



# Friedrich GERNSHEIM

## PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

ROMANZE IN F SHARP MAJOR, OP. 15

GESCHWIND-MARSCH IN C MAJOR

PIANO SONATA NO. 1 IN D MINOR

FANTASIE IN G MINOR, OP. 27

VIER KLAVIERSTÜCKE, OP. 61

CAPRICCIO IN E MINOR

Jens Barnieck

# FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

by William Melton

According to informal family history,<sup>1</sup> Gernsheim antecedents first arrived in the Rhenish city of Worms in the sixteenth century as refugees from the Inquisition in Spain. Worms had hosted a Jewish presence since long before, the first written evidence dating from 960; the first synagogue was erected in 1034.<sup>2</sup> Within the severe constraints imposed upon Jews, the family thrived: Machol Falk Gernsheim, son of Falk ben Schmuël Gernsheim, served over 30 years as the last official spokesman of the Jewish community in Worms before the dissolution of the ghetto in 1792, when Worms briefly became part of France. One descendant, Abraham Gernsheim, was able to study and practise medicine; he was an amateur flautist. His son, Friedrich, an only child, born just before midnight on 17 July 1839, displayed early musical gifts (like the perfect pitch that allowed him to mimic the horn of the passing postilion on the piano). Young Fritz was given piano instruction by his mother Josephine, *née* Kaula, and received further piano tuition from Adjutant Kressel of the local infantry garrison, Eduard Hecht<sup>3</sup> and Carl Haine, as well as violin instruction from Christian Haine. This schooling was augmented by lessons from Louis Liebe, a pupil of Louis Spohr. ‘When I took over the music-director position in Worms in 1846’, wrote Liebe,

I was soon given the musical training of little seven-year-old Fritz by his parents. Even then Fritz showed an extraordinary talent. [...] He also tried his hand at childish compositions. From that point onwards it became my aim to give the boy a thorough schooling in piano-playing and to instil an understanding of Classical music (sonatas

<sup>1</sup> Karl Holl, *Friedrich Gernsheim. Leben, Erscheinung und Werk*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1928, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Reuter, *Warmaisa. 1000 Jahre Juden in Worms*, Reuter, Worms, 2009, pp. 17–18. The German family name may have stemmed from the town of Gernsheim, about ten miles to the north-east of Worms, on the eastern bank of the Rhine.

<sup>3</sup> After leaving Germany for England in 1854, Hecht (1832–87) settled in Manchester, where he served as director of a number of choruses, often working under Charles Hallé.

by Mozart and the lighter ones by Beethoven), but I avoided anything that bordered on virtuosity. I had the joy of seeing him make extraordinary progress in both technique and understanding. Soon afterwards I started him on theory, which he romped through with ease, to the point that just two years later he was able to compose under my direction, in addition to many shorter compositions, an overture for orchestra.<sup>4</sup>

When the boy was nine, mother and son spent time in Mainz, thus escaping the worst of the Revolution of 1848 and the harsh conservative reaction. In Mainz Friedrich was a pupil of the Viennese-born Ernst Pauer (a student of Mozart's son Franz Xaver Wolfgang, as well as of Simon Sechter and Franz Lachner). The following year the entire family moved to Frankfurt, where there was a lively concert life, and the youngster studied with Eduard Rosenhain (piano), Johann Christian Hauff (theory) and Eduard Eliason and Heinrich Wolff (violin). He attended the city theatre frequently, and soon appeared there himself as pianist, violinist and composer. He also toured as a pianist in 1850–51 in the Rhineland, Switzerland and Alsace, the last region generating notices that circulated across France.

Strasbourg, 21 January.

Yesterday evening we attended the last of the concerts given in the auditorium on 22, 25 and 27 January by the young Frédéric Gernsheim. This ten-year-old pianist-composer is one of the most phenomenal manifestations in the history of music. In the three concerts he has just presented, he has given us the great concerto (Konzertstück) by Weber, the concerto in A minor by Hummel, that in E major by Moscheles, the rondo capriccioso by Mendelssohn, a few modern pieces, and two orchestral overtures composed and conducted by the young virtuoso with great aplomb. His pure, elegant, expressive, often lively and highly strung playing, though his small hands embrace the width of an octave with difficulty, is not that of a child, but that of a consummate artist. [...] Frédéric Gernsheim must go to Paris: it is to be hoped that there he will find a more perceptive audience. As for us, we are not afraid to say that if he did not duplicate all of the marvels told of Mozart's childhood, since that great man we have not experienced such surprising

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Karl August Krauss, 'Friedrich Gernsheim. Zu seinem 70. Geburtstag,' *Der Musiksalon*, Vol. 1, No. 13/14, 1909, p. 167.

and extraordinary powers, and we believe that one day all of Europe will enthusiastically profess the name of this child.<sup>5</sup>

After his arrival in Leipzig in 1852 the thirteen-year-old Gernsheim enrolled as the youngest pupil at the Conservatoire there. To his lengthy list of mentors he now added a roster of teachers who had been hand-picked by the late director of the institution, Felix Mendelssohn. They included Ernst Friedrich Eduard Richter and Moritz Hauptmann for theory, August Wilhelm Julius Rietz for composition, Karl Franz Brendel for music history, Hermann Zille for literature, Otto Wacker for classical languages, Raimund Dreyschock and Ferdinand David for violin, and Louis Plaidy and, perhaps most notably, Ignaz Moscheles for piano.

