

The NAXOS logo is a blue square with a white classical building facade icon and the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters.

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ROMANTIC
PIANO

FRIEDRICH
KIEL

6 Impromptus, Op. 79

Elizabeth Haughan



Romantic Piano • 4

Friedrich Kiel (1821–1885)

Friedrich Kiel was born in Bad Laasphe Puderbach on 8 October 1821 and died in Berlin on 13 September 1885. He was the second of six children born to schoolteacher Johann Jost Kiel, and Johanne Marie Kiel née Jung. He was partly self-taught and did not learn music notation and elementary music theory formally until 1832 using his father's music books and advice. Subsequently, through the agency of Prince Albrecht Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg, Kiel received violin lessons from Schulz, the local court orchestra concertmaster and theory lessons from eminent flautist Kaspar Kummer.

Progress was rapid and Kiel was chamber musician (violinist) and soloist for violin and piano concertos at the Fürstlichen Hof Berleburg from 1836 to 1838 and concertmaster from 1840 to 1842, teaching the Prince's children as well. Coming to the notice of Louis Spohr, a stipend from King Frederick William IV of Prussia was made available for Kiel to move to Berlin for composition lessons with Siegfried Dehn.

Kiel's studies with Dehn lasted officially until 1845 after which Kiel established a routine of composing in the morning and teaching composition and piano in the afternoon. As early as 1850 Kiel began having some of his compositions published which drew attention amongst Berlin's art-loving circles and he also appeared occasionally as a pianist in performances of his own chamber music and piano works. Indeed, as early as 1852 he was even described as a protégé of Liszt in a letter from Dehn, and in 1858, upon Dehn's death, Kiel took over most of his composition students.

A decisive moment for Kiel occurred in 1862 when his *Requiem in F minor, Op. 20* had its premiere on 8 February. This premiere enjoyed great success with the public as well as the Berlin critics and moved Kiel's name to the forefront of contemporary composers. A rapidly growing number of composition students allowed him to devote himself entirely to composition lessons. For example, in November 1862 the famous pianist Clara Schumann asked Kiel in a letter about theoretical lessons for her daughter Elise Schumann.

In 1866 Kiel was teaching composition at the Stern Conservatory; later elevated to a professorship. In December 1869 he became a professor of composition at the newly founded Hochschule für Musik (Academy of Music) at Charlottenburg, Berlin. Moving amongst luminaries such as Philipp Spitta and Josef Joachim, Kiel was subsequently head of the department of composition and a council member of the Berlin Academy of the Arts. A plethora of appointments, honours and awards began to descend on Kiel's unassuming shoulders and unsurprisingly several of Kiel's students went on to make considerable musical reputations for themselves including Charles Villiers Stanford, Arthur Somervell, Frederic Hymen Cowen, Emil Sjögren and Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Stanford commented later: 'I learnt more from him in three months, than from all the others in three years.' He was undoubtedly a popular teacher, and this may well have been partly due to the fact he was not an ideologue or dogmatist. Rather, he had an open-minded artistic attitude towards all contemporary musical genres and taught a wide range of different composition styles to his large and international circle of students.

Furthermore, Berlin was turning itself into an Imperial capital, and an industrial and cultural metropolis following the proclamation of the German Empire in 1871 after victories in the German–Danish War of 1864, the Austro–Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco–Prussian War of 1870–71. Reflecting these events Kiel's *Te Deum, Op. 46* appeared in 1866 and *Three Military Marches, Op. 39* for orchestra in 1867. Reconciliation was a theme in his 1870 oratorio *Christus, Op. 60*.

Undoubtedly, Kiel had a penchant for the piano and he included a piano part in 27 of his scores. The three *Piano Quartets* were composed in 1866–67 and published by Simrock of Berlin. Although Kiel admired Schumann and was a close contemporary of Brahms, these chamber *scores* are heavily influenced by middle-period Beethoven. For example, the *Adagio* movement of the *First Quartet* has been described as one of noble and serious character, but conservative in its language with Alberti bass figuration and classical piano writing. Kiel was also committed to the heritage of Schubert concerning romantic melody, yet often allowed for a little advanced harmony, reminiscent of Liszt. His *Violin Sonata in G minor, Op. 67* composed in 1871, dedicated to his friend, the court music director in Dresden, Julius Rietz, is a case in point, while in the 1864 *Piano Concerto in B flat, Op. 64* the influence of Chopin, Mendelssohn and Schumann can be detected.

