



Walter NIEMANN

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME THREE

WALDBILDER AUS DEM FICHTELGEBIRGE, OP. 141

KLEINE MARBURGER SONATE, OP. 162

EPHEU UND ROSEN, OP. 64

PORZELLAN, OP. 120

STÄNDCHEN, OP. 67

Tomasz Kamieniak

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

WALTER NIEMANN Piano Music, Volume Three

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Tomasz Kamieniak, piano

*** FIRST RECORDINGS**

WALTER NIEMANN: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME THREE

by William Melton

The Niemanns of the North Sea coast of west Holstein were a family crowded with musical talent. The patriarch was Johann Claussen Niemann (1806–76), *Stadtmusicus* and organist in Wesselburen. His son Gustav (1843–81) became a violinist and composer, establishing himself in Helsingfors (Helsinki), where Robert Kajanus was one of his students. Gustav's elder brother Rudolph (1838–98) went from initial keyboard lessons with his father to studies with many of the major musicians of his age. When Rudolph reported to the Leipzig Conservatoire at the age of fifteen, his curriculum (1853–56) was guided by the master pianist Ignaz Moscheles and a faculty that Felix Mendelssohn had installed: Louis Plaidy (piano), Ferdinand David and Raimund Dreyschock (violin), Franz Brendel (music history) and Moritz Hauptmann, Ernst Richter and Julius Rietz (theory and composition). In 1857 Rudolph travelled to Paris, where he attended another famous Conservatoire, taking lessons from Antoine-François Marmontel (piano), Lambert Massart (violin) and Fromental Halévy (theory and composition). Private contacts also aided his future career, such as one made with the older, established composer-pianist Stephen Heller during many piano four-hands rehearsals. In 1858 Rudolph won the *Premier Prix* for piano, and after a further two years he returned to Germany. Still not finished with his studies, he spent time in Berlin taking lessons from Friedrich Kiel (composition) and Theodor Kullak and Hans von Bülow (piano). The last of these men introduced Rudolph to his father-in-law, Franz Liszt, who added a final polish to the young man's pianism.

In the meantime, Rudolph had married his cousin Emilie, *née* Peers. Their home towns were only eleven miles apart, but the modest trip involved crossing a marked regional border: Rudolph came from the more settled Holstein dairy farms

of Dithmarschen to the south, whereas Emilie was from Tönnig on the wild Eiderstedt peninsula of North Frisia, with its ever-changing North Sea coast, the salt marshes constantly encroaching on the polders. The pair left their birthplaces behind to establish a home in Hamburg, where over the next twenty years life was a mixture of teaching, concerts and parenthood.

Rudolph and Emilie produced four children, of whom only two lived into adulthood. Elisabeth was the elder of these by ten years, and the younger, born on 10 October 1876 in Hamburg, was Walter, who was spoiled for musical attention by his father, but exposed to noisy competition on frequent visits to his older cousins in the Warnke family, five of whom would become professional musicians.¹ Rudolph became a concert partner of the eminent violinist August Wilhelmj, beginning in 1873, and the next decade would bring an even closer collaboration.² The pianist moved his family to the Rhineland to be close to Wilhelmj for rehearsals, in 1885 landing in the sophisticated spa city of Wiesbaden. Over the next years the two musicians made concert tours across Germany, England, Scandinavia, Russia, Austria-Hungary and the Balkans, with a visit to the Sultan's Court in Constantinople. Bülow commented: 'The judgement of art aficionados is uniform in awarding Herr Rudolph Niemann a high place among the younger generation of piano virtuosos'.³

Between concerts, and particularly after Wilhelmj moved to London in 1894 to teach at the Guildhall School of Music, Rudolph struggled to keep family finances above water, enduring 'a series of anxious years in Wiesbaden, though they were also filled with creative work and teaching'.⁴ His son Walter spent his teens in the sunny,

¹ Walter's aunt Margaretha Warnke, née Niemann, bore Christoph, Rudolph and Carl, who became Kapellmeisters and keyboardists on the island of Helgoland, in Wesselburen and in Kiel, respectively, and also Heinrich and Johannes, both cellists, the former with the Metropolitan Opera, the latter with the Boston Symphony.

² The prodigious playing of August Wilhelmj (1845–1908) at age sixteen made a believer of Franz Liszt, and the young man went to Ferdinand David for further violin study in Leipzig. He would be leader of the violins at the first performance of Wagner's *Ring* in Bayreuth in 1876, and toured the world in solo recitals as far as Australia. The Stradivarius that was his instrument is now called the 'Wilhelmj'.

³ Walter Niemann, 'Meister der Klaviermusik: Rudolph Niemann', *Neue Musikzeitung*, Vol. 30, No. 13, 1909, p. 275.

⁴ Walter Niemann, 'Charakterköpfe norddeutscher Schumannianer in der Klaviermusik', *Musik und Kultur. Festschrift zum 50. Geburtstag Artur Seidls*, ed. Bruno Schuhmann, Bosse, Regensburg, 1913, p. 216.

relaxed atmosphere of the Rheingau, where wealthy aristocratic guests guaranteed that the musical programmes on offer were of a very high quality. One such was a *Liederabend* given after the death of Johannes Brahms on 3 April 1897, when the tenor Ludwig Wüllner sang a memorable programme of Brahms songs at the Hotel Viktoria, accompanied by Rudolph Niemann, with son Walter turning the pages of the score. The father was then casting about for a suitable composition teacher for his son, and he decided on Engelbert Humperdinck.

After the phenomenal success of his first opera, *Hänsel und Gretel*, Humperdinck had moved to Boppard, a quiet village perched between the Rhine and steep hills with extensive Riesling vineyards. In spite of a lengthy commute – a train to Rüdeshheim, a ferry to Bingen, and another train to Boppard – Walter Niemann thoroughly enjoyed his journeys up the Rhine Gorge to Humperdinck's 'little castle'. The proper young Holsteiner and the informal Rhenish master got along from the start. 'So little was theoretical', Niemann remembered, 'and so much was down-to-earth; for him it was all about what worked, and the few words that sufficed to show why it needed to be so and not otherwise were indicative of the master who had trained in the living school of Bayreuth.'⁵ Lessons were not confined to the scheduled late-morning hour, but in casual fashion might sprawl into the afternoon.

I often stayed for lunch, and here, in the small family circle, the happiness of secret German domesticity, in the most beautiful sense of the word, peeked out from every corner. [...] After the meal, until the departure of my train, we walked around with the children in the autumn-coloured garden of his little villa on the slope of the mountain, and Humperdinck would gradually relax; I felt in many a word how much warm, even fatherly, interest he took in me and my artistic development.⁶

Instruction came to an abrupt end when Rudolph Niemann died in 1898. His widow and children decided on a move to Leipzig, where it was hoped that after earning

⁵ 'Engelbert Humperdinck† Gedanken und Erinnerungen', *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 88, No. 21, 29 October 1921, pp. 533–34. Humperdinck had apprenticed with Richard Wagner in Bayreuth (1881–82), serving as his copyist during the preparations for the premiere of *Parsifal*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

a music degree Walter could support his mother and sister. Humperdinck suppressed his grave doubts about the benefits of academic training, instead contacting Hugo Riemann to recommend his young pupil. Walter wrote that Humperdinck told him:

