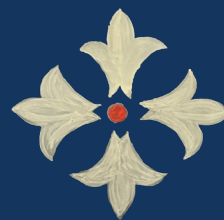


MENDELSSOHN ORGAN SONATAS



SAMUEL
BRISTOW

Sonata No. 1 in F minor * †	[15:10]
1 I. Allegro moderato e serioso	[5:18]
2 II. Adagio	[2:58]
3 IIIa. Andante recitativo	[3:33]
4 IIIb. Allegro assai vivace	[3:20]
 Sonata No. 2 in C minor †	 [9:50]
5 I. Grave – Adagio	[4:15]
6 II. Allegro maestoso e vivace	[2:09]
7 III. Fuga: Allegro moderato	[3:26]
 Sonata No. 3 in A major †	 [9:21]
8 I. Con moto maestoso	[7:10]
9 II. Andante tranquillo	[2:11]
 Sonata No. 4 in B flat major *	 [12:25]
10 I. Allegro con brio	[3:23]
11 II. Andante religioso	[2:09]
12 III. Allegretto	[3:08]
13 IV. Allegro maestoso e vivace	[3:45]
 Sonata No. 5 in D major †	 [7:24]
14 I. Andante	[1:09]
15 II. Andante con moto	[2:09]
16 III. Allegro maestoso	[4:07]

	Sonata No. 6 in D minor *	[14:11]
17	I. Chorale and Variations: Andante sostenuto – Allegro molto	[8:46]
18	II. Fuga: Sostenuto e legato	[2:51]
19	III. Finale: Andante	[2:34]
	Total Timing:	[68:46]

Samuel Bristow *organ*

Recorded on the * Chancel and † Nave Organs of Chelmsford Cathedral, Essex, UK, 14–15 and 21–22 May 2025

Produced by **Daniel Moulton**

24bit, 96kHz high resolution recording, editing and mastering by **David Jones** (Sonus Audio)

A surround sound, spatial audio mix with Dolby Atmos of this recording, by **David Jones**,
is also available on streaming services

Recorded by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Chelmsford Cathedral

