

Reflection on instrumentation of *Bardenklänge*, op. 13

Although the six-string guitar tuned E-A-d-g-h-e1 was widespread in the first half of the 19th century, instruments with added bass strings (ranging from one to seven) appeared in Europe as early as the second decade of the 19th century.

Lacote's ten-string *decacorde*, which was created in collaboration with the Italian guitarist and composer Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841), is known from the year 1826, and a thirteen-string guitar with seven added bass strings and two necks from the prominent Viennese Stauffer workshop appeared as early as 1825¹.

Furthermore, we know of several instruments with added bass strings from the workshops of Viennese masters, dating from the years 1827, 1837, and 1840², and in 1841, several newspaper articles describe the uniqueness and new quality of the "new Stauffer guitar," which had two added bass strings, C and D³.

Several prominent guitarists and composers favored this type of innovation. Besides the already mentioned Carulli, they included Luigi Legnani (1790–1877), Ivan Padovec (1800–1873), Johann Dubez (1828–1891), Napoléon Coste (1805–1883), and also J. K. Mertz, who demonstrably used multi-stringed instruments in his concerts.

The earliest reports that he played an eight-string guitar date from 1841 and 1842⁴. The first review of Mertz's concert in Brno in 1841 states that "... *he played on a guitar by the Viennese master Stauffer, which, in addition to the usual six strings, also had C and D strings to strengthen the bass, especially in the final cadences.*"⁵ Later, when he performed in the Schweighofer Salon in February 1848, the review mentions that he played a *Harfengitarre* (harp-guitar). The review does not provide a detailed description of the instrument, but Stempnik believes that it might have been a ten-string guitar, which the Viennese instrument maker Johann

¹ HOFMANN, Erik Pierre – MOUGIL, Pascal – HACKL, Stefan: *Stauffer & Co. – La Guitare Viennoise au XIXe Siècle*. Les Éditions des Robins, Germolles-sur-Grosne, 2011, p. 62 – 63 a 152 – 153.

² Johann Anton Stauffer & Comp. 1827, Johann Anton Stauffer 1837, Nikolaus Georg Ries 1840 (Pozri HOFMANN – MOUGIL – HACKL, c. d., 2011, p. 160 – 161, 192 – 193, 196 – 197).

³ In: *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung* n. 116, 28. 9. 1841, p. 487 – 488. Accessed: <<https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=awm&datum=18410928&seite=3&zoom=33>>

⁴ In: *Moravia – ein Blatt zur Unterhaltung, zur Kunde des Vaterlandes, des gesellschaftlichen und industriellen Fortschrittes*, 27. 9. 1841, s. 309. Accessed: <https://digipress.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb10532696_00319_u001?page=2,3>

Gottfried Scherzer (1834–1870) later made famous⁶. This is also supported by the dating of some of Mertz's manuscripts, where the use of bass notes A, C, and D is evident.

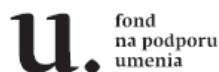
Based on these sources, it is clear that Mertz favored guitars with added bass strings already in the 1840s, even while working on his cycle *Bardenklänge*. However, all the pieces in the cycle, except for the *Romance* in the 14th volume, which was posthumously published in 1899, are written within the range of the bass E, meaning for the traditional six-string guitar model. It should be noted (as was the case with other virtuosos and composers) that publishers rarely published music for unusual types of guitars, and the vast majority of works adapted to the needs of the public in this regard.

Although the texture of the pieces in the *Bardenklänge* cycle is exceptionally compact and it is not necessary to change the octave of the bass voices, it must be kept in mind that when the work was composed, the composer undoubtedly used a guitar with added bass strings. In the context of the Ossianic elements and the associated musical means, the extended possibilities and especially the timbre of the multi-string guitar can be a very useful tool for interpretation.

Martin Krajčo, November 2024

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⁶ STEMPIK, Astrid: *Caspar Joseph Mertz: Leben und Werk des letzten Gitarristen im österreichischen Biedermeier, Eine Studie über den Niedergang der Gitarre in Wien um 1850*. [PhD Thesis.] Berlin: Freien Universität Berlin, 1989, 9. 44.