‘Go to Leipzig; Riemann is a much better teacher than I am’, when my mother and I paid him our farewell visit after Father’s death before moving to Leipzig. He probably saw the professional and ‘social’ usefulness of an academic course of study leading to a philosophical doctorate, but he quietly considered it a grave injustice and a threat to my predominant creative talent. With all his deep respect for the great musicologists Hugo Riemann and Hermann Kretzschmar, he did not think much of music treated as a science and anticipated the long, difficult years in Leipzig, the external inhibitions and inner conflicts that would prevent his young pupil from creation, which was always his first priority, because of musicology, the dissertation and newspaper criticism until he liberated himself. He was only too right!⁷

Niemann’s first impressions of the renowned Leipzig Conservatoire were discouraging:

After the first lesson at the ‘Con’, I left the beautiful new building in the Grassstrasse for home, nearly sobbing with disappointment and anger. I had expected something completely different from the most famous conservatoire in Germany, but was utterly disillusioned. I feared that I would echo and fulfil Edvard Grieg’s angry words, that ‘At my departure from the Leipzig Conservatoire, I was duller than I had arrived’.⁸

The large classes of the institution compared badly with Niemann’s private instruction with Humperdinck. Still, the young man adapted to academic realities, even gradually recognising worthy attributes in his professors, who included Carl Reinecke (composition), Salomon Jadassohn (whom Nicolas Slonimsky dubbed ‘the Rock of Gibraltar of conservatism in musical teaching’⁹), Fritz von Bose (a piano *protégé* of Reinecke and Bülow) and Alfred Riesenauer (a Liszt pupil). Decades previously,

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

⁸ Walter Niemann, *Mein Leben fürs Klavier. Rückblicke und Ausblicke*, ed. Gerhard Helzel, Staccato-Verlag, Düsseldorf, 2008, p. 90.

⁹ *Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Schirmer, New York, 1984, p. 1100.

Reinecke had been a friend of Mendelssohn and Schumann, he had been the music director of the Gewandhaus Orchestra until recently, and he was the director of the Conservatoire during Niemann's years of attendance. Niemann recognised in Reinecke a living representative of a bygone era, in whom

One must honour the rigid fidelity to his original convictions that allowed him to find his formally classical ideals early on, with an addition of moderate Romanticism, and to hold on to them unwaveringly. Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz and all that followed them were contrary to his disposition, his inclinations. But he was too fine and discerning a gentleman to denounce them openly: he simply ignored their presence in his world.¹⁰

In addition to his detailed preparation in piano and composition, Niemann was also becoming a scholar. He attended lectures by the eminent University of Leipzig music professors Hermann Kretschmar and Arthur Prüfer, the art historian Karl Lamprecht, the philosopher Wilhelm Wundt, and Niemann's dissertation sponsor, the aforementioned Hugo Riemann, perhaps the most iconic musicologist in imperial Germany. Riemann would record with pride that Niemann 'received his doctorate in 1901 with the dissertation *Die abweichende Bedeutung der Ligaturen in der Mensuraltheorie der Zeit vor Johannes de Garlandia* ['The Divergent Meaning of Ligatures in the Theory of the Scale before Johannes de Garlandia']¹¹ and quickly developed into a renowned writer on music.'¹²

After graduation Niemann taught at the Bernhuth Conservatoire in Hamburg (1906–7) before being drawn inexorably back to Leipzig by the largest music-publishing market in Germany (and the world). He was briefly editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, but afterwards settled in as music critic for the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* (1907–17). Niemann typically expressed admiration for composers who drew inspiration from their own cultures, praising the likes of Debussy, Ravel, Grieg,

¹⁰ Walter Niemann, 'Karl Reinecke', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 31, No. 13, 1910, p. 277.

¹¹ French music-theorist (fl. c. 1270–1320), who for centuries was accredited as the author of *De Mensurabili Musica*, the first known treatise to examine the notation of rhythm. Modern scholarship tends to the view that he acted as editor of an existing volume.

¹² *Musik-Lexikon*, ed. Hugo Riemann and Alfred Einstein, Hesse, Berlin, 1919, p. 823.

Kjerulf, Nielsen, Sibelius, MacDowell, Coleridge-Taylor, Delius, Elgar, Holbrooke, Holst, Ireland, Cyril Scott, Albéniz, Falla, Granados, Rebikov and Skryabin, ‘while denouncing the “pathological” and “sensuous” music of Richard Strauss, Mahler and Schoenberg’.¹³ He waged unpopular public battles, even attacking the particular favourite in Leipzig, Max Reger (‘He does not play Bach, but Reger with Bach’s notes’¹⁴), who responded by threatening a libel suit. Understandably, Niemann would never be embraced by the Leipzig musical establishment.

In 1914 Niemann received a letter from Humperdinck and quickly responded:

I had come to believe, in the absence of any new opportunity, that I would end up as a full-time writer. Then, in your letter about the Fehrs Variations, you opened my eyes and told me openly what was still missing, above all the colour! I saw that I could still catch up, and now I’ve heard from you that it was a pity that I was only doing composition as a side-line. My self-confidence and courage have returned, and you have saved my talent, which, though certainly small, limited and unfashionable, is perhaps genuine! Today I feel that I am an artist at heart, and not a man of letters.¹⁵

Niemann’s compositions, which by 1914 had grown to Opus 29, slowly began to reap success. Of the theme and variations, Op. 20, that Niemann had sent to Humperdinck, *Die Musik* commented:

The variations may emphasise different aspects of the theme, but are always closely related to it, and may even be described as ‘ideal outpourings of the theme’, as Moscheles once put it. The work is always interesting, the harmonies distinctive and the rhythms lively. Especially valuable seems to me that each individual variation, regardless of its

¹³ Rose Mauro, ‘Niemann, Walter’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, Vol. 17, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 900. Modern German composers whom Niemann came to appreciate included Walter Braunfels, Hugo Kaun, Günther Raphael and Heinz Tiessen.

¹⁴ *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, 22 May 1911, quoted in Christopher Anderson, “Er spielt nicht Bach, sondern Reger in Bachschen Noten”. Einiges über Max Regers Bach-Spiel, *Annäherungen an Max Reger*, ed. Martina Sichardt, Olms, Hildesheim, 2014, p. 135.

¹⁵ Letter to Humperdinck, 29 March 1914, quoted in Anke Stupnik, *Das Klavierschaffen Walter Niemanns*, D.Phil. dissertation, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz, 2008, pp. 29–30. The ‘Fehrs Variations’ were the *Thema und Variationen in G nach J. H. Fehrs’ ‘Krieg und Hütte’*, Op. 20, for piano (F. E. C. Leuckart, Leipzig, 1911).

subject, displays an individual temperament. The fact that the musical intensity of the variations increases steadily should be of great benefit to virtuosic performance. [...] All in all, a beautifully crafted as well as genuinely musical work, which will hopefully soon find its way into concert halls.¹⁶