Felix MENDELSSOHN

Six Organ Sonatas, Op. 65

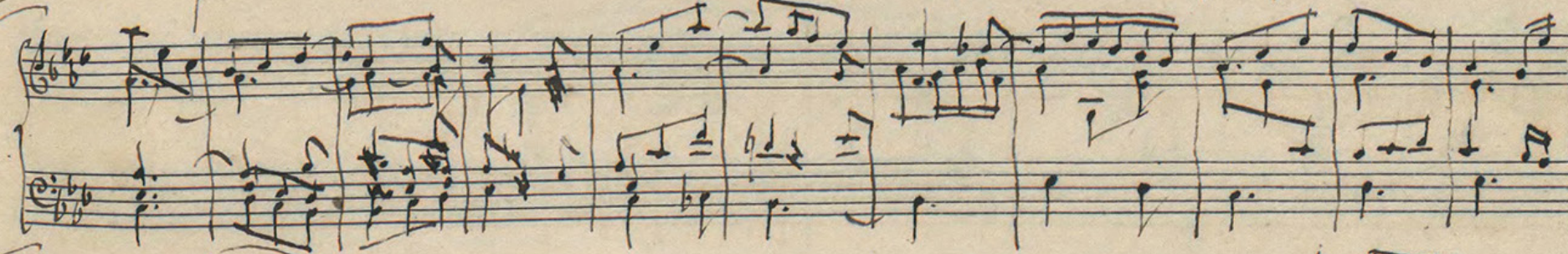
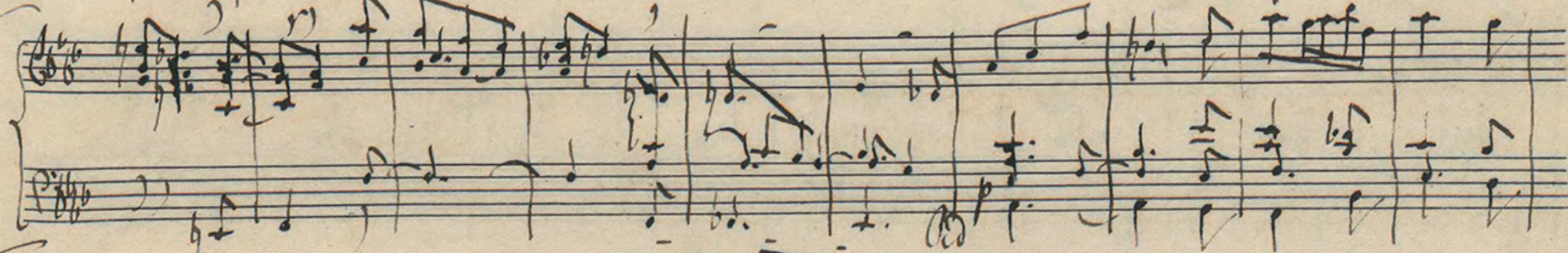
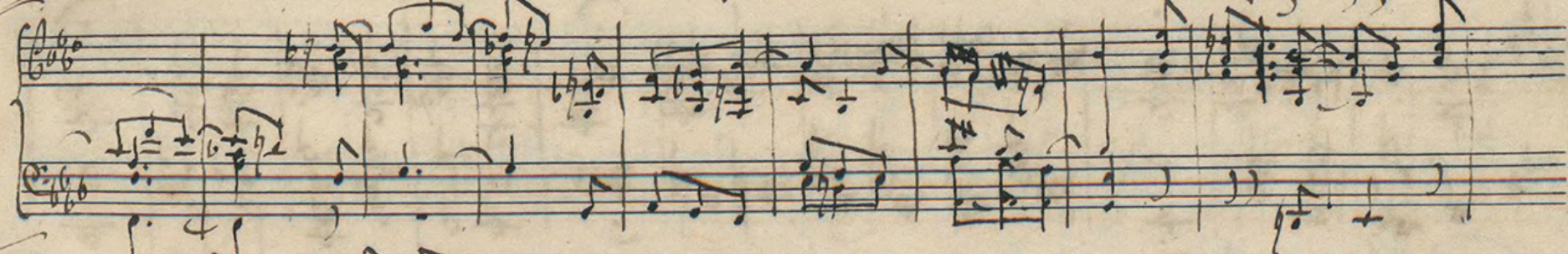
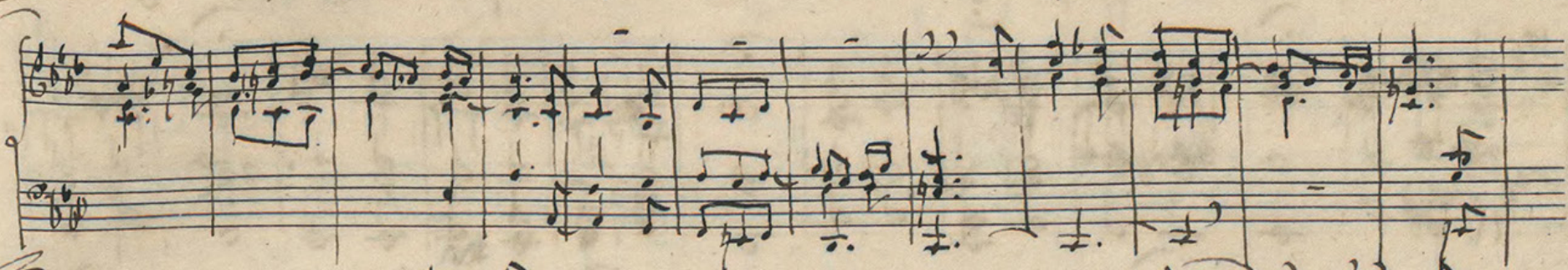
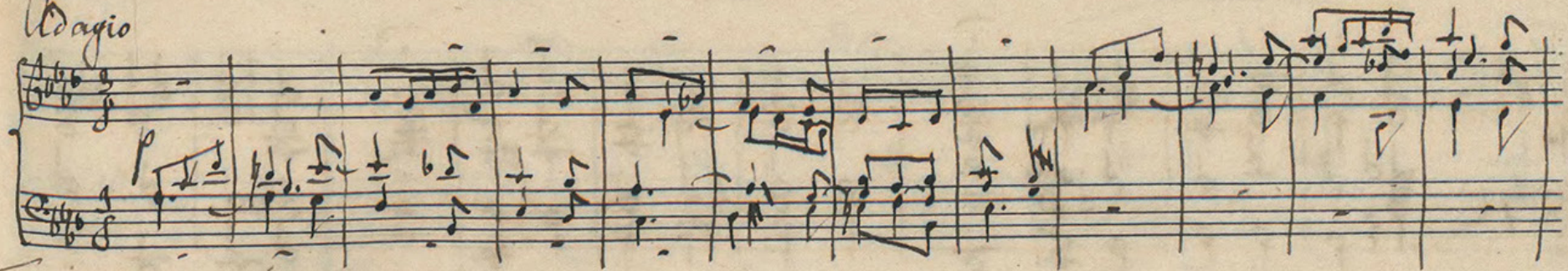
Felix Mendelssohn's *Organ Sonatas, Op. 65* mark the culmination of a lifetime writing for the organ; his first *Prelude in D minor* having been composed at eleven years old in 1820. Whilst it was a life cut tragically short two years after their completion, the set evinces his musical maturity and confidence in a distinctive style that was entirely his own; providing a unique fusion of the contrapuntal mastery and structures of J.S. Bach with the groundbreaking Romantic harmonic language and pianistic technique of Ludwig van Beethoven. Mendelssohn had been commissioned by the English publishers Coventry and Hollier to provide a series of organ voluntaries after his immensely successful tours to England, which included notable organ recitals of Bach's organ works, very rarely heard in England at this time, and his own improvisations which dazzled audiences. Mendelssohn opted to compile the pieces into sonatas for artistic reasons, openly admitting to the publishers that he did not exactly know what the term 'voluntary' meant. Several of the movements were revisions of earlier sketches, others written in a creative outburst for the instrument between 1844 and 1845. Mendelssohn evidently used the set as an opportunity to explore the elasticity of the sonata structure as Beethoven had done with many of his piano sonatas, abandoning the more traditional Italianate three movements exemplified by Mozart. Other organ works dating from this fruitful period are in sufficiently relevant keys to imply they

