



Adolf JENSEN

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

SCENES CARNAVALESQUES, OP. 56: CAHIER II

PIANO SONATA IN F SHARP MINOR, OP. 25

PRÄLUDIUM UND ROMANZE, OP. 19

RICORDANZA. ETUDE

IMPROMPTU, OP. 37

Erling Ragnar Eriksen

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by William Melton

Adolf Jensen's grandfather, Wilhelm Gottlieb Martin, was a university music director, organist and composer, his father Julius was a piano pedagogue, technician and copyist and his Uncle Eduard was a singer and vocal teacher, whose son Paul followed the same professions at the court opera and university. To such a family Adolf Jensen was born on 12 January 1837 (two more sons and a daughter would follow). He showed musical ability early and would publish his first book of songs at the age of twelve, just as his five-year-younger brother Gustav was exhibiting budding talents for the violin and composition.

Jensen's birthplace was highly influential in his development. Among German cities, Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania) was unique. Established in 1255 on the original Prussian site Twangste, the city was a relic of mediaeval German expansion to the east by the Teutonic Knights, and closer to Minsk than it was to Berlin. Jensen managed only two years of accumulated study, albeit from four gifted teachers: the theatre Kapellmeister Eduard Sobolewski, the young composer Louis Ehlert, the pianist-composer Louis Köhler and Friedrich Marpurg, the great-grandson of the renowned music theoretician Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg. The Königsberg-born Elise Bolko remembered:

With lively regret, the gifted composer Louis Ehlert had given up his ingenious pupil at his departure for Leipzig and Berlin – and assigned him to the music director Marpurg. Adolf dived into the deep clear lake of counterpoint with pleasure, as if it were a refreshing bath, and very soon his teacher declared that he could no longer be of any use to him, because this pupil managed counterpoint with the greatest ease and errors in voice-leading simply never occurred.¹

¹ 'Aus einer stillen Musiker-Werkstatt', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 5, No. 12, 15 June 1884, p. 138.



The port of Königsberg

The fond hope of studying with Robert Schumann ended with the news of the great composer's death on 29 July 1856, and the young Jensen proceeded to complete his musical education on his own. Early employment as a pianist, teacher and Kapellmeister took him to eastern (Brest-Litovsk, Poznań, Bydgoszcz) and northern European destinations. In Copenhagen Jensen made contact with the composers Niels Gade, J. P. E. Hartmann and Herman Severin Løvenskiold and the cellist Christian Kellerman,

accompanying the latter on tours across Scandinavia. In 1857 Hans von Bülow wrote to Franz Liszt of ‘a young man named Jensen of great talent, student of Marpurg in Königsberg, [...] full of enthusiasm for all that is beautiful, lofty and essential in art.’² Jensen was offered an attractive post at the helm of the private orchestra of Prince Nikolai Yusupov in St Petersburg, but a persistent, virulent throat infection prevented his acceptance.

Instead, in 1861 Jensen returned to Königsberg to teach at the music academy, and two years later he married the publisher’s daughter Friedericke Borntträger (their own daughter Elspeth was born in 1864). He met artists like Anton Rubinstein and Clara Schumann; with the latter, Jensen, ‘inspired by her elevated artistry, played Mozart’s Sonata in D major and Schumann’s Variations for 2 pianos and – he was a profound and brilliant pianist with a wonderful touch – reaped rich praise from her.’³ Jensen also composed songs and piano works, sending dedications to important musicians like Rubinstein, Ignaz Moscheles and Joachim Raff. He also produced a Piano Trio, Op. 6 (dedicated to Franz Liszt), choral works and the ‘spiritual tone poem’ for orchestra, *The Road to Emmaus*, Op. 27. The latter was dedicated to ‘the great master Hector Berlioz in joyful reverence’ and elicited the following acknowledgement from its dedicatee:

Let me respond by extending my hand after the affectionate cordiality of your letter; I was very touched. Your fine new score arrived just yesterday; it is full of life and splendid intensity. Your command of the orchestra and modulation are worthy of a master. Please accept my sincere compliments and thanks for the honour you have done me with this dedication.⁴

The year 1863 brought public recognition when Hans von Bülow published a laudatory article about Jensen on the front page of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, in which he declared the composer to be ‘a rebirth of Schumann’s Romanticism in the

² Letter of 21 February 1857, in Franz Liszt and Hans von Bülow, *Briefwechsel*, ed. La Mara, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1898, p. 202.

³ Konrad Huschke, *Musiker, Maler und Dichter als Freunde und Gegner*, Helingsche Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig, 1939, p. 282.

