TOCCATA CLASSICS

Antoine REICHA

COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME THREE

FANTAISIE SUR UN THÈME DE GIROLAMO FRESCOBALDI
ÉTUDES OU EXERCICES, OP. 30
RONDEAU NO. 2 IN F MAJOR

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FIRST RECORDINGS

REICHA AND THE PIANO, VOLUME THREE

by Henrik Löwenmark

History has not dealt even-handedly with the composer Antoine Reicha (1770–1836): some of his many achievements have been emphasised at the expense of other, equally important activities. Most unfairly of all, his role as a highly influential pedagogue, theorist and innovator has overshadowed his music. The runaway success of his wind quintets has obscured the fact that he wrote many works, often much more interesting ones, in other genres; and his reputation as a composer mainly of chamber music has resulted in surprisingly little interest being shown in his rich and extensive output for piano. Although important steps have been taken during the last decades – recordings above all, but new editions of, and academic research into, his works are slowly but steadily making their mark – the picture that posterity holds of him remains incomplete. In his large and admittedly uneven production, there is a wide spectrum of artistic attitudes and approaches, often contradictory. Within this *œuvre*, one finds dry academic exercises, highly original experiments and works of enormous spirit and playfulness, as well as pieces of considerable depth and weight. Music for piano forms a substantial part of that output – surprisingly, since he never was active as a professional pianist, in contrast to so many of his contemporaries who started their careers as virtuosos performing their own music on the most fashionable instrument of the day.

Born in Prague on 26 February 1770, Antonín Rejcha was only ten months old at the death of his father (who had been released from serfdom only six years earlier), leaving him in the care of a mother and stepfather who did nothing about his education. The thirst for knowledge that marked his adult career was already a potent element in his make-up and so, at age eleven, he took care of his own destiny and fled to his paternal grandfather in Klatovy, a village near the Bavarian border, and then

continued towards Wallerstein, in Swabia, to his uncle Josef, composer and principal cellist in the private orchestra of the local count. Josef took the boy in and taught him to play the flute, violin and piano; his French wife taught her nephew French and German. In 1785 Josef was appointed principal *Kapellmeister* to the court in Bonn. Anton, of course, moved with his adopted family and before long was playing flute in the electoral orchestra, alongside a fifteen-year-old violist by the name of Ludwig van Beethoven.

Reicha soon began studying composition. In his brief autobiography, *Notes sur Antoine Reicha* (c. 1824), he writes that, when he moved to Hamburg in 1794, he had abandoned all plans of being a musician, although that did not prevent him from giving piano-lessons. In other words, he must have developed a somewhat different relation to the instrument: it never became a vehicle for virtuosic display, nor for obtaining employment from some nobleman or for finding new pupils. Rather, it became a very important field for experiment and pedagogical ideas as well as for purely 'artful' music. Indeed, the chief distinguishing feature of Reicha's piano music is its innocent mixture of characteristics – experimental, advanced, didactic and simple. There is an almost complete absence of the operatic fantasias, flashy variations, commonplace rondos and other pieces which at the time were flooding a growing market – Reicha seems to have refused to depend on them. And even when he is at his most entertaining, he never flirts with the listener – or the performer.

Reicha may not have had the same thorough training in piano-playing as, for example, Beethoven and Clementi; and in the years when he remained a practising musician, his main instrument was the flute, and so he did not have to keep up his pianism. This background may explain some of the 'flaws' (strange part-writing, odd doublings, 'hollow' sounds and so on) in his piano compositions – his textures are often not as full and rich as those of his more illustrious pianist-colleagues. He also recurrently employed unusual pianistic textures, ranging in extremes from advanced solutions and figurations to a degree of unidiomatic clumsiness. But these characteristics can be partly explained as the conscious, deliberate endeavour of his searching mind to go beyond the self-evident and conventionally euphonious – it was simply a matter of a very personal style, as with Janáček or Satie, for example. Be that as it may, one moves here in

a territory with many quite strange and odd ways of writing, to which the ear takes its time to become accustomed, even to accept. The same goes for phrasing, form, pauses and harmony, where all sorts of surprises and peculiarities can be found. They may seem a mark of eccentricity but that would be to misinterpret his aims, and they are certainly not typical of all his piano pieces.

