

CHANDOS

MENDELSSOHN

WORKS FOR SOLO PIANO, VOLUME 3



Peter
Donohoe
piano



Coal and chalk drawing on paper by Friedrich Wilhelm von Schadow (1788 – 1862),
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Felix Mendelssohn, 1834

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

Works for Solo Piano, Volume 3

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | <p>Scherzo à capriccio, WoO 3, MWV U 113 (1835) 5:56
in F sharp minor • in fis-Moll • en fa dièse mineur
for Piano
Composed for <i>L'Album des pianistes</i> (Paris, 1836)
Presto scherzando</p> |
| 2 | <p>Phantasie, Op. 28, MWV U 92 (?1828 – 29, revised 1833) 13:51
in F sharp minor • in fis-Moll • en fa dièse mineur
<i>Sonate écossaise</i>
(Scottish Sonata)
for Piano
Ignaz Moscheles gewidmet
Con moto agitato – Andante – Con moto agitato –
Andante. Tempo I – Con moto agitato –
Allegro con moto – Presto</p> |
| 3 | <p>Capriccio, Op. 5, MWV U 50 (1825) 6:24
in F sharp minor • in fis-Moll • en fa dièse mineur
for Piano
Prestissimo</p> |

	Sonata, Op. 6, BWV U 54 (1826)	22:46
	in E major • in E-Dur • en mi majeur	
	for Piano	
4	Allegretto con espressione –	5:33
5	Tempo di Menuetto – Più vivace – L'istesso tempo –	4:25
6	Adagio e senza tempo. Recitativo – Andante – Allegretto con espressione – Recitativo – Andante – Allegretto come prima –	6:04
7	Molto Allegro e vivace – Allegro con fuoco – Allegretto con espressione	6:43
	Sonata, Op. post. 106, BWV U 64 (1827)	17:37
	in B flat major • in B-Dur • en si bémol majeur	
	for Piano	
8	Allegro vivace	6:23
9	Scherzo. Allegro non troppo	2:48
10	Andante quasi Allegretto – Allegro molto	4:16
11	Allegro moderato – Allegro non troppo – Tempo I	4:09

12

**Concertparaphrase über Mendelssohns Hochzeitsmarsch
und Elfenreigen, S 410 (1849 – 50) 10:08**

aus dem 'Sommernachtstraum'

(Concert Paraphrase on Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' and
'Dance of the Elves' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1843),

Op. 61, MWV M 13)

for Piano

by Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886)

Fräulein Sophie Bohrer gewidmet

Allegro – Più mosso –

Moderato. Tempo I – Più mosso – Tempo I –

Cadenza. Più mosso – Presto –

Tempo I. Allegro – Vivamente – Quasi Presto – Stretta

TT 76:44

Peter Donohoe piano

Mendelssohn: Sonatas and Other Works for Solo Piano

Introduction

The five compositions by Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847) recorded here were composed during the decade 1825 – 35. The former year also saw the composition of the sixteen-year-old's first undisputed masterpiece, the Octet for strings, Op. 20; the Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21, would follow in 1826. By then, Mendelssohn had travelled from Berlin to Paris via Weimar, where he renewed acquaintance with Goethe. A longer period of travel beginning in 1829 would take him to London and thence to Scotland, where the island of Staffa provided inspiration for the *Hebrides* Overture, of 1830, which was revised in 1832 and published the following year. Employment in Düsseldorf from 1833 yielded, in August 1835, to his crucial transfer to Leipzig, where Mendelssohn became municipal musical director and conductor of the Gewandhaus orchestra. He was also offered the editorship of a new journal, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, but that eventually passed to another musician and composer to whom he would become very close: Robert Schumann.

These were years, too, during which 'classical' genres such as sonata, quartet, and symphony (Beethoven's late quartets were composed in 1824 – 26) became increasingly challenged by shorter types of composition. This was especially so in the realm of piano music, the repertoire for which exploded with studies and 'character pieces' of various kinds. Symbiotically connected to these developments was the rise of the keyboard virtuoso and, as Schumann negatively saw it, an appetite for music in which style might dominate substance; a constant of his critical writing for the *AmZ* was the call for composers not to neglect the 'higher forms' in favour of the 'smaller'.

Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 6

It is in this context, then, that we should approach Schumann's 1835 review, in the company of a series of sonatas by Schubert, of Mendelssohn's Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 6, composed and published in 1826 (the autograph manuscript is dated 22 March). Schumann considered these works among the most beautiful things that have appeared since Beethoven, Weber,

Hummel, and Moscheles in, for them,
this highest artistic genre of piano music.¹

He was perhaps the first to mark the similarities between Mendelssohn's composition and Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A, Op. 101 (1816), noticing how the first movement was reminiscent of the 'thoughtful melancholy'² of the older composition's opening, even if the finale looked more in the direction of Weber – 'yet this is not caused by weak unoriginality, but rather by intellectual relationship'.³

The parallels with Beethoven's Op. 101 are many: both opening movements are in a pastoral 6/8, and decidedly less assertive than would typically be expected; the overall weight is therefore directed towards the finale. Beethoven's second-movement, *Alla marcia*, somewhat dwarves Mendelssohn's *Tempo di Menuetto*, though both make prominent use of dotted rhythms. Each of the third movements has an improvisatory cast; Mendelssohn expressly invokes recitative,

¹ mit dem Schönsten, was seit Beethoven, Weber, Hummel und Moscheles in diesem ihnen am wertesten Kunstgenre der Pianoforte-musik erschienen ist

² an den schwermütig sinnenden der letzten A-dur-Sonate von Beethoven

³ so ist dies nicht schwächliche Unselbständigkeit, sondern geistiges Verwandtsein

which is developed in a rich four-part contrapuntal texture. In Beethoven's case, the short *Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll* movement leads into a cyclical return of the opening of the first movement, which then launches the finale; it has often been noted that Mendelssohn reworks this cyclic gesture at the very end of his own finale, where a return to the *Allegretto con espressione* music of the first movement brings the whole sonata to a close; less often remarked is the fact that the third movement (it is considerably more extended than Beethoven's) itself cites that opening movement twice, albeit through the relatively unmarked descending arpeggios over a left-hand pedal which close the exposition and recapitulation.

Piano Sonata in B flat major, Op. post. 106

Cyclic return is also a feature of the Piano Sonata in B flat major, Op. post. 106, in which the Scherzo (in B flat minor) reappears in the finale. The proximate precursor here could be Mendelssohn's own Octet; more distantly, though, one thinks of the linked third and final movements of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Meanwhile, the large four-movement design of this work, the slow movement in third place, the overall key of B flat, and the fact that the first-movement

exposition places the second group in G major, all inevitably conjure Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, which Mendelssohn had learned with his teacher Ludwig Berger and could still perform from memory on a visit to Stettin in 1827. Beethoven had died on 27 March that year; Mendelssohn dated the autograph manuscript 31 May, making it possible that he conceived and wrote the sonata in tribute to the older master. That he nevertheless chose not to publish it suggests that he was in some respect dissatisfied with it; Markus Roth has proposed that, compared to Op. 6, it may have seemed more of an 'exercise'⁴ than a genuinely original composition, and that Beethoven's model may have left him 'more paralysed than inspired'.⁵ Whatever the reality, the association with the 'Hammerklavier' was forever cemented when, on its posthumous publication, in 1868, Mendelssohn's was accorded the same opus number as Beethoven's work.

Phantasie, Op. 28

The 'Hammerklavier' is Beethoven's longest piano sonata; Op. 106 was the last that Mendelssohn composed, and by 1828 he was

⁴Übung

⁵cher gelähmt denn beflügelt

already turning to other genres such as *Lieder ohne Worte* (Songs without Words). And yet, writing to him on 27 May 1829, Fanny told her brother that 'I often play your Scottish sonata',⁶ and Mendelssohn himself noted on 25 May 1830 that he had played a 'schottische Sonate' for Goethe in Weimar. That he had been contemplating a 'Scottish' work of some kind even before visiting that country is clear from the correspondence with Fanny, but whether and to what extent these works are to be identified with what he described as his *Sonate écossaise* in an autograph manuscript dated 29 January 1833 cannot be determined; a second, undated autograph of the same piece is titled *Phantasie für das Pianoforte*, and it was from this manuscript that the Bonn publisher Simrock prepared the first edition of the *Phantasie*, Op. 28, which appeared in 1834, dedicated to Ignaz Moscheles.

Exactly what Mendelssohn might have heard as 'Scottish' in this music is not easy to say, though commentators have listed the opening prelude arpeggiation over a tonic pedal, perhaps invoking a (Celtic) harp; and the melancholy initial theme may, in a German ear, have aroused an Ossianic connection. Widely spaced chords and open

⁶Deine schottische Sonate spiel ich oft

fifths may likewise have been intended as stylistic markers. From a formal point of view the work can be understood as consisting of three movements, each tonally closed and self-standing, although these are not visually separated from one another by conventional double bar lines. When the *Phantasie* is heard as a *three-movement work*, the obvious referential genre is sonata (the clear sonata-form finale reinforces the case); but when it is heard as a *three-section movement*, and given the marked improvisatory character of the first section, it is to fantasia that one first inclines.