Niemann gradually abandoned music criticism, a daily and often exhausting use of his time, in favour of writing articles and books on larger musical subjects that interested him especially – and gave him more control of his own deadlines. Subjects on which he concentrated included, naturally, the piano (*Das Klavierbuch. Kurze Geschichte der Klaviermusik und ihrer Meister*, 1910; *Klavier-Lexikon*, 1918; *Meister des Klaviers*, 1919; *Die Ästhetik des Klavierspiels*, with Theodor Kullak, 1922; and a critical edition of C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*, 1906) but also Nordic music (*Die Musik Skandinaviens*, 1906; *Edvard Grieg*, 1908; *Das Nordlandbuch, Eine Einführung in die gesamte Nordische Natur und Kultur*, 1909; *Jean Sibelius*, 1917; *Die nordische Klaviermusik*, 1918) and historical surveys (*Die Virginalmusik*, 1919; *Musik und Musiker des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zu Gegenwart*, 1905; *Die Musik seit Richard Wagner*, 1913; *Die Musik der Gegenwart*, 1913). The most successful was a much-loved biography, *Brahms* (1920), which went through fifteen editions in its first thirteen years; an English translation by Catherine Phillips (1929) was also reissued multiple times, the last as recently as 1969.¹⁷ During the years 1921–24, Niemann edited almost the entire repertoire of Phonola music rolls for the firm Hupfeld in Leipzig (with Welte-Mignon and Pianola, Phonola was one of the leading makers of self-playing pianos). Hupfeld would run into economic difficulties as shellac recordings made continual improvements, but the remarkable Hupfeld house pianist, Walter Gieseke, became a friend and would be an important early performer of Niemann's works.

In the latter 1920s, when Niemann's compositions were better known but often characterised as gentle pastels for the inexperienced pianist, the composer turned to performing them himself:

¹⁶ Friedrich Adolf Geissler, 'Walter Niemann: Thema und Variationen für Pianoforte, Op. 20', *Die Musik*, Vol. 11, No. 17, 1 June 1912, p. 306.

¹⁷ Cooper Square Publishers, New York.

Niemann was already in his fifties when he appeared on the concert stages of a number of large cities to promote his own works. It then became apparent that the brilliant player also lent such pieces a tone of powerful strength and austerity, which until then had generally been treated with greater softness.¹⁸

He also grasped the opportunity that radio offered, creating programmes to educate listeners, often infused with the poetry that inspired the compositions. His central location in Leipzig meant easy contact with broadcasting management and talent, and explained his continuous domicile in that city for 46 years. Still, Niemann developed a distaste for what he felt was Leipzig middle-class smugness – his home town of Hamburg, with a busy harbour and a large Jewish minority that dated from the end of the sixteenth century, was traditionally more cosmopolitan. In fact, he stubbornly continued to identify himself in Linnaean terms as ‘a *Hamburgensis Holsatus* by descent and character, a Hamburger of Holstein blood and will remain so to the end of my life’.¹⁹

Very quickly Niemann’s activities made him a household name. He lent his renown to many groups. In the year 1929 alone Niemann was a working member of the *Gesellschaft zur Herausgeber der Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, the *Bund deutscher Komponisten* (he was also on the steering committee), the *Reichsverband deutscher Tonkünstler und Musiklehrer*,²⁰ *Hebbelgemeinde* and the *Gesellschaft der Freunde Wilhelm Raabes*, and he was named an honorary member of the Beethoven Club of Appleton, Wisconsin, USA. In his autobiography he recalled:

What one wishes for in youth one is given in old age. As a native of Hamburg, I was always a travel enthusiast. But it was not until I was in my fifties that my ‘life of travel’ truly began, with piano recitals, radio broadcasts and sound recordings of my own piano works. My basically shy, pensive and dreamy ‘Nordic’ nature – in my boyhood I was

¹⁸ Max Steinitzer, ‘Walter Niemann und die Exotik’, *Simrock Jahrbuch I*, ed. Erich Müller, Simrock, Berlin, 1928, p. 115.

¹⁹ Niemann, *Mein Leben fürs Klavier*, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁰ *Reich* can mean ‘kingdom’ or ‘empire’, but also means simply ‘realm’. The *Reichsverband deutscher Tonkünstler und Musiklehrer* replaced the *Zentralverband deutscher Tonkünstler und Musiklehrer* in 1922. After the Nazi ascendance in 1933, the *Reichsverband* was disbanded and absorbed into the new *Reichsmusikkammer*.

wary of people and, as a Low German, completely introverted – was genuinely opposed to appearing in public. I still do not understand how I overcame this aversion to the limelight from the very first evening (and in my circle of friends, the amazement was widespread). [...] My piano music really seemed to give people something. This in spite of the fact that the professional critics, who in Germany tended to disregard the personal, individual qualities of a creative artist, almost never put these qualities in the foreground, while analytically exposing the foreign ‘influences’, ‘echoes’ and ‘models’.²¹

His popularity, however, was to be reckoned with, and if a Niemann anniversary year occurred, the press responded: his 50th birthday in 1926 (‘We hear that England and both of the Americas have societies dedicated to Niemann’s art’²²) and his 60th in 1936 (‘We wish the genial master of warm and intimate art of the homeland, and of a German impressionism rich in dazzling colours, that his lively imagination and joy of creation may remain with him for a long time to come’²³). The accent on ‘art of the homeland’ was an indication of the new regime that had taken power in Niemann’s 57th year.²⁴

Though not without ingrained regional and nationalist loyalties, Niemann had long been a citizen of the world, a multilingual correspondent with many international contacts. He condemned the rising National Socialists in a letter of 31 July 1932 to Ludwig Bisschopinck, his longtime friend and promoter from Mönchengladbach: ‘I am repelled by their fist-fighting rather than using verbal weapons, their defiant, noisy hooliganism that confuses German with Teutonic. Woe betide us if German art, and German artists, are delivered up to the mercies of their limited “racial psychosis”!’²⁵ But such thoughts were shared only in private. The Nazi seizure of the entire German

²¹ Niemann, *Mein Leben fürs Klavier*, op. cit., p. 110.

²² Anna Roner, ‘Ein deutscher Klaviermeister: Walter Niemann zum 50. Geburtstag, 10. Oktober 1926’, *Neue Muzikzeitung*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 1927, p. 42.

²³ Adolf Diesterweg, ‘Walter Niemann, der Sechzigjährige’, *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Vol. 63, 10 October 1936, p. 626.

²⁴ The National Socialist movement had made rapid progress across Germany in the early 1930s, even in Niemann’s beloved Hamburg, where the Lord Mayor, Carl Wilhelm Petersen of the German Democratic Party, resigned from office on 4 March 1933, unwilling to execute the new NS government orders that he considered illegal.

²⁵ Quoted in Karl Dreimüller, ‘Musikerbriefe an einen rheinischen Musikliebhaber’, *Anthony van Hoboken: Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Joseph Schmidt-Görg, Schott, Mainz, 1962, p. 42.

music industry resulted in bans on what was deemed modern, ‘degenerate’, foreign or Jewish. Though Niemann had never been a friend of atonality, he was appalled at the sudden disappearance from concert programmes of the music of Jewish composers such as Darius Milhaud, Ernst Toch and Samuel Feinberg, as well as that of many other French, Polish, Russian-Soviet and jazz-influenced composers whom he valued highly.²⁶ Though he recognised a large chasm between jazz and classical pianists, ‘I also recognise in jazz a “new art form”. I give it full justification as a life and dance style of modern youth, I often find it highly amusing, and I am also pleased about its influence on the rhythmically often terribly stiff German symphonic music’.²⁷

He continued his habitual composing and performing unhindered by the authorities, and was awarded the title of ‘professor’ in 1937. Though hardly one of the favoured composers of the *Reichsmusikkammer* – he had never been a member of the established musical order – Niemann was tolerated by the organs of the regime. His wartime reviews invariably reduce or simply ignore his past attraction to foreign composers and ‘degenerate’ musical styles like jazz, while emphasising his conservative Germanness. A 1941 retrospective in the *Zeitschrift für Musik* enthused that ‘Niemann’s music is a widely spread canopy that preserves its magical Neo-Romantic essence in true German fashion whether the heavens be cloudy or sunny. Even when Niemann talks about “foreign countries and people” he remains a real German, an astute and captivating storyteller’.²⁸

The German invasion of Poland and the subsequent declarations of war led to changes that at first restricted, then impoverished most city-dwellers. Niemann’s older sister, Elisabeth, died in 1942. Air-raid sirens announced the intrusion of war into civilian lives. On 20 February 1944, when sirens sent Niemann and many of his south Leipzig neighbours into bunkers, the spacious flat on the second floor of Kochstrasse 119 that he had called home since 1907 was destroyed by incendiary bombs.