Prague-born and a pupil of Bedřich Diviš Weber, Moscheles had gravitated to Vienna in 1808 and continued his studies with former teachers of his idol Beethoven, Johann Georg Albrechtsberger and Antonio Salieri. Beethoven was so impressed by Moscheles that he chose him to arrange the piano score of *Fidelio* in 1814. After more than two successful decades in London, an appeal came to relocate to Leipzig in 1846. Mendelssohn, who would die a year later, was much relieved to secure a pianist of stature for the Conservatoire at last. Moscheles was a strict traditionalist in his teaching, but one who also valued excellent relations with his students: ‘Moscheles enjoyed having them around him’, his wife, Charlotte, wrote, ‘celebrated their progress, and took a keen interest in the growing youngster Gernsheim’.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the entire institution was proud of its precocious star pupil. When he left Leipzig in 1855 at the age of sixteen, Gernsheim was seen off at the train station by Conrad Schleinitz, the administrative director of the Conservatoire, who made the young man the unprecedented gift of a curl of Mendelssohn’s hair.

Gernsheim then spent the years 1855–61 in Paris, polishing his piano technique with Joseph Lambert Massart and Antoine François Marmontel, the latter a pupil of Alkan and Halévy and the highly esteemed teacher to decades of Conservatoire

<sup>5</sup> Anon., ‘Correspondance: Frédéric Gernsheim’, *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 8 February 1852, pp. 44–45.

<sup>6</sup> Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles, *Aus Moscheles’ Leben nach Briefen und Tagebuchern*, Volume 2, Duncker & Humblot, Leipzig, 1873, p. 232.

students, ranging from Bizet by way of Edward MacDowell to Debussy. Gernsheim also had the considerable benefit of being taken under the wing of Théodore Parmentier, a gifted military engineer and aide-de-camp to Général Adolphe Niel, a future Marshal of France. Parmentier, who would soon be decorated for his service in the Crimean War, also excelled as a musician and writer. His 1856 profile of Gernsheim made it clear that a pianist of unusual talent had taken up residence in Paris.

The young pianist composer F. Gernsheim, whose arrival we have announced in Paris and of whom the *Gazette musicale* has already informed its readers, has won the most brilliant successes in the evenings where he has been heard and enjoys the greatest favour in the aristocratic salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. It is rather awkward to have the task of presenting a great artist who is not yet fifteen years old, especially in this age of child prodigies and hothouse talents, the least of whom would complain if they were not compared favourably to the young Mozart. Thus we do not invoke for Gernsheim the protection of his tender age. He is a true artist, whose talent is doubtless destined to grow further and to make the most brilliant development, but who, just as he is now, can do without the indulgence of the public and be judged without regard to size or age. If this artist emerges from the salons to appear in front of the general public, we do not doubt that all lovers of good classical music who have the felicitous sense to go hear him will be struck at the perfect understanding of style with which he interprets the immortal works of Mozart, Beethoven and especially Mendelssohn and the delicate and dreamy inspirations of Chopin. Skilful pianists are hardly lacking today, but intelligent pianists whose thoughts are as lofty as those of the great men just mentioned, are and will remain rare.<sup>7</sup>

With Parmentier's help, Gernsheim was rapidly introduced to the Parisian musical world, enjoying contact with Berlioz, Stephen Heller, Liszt, Lalo, Rossini, Anton Rubinstein, Saint-Saëns, Brahms' friend Julius Stockhausen (with whom Gernsheim read through Schubert's *Lieder*), and even Richard Wagner. Gernsheim attended the Paris premiere of *Tannhäuser* in 1861, and found much to admire in the work, despite its famously hostile reception.

<sup>7</sup> Théodore Parmentier, 'F. Gernsheim', *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, Vol. 23, No. 6, 10 February 1856, p. 43.

He left Paris in 1861 after succeeding Hermann Levi (a friend whose paternal grandfather, Samuel Levi, had been a rabbi in Worms) as Musical Director in Saarbrücken. He was drawn into Ferdinand Hiller's circle, and in 1865 he was lured away by a teaching position at the Cologne Conservatoire, to be awarded the title Professor and named Kapellmeister at the Cologne Stadttheater. Among Gernsheim's pupils were Engelbert Humperdinck and the conductor and future Elgar champion Julius Buths. A long friendship with Max Bruch began, and Gernsheim was introduced to Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms (though a visit by Brahms to Leipzig in 1853 may have brought a brief earlier meeting). Gernsheim and Brahms developed a respectful relationship that would prove a major stylistic influence on the former and a boon to the latter in the form of important performances under Gernsheim's baton (including the Cologne premiere of the *Deutsches Requiem* in 1870).

In 1874 Gernsheim was named Music Director of the *Maatschappij tot bevordering van toonkunst* (Society for the Promotion of Music) in Rotterdam. His duties included leading the municipal orchestra, chorus and conservatoire, and there he created an important centre for the performance of Brahms, Bruch, Hiller and other contemporary composers. Gernsheim married Helene Hershheim in 1877, and two daughters, Marie and Clara, would follow. The Rotterdam audience proved as open to their conductor's German tastes as they were tolerant of his Jewishness, and the sixteen-year stint was both an artistic and personal success.

In 1890 Gernsheim was engaged by the Stern Conservatoire in Berlin, his candidature strongly bolstered by testimonials from Brahms, Bruch, Hans von Bülow and Joseph Joachim. In Berlin he taught, conducted the Stern Gesangverein and other choirs, was named a Senator in the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts in 1897, and, in 1901, took over one of three Academy master-classes in composition (Bruch and Humperdinck led the others). His many contributions to Berlin life (he led the chorus of the local premiere of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 in 1895) were enumerated by another of the leading choral conductors of the city, Siegfried Ochs:

There is no disputing Gernsheim's importance as a musician in the general sense. There is not an area of musical skill or knowledge that he had not mastered. He knew every secret of compositional theory. He was one of the truly excellent pianists, especially in the domain of chamber music. He was a score-player of uncommon gifts, and a talent for composition that rose above the ordinary cannot be denied him. He was also experienced beyond a doubt in every province of the art of conducting.<sup>8</sup>