Again, an obvious Beethovenian model has been suggested: the 'Moonlight' Sonata, Op. 27 No. 2, though Mendelssohn's first movement / section, once it gets going, is much more turbulent. The 'Moonlight' is, of course, one of two sonatas that Beethoven published as 'Sonata quasi una fantasia'. And Schumann, reviewing the state of sonata composition in the *AmZ* in 1839, suggested that the form (as he termed it) might have run its course, which was in the nature of things as one should have an eye to the new.

So, write sonatas, or fantasias (what's in a name!), only let not music be forgotten meanwhile and the rest will emerge from your good genius.⁷

Capriccio, Op. 5

His earlier championing of the 'higher forms' should not be taken to mean that Schumann always regarded the 'smaller' as by definition insubstantial or less worthy. Passing mention of Mendelssohn's Capriccio, Op. 5 (autograph dated 23 July 1825), dubs it an 'exemplar'.⁸ As for the genre itself, he described the capriccio as being different from the low-comedy burlesque in that it blends the sentimental with the witty. Often there is something étude-like about it.⁹

The latter point is pertinent inasmuch as this virtuoso piece is something of a study in octaves, whether unison or broken, hands together or in contrary motion. If there is wit, it is of a high, intellectual kind: in particular, the middle section perhaps capriciously demonstrates Mendelssohn's contrapuntal ability to work a subject in prime and inverted forms. Mendelssohn was aware of

⁷ Also schreibe man Sonaten, oder Phantasien (was liegt am Namen!), nur vergesse man dabei die Musik nicht, und das andere erstehet von eurem guten Genius

⁸ Musterwerk

⁹ der Genre der Musik, welcher sich vom Niedrigkomischen der Burleske durch die Verschmelzung des Sentimentalen mit dem Witzigen unterscheidet. Nebenbei bezweckt sie oft etwas Etuden-artiges

the technical difficulties, describing the piece as 'crazy',¹⁰ to the extent that in London, in 1829, he had opined that it was not something for females: no 'Miss' could play this piece with its octave runs, wide leaps and 'double stops'.¹¹ In autumn 1831, however, he was hugely impressed by a performance given by Delphine von Schauroth, which entirely surpassed his expectations; perhaps this was why, on 16 September 1835, he presented a copy as a sixteenth birthday present to Clara Wieck, who later made it a staple part of her repertoire.

Scherzo à capriccio, WoO 3

It will not go unnoticed that the *Phantasie* and Capriccio share the key of F sharp minor with the *Scherzo à capriccio*, WoO 3, composed in September and October 1835 and first published that year, in Paris, by Maurice Schlesinger as a contribution to his *Album des pianistes*, under the title 'Presto Scherzando'. The final title (which might as well have suited Op. 5) dates from the 1836 edition, published in Bonn by Simrock. In his posthumously published *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Thoughts on

¹⁰ mein verrücktes Capriccio in fis moll

¹¹ Doppelgriffen

an Aesthetic of the Art of Music, 1806), Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart characterised F sharp minor as

a gloomy key. It tugs at passion as a dog
fretting a garment. Resentment and
discontent are its language.¹²

All this perhaps fits Op. 5 better than this work which, although no less virtuosic and technically demanding than its counterpart, establishes at the outset that gossamer-thin, taut playfulness so characteristic of the Mendelssohnian scherzo. Like Op. 5, too, it explores the full range of the piano keyboard; but whereas Op. 5 moves explosively upward at its conclusion, the overall trajectory here is downward, from the heights to the depths, from the highly strung and over-energetic to the somnolent (let sleeping dogs lie!).

Concertparaphrase über Mendelssohns Hochzeitsmarsch und Elfenreigen, S 410

'What's in a name!'¹³ mused Schumann. By 'paraphrase' is generally meant a restatement of something, typically in a shorter or simpler form which makes the meaning clearer. The

¹² Ein finsterer Ton: er zerrt an der Leidenschaft, wie der bissige Hund am Gewände. Groll und Mißvergnügen ist seine Sprache

¹³ was liegt am Namen!

definition is sorely stretched by Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886) in his *Concertparaphrase über Mendelssohns Hochzeitsmarsch und Elfenreigen*, S 410, from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the incidental music to which had been added to the Overture in 1843; Liszt's composition of 1849 – 50 was published in 1851, with a dedication to the virtuoso pianist Sophie Bohrer (1828 – 1899). The extent of repetition of the principal march theme, treated to ever more giddy, even outrageous, accompaniments, ensures that 'restatement' is never in doubt; but the combination of this not just with the 'Elfenreigen' music but also with that of the Overture does not so much clarify as multiply meaning, inviting the listener to intuit new connections among the independent numbers of Mendelssohn's original.

