

## SCORE REVIEW

Niccolò Paganini. *24 Capricci per Violino solo* op. 1; *24 Contradanze Inglesi per Violino solo*. Edited by Daniela Macchione. Bärenreiter-Verlag Urtext. Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH und Co. KG, 2013. xviii + 58 pp., violin part BA 9424, € 16,95.

Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840) is known today primarily for his op. 1, the *24 Capricci* (published 1820). Because of their virtually comprehensive coverage of violin-technical hurdles, these short pieces for solo violin serve soloists worldwide of ever younger ages to develop technical excellence. They provide testing grounds, stepping stones, and, ideally, milestones for proving what is still viewed as the highest achievable standard of technical mastery in violin playing. The new Bärenreiter Urtext edition, edited by Daniela Macchione, unites the legendary op. 1 with a completely different collection of unexpectedly simple dance tunes, *24 Contradanze Inglesi*, which have only recently been unearthed from a private collection. That these pieces, which like the op. 1 were written in the early 1800s, are still missing from the standard thematic catalogues and are, thus, virtually unknown,<sup>1</sup> gives even more reason to applaud their first publication in this volume.

If Paganini's *Capricci*, which were widely viewed as 'unplayable' at the time, were intentionally directed at and dedicated to professional violinists ('gli Artisti') for study rather than public performance, the *24 Contradanze* are perplexingly easy to play from a technical standpoint, and thus give the impression that they were directed at amateurs, as were other works by Paganini that bear the dedication 'gli Amatori'. The contredanse is a popular genre, a late eighteenth-century English dance derived from an old English country dance.<sup>2</sup> This dance was appealing enough to attract many composers, including Mozart and Beethoven, who used it in the finale of his *Eroica* Symphony and other works. All the dances in Paganini's set are in simple major keys and  $\frac{3}{4}$  metre; they are no more than 16 bars long each and only occasionally exceed first position (the highest pitch in the collection is E6, used once). Most are monophonic (only one tune features simple chords in first position with at least one open string), and they all rely on simple dance-like rhythms with the quaver being the predominant note value (the shortest note value in the set is the semiquaver).

The editor informs us, however, that the intended purpose of the *Contradanze* – which bear no dedication – may not be settled quite as easily as it might seem. The autograph shows signs of being a working draft; for example, only two of the 24 tunes feature dynamic markings. Macchione suggests that the simple nature of the tunes invited repetition and perhaps even arrangement for different instruments (p. iii). She also reminds the reader that 'improvisation was common at the time',

<sup>1</sup> To date the *Grove Music Online* article on Paganini does not list the work. See Edward Neill, 'Paganini, Niccolò', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (accessed 17 September 2016). Also see Macchione, preface, viii, fn. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Aldrich, 'Contredanse', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (accessed 3 September 2016).

implying that Paganini might have used these dance tunes as the basis for expanded variations, fantasias and arrangements, like the piece for violin and orchestra, *Le Streghe*, which consists of a number of variations on the theme of the contredanse of the ballet *Il noce di Benevento* by Salvatore Viganò (p. xi). While this suggests that the *Contradanze Inglese* were not necessarily limited to performances by amateurs, surely they were 'Gebrauchsmusik' for using in 'dance halls' while the *Capricci* were exclusively directed to a small circle of endeavouring violinists, being judged, as they were, as too 'avant-garde' for general conservative Italian audiences, which even caused Paganini to lighten his approach in the compositions written after op. 1 (p. iii). As Macchione observes, these two collections give a vivid image of the violin's role in different layers of society (p. iv).

The Bärenreiter edition includes the violin part to the 24 *Capricci* and 24 *Contradanze Inglese*, an informative preface (pp. iii–x) and a detailed critical commentary (pp. 59–66). Macchione's preface contains two sections. The first and more elaborate, on the *Capricci*, is divided into 'The earliest printed edition' (p. v) and 'Early editorial history' (p. 6). Macchione also describes in detail the somewhat puzzling question of dating – the literature is still unclear how far back the composition of the *Capricci* reaches. She suggests a time frame of 1801–1810, a period which Paganini spent in Lucca. She also provides insight into the early reception of Paganini's performances. While it is unclear whether Paganini gave performances of all 24 *Capricci*, contemporary newspaper reviews do report on his performances, noting how his violin was magically transformed into the 'singing of birds, flutes, trumpets, and horns' with comical effect (p. iv).<sup>3</sup> It is possible that such reviews hint at the imitation of horn calls we find in Nos. 9 and 18, the trumpet-like fanfares in No. 14, and the evocations of bird song in No. 19, as well as the idiosyncratic cuckoo in No. 9, but no reliable evidence survives to confirm this hypothesis. Paganini's use of the violin for purposes of onomatopoeia and the imitation of other instruments extends a time-honoured tradition of Italian Baroque instrumental music, acknowledged, for example, by Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber in his Sonata *Rappresentativa* for violin (1669). Nevertheless, violinists of a more traditional outlook, notably Louis Spohr, openly criticized Paganini for his extravagant techniques, including the flageolet and double flageolet, which to him went beyond the bounds of what a violin should do.

