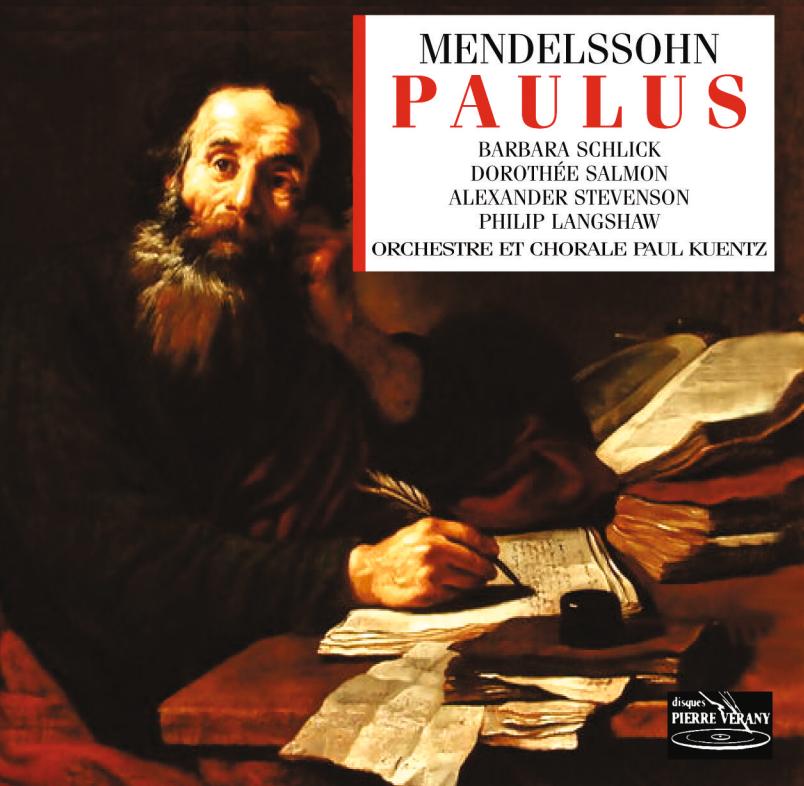


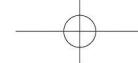
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BARBARA SCHLICK, soprano  
DOROTHÉE SALMON, alto  
ALEXANDER STEVENSON, ténor  
PHILIP LANGSHAW, basse

ORCHESTRE ET CHORALE PAUL KUENTZ  
sous la direction de Paul Kuentz

Enregistrement intégral "Concert à Saint-Séverin"  
*Complete recording "Concert at Saint-Séverin"*

Couverture : "Saint Paul apôtre"  
Claude Vignon dit le vieux (1593-1670). Turin, Gal. Sabauda  
Photo : Alinari-Giraudon

carry the action forward, the arias bring out the work's serene, meditative climate and the vast, traditional chorales bear an obvious similarity to those of Bach and, as Jean-Alexandre Ménétrier has pointed out, chorales nos. 3 and 9, 16 and 29, are purest Bach.

The first part begins with the martyrdom of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who was stoned to death by fanatical Jews (those of the Synagogue of the Libertines, according to the Acts of the Apostles). Among them was a young man by the name of Saul of Tarsus. On his way to Damascus to seek out Syrian Jews, Saul suddenly found himself surrounded by a dazzling light from heaven and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?" Terrified, he fell to the ground; and when he arose, he was blind. The men travelling with him led him to Damascus, where he spent several days, proclaiming in the synagogues that Jesus was the son of God. We must note how Mendelssohn skilfully contrasts the admirable purity of St Stephen in the first part with the sombre expression of Saul the persecutor.

The second part of *Paulus* is less dramatically eventful but just as eloquently lyrical. I relates the journeys of Saul, now Paul the Apostle, his predictions, the Jew's plot against him and his road to martyrdom.

