



**Classical  
Vienna**  
Music for  
Guitar & Piano

**James Akers**  
romantic guitar  
**Gary Branch**  
fortepiano

# Classical Vienna

## Music for Guitar & Piano

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James Akers *romantic guitar*

Gary Branch *fortepiano*

About James Akers:

*'It's a small soundscape, but when played with such beauty,  
taste and subtlety, an utterly enchanting one.'*

BBC Music Magazine

Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841)

1. **Nocturne No. 1** [4:33]

Anton Diabelli (1781-1858)

**Sonata for the Piano Forte and Guitar**, Op. 71

2. Allegro moderato [5:42]

3. Menuetto & Trio [4:48]

4. Polonaise [3:15]

Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870)

5. **Fantasia on 'Potem Mitzwo!'** [6:12]

Ferdinando Carulli

6. **Nocturne No. 2** [3:45]

Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829)

**Sonata Brillante**, Op. 15

7. Allegro [6:06]

8. Adagio [4:59]

Mauro Giuliani

**Variations on 'Nel cor più  
non mi sento' & Polonaise**

9. Introduzione [1:57]

10. Variations [7:44]

11. Polonaise [9:14]

Ferdinando Carulli

12. **Variations on Themes  
by Rossini** [9:24]

Total playing time [67:47]



### Classical Vienna: Music for Guitar and Fortepiano

By the early-nineteenth century, long term societal changes in Europe had created a prosperous and expanding middle class. The values and culture of this group, mainly concerned with aspiration and self-improvement, quickly became established, and remained reasonably consistent thereafter. Their economic power and political influence resulted in an explosion of art and literature, theatres and galleries, public works and private devotions to the cult of personal fulfilment.

Music assumed a central role in this world and instrument builders, publishers and musicians combined to expand a burgeoning industry. Many middle class homes were furnished with musical instruments and each generation provided with musical training thus enabling them to entertain and edify family and friends.

Material comfort, however, can inculcate a comfortable conservatism and the market for challenging works, then as now, was limited, with most preferring the comfortably familiar. Whilst music historians have concentrated on larger forms and figures – on legendary composers of genius like Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, the homes of the bourgeoisie

resounded to more comforting sounds. Music publishers poured out vast quantities of works written by skilled craftsmen composers intent on quieting, not arousing, the latent and unseemly passions of the European elite.

The market for music lessons, sheet music and performances provided gainful employment for the composers featured on this recording, many of whom were able to lead bourgeois lifestyles far removed from the starving artist archetype of romantic mythology. A defining figure of this type was Anton Diabelli (1781-1858). Suffering the historical indignity of being most famous for someone else's composition – namely, Beethoven's monumental 'Diabelli' Variations, – Diabelli originally trained to be a priest but was forced into a change of career when his monastery was closed. He moved to Vienna, taught music and in 1821 he founded a publishing company with a colleague, Pietro Cappi. Cappi and Diabelli achieved huge success publishing arrangements of popular pieces.

Diabelli was also a gifted composer whose output ranged from operetta to masses including guitar solos – the genre in which he was most prolific. His **Sonata for the Piano Forte and Guitar**, Op. 71, is a substantial work of three sections: a lively and dramatic sonata form opening; a graceful

cantabile minuet, highlighting the angelic qualities of the piano, juxtaposed with an earthy guitar dominated trio and finishing with the charming rusticity of a 'Polonaise'. Diabelli gives most of the drama and content to the piano, with the guitar providing accompaniment and occasionally breaking out with a melodic flourish or counter-melody. The piece explores a range of moods and demonstrates Diabelli's skill and depth as a composer.

Along with light music, Diabelli also published weightier works. He was the first to print the music of Schubert and purchased the complete estate after the young composer's premature death. However, Diabelli's business partner, Cappi, seems to have had a penchant for offending the firm's composers with the paucity of his payments. He argued with Schubert and also with Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829), the composer of another work on this recording. A letter survives from Giuliani to Messrs Cappi and Diabelli excoriating the pair for their business dealings. Giuliani writes, 'I am not surprised that Sigr, Cappi wants to acquire my works at an un-warranted price [...] but I am astounded at Signor Diabelli, who, as a composer [...] could ever have permitted his associate to degrade the profession so wickedly.'

