TOCCATA CLASSICS

Friedrich HERMANN

VIOLIN MUSIC, VOLUME ONE: SOLO WORKS

SPECIAL STUDIES, OP. 24: NOS. 7, 19, 25 AND 30
VIOLIN SCHOOL: NO. 78
MINIATURES, OP. 19

Abigail Karr

FIRST RECORDINGS

FRIEDRICH HERMANN Violin Music: Volume One, Solo Works

***Miniaturen*, Op. 19** (publ. 1881)			**54:54**
Heft 1			**28:26**
1	No. 1	Marsch: *Allegro vivace*	2:31
2	No. 2	Lied: *Andantino*	3:08
3	No. 3	Rococo: *Tempo molto moderato*	2:48
4	No. 4	Rondino: *Allegro*	1:45
5	No. 5	Trauermarsch: *Tempo moderato*	4:36
6	No. 6	Postfahrt: *Allegro vivace*	1:46
7	No. 7	Idylle: *Andantino*	2:31
8	No. 8	Humoreske: *Allegro moderato*	1:14
9	No. 9	Elegie: *Tempo moderato*	3:45
10	No. 10	Auf dem See: *Moderato*	4:22
Heft 2			**26:28**
11	No. 11	Reigen: *Moderato*	3:12
12	No. 12	Marsch: *Allegro*	3:00
13	No. 13	Ländler: *Molto moderato*	3:58
14	No. 14	Klage: *Adagio*	2:42
15	No. 15	Streit: *Vivace* –	2:04
16	No. 16	Versöhnung: *Andante*	2:36
17	No. 17	Tambourin: *Vivace*	0:59
18	No. 18	Scherzo: *Vivace*	1:56
19	No. 19	Zwiegesang: *Andante*	4:38
20	No. 20	Kalospinthechromokrene: *Veloce*	1:24

Violin-Schule (publ. 1879)

21	No. 78	Übung für die chromatische Tonleiter: *Allegro moderato*	1:41

***Spezial-Etüden*, Op. 24** (publ. 1888)

22	No 19	Übung für Nüancirungen: *Lento*	2:25
23	No. 30	Übung für den Triller: *Andante – Allegro*	2:29
24	No. 25	Zur Kräftigung des Bogenstreichs: *Assai moderato*	3:30
25	No. 7	Übung für die Egalität der Bogenführung: *Allegro*	1:34
			TT 66:34

Abigail Karr, violin

FIRST RECORDINGS

FRIEDRICH HERMANN'S MINIATURE WORLDS

by Abigail Karr

In her *Memories of a Musical Career*, the acclaimed singer and composer Clara Kathleen Rogers[1] recalls the 'musical feasts' she enjoyed as a student in Leipzig. One reliable pleasure was the 'perfection of chamber concerts': Gewandhaus Quartet performances featuring '[Ferdinand] David for first violin, [Raimund] Dreyschock for second, and [Friedrich] Grützmacher for 'cello'. She adds: 'The name of the viola player has escaped me'.[2]

This remark, a viola joke that writes itself, also aptly, if depressingly, sums up the life and legacy of Friedrich Hermann (1828–1907). In spite of a 60-year career as professor at the Leipzig Conservatoire, positions in the Gewandhaus Orchestra and Quartet, and an astonishing variety of clever and beautiful original compositions, arrangements and edited publications, Hermann has virtually 'escaped' memory. One would expect someone so active and prolific to have left a bigger footprint, and yet information about Hermann is extremely scarce, as are images of him.

Contemporaneous descriptions of Hermann abound with superlatives – about his qualities as a long-standing professor at the Conservatoire, and about his arrangements and compositions, which, as the *Signale für die musikalische Welt* aptly noted in 1855, 'express a deep, decent spirit'.[3] The entry highlights Hermann's distinct harmonic imagination that, remarkably, shines through even in his miniatures for solo violin; and it praises the 'consistently excellent playability' of his works, from

[1] The British-born Rogers (1844–1931) moved to Leipzig with her family when she was twelve, only to find that the Leipzig Conservatoire would not accept her – a decision changed in 1857, when a string quartet written when she was thirteen gave proof of her abilities; she then became the youngest student ever admitted and graduated at sixteen. Her early career was as a singer, in Italy, Britain and the USA; in 1878 marriage removed her from the stage, and she began to write, both music and books – six of them on diction and technique and three autobiographies.

