

## A review of the romantic repertoire for bassoon in northern European composition schools

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**Abstract:** *This research article aims at bringing to the attention of the public and young performers a repertoire less played in our country and aims in addition to broadening and deepening a lesser known musical material and the analysis of new musical forms and genres, the issue being so related to instrumental technique, as well as understanding the elements of specific language. The deepening of these composers and their compositional style helps to diversify the romantic repertoire and to expand the knowledge on the lesser known schools. The peculiarity of these composers consists in the fact that they composed representative works especially for wind instruments.*

Key-words: *Romantic bassoon, style, repertoire*

### 1. Introduction

In my orchestral activity I had the opportunity to evolve with acknowledged personalities. The effort and work of the artists, through which they offer unforgettable moments to the public, are fully rewarded by the applause of the audience. An important aspect of my artistic activity is represented also by the concerts as a soloist, where I had the opportunity to perform with orchestras of the "Paul Constantinescu" Philharmonic, "Mihail Jora" Philharmonic, "Moldova" Philharmonic and Radio Chamber Orchestra.

In these concerts I approached a diverse repertoire, always wanting to broaden my horizons and bring new works to the public. Antonio Vivaldi, Jan Nepomuk Hummel, Jan Baptist Wanhal, Carl Stamitz, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Heitor Villa Lobos and Jiri Pauer are composers whose works I have played as a soloist.

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## **2. Objectives**

This work aims to complement the acquired practical knowledge and together with the theoretical analyses, to contribute to the development of the artistic act. My passion for music in the era of romanticism helped me to approach the repertoire of these composers who through the value of their creations contributed to the progress of musical genres.

Discovering that there is no research study on this topic, I decided to choose this theme, that will certainly help the younger generations to discover new means of expression, stylistic features and innovative interpretive aspects.

## **3. Discussions**

Romanticism was an extremely prolific period for music, and its notable representatives dedicated memorable solo pages for violin, cello and piano. Along with them, there were composers who turned their attention to wind instruments: Ludovic Milde, Anton Reicha, Ferdinand David and others.

The continuous desire to expand my personal repertoire and to bring to the public lesser-known works and compositions, led me to romantic bassoon music in the creation of Northern European composers: Franz Berwald, Bernhard Crusell and Edouard Dupuy. They composed special works for bassoon, exploring the dynamics, agogics, virtuosity and ambit of the ever-growing instrument.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the historical, social, cultural and philosophical environment represented a gradual but structural separation from the last century, imposing a new way of life and aesthetic elements. In the history of culture and art, this period is called romanticism. Due to the complexity of romanticism, this period is crucial for the further development of humanity. Today, when the gaze of time allows for broader conclusions, the diversity of forms in which romanticism manifests itself in various cultural fields makes it difficult to explain the simple and clear phenomenon of current unilateralism. Understanding it involves analyzing all the components, causes and influences of the romantic flow, so that it can only be interpreted scientifically.

We always associate musical romanticism with that of literature and painting, in order to be able to fully understand the means of expressing its content and essence. The romantic artist was the first to consider art as unitary, reaching a wide range of concerns.

The term "romanticism" raises many questions, its connotation being different from one century to another. It is only in the definition of the seventeenth century that we find 'romanticism' as a lover of poetry in England and is called 'chivalrous romanticism'. Its meaning is to define the tendency towards the strange, the absurd. Derived from the term "romance" (court novel or chivalrous novel), this term can also have a picturesque meaning ('romantic'). In a broader sense, according to more recent etymology, the word is derived from 'Romanization', a concept that specifies the background and invasion of ancient Rome from the end of antiquity, which aimed to adopt the Roman culture and lifestyle.

The romantic hero will be very different from his classic predecessor not only philosophically but also psychologically. His response to the impulses of life is passionate, variable and subjective. He has a constant need to show himself and free himself from the burden of devastating mental disorders. For the classics, the title of pride is self-concealment, while romantics are proud of their spontaneous performance. With the exception of Mendelssohn (more classic in lyrical expression), all romantics feel their aesthetic banners with an unrestricted expression. If Beethoven first threw the handcuffs that bound the interpretation of individual human music, then the romantics would completely get rid of its remaining aristocratic classicism. When the cruelty of life makes the romantic composer aware of his humanism or the inconsistency of speculation, a repressive feeling of loneliness descends on him. In order to perpetuate his belief in the ideal victory, the romantic hero must fight fiercely with his subjectivity and emotional elements, and this subjectivity and emotion make him full of passion and, at the same time, undermine his judgment.

As we have already shown, romanticism is a reaction to whatever the old system of thought represents. Fr. Schiller emphasized in his book *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* that modern poets have lost their innocence of classical balance and that natural and sentimental poetry is pursued. The romantic doctrines that belong to the different positions adopted by artists are transmitted to the public through manifest articles, and their common feature is to deny any aesthetic construction based on rationalist ideas. The new level of the artist's line produced a creative process. Inspiration and imagination are considered "grace". The intermediary between consciousness and the supernatural world is the poet, who has the characteristics of the visionary and the prophet.