Another trait is his sparing use of performing instructions, in contrast with a trend that was on a marked increase among his contemporaries, not least Beethoven. He never indicates more than two *ff* or *pp*; there are not many markings of *forte* and *piano* nor for *crescendo* and *diminuendo* (signs or words); and indications like *ritenuto*, *calando*, *rinforzando*, *dolce*, *agitato*, *con espressione*, *smorzando*, *poco*, *sempre* and so on are few and far between. Reicha's view, perhaps influenced by tradition (which, of course, he accepted or rejected as he wished), can be found in the last sentence of the preface to the six piano trios published as his Op. 101: 'Le grand mérite de l'exécution consiste en ce qu'on sente et devine les intentions de l'auteur, pour l'indication desquelles il n'existe pas de signes' ('The major merit in performance consists of how to feel and divine the intentions of the composer, for the indication of which there are no signs').

How well, then, did Reicha play the piano? To judge from the music itself he must have been quite accomplished, but that does not prove much; it simply isn't known, even though he writes in his autobiography that he was often asked at informal gatherings to play some of the *Trente-six fugues* – published by Reicha himself in Vienna in 1804 and 1805 – which had gained something of a reputation.

In spite of these considerations, Reicha's piano music as a whole has a higher musical density, so to speak, than that of Clementi, Dussek and Hummel, since their considerably larger output contains so many works of more or less routine character and/or in popular style. Here Reicha is much closer to his friend Beethoven in his seriousness of purpose and rejection of the demands of the market.

In preparing this project to record all of Reicha's piano music (except, naturally enough, for a small number of works which have yet to be found), I have divided it into three groups, corresponding as far as possible to the period of origin of each work but more often according to when and where they were published. The problems with dating

many of these works are, first, that those manuscripts which still exist have no date of composition and, second, that many, demonstrably or at least probably, were written several years before they were published, by which time he had moved to another city. In a letter to the publisher Artaria in Vienna dated October 1797, Reicha offers a long list of compositions for publication, including solo-piano and chamber works, some of which in all probability are identical with several pieces printed by Breitkopf & Härtel during his years in Vienna. But since it is hard to date works without any informative indication or comment, my guiding principle has been a combination of the periods in Reicha's life, the opus numbering and different publishers: Hamburg/Paris, 1794–1802; Vienna, 1802–8; and Paris, 1808–36. When it comes to manuscript works, stylistic, graphological and in some cases linguistic considerations have determined the placing of individual works in each group. Another complicating factor is that many of the small pieces that Reicha included in various collections also exist in alternative autograph versions which can be slightly different. Several of them were probably written in Hamburg in 1794–99 but not published until he had settled in Paris, in 1799–1802, or even during the Vienna period.

Rondeau No. 2 in F major

The manuscript of this *Rondeau* in F major, marked *Allegretto* 1, is catalogued by the Bibliothèque nationale de France as MS 12079 (2). It has not yet been published. In many respects, it shows the influence of C. P. E. Bach's rondos, with their many sequences, capricious form and far-reaching harmonic wanderings, although in Reicha's rondo the theme remains in the tonic throughout. It was probably written around 1800.

Études ou Exercices, Op. 30

The history of études (studies) of high musical value for piano did not start with Chopin's groundbreaking Op. 10 of 1833, even though that set and its successor, Op. 25, of 1837, in many ways epitomised the genre, becoming part of the established piano repertoire and setting the standard for other composers. The founders and most influential forerunners of the genre were Johann Baptist Cramer, with his *44 Studie* of 1804 and the *44 Studie* of 1810, and Muzio Clementi, with his monumental *Gradus ad Parnassum*, a

hundred pieces divided into three books, published in 1817, 1819 and 1826. In a French context, Daniel Steibelt (though of German origin) may also be mentioned, with his *Études*, Op. 78, of 1805. Most *études* focus on a single pianistic texture: parallel thirds, wide stretches for the hands, rapid figurations, octaves, a melody against a fast-moving accompaniment, broken chords and so on – that is to say, the composer explores the possibilities of advanced pianism, while still attempting to write a piece that is musically interesting. The focus on repeated textures reveals the influence of Baroque procedures, as found in many of J. S. Bach's keyboard pieces, especially among the preludes and toccatas, as well as in the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti.

