



Fine Arts International Journal
Srinakharinwirot University

Vol. 15 No. 1
January - June 2011

Violin Recital

The Unknown Violin Virtuoso - Locatelli, Campagnoli, Ernst: three composers under Paganini's shadow.

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Introduction

Recently I followed two recommendations from teachers and colleagues: From the famous pedagogue Prof. Max Rostal in Switzerland, to practice the Divertimenti by Campagnoli, to improve safer intonation; and from my Italian colleague Prof. Enzo Porta, to look for the Caprices by Locatelli, in search for the so-called “Labyrinth” in David Oistrakh’s performance. My third third issue is the practicing of the works by Ernst, for climbing and challenging the violin skills.

In modern violin pedagogy we are aware of skills and achievements from a few hundred years – nevertheless, various features are more well-known or famous than others, regardless their actual importance and impact. With all respect to our great and unique icon Paganini, some insight has been ascribed to his personality while in fact some of his colleagues found those roots: Pietro Locatelli, one of the three violinist-composers focused on here, has included the complete demands of Paganini’s Caprices op.1 in his own Caprices op. 3, long before Paganini

was born. This concludes that the modernization of the violin building and the Tourte bow at Paganini's time basically did not have to do with his abilities. Bartolomeo Campagnoli, slightly elder than Paganini, contributed with introducing the violin bow-grip near the first finger part almost 200 years ago. An issue we today widely associate with the 20th century pedagogue Ivan Galamian. Campagnoli's 7 Divertimenti each in one position fill in a gap in our intonation work that is being practiced in the scale system. Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, Paganini's younger competitor, increased the later's achievements, by first imitating him, and more and more, combining his virtuoso effects into double-effects. His works are known but rarely performed, simply due to their outrageous difficulties.

My aim is, to give a brief introduction, and then to perform a demonstration recital related to the remarks in the program notes. Following, there is room for discussion, and hopefully some inspiration to teaching colleagues and students for further working with those composers.

Recital Program:

Pietro Locatelli: Caprices op. 3 No. 3 and No. 23 "The Labyrinth"

Bartholomeo Campagnoli: Marcia, "Aria del piccolo Marinaio", Adagio and Bolero from the 7 Divertimenti op. 18

Niccolo Paganini: "Nel Cor piu non mi sento"

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst: "The Last Rose" and "Erlkoenig" op. 26

Contents

A) Portrait 1: **Pietro Locatelli**

I) Biographic Details

II) His works and style
III) The "Art of the Violin", 24 Caprices op. 3

IV) Locatelli's relation to Paganini and historic position

V) Sources

B) Portrait 2: **Bartolomeo Campagnoli**

I) Short biography and contemporaries

II) His works and composing style

III) The Divertimenti op. 18

IV) Campagnoli's historic achievements

V) Sources

C) Portrait 3: **Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst**

I) Biography

II) Works and style

III) Relation to Paganini

IV) Achievements

V) Sources

D) Remarks about the pieces chosen

E) Acknowledgements

F) Attachment of the music print

A) Portrait 1: **Pietro Locatelli**



*Pietro Locatelli ca. 1733
mezzotint engraving by Cornelis Troost (1696-1750)*

I) Biographic Details

Pietro Locatelli (1695 - 1764) has received the title "virtuoso" as a young player in the "Cappella Musicale" in the church "Santa Maria Maggiore" in Bergamo, Italy.

With a special permission he was soon sent to Rome to continue his studies in violin and composition, in 1711. Among his teachers was Arcangelo Corelli, who however died in 1713. Being member of several orchestral groups, Locatelli was supported by the high nobility and clergy: the “Compita accademia di varj instrumenti” of the Duke Michelangelo Caetani, and the “Congregazione generale dei musici di S. Cecilia” of the noble Prelate, later Cardinal Camillo Cybo.

Furthermore he performed for other Roman nobility, such as for the Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni in the church San Lorenzo e San Damaso, until February 7, 1723.

In Rome he also gave his debut as a composer with the concerti grossi op.1, dedicated to Camillo Cybo.

