

The music world may deplore the fact that Theodor Kirchner left us no important sonatas and symphonies, or that Bach and Brahms never composed an opera. They were well aware of their talents, exercising them wisely. Thus it is pointless to bemoan what they did not compose, tantamount to demanding that they could have left us literary or pictorial masterpieces as well. We are thankful for the few sonata movements Kirchner did compose, as well as for the five present sonatinas, which he did not write for pedagogical purposes, although they are certainly suitable for teaching and not all too difficult. They are superb examples of this genre, excellent for performance at home as well as in concert. Therefore it is no coincidence that the five sonatinas have been republished repeatedly, for they belong to the best products of this genre, along with Carl Reinecke's op. 47, composed in 1854, then the Sonatinas by Hermann Goetz, Kirchner's successor in Winterthur, what were published in 1872 (BP 2271), and Stephen Heller's op. 147, released in 1878.

In May 1883, the Leipzig publisher Hofmeister issued the first edition of the five sonatinas in five separate volumes. When the piano pedagogue Ludwig Stark (1831–1884), a co-founder of the Stuttgart Conservatory, received

the work, he responded: “The *five Sonatinas* Op. 70 by *Theodor Kirchner* have *not only completely met my expectations, but far surpassed them*. It was easy to foresee that such a composer would not be content with the familiar platitudes for which the term ‘Sonatina’ is a kind of *carte blanche*, but even in this limited frame he would strive to offer something personal and original. That however the necessary regard for childlike comprehension and performance did not prevent him from creating fully interesting movements, whose rhythm, modulation and variety will also delight adults, and which find their peers only in the formal ‘sonatas’ of Haydn, Mozart and Clementi, reveals the *primordial power of genius*, which is often unequivocally documented in the miniature.”

Kirchner's personal copy contains no corrections, so that it was possible, aside from a few minor corrections and adjustments, to bring the text of the first edition with Kirchner's own fingerings. On page 8 a natural has been added (bar 70 before d') and two slurs supplemented on page 15 (bar 51, d' to g'; bar 55, d'–e'). The first movement of the fourth sonatina (bars 13 and 65) contains an irritation typical for Kirchner: one should resist the desire to “correct” the dissonance.