

**Adam Darr (1811–1866)**

*German Romantic Guitar Duets.*

**John Schneiderman and**

**Hideki Yamaya, guitars**

**Profil / Edition Günter Hänssler**

**PH13052 (2 CDs)**



The popularity of the guitar in the early nineteenth century is well documented in Paris and Vienna. Any list of prominent guitarists of the era will include the Spaniard Sor, the Italian Giuliani, and a number of their countrymen. The German states were home to a lively guitar culture as well, evidenced by the number and quality of extant instruments as well as hundreds of music publications by local as well as foreign composers. A few German guitar composers, notably Kaspar Joseph Mertz (1804–1856) and Joseph Küffner (1776–1856), have been the subjects of modern monographs, although Küffner's oeuvre was not limited to guitar. The reputations of many other contemporaneous Germans, notably Carl Ludwig Blum (1786–1844) and Friedrich Brand (1815–1882), suggest that they deserve further study.

Another such neglected figure is Adam Darr (1811–1866), a Bavarian musician born in Schweinfurt and reportedly an accomplished singer and performer on flute, violin, and zither as well as guitar. Guitarists remember him (if at all) for compositions that were published posthumously by two guitar societies, the *Freie Vereinigung zur Förderung guter Gitaremusik* (Augsburg, 1904–1908) and the *Gitarristische Vereinigung* (Munich, 1909–1910). Brief biographies of Darr were written by several of his acquaintances and pupils, and these were summarized in guitar-oriented compilations such as the dictionaries of Bone, Zuth, and Prat; general musical references such as Fétis or Eitner failed to list him. Peter Danner published several of Darr's works in *Soundboard* in 1985 and 1986, and Darr was the subject of a 2005 D.M.A. thesis by Joseph Costello at Arizona State University.

Darr's guitar duos may have been intended for performance by the composer and his sometime duo partner Friedrich Brand (1815–1882), who was Kapellmeister at Würzburg when Darr settled there in the early 1840s. Brand's broad musical circle included Küffner (who was the Würzburg court conductor) and Richard Wagner (who was known to travel with a guitar).

The guitar's popularity was declining by mid-century, and this may explain why Darr's guitar music remained unpublished in his lifetime. The guitar's decline may also be reflected in his later life, when he moved to Munich for a time—working as tutor and governor to the Whitbread

family, which had close ties to the Bavarian court. At that time he focused his performing and composing efforts on the zither. In the last decade of his life Darr resided in Augsburg, where he taught guitar, harp, and zither, and published prolifically for the latter. Costello states that Darr composed more than four hundred works over his lifetime, including many mixed ensembles, a zither method, works for men's choir, a work for chorus and orchestra, and an operetta. Most of these apparently date to the last years of his life; the works for guitar, unpublished until many decades after his death, cannot be dated with certainty. Darr's life ended tragically with his suicide by drowning following a period of domestic disappointment, physical problems, and depression. Costello's diligent research uncovered revelatory family correspondence that provides poignant insight into the last months of Darr's otherwise poorly documented life, as well as the curious fact that, shortly before his suicide, he composed a piece for military band to be played at his own funeral.

The present two-CD collection of Darr's guitar duets, performed by John Schneiderman and Hideki Yamaya, is the first recording to be dedicated entirely to Darr's music and thus provides a sort of sonic monograph to supplement Costello's study; Costello participated in this project, too, contributing to the liner notes. The first CD consists of eight concert works, some of which are unexpectedly lengthy and ambitious: *Erinnerung an St. Petersburg* (9'36"), *Introduction & Rondo* (11'03"), and *Grosses Adagio und Rondo* (14'47"!).

Most of Darr's guitar music was published around the turn of the 20th century in the guitar society publications mentioned above, but several of the concert pieces survive in manuscripts now in the *Gitarristische Sammlung Fritz Walter und Gabriele Wiedemann* of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. The second CD contains all of the fourteen numbered duos published by the *Freie Vereinigung*, most of which are quite short, but the last is a nine-minute *Duo concertant* in two movements. All the duets are performed here on period guitars or facsimiles, including, when required, a *terz* guitar and a ten-string. One piece, the spritely *Irenengalopp*, requires two guitars a fourth apart, accomplished by Schneiderman on a *terz* guitar with Yamaya on a normal guitar tuned down a full step.

Darr's guitar music is less representative of the early "Classical" Romanticism of Sor and Giuliani and more reflective of the mature Romantic style of mid-19th-century Germany (cf. Mertz), especially in the sensitive slow movements. In this sense, it helps fill stylistic, chronological, and geographic gaps in the guitar's repertory. Like many of

his contemporaries, Darr often evokes Middle-European folk song and dance; many of his pieces feature attractive Ländler, waltzes, polonaises, and galops that would be at home in the Prater.

The duets tend to feature melodies on one guitar with chordal accompaniments on the other. The textures are not unlike his music for zither, much of which, written like guitar music on two treble staves, could be easily adapted to two guitars. In the numbered duos, the melodic and harmonic lines are often swapped back and forth between the guitars, but on some works there is clearly a principal guitar and an accompanying second guitar. Darr's music requires guitarists ranging from competent/intermediate to virtuosic, and there are often cadenzas for the latter. The frequent use of *glissandi* perhaps reflects the influence of the zither.

The performers Schneiderman and Yamaya are both accomplished and experienced soloists and ensemble players on a variety of instruments and in styles from the Renaissance to the present. Both have made a serious study of period technique and interpretation, and they play together with precision, symmetry, and élan, merging meticulous authenticity with a tasteful and appropriate Romantic sensibility. The recording quality is excellent. Darr's duos provide a significant piece of the jigsaw puzzle of guitar history, and are well worthy of being featured in this fashion; their presentation here is exemplary in every respect.

—RICHARD LONG

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