

FOREWORD

Johann Melchior Molter (c. 1695–1765) has hitherto attracted attention principally on account of his concertos for clarinet, which are among the earliest for that instrument. He was, however, a prolific and versatile composer, some of whose other compositions would contribute usefully to the repertoire of several less well favoured instruments, the present work being a case in point.

Molter, Thuringian by birth like his near-contemporary J. S. Bach, entered the service of the Margrave of Baden in 1717 and so distinguished himself that he was granted leave of absence to travel first to Venice and subsequently to Rome in order to further his studies. For German musicians of the time, such a pilgrimage was the equivalent of a period of study at a conservatoire in more recent times—a means of converting promise into proficiency. Returning to the Margrave's court at Durlach, Molter succeeded one J. F. Käfer as court composer in 1722 and settled down to the kind of routine such a post entailed. Disruption occurred in 1733 with the outbreak of the War of the Polish Succession; the Margrave decamped, dissolving his orchestra, but had the foresight to second Molter to the court of Eisenach (near Molter's birthplace), where a comparable vacancy had just arisen through the death of J. A. Birkenstock. After circumstances had returned to normal Molter resumed his old place, but not before he had paid a second visit to Italy in 1738. The old Margrave's successor sought Molter's advice on the reconstitution of the court orchestra, and Molter's specifications are especially interesting because of their relevance to an historically-accurate performance of the present concerto.

The new orchestra was to consist of eight violins, six violas, one (!) 'cello, one bass viol, two double basses, two each of flutes, oboes and clarinets, three bassoons, five trumpets and one set of timpani. The number of players was seven less than the number of instruments listed because some were able to perform on more than one instrument. The list confirms the use of bassoons as reinforcing instruments on the bass line and also, very importantly, the *solo* nature of the 'cello part. (In modern orchestral performance where more than one 'cello is available the supernumeraries are best allotted to the continuo part together with double basses and bassoons.) Molter's list of instruments includes no harpsichord presumably because it was automatically assumed that he would direct performances from that instrument.

Molter remained at Durlach for the rest of his life, quietly industrious. One fortunate consequence of his life-long association with the Baden court has been that the larger part of his output—product of his kapellmeistership there—has escaped dispersal. Today, a huge and diverse collection of works by him, many in autograph score, is preserved in the Baden State Library in Karlsruhe, West Germany.

Molter left close on a hundred concertos for various combinations. In common with most other German concertists of his time he leaned heavily on Italian models, particularly those supplied by Antonio Vivaldi (with whom he may have actually studied on his first visit to Venice in 1719–20). From the wealth of formal design encountered in Vivaldi's concertos certain features were abstracted and quickly became a recipe for "instant" concerto composition by scores of European composers. The German flautist and composer J. J. Quantz saw fit to include in his famous flute manual of 1752 a set of principles for the would-be composer of concertos which accord down to the smallest details with what we find in Molter's concertos. The relative proportions of the movements, their time signatures, their elaborate *tutti* openings: all fit the Quantz formula exactly. Or we should rather say (since works like the present one antedate Quantz's book by at least a dozen years) that Quantz summed up perfectly the general practice of German neo-Vivaldists.

Not only the style but also the melodic cast and the character of the part-writing in Molter's concertos are italianate. Sometimes the polyphonic sumptuousness of Corelli's style is recalled momentarily, but the music is more often homophonic with copious *galant* embellishment of the melody. One novel feature of the trumpet concertos is the cantabile treatment of the solo instrument in slow movements; this finds no equivalent in the earlier

Italian models, where the trumpet customarily pauses and a substitute soloist (if soloist there must be) does duty. The present concerto and its three companions in the genre preserved in Karlsruhe bespeak an altogether remarkable level of virtuosity on the then still valveless trumpet.

The present concerto (arbitrarily designated no. 3 to distinguish it from its fellows) survives in autograph score, unlike no. 1, for which a set of parts has survived in addition. Had any for no. 3 survived, it is probable that they would have shown the same kind of revision that we find in no. 1, where some last-minute alterations have been made in conjunction with a much-amplified complement of bowing marks and dynamics. If the copyist himself undertook this work, he must at least have remained under Molter's general supervision, for it shows a competence and consistency quite uncharacteristic of "unauthorised" 18th-century arrangements. These original parts for Concerto no. 1 have therefore been very useful in the suggestions they provide, by way of analogy, for the editing of the present concerto.