In her critical commentary, Macchione lists and describes five different sources that she consulted for the edition of the Paganini Caprices under review (p. 59). The sources include the composer's autograph, the first printed edition by Ricordi (1820), the second edition by same publisher (1836), the first German edition by Breitkopf & Härtel (1823), and the first French edition by Richault (1824). The last two of these sources are, Macchione tells us, valuable 'documents of contemporary editorial and performance practice' (p. iv), with the second providing especially fascinating evidence (p. 59). It not only includes metronome markings and articulations, but is also the only one of these sources to contain thorough fingerings, added by the French violinist Bonaventure Henry (dates unknown).

The critical commentary of the edition under review lists the metronome markings for all 24 caprices printed in Richault's edition, together with a cautionary remark that they, like Beethoven's metronome markings, were 'regarded as too fast' by many (p. 60, fn. 3). Macchione does not, however, give any indication of the

<sup>3</sup> Macchione cites Danilo Prefumo, *Niccolò Paganini* (Palermo: L'Epos, 2006): 34–5.

nature of Bonaventura Henry's fingerings, a topic we shall briefly visit below. In keeping with the Urtext ideal of minimizing 'editorial interventions', the current edition of the *Capricci* does not include fingerings beyond those marked in the composer's autograph manuscript; these are limited to a handful of fingerings in *Capricci* Nos. 1 and 2, and slightly under a dozen in Nos. 5 and 6 (the latter, in addition, contains a passage with many '0' fingerings to mark open strings, see bars 23–25). While the intentional omission of an additional fingered part from this Bärenreiter Urtext makes it difficult for neophytes to study the *Capricci* directly from this edition, there are a myriad of fingered editions young violinists can choose from, including those by Carl Flesch, Ivan Galamian and Ruggiero Ricci. Furthermore, Macchione's approach corresponds to the composer's intentions, at least based on anecdotal evidence recorded by his biographer Maria Tibaldi-Chiesa (1896–1968). When asked about the 'lacking of fingerings' in the *Capricci*, Paganini purportedly responded: 'Guardate a chi li ho dedicati! (Look at the dedicatees!)' (p. 61).<sup>4</sup>

One quick glance on Bonaventura Henry's fingerings in the Richault edition confirms that they, indeed, address contemporary issues of performance practice and provide insight into how a French violinist active in the 1820s approached certain questions of fingering. Notwithstanding regional and geographic differences in playing styles, Henry's fingerings can reveal to the modern violinist an intriguing perspective pertaining to the difference in performance practices then and now. A few brief examples on the issue of *portamento*, described by Carl Flesch as 'the emotional connection of two notes',<sup>5</sup> help to demonstrate the kinds of differences found in a comparison of Henry's fingerings with more modern fingerings, such as those by Flesch (1873–1944), which were included in the C.F. Peters edition (c. 1900).

In Capriccio No. 4, for example, we encounter a motive of two adjacent notes, asking the violinist to play both notes with the second finger, thereby automatically creating a small slide. As several violin treatises written in the early nineteenth century, including Pierre Baillot's *L'Art du Violin* (1834), inform us, the use of *portamento* was desirable. Whereas today most violinists playing the passage in question would not opt for a fingering that creates an audible slide, given that the passage is not particularly lyrical, in the 1820s an audible slide would have perfectly suited contemporary taste. In Capriccio No. 20 Henry recommends, for a passage of three slurred, consecutively descending sixths the fingering 3-4 for all three intervals, thereby again creating audible slides. The modern approach suggested by Carl Flesch, on the other hand, recommends the fingering 3-4, 3-4, 2-3, which eliminates at least one slide under the slur. Capriccio No. 21 likewise features a passage of multiple sighing gestures in sixths, for which Henry again recommends a continuous 3-4 fingering, which results in ten consecutive intervals fingered with 3-4, whereas Carl Flesch varies the passage – and reduces the number of *portamenti* – by alternating 3-4 with 2-3.

