FOREWORD

My first acquaintance with this beautiful work was in the early spring of 1951, in London. The manuscript was offered to me by a member of the Mendelssohn family, now residing in Switzerland. In 1853, almost one hundred years ago, the composer's widow gave it to the great family friend and leading violinist of the period, Ferdinand David. This manuscript bears the following inscription by Ferdinand David: "Von Frau Cécile Mendelssohn-Bartholdy am 24. Mai 1853 zum Geschenk erhalten. F. David." An inscription by another hand reads: "Composed for E. Rietz in 1822." Rietz was young Mendelssohn's beloved friend and teacher.

It is difficult for us today to conceive of a youth of twelve already so accomplished as was Mendelssohn. Visualize a boy of eleven composing systematically the following works: a trio for strings, a sonata for piano and violin, two full sonatas for piano, the beginning of a third for piano, three more for four hands, four for organ, three songs, and a cantata. Then, the following year, spending sixteen days with Goethe, enthusiastic over his acquaintance with Weber, and further composing five symphonies for strings, each in three movements, nine fugues for strings, the completion of a piano sonata, quartet for four voices, several songs, etudes, two one-act operas, and half of a third.

Mendelssohn must have been particularly fond of this Violin Concerto in D minor. There are many points of similarity with the famous E minor Concerto of 1844: both are in minor, in a somewhat tumultuous mood; the written-out cadenzas, of the second and third movements; a long solo passage of short notes in the last movement reminiscent of the passage in the Allegro Molto Vivace (of the E minor Concerto) which ushers in the recapitulation. In the later work he abandoned the traditional introductory tuttis of the first and second movements, and he also wrote the last movement in major instead of in minor. The Concerto in D minor is full of invention and not in any way inhibited by too-strict traditional concepts. It exhibits, in fact, a remarkable freedom and elasticity of form. There is, for instance, a condensation and amplification with Schubertian modulations of the exposition in the recapitulation of the first movement, and also a completely spontaneous treatment of the third; of the second movement, it suffices to say that it is a noble song throughout.

The *Concerto for Violin and Strings in D Minor* (1822), which is here published for the first time, confirms the incredible genius and prodigiousness of the 13-year-old master.