Gernsheim's longtime correspondence with his close friend Max Bruch mirrored their agreement on issues of musical style. Bruch had coined the expression 'Parthei des vernünftigen Fortschritts' ('Party of Sensible Progress') to describe an alliance against what he felt were dangerous modern tendencies, and was capable of harsh words when he felt Gernsheim was veering too close to New German influences. For his part, Gernsheim had continued in his admiration of Wagner's works, attending *Tristan und Isolde* at Hans von Bülow's invitation and the entire *Ring* cycle under Hermann Levi in Munich. He was also prodded by Bruch to give up the older religion to gain a better reception: 'My advice is: let yourself be baptised (but with authentic Jordan river water)'<sup>9</sup> Gernsheim confided to Hiller:

One does one's best, trying to represent musical Germany honestly to the outside world, but nonetheless those all-knowing gentlemen appear and say 'he is a Jew', or, which borders on bigotry, 'He has too many Jewish supporters, he does not belong to us, etc.'<sup>10</sup>

Gernsheim would never recant his faith. He also composed two works inspired by Judaism – *Elohenu* for cello and orchestra (or piano; 1882) and the Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 54 ('Miriam'; 1887) – but his pieces to Latin texts (including the *Salve Regina*, Op. 11, *Ave Maria*, Op. 80, and *Te Deum*, Op. 90) are a testament to his broadmindedness.

<sup>8</sup> *Geschehenes, gesehenes*, Grethlein, Leipzig and Zurich, 1922, p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander L. Ringer, 'Die Parthei des vernünftigen Fortschritts – Max Bruch und Friedrich Gernsheim', *Die Musikforschung*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1972, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

In the new century Gernsheim's symphonies were performed by conductors including Bülow, Eduard Colonne, Arthur Nikisch and Richard Strauss. Gernsheim remained active through his retirement, observing the newest trends with interest, and stepping in for his ailing colleague Wilhelm Berger to lead winter 1907–8 concerts with the Meiningen Hofkapelle. On a visit to Worms in 1912, Friedrich Gernsheim once again walked through the streets of his youth. Near the Mainz Gate a building had once displayed the sign 'Jewish Jail', which had held those who transgressed against the long list of restrictions. Standing outside this former jail Gernsheim told his listeners:

When the French army made its victorious march through the Rhineland and occupied the old city of Worms, the existence of 'les droits de l'homme' was proclaimed. According to these rights there were no more Christians or Jews under the law, but only citizens, united as one community under the motto 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'. These human rights had barely been declared when my grandfather climbed up a ladder, took an axe to the sign with the legend 'Judengefängnis' and utterly destroyed it.<sup>11</sup>

Dortmund held a Gernsheim Festival for the composer's 75th-birthday celebrations in July 1914, in which he conducted his own works in two orchestral concerts and displayed his still-fine piano technique in a chamber-music matinee. *Die Musik* commented that the festival

made a name for itself with a dignified, academic compositional style in which the developments of the post-Brahms era seem to have passed by without a trace, yet one which employs the symphonic and sonata form so captivatingly that it was able to conjure interest, especially under the guidance of the astonishingly elastic old master [...].<sup>12</sup>

The *Neue Musik-Zeitung* concurred:

To experience a 75th birthday in perfect spiritual and physical freshness is one of the great and beautiful rarities, and it is a feast of joy when the celebrant still stands in the full force

<sup>11</sup> Samson Rothschild, 'Persönliche Erinnerungen an Professor Friedrich Gernsheim', *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, Vol. 80, No. 40, 6 October 1916, p. 476.

<sup>12</sup> Theo Schäfer, 'Konzert: Dortmund', *Die Musik*, Vol. 13, No. 22, August 1914, p. 235.

of his creation, with echoes of the works just performed also announcing with certainty that this creator will have something to say in the future.<sup>13</sup>

Only a month after the Gernsheim Festival the First World War began. A valedictory honour was bestowed in Berlin in 1915 when Gernsheim was named Vice President of the Academy of Fine Arts, but his contented existence received a hammer blow when his elder daughter Marie was killed in a car accident in October of that year.<sup>14</sup> 'Whether I will recover from this greatest pain that life has yet inflicted remains to be seen.'<sup>15</sup> In fact, Gernsheim's health collapsed and he was confined in a Berlin clinic with rapidly worsening arterial sclerosis. Sent to a sanatorium in Bad Wildungen, he returned home in early 1916, but was eventually confined to his bed. At his death in the early hours of 11 September of that year the eulogies were many. From Gernsheim's home town, Samson Rothschild wrote, 'So he has passed on, a prince in the kingdom of music, an unpretentious, unassuming Mensch who, and this cannot be stressed enough in these times, always remained a true son of Judaism.'<sup>16</sup> The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* observed: 'With Gernsheim, art loses one of its best and most faithful representatives, a man of the highest principles and pure, high ideals, but his strong individuality will live beyond death, and his artistic legacy ensures him immortality.'<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the demands of Gernsheim's performing and teaching duties and his scrupulous approach to composition, he was able to produce an estimable catalogue of works in most genres, with the exceptions of opera and oratorio. Absolute music, his instrumental works being twice as numerous as his vocal works, was a lifelong preference. His creations included four symphonies, concertos for piano, violin and cello, choral works for mixed or male choirs with orchestra or *a cappella*, 40 Lieder and piano works. Gernsheim had a special affinity for chamber music, and composed two

<sup>13</sup> Katarina Schurzmann, 'Friedrich Gernsheim. Ein Gedenkwort zu seinem 75. Geburtstag (17. Juli)', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 35, No. 21, 1914, p. 410.

<sup>14</sup> The composer's younger daughter, Clara Pick-Gernsheim, would die in Tel Aviv in 1974.

<sup>15</sup> Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> Rothschild, *loc. cit.*, p. 477.

