Emilie Mayer, String Quartets Vol. 1

In our successful Emilie Mayer edition we now start on Vol. 1 with three of her string quartets. While still a student at Loewe, the composer turned to the most aesthetically demanding and respected genre of chamber music, the string quartet. In 1848, a critic of the Berliner Vossische Zeitung praised the "lovely cantilenas," the "deft arrangement," and "especially the noble and dignified style" of her string quartets. The quartets in G major, A major, and E minor were written by 1858 and were always favorably reviewed by the critics. However, borrowing from classical patterns, the strict motivic-thematic interpenetration of formal sections are only some aspects of Mayer's quartet style. Another, and in this she goes far beyond classical patterns, is the strict motivic-thematic interpenetration of formal sections. Her quartet in E minor seems never to have been performed, yet even the first movement is a masterpiece of concise drama, motivic-thematic economy, and avant-garde experimentation.