²⁶ Sergei Prokofiev was now a favourite of Niemann’s, as was Ralph Vaughan Williams.

²⁷ Niemann, *Mein Leben fürs Klavier*, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁸ Grete Altstadt-Schütze, ‘Walter Niemann in der Klaviermusik der Jetztzeit’, *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 108, No. 3, March 1941, p. 167.

Niemann lost the collections, books and instruments of a lifetime, saving only a fraction of his papers, some printed scores and a handful of family photographs. The barbarity of modern war on civilians, which Niemann well knew had been introduced by his own countrymen, left him deeply affected. With Germany's capitulation, the division of the country into zones administered by the victors made travel, and a last pilgrimage to Hamburg, impossible. Within this diminished world, the spiritually bereft composer reported himself, 'reasonably healthy – aside from the usual marks of old age – outside 73, inside 37'.²⁹

Niemann's 75th-birthday jubilee came in 1951. The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* commemorated, 'Seventy-five years! An extensive chapter of music history from the first "Ring" performance in Bayreuth to [the present] opens up before us, a multifaceted artistic life full of industrious work of the master whom we gratefully commemorate today: Walter Niemann'.³⁰ He also found time to write one last book, his memoirs. Completed in the autumn of 1952, though not published until more than 50 years later, Niemann's final written thoughts included this 'Ausklang':

Are these memoirs to be ended then on a hopeless, gloomy minor chord? No! Now my homeland is bleeding from a thousand self-inflicted wounds. Especially now I must reiterate that I believe in my people – despite everything that was terrible and incomprehensible about the Hitler years. I love the people, despite their dreadful aberrations. I mourn deeply with them over the immense human sacrifice, the extermination of the best and noblest youth, the immeasurable and irreplaceable cultural values lost, terribly exacerbated by our own sins, to the dreadful, barbaric weaponry of the Anglo-American bombing raids. I mourn deeply over the moral and ethical decline, into which this, hopefully last, world war has descended as war inevitably does. I observe with pain that my people have become hard, materialistic, intolerant of other opinions and beliefs, disrespectful and uncaring of the elderly, and indifferent to intellectual creativity. They regard culture and art as something that is absolutely dispensable, superfluous and

²⁹ Quoted in Niemann, *Mein Leben fürs Klavier*, op. cit., p. 138.

³⁰ Hanns Schwarz, 'Ein Leben fürs Klavier: Walter Niemann zum 75. Geburtstag', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 112, No. 10, 1951, p. 530.

contemptible [...]. And yet, I am firmly convinced that they will one day overcome this most terrible trial in their history and once again be a Germany that is respected and regarded in the world, peaceful, united and indivisible.³¹

Niemann died on 17 June 1953 in Leipzig after suffering a stroke. His ashes were buried in the Leipzig Südfriedhof on 26 June, with a headstone designed by his friend, the Leipzig artist Fritz Zalisz.³² The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* wrote:

With Walter Niemann, a great German artist and lovable Mensch has passed away. In his memoirs 'My Life for the Piano' he describes his life [...], divided into the three parts of Hamburg (born 1876), Wiesbaden and Leipzig: truly a 'life for the piano', the quiet, secluded life of a creative musician and writer.³³

Musica commented:

After the bombing of his home in Leipzig Niemann continued his work in all seclusion and modesty, especially honoured and loved by his closest friends. In his last days he yearned to visit the scenes of his youth (Wiesbaden, the Rhine and Hamburg), to which he felt closely connected. For his friends, he was always 'good old Cap'n Pott'. To the piano playing world he was a rich godsend. It is now up to us to make his legacy better known.³⁴

³¹ Niemann, *Mein Leben fürs Klavier*, op. cit., pp. 124–25.

³² Zalisz (1893–1971), who studied both art and zoology (the latter with Ernst Haeckel), was a leading expressionist painter and sculptor who was often attracted to composers as subjects (including Bach, Wagner, Bruckner, Richard Strauss and, of course, Niemann). In 1937 six of his works were seized from collections and destroyed as 'Entartete Kunst'. Niemann wrote, 'Zalisz is my most loyal friend, a highly intellectual, philosophically educated man of the most tender sensibility made more profound by much affliction and a self-effacing goodness of heart' (*ibid.*, p. 118).

³³ Georg Brieger, 'Ein Leben fürs Klavier: Am 17. Juni verstarb Walter Niemann', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 114, No. 8, 1953, p. 469.

³⁴ Werner Klemund, 'In Memoriam Walter Niemann', *Musica*, Vol. 8, 1954, p. 31. Niemann famously went by a string of humorous nicknames, many derived from Hamburg dialect. 'Käppen Pott' was a favourite – others included 'Hamburger Janmaat', 'Obermandarin', 'Hamburgensis' and 'Klavierniemann' – and Niemann began many a phone call with 'Cap'n Pott, at your service!'. 'Pott' was created by the Hamburg-born novelist Hans Leip (who also wrote the lyrics of the song 'Lili Marleen') in *Die Klabauterflagge oder Atje Potts erste und höchst merkwürdige große Fahrt* ('The Klabauter Flag or Atje Pott's First and Most Remarkable Grand Voyage'; Insel-Verlag, Leipzig, 1933). Klabauter are fanciful water-creatures that rescue North Sea and Baltic sailors.

During Niemann's lifetime he was widely dismissed as a mere piano composer, and therefore of limited importance. Certain cognoscenti, however, recognised his uncommon talents quite early:

His piano works (more than a hundred have been published) are among the most frequently performed in Germany. Why? Niemann's music, which takes the form of an impressionistic Neo-Romanticism, is unproblematic, comfortable, Apollonian and cheerful, it demonstrates significant formal and technical skill, is always grateful to play, and thus well matches the taste of an educated, musical middle class. Niemann is to our time what Gade and Kirchner, or Jensen and Grieg were to an earlier generation. The 'contemporary' piano teacher will hardly be able to ignore his works, and our domestic music market counts them among its finest enrichments.³⁵

As the composer himself explained of his early efforts, 'Art is human, and this idea is helpful in characterising the nature of my piano music as a mixture of north and south: "Nordic" in feeling, sensation and mood, but "southern" in colour and sound'.³⁶ Of further influences he wrote, 'The piano writing in the later works [...] cannot entirely deny the tonal and pictorial inspirations of modern Neo-Romantic piano music, be it Russian-Polish or French-English'.³⁷

In 1961, Reinhold Sietz credited Niemann for absorbing the musical streams around him:

Niemann recognised early on that the 'further development of Schumann's and Brahms' style of the piano did not lead to a fruitful and independent modernity of German piano music', and the recognition of the superiority of foreign, especially French and Spanish, piano music, enlarged his expressive range. He also expanded his range of expression through the extensive inclusion of impressionistic and exotic elements. [...] Without

³⁵ Robert Teichmüller and Kurt Herrmann, *Internationale moderne Klaviermusik*, Hug, Leipzig and Zürich, 1927, p. 106.

