

" A package of new scores lay on my piano, unopened [...]. With no small joy, we went about our little preparations; one of us opened the package, the other the piano. It was self-understood that we would begin with a piece for four hands. That, after all, is the most intimate, the most agreeable, and, within its limitations, the fullest way to make music in the home. "

Eduard Hanslick *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien, 1869*

The only way to listen to the latest symphony or opera in the nineteenth century was to either seek out a live performance or perform it at home with a piano partner, *à quatre mains*. Thus, an enormous amount of four-hand literature abounds from the 1820s to the 1930s. Works in transcription largely dominate this repertoire: operas, symphonies, and chamber works were adapted *en masse* for four hands by skilled and not so skilled musicians alike. But there were also works freshly composed in the medium, and four-handed playing could be heard in the home (its natural environment) but also on the relatively new environment of the concert stage. The ubiquity and popularity of the four-handed format meant that it crossed national, social, and economic boundaries. As such, the piano duet was a powerful cultural site in which anxieties about gender, nationality, labour, and pleasure were writ large. Adrian Daub in *Four-Handed Monsters: Four-Hand Piano Playing and Nineteenth-Century Culture* has brilliantly surveyed nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century novels for traces of how the piano duet interacted with those who played and listened to them. Daub argues on the strength of a rich and provocative bed of primary literature that four-hand piano playing theatricalised nineteenth-century issues of subjectivity, community, eroticism, nationalism, and consumerism. One of the most compelling arguments in *Four-Handed Monsters* is Daub's exploration of how four-hands music had a particular and especial relationship to consumption and commodification. Certainly, as the "proto-CD of nineteenth-century domestic culture," four-hand music was mass-produced and consumed eagerly. The nineteen-year-old Friedrich Nietzsche's Christmas wish-list in 1863, for instance, reads "(1) The *Grand Duo* by F. Schubert, arranged for four hands; (2) Düntzer's edition of Goethe's lyric poems." Four-handed music and its performance was undoubtedly one of the important and influential components of nineteenth-century transnational musical culture. One would argue that it could be considered the most pervasive and important, by dint of its widespread agency.

The great virtuoso **Charles-Valentin Alkan** only left us one example in the medium of duet transcription arrangement, besides a single reworking for four hands of his own *Saltarelle*, originally for cello and piano. Alkan's brilliance and originality as a composer and his formidable virtuosity led Ferruccio Busoni and others to claim him as one of the nineteenth century's most important figures. His reclusive and eccentric career marks him as one of the period's most elusive and fascinating. Alkan's contribution to the duet transcription repertoire is the overture to *Le Prophète*, the enormously successful opera by **Giacomo Meyerbeer** from 1849. The production itself had been gestating for many years. A contract had originally been signed in 1838 but it was only in 1847, with new leadership at the Opéra, that Meyerbeer was confident enough that he had the cast and the resources to be able to mount such an ambitious project. *Le Prophète* was a triumph. It was the first opera to use electricity on an opera stage, utilised to light a sensational sunrise in Act 3. Meyerbeer was forced to make many cuts in the lead-up to the premiere after rehearsals revealed that the opera was gargantuan in length. The magnificent and monumental overture, with its finely crafted sense of form and thematic development, was replaced by a 12-bar prelude. Presumably at the request of Meyerbeer, Alkan arranged the original overture sometime in 1850 for publication in a duet arrangement of selections from the opera (a colleague completed the vocal numbers). For decades it was thought that Meyerbeer's score to the overture was lost and Alkan's arrangement was the sole remnant of it. Only recently has Meyerbeer's original manuscript of the overture been located in the archives of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in Paris.

Duet transcriptions often contained the names of the instruments that were being transcribed. This was done either to help the player construct a mental sonic image of the absent orchestral sound or to foster a specific way of playing that might imitate the instrument. The former is borne out by Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, who pointed out that, in this repertoire "the pianoforte points to the great work like a sketch that evokes a great canvas;" the players imagine the orchestral work and "fantasy imitates [the lines] with the colours of the original." The latter approach is emphasised in the many late nineteenth-century volumes – edited by great musicians such as Hans von Bülow – which editorially appended imaginary instrumental indications to the keyboard works of Beethoven, Bach, and others, in order to function on both of these levels. In the score of the overture to *Le Prophète* the velvety tones of the clarinet and the pungency of the oboe vie with the percussiveness of the timpani and brightness of the trumpet, and a skillful player can certainly evoke these orchestral colours on the highly differentiated registers of an Erard piano (Alkan's favoured maker). Alkan is careful also to indicate to readers the newest kinds of instruments that Meyerbeer had at his disposal: most notably the bass clarinet and the modern valved trumpet. In his setting of *Les Huguenots* of 1836, Meyerbeer had been one of the first composers to use the bass clarinet. The lyrical and chromatic second subject of the overture is played first on the valved trumpet, belying that instrument's more usual martial connotations.

