

**Johann Kaspar
MERTZ**

Guitar Duets
Nännen Trauerlieder
Unruhe • Ständchen
La Rage • Barcarole
Wasserfahrt am
Traunsee

**Johannes Möller,
Laura Fraticelli,
Guitars**



Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856)

Guitar Duets

Johann Kaspar Mertz, a virtuoso performer on both guitar and flute, was born in Pressburg (now Bratislava, Slovakia). He moved to Vienna in 1840 and made his concert début at the Court Theatre of the Empress Carolina Augusta. In subsequent years, Mertz toured Moravia, Poland and Russia, gave concerts in Berlin and Dresden, and also played at the court of Ludwig of Bavaria. Shortly after his death from a heart ailment at the age of fifty, Mertz was posthumously awarded the first prize for his composition *Concertino* at the Brussels Competition of 1856.

Mertz performed on various types of guitar, including eight- and ten-stringed instruments, from the 1840s onwards. His prolific compositions include didactic and easy pieces, concert works, arrangements of Schubert, pieces for two guitars or guitar and piano, and fantasies based on famous operatic themes. Nikolai Makaroff (1810–1890), the eminent Russian guitarist, described his playing as ‘marked by force, sweep, sensitivity, precision, expression and assurance’ and praised his skill with ‘every secret and effect of the guitar’. Despite his output of over one hundred compositions, Mertz was neglected by guitarists for many decades. However, a revival of interest in his creative activities has been achieved with Simon Wynberg’s ten-volume edition of his works (Chanterelle, 1985). Since that time his music has become a significant feature of the solo concert repertoire.

Mertz’s music for two guitars, on the other hand, has been generally neglected by the leading duos of the world. Simon Wynberg has suggested that though this neglect is ‘rather a mystery’ (perhaps due to ‘ignorance and a certain hidebound attitude to unknown music’), there may be another historical reason. Mertz’s duet scoring is usually for a guitar with the normal string length and tuning and a *terz* guitar, a smaller instrument with higher tuning, an aspect which may have deterred some duet performers from attempting his works.

But the *terz* guitar can quite easily be replicated on a modern guitar by using a *capotasto* across the third fret. The *capotasto* is a small device, often used in flamenco playing, to enable the guitar to be played in a number of different keys at a higher register than usual. Some guitarists

even use the *capotasto* in recitals to simulate the slightly shriller tones of the lute or baroque guitar.

The guitar historian, Philip J. Bone, commented: “As a composer and performer, Mertz takes rank with the most illustrious; his original compositions, transcriptions and operatic arrangements are gems. He was a musician of rare attainment, a guitarist of the first order, and a poetic writer for the instrument.”

Unruhe (Restlessness), *Nänien Trauerlieder* (Funeral Laments), *Mazurka*, and *Tarantella*, are all to be found in autographed manuscripts in the collection by the Swedish insurance official and music collector Carl Oscar Boije af Gennäs (1849–1923), which he bequeathed to the Music and Theatre Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

The three *Funeral Laments* are among Mertz’s most expressive pieces. The first, *Am Grabe der Geliebten* (At the Grave of his Beloved), is in the key of C minor, and includes an elegiac theme and the unmistakable tolling of a funeral bell. *Ich Denke Dein* (I remember you), laments in straightforward simplicity of statement. The final movement, *Trauermarsch* (Funeral March) is deeply expressive and represents the characteristic romanticism of Mertz’s finest music.

Ständchen (Serenade) takes us back to one of Mertz’s favourite inspirational composers, Franz Schubert, an influence which often pervades his solo guitar music as well.

Wasserfahrt am Traunsee (Boat Trip on the Traunsee) is an impressionistic study, the images of the river’s gentle movement being complemented in *Barcarole*.

La Rage, also known as *Grande Fantaisie*, is one of Mertz’s most extended duo compositions, a virtuosic work and a minor masterpiece among the whole repertoire of guitar duet music.

