

Theodor Kirchner's *100 Short Studies* op. 71 are remarkable in several aspects: they provide valuable material for all levels of instruction; in respect to quantity, this single opus alone contains a tenth of Kirchner's piano pieces; they are dedicated to Kirchner's children and as such a personal gift to the youth of the future. The individual pieces of Kirchner's most extensive work are often not longer than one page. The gems so rich in melodic invention of these bagatelle-like piano miniatures are probably purposely called Studies, for they are excellently suited for teaching as well as for performance. The degree of difficulty increases gradually from lightly sketched pieces up to demanding, technically as well as harmonically complex "tone poems". A related compositional scheme can be found in Kirchner's *Preludes* op. 65 (Amadeus BP 1151).

Kirchner had moved from Leipzig to Dresden around Easter 1883. In May 1883 the last work from his Leipzig period, the *Sonatinas* op. 70, were published; thus the *Short Studies* op. 71 are the first fruits after his relocation. Typical for such new beginnings is that Kirchner was first inspired by professional hopes; however, these were soon disappointed.

The first four volume edition of the *Short Studies* was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig and Brussels in May 1884 (Plate Numbers 16655–16658). At least four reprints in two volumes followed.

A precursor to No. 57 is preserved in a manuscript prelude from 1881. It is possible that Kirchner drew upon further pieces he had sketched earlier and not published. Although not often, he occasionally reused material, for instance No. 66, which he arranged ca. 1889 for violin and piano (op. 90/2: Amadeus BP 2208).

The fine dedication might distract from the sad fate of the two children, who were often ill: Emmy (1870–1942) was mentally

unstable, "hysterically nervous"; the handicapped son Theodor (1872–1927) was a railroad official. Apparently, he was gifted musically. Neither had any descendants.

Between 1884 and 1886 a half dozen reviewers praised the work. Arnold Niggli's detailed review (*Musical Times and Singers' Revue*, 31 October 1884) can be summed up with the words "that few of Kirchner's creations display a similar wealth of the most charming melodic motives, so much waggish naivety, cheerfulness and humorous grace" as this work does. In the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of 9 October 1885 Friedrich Wilhelm Irgang remarked, "Kirchner dedicated these studies to his two children. For him, as one of the most important musicians alive, we must assume that their thorough musical training is certainly a matter of utmost concern, and whatever he considers 'good' for his own children must be good and useful for others." Finally, W. Zeiss wrote in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 22 January 1886: "To be sure, length and technique are designed for children, but the contents and the form can well engage an adult; because with these 100 little pieces Kirchner has created just as many small works of art that are similar to delicate ivory carvings, whose drawings and figures one can truly recognise and appreciate only under the magnifying glass. Whoever regards this music with an eye sharpened by an elegant and refined artistic education will discover an abundance invisible to an eye accustomed to gaudy lights and contours."

The present edition is based upon the fairly flawless original edition. Only a few fingerings, which in Kirchner's old handwriting were difficult to read, had to be corrected: No. 3, bar 15, m.s. (3 corrected from 5); No. 28, bar 32, m.s. (1 instead of 4, analog to bar 12); No. 31, bar 7, m.d. (5 instead of 3); No. 33, upbeat (the fingering 1 is missing in the first edition; it is supplemented here following the reprint).