

SCORE REVIEWS

Ludwig Van Beethoven, Piano Concerto in D major op. 61a, edited by Hans-Werner Küthen (Munich: Henle, 2005). €24

Ludwig Van Beethoven, Piano Concerto in D Major op. 61a, edited by Hans-Werner Küthen; piano reduction by Jürgen Sommer; fingering by Klaus Schilde (Munich: Henle, 2005). €12

After at least three attempts on his European travels, the composer, pianist, music publisher and piano manufacturer Muzio Clementi eventually met up with Beethoven in Vienna in the spring of 1807. Seeking both markets for his firm's pianos and publishing deals with composers, he was successful in securing the exclusive English rights to some of Beethoven's compositions. He signed a contract with Beethoven (20 April 1807) in respect of six major works, including the Violin Concerto op. 61 and an arrangement of the same work for solo pianoforte 'with or without additional keys'. This arrangement was eventually published as op. 61a in July 1810.

The existence of a piano cadenza by Beethoven in G major, which is thematically related to the surviving fragment of his early Violin Concerto in C major WoO5, suggests that he may previously have contemplated transcribing for piano a work originally conceived for the violin.¹ However, whether or not Beethoven himself adapted op. 61 for piano has long been the subject of debate, not least because there is no autograph source for the continuous text. Fritz Kaiser suggests that Beethoven's contribution to the solo piano part was minimal. The fact that Beethoven is known to have assigned some arrangement tasks to pupils such as Ferdinand Ries and Carl Czerny, merely checking their work and making minor alterations himself, adds fuel to this argument,² and it has to be admitted that many of the accompanying figures for the piano's left hand are surprisingly banal.³

While the orchestration for op. 61a is identical to that for op. 61, the sources for the solo piano version are frustratingly incomplete, comprising a few hasty sketches running parallel to the solo violin part, a corrected copyist's manuscript proofread by the composer, and two original editions published in Vienna and London. However, the fact that Beethoven composed an interrelated set of cadenzas for the first and third movements of op. 61a and two *Eingänge* relating to its rondo finale suggests that he either took a principal role in the transcription or, at least, made extensive prescriptions, largely of the left-hand part (for the substance of the right-hand contribution is incorporated in the solo violin part) in the autograph for a copyist/pupil to follow. In any case, one assumes that, as

¹ Barry Cooper, ed., *The Beethoven Compendium. A Guide to Beethoven's Life and Music* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991): 272.

² See Alan Tyson, 'The Text of Beethoven's Op. 61', *Music and Letters* 43 (1962): 105.

³ Fritz Kaiser, 'Die authentischen Fassungen des D-dur-Konzertes Op. 61 von Ludwig van Beethoven', in *Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Kassel 1962* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963): 196–8.

Beethoven checked and corrected the transcription, it must have met with his approval and should thus be recognized as his work.

The study score follows the text published in Section III, vol. 5 of the Beethoven Complete Edition (Munich, 2004) and readers are referred to the preface and critical report for that volume for the full scholarly editorial detail. Hans-Werner Küthen has clearly performed his editorial tasks in exemplary fashion, presenting an uncluttered musical text that is authoritative, transparent and well supported by useful background information, supplied in a trilingual preface (in German, English and French). His edition is based largely on the solo piano part of the corrected copyist's manuscript in full score (preserved in the British Library, London), since this manuscript brings together both the piano and violin versions of the work. Also consulted were Beethoven's pencilled sketches for the piano part in the autograph score of the Violin Concerto (located in the Austrian National Library, Vienna) and the two printed editions in parts, published respectively in Vienna in 1808 and in London in 1810; these editions include several conflicting readings, which are detailed by Küthen in a selected list of comments (curiously in German and English only) from a much longer one published in the NGA. This list refers largely to 'incomplete or problematical passages for which the findings in the sources may prove helpful to performers'.

Beethoven's cadenzas and *Eingänge* are not included in the Urtext study score (whatever the term 'Urtext' may mean!), but are usefully incorporated, in exemplary edited versions, into the solo piano version with orchestral reduction (by Jürgen Sommer) for a second piano. The musical text of the solo part also follows the Beethoven Complete Edition. Intended more for performers, it offers some useful advice on several performance issues, including some practical modern fingerings by Klaus Schilde. It could have been still more helpful had it mentioned, for example, available evidence in Carl Czerny's *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule* op. 500 (Vienna, 1839) concerning tempo indications, staccato dots and strokes (which are indicated here uniformly as dots, with strokes used to signal long, stressed notes), other notational matters (trill beginnings and terminations), or even keyboard instrument characteristics of the period and the types and ranges implied by the composer. However, while one must acknowledge that individual responses to the advice offered will inevitably vary and one cannot expect firm or comprehensive answers on every issue, some discussion would at least raise performers' awareness of the myriad problems to be overcome.

Useful, if inconsistent, annotations as to the original instrumentation are provided in Sommer's orchestral reduction, which seems thinner in texture than many comparable instances. The first movement's dramatic *tremolando* outbursts, such as at bar 28 or in the tutti at 1/224, are cases in point. Furthermore, Sommer often omits parallel material in thirds in order to clarify the melodic line and provide a greater opportunity for cantabile (i/51), and he ignores some octave transpositions (i/44) and octave doublings in the bass (i/79). These, however, are cavils; they do not seriously compromise the authority of the text, which for the most part offers an effective and faithful transcription of the available sources for the orchestral original.

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