Vespergang (Going to Vespers) imitates the walk to church in its opening section, followed by the atmospheric of a hymn in a section marked *Adagio religioso*. *Deutsche Weise* (German Air) is the setting of a piano work by Theodor Kullak, a composer from Berlin, who based his composition on a popular song entitled *Soldatenliebe* (Soldier’s Love).

As well as a Schubertian flavour in much of Mertz's music, the titles of *Mazurka*, *Barcarole*, *Impromptu*, and *Tarantelle* often evoke the strong influence of Chopin, a poetic aspect clearly discernible in the melancholy of *Trauermarsch*.

Mertz's compositions combine intensity with charm and expressiveness with a unique passion for guitar sonorities. In his duo music, the rare chemistry of the two instruments reaches high degrees of virtuosity yet it is his impressionism and love of colourful depiction of scenes and moods which

command our attention rather than technical wizardry. His contribution to the repertoire epitomises all the major elements of nineteenth century romanticism on the guitar.

Yet it is only comparatively recently that the composer's essential qualities have been acknowledged. Certainly no evaluation of Mertz's stature would be complete without including his duo achievements and he remains the most prolific composer of this genre in guitar history.

Graham Wade

Grateful acknowledgement is due in the compilation of these notes to the scholarship of Simon Wynberg and his *Johann Kaspar Mertz: Collected Guitar Works* (10 Volumes) published by Chanterelle Verlag, Heidelberg

To our son Darío, for the joy he gives us
– Johannes Möller and Laura Fraticelli



Johannes Möller

The Swedish guitarist and composer Johannes Möller has captivated audiences throughout the world with his charismatic performances. In 2010 he was awarded first prize in the GFA Concert Artist Competition, considered by many to be the most prestigious guitar competition in the world. In March 2008 he won the Dutch Vriendenkrans Concours while competing against performers in all instrumental categories. As a part of this award his name has been engraved on a metal plate that can be seen in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

Laura Fraticelli

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Laura Fraticelli studied with Tzvetan Sabev, Walter Ujaldón and Eduardo Fernández. A love for music gave her the courage to emigrate to Europe where she continued her studies at the Royal College of Music in London with Carlos Bonell and then later at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague where she was accepted in the class of the renowned guitarist Zoran Dukic. She has been praised for her beautiful tone and passionate interpretations.

Glenn Cornelisse Photography

Johann Kaspar Mertz's duets are unusual for combining a guitar with normal string length and tuning and a smaller instrument with higher tuning, the *terz* guitar. The rare chemistry of the two instruments reaches high degrees of virtuosity in *The Rage* but it is Mertz's colourful depiction of scenes and moods, as in the impressionistic *Boat Trip on the Traunsee*, the Schubertian *Serenade* and the atmospheric *Going to Vespers* which commands our attention. The three elegiac *Funeral Laments* are amongst Mertz's finest and most expressive pieces.

**Johann Kaspar
MERTZ**
(1806–1856)

Guitar Duets

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|---|-------|--|------|
| 1 Unruhe (Restlessness) | 2:45 | 7 Wasserfahrt am Traunsee
(Boat Trip on the
Traunsee) | 5:24 |
| Nänien Trauerlieder
(Funeral Laments) | 14:38 | 8 La Rage (The Rage) | 6:53 |
| 2 No. 1: Am Grabe der Geliebten
(At the Grave of his Beloved) | 4:59 | 9 Vespergang
(Going to Vespers) | 3:41 |
| 3 No. 2: Ich Denke Dein
(I Remember You) | 5:36 | 10 Barcarole | 3:37 |
| 4 No. 3: Trauermarsch
(Funeral March) | 3:57 | 11 Impromptu | 4:54 |
| 5 Mazurka | 3:14 | 12 Tarantelle | 4:37 |
| 6 Ständchen (Serenade) | 5:58 | 13 Deutsche Weise – Fantasie
(German Air) | 4:20 |



Guitar Duo
Johannes Möller and Laura Fraticelli



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Playing Time
60:35



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