

## Octet, First Try



The premiere of Mendelssohn's Octet in E-flat Major was so rocky that most critics don't even count it as a valid performance. The Kapelle Kleines Schwein Leipzig, for whom it was written, was facing financial ruin. All but one of the ensemble's instruments had been pawned to pay off gambling debts. So when it came time to perform the piece, only violinist Dieter von Dinklaker played the notes as written (though a severe sneezing fit limited his participation from measure 152 to the end). The other bandsmen alternately hummed, whistled, and wheezed their lines, much to the bewilderment of the composer, who slinked sheepishly out of the theater when the fourth movement began with the labored ululation from a sacrificial goat.