



“Wedding March” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*  
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)  
arr. David Stone (b. 1922)

## Analysis

**Broad Description / Type** The **Wedding March** is a single movement for full orchestra, from the larger musical work inspired by William Shakespeare’s play.

### **Background Information**

**Felix Mendelssohn** (1809-1847) was a German composer and child prodigy who had reached artistic maturity by the age of sixteen playing piano and violin, composing symphonies and quartets. He developed a style based on classical values of form and clarity with strong lyric melodies and intricate harmonies during the early Romantic period.

The Overture (Op. 21) to **A Midsummer Night’s Dream** was composed in 1826, early in Mendelssohn’s career. He composed the incidental music (Op. 61, including the **Wedding March**) in 1842 for a production of the play.

William Shakespeare (1564 [baptized] - 1616) likely wrote the play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the early 1590’s, during the Renaissance period.

David Stone is a British arranger and composer. This arrangement is published by Boosey and Hawkes.

### **Elements of Music**

#### *Form*

The **Wedding March** has the form: **Intro A Intro’ A B A B A C D E A B A Intro’ Coda**

A: *m. 6* B: *A* C: *B* D: *8 before C* E: *C* Coda: *13 after E*

#### *Rhythm*

Meter is written as 4/4 (Common time), but best performed in Cut time. Mostly basic rhythms, with special challenge to play “dotted quarter eighth” and “double dotted quarter sixteenth” rhythms accurately. Triplets are also present in abundance.

#### *Melody*

The **A** and **B** section melodies are regal and marcato. **C**, **D**, and **E** melodies are legato and more lyrical.

#### *Harmony*

C major is the key center for most of the piece. The **C** and **D** sections are in F Major. The **E** section flirts with D minor for 8 measures, then prepares the return to C Major.

The opening chord of the **A** section is unique as an A minor chord with an added F#, and when combined with the following B<sup>7</sup> is uniquely recognizable.

### *Timbre*

Bright fanfares for **Intro** and **Coda** frame the inner portions which feature traditional orchestral color.

### *Texture*

The lightest texture is orchestrated into the **C**, **D**, and **E** sections using strings and woodwinds. Brass and percussion brighten the **A** and **B** sections and dominate the **Intro** and **Coda**.

### *Expression*

Following Mendelssohn's (and Stone's) dynamics and *sforzandi* will create the basic expressive effects. Students should also add phrase shapes as well as emphases on their "favorite notes" or arrival points.

### **The Heart**

The **Wedding March**'s striking initial harmonic chords contributed to its lasting popularity and familiarity through use in wedding ceremonies. Music often performed for the most significant day in one's life ought to be played with appropriate fervor.

### **Addition Considerations**

The play centers around the wedding of Theseus, the Duke of Athens and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons.

### **Music Selection**

#### **Reasons to Study and Perform**

The **Wedding March** is a challenging and engaging work by a major composer with accessible challenges in the area of technique, bowing, rhythm, dynamics and harmony.

#### **Things to Teach in the Piece**

- Unique harmony (A min add 6 to B<sup>7</sup>)
- Historical periods of Shakespeare and Mendelssohn
- Timelessness of Shakespeare and Mendelssohn
- Dotted Rhythms
- Trills
- Hooked bowings
- "up-up" bowing technique

### **The Plan**

#### **Introducing the piece**

Prior to the official sight reading, students will play hooked bowings, dotted rhythms and double-dotted rhythms as part of daily warm up and scale pattern repetitions.

Also prior to the initial reading, I will introduce the repeated eighth note bowing. It will be done first at a comfortable medium tempo and dynamic, then faster, then softly and on each step of a scale.

Prior to the day we read the piece, I would like to see if students might recognize the piece from just the first two chords of the **A** section, played on the piano or an organ sound.

### **Skill Outcome**

**Skill 1:** Students will play dotted and double dotted rhythms accurately with efficient and correct bow technique.

### **Strategies**

Students will play along with the subdivision (either electronic or provided by other students), then play without the benefit of the subdivision. Players will match bow placement and distribution, establishing this in slow motion with freezing and use of 0 – 100 bow point of contact.

### **Assessment**

1. Visual and aural assessment in class. (within full group active playing)
2. Visual and aural assessment in sectional rehearsals. (small group, pairs and individuals)
3. Individual assessment in playing exam / quarterly audition.

## **Knowledge Outcome**

**Knowledge 1:** Students will understand historical periods of William Shakespeare and Felix Mendelssohn, and relate them to the historical place of other composers.

### **Strategies**

Time lines on the board and posters will help students relate the dates of Shakespeare to musicians, as well as to Mendelssohn specifically. Periods (Renaissance and Early Romantic) will be learned through the use of a human time line with signs and props (wigs, etc.) representing Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Modern, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and a present student (sign with a hole for their face).

### **Assessment**

Students will be asked to place Mendelssohn and Shakespeare on a timeline with historical periods.

**Knowledge 2:** Students will identify and write in the counting for dotted and double dotted rhythms accurately.

### **Strategies**

Students will analyze the note values and write the counting of each.

### **Assessment**

1. Visual and aural assessment in class. (within full group active playing)
2. Individual assessment in playing exam / quarterly audition.

## **Affective Outcome**

Students will explore examples of music enhancing ceremonies and other genres in the arts, performing with appropriate energy.

### **Strategies**

Students will pair up or in groups of three or four, then brainstorm examples of music enhancing ceremonies and other genres in the arts. They will write two or three down on note cards with their names and share one with the class. Students will also discuss how the experience or art becomes different or more effective with the addition of music.

### **Assessment**

1. Collection of cards.
2. Observation of participation in activity and group reports.
3. Concert reflection writing.

## **Ways to “Take Out the Piece”**

1. The piece by Felix Mendelssohn
2. The piece by a German composer

3. The piece that begins and ends in C major
4. The piece inspired by a play
5. The piece with dotted and double dotted rhythms
6. The piece often performed in a ceremony