The presence of Giuliani in Vienna must have accounted for some of the success enjoyed by Diabelli's publishing firm. Upon his arrival in Austria, from Barletta in south Italy in around 1806, Giuliani inspired an enthusiasm for the guitar amongst the Viennese that was described favourably by a contemporary writer (Wilhelm Klingensbrummer): 'He [Giuliani] has provided us with a series of charming compositions and through his teaching he has formed for us so many outstanding amateurs, that there could scarcely be another place where authentic guitar playing is so widely practiced as here in our Vienna.'

'Nel cor più non mi sento', is an aria from Giovanni Paisiello's 1788 opera *La Molinara*. It proved a popular choice for variations, with many composers including Beethoven, Hummel, Paganini and (Giuliani's guitarist composer contemporary) Fernando Sor, all employing it. Giuliani also composed **Variations on Nel cor più non mi sento** and, coupled with a **Polonaise**, they were published in two versions: first, in 1815, for string quartet and guitar and then, in 1823, the arrangement for piano and guitar, heard on this recording. The piece begins with an introduction allowing Giuliani, released from the limitations of the guitar, to flex his compositional muscles. The theme is then played on the guitar with accompanying

chords from the piano before a series of four variations explore different facets of the melody and characteristics of the instruments. Giuliani follows the variations with a lively polonaise, a popular dance form of the time, that lets loose the guitar through a series of episodes demonstrating the variety of virtuosic techniques at Giuliani's disposal.

Giuliani's **Sonata Brillante**, Op. 15, is perhaps his best-known work. Whilst on occasion Giuliani's music tends towards the facile, this piece shows his melodic gift, dramatic intuition and depth of understanding of the guitar honed to perfection. The first movement begins with a gently undulating ostinato before taking off to explore a broad range of moods and emotions. Though in traditional sonata form, the piece is unhampered by convention and allows Giuliani's imagination to venture where it will, while maintaining structural integrity. It proves what can be achieved by a solo instrument in the hands of a gifted composer. The second movement is a touchingly beautiful pastorale. Crying out for orchestration, it could almost have been written by Beethoven himself, with its wistful nostalgic mood, and occasional flashes of darkening angst. It ends, movingly, with a return to the opening theme of the first movement – an act of formal genius satisfying reason

and emotion.

As the popularity of the guitar increased throughout Europe, the leading performers of the day found themselves much in demand. Some, like Fernando Sor, exiled from his homeland by the violent politics of the time, travelled as far afield as London and Moscow never truly settling. Others, during their travels, found commodious respite in one place and decided to remain.

One such was Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841). Born in Naples he began his musical studies with the 'cello before turning his attention to the guitar. Following a highly successful tour of Paris, he decided to re-locate there and became a sought after guitar teacher and later publisher of guitar music.

Carulli was a hugely prolific composer and, given the amount he wrote, the quality of his music is remarkably consistent. Much of his simpler music for students has been continuously in use for two hundred years and this, coupled with the fact that his more advanced music is less well-known and out of print has meant his work has been unjustly undervalued in modern times.

The three pieces by Carulli on this recording are all delightful compositions. Perhaps written in conjunction with his son, the pianist and

singer Gustavo Carulli, they manage to balance the instruments and highlight each in an idiomatic way. His **Variations on Themes of Rossini**, takes a gentle melody, 'Oh, matutino albori' from *La Donna del Lago* subjecting it to a series of variations, before a lively setting of another Rossini melody from *Della Gazza Ladra* (*The Thieving Magpie*) leads into an extended ending, of the type beloved of early-nineteenth-century composers. In which the audience is held in suspense, unsure when the last chord will finally be struck. The two **Nocturnes** are charming pieces full of character and melodic invention that demonstrate the *joie de vivre* of Carulli at his best.