<sup>17</sup> Katarina Schurzmann, 'Friedrich Gernsheim. Ein Nachruf', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 83, No. 38, 21 September 1916, p. 296.

string quintets, two piano quintets,<sup>18</sup> five string quartets, three piano quartets and two piano trios, as well as four sonatas for violin and two for cello.

Once a mark of approbation, the label 'Berlin academic' has since become a stigma, a synonym for compositional mediocrity. Gernsheim's academism is best understood as a rigorous mastery of compositional technique, wholly without what the composer's biographer Karl Holl called 'an unpleasant aftertaste of artistic sterility, stiffness and dessication.'<sup>19</sup> As Willi Kahl observed of the composer,

Within the circle of Berlin academics, he can probably be considered as the most advanced in terms of rhythmic flexibility, harmony and instrumental colour. This is especially interesting in the tone poem *Zu einem Drama* which is not free of the influence of R. Strauss and Reger.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, Gernsheim was shaped by multiple influences across decades.

Studying at the Leipzig Conservatoire led him on the path of musical conservatism like that of Mendelssohn. The warning of his piano teacher Moscheles against the 'Labyrinth of the future seekers' and the aesthetic positions of the Cologne circle around F. Hiller (Bruch, Bargiel) pointed in the same direction. The study residence in Paris formed a counterweight which enabled encounters with Berlioz and Wagner and opened up more progressive musical influences. Because he was open to musical modernity in his later works, he was accused of chasing success 'too strongly and purposely with the latest radicals' (Letter from Bruch to Willy Hess, 7 June 1915). The oft-noted Brahms emulation of the young Gernsheim was limited to some works of the 1860s and early 1870s.<sup>21</sup>

In short, although certain Brahmsian trademarks undoubtedly found their way into Gernsheim's style, further developmental influences cannot be ignored. The scholar Sandra Maria Ehses concluded: 'The openness to different trends runs through his life

<sup>18</sup> Recorded by Edouard Oganessian and the Art Vio String Quartet on Toccata Classics TOCC 0099.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>20</sup> 'Gernsheim, Friedrich', *Rheinische Musiker*, Vol. 3, Volk, Cologne, 1964, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Dietrich Kämper, 'Gernsheim, Friedrich', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Personenteil: Vol. 7, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2001, pp. 795–96.

story;<sup>22</sup> and for Michael Brocke, ‘Gernsheim’s art is versatile and fed by many sources.’<sup>23</sup> Otto Lessmann saw him thus: ‘Not a pioneer in the vast field of art, but he is one of the most outstanding caretakers of that which has been created by greater minds and left as a fruitful legacy to subsequent generations.’<sup>24</sup> ‘One can disagree over Gernsheim’s position in contemporary music, over the measure of his character and invention,’ wrote Leopold Schmidt, ‘but what he produced was always mature and distinguished art.’<sup>25</sup> Alexander Ringer has described

a gifted composer utterly devoid of the self-centeredness that is so often the mark of genius, a first-rate musician too civilized to offend even in the interest of a daring new idea, in short an artist of the highest caliber tragically representative of the lost generation that failed to reach true greatness [...].<sup>26</sup>

It is unsurprising, considering Gernsheim’s successes as a pianist, that works for piano were the most numerous of all his creations, spanning from the young boy’s March in C major (1845 or 1846) to the 75-year-old’s *Verwehte Blätter* (‘Scattered Leaves’; 1914). The unpublished piano works which followed that March were a *Polka-Galoppade*, an *Andante* and a *Rondo brillante*; three sonatas, in D minor (1853), E flat major (1853) and D minor (1854);<sup>27</sup> a Prelude and Fugue (1860) and, 44 years later, another pairing, a Prelude and Fugue in G minor (1904). The published piano works with and without opus numbers are, with their dates of publication, a Sonata in F minor, Op. 1 (1863); six *Präludien*, Op. 2 (1864); a Suite in D minor, Op. 8 (1867); two *Romanzen*, Opp. 15 and 23 (1869 and 1871); two sets of variations, Op. 18 in E flat major (1869) and Op. 22 in C minor (1870); a set of seven pieces called *Ins Stammbuch* (which might translate as ‘Into the Autograph Book’), Op. 26 (1872); *Fantasie*, Op. 27 (1873); *Vier Tanzstücke*,

<sup>22</sup> *Die vier Symphonien von Friedrich Gernsheim*, Are, Mainz, 2013, p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Nach rückwärts und vorwärts Freiheit bewahren. Der Komponist Friedrich Gernsheim’, *Kalonymos: Beiträge zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Friedrich Gernsheim †’, *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 43, 1916, p. 508.

<sup>25</sup> *Aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart*, Hesse, Berlin, 1922, p. 164.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Friedrich Gernsheim (1839–1916) and the Lost Generation’, *Musica Judaica*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1980/81, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> The Sonatas in E flat major and D minor were recorded by Jens Barneck on Volume One of this series, *Tocatta Classics TOCC 0206*.

Op. 30, for four hands (1873); four *Stimmungsbilder*, Op. 36 (1877); *Zwei Klavierstücke*, Op. 39 (1879); *Legende*, Op. 44 (1883); *Capriccio* in E minor (1883); five piano pieces published as *Symbole*, Op. 59 (1894); *Vier Klavierstücke*, Op. 61 (1895); *Fünf Tongedichte*, Op. 67, for four hands (1900); three pieces, *Auf der Piazzetta (sic)*, Op. 68, *Weihe der Nacht*, Op. 69, and *Walzer*, Op. 70, published together (1900); a 'Phantasiestück', *Auf der Lagune*, Op. 71 (1902); a four-movement *Tondichtung*, Op. 72 (1902); a Fantasia and Fugue, Op. 76b, transcribed from an organ original (1906); *Capriccietto* in F major (1906); and, penultimately, a *Fantasia* in F minor, Op. 81 (1909).

