

von Herzogenberg

Complete Music for
Piano Duet & 2 Pianos

Duo Nadàn

Heinrich von Herzogenberg 1843-1900
Complete Music for Piano Duet and 2 Pianos

Theme and Variations in D flat Op.13
for 2 pianos (1869)

1. Theme	Langsam, innig	1'31
2. Var.I	Bewegter	1'18
3. Var.II	In gleichem Tempo	1'43
4. Var.III	Ziemlich langsam	1'27
5. Var.IV	Rasch	1'23
6. Var.V	Sehr langsam	3'01
7. Var.VI	Etwas bewegt	1'22
8. Var.VII	Langsam	3'36
9. Var.VIII	Sehr rasch	0'59
10. Var.IX	Majestätisch	2'23

Variations on a Theme of J. Brahms
Op.23 *for piano 4-hands* (1875)

11. Thema	Andante	0'46
12. Var.I	Adagio	1'12
13. Var.II	Con moto	0'59
14. Var.III	Allegro	1'35
15. Var.IV	Poco meno mosso, ma agitato	1'00
16. Var.V	Allegretto	2'16
17. Var.VI	Lento, appassionato	1'16
18. Var.VII	Allegretto	3'56

Allotria Op.33, part I
6 Pieces for piano 4-hands (1881)

19. I.	Allegro	2'43
20. II.	Allegretto	1'42
21. III.	Allegro agitato	3'37

Allotria Op.33, part II
6 Pieces for piano 4-hands (1881)*

22. IV.	Allegretto	2'01
23. V.	Andante maestoso	3'03
24. VI.	Allegro comodo	6'09

Waltzes Op.53

<i>for piano 4-hands</i> (1886)		
25. I.	Allegro comodo	0'57
26. II.	L'istesso tempo	1'22
27. III.	Agitato e grazioso	1'51
28. IV.	Tempo I	1'58
29. V.	Poco maestoso	1'42
30. VI.	L'istesso tempo	2'48

Ländler WoO7 *for 4 hands* (1897)*

31. I.	Commodo	1'44
32. II.	L'istesso tempo	1'32
33. III.	Allegretto con moto	0'37
34. IV.	Allegro	1'44
35. V.	Moderato espressivo	1'30
36. VI.	Allegretto	2'15
37. VII.	Allegro con fuoco	1'13

“Dainu Balsai” Op.76 *Lithuanian folk songs for piano 4-hands* (1892)

38. I.	Allegro	0'39
39. II.	Sostenuto	1'28
40. III.	Allegretto	0'51
41. IV.	Allegretto	0'52
42. V.	Larghetto	0'51
43. VI.	Allegro grazioso	0'56
44. VII.	Andante	1'01
45. VIII.	Allegretto	0'39
46. IX.	Allegretto, molto moderato	0'45
47. X.	Allegro non tanto	0'35
48. XI.	Andante	1'07
49. XII.	Andante sostenuto	1'26
50. XIII.	Allegro	0'49
51. XIV.	Poco adagio	1'12
52. XV.	Andantino	1'10
53. XVI.	Allegro	0'58

54. Bagatelle, Andantino quasi Allegretto WoO6 *Posth.*
for 4 hands (1904)*

		2'45
--	--	------

Waltzes Op.83 *for piano 4-hands*
(1894/1895)*

55. I.	Allegro comodo	1'01
56. II.		2'49
57. III.	Vivace	0'50
58. IV.	Moderato	2'10
59. V.	Allegro comodo	1'23
60. VI.	Vivace	0'35
61. VII.	Più lento, e con sentimento	2'13

Variations in E Op.84 *for piano 4-hands*
(1894/1895)*

62. Thema	Andante	1'33
63. Var.I		1'05
64. Var.II		1'18
65. Var.III		1'06
66. Var.IV	Allegretto	1'24
67. Var.V	Tempo I	1'34
68. Var.VI		0'44
69. Var.VII	L'istesso tempo	3'49

Variations in B flat Op.85
for piano 4-hands (1894/1895)*

70. Thema	Andante	0'54
71. Var.I		0'48
72. Var.II	Poco Adagio	2'02
73. Var.III	Allegretto	0'45
74. Var.IV	Andantino	1'35
75. Var.V	Andante grazioso	1'03
76. Var.VI	Tempo del Tema	1'00
77. Var.VII	Allegro	0'59
78. Var.VIII	Allegro	0'50
79. Var.IX	Andante sostenuto	1'45