With his two ambitions oratorios, *Paulus* and *Elias*, composed in 1836 and 1846 respectively, Mendelssohn "showed himself to be the great reviver of the modern oratorio" (J.A. Ménétrier) at a time when the German oratorio was on the decline after the great "panaoric" works of Haydn and Beethoven. Although *Paulus* is not so monumental as *Elias*, and less Romantic in its inspiration, it was nevertheless consistent with Mendelssohn's research at that time, which led him to revive Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (presented to Berlin audiences in 1829), and it was probably inspired even more by Handel, a composer he deeply admired.

In *Paulus*, Mendelssohn managed to blend the tradition of the classical oratorio with his own sensibility as a Romantic musician. Deeply impressed by the works of his predecessors, he made up his mind to renew the old methods and, as a disciple of Bach and Handel, he showed his "originality in his use and handling of the chorale, canon and fugue, those old academic forms which he [excelled] at investing with his own personal vision and at rejuvenating by his prestigious use of brilliant orchestration" (Felix Raugel). Abraham Mendelssohn, celebrating the genius of Bach and Handel, wrote the following lines to his son: "I'm sure [your oratorio] will solve the problem of combining modern conceptions with the earliest ones, otherwise the result would be a failure."

Adélaïde de Place  
Translation M.R.P.

It was at the end of 1831 that Mendelssohn conceived the idea of composing an oratorio based on the story of the conversion of Saint Paul. On 10 March 1832, he wrote from Paris to his friend, the baritone and actor Eduard Devrient: "I have several projects in mind. The subject will be Paul the Apostle. In the first part, the stoning of Stephen and persecution; in the second, Paul's conversion; in the third, the life and persecution of the Christians, and Paul's martyrdom. I should like to take most of the words from the Bible and from the canticles, with a few free passages." In the same letter, Mendelssohn asked Devrient to see to the texts. The singer declined his invitation, however, so he turned to another of his friends, the pastor and theologian Julius Schubring, to whom he submitted his ideas, in particular on the use of the chorales: "Various persons have strongly dissuaded me", he wrote. "But I still cannot bring myself to give up the idea completely, for as far as I am concerned the chorale is totally in keeping with an oratorio based on the New Testament."

He set to work in the composition of *Paulus* early in 1834. This year was Mendelssohn's great "Handel year": he heard *Deborah* in Aachen, and conducted *Messiah*, the *Dettingen Te Deum* and *Judas Maccabaeus*. By springtime the first part of the oratorio (with the exception of the overture) was almost ready. Two years later, in the spring of 1836, the oratorio was finished. It was first performed at Lower Rhine Music Festival in Düsseldorf on 22 May 1836, where it was greeted with great warmth. "*Paulus*", wrote Robert Schumann, "is a work of the purest art, an art of peace and love." Felix's beloved sister, Fanny Mendelssohn, was also enthusiastic: "The overture is very beautiful and the interpretation was perfect. The orchestra produces organ effects that are truly splendid. After the chorus *Wachet auf*, there was a burst of applause from the audience". As for Devrient, he was a little more reserved, simply exclaiming: "No work since Haydn's *Creation* has so touched the heart of the nation."

The oratorio's career was brilliant: it was performed as far afield as Liverpool, London, Boston and Paris. In France, Maurice Bourges, editor of the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, devoted several long, analytical articles to the work in 1846 and 1847: "A rather unusual simplicity", he wrote, "a naivety that is a sometimes slightly mannered, a grace that maybe termed evangelical, borrowed by the modern brush from the art of the Middle Ages - all these qualities may be found to a high degree in the master's oratorio." the only discordant note came from Adolphe Adam, who heard six excerpts from *Paulus* in Paris in 1842: "Apart from one chorus which appeared quite charming and was warmly applauded, the composition seemed heavy and lacking invention: there is a lot of talent but no genius."

