martina Frezzotti has performed in solo recitals in Europe, Russia, America and Asia. In 2012 she made her debut at Carnegie Hall in New York with a program that featured the masterpieces of the composers who most represent her: Ravel, Liszt and Prokofiev.

Among the numerous concerts realized, we remember: a concert tour in Kiev, Odessa and Donetsk, which ended with a recital at the Kiev Philharmonic; a concert tour in Cologne, Wolfsburg and Hamburg under the patronage of the Italian Cultural Institutes; a recital in Maribor "European Capital of Culture" under the High Patronage of the Presidency of the Italian Republic at the Slovene National Theater; a recital for the "Società dei Concerti" of Milan in the Sala Puccini; both solo and chamber participation in the "Mozart-Schumann Marathon" organized by the "Maggio Musicale Fiorentino"; participation in the prestigious concerts of the Salzburg Festspiele Prize at the Wiener Saal in Salzburg; a solo recital in tribute to Domenico Scarlatti at the Kawai Hall in Osaka.

She regularly plays in Moscow in numerous concert halls such as the Rachmaninov Hall, the Myaskovsky Hall and the Small Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, the Gogol and Turgenev State Libraries, the Gorkiy Literary Institute, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, the Music School Prokofiev. She performed in two acclaimed recitals at the Memorial Museum of Sviatoslav

Richter, which is the Moscow apartment of the great Russian master. He has also taken part in several contemporary music reviews, with music by G. Ligeti and J. Cage.

She is the winner of several first prizes in national and international piano competitions. Numerous scholarships were also awarded during the training years. She has an album in chamber ensemble of contemporary music by living Italian composers (NAR Nippon Acoustic Records, Tokyo 2015), and soon to be released two solo records for Brilliant Classics and Toccata Classics, including the monograph by composer Fanny Hensel- Mendelssohn, Felix's sister. 2019 sees her busy with the performance of Chopin's complete Ballads and Mazurke and Bach's Well Tempered Clavier.

Martina Frezzotti was interviewed several times by the Italian National Radio Rai, the Slovenian National Television, the Ukrainian National Radio at the Kiev office.