Carulli's music, along with pieces by Giuliani and Diabelli, has frequently been criticised for a lack of originality and profundity. Many performers, critics and historians of guitar music have argued that if only a 'great' composer had composed for the instrument, then the repertoire would have been greatly enriched. This view, however, misses the point of much of the music included on this recording. Carulli, Giuliani and Diabelli were not trying to be original. When the style in which they composed is accepted on its own merits, within the confines of the aesthetic aims it pursues, their music achieves its end with wit, finesse and discernment.

On this recording I used two guitars, an original 1820s instrument by Saumier for the Carulli pieces and Giuliani and Diabelli sonatas and a 2015 Panormo replica by James Cole for the Giuliani Variations and Polonaise.

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It would be considered by many musicians today that a guitar and piano duo is a very tricky combination, due to such a vast difference in the dynamic and tonal qualities of each instrument. However, back in the early-nineteenth century it was quite different, especially regarding the Viennese fortepiano pianos that were popular in southern, eastern and central Europe. These instruments were very much based on the design and build qualities of the fortepiano makers of Vienna.

The fortepiano was in many ways a very different instrument to the pianoforte instruments built in London, Paris, western and northern Europe. It would be the pianoforte instruments designed to become ever more powerful in tone which would evolve into the pianos we know today. The construction of the Viennese fortepiano was created in such a way as to produce a large range of tonal variety, but not necessarily greater 'forte' dynamic ranges. The fortepiano uses a more direct, less

complicated action, which gives a more immediate sound, but is less able to develop the tonal power in the louder dynamics. This would ultimately mean that the fortepiano would be sidelined by the pianoforte through its ability to provide the power required for concert halls and virtuosic pianists of the later-nineteenth century. However, one important feature of the Viennese fortepianos is the use of additional tonal devices operated by pedals or knee levers found in eighteenth-century instruments. All pianos have in common the use of a sustain pedal and an una/duo corda pedal (the keyboard shift to the right, to hit one or two strings instead of three strings). However, early Viennese fortepianos do not always have the una/duo corda pedal, but instead they have another pedal or knee lever to make the instrument quieter called the moderator. The moderator places a piece of cloth between the hammers and the string to create a completely different tonal quality and a quieter dynamic range. The combination of both the una/duo corda and moderator pedals built into the nineteenth-century fortepianos can reduce the dynamic range to a very subtle, sensitive and intimate quality, ideal for duo playing with the Classical guitar of the period. The advantage at this time

in composing music for a fortepiano and Classical guitar duo as opposed to a standard guitar duo, is that the fortepiano is able to provide greater pitch and dynamic ranges without overpowering the guitar. This combination presents composers of the period with more dramatic, tonal and ultimately creative possibilities in this ensemble genre.

The Conrad Graf fortepiano of 1826 used in this recording represents one of the finest fortepiano makers in Vienna and has both una corda and moderator pedals. Conrad Graf (1782-1851) became one of the most successful and prolific makers of these instruments in the first half of the nineteenth century. Having purchased a disused dancehall in 1825, known as Mondscheinhaus (Moonlight House), he converted it to a workshop to build his instruments, but also provided a concert hall and practice rooms. Many of the finest pianists of this period including Frédéric Chopin aged eighteen (having left Poland and before settling in Paris), the great young female pianist Clara Wieck (later to become Clara Schumann) and the formidable virtuoso Franz Liszt were all well acquainted with Mondscheinhaus. It is worth noting that Liszt often had more than one piano on stage during a concert, so that when he broke one instrument he could move to



the next, but it was noted that the Conrad Graf instruments were so well constructed that Liszt did not even break a single string during a recital!

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### Technical Information

Conrad Graf fortepiano of 1826 from the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection

Compass: CC-f4 Pedals

Keyboard shift to duo corda, bassoon (cembalo), moderator, sustain

Build No.: OPUS 988 written in graphite on the soundboard

Dimensions in centimetres: length 242.5, width 120.5, case height 31.5

Decoration: Mahogany veneer with gilt-brass adornments in the key well

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Richard and Katrina Burnett and all the staff of Finchcocks House and Musical Museum for their generous assistance in the recording of this album, providing both the recording location and fortepiano.

