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Otto Nicolai
Complete Works for Piano
Christof Keymer

A glance at the catalogue of works by the composer Otto Nicolai quickly reveals that, although he composed an astonishing amount of music during his short, incredibly eventful life of barely 39 years, he paid rather scant attention to the piano—an instrument he played superbly—when it came to his own compositions. Alongside half a dozen operas and two symphonies, as well as a wealth of sacred and secular vocal music, he wrote a handful of piano works that easily fit on a double album. The result is a veritable *bonbonnière*. Two starkly contrasting sonatas represent the “serious” Nicolai. The founder of the Vienna Philharmonic and director of the Vienna Court Opera is represented, amongst other things, by theatrical occasional music and a fantasia on *Casta Diva*. The trend conscious, playful composer of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* also composed a number of light pieces such as the *Moon Waltz*, which has nothing to fear from comparison to anyone named Strauss.