were also intended for inclusion in the set; examples being the *Theme and Variations in D major*, the *Allegro, Chorale and Fugue in D minor* and the *Fugue in F minor*. Their rejection further solidifies the notion that Mendelssohn's priority was structure, as the exceptional quality of these three works alone would have been more than enough to justify their inclusion otherwise. Previously the only notable sonatas for the instrument had been the *Trio Sonatas* by J.S. Bach, and the six by Carl Philip Emanuel Bach for manuals only, all of which contain three movements. Mendelssohn's original vision had been for two separate sets of three sonatas; *Sonata No. 3* was placed first, and *Sonata No. 1* third. Viewed in this fashion, the gripping *Con moto maestoso* from *Sonata No. 3* arguably becomes an overture akin to that in his oratorio *St Paul*. Why the switch was made cannot be definitively ascertained, but *Sonata No. 1* provides a highly dramatic and arresting opening with a riveting conclusion, so might well be Mendelssohn putting his best foot forward at the very beginning of the set.

The genesis of the *First Sonata* can be traced to the winter of 1844, when Mendelssohn's youngest son was gravely ill. The dramatic first movement is an ominous fugue [played on the Chancel Organ] based on a motif lifted from J.S. Bach's the *Matthäus Passion*, BWV 244 tenor recitative *O Schmerz* (Oh pain), with ethereal interjections of the chorale *Was mein Gott will gescheh allzeit* (What my God wants will always happen)

