

L. van Beethoven's Seventh Symphony Op. 92 Transcription for Wind Instruments Edited in 1816

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Between February and May, 1814, Beethoven composed *Fidelio*, op. 72b, with the contribution of the librettist G. F. Treitschke. It was first performed on 23/5/1815 at the Kanterthortheater in Vienna. The edition was printed by Artaria publishing house in Vienna which also published the arrangement for piano and voice in 1814 and by Farrenc publishing house in Paris which brought out the entire score with French text in 1826.

'Wiener Zeitung' Journal on 27 January 1815 reported the news about the publication of the transcription of *Fidelio*¹ for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and double bassoon. This reduction had been commissioned by Artaria publishing house to the clarinettist-composer Wenzel Sedlak. These arrangements for ensembles of wind instruments were very popular at that time. The proof is the huge number of original manuscripts and first editions kept in the archives. They were written in order to seek publicity or to make money, and sometimes they were more known and appreciated than the originals themselves. It is important to remember that there were no strict copyright rules in that period. This made it easier for transcribers to take part in the success of very famous and praised composers, putting on the market the transcription of their original works.

Wenzel Sedlak was born at Jesborzitz in Bohemia on 4 August 1776; in 1805 he went into Auesperger Prince's service as clarinettist. In 1808 he was Harmonie Kapellmeister of the Liechtenstein Prince at Felsperberg in Moravia. From 1821 he played with the Vienna First Quintet for wind instruments. He probably died on 20 November 1851 in Vienna. It seems that Sedlak succeeded Joseph Triebensee (Wittingau 1772-Prague 1846), composer and oboist who also had been in Liechtenstein Prince's service until 1809. He had written interesting pieces of music for octets of wind instruments (two oboes, two clarinets, two horns and two bassoons) and transcriptions from some Mozart's operas such as *Titus' mercy*² and *'Don Juan'*.

Many transcriptions of works by Auber,

Beethoven, Bellini, Boildieu, Cherubini, Donizetti, Gallenberg, Herold, Isouard, Liverati, Mercadante, Paer, Pavasi, Rossini, Sussmayer, Umlauff, Wranitzky, as well as some compositions written by himself are also ascribed to Sedlak².

In this context S.A. Steiner publishing house brought out a transcription of the *Seventh Symphony* by L. van Beethoven³ for two oboes, two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons and



Padua Ensemble of wind instruments directed by Pierluigi Destro played L. van Beethoven's 7th Symphony on 12/12/1992 in Padua (first performance in modern times). The revised work has been also presented during a manifestation called "From Classicism to German Neo-classicism".

double bassoon (Vienna 1816). The work, commissioned to a still unknown transcriber possessed many analogies with the technique of transcription used in the *Fidelio*, but there is no proof that it was composed by Sedlak.

Beethoven wrote the *7th Symphony*, dedicated to Earl Moritz von Fries, between autumn 1811 and summer 1812. The orchestra included two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two trumpets, timpani and strings. It was first performed on 8 December 1813 at the Assembly Hall of Vienna University during a benefit concert for the dead of the Battle of Hanau.¹

The transcription for wind instruments was published by the same publishing house and in

the same year of the original work by Beethoven. This seems to suggest that the transcriber worked on a handwritten score, not yet printed, nor corrected, making a lot of mistakes and omissions in his version.

In my analysis, as I wanted to be as much as possible close to the original work, I adopted the following system.

1) All my notes are enclosed within round brackets.

2) The ligatures I thought to exclude are underlined and enclosed within square brackets.

3) The notes which are not lined up with the musical writing are also enclosed within square brackets, but with my suggestion enclosed within round brackets put side by side. It seemed to me the best way for people who do not possess the Steiner-1816 material to understand clearly all the later revisions.

There are different opinions whether Beethoven⁵ was a supervisor of the transcriptions of his works. Yet it is difficult to think that the great composer, moved by curiosity, had never looked at these works which the papers were publicizing. My score reconstruction of the 'Harmonie' version is based on Steiner edition. I worked on the parts, taken one by one, of all the wind instruments, because at that time the entire score was not written nor published. My revision is based on the comparison with the original by Beethoven. The parallelism between the two works lets us understand the culture of that period and at the same time lets us know the transcriber's sensibility in using such important material as well as his ability in not altering the general structure of the work, despite having cut some parts.

Comparing the two structures The results are:

First Movement-POCO SOSTENUTO-VIVACE

Beethoven: Tonality: A major; measures: 450. Composed in sonata form. An initial *lento* of 62 measures precedes the *vivace*; this is the last time Beethoven used an initial *lento* in a symphony.

Transcription: Tonality: G major; measures: 450. The rhythmic scanning of the initial chords has been maintained as in the original version with *forte* played by all the orchestra, while the thematic scanning is allotted (in the following order) to the oboe, clarinet, horns, and all the wind instruments together. (Ex. meas. 1-8). The characteristic of approaching to the *vivace* is also maintained and leads through an alternation of 'ribattuto' notes (beaten again)

and silences to the increasing gaiety of the 'soggetto principale' (main theme) of the *allegro*.