[2] Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1919, p. 138.

[3] Vol. 40, p. 317.

the easiest open-string exercises to the most technically complex, which are still highly idiomatic and 'playable' on the violin.

Even the scant biographical crumbs of Hermann's life show clearly that he was a consummate educator, beginning his long career at the Leipzig Conservatoire at only nineteen years old. Later, in his fifties and mostly a performer on the viola, he wrote to Joseph Joachim, perhaps the most prominent violinist of the age, that he still enjoyed composing and practising '*Violinkrabbeleien*' – virtuosic passages – because, as he put it, 'one can always learn along by teaching'.[4] The twenty *Miniatures* published by Breitkopf und Härtel in 1881 as Hermann's Op. 19 appear to be geared towards less advanced students, since the first set of ten uses only first position on the violin, and the second set only first and third, i.e., in the first set, the left hand remains in one place at the end of the fingerboard, and in the second, it adds one additional position in the order usually taught. In the introduction to his 80 *Special Studies*, Op. 24, of 1888, Hermann spells out his intentions more explicitly, explaining that their purpose is 'to assist the beginner in violin-playing by providing him with special studies for special difficulties'.

There is no concrete information on the origins of the *Miniatures* – only intriguing clues. Did Hermann simply create, *de novo*, all of these varied pieces – which range from the highly visual and programmatic ('On the Lake' 10, 'Quarrel and Reconciliation' 15 16, etc.) to the purely abstract ('Rondino' 4, 'Scherzo' 18), with many others occupying a space somewhere in the middle ('Lament' 14, 'Humoresque' 8)? It is possible. But the wide range of styles throughout his *œuvre*, not to mention the variety of creative and unusual movement titles in these *Miniatures*, makes it almost certain that many, if not all, were inspired by other works.

'Zwiegesang' ('Duet', No. 19 19), for instance, is an obvious nod to another solo-instrument 'duet': Felix Mendelssohn's famous *Duetto* from his *Lieder ohne Worte* for piano, Op. 38, No. 6. Both Mendelssohn's and Hermann's duets feature easily distinguished higher and lower voices, which Mendelssohn somewhat redundantly instructs 'must always be highlighted very clearly'. Like Mendelssohn's, Hermann's piece is written in $\frac{6}{8}$,

[4] Letter dated 21 October 1882, preserved in the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

and it lines up almost perfectly, phrase by phrase, with the *Duetto* – alternating between the voices in shorter and shorter statements until they join together in an extended passage, and then separate and fade away. About the references in other *Miniatures* I am speculating at best, but here the obvious parallel is too strong to be a coincidence, and in my opinion, Hermann's duet is even more ingenious than Mendelssohn's: it takes on the inherently tougher challenge of creating the impression of two voices on the violin, while simultaneously displaying the trademark 'harmonic imagination' noted in the *Signale*. I find it to be one of his most remarkable and poignant works.

'Streit' ('Quarrel', No. 15 15) probably takes inspiration from the 1749 C minor trio sonata *Sanguineus et Melancholicus*, WQ161/1/H579, by C. P. E. Bach. This sonata for two violins and *basso continuo* depicts a vigorous dialogue between two very different characters, with one eventually taking on the personality of the other as the conversation becomes more agitated. In Hermann's 'Quarrel', the *Sanguineus* character is replaced by a somewhat angry one, which also contrasts sharply with the exaggeratedly pathetic *Melancholicus*. After peak agitation, both 'characters' appear to settle into the 'Versöhnung' ('Reconciliation') of No. 16 16, where they share the same emotion and coexist peacefully.