In 1723 he started to travel abroad, and while there are few written testimonies about this, it is at least known that he performed at the courts in Mantua, Venice, Munich, Dresden, Berlin, Frankfurt and Kassel.

Besides the nobilities he also met eminent composing colleagues, and it appears that he was regarded and titled as the Italian Virtuoso, in comparison with the German composers:

When he performed for King Friedrich Wilhelm I in Potsdam, he was described as self-confident and proud musician in rich diamond-ornamented clothes. The nobility there supposedly preferred the German composer Johann Gottlieb Graun’s violin playing, which certainly must have followed more German counterpoint style works. On these tours he must have brought along his Caprices “The Art of the Violin” op. 3.

In 1729 he settled in Amsterdam and worked on editing and publishing his own works and those of his colleagues, such as Giovanni

Battista Martini, and besides also started a business with selling violin strings.

He was by far the greatest virtuoso in Amsterdam, and his income from patrons and sponsors was the highest among musicians there. Nevertheless, he seemed to avoid large public audiences and also taught and worked with amateur musicians. Some sources believe that he somewhat feared the critical ears of professional colleagues. Should that be any uncommon?

Certainly Locatelli wouldn’t need to.

After he died in 1764, in his home a large personal library was found, which gives testimony about his broad education and interests in philosophy, literature, mathematics, political science and much more. Also he owned a collection of eminent paintings, and among his music books was a complete edition of Corelli’s works. In 1765 this was all given to a public auction. (A-V-3)

II) His works and style

Locatelli’s works can be categorized in three groups:

The violin solo works for his own performances, larger orchestral works, and chamber music.

Amsterdam at his time was the European centre of music publishing.

He was eager to work out the editing by himself, except for the larger scores which he passed on to various companies.

He obtained his own privilege for publications, which fortunately ensured the authenticity of his editions for us today. In modern terms, he had a copyright, under the condition to provide copies of his works for the University Library in Leiden, Netherlands.

His concerti are following Corelli's style and from there developed more in the direction of maniristic late baroque, involving more virtuoso elements; in the case of op. 4, *Introduttioni teatrali*, he followed the Neapolitan opera symphony (which developed into the *ouverture*).

The chamber music is already reminding of the coming "galant" style that started pleasing the Amsterdam music scene of that time. (A-V-3)

III) The "Art of the Violin", 24 Caprices op. 3

These 24 Caprices are passages taken as solo pieces from the concertos under the same opus number 3 (plus a 25th from the Sonata op. 6 No. 12). Thus their form is representing a large variety:

Cadenza-works, Preludio-types, a lot of sequence material throughout, as well as fragments set together. The demands for the violinist are high: extreme finger extensions, double-stops, high passages, double trills (similar to the so-called "devil's trill" by Tartini), combined with a large variety of bowings and bow effects. The harmonics are ascribed to Locatelli as the first composer to use them. (A-V-1)

These works have been copied and reprinted a lot, and thus have spread Locatelli's reputation and fame all over Europe. He was regarded as the highest standard-setter for violinists, and in these compositions he widely abandoned the traditional style from Corelli.

It is told that he astonished music lovers with his great ease in performing these difficult master-pieces. (A-V-2)

Be it due to their difficulties or due to their forms, and eventually through their also existing concerto versions, these Caprices have been regarded as exercises rather than performance works.

Furthermore, the original manuscript actually is using many abbreviations and few execution explanations, so the study of them required a lot of deciphering prior to actually practicing.

Luckily by today the Italian company Ricordi has worked out a serious and easily readable concert version.

The Caprice No. 23 is called "The harmonic Labyrinth", and is known in a version with orchestral accompaniment by David Oistrakh (violin) and Gennady Roshdestvensky (conductor), as an encore piece on the live recording from Moscou. (A-V-4)

It may be interpreted whether this title more refers to the violin-harmonic effect or to the ancient Greek saga, as it is subtitled by the highly educated Locatelli: "facilis aditus, difficilis exitus".

IV) Locatelli's relation to Paganini and historic position

The similarities in some of both composers' Caprices give evidence that Paganini must have known Locatelli's works. Namely Paganini's No.1 and Locatelli's No. 7 start out similarly.