⁴ Letter of May 1865, quoted in Arnold Niggli, *Adolf Jensen*, Harmonie, Berlin, 1900, p. 45.

sweetest freshness and noblest grace.⁵ Two years later, Lina Ramann surveyed Jensen's piano works at length, up to his *4 Impromptus*, Op. 20:

We joyfully confess to having become acquainted with many noble and beautiful things. Closely allied with this admission is the wish to see them widely circulated, and above all that of soon encountering the composer in works of full artistic maturity.⁶

The acceptance of a teaching post at Carl Tausig's piano school in Berlin in 1866 began a new direction in Jensen's life: he and his family would henceforth live in Germany and Austria. While in Dresden, he took up the cause of Richard Wagner, whose *Die Meistersinger* was undergoing open rehearsals. After his earlier assimilation of Schumann, Chopin and Liszt, he now aspired 'to translate Wagner's ideas of beauty and truth into music in the smaller forms,'⁷ encouraging 'harmonies that can at times appear as an early precursor of Debussy.'⁸ But his respiratory infections grew worse, and in 1869 alone he visited spas in Bad Ems, Bad Reichenhall and Merano, to little avail. He wrote to his Berlin friend Paul Kuczynski that year:

To put it plainly, I am very sick. The last time we saw each other, the disease was already raging inside me. [...] My throat ailment has entered a most alarming stage, and only in a mild climate can I hope for a cure.⁹

The pursuit of restorative climes led to a residence in Graz (1870) and a later move to Baden-Baden (1875) as Jensen's illness (possibly tuberculosis) worsened. Kuczynsky recorded:

The song of suffering lamentation rose, this sheer endless, sad song, which in its eternally grey demeanour destroyed the graceful harmony of the fine poet's happiness. The spectre

⁵ 'Einige Worte über Adolf Jensen,' *Neue Zeitschrift der Musik*, Vol. 59, No. 18, 30 October 1863, p. 145.

⁶ *Aus der Gegenwart. Aufsätze über Musik*, Schmid, Nürnberg, 1868, pp. 118–30.

⁷ Robert Münster, 'Jensen, Adolf,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Macmillan, London, 2001, Vol. 13, p. 3.

⁸ Friedhelm Loesti, 'Jensen, Adolf,' *Die Musik in die Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2003, Vol. 9, p. 1019.

⁹ Letter of 1 April 1869, in *Aus Briefen Adolf Jensen's*, Trautwein, Berlin, 1879, p. 6.

of illness grinned at the minstrel, who was so happy to work, and sat with him as his guest, skulking at his side and never giving way.¹⁰

These years also brought welcome contact with Johannes Brahms, though his uncompromising nature could be discomfiting, as related by Richard Heuberger:

With a keen eye, Brahms had recognised in the few days he spent in Graz that a rather exaggerated Jensen cult reigned there. I confirmed this to him. He then spoke of Jensen himself, with whom he had dealt personally. He praised Jensen's earlier works as 'fine, talented and well done', but found them simply 'overly sweet'. [...] Brahms said, 'Jensen was immensely taken with himself and thought he was on the same level as Richard Wagner, although in a different fashion. Jensen's letters are full of vanity; he also had a habit of philosophising about his own things in his letters. I could simply not do that!' In later days Brahms visited Jensen in Baden-Baden. Jensen was already suffering greatly, but still wanted to sing Brahms' 'Edward' (Op. 58, No. 3) for the composer. Handicapped by his severe illness, he was no longer capable of playing or singing, and when Brahms was having a few words with Frau Jensen, Jensen jumped up from the piano and accused him of lack of interest, respect, etc. This was very embarrassing for Brahms.¹¹

In 1877 Jensen described the strain that such visits caused him:

These visits are a peculiar thing: when a friend whom I haven't seen for years appears before me in person, my heart is frozen with excitement and I am speechless for minutes, depending on the degree of affection I feel for him. The exchange of thoughts that follows, the mutual reports, the awakening of memories from earlier times – all this touches me in the most gratifying way. However, the consequence is always extreme exhaustion.¹²

Jensen's slow debilitation was a genuine puzzle for Brahms, but the patient knew to take the great composer's brusqueness with equanimity: 'Brahms is still here [...].

¹⁰ *Erlebnisse und Gedanken. Dichtungen zu Musikwerken*, Concordia Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1898, p. 52.

¹¹ Richard Heuberger, *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms*, Schneider, Tutzing, 1976, p. 29. Heuberger (1850–1914) was best known as a composer of operettas, his *Der Opernball* (1898) remaining in the repertoire even now.

¹² Letter to Curt Freiherr von Seckendorff, 11 August 1877, in La Mara, 'Aus Schumanns Kreisen', *Die Musik*, Vol. 13, No. 15, May 1913/1914, pp. 166–67.

Next week he is leaving, his destination known only to the gods. An enviable, fortunate temperament, mentally and physically so downright robust.¹³ Jensen's creative stream dwindled, but his industrious letter-writing continued. His sincere idealism was prized by many of his contemporaries, including the poets Paul Heyse, Emanuel Geibel, Hugo Brückler and Robert Hamerling, and musicians such as Robert Franz, Peter Cornelius and Reinhold Becker.

Adolf Jensen died in Baden-Baden on 23 January 1879, having just turned 42.¹⁴ His last letter to his longtime friend Paul Kuczynsky, written a month before his death, showed his infallible good nature intact, though leavened with an increased fatalism:

Please accept my assurance of the closest friendship and loyalty, combined with the assurance of unchanging esteem! I would like so much to write to you in detail, but my strength no longer permits it. The few remaining scraps of energy must serve to keep me going. Still, I do want to wish you a Merry Christmas and New Year at the side of your loved ones, during which you can appropriately bury any painful memories of past years. A further sign of my inner feelings will follow as soon as my decrepitude allows. Many heartfelt greetings to yours; to you, always faithful, I warmly grasp your hand.¹⁵

Jensen's biographer, Arnold Niggli, eulogised:

Jensen belongs to those noble, fine artists who do not impose themselves on anyone, whose works are less suitable for the brightly lit concert hall than for reproduction and enjoyment in an intimate circle. Yet once you have immersed yourself in his creations, you will never let go of their beauty, and will always return to them as a source of the noblest pleasure, a source as pure and refreshing as the man's own elevated, idealistic and joyful personality.¹⁶

¹³ Letter to Louis Ehlert, 22 October 1876, in Niggli, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁴ Adolf's younger brother Gustav, on the faculty of the Cologne Conservatoire since 1872, survived him by sixteen years. Gustav's teaching (his charges included Engelbert Humperdinck) was augmented by producing editions of old violin music (Corelli, Geminiani, Handel, Purcell, Veracini) and composing in all genres, including a Symphony, Op. 35, choral works, chamber music, songs and some fine pieces for solo piano.

