

ABSTRACTS

GRAHAM PONT: *Handel's Extempore*

This essay is the first to bring together the available evidence of Handel's extempore, including the important evidence of his friend Johann Mattheson. Handel's improvisations were greatly admired by the Italians. I have suggested that the Sonata in G major HWV 579 goes back to one of Handel's improvisations in his 'trial of skill' with Domenico Scarlatti (1708). Handel's improvisations in *Rinaldo* (1711) created a sensation and were recorded in William Babell's *Celebrated Lessons* (c1715-1718). Handel's mature style of improvisation was preserved by Jonathan Battishill (1738-1801) who left two annotated prints showing his versions of Handel's extempore. A unique attested improvisation by Handel is the Sarabande in E major HWV 425 (c1750). His style of extempore is also recorded on mechanical instruments. Handel's improvisations continued until his last appearance in *Messiah* on 6 April 1759 when he 'manifested his power of invention in extemporaneous flights of fancy' undiminished. My essay concludes with an experiment in psychic musicology, an attempt by a professional dowser to identify Handel's last improvisation da mente on his deathbed.

ERICA BUURMAN: *Three Symphonies in One Year? Beethoven's Sketches of 1812*

This article examines a group of Beethoven's sketches from 1812, made during the composition of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies. These sketches outline preliminary ideas for a further symphony that would have formed the third in a set, had it reached completion. While Beethoven's sketchbooks are full of unrealised ideas for symphonies and other works, the 1812 sketches represent the only occasion when he explicitly planned to compose a set of three symphonies. Some of the sketches are also more detailed than was usual at a preliminary stage, and they include an outline plan of all four movements of a symphony in E flat. The sketches provide an insight into the nature of the projected symphony, as well as Beethoven's approach to planning the overall sequence of movements in large-scale works. The article considers Beethoven's sketching (and ultimately abandoning) of the 'third' symphony in the context of contemporary biographical events, including his worsening deafness, the end of his performing career, and Viennese concert life.

SUSAN WOLLENBERG: *A Look (back) at Clementi's «Sonatinas» for Piano, Op. 36 (1797)*

As Leon Plantinga observed (in his 1977 monograph, *Clementi: His Life and Music*), Clementi's *Six Sonatinas*, Op. 36 were routinely «practised year in and year out by countless beginner students», and thus «by degrees seeped into the public consciousness». In respect

of their popularity they are noted by Rohan H. Stewart-McDonald as having overtaken Clementi's *Gradus and Parnassum*: «Given that Clementi's *Sonatinas* and not the *Gradus* have been consistently included in keyboard examinations – a sphere encountered by so many people of varying musical ability and aspirations – it is unsurprising that the most direct association with Clementi in people's minds is that of the *Sonatinas* rather than the *Gradus ad Parnassum*» ('The Faces of Parnassus: Towards a New Reception of Muzio Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum*', in: *The Piano in Nineteenth-Century British Culture: Instruments, Performers and Repertoire*, edited by Therese Ellsworth and Susan Wollenberg, Farnham, Ashgate, 2007 [Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain], p. 71). Op. 36 will have been among the formative influences on innumerable fledgling pianists, at an impressionable stage in their lives. In the belief that Op. 36 deserves closer attention beyond its immediate function, I explore here questions of genre hierarchy, reception history, editions, piano pedagogy and analytical method in connection with this music. I take my cue in such endeavour partly from the critical model provided by Plantinga's judicious and sympathetic evaluation of the *Sonatinas* (*op. cit.*, especially pp. 163–165); also from the innovative enterprise of Scott Messing, in his *Marching to the Canon: The Life of Schubert's Marche Militaire* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2014 [Eastman Studies in Music]). Although the Schubert work (D 733, Op. 51) had a very different life from Clementi's Op. 36, Messing's observation in his preface that this march for piano duet, which became «Schubert's most recognizable work», attained its special position «in spite of its lack of the musical values that [...] guardians of high culture considered necessary in a masterpiece» (*op. cit.*, p. [xi]), is highly thought-provoking also for an approach to the Clementi opus.

MATHIEU SCHNEIDER: *Le paysage comme narration. Ou de la «Symphonie alpestre» de Richard Strauss comme 'symphonie à paysage'*

Scholars often considered Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* under its formal aspects, regarding especially the tradition of programme music. This article aims to start from another point of view, that of its content. Coming back to the sketches of the work and to the first drafts of the programme, it identifies the symphony primarily as a landscape in music. Hence, the musical analysis lies on a specific methodology with four level of interpretation taken from geographic and anthropologic approaches of the alpine landscape. Lots of features of the musical form become at once explainable. Modulating and tonally stable passages alternate in the work accordingly to the movement either of the wanderer or the elements of the landscape. But, more interestingly, all these elements of the nature get through the music a symbolic, expressive or social meaning, which allows, in articulation with the title of the different sections, Strauss to create specific narratives on and above the landscape. By doing so, Strauss refers explicitly to previous landscape pieces, such as Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage*, in which the composer used similar features. Should we therefore consider the *Alpine Symphony* only as a tone poem? Or rather as a successful attempt to depict a landscape, physically and emotionally, in music? This article shows that musicological research should try both ways.