³⁶ Walter Niemann, 'Wie ich zum Klavier kam', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1920, p. 51.

³⁷ 'Schleswig-Holsteinische Tondichter der Gegenwart', *Schleswig-Holsteinischer Kunstkalender 1917*, ed. Ernst Saueremann, Stiftungsverlag, Potsdam, 1916, p. 71.

having gone in absolutely new directions, he exerted a thoughtful influence on home and piano music of this century, and not only in Germany.³⁸

Though Niemann wrote a handful of works in different genres (including a smattering of early songs, the *Rheinische Nachtmusik für Streichorchester und 2 Hörner*, Op. 35, and the *Deutsches Waldidyll für kleines Orchester*, Op. 40), his output was dominated by the roughly 1,000 pieces for piano that made up most of his 189 opus numbers. The scholar Anke Stupnik sorted them into three main categories: adaptations of Baroque and Classical forms, lyrical piano pieces and literature for the young.³⁹

In *Epheu und Rosen* ('Ivy and Roses'), Op. 64, which was dedicated to Hermann Wetzel⁴⁰ and published by Gebrüder Hug & Co. of Leipzig in 1919, all five movements use ABA (or song) form. The first number, *Moderato ma un poco agitato ed inquieto* [1], offers a stepwise ascending theme in common time and E minor. The *espressivo cantabile* mood is dramatic, with sharp accents and high chromaticism. The secondary section, *Un poco più tranquillo*, re-employs the same thematic material while altering the ambience to *dolce cantante* in G major. The *Molto sostenuto* return of the opening in E minor follows, before a brief, ever-slowing coda ends in E major. The second piece, *Andante tranquillo e malinconico* [2], begins *dol. cant.* (*dolce cantabile* or *cantando*) in F minor and in common time, the mournful downward theme peppered with dotted quavers and semiquavers. The dotted rhythm is isolated and reworked in the B section, *Un pochettino più mosso*, its modulatory sequences quickening towards the return of the opening. The latter offers new touches of dissonance before a slowing of note-values, marked *molto legatissimo*, *diminuendo* and *molto espressivo*, re-establishes

³⁸ 'Niemann, Gustav Adolph, [...] dessen Bruder Rudolph, [...] dessen Sohn Walter', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, Vol. 9, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1961, pp. 1520–21.

³⁹ Stupnik, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁰ Justus Hermann Wetzel (1879–1973) was a composer and teacher who taught in Berlin, where from 1910 onwards he served on the staff of the Klindworth-Scharwenka Conservatoire, the Royal Music Institute and the Berlin University of the Arts. Mark Lothar was a pupil of Wetzel, and the artist Emil Orlik and poet Hermann Hesse were among his circle of friends. Wetzel was dismissed from his teaching engagements by the Nazi regime in 1937, and his Jewish wife, Rose, *née* Bergmann, was briefly imprisoned. Wetzel composed almost exclusively Neo-Romantic *Lieder*, over 600 at his death, of which about a hundred saw publication. Artists who performed Wetzel's songs included Emmi Leisner, Heinrich Schlusnus and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

F minor and finishes on bare F octaves, *pp*. The only major-key piece of the opus, *Quasi adagio cantabile ed espressivo* [3], begins $\frac{2}{4}$ *piano dol. cant.*, and its character is quickly established by the genial quavers in thirds and sixths in D major. The slightly faster middle section continues the quaver movement, but after starting in A major, modulates over repeated sequences that swell to *forte*. There is a slowing for the return of A, again in D major but now enhanced by a subsidiary theme in semiquavers in the bass. Chromatic cadences add piquancy to the slowing tempo, as crochets slow to minims, and the end arrives in hushed D major. In $\frac{3}{4}$, the *Andante patetico e sempre pesante e poco rubato* [4] starts moderately with two crochets before the first complete bar. Though C minor is hinted at, the basic triads are obscured by the constant addition of chromatics. A single B major chord signals the beginning of the B section, though sequential modulations obscure further definition. The return of the opening, again hinting at C minor, ultimately produces three successive C minor chords at its *piano* close. The finale of *Ivy and Roses*, marked *Molto moderato ed egualmente* [5], opens with relentless quavers in common time, *pp e dolce mormorando*. The key centre is D minor, though the F natural that would solidly affirm the key appears only rarely. The secondary section is *mf* in A major, with a slower, hopeful counter-theme appearing in the bass. Modulatory quavers lead to the return of A, the D minor now *forte* and accented, and a slow D major coda progresses in sweet *tranquillo piano* before a falling cascade of *pp* arpeggios ends well below the bass clef on a saturnine D1.

The eleven movements that make up *Porzellan Figuren und Bilder aus berühmten Manufakturen* ('Porcelain Figures and Pictures from Famous Manufacturers'), Op. 120 (Peters, Leipzig, 1931), were dedicated to Ludwig Bisschopinck. The scope of the work was described by the musicologist Friedrich Herzfeld in *Die Musik*:

Niemann walks through a porcelain collection and his eyes, which caress the delicate forms of the individual masterpieces, convey what he sees to the ear. Porcelain from all over the world thus provides a picture of the world – not as it hammers at us every hour with all the hardships of the times, with misery, hunger, unemployment and mental suffering. Instead, it emerges as some of us wish it had always been: fountains, serenade

singers, weaver birds, high mandarins and shepherdesses are the symbols of this dream world – all made of porcelain.⁴¹

Most of these pieces are in ABA form, but as they are largely monothematic, the middle sections only differ as far as exhibiting contrasting keys. Each number bears two titles: a particular porcelain piece such as the very first, ‘Die kleine Schäferin’ (‘The Little Shepherdess’) [6], and a subtitle that identifies the place of origin, in this first case that of Meissen, the Saxon town known for fine porcelain since 1710. ‘The Little Shepherdess’ begins in the delicate and antiquated *Tempo di Minuetto all’ antica*, in $\frac{3}{4}$ and G major, styled *Mit aller Süßigkeit und Grazie des Rococo* (‘With all of the sweetness and grace of the Rococo’). ‘Tanzendes englisches Bauernpaar’ (‘An English Farming Couple Dancing’) [7] is an example of Old Chelsea (established c. 1743). Marked *Moderato, ma marcato*, the piece of only 43 bars opens in $\frac{2}{4}$ and C major in sturdy dotted rhythms, *Kräftig und schlicht* (‘Powerful and sleek’), *ma sonore*. ‘Athenischer Opferreigen’ (‘Athenian Dance at a Sacrificial Festival’) [8], in Vienna Royal porcelain (founded 1718), begins *Andantino mosso* with venerable repose in E flat major. In compound metre ($\frac{6}{4}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$), it bears the injunctions *In ruhig und feierlich dahinschreitender Bewegung* (‘In a calm and solemn striding motion’), and *piano, ma sonore e dolce cantando*. ‘Dänischer Frühling’ (‘Danish Spring’) [9], in Royal Copenhagen (since 1775), is dedicated to the memory of the Danish composer and pedagogue Niels Gade. The piece begins *Vivo e leggiero, quasi improvvisando* in $\frac{6}{8}$ and D major, and its sparkling opening (septuplet demisemiquavers) is styled *im nordischen Volkston* (‘in the Nordic folk-style’). ‘Reisvögelchen’ (‘Little Weaver Bird’) [10], in Japan porcelain (early seventeenth century), starts *Amabile con moto* in $\frac{3}{4}$ and G major, its flitting quintuplet hemidemisemiquavers marked *Leicht und zierlich beschwingt* (‘Light and gracefully lilting’). No. 6, midway through *Porzellan*, ‘Der kleine holländische Glockenturm’ (‘The Little Dutch Bell-Tower’) [11], of Delft manufacture (from 1585), begins *alla breve, Moderato con anima* in D major. The player is instructed to deliver the refined peals *Mit silberhellem Glockenklang – quasi Carillon* (‘With the silver-bright sound of bells – quasi carillon’).

