

## ADOLF JENSEN

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Adolf Jensen was born on 12 January 1837 in Königsberg into a family of musicians. His brother Gustav (1843-1895) was a violinist and composer. Adolf was mostly self-taught but he received help from Louis Ehlert, Louis Köhler and Friedrich Marpurg (1825-1884). Ehlert (1825-1884) studied with both Mendelssohn and Schumann and composed A Spring Symphony, an Overture and Requiem for a Child as well as vocal, choral and piano music. He came from Königsberg. Köhler (1820-1886) taught there and composed three operas and a ballet but is only known for his educational piano music, and Marpurg was the director of the Königsberg Theater and the great grandson of Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg who wrote books about music.



It is understood that Jensen wanted to make money so he could take lessons with Robert Schumann but Schumann died.

In 1857, Jensen was the music director of the Posen City Theater. From 1858 until 1860, he lived in Copenhagen and he made friends with Niels Gade. Then he went back to Königsberg and there composed most of his music. He went to Berlin and taught advanced piano at Carl Tausig's "Schule des höheren Clavierspiels" from 1866 until 1868. Then he became very sick and had to retire. He went to Dresden, and then to Graz in 1870 and then to Baden-Baden. He died there of tuberculosis on 23 January 1879 when he was 42.

Jensen wrote about 160 songs, and music for piano. His music for piano includes a Sonata in F sharp minor (Op. 25), a set of 25 Études (Op. 32), and Erotikon, Op. 44, pieces depicting scenes from Greek legends. He also wrote music for piano four hands.

His orchestral music consisted of a Concert Overture in E minor and Geistliches Tonstück. He started work on opera Die Erbin von Montfort in 1864-65, but never finished it. After his death, Wilhelm Kienzl adapted the music to a new libretto, Turandot, written by Jensen's daughter Elsbeth, who wrote under the pseudonym "Egbert Jensen".

Most of his works were for piano and songs such as his Six Lieder Op 1 published in 1876. They are simple in design but effective. His Fantasy Pieces for piano Op 7 are dedicated to Brahms and were published in 1882 and Brahms is the dedicatee of the large Piano Sonata Op 25 which appeared in print in 1864. A rare excursion into choral music came with his Op 10, Song of the Nuns, based on poetry of Ludwig Uhland and scored for women's voices.

[Score: Erotikon op.44](#)

[Score: Sonata op. 25](#)

His brother Gustav wrote two cello sonatas, a sinfonietta for string orchestra, a piano trio, a string quartet and a symphony in B flat and was therefore more versatile.

I suppose Adolf's music owes something to Brahms but it is original inasmuch as the melodic lines are unpredictable and somewhat angular. His music is not Chopinesque or Lisztian but has a rich chromaticism which may foreshadow the great Piano Sonata of Berg.

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