The étude is therefore rarely found among composers of the Classical Viennese school, whose style is based on the contrast and development of themes, with changes of texture and structure. Clementi, born four years before Mozart, is an exception, but his *Gradus ad Parnassum* was written late in his long life and after the études by Cramer, who was a student of his.

The rise in the number of piano études (with different degrees of difficulty) composed from the beginning of the nineteenth century is strongly connected to the growing popularity of the instrument itself, and the interaction between virtuoso players, composers (often virtuosi themselves) and piano manufacturers led to rapid developments in the mechanism of the instrument.

It seems as if one of the very first collections where the term étude was used for pieces written exclusively for the piano was Reicha's *Études ou Exercices pour le Piano-Forté Dirigées d'une Manière Nouvelle, Œuvre 30* ('Studies or Exercises for the piano-forte organised in a new way, Opus 30'), published by Imbault in Paris around 1800. The term had been used earlier for études for violin, such as Fiorillo's *36 Études*, and Scarlatti's first book of sonatas, for harpsichord, of 1738, was entitled *Essercizi.* Dussek's *Douze Études Mélodiques* for piano, published in 1794, has very little in common with Reicha or Cramer. All of them are more akin to the general, rather bland style of Clementi's and Dussek's own sonatinas; there is nothing that would qualify them as études in a narrower sense as regards technique, expressiveness or composition.

Reicha's reason for writing a collection of études is stated on the title page:

> A work equally useful to those who wish to have a refined talent for this instrument as to those who, having attained that level, wish to maintain it. This work may serve as a continuation of the *Piano Method* of Citizens Adam and Lachnith.

The piano manual Reicha is referring to was that of Ludwig Wenzel Lachnith, horn-player and fellow Bohemian, and Louis Adam, piano teacher at the Paris Conservatoire – and father of Adolphe Adam, who was to be one of Reicha's students. It was published in 1798 under the title *Méthode ou principe général du doigté pour le forté-piano* ('Method or general principle of fingering for the fortepiano').

In his preface, 'Main idea of this work', Reicha emphasises the importance of offering students not only études dedicated to scales, trills, broken chords, octaves and so on; such things are indeed necessary, but they lack musical interest and are therefore tiresome. (This is the very fault of the Adam/Lachnith approach, as well as of some of Clementi's and Dussek's early piano methods.) It is to remedy these shortcomings that Reicha says he has taken on this task:

> I am not unaware of all the difficulties of this enterprise, but I have boldly undertaken it with this experiment that I here present to the public for the pianoforte; I may perhaps not have fulfilled my intentions in this respect, but I would at least have the satisfaction of being the first to advance this idea. It will be for someone else to realise it with more success.

The claim that Op. 30 would be the very first work to combine a technical exercise with a purely musical aim is questionable and depends very much on how an étude is to be defined and what limits it may have. Nevertheless, the difficulties that Reicha implies are obvious – *utile dulci*, the *raison d'être* of the work: how to create something that is not only technically and musically rewarding, but also accessible in the eyes of the student, something concentrated and lucid. In any case, Op. 30 should by no means be considered as a piano school, being far too unsystematic and lacking any kind of explanation as to mastering fingerings, hand-positions, chord-progressions, etc.

The differences between Op. 30 and other études of the time are considerable. They spring from Reicha's natural curiosity, independence of mind and investigative

endeavour, characteristics that often led him to unexplored paths and interesting solutions. The collection is more than merely a variety of études in a technical sense; the compositional aspect is often as much in the foreground, even though the work is explicitly addressed to pianists. This paradox is one of many with Reicha; another is the contrast between his high ambition with regard to pianism and his absence from the public stage as pianist. The mixture of the technically simple and the conspicuously advanced is yet another; nor does there seem to be any organisation in the degrees of difficulty of the pieces. It is more an assemblage that Reicha thought fit to be published in the framework of a collection of études.