Alkan's arrangement is a tour-de-force of pianistic effects and would have undoubtedly challenged the technical capacity of most amateur players. The vast palette of orchestral effects is meticulously preserved and idiomatically transformed in the four-hands adaption, from squealing piccolos in the extremes of the treble to grumbling timpani in tone clusters in the bass. Meyerbeer's overture has a tragic and fateful sweep, befitting the subject of the opera. The two contrasting themes of the opening are worked through in a final fugue before a blazing conclusion in the major.

In addition to his prowess as a pianist, Alkan was also a formidable organist; receiving his premier prix in organ from the Paris Conservatoire in 1834. It was his fourth, having already received a premier prix in solfège at the age of seven (1821), piano at the age of ten (1824), and harmony at the age of thirteen (1827). Like Robert Schumann, he became increasingly interested in the development of pedal pianos, or *pédaliers* (pianos with an organ pedal board), giving a *pédalier* recital in 1852 and becoming a champion of Erard's *pédaliers*. He preferred the *pédalier* for the organ works of Bach on account of its greater clarity, and praised the strict discipline in part writing that it encouraged. During the 1860s he produced a series of works for *pédalier*, sometimes presenting them as suitable for organ, *pédalier*, and occasionally harmonium. The *Onze grands préludes et un transcription du Messie de Haendel* (Op. 66, 1865) were advertised as being suitable for all three instruments. Portuguese pianist **José Vianna da Motta** was one of Liszt's last pupils, and collaborated with Busoni on editions of the complete works of Bach and Liszt. He championed the music of Alkan, played his music in Wigmore Hall in 1903, and transcribed a number of his *pédalier* pieces, including nine of the pieces from Op. 66. In his adaption, Vianna da Motta rearranged the pieces and omitted the arrangements of Händel, creating a new order that clearly had personal significance. Vianna da Motta dedicated the arrangement to the great French pianist Isadore Philip.

Vianna da Motta wrote in a highly personal preface in which he ruminated at length on those qualities that he found special in Alkan's work:

[We] have tried to impart a poetic unity with nine pieces, so that in a suite we have a development of a drama of the soul struggling against suffering, rebelling against humanity and nature, and finally finding in supreme peace a mystical rapture. Expressions of grief and anger alternate with deep prayers and ardent ecstasies. The more the violence of the pain increases, the more intense is religious peace. Thus the pain reached in No. 6 is the extreme of a tragic expression, but in the last piece religious sentiment rises to metaphysical heights. Alkan in this piece gives a Dantesque vision of the afterlife. It is the soul that hovers above life and the earth, which embraces, forgives, and loves all. The pain is not forgotten, but it is transfigured; the same martyrdom is sweet in this state of beatitude: suffering here is accepted, desired. This is the state of the sage, the saint. This is l'unio mystica with God.

The nine pieces are naturally divided into groups of three.

No. 1-3. The problem is posed.

No. 4-6. Development of the conflict between the feeling of revulsion and the aspiration to peace.

No. 7-9. Prayer - Last monologue of the resigned martyr (Gethsemane) - Redemption.

Vianna da Motta's "problem" is outlined in the first three preludes. No. 1 is an angular fragment distinguished by Alkan's characteristic rhythmic originality. A bittersweet melody floats upon a restless and agitated accompaniment. No. 2 alternates between a single-line proclamation of faith and determination and a contrasting heartbreaking melody that seems to search for answers and resolutions that it cannot find. No. 3 is a parody of Gluck's famous chorus of the furies from *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Vianna da Motta's "development of the conflict" is typified by the choice of preludes in which the internal contrasts increase. No. 4 is a noble and tragic work, and one of the longest. An internal section tilts between solemnity and uncertainty, with brief periods of calmness. No. 5 outlines Alkan's gift for lyricism and is clearly an "aspiration to peace"; a tumultuous development gives way to the solemnity of the opening melody and the close is marked as "mystical" (*mistico*). No. 6 is a dessicated demonic Barcarolle, dripping with sarcasm: leering and terrifying, it typifies the "feeling of revulsion" in Vianna da Motta's description. No. 7 is marked "Alla Giudesca" by the composer, and represents a Hebrew call to prayer (also marked *con divozione* - "with devotion"). No. 8's text-like melodies and fervent tone led Vianna da Motta to characterise it as the last monologue of Jesus on Gethsemane. The final work in the set is a work of great genius. Alkan generates swathes of exquisite harmony through a delicate shimmering and pulsating texture marked *etereo* ("ethereal"). Vianna da Motta's arrangement throughout is a masterly one. The pedal-line is strengthened and thickened, but without unduly distorting Alkan's original conception. Clearly Vianna da Motta was inspired by Alkan's works and the re-ordering under his hands is dramatised into a suite of transfiguration. Choosing to place the transcendent *Adagio* at the close created a greater sense of the transformative and redemptive qualities in Vianna da Motta's suite.

