

FAVORITE

ANNE AKIKO MEYERS

Violinist
Photo: David Zentz

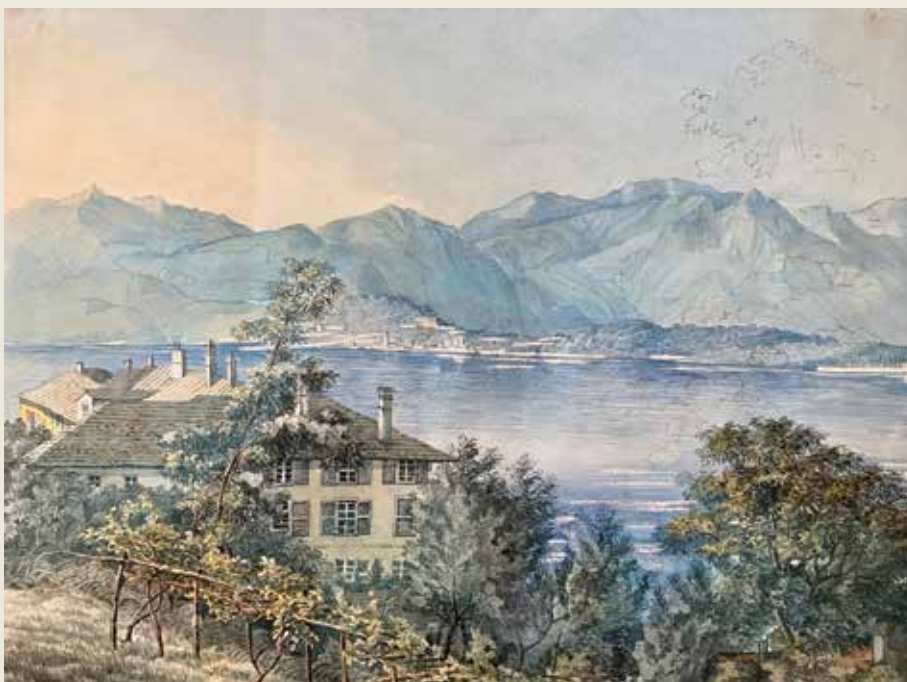


Cadenabbia, Lake Como, Italy
FELIX BARTHOLDY MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)
1837, watercolor on paper, 7 x 9 1/2 in.
Private collection

Every day in the music studio of her Los Angeles home, violinist Anne Akiko Meyers plays along with Felix Mendelssohn. As she tunes her 1741 Ex-Vieuxtemps Guarneri del Gesù instrument, reputed to be perhaps the best-sounding violin around, and launches into passages of works she will perform in concert halls around the world, Meyers acknowledges the great composer. His scores are in the room, and so is a painting by him, one of some 300 he completed in his short lifetime (he died at 38).

Meyers owns a diminutive yet uncannily detailed watercolor created by the composer in June 1837. It depicts the Lake Como locale where he and his wife, Cécile, honeymooned. “Until recently, no one even knew this painting existed,” says Meyers. Her husband purchased the work at a Sotheby’s London auction of music manuscripts in 2015 and presented it to Meyers as a surprise. “We spent our honeymoon in this exact spot,” she recalls. “The watercolor sits in my music studio and I look at it every day to give me inspiration.”

Not only does Meyers share the same honeymoon destination as her beloved Mendelssohn, but she has also played his iconic Violin Concerto in E Minor numerous times in Leipzig with the Gewandhaus Orchestra, for which Mendelssohn served as music director. “I visited the museum there devoted to him and admired the collection of watercolors he made, unaware that this painting even existed.” Cécile Mendelssohn wrote in her



honeymoon diary that her new husband had been working hard on translating an earlier sketch of this landscape into a painting. According to the 2015 Sotheby’s catalogue, a drawing of the same scene exists in Oxford’s Bodleian Library, though this full-color scene was unknown then. It came down through the family of Fanny Hensel, Mendelssohn’s composer sister.

Meyers compares Mendelssohn’s artworks to his compositions. “Like his paintings, the bones of his music are so classical, but the structure is romantic. That’s what makes his scores so difficult to perform. You feel the romantic imagery in his music. He was such an intellectual,” Meyers emphasizes, noting the composer’s ability to paint, write poetry, speak four languages, play multiple instruments. “He crafted so many pieces that are part of our collective consciousness — from the wedding march every bride walks down the aisle hearing to his octets and Scottish symphonies.” While admiring the paint-

ing, Meyers confides, “I can hear the phrases of his violin concerto in there.”

She has positioned the watercolor on a cabinet, the shelves above filled with scores, as well as photographs of Meyers on tour, some showing her with contemporary composers, including Arvo Pärt, who dedicated to her his *Estonian Lullaby*, which she premiered early last year. While her repertoire includes the concert hall classics, Meyers is best known for her embrace of living composers. She has made nearly 40 recordings, a sizeable number of which rose to number one on the *Billboard* charts.

When she places her music on a stand and admires the painting just above it, “What I see every time are the blues of the painting, so crystalline you really feel the water. I’m always struck by Mendelssohn’s brilliance, his ability to create something that we are all affected by. He makes you think about the circle of life and how truly connected we all are. It makes me feel alive when I look at this.”