The title itself, *Études ou Exercices*, is rather bewildering in this context, perhaps even misleading, since their inherent musical worth is reason enough for performing these pieces. Something like '*Études ou Exercices musicaux*' might have been more appropriate, though the self-confident addition of '*d'une Manière Nouvelle*' reveals Reicha's tendency to stick his neck out and announce he had found or invented something new. It was not the first time he had done this, nor would it be the last.

Reicha's pieces and the textures he employs have very little to do with Cramer's well-written and efficient pianism, which also succeeds in being charming and rewarding. As in Reicha's opus, Cramer's pieces are short, lasting between one and two minutes per piece. Each is based on a specific pianistic texture, from which there is no deviation. Many are pianistically highly inventive, mostly in a moderately fast or fast tempo. Reicha, by contrast, mixes slow and fast, introvert and extrovert, easy and difficult. Perhaps most surprising and original is that he puts different textures and styles side by side – fugue, broken chords, slow fantasy-like movements, variation, toccata-like textures, exercises in different clefs. In some ways, Op. 30 is a precursor to Clementi's *Gradus ad Parnassum*, which does indeed contain several fugues, fugatos, canons and sonata movements, but on the whole it is dominated by the same ambition as Cramer's two collections: to explore the techniques of advanced pianism.

Op. 30 should therefore be seen both as a response to the pedagogical approach dominated by dry technical exercises and as an exploration of compositional ideas rather than of pianistic textures. Since Reicha was not a concert pianist, it is not surprising that,

even though there are examples of advanced pianism in this collection, as elsewhere among Reicha's piano works, he is in general inferior to Cramer and Clementi in this respect.

The compositional element is central, not least harmonically, even in the few pieces that are more exercises than creative works. It is obvious that Reicha wants to demonstrate different kinds of compositional techniques, to offer a toolbox for would-be composers. Here, he is pointing the way to the twentieth century – to Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, for example.

The Op. 30 *Études* are divided into two books, each consisting of ten pieces. In the preface there are remarks on some of them, and a few short musical examples to demonstrate a certain aspect of a piece. Book 1 is devoted to clearly defined textures such as 'Les Octaves', 'Les Gammes' (three types), 'Les Cadences', 'Les Agrémens', reflecting Reicha's deliberate reference to the Lachnith/Adam *Méthode*, as well as pointing the way to Debussy's *Douze Études* of 1915, which have identical or similar titles. Book 2 is devoted more to musical forms, although only one of the pieces, No. 9, Fugue, has a title. No. 8, though, is clearly a technical study and the very last one is an exercise in reading and combining different clefs. Many of the pieces have no equivalent among other composers of that time.

Op. 30, Livre 1

No. 1: 'Les douze Gammes majeures' – *Allegro*

This first piece, presenting 'The twelve major scales' [2], is one of two in Op. 30 where the organisation of the material is perhaps the most interesting feature. In contrast to the scale études in Clementi and Adam, where the scales are separated from one another or follow a strict circle of fifths, which Reicha probably found extremely boring, the twelve transitions here are made irregularly: six of them are mediant via major thirds, five are by fifths in the subdominant direction, and one is by a major second from G to A. The compositional touch is undeniable. The little twist at the end is a charming detail: you sense that the piece could very well end in the dominant, B major, but suddenly the music slips back into E major, the point of departure.

No. 2: 'Les douze Gammes mineures' – *Un poco allegro*

In contrast to the preceding étude, the sequence of 'The twelve minor scales' here is entirely regular [3]. From the start in A minor, every scale follows a fifth down, that is, once again, in the subdominant direction. The walking-bass sections, very Baroque and also reminiscent of the chorale 'Die geharnischter Männer' in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, give the piece a sombre, processional quality. As with several other of the études in Op. 30, the stated object seems less important than one would expect, for only fourteen of the 48 bars contain scales. The last five bars are another Baroque feature, like something that Schumann could have written in one of his Bach-inspired pieces.