¹⁵ Letter of 21 December 1878, in *Aus Briefen Adolf Jensen's*, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁶ Niggli, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

Commentators since have found Jensen's music a controversial topic, often banishing his creations to permanent second-tier status. In this vein Carl Friedrich Weitzmann described 'a fruitful author of attractive, cleanly written, and technically "convenient" piano-pieces.'¹⁷ The Vienna Conservatoire professor Adolf Prosniz compared Jensen to Theodor Kirchner (1823–1903), the author of over a thousand piano works.

Jensen is the more naive, softer, Kirchner the more reflective, more serious. Jensen later loses himself in the sentimental, weak, [...] graceful in invention, intimate in expression. In the 'Etudes', his most successful work, he also succeeds in the strong, characteristic. His 'Wanderbilder' are fine and tasteful, [...] but there are also mediocre enough works. The 'Eroticon' borders on the effusive. From the titles that some of his pieces bear, it can be concluded that he overestimates their expressiveness.¹⁸

Hermann Kretzschmar and Reinhold Sietz each emphasised the composer's deficiencies:

the sickly sweetness and sentimentality later developed into mania in the suffering artist. [...] Richly but one-sidedly gifted, he had missed the right time to break through to an independent style. First in Schumann's, then in Chopin's bonds, he later fell in love with Wagner and his pathos and dissonances, and the pining and squirming grew ever worse.¹⁹

Jensen's homophonic, mostly two-part, settings lack the mysteriously dynamic middle voices; its often energetic rhythms lack Schumann's intricacy and disguise; its harmony is not truly bold, despite well-chosen and sometimes surprising progressive effects, even with its colourful modulations and, later, nearly impressionistic sounds.²⁰

In contrast, the Leipzig Conservatoire piano pedagogue Adolf Ruthardt was more carefully balanced in his judgement than Jensen,

¹⁷ *A History of Pianoforte-Playing and Pianoforte-Literature*, Schirmer, New York, 1893, p. 176.

¹⁸ Adolf Prosniz, *Handbuch der Klavier-Literatur 1830–1904: Historisch-Kritische Übersicht*, Doblinger, Vienna, 1907, p. XIV.

¹⁹ Hermann Kretzschmar, *Gesammelte Aufsätze über Musik und Anderes aus den Grenzboten*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1910, pp. 125–26.

²⁰ 'Jensen, Adolf', *Die Musik in die Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1958, Vol. 7, p. 3.

although remaining entirely in the footsteps of Robert Schumann, is one of those poetically motivated German composers who create from within and who, due to their noble and distinguished nature, seldom fall prey to platitudes and empty phrases, who therefore, as much as they may be epigones, are always appealing and arouse interest.²¹

A number of analysts have stressed Jensen's positive contributions, such as Oscar Bie: 'Adolf Jensen became the heir to Schumann's sensitivity, Johannes Brahms the heir to Schumann's compositional style. The sympathetic Jensen, whose style spans the boundary between Chopin and Schumann, left behind piano works that will not pass away.'²² Thomas Arnold Johnson was likewise generous with his praise:

for whatever his failings, we cannot help admiring a man who, above everything, always wrote as a true and sincere musician. His compositions are never commonplace and the workmanship is impeccable. [...] in composers of the Adolf Jensen class, the result will be well worth the time spent in perusing the complete output, for one does unearth real treasures – and very often genuine surprises.²³

The major piano teacher Ernst Pauer wrote that: 'His compositions for pianoforte are throughout noble, full of expression, and of considerable originality.'²⁴ Richard Möbius described 'the advantages of his compositional concept: clear melodic lines on the piano, skilful motivic processing without tiring sequences, and distinctive, modulation-rich harmony with often surprisingly beautiful colour effects.'²⁵

That Jensen produced an asymmetrical catalogue of works is undeniable – a single attempt in a genre often sufficed to deter him from further efforts. This tendency resulted in one opera, *Die Erbin von Montfort* (set in eighteenth-century France to his own libretto and unpublished until Wilhelm Kienzl and the composer's daughter retooled it as the opera-ballet *Turandot* in 1888), one orchestral work (aside from the overture to *Die Erbin von Montfort*, which was published in 1882), *The Road to*

²¹ J. C. Eschmann's *Wegweiser durch die Klavierliteratur*, Hug, Leipzig, 1900, p. 162.

²² *Das Klavier und seine Meister*, Bruckmann, Munich, 1901, p. 299.

²³ Thomas Arnold Johnson, 'The Pianoforte Music of Adolf Jensen', *Musical Opinion*, Vol. 60, July 1937, pp. 875–76.

