

## Book Review

Hervé Audéon, Jana Franková and Herbert Schneider, eds. *Antoine Reicha: Actes des rencontres organisées à l'occasion du 250<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de sa naissance / Proceedings of the Meetings Organised on the Occasion of his 250th birthday* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2023). 486 pp. 68€.

In the last ten years or so, the music of Antoine Reicha has seen a rapid expansion in the number of performances, recordings and new editions. This has been accompanied by publications based on international conferences at which, not only his music, but also his theoretical writings were discussed. The work under review here (henceforth 'Actes 2023') consists of 15 of the contributions to three conferences held between 2020 and 2021. The first of these took place in Paris, before the Covid restrictions came into force. The second and third were held online. It is not my intention here to make any judgements on the essays in 'Actes 2023', as in all cases the authors know far more about their topic than I do. I wish, instead, to give an idea of the range and detail that are to be found.

The conferences of 'Actes 2023' were by no means the first in recent times to have Reicha as the topic. We can go back to Paris in 2013 and *Antoine Reicha: compositeur et théoricien*. That conference consisted of 22 lectures divided into three sections: Reicha's aesthetics, his theoretical works, his music. The proceedings of that conference were published, as with 'Actes 2023', by Georg Olms, under the editorship of Louise Bernard de Raymond, Jean-Pierre Bartoli and Herbert Schneider.

There can be no doubt that the principal impetus for that Paris conference was the publication, by Olms, in 2010 and 2011, of two volumes of previously unpublished theoretical writings by Reicha. These volumes, having the title *Écrits inédits et oubliés / Unbekannte und unveröffentlichte Schriften* (Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.1), were edited by Hervé Audéon, Alban Ramaut and Herbert Schneider. They are, respectively, of 344 and 631 pages, but those numbers must be roughly divided by two, as the editions are bilingual, with a facing French translation when the original text is in German, and vice-versa. The main contents of the first volume are an autobiography, a commentary on the collection of 24 piano pieces entitled *Practische Beispiele* and the essay *Sur la musique comme art purement sentimental*. The second volume contains two extensive treatises: *Der Grundsätze der practischen Harmonie* and *Kunst der practischen Harmonie*, that is, the principles and practice of harmony. It is illustrated by numerous musical examples of Reicha's own invention.

The Paris conference was followed by one in Lucca, in 2017, having the title *Professor Reicha: practice and legacy of a composer-teacher*. The 18 lectures covered the topics of Reicha as teacher, his treatises, counterpoint, his legacy, his contemporaries, the chamber music, performing style and virtuosity.

As the above references indicate, we can see Reicha in three ways – principally as composer, but also as teacher, with luminaries such as Berlioz, Gounod, Farrenc, Liszt, Bertin, Franck and Onslow among his students, and as theoretician, with influential treatises such as the *Traité de haute composition musicale*, which Czerny thought so important that he translated it into German.

Returning, then, to 'Actes 2023': there is no overriding theme, and so I could not write about it as if it were a unified work. I have opted therefore simply to give a

brief overview of the content of each chapter, in the hope that this will show the variety of approaches to Reicha's music that these 15 essays offer. The work begins, appropriately, with two chapters on Reicha's early years, in Bonn and Hamburg.

The first is by François-Pierre Goy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which houses the great majority of the manuscripts and first editions of Reicha's music. Goy presents us with Reicha in Hamburg in 1797, at the age of 27, an unpublished composer. In October of that year, Reicha sends letters to several publishers proposing works of his for publication. Two of these letters have been preserved. Appended to each is a four-page catalogue of works. Goy provides an image of Reicha's original and in print, with modern identification, such as shelf-marks. From this catalogue, we can determine those works that, in the composer's lifetime, were published or remained in manuscript and those that are now lost. What is astonishing is the number of works that are listed. Depending on how you count them, it comes to something between 100 and 130. The works are divided into groups on the basis of the forces required. There are six main categories, with subdivisions: orchestral music, concertos, Italian airs with orchestra, chamber music ranging from quintet to duo, music for voice and piano and, finally, for piano solo. Goy gives a detailed commentary on all these categories.

The second chapter, by John D. Wilson, presents Reicha in Bonn, during his teens and early twenties, from 1785 to 1794, where he met and befriended Beethoven. The two played in the same orchestra and studied under Christian Neefe, who seems to have inspired their special interest in fugal form. Wilson's aim is to establish which of Reicha's works were composed in Bonn and when. Reicha makes this difficult, as he never made a list of his works as he composed them. From an examination of the types of paper Reicha used and their watermarks, Wilson is able to date the compositions. Images of some of the manuscripts are included.

The next two chapters are on the operas. If we can talk of a 'Reicha renaissance', these are the weakest element. I know of only one performance in modern times. It is to be hoped that, before too long, one of the big opera houses will put on one of Reicha's 'grand' operas, *Sapho* or *Natalie*. The first of these chapters, by François-Pierre Goy, is about the comic operas *Obaldi* and *Ouragan*. The former was composed in Hamburg and the latter in Paris during Reicha's first visit to the city. Both were rejected by the Parisian theatres. Goy recounts his own discovery, as recently as 2020, that a previously unidentified manuscript is, in fact, a copy, of high quality, of *Obaldi*. Similarly, he relates how, in sorting out three boxes of manuscripts, he found that they are a mixture of *Ouragan* and the later opera *Natalie*. The result is that we now have 500 pages of *Ouragan*. Goy presents many details, too numerous even to hint at here, comparing the various versions of the two works.

