

Echo and Influence

Violin Concertos by Franz Clement in the Gravitation Field of Beethoven

World premier recording by Mirijam Contzen and Reinhard Goebel
For the opening of Sony Classical's „Beethoven's World“ series



Franz Joseph Clement (1780-1842)

CONCERTO NO. 1 IN D-MAJOR FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTER (1805)

- [1] ALLEGRO MAESTOSO
- [2] ADAGIO
- [3] RONDO. ALLEGRO

CONCERTO N. 2 IN D-MINOR FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTER (AFTER 1806) (WORLD PREMIER RECORDING)

- [4] MODERATO
- [5] ADAGIO
- [6] RONDO. ALLEGRO

WDR Symphony Orchestra // Reinhard Goebel (Conductor)

Mirijam Contzen (Violin)

Sony Classical 19075929632 // Release (Germany): 10th of January 2020

For many years violinist Mirijam Contzen has supported the conductor and expert for historical performance practice Reinhard Goebel in his efforts to reintroduce audiences to 18th and early 19th century compositions: works that for decades have resided in the shadows, lost and forgotten, amongst the ample works preserved in various musical archives. The recordings of the Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 by Viennese virtuoso Franz Joseph Clement (1780-1842) mark the rediscovery of such treasures. Together with the WDR Symphony Orchestra, Contzen and Goebel will kick-off the quintuple series „Beethoven's World“, curated by Goebel himself, which will be released by Sony Classical throughout 2020 - the year of Beethoven's 250th birthday anniversary. The German release date for the first album has been set for the 10th of January and includes the world premiere recording of Clements Violin Concerto No. 2 - a work lost soon after its introduction to the public in the first decade of the 19th century.

The CD series acts as Reinhard Goebel's contribution to Beethoven's anniversary year. The project revives previously unknown elements of the soundscape that accompanied, influenced and shaped Beethoven throughout his time in Vienna. The series features German-Japanese violinist Mirijam Contzen, a vital accomplice and partner to Goebel precisely because of the shared fascination and excitement for the widely unknown music of the 1700s and early 1800s.

Clement's Violin Concerto No. 1 was written in 1805 and, as such, preceded Beethoven's own violin concerto. Clement's work had a major influence on Beethoven's violin concerto, which in turn served as a source of inspiration for the former's second violin concerto in D-Minor. The aforementioned three works exhibit uncanny resemblances with regard to style, orchestration, form and content. The elegant weaving of orchestral voices with the fine timbre of the solo violin characterizes the three works and decidedly sets them apart from similar compositions of that time, the aim of which was usually the mere showcasing of the virtuosity of the solo instrument.

Franz Clement entered the Viennese spotlight at the young age of eight and soon after embarked on his first concert tour of Europe, accompanied by his father. During one of the tour stops in London, Clement met Joseph Haydn who was very impressed by the young virtuoso. He became particularly well-known for his elegant sound and a way of playing that maintained breathtaking elements of simplicity even whilst engaging in the most complicated and difficult of techniques. In 1802, 22-year-old Clement was appointed Concert Master and Music Director of the Theater an der Wien, where he drove the development and reputation of the orchestra to new heights. His Violin Concerto No. 1 in D-Major premiered at the theatre in 1805 in a program that featured premiere performances of both his violin concerto and Beethoven's „Eroica“. Clement's violin concerto was received with considerably more enthusiasm than Beethoven's symphony, undoubtedly owing to the fact that Clement had enjoyed a popular standing amongst Viennese audiences ever since his childhood and Beethoven's compositions were widely regarded as too progressive and uncomfortable to listen to.

The previously described disappointment, however, didn't take a toll on the relationship between the two. Beethoven's violin concerto reflects many elements of Clement's work and the former dedicated the composition to his dear friend with the words „*Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement*“ printed on the front of the score's manuscript. Before the first edition of the composition was published in 1808, however, Beethoven revised his work and removed the dedication from the front page. While Beethoven's motivation for the removal of his dedication to Clement remains unclear, it may have been due to the fact that similarly to his „Eroica“, the violin concerto was received with only modest enthusiasm amongst the contemporary public: the soloist definitely not having been the reason for its lack of success.

The unfortunate fate of Beethoven's violin concerto amongst the contemporary public had little effect on Clement, who paid tribute to the work in his second concerto by composing in a timpani motive into the final movement. It seems that the lack of acknowledgement and prominence of Clement's works is largely due to his self-imposed career demise, as the now world-famous sister works by Beethoven managed to survive the last 200 years, during which Clement's works faded into nothing but a distant memory.

It is precisely the intimate relationship between these three works that fascinates Mirijam Contzen: *„It is fascinating to see how Beethoven relates to Clement's preceding work in his own violin concerto, even directly mirroring certain elements, so that the style and dimension of his composition renders it a part of a comprehensive triad of works. The way that Clement's second violin concerto then continues that creative interaction between the two composers is very impressive!“*

Further along the line in the series „Beethoven's World“ Mirijam Contzen, Reinhard Goebel and pianist Herbert Schuch will present another work that suffered a similar fate to the aforementioned pieces by Clement. The third album of the series published by Sony Classical, set to be released at the end of May 2020, will feature former Mozart student Johann Nepomuk Hummel's Concerto for Violin and Piano Op. 17 as well as works by Anton Eberl and Antonio Salieri.

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