The **Piano Sonata No. 1 in D minor** was composed for Gernsheim's teacher in Leipzig, Julius Rietz, in April–May 1853. As yet unpublished, it has been restored from a copy of the autograph by Jens Barnieck. This copy (National Library of Israel, Gernsheim Archive: 0010 A 025) presented confusing incompletions, deletions and superimposed competing versions.

'You have to do style-critical detective work', says Barnieck. 'On the other hand, you build a much closer relationship to a piece whose trajectory you can understand from the corrections than if you had practised it from a score already complete. And I am always amazed that Gernsheim was only [14 to] 15 years old', he says. 'This has been composed very well from a handwork standpoint. You can recognise a great preoccupation with Beethoven. [...] Gernsheim relied upon such models, but advances beyond them in his own, very elegant manner.'<sup>28</sup>

The young Gernsheim approached his very first large-scale work with care. The beginning statement of *Allegro agitato* 1 in D minor ( $\frac{6}{8}$ ) features pounding quavers in the bass, later transferred to the treble; a contrasting theme then presents a serene chorale in F major. A repeat of the exposition precedes a development that largely deconstructs the initial theme, parading fragments through F major/F minor to A major with many chromatic wrinkles. The anticipated recapitulation in D minor arrives in an exact duplicate of the first 42 bars, though the harmony afterwards shepherds the

<sup>28</sup> Doris Kösterke, 'Pianist Jens Barnieck rekonstruiert Klaviersonate von Friedrich Gernsheim und spielt sie in Worms', *Wiesbadener Kurier*, 17 August 2016. Barnieck's transcriptions of Gernsheim's early works are available at [www.jensbarnieck.de](http://www.jensbarnieck.de).

tonal centre to D major and the chorale tones of the secondary material. The starting theme returns for the coda, *Assai animato*, and D minor dominates through a *fortissimo* fermata-held close. An *Adagio* [2] answers the tumult of the previous movement with quiet songful phrases in B flat major, common time. The contrasting theme that follows is enlivened with trills, dotted rhythms and triplets. The two sections appear three times in extended ternary form, each repetition of the opening slightly altered (the second with the addition of semiquavers, the third with quaver triplets), but always reaffirming the home key of B flat major. The *Allegro assai finale* [3] returns to sonata-form construction. A hurried, plaintive melody in D minor, *alla breve*, begins the movement, its counterpoint a stately theme in F major. After the repeat of the exposition, a development brings truncated segments of both subjects, which are propelled through a series of disparate keys (including G major/minor, C major/minor, E flat major and A major). The recapitulation in D minor is a carbon copy of the initial 30 bars before it deviates in order to dispense the secondary theme in D major at *a tempo*. This stately material is also employed in the *Presto* coda, and, after a climactic arpeggiated descent into the bass is simultaneously mirrored by an ascent into the treble, a closing D major chord sounds *fortissimo*. In this piano sonata and the next two such works that Gernsheim would compose, his utilisation of sonata-form tropes would become increasingly assured.

The **Romanze, Op. 15** [4], was dedicated to Isaure Hérault (who would later marry the mesmerist Baron Jules Denis Du Potet de Sennevoy) and was published by Schott of Mainz in 1869. The *Romanze* begins *Adagio*, in common time, with a genial, Schumannesque theme in F sharp major. A hurried contrasting section is then presented, *Vivace ed agitato* in  $\frac{12}{6}$  and E flat minor. The *da capo* form of the piece is revealed when a last cadence in G flat major becomes the enharmonic F sharp major of the opening at *Tempo I*, the original quaver triplets having been replaced by more rapid semiquavers, before the *Romanze* dwindles to a *pianissimo* close.

The **Capriccio in E minor** [5], without opus number, first appeared in the *Neue Musik-Zeitung* of Cologne in 1883.<sup>29</sup> True to the title, this fancy begins with an E minor motif, *Vivace e con brio*, and continues in whirlwind manner, its cascading

<sup>29</sup> '1. Beilage', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 4, No. 15, 1883.

*leggiere assai* triplets juxtaposed with a doleful *ben tenuto* with kaleidoscopic modulations. The starting motif and *ben tenuto* reappear briefly before a seven-bar *Molto vivo* codetta employing the E minor opening for a third time brings the work to a *fortissimo staccato* close.

The collection **Vier Klavierstücke, Op. 61**, includes four varied tone-pictures published in 1895 by N. Simrock of Berlin. Particularly recommended by Karl Holl 'for their splendidly idiomatic piano settings',<sup>30</sup> Leopold Schmidt characterised each thus: 'atmospheric' *Idyll*, 'witty/spirited' *Capriccio*, 'lovely' *Legende* and 'significantly more technically challenging' *Impromptu*.<sup>31</sup> No. 1, *Idyll* [6], begins in a languorous *piano dolce* (*Lento e sostenuto*), in F major and  $\frac{6}{8}$ . A reflective middle section in A flat major precedes a song-form return of the opening, intensified by *espressivo* and surging to *forte* before a *sempre diminuendo* to a *pianissimo* finish. In No. 2, *Capriccio* [7], a frantic *Allegro agitato* in F minor (*piano*,  $\frac{6}{8}$ ), its *leggierissimo staccato* crotchets alternating between the hands, is succeeded by a jubilant *ben misurato* in E major, *fortissimo*. A contrasting *legato* section follows in sprawling arpeggiated crotchets in A minor, *pianissimo* and *espresso*. All three sections make returns in new keys (including A flat minor) before the first two themes, both now in F minor, finish *con tutta forza*, concluding on two *staccato* chords, *sforzando* and *fortissimo*. No. 3, *Legende* [8], offers a delicate C major theme in *Andante molto espressivo* and  $\frac{3}{4}$ . G major is established at *a tempo*, but increasing chromaticism continually pulls away from harmonic centres. A double barline marks a realm of rapid modulations, B flat major superseded by A flat major only three bars later. C major reasserts itself and the opening theme is mused upon, not without chromatic twinges, ultimately fading to a fermata-held C major chord, *pianissimo*. No. 4, *Impromptu* [9], is inscribed with a German translation of a stanza of an unidentified French poem, 'Le Jongleur' ('The Juggler'):

<sup>30</sup> Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> 'Unsere Bilder und Noten', *Kunstwart und Kulturwart*, Vol. 27, No. 12, March 1914, p. 496.