Ignaz Moscheles, like Alkan, was Jewish. Along with ten other colleagues at the Leipzig Conservatorium, Moscheles signed a letter expressing outrage at another colleague's inclusion of Wagner's infamous anti-Semitic tract in a periodical. Friend and colleague to Mendelssohn and Chopin, Moscheles had a deep respect for the past: he was an advocate in print and performance for the works of Händel, Haydn, Mozart, and Clementi, as well as of Weber. Schumann considered Moscheles the best sonata composer of his generation.

Moscheles' *Grand Duo* is part of a series of tributes to great composers. Each is a kind of pot-pourri of themes from various famous works. Some are based around "ancient" composers, such as Händel. Others are contemporaneous opera composers; the tunes of their arias would have been familiar to those who performed and listened to four-hand music. His Op. 102 is entitled *Hommage à Weber* and is based on the motifs from Weber's operas *Euryanthe* and *Oberon*. Moscheles dedicated the work to the virtuoso sister duo: Bertha and Ina Jacques, who probably performed the work in public. Here is an example of a freshly composed work in the four-hands medium. Not bound by the strictures of transposition, Moscheles has given free rein to a kind of extended fantasy for four virtuosic hands on various themes from Weber's operas, utilising the entire breadth of the piano with the latest fashionable effects and textures. The hands and feet of the two sisters perform a choreographed ballet - the *primo* delicately places chords in the slow middle section between the two hands of the *secondo* and Moscheles meticulously marks which performer operates the *sostenuto* pedal. It is sophisticated salon music of the highest order, elegant and finely crafted. Themes are freely varied and interwoven at will and a variety of musical topics (such as marches, serenades, and variations) are paraded in classic pot-pourri fashion for listener and performer.

The historic pianos used in this recording were brought to superb playing condition by specialist, Frits Janmaat. All are Erards, the favoured instrument of Alkan, Moscheles, and Vianna da Motta alike. From 1815 to 1820 **Sébastien Erard** worked at combining the the expressive and full touch of the English-type action with a more effective repetition inspired by Viennese pianos, and he eventually achieved this with his famous repetition mechanism, patented in London in 1822. The high quality of Erard's instruments was sealed from this moment. Liszt was so impressed with the clarity, precision, velocity, and sensitivity of control of the instruments that he dedicated his Op. 1 to Sébastien Erard, a rare dedication in music history to an instrument builder rather than a patron or performer. In this recording, Alkan's arrangement of *Le Prophète* from around 1849 is performed on an Erard of 1847, the 1906 arrangement of Alkan's Op. 66 on an instrument from 1898, and the Moscheles *Duo* from 1842 is performed on an Erard originally built in 1839, with later alterations. All instruments were kindly provided from the collection of Frits Janmaat at Maison Erard, Amsterdam. Even though the production of the double escapement Erards was basically standardised in 1841, each of these straight-strung Erards possesses a distinctly different personality and quality of tone that we believe complements the works we have chosen to perform on them, and vice versa. The straight-strung construction also highlights and clarifies the four-hands texture itself, in that all the registers are naturally more transparent than a piano that is cross-strung.

Erin Helyard and Stephanie McCallum, MMXVI





Praised by London HiFi News and Record Review as "a formidable and insightful pianist", **Stephanie McCallum** has recorded nineteen solo CDs and appears on over fifty ensemble and compilation discs. Her most recent releases includes a disc of previously unrecorded music by French composer Guy Ropartz, and two CDs of the complete *Recueils de Chants* by Alkan. Her recording of Beethoven's complete Bagatelles contains the first recording of a previously unpublished piano piece believed to be the last piano piece that Beethoven wrote.

An Associate Professor in piano at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney, Stephanie studied with Alexander Sverjensky, Gordon Watson and Ronald Smith, before giving what The Times described as "an impressive debut" at the Wigmore Hall. She is credited with the first complete performance of Alkan's *Trois Grandes Études*, Op. 76 in London. Stephanie McCallum has appeared extensively as a soloist in the United Kingdom, France and Australia, and has appeared in the Brighton, Cheltenham, Huddersfield, and Sydney Festivals. Her concerto appearances have included performances with the Sydney Symphony, Queensland and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras of Elena Kats-Charnin's *Displaced Dances*, a work especially written for her. Stephanie's solo recordings include music of Satie, a two-disc set of the complete piano sonatas of Weber, *Illegal Harmonies: The 20th Century Piano*, two CDs of music by Liszt, and recordings of Alkan's complete studies in the major and minor keys (Op. 35 and 39).