These aesthetic thoughts have led to the trend of synthesis, the preference for primitive personalities and spiritual adventures and it is impressive that the various elements that make up works of art are still reflected in musical

relationships. Moreover, in these contradictory conditions, music seems to be an innovative language, without the literary and poetic excess of romantic aesthetics. The paradox is that while music is placed above other arts, it has remained balanced over the centuries. In most cases, music represents the harmonious development of the human spirit and continues to develop.

The new concept of song has become the most obvious symptom of the musical language adopted by romantics. Unlike the symmetrical formula that usually represents the classical melody that unfolds at the base of harmony, by performing arpeggios on chords you can see the evolution towards a softer and more curved melody.

Musical forms such as sonata, lied, theme with variations, rondo, lose their purity, intertwine and give rise to new types of forms (see George Bălan, 1966, 90). In order to better understand the meaning of romance, as an attitude and as a human trait, it must be analyzed on several levels. From the point of view of the opposition of classical romanticism, the essential differences are more accentuated. In classicism, the world represents a relationship of coexistence, in which time is seen as static and does not evolve, and people form a balanced and well-organized whole. Classicism considers the heroic life, a unity created from pain and happiness, a necessary condition for the existence and realization of the classic tragedy. For romance, the world is a collection of a series of continuous relationships, a permanent, temporal experience, a life experience, in which fluid and imprecise people tend towards universalism. The vibration of pantheism, which is an integration in nature, corresponds to a tragic hero who is now the bearer of the problematic complex, with the prototype of Hamlet or the Faustian line.

A precipice was created between the romantic artist and society, the tense atmosphere becoming completely useless in resolving the contradictions between ideal and reality. Thus, the romantic hero is put in the position of a strong feeling of inner tearing, which could be dissolved only by escaping the hostile reality and taking refuge in an imaginary world. The ways in which the artist regained his balance and peace of mind were inexhaustible sources of imagination, which led to an enrichment of the content of romantic creations. Since the depletion of Greek antiquity and mythology, romantics have anchored themselves in the historical past and its idealization, especially the medieval era, full of mystery, superstition, and the unbridled power of the Catholic Church known for its cruelty and torture. The initiator of this current was Walter Scott. The theme of the works of Wagner, Weber, Meyerbeer was influenced by great legends, such as "Tristan and Isolde"; "Roland's Song"; in escaping to exotic places that no human ever touched.

„Another stylistic characteristic of Romanticism remains *the extension of the means* - for example the extension of the secondary parameters, the emotion seen as deviation from a *normal* state (novelty consists in the degree of deviation frequency), the length of the pieces, the widened and chromated interval. The melodic extension (compared to that of Classicism) leads to the climax characteristic of the romantic form (statistical type).” (Valentina Sandu-Dediu, 2013, 154).

Finally, the direct relationship with the language innovation of harmony is the result of the emotional content of romantic music, which frees the melody from the harshness of classical chords and chains and develops in a colorful direction. The interdependence between text and music is not only important, but depends not only on the sound creation of the text, but also on the consequences of the song sung by the sound on the instrumental music. The role of rhythm in this area is to release the discourse, even beyond the obvious connection with folk songs.

„Among the peculiarities of Romanticism we can detach the subjectivism, as the main dimension of the personalization of the expression, the tendency of liberation, the exacerbation of the feelings, the discovery of the feeling of nature and the openness to the fantastic” (Grigore Constantinescu, 2008, 75).

*Franz Berwald (1796 – 1868)* – An eccentric romantic - born in Stockholm in 1796, Franz Adolf Berwald was the son of violinist Christian Friedrich Georg Berwald (1740-1825). His family is originally from Germany, its members working as instrumentalists throughout Europe in the seventeenth century. His parents settled in Sweden in 1773.

Franz Berwald is considered a composer of early Romanticism. At the age of 5 he began to study the violin with his father, and later (in 1810) with Edouard Dupuy (Du Puy). Due to the physical punishments to which the students were subjected, his father withdrew him from school. He wanted a liberal education for his son.

Between 1818 and 1828 he was principal violinist in the chapel of the royal court, and between 1829 and 1841 he lived in Berlin where he founded an institute of orthopedics and massage. He was the first in the world to use orthopaedic equipment that he had invented himself. Between 1835-1841 he was the director of an institute of medical gymnastics.

In 1841-1842 he lived in Vienna, where many of his compositions are sung (The Game of the Yells and Memories of the Norwegian Alps). Returning to Sweden and his music not being as appreciated as abroad, he became a businessman and director of a glass factory. From 1864 he was accepted as a member of the Swedish Academy of Music, and from 1867, professor of composition at the Academy Conservatory.

