

*A Kalmus Classic Edition*

Theodor

# KULLAK

## THE SCHOOL OF OCTAVE-PLAYING

VOLUME I

FOR PIANO

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## THEODOR KULLAK



**T**HEODOR KULLAK, the distinguished pianist and pedagogue, was born in Krotoschin, in the German province of Posen, on September 12, 1818. His father, a secretary of the provincial court, intended him for a legal career, but at the same time encouraged his marked musical proclivities. His first teacher on the

piano was Albrecht Agthe, of Posen. The boy's rapid progress attracted the attention of Prince Radziwill (the composer of the music to Goethe's *Faust*); through his interest the youthful virtuoso was enabled, at the age of eleven, to make a successful *début* before the Berlin court. While zealously prosecuting his musical studies, the death of his patron, Prince Radziwill, in 1833, caused a change in his plans; after graduation from the gymnasium at Züllichau, in 1837, Kullak went to Berlin with the intention of studying medicine; but renewed intercourse with his former teacher, Agthe, who had meanwhile removed to that city, was decisive for his future career. He studied the piano with W. Hauck, and harmony with Dehn, also giving lessons himself, and in 1842 continued under Czerny, Sechter and Nicolai at Vienna. In the following year, after a brilliant pianistic tour through Austria, he settled in Berlin, where he was appointed music-teacher to Princess Anna, the daughter of Prince Friedrich Carl, and ultimately became the teacher of all the children of the royal family, receiving the title, in 1846, of Court Pianist. Four years later he founded, with Julius Stern and Dr. A. B. Marx, the "Berlin Conservatory" (afterwards the "Stern C."); in 1855 their partnership was dissolved, and Kullak then established the famous "Neue Akademie der Tonkunst," which celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, in 1880, with a staff of 100 instructors and over 1,000 pupils. Only two years thereafter, on March 1, 1882, the founder of the Acad-

emy died. His son, Franz Kullak, carried on the institution until 1889, when it was closed.

As a teacher, the impressive personality of Theodor Kullak has left an abiding mark. The writer remembers seeing him in 1875: a tall, spare, erect figure, nervously abrupt in manner and gesture, of a certain military rigidity—an effect doubtless enhanced by the multitudinous swathings of the neck as a protection from the chilly March air;—strongly marked features, with deep lines and furrows; deep-set, piercing eyes under bushy brows; iron-gray hair, somewhat *à la* Schumann, and a thick, short-clipped moustache; all in all, the type of a veteran thinker and worker—a master of art and of men, well deserving a niche in the Pantheon of the "nation of schoolmasters." The prosperity of his Academy bore eloquent testimony to his popularity; a host of pupils—among them Xaver and Philipp Scharwenka, Moritz Moszkowski, Constantin Sternberg, W. H. Sherwood, Hans Bischoff, Alfred Grünfeld, Arthur Mees, Otto Neitzel, Erica Lie, Helene Geissler, Martha Remmert—amply attest his remarkable ability as a pedagogue; and those of his works which promise to attain greatest longevity, and which command universal admiration, were written for the purpose of instruction. And foremost among these text-books must be noticed "The School of Octave-playing," a work used wherever advanced piano-playing is taught; also the "Materials for Elementary Instruction," in three books, and his contributions to the Moscheles-Fétis Method, both valuable; together with the "Kinderleben," "Arpèges," "Gazelle," etc., the last being a very elegant concert-piece. His published compositions number about 130, and include, besides the above, a pf.-concerto (op. 55), a "Symphonie de piano" (op. 27), a sonata (op. 7), much charming salon-music, many brilliant paraphrases and fantasias, etc.

As a performer, Kullak was extremely successful; his eminence as a pianist, teacher, and composer won him numerous flattering distinctions; in 1861 he received the title of Royal Professor; he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Philharmonic Academy of Florence, and was created a Knight of various orders, e.g., of the "Red Eagle" and "Prussian Crown."

# Preparatory Exercises.

## Section I.

### Preliminary Remarks.

(1) Dexterity in octave - playing is essentially dependent on the training of the wrist, the assistance of which is required in two different directions:

a. In *staccato* playing, in order that the rise and fall of the hand required by the separation of the tones, may be executed easily and without stiffness.

b. In *legato* playing, in order to facilitate the rising and falling of the hand, which has to serve as a weight augmenting the pressure required of the finger depressing the key, thus facilitating a sustained and connected style of execution. For this rising and falling are necessary to prevent overexertion and exhaustion. In contradistinction

to *legato* playing, which is based on the simple "finger-stroke from the knuckle-joint," we term this style "*legato* playing by the aid of the wrist."

(2) In the second place, we must consider the training of those fingers which are chiefly employed in octave-playing. The principal finger is the thumb; the fifth and fourth fingers are next in importance, the third and second being utilized only in a very subordinate capacity. The three principal fingers 1, 4 and 5, require special training (particularly for the *legato* execution of successive octaves), for the reason that they are obliged, by the distance between the lower and higher tones of the octave, to assume positions and perform duties at variance with those demanded by the simple finger-*legato*.

### I. Staccato Playing.

Repeated striking of one and the same key; fingering 1-5; the simple wrist-stroke.

Assuming that the pupil knows the correct attitude of the body and position of the seat, as well as the correct angle between the forearm and upper arm, the simple form of the wrist-stroke requires independence of the hand of the arm, which latter must strive to retain its normal position.

The up-strokes and down-strokes of the

hand must be executed as evenly as possible. Accents require a higher up-stroke, so that the down-stroke may gain greater power. Each of the following exercises is to be repeated several times in succession in the same manner. The unemployed fingers should assume an easy attitude. With increasing facility, the *tempo* may be accelerated and various degrees of force (*p*, *f*, etc.) may be taken into account.

The musical notation consists of three exercises, labeled I. a., b., and c., arranged horizontally. Each exercise is written on a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The time signature is common time (C). Exercise I. a. shows a series of eighth notes on a single pitch in the treble clef, with a single eighth note in the bass clef. Exercise I. b. shows a series of eighth notes on a single pitch in the treble clef, with a single eighth note in the bass clef. Exercise I. c. shows a series of eighth notes on a single pitch in the treble clef, with a single eighth note in the bass clef. The exercises are marked with 'I. a.', 'b.', and 'c.' respectively.

(b) 2.(a) (b)

(c) (d)

3. 4.

5. (a)

(b)

etc., through the entire Chromatic scale.