Reflecting a resilient physique, Kiel's hobby was mountaineering and in 1881 aged 60, he had climbed Europe's second highest peak, the Monte Rosa. However, in September 1883, he was hit by a horse-drawn carriage. Subsequent hospitalisation and a period of recuperation in Switzerland failed to restore him to good health and he died, aged 63, on 13 September 1885, following a stroke. On 17 September he was buried in the Old Twelve Apostles Cemetery in Berlin-Schöneberg.

As little as five years later his composition pupil Otto Lessmann complained that 'all of Kiel's music deserved much more attention than is unfortunately the case'. Various reasons have been suggested for the relatively rapid disappearance of Kiel's music from concert platforms including the lack of symphonies, operas and a substantial quantity of songs in his *oeuvre*. However, if that were the case Chopin would also not be remembered. More likely, given his open-minded eclectic tastes, a lack of readily identifiable signature stylistic traits in his music played a part.

6 Impromptus, Op. 79

These date from 1881 and appeared in two volumes, *Book I: Nos. 1–3* and *Book II: Nos. 4–6*. They represent Kiel's mature style with added ambiguity in modulation, more chromatic chordal formations and unexpected structural formations. The key and mood scheme indicates thought was given to them being performed as a set.

No. 1. Andante con moto, G major

This simple monothematic Mendelssohnian binary-form movement maintains an imperturbable sense of dignified calm throughout.

No. 2. Andante quasi Allegretto, D major

A highly restrained Chopinesque *Mazurka* colouration permeates the music of this small-scale work.

No. 3. Vivace, G major

There is energy aplenty in this fine extended canvas the main theme of which effortlessly spans a page and a half before a more modulatory secondary motif appears. After the main theme reappears there is coda where the energy increases rather than dissipates.

No. 4. Presto, E flat minor

Kiel builds ambiguity around the key, moving between E flat minor and G flat major from the opening bars of this 6/8 *Presto* piece. An E flat major slower Hungarian dance in 2/4 followed by a cadenza interpolates before the 6/8 *Presto* returns followed by a very extensive coda.

No. 5. Andante sostenuto, A flat major; *No. 6. Andante*, E major

These two thoughtful works provide a reflective close to the series, the first uninterrupted in its quiet meditation, but the second containing an unexpected outburst indicating perhaps more beneath the surface than at first surmised.

Rodney Smith

Elizabeth Haughan



Scottish-born pianist Elizabeth Haughan has worked as both a soloist and collaborator in venues such as the Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall and the V&A Museum. Particularly interested in collaborative and curation work, she has been involved in a variety of projects, from playing piano trio works outside of the canon to investigating the link between song and sign language. This work has seen her be a Young Artist at Leeds Song Festival and SongEasel, as well as play concerts for various City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra festivals. Haughan held a Weingarten Scholarship at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. She also studied at the Royal College of Music and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, learning with John Thwaites, Gordon Fergus-Thompson, Margaret Fingerhut and Pascal Nemirovski. While completing her Advanced Postgraduate Diploma at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire she received the Leamington Music Prize and the Sylvia Cleaver Chamber Music Prize, as well as the accompanist prizes for all major song competitions.

www.bethhaughan.com

Friedrich Kiel enjoyed great prestige as a professor of composition in Berlin where his many students included Stanford and Paderewski. As a teacher he remained broad-minded and undogmatic. His elegantly poised works show a rather conservative craftsman but one who absorbed the influences of the best of his contemporaries – Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Liszt. The *Six Impromptus* are fully mature, thoughtful works with unexpected elements. Elizabeth Haughan's album of Kiel's piano works is available on 8.574703.

**Friedrich
KIEL**
(1821–1885)

6 Impromptus, Op. 79 (1881) 15:51

Book I

- | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|
| 1 | No. 1. Andante con moto | 1:45 |
| 2 | No. 2. Andante quasi Allegretto | 1:11 |
| 3 | No. 3. Vivace | 4:19 |

Book II

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 4 | No. 4. Presto | 4:24 |
| 5 | No. 5. Andante sostenuto | 1:45 |
| 6 | No. 6. Andante | 2:16 |

Elizabeth Haughan, Piano

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