*Konzertstück* for bassoon and orchestra is a concert work, new as a genre in the era, which highlights the bassoon as technical possibilities, ambitus and creativity.

*The septet* for clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, viola, cello and double bass (1817/1828) appeared in several versions and was first played in Stockholm on January 10, 1818. The work uses the same instrumentation as the famous Septet in E major flat by Ludwig van Beethoven. The harmonious combination of instruments forms an attractive texture, Berwald distinctly exploiting the individual timbres of the wind instruments. His music abounds in opera themes, to be sung. This three-part work in which Berwald ingeniously comprises a slow-moving Prestissimo was presented in its final form on December 6, 1828 at the Stora Borssalem in Stockholm, played by Crusell-clarinet, Preumayr-bassoon and Hirschfeld - horn. The program also included *Conzertstück* for bassoon and orchestra.

*Bernhard Henrik Crusell (1775 – 1838)* - was the most important and well-known Finnish composer before Sibelius. Born in Nystad, the son of a bookbinder, he began his musical studies at the age of 8 with a regimental clarinetist. In 1788 he became a volunteer musician in the military band in Sveaborg, in Viapori, the fortress island outside Helsinki, and in 1791 he was transferred to Stockholm where he became a court musician two years later and remained employed here for the next 40 years. He studied clarinet in Berlin in 1798 with Franz Tausch and gave several concerts there and in Hamburg. In 1803 he went to Paris to study composition with Gossec and Berton and clarinet with Jean Xavier Lefevre. He later served as director of the Swedish court chapel and the royal regiment.

During his career he became a respected composer and one of the best solo clarinet artist of the time, in his repertoire having works from the creations of composers: Peter Winter, L.A. Lebrun, L.E.Jadin, Krommer, Beethoven, Mozart and others, along with his works. His compositions include 3 Concerts for Clarinet (1811, 1816, 1829), a Theme with Variations for Clarinet and a Concert Symphony for Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn (1816). He also composed chamber music that included: three clarinet quartets (1812, 1816, 1823), an opera *Den Lilla Slafvinnan* (1824), and 12 songs. He was a fluent composer with a fresh vision of the song. He

translated works by the composers Mozart, Rossini and others, in Swedish; the concert symphony was the most sung work of his life.

*Concertino* for bassoon and orchestra is a work of great virtuosity whose parts follow each other without a break. Its music stretches over twenty minutes, giving the bassoonist repeatedly the opportunity to show off his mastery of technical passages and cadences.

*The concert symphony* for clarinet, bassoon, horn and orchestra is a solo work that harmoniously combines the warm timbre of solo instruments, in dialogues, resulting in new timbre colors, the melodic material being presented by soloists in various combinations.

*Jean Baptiste Edouard Dupuy (Du Puy)* (1770-1822) - he was born in Switzerland in 1770 and was a violinist, composer and singer. After studying the violin in Paris in 1793, he moved to Sweden where he gained the appreciation of social and cultural circles through talent and charisma. His music contains lyrical songs and passages of great virtuosity. In 1793 he moved to Stockholm, where his musical talent helped him enter high social circles. His political sympathy for Napoleon led to his deportation in 1799. After moving to Copenhagen - Denmark, he regularly performed on stage as a singer and master concert, but also worked as a teacher at the Court.

Together with Berwald and Crusell, he was part of a cultural society called Par Bricole. His 1806 work *Ungdom og Galskab* (Youth and Madness) was a huge success and was the most popular work of its kind in Denmark to date.

At the time, the Stockholm Orchestra was considered one of the best in Europe. The most important bassoonist in Sweden at that time was Franz Preumayr (1782 - 1853), and composers Franz Berwald, Bernhard Crusell and Eduard Brendler dedicated compositions to him. He premiered De Puy's Bassoon Concerto on January 12, 1805.

Edouard De Puy was re-employed soloist of the opera from 1811 until his death in 1822.

*The concerto* for bassoon and orchestra, played for the first time in 1805 by the most titled Swedish bassoonist of the time - Franz Preumayr, is a work of exceptional virtuosity, the moments of respite being very few, the composer places great emphasis on the development of musical discourse through melodic figuration and rich ornamentation.

In *the bassoon quintet, two violins, viola and cello*, the solo bassoon part seems to be based on the beautiful, fluid sound and effortless technique that characterizes the tradition of belcanto, perhaps evoking the composer's own voice.

#### 4. Conclusions

I believe that this research will help me achieve a higher level of understanding of the interpretive phenomenon and together with my work as an orchestra instrumentalist will allow me to share with the young bassoonists and musicians with whom I collaborate the knowledge acquired.

Deepening the creation of these composers for bassoon, together with a good understanding of the place they occupy in the romantic repertoire for bassoon, will highlight their role in the development of instrumental technique and means of expression, which are helped by the continuous improvement of the instrument.

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