

A dedication so pronounced as Theodor Kirchner's *For Stephen Heller* is unique, because in his titles Kirchner did not even mention his „Ideals“ (cf. op. 33) Mendelssohn and Schumann explicitly merely referring to their works with names such as *Songs without Words* (op. 13), *New Davidsbündler Dances* (op. 17) and *Florestan and Eusebius* (op. 53). Like Kirchner, Stephen Heller (1813–1888) was influenced by Robert Schumann; Heller also shared with Kirchner the predilection for character pieces in his oeuvre, which he composed primarily for piano solo. Because Heller moved to Paris in 1838, he probably never met Kirchner. Nonetheless, their mutual esteem is documented. In 1868 Kirchner accompanied the *Pensées fugitives*, a co-production that Heller had composed with Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst for violin and pianoforte. Kirchner's dedication to the “kindred soul” caused a brief correspondence (four of Heller's letters are known*), and in January 1882 Heller was able to return the favour by dedicating his 20 *Preludes for Piano* op. 150 to Kirchner. Heller's thank-you letter is as follows:

“Paris, 22 April 1880.
7 Cité Malesherbes.

Expect from me no titles, such as more or less honoured and highly esteemed sir! but I shall just begin

Dear Kirchner,

You have given me true joy through the dedication of one of your works.

Yesterday, Wednesday the 20th of April, I received your note, a letter from Mr. Hug and a copy of your opus 51. I was just free and played through the 12 pieces at once. Again it is such a precious gift as only you can give: full of charm, full of poetry and deep in spite of all simplicity.

The masters of all times have abided in this way. You know that I am a long-term fervent devotee of your music. You also know that through the kind

shipments of your publishers I have come to own your complete piano works. They belong to my favourites, to which I often return.

You promise me a long letter: keep your word! I have been told that letter writing is a burden to you. With me you can act as you see fit. You need not abide by any order; write whatever you have in mind. – Fare well, dear and precious composer; you have given me utmost pleasure. In heartfelt affection

Stephen Heller

Whenever I languish for genuine music, your *Preludes* [op. 9], *In the Twilight* [op. 31], *Village Tales* [op. 39] etc. refresh me.”

The first edition was published in 1880 in three volumes by Friedrich Hofmeister in Leipzig (Plate Nos. 7839–7841), and on 14 April Kirchner played one piece from the collection (called “Evening Song”, probably No. 12) in an organ concert in the Basel Cathedral. At the end of 1883 Kirchner's arrangement for piano four hands of numbers 1–2, 5–8 and 10–12 appeared. Although Kirchner entered a few changes into his personal copy of the first edition (Brahms Institute at the Musikhochschule Lübeck), these were not taken into consideration when Hofmeister reprinted the work in April 1900. Instead, numbers 2, 6 and 8 were overloaded with phrasings and additional markings by an anonymous editor. The present new edition brings the version of the first edition with Kirchner's corrections from his personal copy (No. 1, bars 7f, 15f, 26, 43, 48, 83–85, No. 2; bar 5; No. 5, bars 34 and 36). In addition, Kirchner's additional fingerings from his personal copy were supplemented and a few phrasings were adjusted in concordance with parallel passages.

* Cf. *Musikerbriefe aus fünf Jahrhunderten* / nach den Urhandschriften erstmalig hrsg. von La Mara [pseudonym for Elisabeth Lipsius] – Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1886, S. 283–288.