Second Movement-ALLEGRETTO

Beethoven: Tonality: C major; measures: 278. The theme, allotted to the strings, starts from the low register going to the high register with increasing intensity and great sadness. The movement ends with a chord of wind instruments alone as at the beginning.

Transcription: Tonality: B flat major; measures 277. In the reduction for wind instruments the theme is allotted to the bassoons and the double bassoon (Ex. meas. 1-6). The transcriber removed bar n. 253. This omission balances the normal phrasing (two by two), typical of this section, which Beethoven had brilliantly altered. I replaced the missing bar, choosing to put it within brackets and call it 253bis.

Third Movement-PRESTO-PRESTO MENO ASSAI-PRESTO

Beethoven: Tonality F major; measures 653. The notations by Beethoven⁶ let us know that he first wanted to entitle this movement 'Minuetto' and then 'Scherzo', but finally he gave us only the indication of the tempo. The gaiety of the main theme which passes from low to high register, underlined by *acciaccatura*, leads to a bursting vitality of rhythm and timbre. The scheme is the following:

A - B - A - B - A - CODA
bar 149 236 409 496 641

Transcription: Tonality: F major; measures 417. The transcriber reduces the scheme of the composition as follows:

A - B' - A - CODA
bar 149 236 405

removing the 'ripresa' (repeat) B-A.

Fourth Movement-ALLEGRO CON BRIO

Beethoven: Tonality: A major; measures 465. The introduction is allotted to two chords played by all the orchestra, each of which is separated by a bar of silence. The main theme underlined by *ritornelli* and continual *sf* is very joyful. The 'sviluppo' (development) characterized by the first theme in C major, is enlarged by an increasing tension. The Fourth Movement end is allotted, as at the beginning, to two ranges of chords which finish the contrapuntal play.

The scheme of the composition is:
ESPOSIZIONE - SVILUPPO - RIPRESA
Introduction Development Repeat
bar 126 225

Transcription: Tonality G major; measures 351. The transcriber reduces the scheme of the composition as follows:

ESPOSIZIONE	-	RIPRESA
Introduction		Repeat

bar 126
removing the whole 'sviluppo' (development) section.

The following reduction for wind instruments produces a strong sensation to the listener. The anonymous transcriber shows all his creativity obtaining lightness and agility from his orchestration and maintaining the far-reaching harmonic characteristic of the work. (translation Robert Lazzarin - Padova)

Notes:

1. The transcription by Sedlak of the *Fidelio* parts for wind instruments from the 1815 edition of Artaria publishing house are kept at Wiener Stadt Archiv - cod. M 12355/C; the original by Sedlak is missing.

2. DAVID WHITWELL, The Incredible Vienna Octet School, "Instrumentalist Magazine", XXIV, 1969/70, n. 3-7, (January 1970), pp. 38-40.

3. GEORG KINSKY, Thematisch-Bibliographisches Verzeichnis aller vollendeten Werke L. van Beethoven, Henle Verlag, München, pp. 256-260.

4. E. FORBES, Maizel and Wellington's Victory - concerts of December 8 and 12 in Thayer's Life of Beethoven, Ed. Princeton U.P., p. 549.

5. The theory about which Beethoven was a supervisor of the transcription by W. Sedlak is upheld by ROGER HELLER, Fidelio für neunstimmige Harmonik, "Music and Letters", III, July 1972, pp. 242-253.

6. Interesting and detailed analyses by D. JOHNSON - A. TYSON, The reconstruction of Beethoven's copybooks and schemes, and by D. JOHNSON, The scholars of Beethoven and the interpretation of his schemes, are collected in the volume Beethoven, by G. Pestelli, Il Mulino, p. 343 and p. 367.



About the Author:

Pierluigi Destro graduated in oboe with full marks at the 'B. Marcello' Conservatoire in Venice guided by Bruno Baldan. Afterwards he completed his studies at Accademia Pescaresse with Augusto Loppi obtaining the Diploma of Merit, and Academic Internationale in Nice with Pierre Pierlot and at Internationale Akademic der Hochschule Mozarteum in Salzburg with Berliner Philharmoniker Lothar Koch. He has specialized in chamber music and has given concerts in Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Hungary.

Since 1983 he plays in radio programmes and records with RAI Symphony Orchestra. From 1983 to 1986 he also worked with 'Solisti Veneti'. He won several national and international prizes and in the prestigious Martigny Competition he was awarded the Diploma of Honour.

He has recorded for CBS, Fonit Cetra, Edi Pan-Roma. In Paris he first performed a work of music dedicated to him. Currently he is teacher of Ensemble Music for wind instruments at Vicenza Conservatoire. He works on rediscovery of chamber pieces of music for wind instruments, interested in their score reconstruction and critical editions.