Adagio

op 65 I₂



[played on the Nave Organ], also utilised in the Gethsemane scene by Bach, perhaps indicating Mendelssohn's tension between fatherly anguish and acceptance of God's will. The tender and lilting *Adagio* is followed by an uncertain recitative, which leads to an eruption of joy in F major, possibly capturing the exultant feeling in the Mendelssohn household as his son recovered, concluding magnificently with both organs playing simultaneously. The *Second Sonata* is split into two sections; the first a dramatic introduction followed by a lyrical song without words. The second opens with a grand march, a reworking of an 1831 *Nachspiel*, followed by a fugue, which gains momentum towards a sparking conclusion. The *Third Sonata* opens with a triumphal wedding march, originally written for Mendelssohn's sister, Fanny. An intense double fugue follows, the first subject based on a tenor recitative motif from his *Lobgesang Symphony*: 'Hüter, ist die nacht bald hin?' (Watcher, will the night soon pass?). The pedal states the chorale *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*, a paraphrase of Psalm 130. The *Andante tranquillo* provides a gentle after-thought, concluding the sonata in an understated manner. The *Fourth Sonata* is divided into four movements, thereby most closely following a Classical structure; the opening is a

sprightly display of pianistic virtuosity, the *Andante religioso* offering a moment of serenity. A deeply lyrical song without words features a duet between soprano and tenor solos underpinned by a gently bubbling accompaniment, before an exhilarating finale. In the *Fifth Sonata*, the melody of the opening chorale is thought to be original, although it bears a striking resemblance to the hymn *Dir, dir Jehova will ich sing'n* (To you, to you Jehovah I want to sing). This is followed by a plaintive *Andante con moto*, a song without words accompanied by a pizzicato bass line; a feature for which Mendelssohn was reputed in his organ improvisations. The main theme of the joyous *Allegro maestoso* is accompanied by flowing arpeggios in a bubbling and energetic texture, concluding this sonata with buoyant extravagance. For the *Sixth Sonata*, the accomplished first movement is founded on *Vater unser im Himmelreich*, the Lutheran paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. The colourful variations convey the character of each stanza; the fervent final toccata reflecting the earthly tension between right and wrong in the text, 'deliver us from evil'. A fugue follows, derived from the same chorale. The serene *Finale* concludes this intense sonata, and the set, with dignified tranquillity.

Samuel Bristow, 2026





Dubbed ‘an artist to watch’ in *Organists’ Review*, **Samuel Bristow** has served as Assistant Director of Music at Chelmsford Cathedral since September 2023. In this role he acts as the principal organist to the Cathedral’s liturgy, assists in the running of the Cathedral choirs and oversees a flourishing lunchtime concert series. Additionally, his innovative family concert series, ‘Pipes and Popcorn’, regularly attracts hundreds to the Cathedral in school holidays.

Originally hailing from the Cotswolds, Bristow graduated from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire with First Class Honours in 2019, having studied with Daniel Moulton and Henry Fairs. Whilst there he was also a recipient of the John Campbell Keyboard Prize. In his time as Organ Scholar at St Paul’s Cathedral, Bristow performed the complete organ works of Felix Mendelssohn in 2021 as part of the ‘Organ Giants’ series, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Father Willis rebuild. He has also held positions at the cathedrals of Salisbury, Birmingham and Coventry, where he was an integral part of the respective music departments.

Bristow has accompanied world premières of choral works by composers including Francis Jackson and Owain Park. Alongside his work in the Cathedral, Bristow is also active as a recitalist, composer and teacher. Along with his many accolades he has also broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4, and *Songs of Praise* on BBC One.

Chelmsford Cathedral Organs

This album celebrates the 30th anniversary of the completion of a unique, long-term project to install two mechanical action organs in Chelmsford Cathedral, independent but interlinked. This vision was driven by then Director of Music Dr Graham Elliott and for 30 years these instruments, built by Mander, have played a prominent role in both liturgy and concerts. The concept was to provide two instruments which could sufficiently fill the space of the Cathedral together, when required, but also retain separate identities at opposite ends of the building to fulfil their respective purposes. The overall tonal work was based on English instruments of the mid-19th century; the casework of the Nave Organ was inspired by the work of Arthur Hill to reflect this. A new gallery was constructed to accommodate the Nave Organ at the west end of the Cathedral in 1994. This