Schubring's text was freely adapted from the Acts of Apostles, with borrowings from various other biblical texts, including the Psalms, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to Timothy, and it was arranged in choruses, chorales, solos, arias and duos, almost all of them written in short stanzas. While the great choruses for the crowd help to

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY 1809-1847

# PAULUS ORATORIO, OP. 36

### CD1 – Part One (68'30)

1 - N°1 Overture "Choral Wachet auf"	5'54
Andante in A major and four-part double fugue (allegro)	
2 - N°2 Chorus "Herr, der du bist der Gott"	4'23
Allegro maestoso in A major - A Chorus in praise of God, with the voices moving, and also a cry of indignation of persecution evoked by the fugal style with its rapid caesuras.	
3 - N°3 Chorale "Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr"	1'29
Song of the community in E major	
4 - N°4 Soprano solo "Die menge der Gläubigen" and bass-soprano duet "Wir haben ihn gehört"	2'03
Andante in E minor - Stephen is accused by false witnesses. Mendelssohn here makes use of canon.	
5 - N°5 Chorus "Dieser Mensch"	3'19
Allegro in D minor - To a violently emphatic rhythm, the Jews accuse Stephen.	
6 - N°6 Soprano and tenor "Und sie sahen auf ihn" and Chorus "Weg, weg mit dem"	5'00
Presto - Stephen harangues the crowd. The Jews sentence him a brief chorus, answered in a few bars by Stephen alone to the strains of a mysterious harmony, prophesying his torture and the glory of Christ seated on the right hand of the Father.	
7 - N°7 Soprano aria "Jerusalem"	3'19
Adagio in B flat major - in this contemplative aria, full of Christian gentleness and based on chords articulated in triplets, Stephen reproaches Jerusalem for its implacable attitude towards the prophet	

8 - N°8 Tenor solo "Sie aber stürmten auf ihn ein"	1'48
Allegro moderato in C minor – The Jews call for Stephen's death; the chorus is very vehement, particularly on the words "Steiniget ihn - Stone him".	
9 - N°9 Tenor solo "Und sie steinigten ihn"	2'37
A sober, bare account of Stephen's death, immediately followed by the very melancholy chorale "Dir, Herr, dir will ich mich ergeben".	
10 - N°10 Soprano solo "Und die Zeugen"	0'54
The Jews entrust Stephen's clothing to the keeping of the young Saul of Tarsus.	
11 - N°11 Chorus "Siehe, wir preisen selig"	3'29
Andante con moto in E flat major – Song of praise to the Blessed after Stephen's death; the singing is forcefully poetical, while the orchestra remains sober; the accompaniment from the first violin is embellished with garlands of semiquavers.	
12 - N°12 Tenor solo "Saulus aber zerstörte die Gemeinde" and Saul's first aria "Vertilge sie"	2'14
Allegro molto and staccato in B minor – Description of Saul's rage in his persecution of the Christians, emphasised by the hammering chords, the use of trumpets and kettledrums and a perpetuum mobile from the strings.	
13 - N°13 Soprano solo "Und zog mit einer Schaar" and arioso "Doch der Herr"	2'51
Andantino in G major – This lament-like arioso describes Saul's departure for Demascus.	
14 - N°14 Tenor solo "Und als er auf dem Wege wa" and chorus "Saul, was vefolgst du mich ?"	2'32
Adagio in F sharp minor – Saul's conversion on the road to Demascus. After a short solo, a plaintive, imposing but tender female chorus evokes Christ's words, "Saul, was vefolgst du mich ? – Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?"	
15 - N°15 Chorus "Mache dich auf, werde Licht"	4'32
Molto allegro con fuoco in D major – Saul is surrounded by a dazzling light shining down from heaven; This is evoked by a great crescendo from the orchestra and the organ.	
16 - N°16 Chorale "Wachet auf"	1'59
Con moto in D major – Accompanied by fanfares, the famous "Watchman's" chorale, heard for the first time in the overture, evokes Saul's conversion.	

