

JOHANN KASPAR MERTZ

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Character Pieces

Edited by Julian Gray

The Man and the Music

The great Hungarian guitarist and composer Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856) created, along with composers Giulio Regondi and Napoleon Coste, the most significant guitar repertoire of the mid-19th century, in the heart of the Romantic

period. His compositions include works in the most popular forms of instrumental expression of his time—the bravura fantasy, the polonaise, the mazurka, the opera revue, the pictorial miniature, and song arrangements. Mertz toured successfully throughout central Europe and Russia performing on the public concert stage and at court. Through his travels, he maintained his permanent residence in Vienna from 1840 until his death.

The Op. 13 *Bardenklänge* (“Bard Sounds” or “Bardic Tones”) were his most beautiful and substantive contribution to a genre that is one of the defining musical expressions of Romanticism—the character piece. From the creation of poetic epics inspired by the deeds of ancient Gaelic warrior-poets, and the serious philological study and collection of the oral heritage of the German “Volk” by the Grimm brothers to the spectacular literary success of Hans Christian Andersen’s “fairy tales,” the visual tableaux and immediate dramatic impact of the spoken story fired the imaginations of Romantic period painters and musicians alike. The character piece for solo piano (and guitar) became the wordless witness and advocate for this fascination.

The nocturne, whose dreamy lyricism and at times passionate utterance was famously first coined as a musical title by the Irish piano virtuoso John Field and was soon taken up by the young Frederick Chopin. The Op. 4 *Nocturnes* by Mertz appear just ten years after Chopin’s first published works with this designation and are among the initial pieces Mertz offered to the public after his move to Vienna.

A Note on This Edition

The earliest published editions of these pieces were used as the basis for the text of this volume. The Viennese publishing house of Haslinger (owned first by Tobias Haslinger and after his death in 1842 by his son Carl) brought out both the Op. 4 and Op. 13 works.

The Op. 4 *Trois Nocturnes*

were published in 1840. The Op. 13 *Bardenklänge* appeared serially over a number of years: Books 1 through 10 in 1847, Book 11 in 1851, and Books 12 and 13 in 1852. It should be noted that the so-called 14th and 15th books

of the Opus 13 collection are not included in this edition. These two pieces were added to the original 13 books decades after Mertz’s death and for a host of reasons give every indication that they do not belong in the Op. 13 set as originally envisioned by the composer.

Tobias Haslinger was one of the powerful presences in the musical life of Vienna. He had a strong personal friendship with Beethoven and published many of that composer’s greatest symphonies and concerti. He was also the publisher of Schubert’s *Winterreise*, Liszt’s *E♭ Piano Concerto* and numerous other works by Hummel, Clementi, and Rossini. Haslinger was also instrumental in presenting a young Chopin to the Viennese public for the first time in concert. Mertz was well served by Haslinger *père et fils*. The scores are visually attractive, contain clearly placed and detailed expression marks, and have very few errors or internal inconsistencies of articulation or pitch.

This new Alfred Music publication of the Op. 4 and Op. 13 works has a more spacious representation of the score. The editing of the original publications for our edition has taken the following forms:

- 1) The correction of clear errors and the correlation of textual inconsistencies in parallel passages (this has typically been done without comment).
- 2) The notation of additional fingerings to assist in the study, sight-reading, and fluent execution of these pieces.
- 3) The very occasional addition of pitches in particular chords that seemed to require a bit more sonic heft or harmonic clarification and articulation marks to help characterize the rhythmic scansion of a passage.
- 4) The changing of an original fingering when there seemed to be a more fluent option available.
- 5) The substitution of a modern musical term for an antique one (for example, changing the designation for a natural harmonic from “flag.” [Flageolott] to “harm.”).
- 6) Most significantly, the elimination of the 19th century technique of using the thumb of the left hand to fret notes on the 6th string (all due respect to the ghost of Jimi Hendrix!) as this fingering option has fallen out of the normative classical guitarist’s technical options with the development of the greater neck width of the modern guitar. In almost all cases, it was possible to finger the notated chords as written using modern fingering options. In a very few instances a change of chord voicing in an accompanimental figure or chord was necessary and this has been noted in the score.

The guiding intention behind this edition has been to honor the genius and creative spirit of one of our great

An Malvina

INTRODUCTION

Maestoso

p

leggero

hI₃ BV₄ BII₅ BIII₅ BIII₃ BVII₃ I BI₄

espressivo e ben pronunziato la melodia.

Moderato quasi Allegretto

sempre pp gli accompagnamenti.

[3]

[6]

dol.

p dol.

[9]

più cresc.

[12]

volante

tristamente

[15]

volante

tristamente

[18]

Variations mignonnes

Maestoso

(Ossia: V —————)

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Maestoso

(Ossia: V —————)

I

f

p

[f]

(Ossia: IV —————)

0

p

8

p

15

leggero

p

p

III

Romanze
Andantino

THEME

THEME

Romanze

Andantino

I

hI₂

hI₃

p

p

p

p

9

I

espressivo

1st VARIATION

1st VARIATION

Ossia:
(3 0)

I

VII

I

IV

p

6

dim.

p

12

ten.

dim.

p

Trois Nocturnes, Op.4

Nocturne No. 1 *Andante con moto*

Measure 1: *p*

Measure 3: *p*, *stentando*

Measure 6: *p*

Measure 9: *p*, *f*

Measure 12: *a dolce*, *p*

Measure 15: *p*, *sf*

Measure 18: *p*

Measure 21: *p*