It is assumed that through French channels Locatelli's were brought to Paganini.

Paganini was born 18 years after Locatelli's death, yet it may well be understood that Paganini was inspired by Locatelli to become an unaccompanied violin virtuoso soloist. (A-V-2)

Since – as mentioned – Locatelli's Caprices have not been performed in public a lot, Paganini's Caprices obviously became much more famous. This may have led to the assumption that Paganini worked out his virtuosity in accordance with the modernization of the violin building at his time, as well as with the newly developed bow by Tourte.

(in short: the longer violin neck and bass bar for higher tension strings and brilliant sound, possibly the chin rest by Spohr, and the higher tightened bow through the inward shape)

Knowing the Caprices by Locatelli, it is visible that practically all of Paganini's violinistic demands have been mastered by Locatelli before, on the elder violin and bow model, and the many achievements we in fact gratefully owe to Locatelli, rather than to Paganini - who made them famous - and besides, not to the modernized violin and bow.

V) Sources

1) Pietro Locatelli: L'Arte del Violino, Edizione Ricordi 110, Casa Ricordi Milano 1920

2) Romeo Franzoni: Prefazione ibidem, Parma 1917

3) http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pietro_Locatelli

4) David Oistrakh/Gennady Rozhdestvensky: Locatelli "The Labyrinth", EMI live 27/9/1968

B) Portrait 2: **Bartolomeo Campagnoli**



Bartolomeo Campagnoli
Illustration in his "Nouvelle Methode" op. 21, 1824

I) Short biography and contemporaries
Bartolomeo Campagnoli (1751 - 1827) was a fine violinist, pedagogue, composer and conductor.

His first studies and employment were in his native town Cento, Emilia Romagna in Italy.

The teachers there were Alberto dall'Occa, student of Antonio Lolli, and Don Paolo Gustarobba, student of Giuseppe Tartini; his work was with the Orchestra of Cento. When there he heard the soloist Lamotte, he left Cento and followed him to Venice and Padua in 1768. After successful concerts in Rome and Faenza, he studied with Pietro Nardini in Florence. His career went on gradually, working with the Teatro Argentina in Rome and for the Bishop of Freising in Germany.

Further tours through Germany, Poland and Scandinavia led him to a membership of the Royal Music Academy in Sweden. Several jobs followed again in Germany, among them becoming Music Director of Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig 1797, later Hannover and Neustrelitz where he died in 1827.

Among his violinist colleagues were Rudolph Kreutzer, Louis Spohr, and Ernst Ludwig Gerber, all with mutual respect and appreciation. In Leipzig he was also accepted into the Freemasons' Lodge – which certainly postulates a thought of Mozart. Whether there was an actual acquaintance with the great genius is unknown and thus unlikely. However, for example the last movement of the 2nd Divertimento is similar to the theme of Mozart's clarinet quintet, last movement – not too uncommon, yet Campagnoli obviously stands in the middle of the classic era. (B-V-2)

II) His works and composing style

Clearly Campagnoli focused primarily on works for the violin and viola:

Fugues and Divertimenti for violin solo, Caprices for viola solo, a violin concerto, and chamber music : duos for 2 violins, violin-violas and violin-flute, besides a flute concerto.

At the same time he engaged into writing pedagogic works:

One about the art of improvisation, and one on the violin method, with a second enlarged version later. (B-V-2)

Whether he ever met Paganini is also unlikely – but as an Italian violinist-composer, involving virtuoso skills, he must have known about him.

III) The Divertimenti op. 18

As concluded, his compositions are classical, and among them many with a pedagogic point of view: such, the 7 Divertimenti op. 18 are composed each for one position only.

This is a demanding task for both composing and executing, and at the same time these difficulties are not too obvious to the audience.

This matter of fact may be a reason that these works are not too famous, unless to well studied pedagogues. It is of a very high value to practice the Divertimenti: not only that they fill in a gap in our intonation practicing – it is also outstanding what these works represent from the composer's fantasy, variety and skill.