Die Bälle wirft mit sicherer Hand  
er in die Luft, Leuchtkugeln gleich.  
Sie steigen, fallen, scheinen sich zu mehren,  
und immer toller wirbelt's vor ihm auf.

*With a sure hand he tosses the balls  
into the air, like balls of light.  
They rise, fall, and seem to multiply before him,  
swirling in fantastic profusion.*

Marked *Allegretto grazioso e giocoso*, and set in  $\frac{2}{4}$ , it begins in A flat major with persistent *staccato* quavers, marked *leggierissimo*. These quavers alternate between hands and are quickened with the addition of crotchet triplets, the resultant three-against-two rhythms complicated by increased chromatic activity. The opening A flat major twice resurfaces with its melodic profile varied by continuing rhythmic and harmonic scampering. Finally, three bars of semiquavers cascade from treble to bass and back and two arpeggiated chords mark the ending, *fortissimo*. Karl Holl noted that the poem 'translates into highly stimulating sonic images',<sup>32</sup> and Leopold Schmidt applauded 'the intensive tone-painting that engages both eye and ear'.<sup>33</sup> The *Impromptu* recalls Hermann Mendel's description of an archetypal Gernsheim piano work, with 'Attractive melodies, often expanded into truly dramatic and colourful expressions in characteristic tone pictures and mood pieces, that greet the listener in a stimulating and poetic way'.<sup>34</sup>

The *Fantasie*, **Op. 27** [10], was dedicated to the major pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow and published by Schott of Mainz in 1872. After von Bülow had played the successful premiere of the *Fantasie* in Munich, he wrote a note to Gernsheim in which he could not conceal his doubts about the *Molto adagio* in C minor, between Scherzo and Fugue, finding it 'a kind of parasitic episode'. But he also had much praise for the piece:

Bravo bravissimo – this is a very beautiful work with the dedication of which you have graciously honoured me. It is equally distinguished by interesting invention as by design, by stylish solidity in the purely musical as well as the technical aspects. For the latter I want

<sup>32</sup> Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>33</sup> Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

<sup>34</sup> Gernsheim, Friedrich', *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 4, Oppenheim, Berlin, 1880, p. 206.

to praise that it is a true piano work and not a ‘camouflaged’ symphonic fragment. I like the Fugue best, then of course the beautiful and broadly melodic Andante in B major.<sup>35</sup>

The *Fantasie* begins with an *Allegro energetico* (*alla breve, forte*) in G minor that exults in startling modulations and nimble flourishes in the right hand. A composition of many moods and disparate parts, the *Fantasie* continues with a meditative *Lento* (common time, *piano*) in F sharp minor and a scurrying *Vivo* (*quasi cadenza*) before a *Tempo I* return of the opening G minor. Then Bülow’s ‘beautiful and broadly melodic’ *Andante espressivo* in B minor is reached, which after long modulatory passages is displaced by a swaggering *Allegro molto vivace* ( $\frac{3}{4}$ , *pianissimo*) in E flat major. A section marked *Con brio* ( $\frac{2}{4}$ ) bustles in in E flat minor before a return of *Allegro molto vivace*, again in E flat major. Then appears the mournful *Molto adagio* in C minor (common time) that Bülow found wanting. An ensuing *Allegro ma non troppo* in D major is followed by *Listesso tempo* (Bülow’s favoured Fugue), an extensive tract that begins in G major and concludes with a return of the expansive *Andante espressivo* and finally a nine-bar codetta in G major, *fortissimo*. Karl Holl maintained that the weighty, 22-page work was a decisive step in Gernsheim’s compositional progress:

It displayed diverse stylistic elements in easy balance, and reached a plateau from which the searching personality of the composer could develop steadily in the future. Here the extent that Gernsheim made the particular craft of piano composition his own is evident [...] as he learned how to exploit the sound, the mechanical facility and the characteristics of technique of his era.<sup>36</sup>

The brief *Geschwind-Marsch* (‘Quick March’)  $\square 1$ , in C major and  $\frac{2}{4}$  metre, is listed by Gernsheim’s biographer Karl Holl as the composer’s first childhood composition, composed in 1845 or 1846.<sup>37</sup> Louis Liebe recalled of his young pupil that ‘standing by a chair, he jotted down the march that a military band was playing as they passed by.’<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>36</sup> Holl, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7 and 195.

<sup>38</sup> Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Holl cites Louis Liebe dating the march to 1846 (p. 7) but lists 1845 in his catalogue of *Jugendwerke* (p. 195).

The forthright dotted rhythms of the opening march in C major (complete with a short episode in E minor) give way to a jovial Trio in F major that features grace notes and crotchet triplets. An ostinato of octave quavers in the bass makes a slow *crescendo* for thirteen bars into the *fortissimo* ending cadence before the *da capo* return of the opening march. The original MS of the piece, housed in the National Library of Israel (Gernsheim Archive: MUS 0010 A 025), was transcribed by Jens Barnieck.