²⁴ Ernst Pauer, *A Dictionary of Pianists and Composers for the Pianoforte*, Novello, London, 1896, p. 54.

²⁵ "Sing ein Lied". Zum 100. Geburtstag Adolf Jensens', *Ostdeutsche Monatshefte*, Vol. 17, 1937, p. 624.

Emmaus, Op. 27 (1865), and one chamber work, the Piano Trio, Op. 6 (unpublished). The choral harvest is bigger, with *Jeptha's Daughter*, Op. 26 (1865), for soloists, chorus and orchestra at the fore of a number of smaller works. But Jensen's successes were earned exclusively in more intimate genres, like his seven opus numbers for piano four-hands and particularly his many sets of songs (26 with opus numbers), which were hugely popular during his lifetime and inspired piano transcriptions by Theodor Kirchner, Rafael Joseffy and Max Reger.

Though Jensen's songs have since faded from the repertory, a century and a half after his death he is remembered chiefly as a composer of works for solo piano. This output is listed here in its entirety: *Innere Stimmen*, five pieces, Op. 2 (1861); *Valse brillante*, Op. 3 (1861); *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 7 (1862); *Romantische Studien*, seventeen pieces, Op. 8 (1862); *Berceuse*, Op. 12 (1863); *Jagdszene*, Op. 15 (1864); *Der Scheidenden*, two romances, Op. 16 (1864); *Wanderbilder*, twelve pieces, Op. 17 (1864); *Präludium und Romanze*, Op. 19 (1864); *4 Impromptus*, Op. 20 (1864); Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 26 (1864); *3 Valses-Caprices*, Op. 31 (1866); *25 Etudes*, Op. 32 (1866); *Lieder und Tänze*, twenty pieces, Op. 33 (1866); *Deutsche Suite* in B minor, Op. 36 (1869); *Impromptu*, Op. 37 (1869); *2 Nocturnos*, Op. 38 (1869); *Alla Marcia, Canzonetta, Scherzo*, Op. 42 (1871); *Idyllen*, 8 pieces, Op. 43 (1873); *Erotikon*, seven pieces, Op. 44 (1873); *Ländler aus Berchtesgaden*, fourteen pieces, Op. 46 (1874); *Wald-Idylle*, scherzo, Op. 47 (1874); *Erinnerungen*, five pieces, Op. 48 (1874); *Scènes carnavalesques*, eighteen pieces, Op. 66 (1876); *Ricordanza*, study, o. Op. (1880).²⁶

The étude *Ricordanza* ('Remembrance') [1] was originally written to assist in the financing of the Vincenzo Bellini monument in Catania. On 4 October 1878 – three months before his death – Jensen wrote from Baden-Baden to J. N. Dunkl, a representative of the Budapest publisher Rózsavölgyi:

I would like to inform you that I am only able to offer you one piano composition, which, however, could very well be considered a solid performance study. It is neither a

²⁶ Volume One of Erling Ragnar Eriksen's recordings of Jensen's music (Toccata Classics TOCC 0232) featured *Der Scheidenden: Zwei Romanzen für Pianoforte*, Op. 16, the *Deutsche Suite*, Op. 36, *Erotikon*, Op. 44, and three songs transcribed by Max Reger.

bravura nor a concert étude, as you might have wished, but rather has the character of a sensible, elegant nocturne, in which the important thing is to bring out the alternating right and left melodic parts beautifully, while at the same time the figuration ought not be neglected [...]. You must be informed that I am mortally ill, and my suffering has increased to such an extent in the course of the last few years that I am obliged to spend the greater part of the day in bed. Should you on this occasion reject my offer – there is no possibility of offering a substitute.²⁷

The piece was indeed published by Rózsavölgyi in 1880. Marked *Andantino cantabile*, *Ricordanza* begins in B major ($\frac{9}{8}$) with rising chordal quavers in the left hand, balanced six bars later by octave quavers in the right. The copious use of thirds and sixths is accompanied by the directions *piano*, *dolce*. A middle section shifts to F sharp minor in a similar mood but with chromatic semiquavers in thirds. Song form, or ABA, is indicated with a return of the opening in B major with increased ornamentation in the right hand, before *decrescendo* and *sempre dolcissimo* lead to a *pianissimo* close. The *Ricordanza* familiar to Jensen was by Franz Liszt (first composed in 1826, but best known as No. 9 of the *Études d'exécution transcendante* of 1852). Though Liszt's setting is on a larger scale, the Jensen piece shares the mood of nostalgic beauty and the homage to Italian operatic *cantilena*.

The Piano Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 25, was Jensen's second essay in the genre; an earlier attempt had occasioned an adverse judgement.

When Jensen showed him his piano sonata Brahms, in his frank, somewhat brusque manner, made the remark, 'These are four pretty piano pieces, but not a sonata.' Jensen became silent and Brahms went on talking about all sorts of other things. Suddenly he noticed how poor Jensen's tears were running down en masse. Brahms' words had offended him so much.²⁸

²⁷ Niggli, *op. cit.*, appendix, unpaginated.

²⁸ Heuberger, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

The early sonata was duly repackaged and published as *4 Impromptus*, Op. 20, by Fritz Schubert of Hamburg in 1864.²⁹ But Jensen soon wrote to Brahms about the fresh Sonata, Op. 25.