It would be impossible to say with certainty which, if any, earlier works inspired each one of the twenty *Miniatures*. The Humoreske (No. 8 8) is a case in point. Before 1881, quintuple metre in classical music was a rarity, especially at a quick tempo; the few folk-dances where it appears, such as the Bulgarian *pajduško*, generally follow a 2+3 rather than 3+2 pattern. But a three-part glee, 'O Who has seen the Miller's Wife?' – composed in 1796 by the Englishman William Reeve – concludes with a section in $\frac{5}{4}$ entitled, rather naughtily, 'Come, stain your cheek with nut or berry'. Would a nineteenth-century composer in Leipzig have been familiar with this old English theatre ditty? The similarity is tantalising, especially in the appearance of diminutions (quicker note-values) about halfway through. In theory it is not impossible that Hermann knew the glee: it appears in two collections which may have made their way across the channel: *The Beauties*

of Melody,[5] published in London, and *The British Minstrel, and Musical and Literary Miscellany*, published in Glasgow around 1843.[6]

The 'Postfahrt' ('Mail Coach', No. 6 6) has only one musical antecedent I am aware of: Telemann's Ouverture in D, '*jointes d'une suite tragi-comique*, TWV55:D22, a creative and hilarious work in which the composer pairs various physical afflictions with their imagined 'cures'. In Telemann's dubious medical fantasy, the proposed cure for gout is a bumpy ride in the mail coach. Because both *Postfahrten* share the key of D major, as well as triple metre, one could speculate that Hermann's use of the 'Postfahrt' as a musical movement came from Telemann. Or it simply could have arisen from the collective image of the iconic round post-horn and its distinctive calls, announcing arrivals and departures.

'Auf dem See' ('On the Lake', No. 10 10) shares a title with both a poem by Goethe and the setting of it by Schubert. It also shares the $\frac{6}{8}$ metre and the feel of Schubert's setting, and a shift to quadruple metre, though Hermann's shift in metre denotes the arrival of a storm, practically an obligatory feature of any nineteenth-century body of water. This miniature requires very fast *tremolo* bowing, making it the most difficult of the first set of ten, though the left hand remains in first position.

An important reference is found in the most bewildering and mysterious of all the *Miniature* titles, the 'Kalospinthechromokrene' (No. 20 20). The word has, not surprisingly, no translation in English, being a combination of German and Greek roots, but means something along the lines of a kaleidoscopic spinning colour-wheel. I originally thought it evoked the '*Wunderfountaine*', a kind of magical coloured fountain, made famous in an 1871 epic poem written by the Swiss-Austrian author Josef Viktor

[5] Its full title is *The Beauties of Melody; A Collection of the most popular Airs, Duets, Glees, &c. of the Most Esteemed Authors, Ancient and Modern, comprising those of Arne, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Winter, Weber, Bishop, &c. Also a selection of the best and most approved Irish Melodies; with appropriate words, written expressly for them. The Symphonies and Accompaniments entirely new and composed for this work. Interspersed with many of the beautiful Scotch Melodies, singing at the Theatres, Consorts, &c. Arranged for the Voice, with an Accompaniment for the Piano-Forte, &c. To which is prefixed, Observations and Instructions on Music, particularly Vocal and Accompaniment. The whole compiled, composed, selected and arranged, by W. H. Plumstead*, Dean and Munday, London, 1827.

[6] *The British Minstrel, and Musical and Literary Miscellany: A Selection of Standard Music, Songs, Duets, Glees, Choruses, Etc. and Articles in Musical and General Literature*, three vols., William Hamilton, Glasgow, c. 1843.