ALMA, CALIFORNIA
1952

YEHUDI MENUHIN

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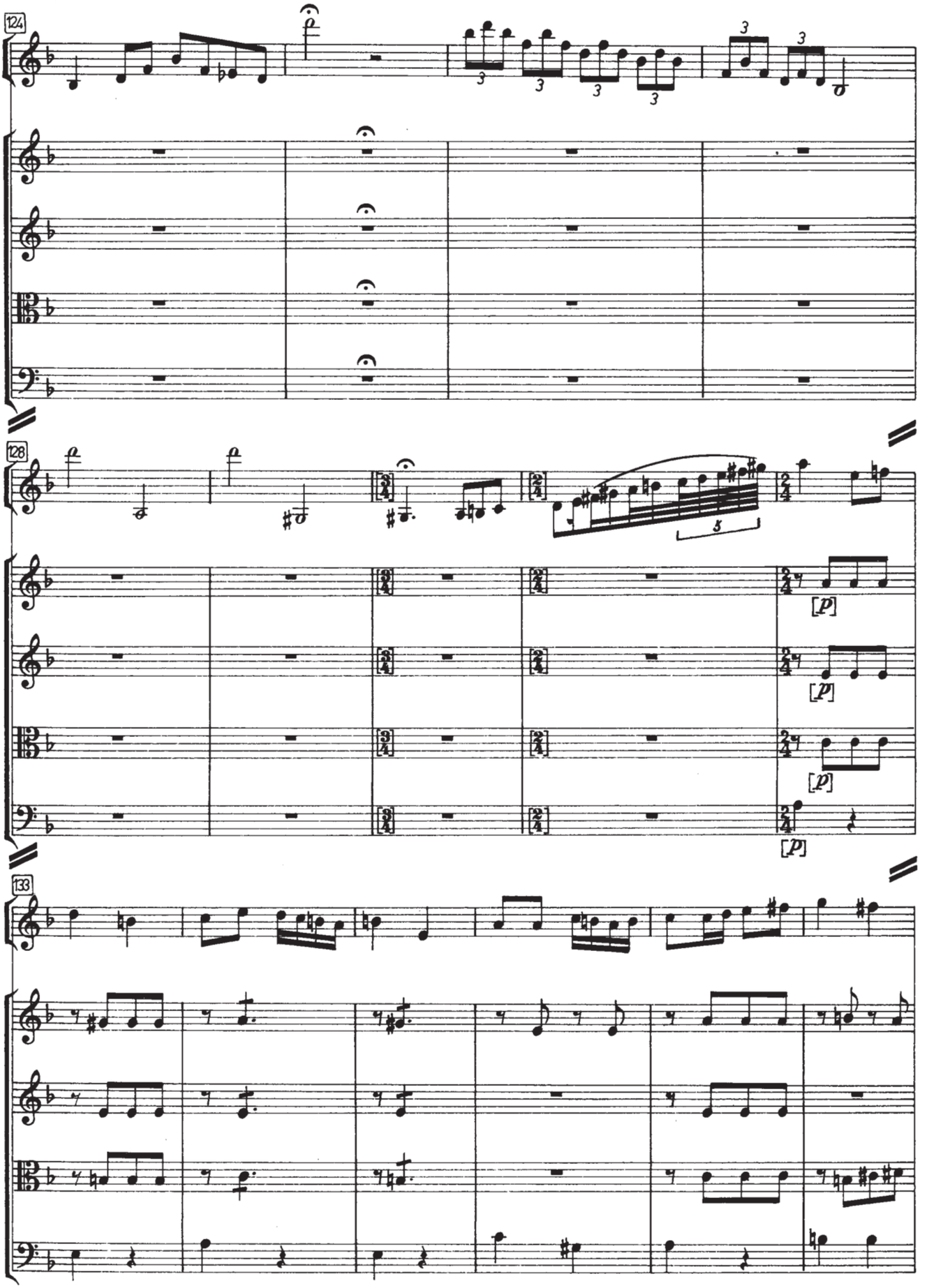
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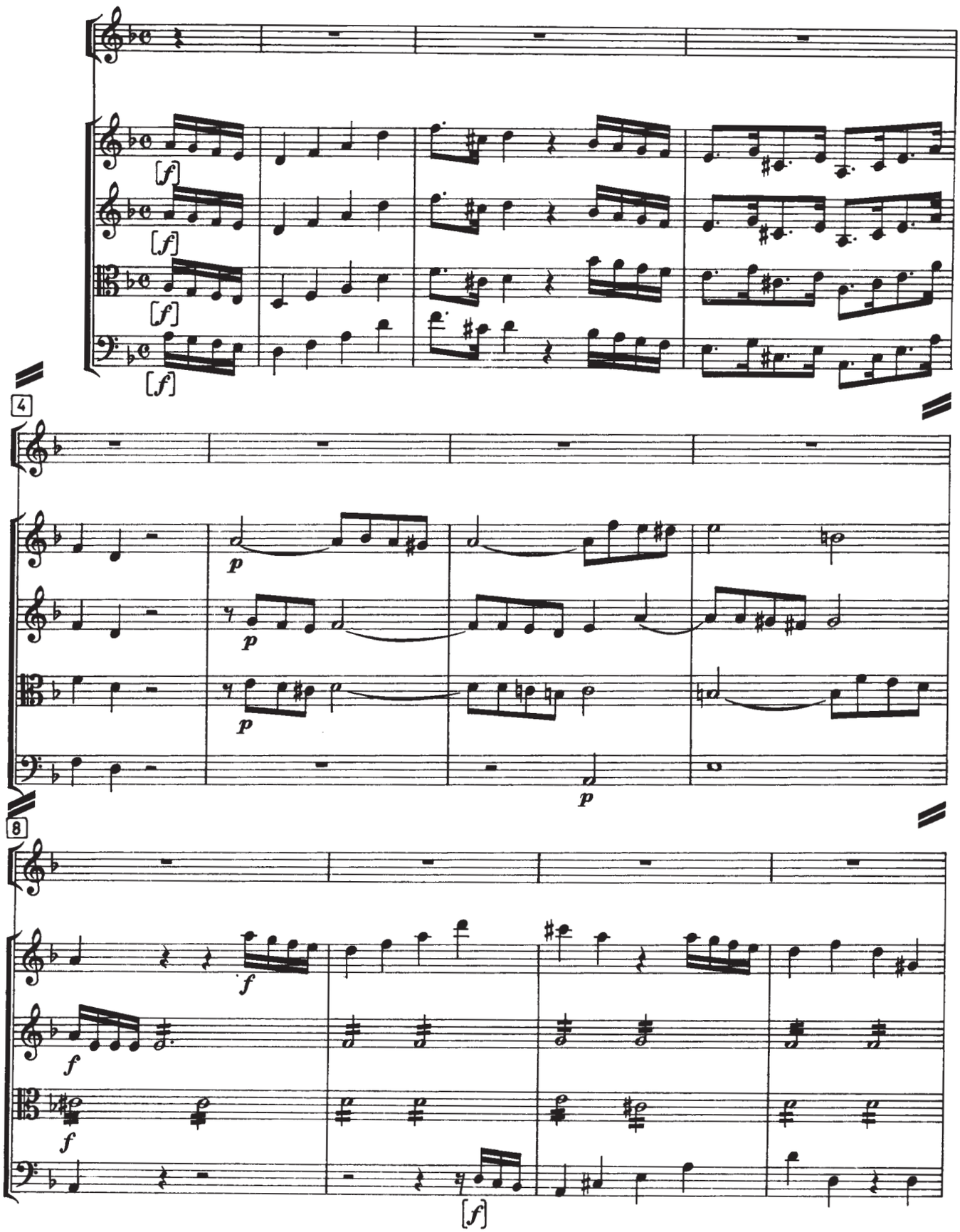
Concerto in D minor

for Violin and String Orchestra

I

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)
Edited by YEHUDI MENUHIN

[Allegro]



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