⁴¹ Friedrich Herzfeld, ‘Musikalien. Walter Niemann: Porzellan’, *Die Musik*, Vol. 24, No. 9, June, 1932, p. 710.

No. 7, 'Beppo, der Serenadensänger' ('Beppo, the Serenade Singer') [12], in Naples porcelain (est. 1743), is marked *In tempo d'una Sereneta*. The languid G major theme in $\frac{12}{8}$ metre comes with the guidance *dolce cantando* and *Mit südländisch freiem Vortrag* ('With southern free expression'). 'Jagdstück' ('Hunting Piece') [13], in Rosenthal (from 1879), begins with a sixteen-bar introduction (*Molto moderato e un poco tenuto*) that mimics horn calls near and far, before the stately theme appears in $\frac{6}{8}$ (A major) at *Allegro alla caccia*. 'Madame la Marquise' [14], in Sèvres (founded 1738), opens *Tempo di gavotto del' XVII. secolo* with sturdy charm, *alla breve* and in F major. 'Der gelbporzellanene Obermandarin' ('The Yellow Porcelain High Mandarin') [15], created in China (Tang Dynasty, 618–907AD), is *Adagio assai* in $\frac{2}{4}$ metre, introduced in F minor, *pp e misterioso*, at the phrase *Es war einmal ...* ('Once upon a time ...'). Nine bars later, at *Alla marcia, moderato ed alla burla*, the solemn yet spry first theme is heard in F major. No. 11, the final piece of *Porzellan*, is 'Die Fontäne von Sanssouci' ('The Fountain at Sanssouci') [16], of Old Berlin manufacture (est. 1761). The *Allegro (non troppo) amabile* in G major is in the same key as the very first piece in the set and, here a novelty, is in ABAB form. The scintillating first theme is in common time, and an additional notice at *Poco meno mosso* echoes that of the first number: *mit der zierlichen Grazie des Rococo* ('with the delicate grace of the Rococo'). The composer played the suite in its radio premiere in late spring of 1932. The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* commented:

The world and home traveller has become a collector. Yet he loves his collected items not for the simple sake of owning them, but for the life that they possess; Niemann's porcelain suite captures the life, air and light, spirit and consciousness that radiate from those figures that the master potter has presented to the master of tone. Niemann is always concerned with the heart of things, and as a collector he is no different. Thus, in the 'Athenian Round Dance of Sacrifice', the marvellous world of the second golden age of mankind appears to him, next to it an English peasant couple gambols rustically, China smiles at us enigmatically, the chaste 'Danish Spring' shows delicate birches on the verge

of bloom, Italy's Beppo sings soulfully of a carefree life in the sunshine, and the 'Fountain of Sanssouci' sparkles in a thousand drops of water.⁴²

Niemann's *Ständchen* ('Serenade'), Op. 67 17, was published by Ernst Eulenburg of Leipzig in 1919. The piece begins *Amabile con moto*, in E flat major with a rocking ⁶ rhythm that is immediately recognisable – as Artur Liebscher noted, 'the accompanying motif of the Barcarolle from "Tales of Hoffmann" cheekily makes its appearance'.⁴³ The form used is ABABA, with B a *poco animato* theme of horn fifths in B flat major, and a codetta that employs both themes. Though Niemann increased melodic and harmonic pungency beyond nineteenth-century norms, 'Despite the sensuousness of his melodies, his tonal language remains refined'.⁴⁴

In June of 1934 Niemann and his sister travelled to Alexandersbad to take the waters. In his autobiography, Niemann wrote of his personal attraction to this rugged area in Franconia (northern Bavaria), situated between Bayreuth and the Czech border:

the gloomily beautiful Fichtelgebirge (Alexandersbad, Berneck, Wirzburg). If Berneck, with all the marvellous romance of its castle-crowned location in the narrow valley of the rushing Ölschnitz, remained only a one-off episode to which I owed my 'Franconian Sonata',⁴⁵ we were captivated by Alexandersbad from the very beginning. Here, in the midst of a paradisiacal, peaceful forest solitude, the simple bath houses, spa temples and lodging houses were inspired by the classical spirit of the noble Queen Luise and the romantic spirit of the curly-haired Jean Paul. My 'Forest Pictures from the Fichtelgebirge' were created here. The altitude on the gentle slope of the actual mountain ridge, which on the one hand allowed solitary, heroic hikes through quiet coniferous forests to the natural and rocky wonder of the 'Luisenburg', which Goethe had called a marvel, and on the

⁴² Alfred Nestmann, 'Niemann: Op. 120, Porzellan. Figuren und Bilder von berühmten Manufakturen für Klavier', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 99, No. 1, January 1932, p. 49.

⁴³ Artur Liebscher, 'Neue Klaviermusik fürs Haus', *Kunstwart*, Vol. 34, No. 6, March 1921, p. 374.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

⁴⁵ That is, Niemann's Piano Sonata No. 4 in A major, 'Fränkische', Op. 88, written in summer 1922.

other idyllic meadow and rocky walks to Jean Paul's cosy 'little town of light', Wunsiedel, was just right for us.⁴⁶

The *Waldbilder aus dem Fichtelgebirge* ('Forest Pictures from the Fichtel Mountains'), Op. 141, were published by Anton Böhm & Sohn of Augsburg in 1936, and dedicated to 'Herr and Frau Professor Santl in Waldhäusl, Marquartstein'. The individual numbers are akin to musical postcards, and their form is ABA – though all is foreshortened in these miniatures, which have lengths of as little as one page. They are also usually monothematic, and the interest of the brief middle sections is found in a differing key and a heightening of chromaticism rather than a change of theme. The first of the *Forest Pictures* was 'Juni-Morgen' ('June Morning') [18], styled *Allegro brioso* and in $\frac{6}{8}$, the cheerful F major opening is marked *In jauchzender Wanderfreude* ('In the Exultant Joy of Travel'), as if the traveller has arrived with fresh energy. 'Einsamer Weiher im Hochmoos' ('Lonely Pond in the High Fen') [19], *poco Andante malinconico* and in $\frac{3}{4}$, is given a more solemn, A minor treatment. In 'Siebenstern' ('Seven-pointed Star' or 'Arctic Flower') [20], *Amabile e teneramente con moto (Andantino mosso)*, in common time, the buoyant D major opening is marked *Im Volkston* ('In a popular tone'). 'Felsenmeer' ('Sea of Rock') [21], depicting a fourteen-acre field of granite boulders that are a relic of the end of the last Ice Age, evoked an austere treatment in $\frac{2}{2}$ metre and C major, marked both *Largamente sostenuto e solenne* and *Mit granitener Wucht und strenger Starrheit* ('With granitic strength and strict rigidity'). 'Waldbächlein' ('Forest Brook'), No. 5 [22], at the very centre of the *Forest Pictures*, is given a delicate, darting theme in D major ($\frac{3}{4}$), with the appropriate direction *Allegretto liquido in modo pastorale*. 'Rosarote Abendwolken' ('Pink Evening Clouds') [23], *Larghetto*, in $\frac{3}{4}$, receives an amiable yet enigmatic theme in E flat major, with the direction *teneramente*. 'Farren im Wind' ('Bullocks in the Wind') [24], employs agile semiquavers, *Leggierissimo con moto* in common time (F major), to give a breezy, but *zart wehend* ('gently blowing') ambience. 'Heroische Landschaft – Vogelruf in Luisenburg' ('Heroic Landscape – Birdcall in the Luisenburg') [25], *Moderato, ma patetico e eroico in modo* and in $\frac{6}{8}$, begins with a doleful