Beyond the many existing editions supplied with fingerings by leading violinists, the 24 *Capricci* also have an established record of myriad arrangements. Robert Schumann fell victim to what John Daverio termed the 'spell of Paganini'

<sup>4</sup> Macchione cites Maria Tibaldi-Chiesa, *Paganini, la vita e l'opera* (Milan: Garzanti, 1942): 410.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Stowell, 'Portamento (ii)', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (accessed 17 September 2016).

in 1830 when he first heard him at a concert in Frankfurt.<sup>6</sup> Two years later, on 20 April 1832, Schumann wrote into his diary that he had completed ‘at least half dozen arrangements – or “elaborations” (Bearbeitungen)’, as Schumann called them.<sup>7</sup> Ferdinand David issued an edition of the caprices in 1854 with Breitkopf & Härtel, which incorporated Schumann’s piano accompaniment. Countless other arrangements and editions, as Macchione mentions, have emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, making the caprices ‘perhaps the most edited set of virtuoso music of the last two hundred years’ (p. iv).

Macchione’s introduction to the edition also raises another aspect of nineteenth-century reception of Paganini, which is sometimes overlooked because it is, admittedly, counterintuitive. She mentions the biographer of Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), Andreas Moser, in whose books about Joachim we find valuable anecdotes about Paganini, told by Joachim’s very good friend Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1812–1865), who was Paganini’s protégé. One letter of Joachim, in fact, creates a link with a figure important in the history of the manuscript to the *24 Contradanze Inglesi*.

Writing to Ferdinand David on 12 April 1847, Joachim wrote:

Ernst played the *Gesangsscene* [by Louis Spohr] not faithfully [nicht getreu]; he ... left out entirely the beautiful modulations of the passage in the Allegro (in F), changed and modernized the endings of each single solo in the Allegro, transformed the [single-voice] staccato runs into thirds [double-stops], which forced him to slow down the tempo. I ... find [however,] that he is an incomparably greater virtuoso, artist, and human being than Sivori.<sup>8</sup>

Sivori was a student of Paganini who, in fact, held the manuscript of the *24 Contradanze* in his hands at least once. Today the manuscript is kept at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, which acquired it on 25 June 1976 from an antiquarian dealer in Switzerland, Renato Saggiori, who, in turn received it from the post office official Giuseppe Salivetto (p. ix). Before then, the manuscript was apparently in possession of Sivori for some time, who dated and authenticated the first page: ‘I certify this to be a genuine autograph of / Nicolò Paganini. Camillo Sivori Genoa, 2 May 1893’ (p. viii). Sivori was ‘the only one’ whom Paganini could call ‘his pupil’<sup>9</sup> and Paganini apparently wrote several exercises for him in the early 1820s. Macchione, however, believes that the *Contradanze* were not among these exercises and that Sivori did not have them in his possession for a long time. Rather, they may have been given to him in 1893 for authentication. How the manuscript

<sup>6</sup> John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a “New Poetic Age”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 94.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Berry, *Listening, Performance, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 76. Berry cites Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann and Gerd Nauhaus (Basel and Frankfurt: Stroemfeld and Roter Stern, 1971–82): I: 379, I: 405–6.

<sup>8</sup> Johannes Joachim and Andreas Moser, eds, *Briefe von und an Joseph Joachim* (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1911), I: 6, letter from Joachim to David of 12 April 1847. ‘Ernst spielte die *Gesangsscene* nicht getreu; er ... ließ die schönen Modulationen der Passage im Allegro (in F) ganz aus, machte am Ende eines jeden Solos im Allegro ganz moderne Schlüsse, machte den Staccatolauf in Terzen, wodurch er genötigt war, die Passage etwas gemäßiger zu nehmen. Ich ... finde, dass er unvergleichlich größer als Virtuose, Künstler und Mensch ist wie [sic] Sivori’.

<sup>9</sup> Flavio Menardi Noguera, ‘Sivori, Camillo’, *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 20 September 2016).

came to Salivetti remains one of the mysteries that have accrued to the legends of Paganini.

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