Widmann, entitled *Kalospinthechromokrene oder Der Wunderbrunnen von Is* ('The Miraculous Fountain of Ys'). The Widmann Fountain in Bern is open to visitors to this day – miracles not guaranteed. But a more significant clue, not only to this one miniature but to the entire collection of *Miniaturen*, can be found in *An Introduction to Aesthetics*,[7] a massive work by the German philosopher and lifelong Leipziger – and uncle of Clara Wieck Schumann – Gustave Theodor Fechner (1801–87). Given Fechner's proximity to the musical scene in Leipzig, his discussion of the 'Kalospinthechromokrene' specifically in association with music (not found anywhere else), and the publication of this work in Leipzig a mere five years before the earliest edition of the *Miniatures*, it seems that this association can hardly be a coincidence.

Fechner's chapter on music is entitled 'The representation of the direct factor of aesthetic impressions in comparison with the associative': a lot of words grappling with the relation of music both to itself and to 'life outside music', issues which, he says, 'have recently engaged the attention of the musical world'.[8] Perhaps these concepts seem rather heavy for me to be applying them to a set of short pieces in the first and third positions. But reduced to its essence, Fechner believes, the purpose of *all* music, no matter what its scale, is simply to stir in the listener what he calls *lebensverwandte Stimmungen*, or 'life-associated moods', such as light-heartedness, seriousness, excitement, tenderness and such like.

It is, of course, also possible, if not necessary, for the 'features of music' to evoke 'extra-musical circumstances – the play of waves, the roar of the sea, [...] the sighing or howling of the wind, [...] the lark's trilling and the blackbird's song and so on'. There are many examples of this in the miniatures, such as the aforementioned 'Quarrel and Reconciliation' 15 16, 'Mail Coach' 6 and 'Kalospinthechromokrene'. 20. In fact, it is the 'Kalospinthechromokrene' which, Fechner states, 'provides the nearest visual equivalent to musical experience'. Why? Like music, this special colour-wheel possesses a mixture of the perceptible and the imperceptible: the human ear can discern a particular note, but not each of its overtones, just as the eye perceives *one* colour, but not the individual

[7] *Vorschule des Aesthetik*, two vols., Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig, 1876.

[8] Fechner, quoted in Bojan Bujić, *Music in European Thought 1851–1912*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 285.

colours which blend to produce that colour. But Fechner believes this closest of possible analogies also proves the limits of such analogies: a relatively narrow portion of the light spectrum produces the brilliant variety displayed in the Kalospinthechromokrene, whereas a similarly narrow range of pitches reaches the ear as closely related melody and harmony. (I wonder if Hermann tried to disprove this argument by writing a musical 'Kalospinthechromokrene' that is full of colour and contrast.)

Other examples of 'extra-musical' subjects in the miniatures include 'Idyll' (No. 7 7), a genre of poetry depicting pastoral life, and 'Trauermarsch' ('Funeral March', No. 5 5), where one finds the traditional mix of reluctance and inevitability. No. 9, 'Elegie' 9, likewise points to a specific topic.

The term 'Rococo' (No. 3 3) describes a musical (and extra-musical) artistic style characterised by exaggerated elegance and pomp. Here, loud interruptions appear to poke fun at this manufactured daintiness – perhaps a nineteenth-century commentary on eighteenth-century conceits. 'Tambourin' (No. 17 17) also has two meanings, referring both to a bustling Provençal dance style and to the drum which might have accompanied such a dance. Like most, Hermann's 'Tambourin' is very short and harmonically simple, with left-hand *pizzicato* evoking the rhythm and sound of a drum. Again, one can speculate on influences in this miniature: repeating open strings recall the drones in Handel's closing *tambourin* of the opera *Alcina* (1735), and/or the harmonics in Gluck's *tambourin* from the ballet music to *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1773); it also shares the minor-key middle section of Jean-Féry Rebel's *tambourin* from *Les Élémens* (1737–38).

Occupying a space somewhere between these highly specific 'imaginative associations' with particular musical works and the simple and direct evocation of a 'mood' are 'feelings' such as love or longing. 'Feelings' are more specific and are available to more than one mood – given any particular feeling, the composer must communicate which mood it is in. Music can also represent feelings, though 'it cannot evoke so definitely'.[9] One example of a 'feeling' in the miniatures could be the 'Klage' ('Lament',

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

No. 14 [14]), another movement title found frequently in Baroque music. Purcell wrote several famous laments grieving lost love, the most famous being 'Dido's Lament'.