No. 3: 'Gamme chromatique' – *Allegro*

A *perpetuum mobile* piece, like a toccata, Bach but not Bach [4]. Since there is only one chromatic scale in the western harmonic system, any transition between scales is impossible. In the preface, Reicha gives a 'new type of chromatic scale' and its mirror. Neither actually appears in this étude, but they are, interestingly enough, identical with some of those used by Chopin in Nos. 4 and 12 of his *Études*, Op. 10.

No. 4: 'Les Cadences' – *Allegretto*

The term *cadence* could, in Reicha's time, mean not only 'cadence' but also 'trill'. Here, though, the trills are anything but the main feature, occurring only on the descending five-note scale-like figure at the beginning, and returning three times [5]. More interesting is Reicha's use of double counterpoint, that is, shifting the relation between the two basic voices, adding a third voice, making the sequences similar but never quite identical and, at the same time, never leaving C major, except for bars 9–18 out of the total of 64. It is another example of Reicha's ingenuity in making simple and constricted material sound new and fresh, a kind of mixture of late Mozartian chromaticism with the tightness of a Beethoven bagatelle, and yet still very much Reicha.

No. 5: 'Les Agrémens' – *Largo*

Agrémens – in modern French *agréments* – means 'ornaments'. Few commentators have noted the deep thoughtfulness that recurs in Reicha's music. It is not confined to the piano music but is perhaps most conspicuous in it, partly due to the abundant use of

pauses and breaks between sections, short phrases, a 'stop-and-go' technique, sometimes very slow tempi and subdued expression, which now and then can produce a degree of calm or even a standstill without any sense of direction. There are several pieces in Op. 30 where this approach is manifest, No. 5 [6] being of them. The tempo is extremely slow, as is the simple harmonic progression. Many figures are repeated several times, to the point where the music is almost minimalist. The ending is another example of the Baroque filtered through Romanticism (Schumann *ante diem*, once again), although the long appoggiatura in the last bar sounds very classically Viennese.

No. 6, 'Les Accords brisés'

Another 'minimalist' piece, and hardly a piece in a more traditional sense. Apart from the completely different ending, it consists wholly of four-note broken chords, which could go on and on [7]. That Reicha has included it as a piece, and not simply as a short example in the preface, reveals something about his ambition in this work. The most conspicuous and interesting feature is the organisation of the chord progressions. Every sequence consists of three different chords, none of which is in root position. The first two chords have the same bass note, an A in an F dominant-seventh chord, followed by a B flat for the third chord. Thus the bass line ascends in half-tone steps but the sequences themselves in whole tones: F–G–A–B natural–C sharp–D sharp (E flat)–F. The harmonic process finally reaches F major again. It is followed by triads of B flat minor, a chord that has not been heard before. There is a sense now that the piece might end as it started, in F, but Reicha makes a direct leap from B flat minor to a powerful and unambiguous ending in F sharp major. It is quite revolutionary, and the final bars sound even more like the ending of a song by Schumann.

No. 7: 'Les Tierces' – *Allegro moderato*

This playful, jolly piece [8] is characterised by a simple harmonic structure, like Nos. 3 and 4, with lots of runs in thirds, interrupted by a section in C minor that is almost completely devoid of thirds. Just before the C minor section, there are two bars with thirds descending by thirds in an interchange of the two hands. One finds practically the same thing in two bars of 'Les Tierces' in Debussy's *Études*. Debussy

would not have known anything about Reicha's piano music, but this comparison shows how the material in itself can create connections despite a gap of more than a hundred years.

No. 8: 'Les Clefs' – *Larghetto*

A simple but charming piece 9 that seems to be a little 'paraphrase' on Bach's famous C major prelude in *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*, Book 1. The title refers to the use of different clefs: every note in the gentle quavers in the right hand is notated with alternating soprano, alto and tenor clefs. It looks extremely strange on paper but, as the music is quite simple and the changes are regular, it is much easier than one might think. (The preface to the publication contains a version in normal notation.)

No. 9: 'Les Octaves' – *Allegro*

Another Bach-inspired piece and with a rather Baroque texture in general 10. One possible model is the E flat major prelude in *Das wohltemperierte Klavier*, Book 1: fast notes projected against voices in minims and crotchets imitating each other. What makes it even more special is its dark, brooding character, the hesitant bars, the silences, and the slow, sombre ending, all creating a sense of the archaic Baroque style to be found in some of Clementi's endings in his *Gradus ad Parnassum*, or in pieces by Mendelssohn or, again, by Schumann – the slow movement of his 'Rhenish' Symphony, for example.