⁴⁶ Niemann, *op. cit.*, p. 47.



Part of the 'Felsenmeer' ('Sea of Rock'), the fourteen-acre field of granite boulders evoked in the fourth movement of Niemann's Waldbilder aus dem Fichtelgebirge

nobility in G minor. Unlike the other *Forest Pictures*, the sharply delineated middle section is given over to birdsong (in the compound metre $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$). An ending codetta of eight bars brings a short quotation from No. 4, the ‘Sea of Rock’, now transposed into G minor. The final piece, ‘Abschied’ (‘Farewell’) [26], *Un poco Allegretto tranquillo* in common time, presents a wistful theme in F major, the key of the first piece. In the codetta, marked *quasi corni*, horn fifths fading as if in the distance give an acoustical illusion of departure.

The composer introduced the *Forest Pictures* to the world in his ‘Walter Niemann Hour’ on Breslau Radio. Anneliese Kaempffer offered this critique of the cycle in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*:

What a marvellous gift the tone poet Walter Niemann has been given in his ability to capture diverse, profound impressions of nature in musical soundscapes! [...] Master Niemann does not take us to distant foreign lands, but in the Fichtel Mountain pictures shows us his own homeland in its multifaceted grace, beauty and violence. [...] Niemann’s unique style of expression has often been honoured in this journal in formal and technical terms. Now, again, any keenly interested and receptive player will find musical and technical enrichment and exhilaration in many respects. It is particularly in W. Niemann that we witness the fact that reproducing the works of a master is possible only through the technique intrinsic to that master; that such things can only be achieved and made personal through one’s own compositions. On the whole, these pieces are of medium technical difficulty, but only a mature player will be capable of coaxing the tonal world to reveal itself in its entirety.⁴⁷

The *Kleine Marburger Sonate*, Op. 162 (also referred to as Piano Sonata No. 12), was composed in 1942 but went unpublished until 1946, when H. L. Grahl of Apolda⁴⁸ issued it, with a dedication to Dr Hermann and Mrs Lisa Stephani, who had hosted

⁴⁷ Anneliese Kaempffer, ‘Musikalien: für Klavier. [...] Waldbilder aus dem Fichtelgebirge, Op. 141’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 104, No. 10, 1937, p. 1129.

⁴⁸ Apolda is a town in Thuringia, about ten miles northeast of Weimar.

Niemann in their house in Marburg.⁴⁹ Though best known for his colourful miniatures, from 1913 until his death Niemann completed no fewer than 23 sonatas and sonatinas for piano. Anke Stupnik explained their place in sonata history:

Niemann's awareness of tradition, combined with his roots in classical principles as represented by the German Brahmsians, obliged him to maintain the legacy entrusted to him at the Leipzig Conservatoire. He gladly and wholeheartedly complied with this demand: his piano sonatas belong exclusively to those post-romantic manifestations that remain true to classicist principles. However, Niemann had no intention of being an epigone in his piano sonatas: he endeavoured to find new possibilities for further development and strove for high-quality results. [...]

The general decline in interest in sonata compositions is linked to the development of the sonata in the first half of the 20th century. The dissolution of tonality increasingly spread to all musical genres, which is why the sonata was robbed of its foundations, as its structure was primarily based on key contrasts until the 20th century. This compositional discrepancy had to be faced by all composers who dealt with the genre; at the same time, it was necessary to find new possibilities for the further development of the sonata and to secure its existence in modern and future musical life. As a result, two main currents emerged, both of which endeavoured to revive the genre in a lively manner and to develop further. The followers of New Music pursued a path that moved further and further away from the traditional form in connection with atonality. For many composers, a fusion of the sonata genre with atonality represented an insurmountable obstacle. The contrast of keys, on which the traditional sonata was primarily constructed, was for them a fundamental element without which a sonata form could not exist. Walter Niemann clearly belongs to the group of classicists who chose the 'conservative' path with regard to their sonata-writing at the beginning of the 20th century and created sonatas with a traditional movement pattern.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Stephani (1877–1960), who had known Niemann since their university days, became a distinguished academic, personally establishing the Marburg University musicology seminars. His exclusive occupation with German composers led after 1933 to increasing involvement with the National Socialist musical hierarchy, and he joined the Nazi Party in 1937.

⁵⁰ Stupnik, *op. cit.*, pp. 243 and 276–77.

The first movement of Niemann's Marburg Sonata, *Allegro amabile* [27], opens in $\frac{6}{8}$ with a playful theme in G major, *dolce e chiaro*, which plays over a steady stream of crotchets in the bass. The same motif breaks apart into modulatory fragments before the arrival of the more relaxed second theme in horn fifths (notated *quasi corni*), in the subdominant D major. An *Animato marcato* fragmentation of the second theme precedes a *piano tranquillo* transition that pivots to the development. Here the tonal centre, which initially employs scraps of the first theme, shifts rapidly from G major to C and B flat minor, and the marking *agitando a poco a poco* brings *marcato forte* dynamics and heightened chromaticism. The second theme hurries by *staccato* in the disorder, before a sequential repeat of a first-theme fragment leads to a recapitulation of the opening in G major, now *pp delicatissimo*. Modulations similar to those of the exposition again result in the second theme, which now returns in G major. The first-theme fragment dominates the coda-like finish, with a jazz-like E flat major ninth chord and *forte* accented ultimate D to G major cadence. This opening sonata-form movement clocks in at well under five minutes, and yet, just as Niemann's satisfying storytelling conceals the expert craftsmanship of his mature style, to a large extent the brevity of the treatment is disguised by the cogent and authentic sonata-form argument.

The sinuous and chromatic triplets that open the $\frac{6}{4}$ metre *Poco adagio notturnale* [28] form a modern background to the dotted quavers of the reassuring, solidly tonic first theme that enters *dolce mormorando* in the third bar, as the contemporary accompaniment is literally overlaid with a traditional melody. Marked *Più animato* and *rallentando*, the music now moves to the B theme in F major, with a *dolce e triste cant.* stepwise melody. The return of A in C major is prepared *Largamente* and *sostenuto*, then it cedes to a codetta that evokes the earlier semiquavers before slowing to minims. The final four bars are devoted to repeated C major chords, *schwebend* ('suspended'), and the movement ends *pppp*.

