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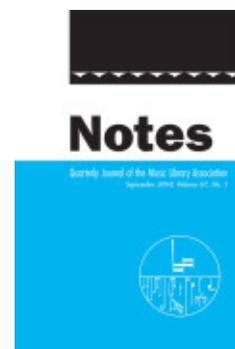
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## **Bart van Sambeek Piano Editions**

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# MUSIC REVIEWS

EDITED BY JOHN WAGSTAFF



## BART VAN SAMBEEK PIANO EDITIONS

**Johann Baptist Cramer.** *Trois grandes sonates, opus 29.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2007. [Contents, p. [i]; score, p. 1–75; crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. iii–viii. Pub. no. VSE 09. €27.50]

**Carl Czerny.** *Rondo espressivo, opus 93; Caprice, opus 108; Deux rondeaux, opus 168; Nocturne, opus 647.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2006. [Contents, p. ii–iii; score, p. 1–52; crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. v–ix. Pub. no. VSE 04. €22.50]

**Anton Eberl.** *Grande sonata, op. 10 no. 2, for piano, clarinet, violoncello.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2009. [Contents, p. [i]; score, p. 1–59 + parts (clar., 11 + [ii] p.; violoncello, 9 + [ii] p.); crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. v–ix. Pub. no. VSE 13. €34]

**Friedrich Kalkbrenner.** *24 préludes, opus 88.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2008. [Contents, 2 p.; score, p. 2–66; crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. iv–x. Pub. no. VSE 12. €27.50]

**Ferdinand Ries.** *Polonaises, opus 41, 93, 138, pour quatre-mains.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2007. [Contents, p. [i]; score, p. 2–61; crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. iv–xi. Pub. no. VSE 08. €27.50]

**Sigismund Thalberg.** *Grande fantaisie et variations sur deux motifs de Don Juan, opus 14; Grande fantaisie sur la sérénade et le menuet de Don Juan, opus 42.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2005. [Contents, p. [i]; score, p. 1–54; crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. iii–v. Pub. no. VSE 07. €22.50]

**Joseph Wölfl.** *Trois sonates, opus 6.* (Urtext.) Amsterdam: Van Sambeek Editions, 2009. [Contents, p. [i]; score, p. 1–63; crit. notes in Dutch, Eng., p. iii–vii. Pub. no. VSE 14. €27.50]

We still tend to understand the classical and romantic periods of music through the work of a handful of great composers. This series is a welcome effort to make available some of the neglected masterworks for the piano. It surely represents a labor of love

on the part of its editor, Bart van Sambeek, and many pianists will be grateful to have access to so much unfamiliar material of high quality. The present group represents about half of the volumes issued to date. They can be ordered directly through the

publisher's Web site at <http://www.vansambeekedities.nl/> (accessed 25 August 2010).

These are fully critical editions. The editing seems to be highly accurate and thorough. I detect very few self-evident misprints, though it has not been practical to check all the sources. The pages are uniformly oblong (like the original editions), the design is spacious, the printing is clear and legible, and the page breaks are well planned to minimize difficult turns. The paper is strong, but the pages are glued to the spine rather than sewn, which makes them vulnerable in the long term.

The critical notes, in English and Dutch, include lists of emendations and of variants between sources. For each piece, Van Sambeek identifies one published edition as his main source and, if there are others, lists them as "sources serving as addition to and clarification of the main source." This is generally a sound practice. However, he does not always explain the grounds on which the main source has been selected, or its likely relationship to the others. A conjectural date of publication is given in each case, but not the full reasoning behind it (in one case it is slightly inaccurate). The editor provides little or no biographical or historical information about the composers or the selected pieces, perhaps assuming that it is readily available online.

One recurring problem in editing piano music of this period concerns the distribution of the music between the hands. The general practice at the time was to spread the music freely over the two staves, and leave it to the player to work out which hand would play what, though some editions included fingering, meaningful stemming, and other directions. Modern practice favors consistently using the upper stave for the right hand and the lower for the left, with clef changes and rests wherever needed. On the whole, Van Sambeek has used the modern practice; in some cases this policy has mandated an editorial decision as to which hand is to play certain notes. His decisions make good sense.

Joseph Wölfl's three sonatas, opus 6 (1798), are thoroughly imbued with Mozart's style, sometimes even to the point of near-plagiarism, yet they also contain many individual touches. In particular they

make good use of the heavier English-style piano that had developed since Mozart's time, perhaps under the influence of Jan Ladislav Dussek. To me the Adagio of no. 1 is the most exciting movement of the set; Van Sambeek may share this opinion, as he has chosen its opening measures to display on the front cover.