Besides the classical standards Campagnoli broadens the pictures: involving a baroque "Siciliana", an Allemanda in rather the classical "alla tedesca" manner, surprisingly a Bolero, and an "Aria del piccolo marinaio", a programmatic picture. (B-V-1)

IV) Campagnoli's historic achievements

Apart from the books mentioned and the pedagogic aspects explained, there is one further aspect of eminent importance: he renewed the bow grip, introducing it near the first part of the index finger. (B-V-2)

On the picture illustration it is not completely visible how far forward he held the bow, be it all the way (the so-called "old German") or be it near the second part (today regarded as the "Franco-Belgian").

To my eyes it seems close to the second – in any case, it is away from the third finger part (named the "Russian"), and far into the 20th century this had been the preference, until, as widely believed, since Ivan Galamian, today everybody is learning Franco-Belgian. Carl Flesch even for a long time believed in the future of the Russian and late in life admitted that it changed.

Thus, we may regard Campagnoli as the inventor of the modern bow grip, that, estimated, only around the 1970's became definite.

V) Sources

1) Campagnoli 7 Divertimenti o Sonate op. 18 per violino, G. Ricordi & C. Editori, Milano 1950

2) http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartolomeo_Campagnoli

C) Portrait 3: Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst



*Lithography
with personal dedication and signature from 1842*

I) Biography

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1814 - 1865) came as a “wonder child” from Raussnitz/Moravia to Vienna, to study with Joseph Boehm, same as Joseph Joachim, at the Conservatory of the “Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde”, in 1825. Performing, composing and traveling became his life content, however, in London he also proved himself to be a deep and serious chamber musician: he performed all Beethoven quartets together with Henryk Wieniawski, Joseph Joachim and Alfredo Piatti, for the London Beethoven Quartet Society. When his health decreased, he went to Nizza where he died.

Johann Strauss composed his work *Carneval in Venice*, “For the memory of Ernst”. Joseph Joachim’s testimony is thus: “I have never again heard anything similar, as then Ernst was the one violinist that stood like a tower high above everybody else I met in my life.” (C-V-3) There is also a curious historic event: in Leipzig the violinists Ferdinand David, Joseph Joachim, Antonio Bazzini and Ernst performed the *Concertante for 4 violins and orchestra* by Ludwig Maurer. Each of them had a certain space for a cadenza, and after three had theirs already, Joachim as number 4 just took a bow instead.

II) works and style

Ernst’s works are completely dedicated to the violin and to extending its possibilities.

Starting out with following and imitating Paganini, Ernst accomplished his own romantic virtuoso style, in forms, characterizations and so-called technical features.

The most famous two solo works are “The Last Rose”, Variations on the Irish song, and the “Erlkoenig” op. 26, the transcription of the song by Schubert/Goethe. The Last Rose is the No. 6 from the Polyphonic Etudes, each dedicated to one of his colleagues and characterizing the manner of playing of each of them: Laub, Sainton, Joachim, Vieuxtemps, Hellmesberger, and Bazzini. (C-V-1)

The Last Rose is close to Paganini’s “Nel Cor piu non mi sento”, with similar structure: Introduction, Theme, Variations, Coda, and involving various difficulties and characters of violin playing. Ernst’s demands are often built by combining effects to double-effects, more than in Paganini’s works. Such as: Arpeggio plus pizzicato, or double-stops plus harmonics, etc.

The Erlkoenig at times has received criticism for overloading Schubert’s tragic with virtuoso features.

This may be reasonable, yet as long as somebody is able to master the piece – and not to forget that some of Schubert’s works received similar critics: the Fantasy for example had wrongly been understood as virtuoso show piece due to its difficulties.

As a violin work the Erlkoenig is unique and untopped in history.

