

Theodor Kirchner's *Seven Waltzes for two pianos four hands* op. 86 are an example of the composer's decade long occupation with the three-beat dance. The fact that he repeatedly composed waltzes may be due to a basic affinity, or may be ascribed simply to the success of the *Waltzes* op. 39 by Johannes Brahms that were published in 1866. Indeed, in 1876 Kirchner dedicated his first *Waltzes* for piano solo op. 23 to Brahms and soon arranged these waltzes for piano four hands. He published other *Waltzes* in 1878 as op. 34; *Reflexe* op. 76 from 1886 contains six waltzes, and then there are the *Waltzes* for pianoforte to four hands op. 104. Finally, waltzes can be found more or less hidden in other publications such as: *Caprices* op. 27, *In the Twilight* op. 31, *Quiet Songs and Dances* op. 72, *Polonaise, Waltzes and Ländler* op. 77.

The immaculate first edition of the *Waltzes* op. 86 was published at the latest in October 1889 by Peters in Leipzig (plate number 7313); several reissues testify to its success, which was not to be taken for granted, since few middle-class homes will have sheltered two pianos. A manuscript version of No. 5, entitled *Lento in d minor for violin and piano*, is dated 23 September 1888 (Amadeus BP 2211).

Kirchner's oeuvre contains much music for four hands on a single piano: original compositions in addition to the numerous arrangements of his own as well as of works by other composers. By contrast, for two pianos four hands he published only the *Variations* op. 85 (Amadeus BP 1705), the *Waltzes* op. 86 and the *Polonaise* in F major after op. 43/2.

Thus Arnold Niggli's review of the *Waltzes* in the *Swiss Musical Times and Singers' Revue* of 6 March 1890 was all the more enthusiastic: "They are genuine dances, sometimes rushing upwards,

full of joyful desire like the D major compositions No. 4 and 7, sometimes floating away in peaceful grace like the lovely opening piece or the ländler-like number 6, but never with a melancholic tone, brooding and self-obsessed like so many newer dances, whose contents quite actually mock the form. At the same time, the tonal material is distributed masterfully between both instruments, and although the movement cannot be called difficult by any means, the sound effect is truly captivating. Thus may the seven star constellation of waltzes rise in our concert halls as well and allow its gleaming beauty to radiate in thousands of receptive hearts!"

The effective *Polonaise* op. 43/2 for solo piano (cf. Amadeus BP 1697) was quite popular: Kirchner satisfied the need for arrangements with one for two pianos, printed by Hofmeister in April 1881 in a single edition with the title *Polonaise F dur für 2 Claviere*, not mentioning any opus number (Plate No. 7887), and in 1883 with an edition of all *Polonaises* for piano four hands. Finally, Heinrich Schulz-Beuthen set the second *Polonaise* for orchestra.

In his transcription for two pianos, Kirchner repeated the first 16 bars of the middle section while exchanging the parts. Kirchner's personal copy (Brahms Institute of the Musikhochschule Lübeck) contains two important changes: in bar 27 the expected F/f in the left hand of the second piano part was altered to D flat/d flat, and the melody marked *Cantabile*; in the first piano part, bar 73, the first note in the left hand was originally restructured; in conformance with the right hand the addition of a tie alleviates the sharp dissonance. In the sources, the notation of dots is inadequate and partially contradictory: for the new edition some marks were added cautiously.