In the next of this pair of chapters, Jana Franková deals with the three 'opéras-comiques' written after 1808, when Reicha established himself definitively in Paris: *Cagliostro* (1810), *Gusman d'Alfarache* (1816) and *Bégéri* (1818). The first was premiered in 1810 in Paris. As with the earlier operas there are various sources, and Franková gives an account of the changes that these works underwent as a result of administrative demands and artistic conflict. She concludes by considering how his experience with these works may have influenced Reicha in writing his treatise *Art du compositeur dramatique*, published in 1833, even though no extracts from those operas are used as examples in the treatise.

The next two chapters are on two large-scale works for piano. In the first, Henrik Löwenmark discusses the *Étude de piano ou 57 Variations sur un même thème suivies d'un Rondeau*, Op. 102, first published in 1824. Löwenmark is not only a

musicologist specializing in Reicha, but also a pianist, who has, since 2016, recorded five commercial CDs of Reicha's music for piano solo, including Op. 102, with more to come. The theme is assumed to be taken from Grétry's opera *Panurge dans l'isle des lanternes*, though Grétry's name does not appear anywhere in the original edition. Reicha wrote one other set of 57 variations, his Op. 57, having the additional title of *Art de Varier*, published in 1804. Naturally, Löwenmark compares the two. (It is as yet to be explained why Reicha was so drawn to the number 57.) We know from his writings that Reicha was opposed to the popular style of variation writing of the time, which relied on facile ornamentation and figuration. Löwenmark's detailed analysis of Op. 102 shows how Reicha's variations, by contrast, are musically interesting rather than emptily pianistic, sometimes reducing and transforming the theme and its harmonies to reveal possibilities we would never have thought were there, as with Variation 25, which has the title *La Bizarre*.

The second of these two chapters is my own contribution to this collection. It is on the *Études dans le genre fugué*, Op. 97, first published in 1820. This is a set of 34 studies, each containing two pieces. The subtitle is 'for the use of young composers' and, before the studies themselves, Reicha adds remarks on the structure of 16 of the pieces. Despite the implications of the title and of Reicha's own preface, nearly all of the studies contain a piece that is not fugal. I discuss some of these pieces, which I divide into two categories – the six having the title 'Air' and those that relate to Reicha's remarks on suspensions. Of the Airs, two have a saraband structure. The difference between them and the traditional baroque saraband is that the melodic phrasing of Reicha's pieces is asymmetrical with, for example, a sequence of 7 + 8 + 9 + 5 bars. Reicha writes about this sort of asymmetry in his *Traité de mélodie*. The other four can be compared structurally with the theme of Handel's famous Air, the *Harmonious Blacksmith* and, in fact, Reicha quotes from it in the second of these four pieces. He also analyses this work of Handel's in the *Traité de mélodie*. Once again, Reicha employs asymmetrical phrasing. As for the pieces demonstrating suspensions, Reicha sets out, in his preliminary remarks, the four different types, which he defines as tied, broken, struck and varied. I identify and comment on examples that display those characteristics.

The fugues of Op. 97 feature in the following chapter, by Herbert Schneider. He discusses the relation between Reicha's two early experimental fugue cycles – the *Douze fugues* (c. 1799) and the *Trente-six fugues* (1804), which incorporates the former work – and the more conservative collections, the *Six fugues* (1810) and the *Études dans le genre fugué* (1820). The latter two works are considered in the light of what Reicha would later write about fugal form in his influential *Traité de haute composition musicale* (1826). Schneider describes Reicha's different ways of treating the fugue theme – the answer, interludes, components from sonatas and character pieces – as well as the relation to Bach and the *Well Tempered Clavier*. Later in the chapter, Schneider compares Op. 81 and Op. 97 with the later collections of fugues by Czerny and Klengel.

The next chapter, by Ana Stefanović, is on the two quintets for clarinet and string quartet, Op. 89, of 1820, and Op. 107, of 1829, the latter having the option of oboe for the wind part. Stefanović places these quintets in the context of Reicha's other works for clarinet, such as the concerto, and of contemporary works for the same forces, such as those of Meyerbeer and Weber. She characterizes the two quintets as being in the classical Viennese tradition, emphasizing the *cantabile* nature of the clarinet writing.