After I played you during our earlier get-together in Hamburg a sonata which consisted of four quite good pieces and which I have therefore published also through Fritz Schubert as Op. 20 with the title 'Four Impromptus' [...] I am sending you enclosed [...] a 'true' sonata, taking the liberty of dedicating it to you. To what extent my view is correct that it is viable for your name to grace the enclosed F sharp minor Sonata – a title I could not forgo – you as a 'sonata man' will best judge.³⁰

The Sonata as published in 1864 by Bartholf Senff of Leipzig was indeed dedicated to Johannes Brahms, and Wilhelm Kienzl testified that Brahms gave the work 'high praise'.³¹ The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* discussed the piece in detail:

Of all the new sonatas that have been submitted to us for review, the one that is presented here, first made known to us only a few days ago after the printing of the introduction to this review, has decidedly pleased us the most, namely because of its contemporary tone and musically precise, noble and appealing character. Far less striving and artificial than some of this composer's other works, it will doubtless move listeners sympathetically. Pianists trained in a soft touch and a full tone who delight in playing the music of Schumann and Gade will feel most attracted to it, and doubtless even Beethoven specialists will find it interesting. The piano style that prevails in the opus is by no means a pure imitation of Schumann's manner, but rather a happy fusion of the classical and the modern. [...]

²⁹ Dedications to four pianist-composers (Carl Tausig, Hans Bronsart von Schellendorff, Rudolf Niemann and Hans von Bülow) were duly assigned to each piece. Yet tempo markings and key relations continue to point to Jensen's earlier sonata: 1) *Sturm und Drang; Allegro non troppo* (B major); 2) *Liebestraum; Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung* (F sharp major); 3) *Intermezzo; Sehr lebhaft* (B minor); 4) *Rückblick; Sehr schnell* (B minor). A motto also headed the first movement, from Horace's *Odes*, Book III, ode iii, line 7: *Si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum ferient ruinae* ('Should the world collapse, it would fall upon a fearless man').

³⁰ Letter of 22 November 1864, in Wayne C. Petty, 'Brahms, Adolf Jensen and the Problem of the Multi-Movement Work', *Musical Analysis*, Vol. 22, Nos. 1–2, March–July 2003, p. 107. Petty dismissed Kienzl's testimony and made a detailed case that Brahms' criticism was meant for the Sonata, Op. 25.

³¹ *Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*, Allgemeiner Verein für Deutsche Literatur, Berlin, 1909, p. 60. Kienzl edited a later edition of the Sonata, Op. 25, as well as other piano works by Jensen for Universal-Edition of Vienna.

Consider, for example, the first movement [*Sehr lebhaft*; 'Very lively'] [2]. [...] The main theme, endowed with a graceful semiquaver accompaniment with parallel movement in the tenor voice and with great dynamic resources, concludes in the 24th bar in F sharp minor. An episode in D major of 16 bars follows, returning to the theme in F sharp minor towards the end; the theme then reappears in the exact same 24 bars and with the same conclusion in F sharp minor. This key has probably been heard quite enough, but the composer turns again to F sharp in a sweeping motif that is unsuited to the next short episode. This is extended to 16 bars by transposing it and adding dissonant harmonies until an A major close (after which it is repeated in its entirety). The motif is repeated yet again in A major for 12 bars, the first inversion chord of the dominant of (yet again) F sharp minor is introduced, and by means of a new motif, further development is initiated which leads laboriously from F sharp minor to B sharp minor and C sharp minor. After 33 bars in the latter key, a new idea is introduced in the secondary theme, which contains little of melodic interest and is repeated several times in the same key. From beginning to end of this repeated region there are 44 bars in C sharp minor, which change into major to reach the major dominant only in the last four measures. A more mature, self-aware composer might have easily reduced the five pages of this exposition to three, to the great advantage of the piece.

The second section now brings the following in lieu of a development: sombre chord progressions in the lower regions of the piano, then a piano motif in A minor, after which the main theme of the piece also appears in A minor, soon to be followed by a triplet passage that has nothing in common with it, which then turns to F sharp minor and progresses with chords in semiquavers. The theme returns in F sharp minor; it receives a new ending which becomes the basis of a very beautiful passage (pages 10 and 11) and leads back to the theme, again fully quoted in F sharp minor. [...] The preparation might nevertheless have been kept more compact; namely, we find the last system of page 14 and what follows on page 15 superfluous. The brusque ending of the movement seems wholly out of place.

The second or slow movement [*Nicht zu langsam, sehr ausdrucksvoll*; 'Not too slow, very expressive'] [3], in A major $\frac{4}{4}$, is very Schumannesque, not only in sonority and treatment, but also in melodic invention as the first theme reveals. It sounds exquisitely beautiful, is free of harsh or forced harmonies, and is neatly structured. The content, though not profound, is noble, warm and appealing.

Of the following *Scherzo* (F sharp minor in $\frac{6}{8}$, entitled: *Unheimlich bewegt, mit prägnanten Rhythmen* ['Terrific motion with incisive rhythms']) [4], it must be said that it is interesting and original in invention. After a brief introduction, the opening theme is given a fugal treatment, and is followed by a rhythmically determined secondary theme in C sharp minor, which partakes of fantastic harmonies. The composer could have omitted the repetition of the first part, as the theme has been heard often enough in the main key and the reprise begins with it in the same key and treatment (another improvement to be made). The trio in D major does not sound serious enough for a sonata and as a contrast to the 'sinister' *Scherzo*. In the reprise, it is definitely a mistake that the theme returns twice in F sharp minor in the same register and in the same sequence of voices.