80. Variations in D minor Op.86
for piano 4-hands (1896)

		6'12
--	--	------

81. Allegro WoO16
*for piano 4-hands**

		8'31
--	--	------

Duo Nadàn
Nadia and Angela Tirino

* World premiere recordings

Recording: July 2019, Fazioli Concert Hall, Sacile (PN), Italy
Sound engineer, editing and mastering: Matteo Costa
Piano: Gran Piano Fazioli F278
Piano technician: Domizio Nardin

Photos: Filippo Basetti
Cover: Prozession im Nebel (1828), by Ernst Ferdinand Oehme (1797-1855)
© & © 2020 Brilliant Classics

H. von Herzogenberg: complete four hands music

“Herzogenberg is able to do much more than others” is the somewhat laconic comment that Brahms wrote about the oeuvre of his friend Heinrich von Herzogenberg. It’s Brahms’s only extant observation on the subject, and it sounds strangely lean and evasive, in many respects at odds with the wealth and value of the correspondence that he kept up with Heinrich Herzogenberg and his wife Elisabeth between 1876 and 1897. One possible explanation lies in the fact that Brahms gave Elisabeth piano lessons for a short while, soon developing for his pupil a fondness that became unmanageable when she married Herzogenberg in 1868. Another relates to the suggestion that Elisabeth’s presence may have played a part in persuading Brahms to accept Herzogenberg’s invitation to go to Leipzig in January 1874, for a “Brahms week” organized by the Gewandhaus and Riedel. Nearly three years later Brahms was back in Leipzig as a guest of the Herzogenbergs, where the friendship between the three of them grew in strength and depth, surviving through to their deaths: Elisabeth’s in 1892, Brahms’s in 1897 and Heinrich’s in 1900.

The importance of this relationship could be one of the reasons why Herzogenberg’s status as a composer has suffered from relative neglect. Although at the time he was considered a valid exponent of the great German romantic tradition, a musician endowed with absolute originality and expressive refinement, in time he came to be viewed as a pale copy of Brahms.

This album focuses on the chamber works for piano of Heinrich von Herzogenberg, with his complete oeuvre for four hands piano and piano duo. They were written over a period of around 30 years, from 1869 to 1897, and although they only represent a relatively small section of an overall output that comprises 150 works, including operas, they bear witness to the composer’s particular interest in piano pieces for two players. In general he avoids the grand format, focusing instead on pieces made up of dances, variations and other brief episodes.

There can be no doubt that Herzogenberg’s close relationship with Brahms and his

great admiration for him influenced his language as a composer. This is particularly evident in the explicit homage of the **Variationen über ein Thema von J. Brahms, Op.23** of 1875, which derive from the “*Trauernede*” theme included in Brahms’s *Deutsche Volklied* Op.7 No.5. The tribute does not only concern the subject, however, since the opus number clearly also refers to Brahms’s own *Variationen über ein Thema von R. Schumann* Op.23.

Apart from questions of influence, what is particularly striking about these works is the originality of the handling of variation, which involves some complex reworking of the chosen material that occasionally leads far from the theme itself. From the formal and harmonic point of view, the outcome is often relatively unconventional, and it may have been this that elicited the somewhat detached, and possibly ironic, reaction on the part of Brahms. Having received the variations from Herzogenberg on 1 August 1876, Brahms wrote back 20 days later, remaining vague as regards his studied opinion of the works. Yet he did point out that the title “Variations” called for absolute precision, something quite different to the “*Fantasia-Variationen*” or the *Veränderungen* of Beethoven’s Op.120.

Apart from the title and the various aspects mentioned above, while Op.23 reveals considerable independence with regard to the declared source and remarkable originality in the handling of the score, Herzogenberg’s other works are much closer to the Brahms idiom. This is certainly the case of the **Variationen für Clavier Op.86**, a highly intense work developed as a passacaglia, written between 1895 and 1896. The Herzogenbergs had been deeply moved by Brahms’s Symphony No.4, as we know from various detailed accounts in the correspondence they kept up during the years 1885/1886. In fact right from the outset there is an evident reference to the fourth movement of the Symphony, especially the first bars of the passacaglia, and indeed the solemnity of the piano score as a whole.