Anton Eberl's sonata (ca. 1800), here assigned to piano, clarinet, and cello, is a pleasant but conventional work. The composer seems to have trouble escaping the tyranny of the four-bar phrase. As a piece of chamber music its interest is lessened by the fact that the cello part, labeled "ad libitum" in the sources, is not independent: it never does much more than double the piano bass. Also, because the clarinet part was designed to be alternatively played on the violin, Eberl could not make use of the clarinet's rich low register, which is so evocative in Mozart's and Weber's music. But the piece is an acceptable specimen of the "accompanied pianoforte sonata" characteristic of its time.

By comparison, Johann Baptist Cramer's three solo sonatas, opus 29 (1803), are outstanding examples of the classic style at its best, where strong conventional forms are constantly varied by surprises on both the micro and macro levels. Especially notable is Cramer's interest in exploring new ways of writing for the piano, giving full expression to both hands and varying the texture in many inventive ways. Beethoven knew and admired Cramer's work, and there are passages in his sonatas where Cramer's influence is evident, as I have pointed out elsewhere.

The other four sets are more distinctly of the early romantic period. The rapid development of the piano, with the double escapement, steel or steel-barred frame, and extension of range, encouraged bold exploration, and these composers took full advantage. Each of the three polonaises by Ries for piano duet (1819–25) has a separate opus number. They are ambitious and elaborate examples of a hugely popular genre of the time, hardly the equal of Schubert's best, but showing considerable charm; their most interesting portions are often in the slow introductions and extensive codas. The four pieces by Czerny, dating from 1825 to 1841, are a well-chosen selection from this composer's vast output.

They will be a pleasant surprise to those who know Czerny only through his mechanistic exercises and studies. They reveal a gift for passionate melody as well as a mastery of new piano textures and techniques.

Kalkbrenner's *24 préludes* (ca. 1827) are historically important works as well as delightfully varied ones. They belong to a long line of sets of preludes in all twenty-four keys, designed for amateurs who wished to play the customary prelude before a piece in the same key; this, not Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, was the likely model for Chopin's famous *24 préludes* of 1839. Kalkbrenner's delightful ideas and freewheeling forms contain many surprises, and the preludes add up to a compendium of early-nineteenth-century piano idioms.

The works discussed so far are domestic pieces, ranging from moderate to high in their technical difficulty, but all within reach of a well-trained amateur. Thalberg's fantasias on themes from *Don Giovanni* (1835, 1841) are spectacular show pieces of the kind favored by leading concert pianists to draw in the multitudes of their support-

ers. They were surely beyond the reach of amateurs, and most of those who purchased the printed editions must have done so largely as an act of homage to one of the great "celebs" of the day. From our point of view they are of historical more than practical interest, though I hope some enterprising pianist will record them. Thalberg's pre-eminent rival, Franz Liszt, was to publish his own *Réminiscences de Don Juan* in 1843; if it did not surpass Thalberg's in technical demands, its unstated program related the themes to the story of the opera in ways that Thalberg did not attempt. Instead, he embeds the themes in a web of dazzling virtuosity, though in each work there is a long introduction of independent character by which Mozart's familiar tunes are gradually introduced.

This is indeed a fascinating collection of works from the seminal period of pianistic writing, made available in workmanlike and well produced editions.

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#### NICOLAS BERNIER MOTET

**Nicolas Bernier.** *Benedic anima mea Domino. Restauration des parties intermédiaires instrumentales: Bernard Thomas.* (Collection Chœur & orchestre.) Versailles: Éditions du Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2009. [Biographical and editorial notes in Fre., p. [3–6]; text in Fre., Lat., p. [7]; score, p. 9–33. ISBN-13/EAN 9790560161778; ISMN M-56016-177-8; pub. no. CAH 177. €17]

The work of the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles (CMBV) has, in recent years, led to an important expansion and improvement in the availability of reliable editions of the works produced by the *grand motet* composers. The *grand motet*, the most important sacred form in France from the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV until the time of the French Revolution, has seen relatively few performances in the United States in the last half century, but an increasing number of performances and recordings, centered mostly in Europe, are leading to increased awareness of the importance and beauty of these works. *Grands motets* survive from about eighty composers of those who contributed to the genre over its 130-year history, and of those composers

about two dozen can be listed as the leading figures, including most of the composers who served in the Royal Chapel as did Nicolas Bernier. The catalog of the CMBV now includes *grands motets* in full score by most of these leading figures, including Jean Veillot, Michel-Richard de Lalande, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, André Campra, and others. Bernier was recognized more than a half-century ago as an important historical figure when Philip Francis Nelson prepared a dissertation on the composer in the 1950s ("Nicolas Bernier, 1665–1734: A Study of the Composer and His Sacred Works" [Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1958]). Nevertheless, despite Bernier's importance, until recently there were virtually no good