The sonata finale [29] *Moderato con moto*, is in $\frac{2}{2}$ and G major. The genial opening theme in thirds is marked with *Im behaglichen Wanderton* ('In a cosy, ambling manner'), and supported by *legato* quavers in the bass. A direction of *Poco più animato*

sends the theme tonally far afield, after which it lands at the *staccato* quavers of the second subject in D major. A *con fuoco* crescendo to *forte* precedes a development that employs both previous themes, venturing through D minor, F major and A and E minor, before several bars of repeated D quavers in the bass act as the dominant to the G major recapitulation of the opening theme. The theme then veers harmonically only to return to G major for the secondary theme. A coda offers a triplet variation on A, *Poco lento* and *im süßschmerzlichen Abschiedston* ('in a sweetly painful farewell'), before the instruction *Molto con fuoco* propels the B theme towards the *ff* finish on three *marcato* G major chords.

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Tomasz Kamieniak is a pianist and composer who enjoys playing the works of not only of familiar figures like Franz Liszt but also Charles-Valentin Alkan and other less well-known composers.

He graduated from the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice after attending the piano class of Joanna Domańska, further developing his playing under Rolf-Dieter Arens at the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar, with Konstantin Scherbakov in master-classes, Zbigniew Raubo through postgraduate studies in Katowice and Leslie Howard in London.



He was awarded the special prize at the Fourth International Franz Liszt Piano Competition in Weimar and recorded works by Józef Wieniawski as the winner of the Grand Prix at the Fourth Competition for a recording project 'Forgotten Polish Music', organised by the label Acte Préalable. A recipient of scholarships from both the Marshall's Office in Katowice and the Wagner Society in Bayreuth, he also received a prize presented by the Mayor of Tarnowskie Góry in recognition of his cultural achievements.

His solo performances include the Alkan *Concerto for Solo Piano* at the 'Indian Summer in Levoča' music festival in Slovakia, the 'Piano Extravaganza' festival in Sofia and during recitals given in Kyiv, Weimar, London, Bayreuth and the Świętokrzyska Philharmonic in Kielce, as well as the Alkan *Symphony for Solo Piano* in the Academy of Music in Katowice, as well as in Bielsko-Biała and Zakopane. He has given recitals in Bayreuth and Venice under the auspices of the Wagner Society. In 2008, during a three-part recital at the Steingraeber Haus in Bayreuth, he performed all of Liszt's Wagner transcriptions on Liszt's own 1876 piano. He also performed Liszt's two-piano arrangement of the *Faust Symphony* with Leslie Howard in London. In 2021 he performed at the American Liszt Society Festival via recorded videos since the pandemic precluded travel. In 2023 he made a series of successful debuts in the national recital halls in Taiwan, performed again at the Levoča festival and debuted at the festival 'Les Nuits Romantiques' in Verbania in northern Italy. His appearances as a concerto soloist in Poland include one with at the Polish Youth Symphony Orchestra under Andrzej Affeltowicz in the Liszt Second Piano Concerto; the Józef Wieniawski Piano Concerto with the Koszalin Philharmonic Orchestra under Monika Wolińska during the 'Swego nie Znacie' festival of Polish music and with the Świętokrzyska Philharmonic Orchestra under Alexander Walker during the 'Świętokrzyskie Days of Music' festival; the Górecki Concerto and Philip Glass *Tirol Concerto* with the Nomos String Orchestra under Mieczysław Unger during the 'New Music Festival' in Bytom; and the Kilar Second Piano Concerto and Górecki Concerto with the Archetti String Orchestra under Maciej Tomaszewicz in Jaworzno.

In 2024 he performed as the opening soloist for Polish Radio Chopin Festival in Antonin and as the musical guest for the reunion of the Harvard Law School Association of Europe at Lobkowicz Castle in Prague. He made his American debut in San Francisco, and again performed at national recital halls in Taiwan, premiering his own *Berlin Piano Works*, Op. 67, alongside works by Liszt, Alkan and Thalberg. In 2025 he performed Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto using the Godowsky cadenzas with the London International Concert Orchestra

under Alexander Walker, and once again played at the Levoča festival and the American Liszt Society Festival, this time in Tennessee.

His considerable output as a composer has earned recognition from performers and audiences. He has written for piano and harpsichord and composed chamber, vocal and film music, as well as producing piano transcriptions of music by Queen, Glass, Górecki, Gounod, Kilar, Korngold, Liszt, Preisner, Prokofiev and others. In 2022 his Concerto for Harpsichord and String Orchestra, Op. 78, was premiered at the Podlasie Philharmonic in Białystok and later at the Concert Studio Lutosławski in Warsaw, and again in 2023 in Jaworzno with the Archetti String Orchestra. Also in 2023, his most recent composition, *Sceny filmowe* ('Film Scenes') for cello and piano, Op. 81, was premiered at the Świętokrzyska Philharmonic in Kielce. His works are performed by such esteemed Polish musicians as Hanna Balcerzak, Aleksandra Gajecka-Antosiewicz, Anna Górecka, Gabriela Szendzielorz-Jungiewicz and Przemysław Wierzbą. In 2023 and 2024, the harpsichordists Anna Krzysztofik-Buczynska and Lilianna Stawarz performed his *Wandermusik für zwei Cembali*, Op. 83, in Białystok and in Warsaw at the Dharma per Musica Festival, and the conductor Maciej Tomasiewicz and the Chamber Orchestra Archetti gave the premiere of his *Landschaften nach Caspar David Friedrich für Streichorchester*, Op. 84, in April 2025. Other 2025 premieres included his *Zirkusmusik für Cembalo*, Op. 82, and *Im Nebel* for violin and harpsichord, Op. 86, at the Gorczycki Festival. His compositions and transcriptions are published by MusePress of Japan and Ars Musica of Poland.

His Toccata Classics recordings of the piano music of Walter Niemann have been well received. Henry Fogel, assessing Volume One (TOCC 0484) for *Fanfare*, concluded: 'This delightful release will appeal to anyone who enjoys exploring the byways of the Romantic piano literature. No new ground is broken by Niemann, but there is still much pleasure to be found in the old paths'. And Rob Challinor, reviewing Volume Two (TOCC 0747) for MusicWeb International, felt that 'Kamieniak is a worthy champion of Niemann's music. He has a flair for Niemann's character and picture painting alongside finely crafted phrases and fabulous pedalling. With a clear, rich sound this is an excellent addition to Niemann's growing discography and I hope that he adds more volumes to this series'.

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—Henry Fogel, *Fanfare Magazine*, July/August 2024, on Volume One

'Kamieniak is a worthy champion of Niemann's music. He has a flair for Niemann's character and picture painting alongside finely crafted phrases and fabulous pedalling. With a clear, rich sound this is an excellent addition to Niemann's growing discography and I hope that he adds more volumes to this series that he began with four of the piano cycles on Toccata Classics TOCC0484.'

—Rob Challinor, *MusicWeb International*, on Volume Two



Recorded on 22 July 2024 (*Ständchen* and *Waldbilder aus dem Fichtelgebirge*) and on 24 and 25 February 2025 (other works) in the Witold Lutosławski Concert Studio of Polish Radio, Warsaw
Piano: Steinway D-274
Piano technician: Maciej Wota
Recording engineer: Zbigniew Kusiak



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