Si les grands choeurs de foule contribuent à faire avancer l'action, si les airs font ressortir le climat méditatif et serein de l'œuvre, les vastes chorals traditionnels offrent une parenté évidente avec ceux de Bach, et Jean-Alexandre Ménétrier a souligné que les chorals n°3 et 9, n°16 et 29, sont du plus pur Bach.

La première partie s'ouvre sur le martyre de saint Etienne, premier martyr de l'histoire chrétienne, lapidé par les Juifs fanatiques, ceux de la Synagogue des Affranchis nous disent les Actes des Apôtres. Parmi eux se trouvait un homme du nom de Saül de Tarse. Alors qu'il se rendait à Damas afin de poursuivre les chrétiens de Syrie, celui-ci se vit tout à coup entouré d'une lumière fulgurante et entendit une voix lui dire : "Je suis Jésus que tu persécutes". Terrifié Saül se prostrera : lorsqu'il se releva, il avait perdu la vue. On le conduisit à Damas où il passa plusieurs jours, proclamant dans les synagogues que Jésus était le fils de Dieu. On retiendra ici avec quel art Mendelssohn réussit à opposer l'admirable pureté de la figure de saint Etienne et la sombre expression de Saül le persécuteur.

La seconde partie de Paulus, plus pauvre en événements dramatiques, mais tout aussi éloquente par ses épâchements lyriques, relate les voyages de Saül devenu l'apôtre Paul, ses prédications, le complot des Juifs et sa route vers le martyre.

Avec ses deux oratorios, œuvres ambitieuses qu'il signa à dix ans d'intervalle, *Paulus* (1836) et *Elias* (1846), Mendelssohn "apparut comme le grand rénovateur de l'oratorio contemporain" (J.A. Ménétrier) à l'heure où l'oratorio allemand avait amorcé son déclin depuis les grandes fresques de Haydn et de Beethoven. S'il est moins monumental et renferme moins de souffle romantique qu'*Elias*, *Paulus* s'inscrit certainement dans la continuité du travail de recherche réalisé par Mendelssohn autour de la "résurrection" de la Passion selon saint Matthieu de Bach qu'il offrit au public berlinois en 1829, mais ressortit peut-être encore davantage à l'admiration profonde qu'il voulait à Haendel.

Precisément, Mendelssohn a su ici réalisé une synthèse entre la tradition de l'oratorio classique et sa sensibilité de musicien romantique. Profondément marqué par les œuvres de ses devanciers, il forma le dessein de renouveler les procédés anciens et, en disciple de Bach et de Haendel, il se révéla, selon Félix Raugel, "original dans l'emploi et le maniement du chorale, du canon et de la fugue, vieilles formes scolastiques qu'il [excella] à envelopper d'une vision personnelle et à rajeunir par les prestige d'une orchestration brillante". Célébrant le génie de Bach et de Haendel, Abraham Mendelssohn avait écrit à ce propos à son fils : "J'en suis sûr, [ton oratorio] résoudra le problème de la combinaison des conceptions modernes avec les plus anciennes, sinon le résultat serait un échec".

Adélaïde de Place



C'est à la fin de 1831 que Mendelssohn mûrit le projet d'écrire un oratorio sur la conversion de Saint Paul. Le 10 mars 1832, il écrivait de Paris à son ami, le baryton et comédien Edouard Devrient : "J'ai plusieurs projets en tête. Le sujet sera l'apôtre Paul. Dans la première partie, la lapidation d'Étienne et la persécution ; la deuxième partie, la conversion, la troisième, la vie chrétienne et les persécutions, et son martyre. J'aimerais emprunter les paroles principalement à la bible et aux cantiques et quelques passages libres". Dans la même lettre Mendelssohn priait Devrient de se charger de l'assemblage des textes, propositions que le chanteur déclina. Il se tourna dès lors vers un autre de ses amis, le pasteur et théologien Julius Schubring, et lui soumit ses réflexions, en particulier quant à l'emploi des chorals : "J'en ai été fermement dissuadé par différentes personnes, écrit-il, mais je ne puis encore me résoudre à y renoncer complètement, car j'estime pour ma part que le choral est vraiment dans le caractère de tout oratorio fondé sur le Nouveau Testament".