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Born in Manchester in 1953, **Peter Donohoe** studied at Chetham's School of Music for seven years, graduated in music from Leeds University, and went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham, and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time,

for his musicianship, stylistic versatility, and commanding technique, a critic concluding in *Musical Opinion* that 'I cannot imagine a living pianist capable of improving upon Donohoe's outstanding artistry'. In recent seasons he has appeared with the Dresdner Philharmonie, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, and RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. He has undertaken a UK tour with the Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra and given concerts in many South American and European countries as well as China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Russia, and the USA. In high demand as a jury member for international competitions, he has recently served on the juries at the Concours de Genève (2018), International Piano Competition 'Cidade de Ferrol' (2022), and Hong Kong International Piano Competition (2022), along with many national competitions both within the UK and abroad. His most recent discs include Volume 2 of the Orchestral Works of Grażyna Bacewicz, an exploration of Busoni's works for solo piano, and an album devoted to solo piano works by Granados and Albéniz (all for Chandos Records), as well as Piano Quintets by Taneyev and Schumann and a selection of waltzes by Ravel, Schumann, Debussy, and

Chopin. He has performed with all the major London orchestras and, across the European continent, with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Münchner Philharmoniker, and Berliner Philharmoniker. In the United States, he has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and more. In the 2024 / 25 season Peter Donohoe gave notable

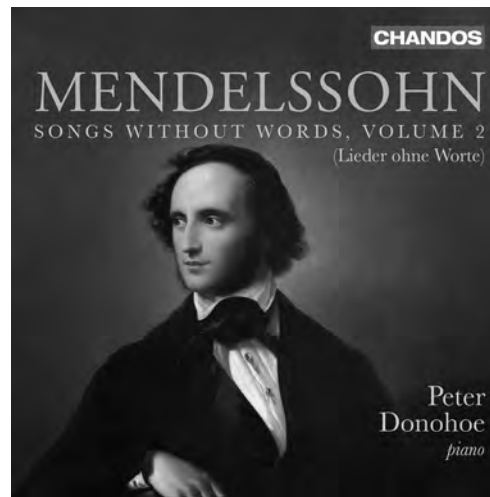
performances with the Symphony Orchestra of India, Filarmonica George Enescu, in Bucharest, Vox Ama Deus, in Philadelphia, and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, at Cadogan Hall. The season also featured recitals at the Fundación Juan March, in Madrid, Chopin Piano FEST, in Prishtina, Kosovo, and at such UK events as the Ludlow Piano Festival, Newbury Spring Festival, and Ulverston International Music Festival.



Sim Canery-Clarke Photography

Peter Donohoe

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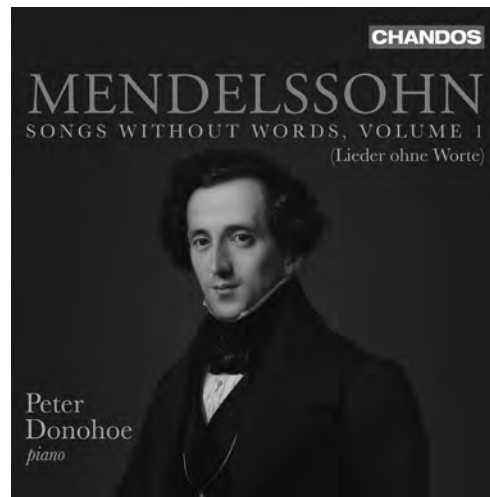


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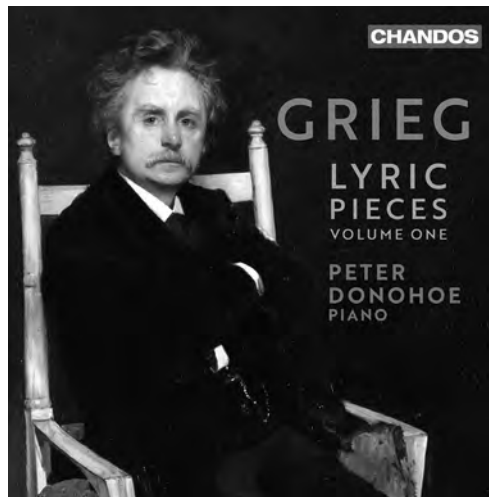


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FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)

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TT 76:44

Peter Donohoe
piano

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