Thanks are also due to Steven Devine and Edmund Pickering.



## James Akers

James Akers was born in Scotland and began playing guitar at the age of ten, later studying with Robert Mackillop at Napier University, Edinburgh. Whilst at Napier he turned his attentions to playing the lute, progressing to the Royal College of Music and study with Jakob Lindberg. Adding theorbo to his expanding instrument collection, James continued his studies at Trinity College of Music with Jacob Heringman and David Miller with additional lessons and advice from Paul O'Dette and Elizabeth Kenny. Having settled on the period instrument path James continued accumulating instruments and exploring the music of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

Following a Junior Fellowship at Trinity College of Music James began pursuing a varied professional career. As a soloist he has performed mostly in the UK and Scandinavia giving recitals for The Yorke Music Trust, Ullapool Guitar Festival, Classical Guitar Retreat, Exeter Guitar Festival and the Copenhagen Renaissance Music Festival.

He has accompanied leading singers including Dame Emma Kirkby, James Bowman, Michael Chance, Miriam Allan, and Sam Bowden and with ensembles such as I Fagiolini, Ex Cathedra, Fretwork, The Parley of Instruments, The

Hanover Band, Sounds Baroque and the Dunedin Consort.

As a continuo player James has worked for major opera companies, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North and Innsbruck Festival Opera and orchestras and chamber groups including The Scottish, Irish and English Chamber Orchestras, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, The Scottish Ensemble, and ventured into other styles with Damon Albarn.

James has performed on numerous recordings – his debut solo recording *Thesaurus Harmonicus* was released in 2012; a few film soundtracks; several theatrical stages, including Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the Barbican, and broadcast for the BBC, France Musique and RTE Lyric, Ireland.

Although mostly concentrating on performing and teaching, James has occasionally indulged in research, exploring the domestic music making of Samuel Pepys and his 'musical secretary' Cesare Morelli, the polyphony of Scottish Renaissance composer David Peebles and, most recently, how Scottish melodies were used by European guitarist composers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. James is a lecturer in early plucked strings at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

[www.jamieakers.com](http://www.jamieakers.com)

## Gary Branch (fortepiano)

Gary Branch studied piano at Trinity College of Music, London with Anthony Peebles and Christine Croshaw graduating with a GTCL Honours degree and Postgraduate Performance Certificate. He won numerous prizes including The Elsa and Leonard Cross Memorial Trust Scholarship for a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22. This award enabled him to continue his studies in Amsterdam with Jan Wijn, Head of Keyboard at the Sweelinck Conservatoire.

In Amsterdam, Gary became very interested in early pianos and their link to the great Classical and Romantic composers. Returning to England he discovered Finchcocks Musical Museum of early keyboard instruments. Since 2004 Gary has become closely involved with Finchcocks – demonstrating, performing and workshop teaching. In 2010 Gary was appointed Educational Co-ordinator until the museum closed in 2015. He is presently connected to the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection and the Finchcocks Charity for early keyboard restoration, performance and education.

Gary has performed widely, both the UK and abroad including with many distinguished

artists including Neil Jenkins (tenor), Steven Devine (early keyboard specialist), Mark Milhofer (tenor), Kate Semmens (soprano) and Kathleen Kemler (American flutist). He is also Musical Director of the John Kerr Award for English Song, a charity founded in 2005 to promote performance of the English Song repertoire. It also provides bursary prizes for young singers and accompanists who take an interest in the genre.

Broadcasts include BBC local radio and BBC Television's *Great Railway Journeys* series at Finchcocks House, broadcast in January 2016 and focusing on Broadwood and Sons square pianos and their link to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

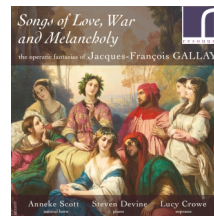


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Conrad Graf piano (1826) prepared & maintained by Edmund Pickering

Session & instrument photography © Resonus Limited

Recorded at 24-bit/96kHz resolution (DDD)

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