Products of the same period are also the **Walzer für Pianoforte Op.83**, and the **Variationen für Clavier Op.84 and Op.85**, which reveal even greater ties to Brahms’s

compositional style. Like the Op.86, they were published by Pieter-Biedermann in Leipzig in 1896, and in their shared reverence make the keyboard sound positively orchestral, with a form of lyricism reminiscent of vocal chamber music and particular sensitivity for folk motifs, especially those of Slav origins. With the Opus 84 and 85, Herzogenberg achieves full maturity as a composer: the lofty, evocative themes, his skilful phrasing and the references to Brahms, and indeed Schumann in the final variation of Op.85, justify placing these works among the most important expressions of the entire German romantic tradition for piano duo. A similar atmosphere prevails in the **Walzer Op.53** written a decade earlier, despite the slight hint of Biedermeyer and the odd echo of Schubert. Such elements are even more evident in the seven **Ländler** for four hands piano, catalogued as **Wo07**, which were probably composed in 1897 and were published in the *Tondichtungen deutscher Meister* collection that same year.

The two volumes of **Allotria** (Bagatelles) **Op.33** composed in 1881 are more personal. The pieces make up a two-part suite, each section consisting of 3 pieces. What stands out here is the handling of harmony and the thematic originality, with the focus on northern motifs, especially in the *Allegro commodo* that concludes the second volume.

While the reference to distant musical traditions is still latent in **Allotria**, it becomes much more explicit in **Dainu Balsai, Op.76**, of 1892. In fact the Dainu Balsai are 16 Lithuanian folk tunes, here arranged for four hands piano. Herzogenberg had probably come across them in the collection edited by Christian Bartsch a few years earlier, discussed by Philipp Spitta in 1891 in the *Vierteljahresschrift für Musikwissenschaft*.

Distinctly modish and singularly elegant is the **Bagatelle Wo06**, probably written during the last decade of Herzogenberg's life and published posthumously in 1904 in the magazine *Der Türmer*.

The unfinished manuscript in Sonata form (here indicated as **Allegro Wo016**) kept

at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin comes to an end shortly after the recapitulation. It bears witness to Herzogenberg's diffidence in addressing the Sonata form within the overall framework of his piano compositions, the only exception being the "*Fantasia quasi Sonata*" that remained unpublished. It was nevertheless a form that he had no problem in handling in other chamber works, including duos, trios and quartets, and indeed in symphonic compositions.

The only work for two pianos, the **Thema und Variationen Op.13** composed around 1869 is unquestionably one of Herzogenberg's most significant accomplishments. Here again, beginning with the theme and the first variations, the density of his music comes across as distinctly orchestral, with poignantly melodious subjects and "Hungarian" elements (for instance, in the third variation "*Ziemlich langsam*") that are also reminiscent of Brahms. Here again, the originality of Herzogenberg's work lies in the handling of harmony and thematic transfiguration, especially in the last variations, before the piece concludes in a finale that is thoroughly symphonic, in a manner almost suggestive of Schumann.

As is often the case in the history of western music, these works may be considered "minor", but they are certainly of the highest level. To consider them the product of mere craftsmanship is to fail to do them – or the composer – justice. For while Herzogenberg certainly worshipped one of the musical giants of his time, he was also able to invest his own compositions with a creative vein of his own that deserves to be rediscovered and appreciated.

© Nadia and Angela Tirino (*Duo Nadàn*)

Translation by Kate Singleton



Duo Nadàn Nadia and Angela Tirino studied at the Cherubini Music Conservatoire in Florence, achieving first class degrees under G. Fricelli and G. Carmassi.

Since they were very young they have held concerts and taken part in important musical events in Italy and abroad (Gozo, Malta, London, Bristol, Milan, Pescara, Florence, Pisa, Orvieto, etc.), to widespread public and critical acclaim.

They have also won prizes in numerous national and international piano competitions, now often acting as members of the Jury.

They have attended master classes held by F. Scala, V. Voskobojnikov, B. Canino and M. Damerini, and have also specialized in the Kodaly teaching method and music therapy.

They teach piano at the Accademia Musicale di Firenze, and in public schools in the Florence area.

Dedicated to Giuseppe and Enrica

*Special thanks to: Duccio Beverini, Accademia Musicale di Firenze
and Maestro Giovanni Carmassi, guide and fundamental point of reference.*