

For Immediate Release

**MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE PRESENTS
MENDELSSOHN: LOST TREASURES AND THE WAGNER SUPPRESSION
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, AT 7:00 P.M.**

**Program Comprises 13 World Premieres and a U.S. Premiere of Recovered Recital, Vocal,
and Chamber Works by Felix Mendelssohn**

December 10, 2008...Felix Mendelssohn, one of the most popular composers of the Romantic era, is recognized as one of classical music's most prolific and gifted composers. Yet of his more than 770 compositions, over 270 are still unpublished, owing primarily to a campaign of suppression by composer Richard Wagner and his sympathizers in the post-revolution Germany of the 1850s and later during Hitler's rise to power.

Now on Wednesday, January 28, at 7:00 p.m. as the music world prepares to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Mendelssohn's birth, the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in association with The Mendelssohn Project will present a program of 13 world premieres and a U.S. premiere of recital, vocal, and chamber works by Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn: Lost Treasures and the Wagner Suppression will take place in Edmond J. Safra Hall of the Museum and will feature pianists Orion Weiss and Anna Polonsky, the Shanghai Quartet, bass Kevin Deas, and a mezzo-soprano to be announced. Stephen Vann is artistic producer, and founder and artistic director of The Mendelssohn Project Stephen Somary is artistic director of this concert.

After his death in 1847 at age 38, Felix Mendelssohn's reputation was vilified by composer Richard Wagner through his writings, specifically his book *Judaism in Music*, in which Wagner wrote that since Mendelssohn had the blood of a Jew, he was incapable of writing great music. As a result, publication of hundreds of Mendelssohn's works was suppressed as anti-Semitic feelings increased. Later, when Hitler came to power, Mendelssohn's scores were banned by the Nazis and were scattered around the globe. In a campaign to recover these lost works and to further restore Mendelssohn's reputation, Mr. Somary has rediscovered hundreds of unknown compositions of all genres, which Mendelssohn wrote from his teen years to the period just before his death.

Tickets are available at the Museum Box Office at 36 Battery Place, by calling 646.437.4202, or online at www.mjhnyc.org

“It is a profound irony that so much of the immeasurably beautiful music by Felix Mendelssohn has yet to become standard repertoire,” said Mr. Somary. “The works on this program are representative of the complexity of genius at the heart of his music and come from all of the fertile periods of his creativity.”

“The Museum of Jewish Heritage is proud to present this “lost” music by Felix Mendelssohn, one of the greatest composers of his time,” said Dr. David Marwell, director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage. “Not only will this concert provide the public with the opportunity to hear wonderful music that has never been performed before, but it will also shed new light on a composer whose music and reputation were attacked by the Nazis.”

Research by **The Mendelssohn Project** began worldwide in 1996, culminating with foundations being established in Germany and New York City in 2004. The primary mission of the international foundation is to reacquaint today’s society with the music of Felix Mendelssohn and his sister Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and to provide the public with a complete picture of their lives, compositions, letters, and artworks through CDs, concerts, books, film, theatre, and other media. Before the campaign of vilification by Richard Wagner and German Nationalists, Mendelssohn, a brilliant composer, performer, and leading figure in European cultural life, was considered the most influential and respected musician of his time.

In addition to his work as founder and artistic director and of The Mendelssohn Project, New York-born conductor **Stephen Somary** makes numerous guest appearances with leading orchestras of the world. Based in Germany from 1993-2006, Somary has conducted and recorded with many of that country’s orchestras, including the Berlin Symphony, the Nürnberg Symphony, and the Thüringen Philharmonic. Now residing in New York City, Somary, also an acclaimed interpreter of American repertoire has a discography that includes works by such composers as Samuel Barber, Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, and David Chesky. Mr. Somary served as music assistant to Leonard Bernstein from 1984 to 1990. His early career was also shaped by studies with his father Johannes Somary, Eiji Oue at Boston University, and Norman Del Mar at the Royal College of Music in London.

Recognized as one of America’s leading basses, **Kevin Deas** has won acclaim for his burnished sound, clarity of diction, and fervent intensity. In demand by orchestras across North America, he is particularly well known for his signature portrayal of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess*, and as a strong proponent of contemporary music, his 20-year collaboration with Dave Brubeck, with whom he has recorded and performed both here and abroad. This season he returns to the New York Philharmonic for Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges*, sings the world premiere of Derek Bermel’s *The Good Life* with the Pittsburgh Symphony, and gives performances with the Atlanta, Boston Baroque, Detroit, National, and Pacific Symphony Orchestras, among others.

Pianist **Anna Polonsky**, a soloist and chamber musician, has toured extensively throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia. She has collaborated with such artists as Mitsuko Uchida, David Shifrin, Richard Goode, and Fred Sherry and recently formed the Schumann Trio with violist Michael Tree and clarinetist Anthony McGill. She participated in the European Broadcasting Union’s project to record and broadcast all of Mozart’s keyboard sonatas and inaugurated the Emerson Quartet’s Carnegie Hall Perspective Series with a solo recital. Ms. Polonsky earned her

Master's Degree from The Juilliard School, where she studied with Jerome Lowenthal. A recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, Ms. Polonsky serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College.

Pianist **Orion Weiss**, at 26, is a sought-after soloist and collaborator who has performed with the country's top orchestras including those of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. In spring 2008, he released his debut recording, a recital disc for Yarlung Records including works by Bach, Mozart, Scriabin, and Carter. Mr. Weiss made his Baltimore Symphony debut in 1999, stepping in on less than 24 hours' notice to replace Andre Watts in Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2 and was reengaged on the spot. Mr. Weiss graduated from The Juilliard School in 2004, where he studied with Emanuel Ax.

The Shanghai Quartet, longtime champions of new music, are well known for their passionate musicality, virtuosic technique, multicultural innovations, and for juxtaposing Eastern and Western sounds. Celebrating its 25th anniversary this season, the Quartet regularly tours the great music centers of North and South America, Asia, and Europe, and its wide array of media projects include the soundtrack and a cameo appearance in Woody Allen's 2005 film "Melinda and Melinda." The Quartet is in residence at Montclair State University and its members serve as visiting professors at the Shanghai Conservatory and the Central Conservatory in China.

This concert is made possible, in part, through the generous support of the Avery and Janet Fisher Foundation and by Priscilla and Harold Grabino.

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A Program of 13 World Premieres and a U.S. Premiere by Felix Mendelssohn

Wednesday, January 28, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust
Edmond J. Safra Plaza
36 Battery Place
New York, NY 10280

Artists:

Anna Polonsky, Piano
Orion Weiss, Piano
The Shanghai Quartet
Mezzo Soprano, TBA
Kevin Deas, Bass

Stephen Somary, Artistic Director
Stephen Vann, Artistic Producer

Program:

Song Without Words for piano in D Major (1843)
Song Without Words for piano in F# Minor (1836) – U.S. Premiere
Sonata for piano in F minor (1820)

O koennt ich zu dir fliegen (1838) (male)
So schlaf in Ruh (1838) (female)
Bist auf ewig du gegangen (late 1830s) (female)

Wie kann ich froh und lustig sein (1837) (for 2 singers)
Wenn ich auf dem Lage liege (1837) (for 2 singers)

Ich stand gelehnet an den Mast (1838) (for 2 singers)

Presto agitato for piano in B Minor (1833)

Trio for Piano and Strings in C Minor (1826) (pf, vln, vla)

-- Intermission --

Sonata for Violin and Piano in D Minor (1823)

12 Fugues for String Quartet (1821)

Finale from Quartet Eb Major for Strings (1823)

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