La composition de *Paulus* commença au début de l'année 1834 qui fut pour Mendelssohn la grande année Haendel : cette année-là en effet, il entendit *Deborah* à Aix-la-Chapelle, et dirigea *Le Messie*, le *Te Deum* de *Dettingen* et *Judas Macchabée*. Au printemps de 1834, Mendelssohn pouvait annoncer que la première partie de l'oratorio était presque terminée mais qu'il lui restait à travailler l'ouverture. *Paulus* fut définitivement achevé au printemps de 1836 pour être créé à Düsseldorf le 22 mai avec un succès immense. "Le *Paulus*, une œuvre de l'art le plus pur, d'un art de paix et d'amour", écrivit Robert Schumann. On releva le même enthousiasme sous la plume de Fanny Mendelssohn, la sœur tant chérie : "L'ouverture est de toute beauté et l'interprétation parfaite. L'orchestre a des effets d'orgue d'une vraie grandeur. Après le choeur *Wachet auf*, la salle a éclaté en applaudissements". Et Devrient, quoique un peu plus réservé, de s'écrier : "Depuis *La Création* de Haydn, aucune œuvre n'a tant touché le cœur de la nation".

*Paulus* devait connaître une brillante carrière, jusqu'à Liverpool, Londres, Boston et Paris. En France, Maurice Bourges, rédacteur de la *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* lui consacra plusieurs longs articles analytiques parus en 1846 et 1847 dans les colonnes du journal : "Cette simplicité un peu étrange, écrit-il, cette naïveté assez maniérée parfois, cette grâce qualifiée d'évangélique, dont le pinceau moderne a fait emprunt à l'art du moyen-âge, tout cela se retrouve à un haut degré dans l'oratorio du maître". Seule note discordante dans ce concert de louanges, ce jugement d'Adolph Adam qui, en 1842, entendit à Paris six extraits de *Paulus* : "A l'exception d'un choeur qui a paru charmant et que l'on a vivement applaudi, cette composition a paru lourde et dénuée d'invention : on y trouve beaucoup de talent mais pas de génie".

Le livret de Schubring est tiré des Actes des Apôtres avec des emprunts à divers textes bibliques dont les psaumes et les épîtres de Saint Paul aux romains et à Timothée, et organisé en chœurs, chorales, récits, airs, duos, presque tous écrits sur de courtes stances poétiques.

17 - N°17 Tenor solo "Die Männer aber"	1'14
Saul arises and finds that he is blind. He is led to Damascus.	
18 - N°18 Bass aria "Gott sei mir gnädig"	5'11
Adagio in B minor – In this sombre, sorrowful aria, the former persecutor implore's God's mercy; In the central recitative, he swears that he will defend the Christians.	
19 - N°19 Tenor solo "Es war aber ein Jünger"	1'46
God instructs Ananias, a young Christian from Damascus, to go to Saul (now Paul)	
20 - N°20 Bass aria "Ich danke dir" with chorus "Der Herr wird die Thränen"	4'52
Allegretto in A minor – Paul expresses his gratitude in a piece tinged with both sadness and joy to the rhythm of a barcarolle.	
21 - N°21 Soprano solo "Und Ananias"	1'45
Scales fall from before Paul's eyes and he recover his sight.	
22 - N°22 Chorus "O Welch eine Tiefe"	5'10
Allegro moderato in F maj. – This great chorus of thanksgiving brings Part One to a majestic end.	
 CD2 – Part Two (56'01)	
1 - N°23 Chorus "Der erdkreist ist nun des Herrn"	5'02
Grave in B flat major – A solemn chorus and a five-part double fugue celebrating the earth, which now belongs to the Lord.	
2 - N°24 Soprano solo "Und Paulus kam zu der Gemeinde"	0'55
Beginning of Paul's preaching	
3 - N°25 Duettino for Paul and Barnabas "So sind wir num Botschafter"	1'35
Andante in G major – This piece, naive in character and unctuously sweet, evokes the Apostle Barnabas who introduced Paul to the apostolic community in Jerusalem.	
4 - N°26 Chorus "Wie lieblich sind die Boten"	3'00
Andante con moto in G major - After several years of common discipleship, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways, each setting out on his own mission to bear the Holy message. This chorus, pastoral in mood, is in the spirit of Handel.	