In speaking of the *Finale* [*So schnell als möglich, in leidenschaftlicher Bewegung*, 'As quickly as possible, in passionate motion'; F sharp minor, ending in F sharp major] [5], we must confess that it is with no small astonishment that we are confronted with an abundance of healthy and beautiful ideas heaped up in this movement. Though they cannot be called original in the highest sense, they echo Beethoven, Weber and Schumann. Still, they are so beautifully put together that we never tire of playing the piece to ourselves over and over again. We would have to fill a column with music examples in order to give a vivid picture of it, and therefore refer those who are interested in new compositions directly to the piece itself. Jensen is truly a fine talent! His sonata, especially the *Finale*, compels us to recognise this and imposes upon us the wish that he should write more in this form and thereby enhance his self-criticism. Still, it has been a long time since we have come across anything new for piano that has attracted us to the same extent.³²

³² Anon., 'Neue Claviersonaten (Schluss). Adolf Jensen Sonate (Fis-moll) Op. 25', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Neue Folge, Vol. 3, No. 3, 18 January 1865, pp. 45–46.

Hermann Kretzschmar declared that the work ‘moves in sometimes very laborious transitions from one Schumannesque sliver of thought to another.’³³ Thomas Arnold Johnson, though he found the piece undeniably too long, related that ‘I am not afraid to confess that I have a great liking for it. It is exhilarating to play, not too difficult, and very tuneful. [...] one is amply repaid by the very sound of its fluent and graceful writing.’³⁴ Arnold Niggli added a longer summation:

Among the most important of Jensen’s works for pianoforte is the F sharp minor Sonata Op. 25, dedicated to Joh. Brahms. Whereas in the *Impromptus*, Op. 20, originally intended as a sonata, one germ shoots out next to the other without any dialectical processing of the themes, here the conditions of the art form are essentially fulfilled. The passionate tone of the first movement, whose romantic beauty lifts the listener above certain organic deficiencies, namely the insufficiently taut development of the basic ideas, is immediately influenced by the main theme.

More equal in all parts than the elegiac *Adagio*, whose middle section seems somewhat meagre, is the *Scherzo*, a tone painting full of remarkable whirlwind motion which exhibits its theme only after an introduction establishing a fantastic atmosphere. The trio, full of rapturous beauty, contrasts splendidly with the capricious first part, and the pathetic final part, with its inexorably advancing themes, is distinguished by its genuine finale character.³⁵

The *Impromptu*, Op. 37 [6], was dedicated to Paul Kuczynski and published by Robert Forberg of Leipzig in 1869. The genial opening in G major ($\frac{12}{8}$) is marked *Vivace con anima*, the quaver triplets in the left hand contrasted with duplets in the right. After the theme subsides, it is replaced by a long middle section, which begins in G minor, the constant quaver motion a link to the opening, but wandering further afield in modulatory *molto agitato* fragments that swell to *ff*. The G major theme reappears at *con alcuna licenza*, marked *piano, dolcissimo*, and adorned this time with a trill

³³ Kretzschmar, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

³⁴ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 875.

³⁵ Niggli, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–44.

and mordents, before *poco ritenuto e diminuendo* leads to the last *pianissimo* chords. Jensen 'has further distinguished himself', responded the Mendelssohn pupil and Berlin *Hofkirchenmusikdirektor* Emil Naumann to the *Impromptu*.³⁶ Arnold Niggli commented:

When listening to the G major *Impromptu*, Op. 37, the name Chopin comes to our lips, and likewise the two Nocturnes, Op. 38, involuntarily recall that master of melancholy grace. Since there can be little talk of conscious imitation of specific Chopin studies to which Jensen would have devoted himself in Dresden, we can only explain the similarity from the peculiar state in which our artist found himself at that time. As his letters then show, he was not only in a melancholy mood due to the circumstances of his new home, but was already suffering physically. He composed the piano pieces while fluctuating between nervous excitement and dreamy melancholy, and if one considers that similar physical and psychological tendencies dominated Chopin for most of his life, as his finely strung nature shows a certain affinity with that of Jensen, then the analogy is well founded. The Polish tone poet could have written the very first bars of the *Impromptu*. The mixture of different rhythms, the free movement between time signatures, the soft gliding of the harmonies into each other over an organ point, all this is Chopinesque, without any direct echo to be discovered.³⁷

The *Präludium und Romanze*, Op. 19, was issued in 1864 by Friedrich Kistner of Leipzig and dedicated to the Hamburg composer and pedagogue Carl Georg Peter Grädener. The *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung* noted at its publication:

A piece as rich in content as it is engaging, in which art and nature are united in beautiful alliance! The *Präludium* [*Nicht zu schnell*; 'Not too fast'] [7], in C major $\frac{4}{4}$, captivates with original figuration full of vividly flowing, distinctively shaped harmonic material. Nothing is ordinary; everything is solved blithely and yet unforced. The following *Romanze* [*In ruhiger Bewegung, nicht schleppend*; 'In smooth motion, not dragging'; $\frac{4}{4}$ [8]] in the same key is full of lyricism, natural and easy on the ear, but of a very noble feeling and in a fine modern piano setting. The first *Intermezzo*, in A minor [and] $\frac{6}{8}$, stands out against the

³⁶ *The History of Music*, transl. F. Praeger, Cassell, London, 1886, Vol. 5, p. 1203.