The 'Humoreske' [8] is another, as is the 'Lied' ('Song', No. 2 [2]), which suggests a spoken and intimate feeling in addition to a more generic mood. Dance movements and the Marches, Nos. 1 and 12 [1] [12], may also fall into this in-between category, evoking not specific images or subjects, but the feeling of a particular rhythmic motion. The Marches share a similar rhythmic feeling, but in different moods: the first jaunty and light; the second more severe (though the severity may well be tongue-in-cheek). The two marches belong to the two sets of ten, allowing one to observe the progression in difficulty and complexity from one set to the next: adding shifts, more complex double-stops, and a whimsical middle section contrasting in character with the stern outer sections.

The 'Ländler' (No. 13 [13]) is an Austrian folk-dance, and its 'mood' can range from gentle to raucous. In his book *Stolen Time*,[10] Richard Hudson discusses the *rubato* effect achieved on the piano in waltzes and mazurkas when the melody line is flexible, stretching and hurrying at various points, while the left hand remains relatively stable. Here Hermann rather cleverly uses left-hand *pizzicato* to mimic this effect on the violin.

By definition, a 'Reigen' ('Round Dance') is danced in a circle, often represented musically by obscured downbeats and ambiguous metre. That is certainly the case in the outer sections of Hermann's 'Reigen' (No. 11 [11]), though less so in its middle section. Another common characteristic of this dance found here is the use of drones – notes sustained in one voice, usually a lower one, while a melody plays in another.

Only two of the miniatures can be considered true 'absolute music', i.e., entirely self-referencing: a Rondino (No. 4 [4]), which incorporates the technique of both chromatic scales (found in the *Violin School* Exercise 78 [21]) and string-crossing (also found in Op. 24, No. 7 [25]). And a true Scherzo (No. 18 [18]): not, in this case, a triple-metre substitute for a minuet, but simply a light and playful piece of music. These titles leave all 'extra-musical associations' to the imagination of the listener.

[10] *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994.

That brings the discussion back to mood as the irreducible 'direct factor' in music. In spite of the cerebral nature of Fechner's writing, he outlines quite an optimistic view of the broad appeal of music, believing that, thanks to the directness of mood, it is possible even 'for a person of relatively small general culture to experience strong and profound direct musical impressions'[11] – good news for those of us with 'relatively small general culture'.

To summarise Fechner's theory: everyone perceives musical mood; the effect of that mood depends on the mood of the individual mood at the time it is taken it in. If music reaches the listener in a neutral state of mind, it will simply generate its existing mood; if the music aligns with the mood currently prevailing in the individual, it will deepen and prolong that mood. If it does not align, music has the power to change moods, unless it contrasts too dramatically, in which case it produces an emotional dissonance. And this emotional dissonance is in its own way a powerful experience; indeed, anything that taps into human emotions and triggers a response is valid and valuable. In short, one can always be moved by music, whether to affirm and enhance one's current emotional state or to change it.

Fortunately, to paraphrase Whitman, the miniatures contain multitudes, and so no matter which 'aesthetic impression' one might wish to experience, one of these delightful bite-sized gems awaits every listener.

Violin-Schule and *Spezial-Etüden*, Op. 24

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Leipzig Conservatoire in 1893, the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* included short biographical sketches of its director and faculty members.[12] The entry for Friedrich Hermann states that 'his works in the educational field (violin school and etudes for violin and viola) [...] are among the best of their kind'. Indeed, Hermann possessed a singular ability to transform what could be the tedious practice of individual techniques into pieces of real music, full of personality and even humour. For this recording, I selected etudes in which the techniques showcased are

[11] Bujić, *op cit*., p. 287.