" Stephanie McCallum has given us a close-to-ideal first hearing of these works. She has an extraordinary dynamic range, a keen awareness of harmonic tension and resolution, an expansive approach to rubato, and a sophisticated understanding of Ropartz's large-scale structural organization. "

Fanfare, June 2016

Praised as a virtuosic and eloquent soloist as well as an inspired and versatile conductor, **Erin Helyard** is at the forefront of a new generation of young musicians who are inspired by the latest musicological and historical enquiry.

Erin graduated in harpsichord performance from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with first-class honours and the University Medal. He completed his Masters in 2005 in fortepiano performance and a PhD in Musicology in 2012 with Tom Beghin at the Schulich School of Music, McGill University, Montreal. He was named the Westfield Concert Scholar on fortepiano for 2009-2010 and from 2003 to 2012 Erin was a central member of the award-winning Montreal-based Ensemble Caprice. In Sydney, Erin is artistic director and founder of the Pinchgut Opera and the Orchestra of the Antipodes. He has conducted from the keyboard acclaimed performances of Purcell's *Fairy Queen* (Montreal Baroque Festival), Cavalli's *L'Ormindo*, Purcell's *Dioclesian*, Vivaldi's *Griselda*, Cavalli's *Giasone*, Salieri's *The Chimney Sweep*, Vivaldi's *Bajazet*, Grétry's *L'amant Jaloux* (Pinchgut), Händel's *Acis and Galatea* (NZ Opera), Händel's *Orlando* (Hobart Baroque), Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and Händel's *Faramondo* and *Agrippina* (Brisbane Baroque). Both *Faramondo* and *Agrippina* won Best Opera at the Helpmann Awards in 2015 and 2016.

Erin has appeared as guest conductor and keyboard soloist with the Australian Haydn Ensemble and is a Senior Lecturer in Musicology and Historical Performance at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne, and appears by kind courtesy of that institution.

" But it is Helyard who must take the evening's highest honours, for musical direction that lends clarity to every word, bends supply with the speech rhythms of the recitatives, lets his excellent instrumentalists breathe and articulate as one, has the dramatic pace of a good thriller, and walks the tightrope between laughter and tears with consummate grace. "

Financial Times, December 2013

Le Prophète was performed and recorded on three historic Erard pianos from the collection of Frits Janmaat at Maison Erard, Amsterdam.

Giacomo Meyerbeer *Le Prophète: Overture (ca. 1850)*
performed on an Erard piano from 1847

primo **Stephanie McCallum**
secondo **Erin Helyard**

Charles-Valentin Alkan *Neuf Préludes, Op. 66 (1867, arr. 1906)*
performed on an Erard piano from 1898

primo **Stephanie McCallum**
secondo **Erin Helyard**

Ignaz Moscheles *Hommage à Weber, Op. 102 (1842)*
performed on an Erard piano from 1839 with later alterations

primo **Erin Helyard**
secondo **Stephanie McCallum**

TRPTK was founded in 2014 by audio engineer Brendon Heinst, music producer Luuk Meijssen, and cinematographer Nicky Regelink, as a movement against degradation of sound quality and emotional impact in the music industry.

Involved in more than 90 recordings to date, audio engineer Brendon Heinst felt it was high time to change the way music is recorded nowadays, and to create modern-sounding recordings with completely transparent equipment and techniques.

By using state-of-the-art recording technologies such as the DXD recording and mastering format of 352.8 kHz 24 bits, custom-built recording equipment and ultra-high-end cabling, TRPTK strives to create a completely emotionally transparent path between the artist and the listener.

By using 5.1-channel surround sound recording techniques, TRPTK creates an immersive experience, acoustically and emotionally conveying the recorded performance.

TRPTK's recordings are always recorded, mixed and mastered by TRPTK's engineer Brendon Heinst and producer Luuk Meijssen, and CDs are created directly from the DXD 352.8 kHz 24 bits stereo master, without any intermediate steps involved.

TRPTK proudly uses **Furutech** cabling and **Vivid Audio** loudspeakers at their mastering facilities, carefully optimized by **Acoustic Matters**.

MICROPHONES

Sonodore RCM-402

PREAMPLIFIERS

Sonodore MPA-502

CABLING

Mogami Neglex Quad 2534
Furutech FA-220 interlinks
Furutech FS-Alpha loudspeaker cables

AD/DA CONVERSION

Merging Technologies Sphynx 2 at 352.8 kHz

MONITORING

Vivid Audio B1 Decade
Primare A32

Recording, Mixing & Mastering Brendon Heinst

Assistant Engineering Bart Koop

Piano Technician Frits Janmaat

Photography & Artwork Brendon Heinst

Liner Notes Stephanie McCallum & Erin Helyard

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Recorded from February 13th to 16th 2016
at Maison Erard, Amsterdam.



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