³⁷ Niggli, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

previous movement with its inner liveliness and distinctive rhythms. An additional region in $\frac{2}{4}$ time, followed by a return of the first part, brings pleasing variety in the play of mood and form. The *Romanze* follows again, now varied in its main features, and leads into a second *Intermezzo*, F major $\frac{2}{4}$, more song-like than the first and charmingly accessible melodically [...]. The *Intermezzo* is more broadly executed, the imagination free and inwardly driven, and it dispenses characterful, tonal beauty with ease. The now varied *Romanze* concludes the piece, which is highly recommended for better pianists.³⁸

Two generations later the work was still well-regarded. Ernst Pauer noted: ‘Among the pieces which have obtained great popularity [is] Op. 19, *Prelude and Romanza*’,³⁹ and Arnold Niggli affirmed that the ‘*Präludium und Romanze*, Op. 19, is quite elegant. It follows Schumann’s *Arabeske* and *Blumenstück* in both outward form and overall style and reveals the same delicacy and rich sonority’.⁴⁰

Both Cahiers I and II of the *Scènes carnavalesques*, Op. 56, were issued in 1876 by Nikolaus Simrock of Berlin. Arnold Niggli held the pieces to be of ‘artistic significance’:

They comprise 18 numbers in two volumes, in which the composer musically reflects the colourful facets of the masquerade, similar to Schumann in *Papillons*, *Carnaval* and *Wiener Faschingsschwank*. ‘Drawing on my knowledge of Italian characters’, Jensen wrote to Reinhold Becker on 20 January 1876, ‘I have created an ideal carnival picture, or rather a series of colourful pictures, mixing the most diverse affects, the purely sensual interpretation of which will not remain hidden from the observer’. In the very first movement, the opening of which leads us into the midst of the merry bustle of masks, images and moods which continue to change as in a kaleidoscope, a few graceful numbers in particular unfolding the charm of Jensen’s melody.⁴¹

In Op. 56 ternary song form repeatedly serves as a substructure for rather varied musical keys, tempos and moods. No. 11 (No. 1 in book 2), marked

³⁸ L. K., ‘Recensionen: Adolph Jensen, Op. 19. Präludium und Romanze für das Pianoforte’, *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, Vol. 18, No. 34, 24 August 1864, p. 265.

³⁹ Pauer, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴⁰ Niggli, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Con grandezza [9], is a jubilant Polonaise, $\frac{3}{4}$ in B flat major which ends *fff marcato*, whereas No. 12, *Un poco mosso, serio* [10], oscillates between F sharp minor and major in $\frac{3}{4}$. No. 13, *Presto assai* [11], is a Tarantella in $\frac{6}{8}$ and E flat minor, and No. 14, *Molto vivo e mobile* [12], is a sturdy chordal study in B major and $\frac{6}{8}$ (though Schumann is the influence usually mentioned, Walter Georgii noted that here 'Brahms also looks in with a friendly greeting'⁴²). No. 15, *Marcia da lontano, con moto* [13], $\frac{2}{4}$ is a brief, light-hearted march in E flat major, No. 16, *Allegro molto a capriccio* [14], a tender $\frac{3}{4}$ romp in G major, and of No. 17, *Agitato assai* [15] in B minor and $\frac{2}{4}$, Friedrich Niecks found 'the colouring somewhat sombre [and] tinged with melancholy'.⁴³ For No. 18, *Finale al chiaro di luna. Tempo moderato* [16] in $\frac{3}{4}$, Arnold Niggli traced an extended story:

In the final number, Jensen once again moves the scene from the ballroom to the open air, where the peaceful moonlit night reigns. The motif of the very first piece is heard again, but broken off with a faint echo. Only in the distance can one hear individual sounds of the carnival festival wafting nearer. Then a sweet, eloquent song rises, as if a lover were imploring his young lady to give her love in return. The melody swells ever more passionately; a second theme like a victory fanfare is added. Yearning desire has been granted, and a stretta of 60 bars in which carnival joy bursts through like fireworks brings the piece to a close.⁴⁴

Musical commentators have been largely positive about the *Scènes carnavalesques*. Otto Schumann wrote: 'these eighteen carnival and dance pictures are so lively in attitude, so powerful in invention, and so finely realised that they appeal to us more than many oft performed mediocre or undistinguished work by a great paragon'.⁴⁵ 'The climax of Jensen's work', noted Walter Georgii, 'the 2 volumes of *Scènes carnavalesques* (1876)

⁴² Walter Georgii, *Klaviermusik. Geschichte der Musik für Klavier zu zwei Händen von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Atlantis-Verlag, Zurich, 1950, p. 395.

⁴³ Adolf Jensen, *Monthly Musical Record*, Vol. 12, No. 135, 1 March 1882, pp. 52–53.

⁴⁴ Niggli, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–4. The fireworks of the last bars are represented by an upward run of semiquavers that prefaces the *fff marcato* final chords.