[12] Leipzig, 4 May 1893.

relatively swiftly discerned, though some include additional instructions for bow-use and left-hand positioning less obvious to a listener. Op. 24, No. 7 25, for instance, is to be played in the upper half of the bow, and *Violin School* No. 78 21 includes specific instructions on which part *and* how much of the bow to use, whereas Op. 24, No. 25 24, states that 'The short note must be very strongly marked'. And the 'Full length of the bow for the long notes', required in Op. 24, No. 19 22, appears to be a priority for Hermann: the introduction points specifically to this exercise, observing that a 'very common bad habit is not using the bow to its full length, as an antidote to which Exercises 1 and 19 will be found beneficial'. But nothing seems to exasperate him so much as the 'bad habit' of 'putting the little finger under the fingerboard'. Hermann mentions this particular grievance not only in the introduction of Op. 24 but also *three* different times throughout his *Violin School*, confirming that the challenges of teaching the violin today remain much the same as they were in the nineteenth century.

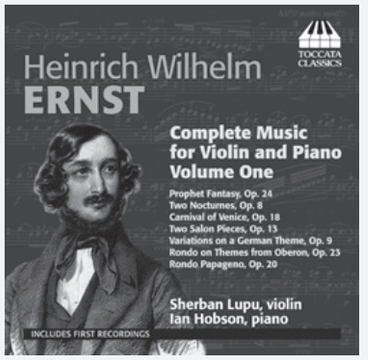
Noted for 'balancing passion with precision' and 'intrepid' leadership, the violinist **Abigail Karr** performs in a variety of period-instrument ensembles, including the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston and *Tempesta di Mare* of Philadelphia. As a specialist in nineteenth-century performance practice, she has recorded Mendelssohn's complete works for violin and piano with the keyboardist Yi-heng Yang (the first period-instrument recording of this repertoire), and has been praised for 'set[ting] a standard for performers, instruments, and recording technique'. An active chamber musician, noted for the 'focused direction' she brings to performances, she is the founder and director of Gretchen's Muse, a chamber ensemble dedicated to bringing the music of the eighteenth century to life through historically informed performances; it has been praised for its 'near-telepathic synchronicity' and the 'palpable collective chemistry between such individually accomplished bow-wielders'. She was also a founding member of the Rosetta String Trio, which, in addition to its commitment to historical performance, has commissioned and premiered three new works for string trio. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston and a degree in historical performance from The Juilliard School in New York. In addition to maintaining a private studio of piano and violin students, she is a faculty member at the Lucy Moses School in Manhattan, and participates in 'Concerts in Motion', an organisation which brings live in-home concerts to the most vulnerable residents of New York City.

TOCCATA CLASSICS

Violin Music from around the World on Toccata Classics

TOCC 0199

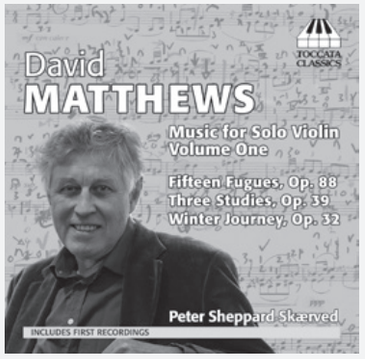
TOCC 0118



TOCC 0470

TOCC 0089

TOCC 0152



TOCC 0135

TOCC 0122

TOCC 0137

TOCC 0007

TOCCATA DISCOVERY CLUB

Join today to discover unknown music from the Renaissance to the present day. Experience our Classical music discoveries from around the world before anyone else!

toccataclassics.com/discovery

Recorded on 4–5 February 2023 in Oktaven Audio Studios, Mount Vernon, New York
Recording engineer: Edwin Huet
Editing and mixing engineer: Charles Mueller
Producer: Abigail Karr

Booklet essay: Abigail Karr
Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)
Typesetting and lay-out: ALN Design, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

Toccata Classics CDs are available in the shops and can also be ordered from our distributors around the world, a list of whom can be found at www.toccataclassics.com. If we have no representation in your country, please contact:
Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK
Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com