The eminent pianist and pedagogue Ernst Pauer held that Gernsheim's piano compositions are 'distinguished by excellent workmanship, practical writing, effective treatment and a thorough absence of shallowness or triviality'.<sup>39</sup> Leopold Schmidt observed that the music 'never verges on the salon-like, and even in miniature always maintains a noble demeanour'.<sup>40</sup> Adolph Kohut wrote a longer summation:

His compositions gain the sympathy of the listener by revealing his distinctive individuality. Almost all of them are stamped with flourishing imagination, richness of melody, crispness of rhythm, and perfect mastery of form and compositional technique. Although he borrowed from Beethoven and Schumann in his first works, his own artistic personality and creativity emerged ever more distinctly in the later compositions. Because of the plasticity and transparency of his musical creations and the poetry and vigour inherent in them, they have gained in recognition over decades and have become popular in the best sense. All of his works reveal a fresh, soulful essence.<sup>41</sup>

Late in life, Gernsheim was asked to contribute a short entry for a larger tribute to Frédéric Chopin. His response was to quote Heinrich Heine about the universality of genius (indeed, Gernsheim may well have identified with Heine's dismissal of national prejudice):

<sup>39</sup> *A Dictionary of Pianists and Composers for the Pianoforte*, Novello, 1895, London, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> 'Unsere Bilder und Noten', *Kunstwart und Kulturwart*, Vol. 27, No. 12, March 1914, p. 496.

<sup>41</sup> *Berühmte israelitische Männer und Frauen in der Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit*, Payne, Leipzig, 1900, p. 15.

[Chopin] is, then, neither Polish, nor French, nor German, but actually reveals far more lofty origins. One recognises that he hails from the country of Mozart, Raphael, Goethe; his true fatherland is the fantasy kingdom of poetry.<sup>42</sup>

*William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, 2020) and The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and is a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). He did his graduate studies in music history at the University of California, Los Angeles, before a four-decade career as an orchestral horn-player with the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics like Friedrich Klose, Henri Kling and Felix Draeseke, and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.*

**Jens Barnieck**, born in Wiesbaden, Germany, has performed in major concert halls and festivals, including the Konzerthaus, Berlin; European Festival Week, Passau; Music Festival Saarland; Jazz- und Klassiktage, Tübingen; Fluxus at 50 in Wiesbaden; Jewish Culture Days in Worms; Long Night of Culture, Kaiserslautern; Mémorial ACTe, Guadeloupe; Tulip Festival, Canada; Roaring Hooves, Mongolia; Ravello Festival, Italy; Performing Tangier, Morocco; 2 Days and 2 Nights of New Music in Odessa, Ukraine; Almeida Theatre, London; North American New Music Festival, Buffalo; ReViewing, Black Mountain College, Ashville, North Carolina; Lincoln Center, Steinway Hall and the German Consulate, New York; and at Harvard University.

As an active accompanist and chamber musician he has worked with such musicians as Deborah Lynn Cole (soprano), Sarah Leonard (soprano), Julia Oesch (mezzo-soprano), Lukas Eder (baritone), Kurt Ollmann (baritone), Stephan Breith (cello), Michael Höfele (oboe), Romuald Grimbart-Barré (violin) and Jan-Filip Ĺupa (cello).



<sup>42</sup> 'Wie stehen Sie zu Chopin? Eine Umfrage zu seinem 100. Geburtstag', *Rheinische Musik- und Theater-Zeitung*, Vol. 11, No. 9, 26 February 1910, p. 143.

He has made numerous radio and television recordings and given interviews for stations like ARTE, 3Sat, Südwestrundfunk, Saarländischer Rundfunk, Deutsche Welle (Germany), NBC, WNED-FM Buffalo (USA) and Omroep Gelderland (The Netherlands). An album with first recordings of Lieder by Friedrich von Flotow and a short opera by Patrício da Silva (*It's Never too Late to Lie*), sung by Julia Oesch, is available through his website; and solo-piano recordings are available via the usual download sites such as Amazon, iTunes, Spotify and CDBaby.

Through his interest in new music and cultural cross-over, he has collaborated with, and/or premiered works by, many composers, among them Luis Hilario Arévalo, Vykintas Baltakas, Carl Christian Bettendorf, John Cage, Gloria Coates, Mayako Kubo, Felix Leuschner, Patrício da Silva, Stefano Gianotti, Piotr Grella-Mozejko, Erik Oña, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Bruce Stark, Karmella Tzepakolenko, Kevin Volans, Christian Weidt and Philip Wharton. Together with Frank Mehring, professor for cultural sciences and American studies at Radboud University in Nijmegen in The Netherlands, he regularly performs in multimedia settings – in, for example, ‘Vogue Mexico: Diary of German-American painter Winold Reiss (1886–1953)’ or ‘Soundtrack of Liberation: Dutch Liberation Songs after the Second World War’.

Apart from concertising, he writes articles and artists’ biographies, focusing on musicians as diverse as Carl Christian Bettendorf, Ludger Brümmer, Charles Ives, Mayako Kubo, Misato Mochizuki, Dane Rudhyar, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Karmella Tzepakolenko and Philip Wharton.

Jens Barnieck studied at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Detmold with Gregor Weichert. His time studying at the State University of New York at Buffalo with American pianist and composer Yvar Mikhashoff was formative, and resulted in a Master in Musical Performance *cum laude*. Master-classes with Peter Feuchtwanger in London and Renate Kretschmar-Fischer in Detmold were also important stimuli.

The Cultural Ministry of the German government and the Federal State of Hessen selected him for scholarships at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris and the German Study Centre in Venice. He received a grant from the cultural foundation of the city of Taunusstein and was also artist-in-residence at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

Writing for WTJU on the first volume of this survey of Gernsheim’s piano music, Ralph Graves felt that ‘Jens Barnieck performs with solid technique and real authority. He knows these works and understands Gernsheim in a way few modern pianists do. That understanding makes these works come alive. And makes me look forward to the rest of this series’.