⁴⁵ *Handbuch der Klaviermusik*, Heinrichshofen, Wilhelmshaven, 1979, p. 512.

stand out by virtue of a certain freshness. That they breathe the spirit of Schumann is not surprising in view of the poetic subject.⁴⁶ Gerhard Puchelt observed:

one must count this almost unknown cycle among the composer's most important inspirations. In 18 colourful pictures a masquerade is reflected, but not in a German style as in Schumann's 'Papillons' or his 'Faschingschwank'. [...] If one takes the pieces as sketches of an Italian folk festival, as descriptions of southern cheerfulness, they unveil many beauties and often captivate with their rousing energy. As in the preceding works, the musical style is again closer to the Schumann idiom than in the 'Idylls' and the 'Erotikon'; however, the expansion of the Romantic sound palette through the integration of Wagnerian elements can be seen in many details. Almost every piece has its own special charm.⁴⁷

In the years since Adolf Jensen's death the quality of his music has been much disputed, but from the controversy his particular contributions to piano music have emerged more clearly. Gerhard Puchelt emphasised the composer's success in blending Schumannesque and Wagnerian aspects of Romanticism:

A thorough and necessarily unprejudiced examination will reveal a spate of Jensen's piano pieces that shed doubt on the harsh judgment of his critics about the pernicious influence of his Wagner enthusiasm on his later works. It cannot be denied that the progression of his severe illness reduced the elasticity of his ideas; there is also at times an undisciplined persistence on a misjudged course using an unsustainable motif – which can probably be explained by his physical weakness, the fractiousness of an organism under siege. Still, the attempt to unite the two great sources of power within high Romanticism is a remarkable undertaking, and one that was not without success [...]. It is to Jensen's credit, indeed it is his personal achievement, to have recognised the challenge of this synthesis and in his fashion to have solved it in a number of significant works.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Georgii, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

⁴⁷ Gerhard Puchelt, *Verlorene Klänge. Studien zur deutschen Klaviermusik 1830–1880*, Lienau, Berlin-Lichterfelde, 1969, pp. 83–84.

⁴⁸ Puchelt, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

On the centenary of Jensen's birth the following assessment appeared in *Die Musik*:

Time has not been kind to his tranquil, contemplative art, and the day has passed almost unnoticed despite Jensen's song and piano creations offering many pearls that have lost none of their freshness. [...] One would do him an injustice to judge him merely by those few faded pieces that were still remembered at the turn of the century. Still, things artistic cannot be forced, and we may simply have to wait until an artist of rank and personality arrives to demonstrate the viability of Jensen's compositions.⁴⁹

William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, 2020) and The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and was a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). He did his graduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles before a four-decade career as an orchestral horn-player with the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics like Friedrich Klose, Henri Kling and Felix Draeseke, and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.

Erling Ragnar Eriksen was, until 2021, professor of piano in the Faculty of Performing Arts at the University of Stavanger; from 2009 until 2013 he also taught at the Barratt Due Institute of Music in Oslo. He studied with Einar Steen-Nøkleberg and Hans Leygraf at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hannover, and with Alfons Kontarsky at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich. He was awarded his *Meisterklassendiplom* in 1981. After a successful debut in Oslo in 1978, he has given concerts in many European cities, as well as in the USA, Canada, Japan and China.

In 2007 his complete recording of Bach's *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* (released by the University of Stavanger) was well received by the critics. Other recordings include songs by Eyvind Alnæs (Simax), Edvard Grieg (Naxos) and Christian Sinding (Naxos), all with the soprano Bodil Arnesen. He recorded music by Alfred Janson, Jon Øivind Ness and Asbjørn Schaathun on the album *1-2-3 Happy Happy Happy!* (Aurora) with the Stavanger New Music Ensemble. This is his fourth album for Toccata Classics. Of the first, a recital of Alnæs piano music (TOCC 0067) Peter Burwasser wrote in *Fanfare*: 'Eriksen plays it with great panache

⁴⁹ August Pohl, 'Unbekannte Jensenbriefe', *Die Musik*, Vol. 29, No. 5, February 1937, p. 344.

and affection'; and in *The Guardian* Tim Ashley commented of the second, a recital of Alnæs songs (TOCC 0124): 'They're exquisitely performed by ultra-refined mezzo Ann-Beth Solvang and pianist Erling R. Eriksen'. Reviewing Volume One of Adolf Jensen's piano music (TOCC 0232) in *Fanfare*, Scott Noriega felt that 'the pianist, Erling R. Eriksen, proves himself up to the music's numerous challenges. His highly Romantic tendencies work well in much of this music: His pearly and rounded tone on the melodic notes, his sudden quasi-demonic outbursts of uninhibited emotion, his apt characterization, and moreover his obvious love and commitment to this music, are always in evidence'.

He is in much demand as an accompanist for singers, and has performed with Bodil Arnesen, Ingrid Bjoner, Mari Eriksmoen, Isa Katharina Gericke, Nadja Michael, Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz, Ann-Beth Solvang, Barry Banks, Ernst Haefliger, Dietrich Henschel, Bror Magnus Tødenes and many others.

He has given master-classes in Foggia, Monopoli, Paris, Pescara, Rome, Stockholm and Weimar and, further afield, in Guangzhou, Nanjing, Suzhou and Yixing. In 2000 he was awarded the Grieg Prize for services to Edvard Grieg and his music.

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Tuner: Jan Inge Almås

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ADOLF JENSEN Piano Music, Volume Two

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