

THEODORE KIRCHNER

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Theodore Furchtegott Kirchner was born in Neukirchen, Germany on 10 December 1823. From 1838, he studied at the Leipzig Conservatory under C F Becker. His second period of study was at Dresden

On the recommendation of Mendelssohn, Kirchner became the organist at Winterthur in Switzerland from 1843, where he stayed for about twenty years before taking up a similar post in Zurich in 1862. He then moved to Meningen as a court pianist and the following year became the director of the Music School in Wursburg in 1876.

He composed much piano music but was unable to have a successful musical career because of his life style. He wasted money and had a severe gambling addiction and his marriage in 1878 was also a failure largely due to this addiction. In 1883, he was teaching score reading in Dresden at the Conservatory where he stayed until 1890.



A few years earlier in about 1884, Brahms, Hanslick, Gade, Grieg and von Bulow raised 30,000 marks to pay off his gambling debts.

Kirchner was held in great esteem particularly by Mendelssohn, Brahms, Grieg and Schumann. Theodore was said to be Schumann's greatest disciple. It is also said that he had an affair with Clara Schumann in the 1860s. She had been a widow since 1856. Even Wagner and Liszt thought highly of Kirchner. The composer Gustav Weber dedicated his impressive Piano Quartet to him.

Not only as a composer of perhaps ,1000 piano works, and a few chamber and choral works, Kirchner was a good arranger particularly of Bach.

He died in Hamburg on 19 September 1903.

His music seems to be somewhat naive and acquired the tag of mainly educational music. There appears to be no originality in his music. At the best it sounds like mellow Brahms and, at its most derivative, slushy Chopin.

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