Then there is also the violin concerto, the “Carneval in Venice” (with the same theme and topic as by Paganini), and others, all rarely performed due to the difficulties. (C-V-2)

III) relation to Paganini

Ernst was strongly inspired by Paganini, whom he first met in 1828. Paganini well saw Ernst's talents and advised him to go for a solo career rather than for an orchestral employment. Ernst followed him, and one may even understand, chased him and tried to top him. When Paganini turned down an offer to take the solo viola part of "Harold in Italy", on tour with the composer and conductor Berlioz, Ernst took it instead, and performed in Brussels, Vienna, Sankt Petersburg und London in 1834. There was a famous meeting of both later in Marseille 1837, where Ernst managed to perform shortly before Paganini and played Paganini's works as he had heard them in the room he rented next door. In one regard it can in fact be said that he topped Paganini: while the later was on tour for 7 years, Ernst was never settled for his whole life. It is told that in comparison between the two, Paganini tended to perform on the tragic, demonic side with his Guarneri del Gesu, whereas Ernst was more humoristic and friendly, and preferred two Stradivari instruments. Paganini eventually also led an unhealthy life and died tragically in poverty, with insufficient funds to have a funeral organised. Ernst similarly at high age had to step back from performing due to his health and became poor. (C-V-3)

IV) achievements

As stated, Ernst extended the possibilities on a violin to the absolute limits.

The top demand a violinist can reach.

As this is a long progress to make, it is often too easy and not fair to take his compositions as technical effect composing. It takes a long time to master them and from there to manage them in expressive ways.

After years of not printing many of them, today fortunately these compositions are back to stage and honor.

V) Sources

1) H. W. Ernst: 6 mehrstimmige Etuden (u.a. "Die letzte Rose"), der "Erkoenig" nach Schubert, Verlag Sikorski Hamburg 1954

2) Preface, Franz Schmidtnr, ibidem

3) http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_Wilhelm_Ernst

D) Remarks about the pieces chosen

Pietro Locatelli: Caprices op. 3 No. 3 and No. 23 "The Labyrinth":

I chose these two from the series, since the No. 3 is a prelude model, that – without postulating anything further – starts out with the same c-minor sixths downwards as Bach's c-minor Prelude of the Welltempered Clavier. A good serious concert opening.

The "Labyrinth" is the most famous one, thanks to Oistrakh, and shows the ricochet technique together with harmonics, double-stops and extended fingerings. Close to Paganini.

Bartholomeo Campagnoli: Marcia, "Aria del piccolo Marinaio", Adagio and Bolero from the 7 Divertimenti op. 18

The March is a strong character piece, particularly for opening a Divertimento – Mozart did so.

This one is from No 5, in the 5th position, and involves double-stops, scales, and a trio with more dancing character in between. The "Aria" is the programmatic picture of the little fisherman, with a fast variation and Coda in the 7th position. The Bolero as a unique character piece in classical context, together with an introducing adagio, gives a sharp ending to the Campagnoli examples, in the 4th position.

Niccolo Paganini: “Nel Cor piu non mi sento”

Since our topic relates the three portraits to Paganini, the grand master himself must be in the middle of the program. “Nel Cor piu non mi sento” is his one great solo work besides the Caprices, and already regarded as some of the most difficult works for violin. At the same time it is a shining example of Italian character, with a strong form, tragic contrasts and multi-faceted features and colors on the violin.

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst: “The Last Rose” and “Erlkoenig” op. 26

The Last Rose feels like a sister work to Paganini’s “Nel Cor” – but it involves more of Ernst’s specific skills, especially double effects and yet humoristic sides: suddenly there are simple pizzicati in the middle of the puzzle.

Following, the “crown”, the “Erlkoenig”. Already Schubert’s version is very difficult for pianist and singer, but putting all of that on 4 violin strings, with all effects possible, is unique in composing and performing history.

The music print is attached (F)



Niccolò Paganini

Drawing by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres ca. 1819

E) Acknowledgements

Besides the colleagues mentioned, I owe my gratitude to my own dear and honored violin teachers:

Professors Gerhart Hetzel, Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Dorothy DeLay and Aida Stucki.

As well I would like to thank my colleagues and friends for their comments and questions:

Prof. Dr. Goetz Richter, University of Sydney and Dr. Karol Sue Reddington, Wheaton Illinois USA.

F) Attachment of the music print