instrument possesses 40 stops, with a fourth manual specially dedicated to the solo Ophicleide to provide further versatility. This organ has been purposed for the performance of repertoire – predominantly voluntaries at services and regular recitals. The Chancel Organ largely incorporates pipework from an instrument at St Andrew the Great Church, Cambridge, built by Holdich and Hill in 1844. More modest in scale than its west end counterpart and adorned with a striking new case, it sits adjacent to the choir stalls and accompanies the weekly choral services, thereby sitting at the heart of the Cathedral's daily liturgical cycle. Most of the Nave Organ can be played from the console of the Chancel Organ, which enables both organs to be utilised simultaneously when supporting a large-scale congregation. Efforts have been made in this recording to include every stop on both instruments.

Chelmsford Cathedral Choral Foundation

The Chelmsford Cathedral Choral Foundation was established at the same service which inaugurated the Cathedral organs in 1995. Originally conceived as a partnership involving the Cathedral and three local schools in Chelmsford, it aimed to attract, and provide funding for, Cathedral choristers, and also funding for sufficient lay clerks and choral scholars to enable daily choral services to be sung. The uses of the fund expanded to support and promote the choirs more generally as they developed, including the work of an organ scholar. The principle aim of the

Choral Foundation remains to build a fund to sustain the future development of the Cathedral's choral music by covering the annual costs of remunerating the choirs. Through this, the ambition remains to raise the profile of the Cathedral choirs – and the excellence of church music – across the Diocese especially through events involving the choir, which are both excellent and accessible, and in particular those which engage the wider community and especially young people.



Nave Organ

GREAT ORGAN

Bourdon 16
Open Diapason 8
Gamba 8
Stopped Diapason 8
Principal 4
Flute 4
Twelfth 22/3
Fifteenth 2
Sesquialtera II
Mixture III
Cornet V
Posaune 8
Clarion 4
Choir to Great
Swell to Great
Solo to Great

PEDAL ORGAN

Open Diapason 16
Bourdon 16
Principal 8
Flute 8
Fifteenth 4
Bombarde
Trumpet 8
Great to Pedal
Choir to Pedal
Choir Octave to Pedal
Swell to Pedal
Solo to Pedal

SWELL ORGAN

Stopped Diapason 8
Viola da Gamba 8
Vox Angelica 8
Principal 4
Flauto Traverso 4
Fifteenth 2
Mixture III
Contra Fagotto 16
Trumpet 8
Hautboy 8
Vox Humana 8
Clarion 4
Tremulant

CHOIR ORGAN

Stopped Diapason 8
Salicional 8
Principal 4
Flute 4
Flageolet 2
Mixture II-III
Cromorne 8
Tremulant
Swell to Choir

SOLO ORGAN

Ophicleide 8

Chancel Organ

GREAT ORGAN

Bourdon 16
Open Diapason 8
Stopped Diapason 8
Dulciana 8
Principal 4
Wald Flute 4
Twelfth 22/3
Fifteenth 2
Mixture III
Trumpet 8
Swell to Great

PEDAL ORGAN

Subbass 16
Bourdon (Great) 16
Flute 8
Trombone 16
Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal

SWELL ORGAN

Open Diapason 8
Stopped Diapason 8
Echo Gamba 8
Voix Celeste 8
Principal 4
Fifteenth 2
Mixture III
Contra Fagotto 16
Cornopean 8
Oboe 8
Tremulant



Front and back cover designs by **Georgia Coote**

Artwork by **David Murphy** (FHR)

Photos / images:

Album cover and page 8: Samuel Bristow by **Georgia Coote**

Page 5: Mendelssohn: *Adagio* from *Organ Sonata No. 1*,
autograph manuscript, 1844 (Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Kraków)

Page 7: Felix Mendelssohn by **Eduard Magnus**, 1846

Pages 12, 14: Chelmsford Cathedral and page 10: Nave (left) and Chancel (right)
Organs of Chelmsford Cathedral by **Samuel Bristow**

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chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