5 - N°27 Soprano solo "Und wie sie ausgesandt" and arioso soprano "Lasst uns singen"	2'20
Andante con moto in F major – Proclamation of God's greatness; this aria is almost Mozartian in its tenderness.	
6 - N°28 Tenor solo and chorus "So spricht der Herr"	1'29
Allegro in D minor – The Jews plot against Paul	
7 - N°29 Chorus "Ist das nicht" and chorale "O Jesu Christe"	5'47
The chorus expressing the Jews's anger is accompanied by the horns and kettledrums (allegro molto in G minor); It is followed by the choral "O Jesu Christe, wahres Licht" (adagio in G minor), a fine example of romantic piety.	
8 - N°30 Tenor solo "Paulus aber und Barnabas"	0'56
Paul sets about converting the Heathens.	
9 - N°31 Duetto "Denn also hat uns"	2'27
Allegro in E major – This duo between Paul and Barnabas is full of simplicity and grace.	
10 - N°32 Soprano solo "Uns es war ein mann"	1'02
Evocation of the paralytic man in Lystra	
11 - N°33 Chorus "Die Götter sind den Menschen"	1'11
Presto in C major – A short but lively chorus for the heathens, composed with exquisite finesse.	
12 - N°34 Soprano solo "Und nannten Barnabas"	0'33
The crowd likens Barnabas to Jupiter and Paul to Mercury.	
13 - N°35 Chorus "Seid uns gnädig"	2'40
Andante in A major – Chorus sung by the heathens as they present offerings to their gods	
14 - N°36 Aria solo "Wisset ihr nicht" and chorus "Aber unser Gott"	7'22
Allegro quasi moderato in D major – With vigorous inflexions, Paul severely reprimands the pagans. He answered by a great chorus, with an additional chorale.	
15 - N°37 Soprano solo "Da ward das volk ergehet"	0'16
By his act of faith Paul arouses the angers of the crowd.	
16 - N°38 Chorus "Hier ist des Herren Tempel"	1'49
Allegro non troppo in E minor - Alternating between concentrated murmuring and	

vehement explosion, the chorus calls for the death of the Christians and reiterates the imprecations of chorus N°8

17 - N°39 Soprano solo "Und sie alle verfolgten Paulus"	0'37
God comes to Paul's aid	
18 - N°40 Cavatina for the tenor "Sei getreu bis in den Tod"	2'59
Adagio in C minor – In a elegant and touchingly meditative piece, its poetic character underlined by the solo cello, God asks Paul to believe to Him until his dying day.	
19 - N°41 Solo "Paulus sandte, und liess fordern die Altesen"	1'54
Paul leaves the Christian community of Ephesus and decides to face martyrdom.	
20 - N°42 Chorus "Schone doch deiner selbt!" and bass solo	3'30
Allegro moderato in A minor – A fugal chorus of lamentation, based on the rhythm of a funeral march	
21 - N°43 Chorus "Schet, Welch eine Liebe"	2'52
Andante sostenuto in A minor – The thoughts of the Christian community of Ephesus accompany Paul on his journey towards martyrdom.	
22 - N°44 Soprano solo "Und wen es gleich"	1'11
23 - N°45 Final chorus "Nicht aber ihm allein"	4'23
Allegro maestoso in D major – Chorus to the glory of God, blossoming out into splendid fugue with two countersubjects.	