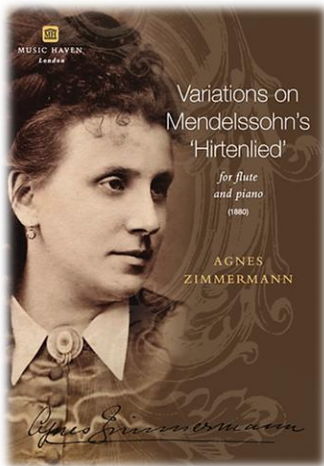




Music Review - Variations on Mendelssohn's 'Hirtenlied' for flute and piano, by [Agnes Zimmermann](#) (1880), Music Haven Publishing

Written by BJ Nicoletti



Agnes Zimmermann (1847 - 1925) was a later 19th, early 20th century composer. Starting at a young age, she attended the Royal Academy of Music to study piano. She won prestigious competitions and had pieces composed for her. As a pianist, “she was praised for her clarity and control, and was regarded as one of [England’s] leading pianists.” (Grove Music Online) She was also a composer of piano pieces and chamber music for which she was recognized in her lifetime. She performed two piano recitals regularly with Clara Schumann.

I recently came upon this newly discovered 19th century piece for flute and piano in a recent issue of Pan, the journal of the British Flute Society and wanted to call GPFS member attention to it right away – [Agnes Zimmermann Variations on a Theme by Mendelssohn](#). The piece is a musically engaging, well presented (edited by [Peter Fribbins](#) and [William Drabkin](#)), and accessible set of three variations based on the familiar Shepherd’s song theme for solo flute by Felix Mendelssohn (originally played by the well-known French flutist Philippe Drouet. This is Zimmermann’s only piece written for the flute.

- ❖ This is the first publication of the piece. It’s overall energetic, easy and sometimes playful feel makes it a nice piece to program as a shorter work to lighten the mood.
- ❖ It is about ten minutes long with an opening statement of the familiar and beautiful theme (slightly modified from Mendelssohn’s), followed by three variations.
- ❖ The piano accompaniment is, one might say, perfect, and has frequent interplay between the flute and the piano’s right hand.
- ❖ It is definitely accessible to more advanced intermediate players, but is probably a better fit for early advanced players on up.
- ❖ At the start, the theme is simply stated over 27 measures, in 6/8, with no rhythmic complexities and a note range of low d to the third octave g.

- ❖ The first variation, *grazioso e tranquillo*, has syncopated rhythms in both parts and, therefore, some manageable but still complexities to carefully work out. The range is low e-flat to third register e-flat.
- ❖ The second variation, in 6/8, is softer and slower in nature. It plays more melodically and stays within the range of low d to middle register e-flat.
- ❖ The third variation, *grazioso leggiero*, remains in 6/8 and uses near constant sets of slurred sixteenth notes with intermittent staccato, giving it a sense of elongated movement to the end. The dynamic range is more varied than the second with *pianissimo* to *forte* contrast in the first half and a *pianissimo* to *forte* rise then gradual *decrescendo* to the close.
- ❖ The publication has clear dynamic and articulation notations.

A final observation, one shouldn't ignore that the cover of this edition has a classy, near life-size picture of Agnes Zimmermann herself - an homage to this careful and honest effort to bring this female composer and long unknown piece to life.

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