

## Score Review

Philipp Jakob Riotte, *Clarinet Concerto in C Minor, Op. 36*, edited by Martin Harlow. Recent Researches in the Music of the Classic Era (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2016). Full Score, C104, xv + 103 pp. USD145.00.

In 1808 Philipp Jakob Riotte (1776–1856) moved to Vienna after a brief period working in Danzig and Magdeburg. A year later, the Russian clarinet virtuoso Iwan Müller (1786–1854) arrived in the city having left his post as an Imperial Chamber Musician at the St Petersburg court in 1807. In the interim, he had established an impressive international reputation as a performer, spending time in Dresden, Berlin, Leipzig and Paris. As well as being a virtuoso on both the clarinet and basset horn, Müller was fascinated by instrument design. Through a process of experimentation and collaboration with first-class instrument makers including Heinrich Grenser in Dresden, he had already developed an improved basset horn and was working on the development of a revolutionary new clarinet. Müller's 'clarinet omnitonique', a 13-keyed instrument that displayed significant technical advancements over earlier instruments, was perfected by Müller in collaboration with the prominent Viennese instrument maker, Johann Baptist Merklein. It was for this instrument that Riotte composed his C minor Concerto, op. 36, which Müller premiered in Vienna on 22 October 1809 in the Saale zum römischen Kaiser.

Like all works of its kind, Riotte's new clarinet concerto was composed to show the soloist to advantage. But it also had another purpose, from Müller's perspective at least, of demonstrating the enlarged technical and expressive range of his 'clarinet omnitonique'. In his preface to the present edition, Martin Harlow, a specialist in wind repertoire of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and related issues of performance practice, draws on both primary sources as well as his own close-reading of the concerto, to define what made the work so remarkable. He also explains why a number of composers, among them Adalbert Gyrowetz, became such enthusiastic advocates for the Müller-Merklein clarinet. An extended review of the work, which appeared in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in August 1818, praises the instrument, writing that "this mechanism [of the 13-keyed instrument] is truly an improvement".<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of Riotte's autograph score and any performance materials that can be directly linked to the composer, Harlow's edition of Riotte's concerto is based on the first and only edition of the work, printed in parts in Bonn by Simrock c. 1817. It is surprising that only one complete copy of Simrock's print, now housed in the library of the Istituto musicale Pareggiato "O. Vecchi – A. Tonelli", in Modena, appears to have survived, given the spate of performances that took place around 1817–18. The lack of manuscript performing materials that predate the work's publication is rather less surprising, and it is not atypical of concertos written for specific performers who sought to restrict their wider circulation. Whether Riotte granted Müller exclusive rights to perform the concerto

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<sup>1</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 31 (5 August 1818): cols 555–557.

is unknown, but the absence of sources and the later dedication of the work to Müller suggests that such an arrangement may have existed.

Harlow's edition follows the general editorial principles and formatting conventions that have long been a part of A-R Editions' house style. Judging from the comparative brevity of Harlow's critical notes, which record readings in the source that differ from the edition in ways that cannot be indicated in the score, Simrock's parts appear to have been for the most part carefully engraved and based on a reliable if unidentifiable source. The editorial method is commendably straightforward, its aim to present the musical text in a way that conforms as closely as possible to modern practice without obscuring details in the original that have implications for performance, as is the case at times, with beaming patterns. The edition differentiates clearly between original and editorial markings and these are indicated variously by the use of brackets, dotted slurs and other conventional means. Redundant accidentals have been removed, and care taken to distinguish between editorial accidentals, which are placed in brackets, and cautionary accidentals, which are placed in parentheses.

Harlow's decision to use staccato markings throughout the edition, in spite of the occasional presence of contradictory stroke markings, is understandable given the lack of other sources for the work. Nonetheless, he does not indicate whether this approach appears to be consistent with Riotte's usual practice. In the preface, Harlow refers to the important collection of Riotte autographs held in the archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. It would surely have been instructive to compare a number of these with Simrock's print or indeed other early editions of Riotte's works. He justifies his decision on the grounds of there "being no discernible distinction in meaning", a view that admittedly is not without its advocates, but the argument is weakened by the lack of contextual evidence relating directly to Riotte himself.

In comparison to his approach to staccato markings, Harlow resists the temptation to regularize parallel passages through the application of markings by analogy. This is to be commended since it preserves and respects the variety in performance that was characteristic of contemporary performance practice. One such example of this can be seen in the final bars for the work, where two articulation patterns can be seen in the solo part (bars 293–294). One of these continues the single slur on each semiquaver group of six which conforms to the pattern established in bar 291, while the second pattern slurs notes 2–4, with staccato markings on notes 1, 5 and 6. Since it is unlikely, although not impossible, that Riotte wrote both sets of markings, one or other of them may point to the engraving copy used by Simrock having been annotated by a performer, which clearly has implications for other markings in the editions. Harlow's decision to include both sets of markings without comment is consistent with his approach to variant articulations in parallel or analogous passages. As in all good editions, any ambiguity in the text is intentional, giving agency to the performer to make decisions about whether a passage should be performed in manner identical to earlier iterations or be invested with new significance through varied articulations or dynamics.

Riotte's Concerto in C minor is a fascinating example of a work that owes its final form to the impact of innovative instrument design, the playing style of the performer for whom it was written, and the overarching artistic conception of the composer. Certain aspects of Müller's technique, now considered orthodox, would have been considered startling in 1809. Riotte provided ample scope for him to impress. The concerto features frequent chalumeau melodic writing,

passagework such as that found in the third solo section of the finale, bar 172 ff., which Harlow describes as “unimaginable and unidiomatic on a clarinet without additional keywork” (p. xii), and frequent chromatic scalar runs. The publication of this edition marks an important contribution to the early nineteenth-century clarinet literature.

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