The next two chapters are the most abstract. In the first, Hervé Audéon considers Reicha's ideas about the history and nature of music, ideas that were fiercely contested by François-Joseph Fétis, one of Reicha's colleagues at the Paris Conservatoire. An important work in this context is Reicha's essay *Sur la musique comme art purement sentimental*. The French 'sentimental' has not the sense of the English word; we should translate the French noun 'sentiment', rather, as 'feeling' or 'feelings'. The final sentences of that work are remarkably passionate. Audéon refers to a debate in 1829 about Mozart's 'Dissonance' Quartet as an example of the conflict between Reicha and Fétis. The latter, supported by Cherubini, accused Mozart of breaking the rules of harmony. Reicha defended Mozart, and we can see his reasoning in a passage from his treatise *Philosophisch-practische Anmerkungen*, where he writes 'Feelings must be aroused, however that may be brought about, whether by respecting a rule or, equally, by breaking it'. Berlioz was a pupil of Reicha's at the Conservatoire and Audéon pays particular attention to the possible influence Reicha may have had on Berlioz's aesthetic conception of music. The ideas of these composers are linked with those of philosophers of the period, such as Kant and Hegel.

The second of these 'abstract' chapters is by Alban Ramaut, who takes a text by one of Reicha's pupils, Jacques-Auguste Delaire, as the springboard for an examination of the word 'visionnaire'. Delaire is defending Reicha, and Ramaut wonders whether his praise could be taken as characterizing the composer as a 'visionary' (the first and third conferences relating to 'Actes 2023' had the title 'Reicha Visionnaire'). This involves a semantic angle and Ramaut examines various dictionary definitions of 'visionnaire'. The contrasts in Reicha's life and music are brought into play: the changes of country and language, the 'learned' works like the *Quatuor scientifique* as opposed to the wind quintets. Towards the end, Ramaut returns to Delaire saying of Reicha that 'More than once he created problems for himself so as to be able to overcome them', and wonders if that was part of Reicha's visionary character.

In the next chapter, Marie Winkelmüller-Urechia discusses tonal homogeneity in Reicha, that is, the combination of two keys in an opening theme, a practice almost unique to Reicha in the music of the time. Reicha presents this concept first in his commentary on the *Practische Beispiele* and then in his *Traité de mélodie*, though with some conflict of ideas between the two. The theoretical writings of Heinrich Christoph Koch on this topic are discussed by way of comparison with Reicha's practice. Examples from three of Reicha's string quartets are used as illustrations of this principle of tonal homogeneity.

The title of Frank Heidlberger's chapter begins 'Help, mighty Apollo'. It is taken from Reicha's commentary on No. 3 of his 24 *Practische Beispiele* for piano. This piece has a time signature of 5/8 and Reicha is defending his use of such a rhythm. The collection contains highly experimental works, one on three staves each with a different time signature and two where some of the keys of the piano are tuned down a semitone. In the context of this collection and Reicha's commentary on it, Heidlberger discusses in particular fugal form, chromatic modulation and sonata form. It is here that Reicha sets out the idea of the 'grande coupe binaire', elaborated on in his later treatises, such as the *Traité de haute composition musicale*.

Maria Teresa Arfini continues the topic of the *Practische Beispiele* in a chapter where she speculates on its possible influence on Liszt, who was briefly a pupil of Reicha's. After classifying the 24 pieces, Arfini concentrates on three: No. 4, a *Fantasie*, that uses only the three notes of the triad of E major; No. 7, an Allegro in D minor/major having many changes of time signature and

unconventional modulations; and No. 20, a set of variations based on a harmonic scheme rather than on a melody. Arfini looks at some changes in Liszt's compositional style before and after his lessons with Reicha and finds comparisons, particularly in structure and harmony, with some of the *Practische Beispiele*.

In the penultimate chapter, Ursula Kramer discusses Reicha's wind quintets. She focuses particularly on their reception in German-speaking countries after the initial success of the first series of concerts in Paris. German journals soon reported on the novelty of the genre and on the high standards of the musicians who premiered the works. This prompted the publication of German editions, such as those by Simrock and Schott. The rest of the chapter concentrates on the German musicians who spread the music in Austria and Germany, as well as the reviews in different journals, of which the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* was the most prominent. Kramer also describes the apparent decline in interest after the initial public enthusiasm, adding the caveat that there may have been performances in private circles that would not have been reported in journals. She remarks that neither in the *Société classique* (1872) nor the *Société des instruments à vent*, founded in 1879 by the flautist Paul Taffanel, is there any record of performances of Reicha's quintets.

The final chapter, by Sarah Hassid, gives us Reicha as a teacher, through two of his private pupils, Georges Kastner and Léonie Boursault, who married in 1837, the year after Reicha's death. Recent discoveries have led to a project that will clarify the role of Kastner and Boursault in illuminating Reicha's teaching methods and aesthetic considerations. We learn that Kastner was inspired to become a composer as a result of reading Reicha's *Traité de haute composition musicale*, and that it is to Boursault that we owe the biographical *Notes sur Antoine Reicha*, entrusted to her by Reicha's elder daughter Antoinette. Hassid makes particular reference to new ideas in instrumentation and original effects in timbre and harmony. It is clear that the two students held Reicha in the highest esteem, both professionally and personally.

Having attended all the conferences I refer to here, I can assert that the contributions to them, whether published or not, attest to an awareness in current musical circles of the importance, not only of Reicha's own music, more and more of which is being made public, but also of his influence on the music of his time, particularly in France. The contributions that have been published in 'Actes 2023' offer an illuminating representation of the present state of research.

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