# SKETCHES OF GERNSHEIM

by Jens Barnieck

The Hessische Kulturstiftung (Hessian Cultural Foundation) provided a working scholarship in June 2020 for projects that were to be created or completed during the Corona crisis. One criterion in the call for proposals was the topic of sustainability. It struck me that one way of generating sustained interest in an unknown composer is to get young people involved in the rediscovery of the music, and the idea of using sketches to illustrate Gernsheim's life at a glance for an international audience was immediately embraced by the director and the art-teachers of the Rudi-Stephan-Gymnasium in the city of Gernsheim's birth, Worms: Dr Markus Wallenborn, Katharina Traut and Reinhard Tiemann. My most sincere thanks go to them and to the devoted students of Jahrgangsstufe Q1 – the equivalent of Lower Sixth in England, Higher level in Scotland and Eleventh Grade in the USA, so that most of the participants were seventeen years of age. They came up with striking results. A selection of their works can be seen here; the other works can be found on the Toccata Classics blog (<https://toccataclassics.com/blog/>).

The first picture deals with the time of the wedding of the parents, Abraham and Josephine. Abraham was a doctor in Worms and Josephine a passionate piano player. Both came from respected Jewish families. Josephine, *née* Kaula, was born in Augsburg. Their only son was Friedrich, called Fritz.



'Childhood' by Nele Lemper

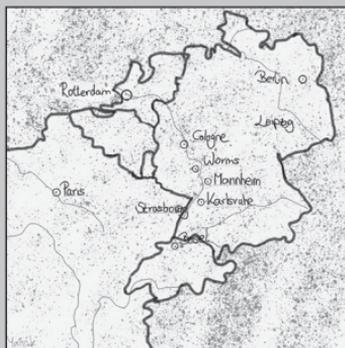


'Wunderkind' by Helene Holl

The second image shows little Friedrich, the wunderkind, practising and composing. The Gernsheims lived near the city gate. There, the little boy's favourite pastime became music. He also listened to a passing military band and wrote down a march by ear.



*'First Concert Tour', by Marlena Bonin and Luc Marten Müller*

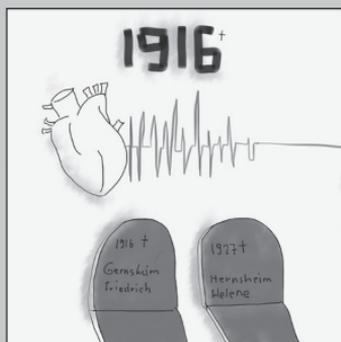


*'The Stations of Gernsheim's Life', by Yannick Weber*

Together with his mother, he went on his first concert tour in 1851–52. It took him to Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Strasbourg, Basel and Cologne. Along with works by famous composers like Beethoven and Carl Maria von Weber, he not only played his own works on the piano (*Meerfahrt*) but also conducted his orchestral pieces (two overtures).

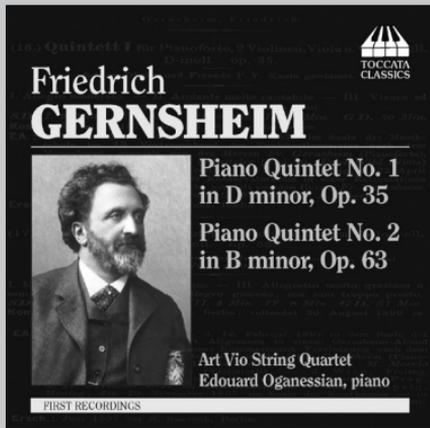
After this tour, Gernsheim went on to study piano, violin and composition at the Leipzig Conservatoire. Further stations in his life were Paris, Saarbrücken, Cologne, Rotterdam and finally Berlin.

In his Berlin years Gernsheim undertook numerous concert tours to Worms, Paris, Meiningen, Gotha and Hamburg. Gernsheim died in 1916 and was buried at the famous cemetery at Berlin-Weißensee.



*'Death' by Anna Baron*

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‘I am overwhelmed by these two works. They are incredibly alive, passionate, rhythmically dramatic, and melodically blessed. Brahms clone? Here Gernsheim is in competition with the master for the top rung. The Art Vio Quartet and Pianist Edouard Oganessian play as if their lives depended on it. This is a major find.’

—Robert Reilly, CatholiCity



‘All three pieces/sets are most sympathetically shaped and sounded out by Jens Barneck. Clearly he has invested of his time and self in producing some very listenable results. He strikes what feels like the adroit note for works that had not seen or heard the light of day probably for upwards of a century.’

—Rob Barnett, MusicWeb International



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## FRIEDRICH GERNSHEIM Piano Music, Volume Two

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<b>Piano Sonata No. 1 in D minor (1853)</b>	<b>19:12</b>
① I <i>Allegro agitato</i>	7:38
② II <i>Adagio</i>	5:23
③ III Finale: <i>Allegro assai</i>	6:11
④ <b>Romanze in F sharp major, Op. 15</b> (publ. 1869) <i>Adagio – Vivace ed agitato – Adagio</i>	<b>7:38</b>
⑤ <b>Capriccio in E minor</b> (publ. 1883) <i>Vivace e con brio</i>	<b>2:22</b>
<b>Vier Klavierstücke, Op. 61</b> (1895)	<b>13:47</b>
⑥ No. 1 Idyll: <i>Lento e sostenuto</i>	3:26
⑦ No. 2 Capriccio: <i>Allegro agitato</i>	2:56
⑧ No. 3 Legende: <i>Andante molto espressivo</i>	4:45
⑨ No. 4 Impromptu: <i>Allegretto grazioso e giocoso</i>	2:40
⑩ <b>Fantasia in G minor, Op. 27</b> (publ. 1872)	<b>19:38</b>
⑪ <b>Geschwind-Marsch in C major</b> (1845 or 1846)	<b>2:45</b>

Jens Barneck, piano

TT 65:26

FIRST RECORDINGS