

In the 1880s Theodor Kirchner's compositional vigour had produced a flood of publications, averaging ten publications a year until 1888 (including the arrangements). However, especially from 1891 on, his creativity appeared to wane. In autumn 1890 he had moved from Dresden to Hamburg, "after the artist's hopes of finding a more extensive sphere of influence as a result of his teaching activities at the Royal Conservatory had hardly been fulfilled" (*Der Klavierlehrer* [The Piano Teacher], 15 September 1890). This year witnessed the publication of opus numbers 89–95 and arrangements of Brahms' first two symphonies for two pianos, but in 1891 only op. 96 and one arrangement were printed. During the following two years, only arrangements of works by Brahms, Haydn and Davidoff appeared; all the same, in 1894 op. 101–104 were released (op. 97 was not published until 1904). Then, in December 1894 Kirchner suffered a first stroke, which was probably the reason that his next works were not printed until the autumn of 1896 by Kirchner's new publisher August Cranz, who was just preparing to move from Hamburg to Leipzig. Because Cranz also had a branch in Brussels, the title pages were in German and French. These were Kirchner's last works with opus numbers, namely *36 Rhythmisch melodische Etuden* | *36 Etudes rythmiques et mélodiques* op. 105 and the *Vorbereitungs-Studien zur Einführung in die Werke neuerer Meister* | *Etudes pour servir*

*de préparation à l'exécution des œuvres de l'école moderne* op. 106.

It may be assumed that these two works were written before Kirchner's stroke in a last outbreak of composing passion, along with *Nur Tropfen*, which was published posthumously on 18 September 1903 as the "last work by Theodor Kirchner", and the *Preludes in all Keys* not published during his lifetime. To be sure, in 1893–1894 Kirchner composed numerous pieces, preserved in his estate in the Brahms Institute at the Musikhochschule Lübeck (Hofmann Collection), which are just being printed now. Due to their large number, it is not surprising that Kirchner lost track and published the same piece as op. 105/12 as well as op. 106/6.

Several of the *Etudes rythmiques et mélodiques* are just like the genre of album pages Kirchner cultivated throughout his life. Sometimes there are even echoes of his own pieces: No. 3 *Vivace* calls to memory his first *Album Leaf* in op. 7, No. 36 *Allegro* reminds us of his first *Cloud Painting*.\*

In his last years, Kirchner's handwriting was not always easy to decipher: through analogy, it was possible to correct most errors in the first edition. To avoid turning pages, we have inverted the order of the following pieces: 2/3, 7/8, 20/21. All fingerings are taken from the original edition.

\* Albumblätter = Album Leaves op. 7. BP 1527  
– Wolkenbilder = Cloud Paintings op. 100. BP 1981.