The instrumentation poses a certain problem, as Molter's score is devoid of any relevant indications. Here, the parts for the first concerto are again very helpful. A pair of oboes were evidently used as *stromenti di rinforzo* ("reinforcing" instruments) in tutti passages, a common practice of the time. Although their inclusion in the present edition of Concerto no. 3 has been decided against, parts for first and second oboe can if necessary be derived from their corresponding violin parts following the practice of the copyist in Concerto no. 1 (for which the original oboe parts have been retained to serve as specimens). In tutti passages the solo 'cello would probably have been supported by bassoons and double basses, though, surprisingly, no parts for these instruments have survived in Concerto no. 1. In that concerto the part described as *cembalo* is also treated as a *stromento di rinforzo*, pausing during solo episodes. Ostensibly, therefore, the 'cello remains as sole accompaniment to the trumpet for long stretches at a time. This is certainly one possibility, and it is interesting to note that in the analogous case of the four clarinet concertos by Molter published in Volume 41 of *Das Erbe Deutscher Musik* the editor has accepted this situation at its face value. But it is not inconceivable that Molter had available another harpsichord (perhaps one played by himself, reading from the score), which was to accompany throughout. A hint in this direction is provided by the bass figures in bars 37–38 of the first movement of the present concerto, where an analogy with the *cembalo* part of Concerto no. 1 would have argued in favour of the harpsichord's suppression. Certainly, the use of two continuo keyboard instruments in this fashion was by no means a novelty. Since it is easier for the performer to subtract from than to add to the material before him I have assumed the presence of the harpsichord almost throughout, but conductors and harpsichordists should be aware of the speculative nature of the case.

Other details of editorial procedure follow in the Critical Commentary.

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

The Source

Autograph score *ca.* 1740. (The work is provided with no original title or composer's name, though Molter's authorship is unquestionable.)

Present Location

Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe. Identified as "Concerto 35" and catalogued under the shelf-mark: Musik Hs. 333. Microfilm kindly made available by the library authorities.

The Present Edition

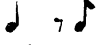
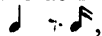
1. The original trumpet (*clarino*) being a D instrument, its part appeared in a transposition one tone lower (i.e. with blank key signature) in the source. In the present score the trumpet is notated at sounding pitch. In the set of parts two alternative trumpet parts—for instruments in D and B flat respectively—are provided.

2. Editorial slurs and ties are distinguishable through having a short cross-stroke. Editorial tempo directions, trills and dynamics appear within brackets. A few editorial staccato dots required by analogy with dots already provided sporadically in the source have been introduced tactitly.
3. "Long" and "short" appoggiaturas, undifferentiated in the original source, remain so here. The context should make clear which is required.
4. The realization of the harpsichord part is editorial; the few bass figures are original. Bracketed lower-stave notes represent the putative accompaniment by a "principal" harpsichord (see Foreword) outside the main tutti.
5. Early 18th-century musical notation did not have any hard-and-fast rules governing the presence of accidental prefixes since correct interpretation in context was the only absolute requirement; consistency took second place. However, the general principle is followed that prefixes retain validity so long as the original note is repeated without intervening notes or rests, even across bar-lines. Otherwise, accidentals have to be provided afresh for each note to which they apply. For the purposes of the present edition this convention is regarded as a rule. All "editorial" accidentals can be identified by reference to the list of original readings.

ORIGINAL READINGS

First Movement—(Allegro)

Bar

- 21 All This bar remains as in the original. It is possible that the  rhythm would have been performed as , following a common Baroque practice known today as "over-dotting". (The rest stands in lieu of a dot.)
- 34 Vlc/Cemb Sharpening of last note (G) not indicated.
- 56 VI 2 Sharpening of third note (d'') not indicated.
- 61 VI 1 Sharpening of eleventh, thirteenth and fifteenth notes (all g') not indicated.
- 95 All As bar 21
- parts

Second Movement—(Adagio Cantabile)

- 7 VI 1 Sharpening of a'' not indicated.
- 25 Vla Fourth note e'.
- 39 Tr Sharpening of fifth note (g'') not indicated.
- 59 Vlc/Cemb Sharpening of first note (e) not indicated.

Third Movement—(Allegro)

- 50 Tr Sharpening of fourth and sixth notes (both g'') not indicated.
- 41 Tr Sharpening of fifth note (g'') not indicated.
- 63 VI 1, 2 Sharpening of fourth note (g') not indicated.
- 65 VI 1, 2 Sharpening of fourth note (a') not indicated.
- 66 VI 1 As bar 65.

MICHAEL TALBOT
Liverpool, 1971