No. 10: 'L'Enharmonique' – *Andante sostenuto*

An example in Reicha's preface shows how to write the same chord in various ways depending on the harmonic context, although the broken chords there seem more suitable for a study like No. 6. In No. 10, by contrast, Reicha's purpose is entirely different 11: the right hand is written in G flat major and the left hand in F sharp major, those being one and the same key on a keyboard instrument. There is also a simplified version in F major. The piece is another 'bagatelle', unassuming but quite beautiful in its simplicity.

Op. 30, Livre 2

No. 1: *Adagio molto et sostenuto*

This piece [12] could be suitable as the slow movement of a sonata, but with a twist characteristic of Reicha. It has a fantasy-like quality in its irregularity and open form. Equally, there is something of a slow-motion rondo to it, for the opening bars sound as if they could follow on again without a break or as if they were constantly in the background. The long middle section, starting with a C minor outburst, is essentially a harmonic sequence based on falling major and minor thirds in alternation, starting with A flat major and ending in C flat major.

No. 2: *Allegro poco vivace*

Of all the Op. 30 *Études*, this one [13], good-humoured and full of playfulness, is perhaps the closest to Haydn, although there is no mistaking Reicha's spirit in the middle section and in the *adagio* passage that functions as a fantasy-like bridge leading back to the main theme.

No. 3: *Andante un poco adagio*

The third *Étude* in Book 2 is essentially an exercise in modulation but with an unconventional harmonic pattern [14]. The sequence goes in a subdominant direction with occasional and sudden mediant steps. It is a lyrical piece held together by a motif of three repeated chords. Even though it starts and ends in D major, all the harmonic changes make it impossible to say what the main key is: this music is somehow and somewhere on the path to early Schubert.

No. 4: 'Mesure composée' – *Allegro un poco vivace*

At the beginning of Book 2, there are a couple of explanatory notes. The first deals with the notion of combined metres (*mesures composées*). Reicha explains the background to this bold idea and defends it against its adversaries, as well as mentioning his *Douze fugues* (1799–1800), one of which is in $\frac{5}{8}$. This piece, too, is in $\frac{5}{8}$ and the pattern of 3+2 is retained throughout [15]. It is a kind of rondo, but with many original details, not least the harmonically extraordinary introduction before the main theme, which is in G major. This introduction is repeated in transposition before the next entrance of the theme,

now in C major. After an imitative section and a bridge of fast-running notes, the theme returns for the last time, here extended by several bars, as if it had not been heard in its full length until now. The piece is naïve and rustic, matching Reicha's description of combined metres as being derived from folk-music.

No. 5: *Andante*

This piece is another that might serve as the slow movement of a sonata 16. The form involves an interchange, with bridge passages, of the opening main theme, in E flat major, and a subsidiary theme, heard twice, first in F major and then in the tonic. The piece finishes with a shortened version of the initial theme. The melodic gestures and gentle character are quite typical of many of Reicha's slow pieces.

No. 6: *Allegretto*

As with No. 4 of Book 1, 'Les Cadences', this piece shows Reicha's interest in using a few bars as a sort of *cantus firmus*, like a skeleton, to which he adds other voices in different combinations 17. (One finds this technique in many of Reicha's chamber works.) As the piece is short and the presentations of the theme are connected via interludes, one cannot really call it a chaconne or a passacaglia, but it comes close to that style. The interludes share the same material, but four of them, all starting in G major, go to cadences in different keys: B minor, D major, E minor and G major – a technique much used by Berlioz, who was, of course, one of Reicha's pupils. The bars where both hands play the same repetitive rhythm are especially interesting. The dissonances sound like something a French Baroque composer, such as Rameau, might have written but also like a Baroque pastiche, as in Grieg's *Holberg Suite*.

No. 7: 'Harmonie' – *Un poco largo*

The 'theme' in this extremely short variation set 18 is not a melody, nor a bass line, but the opening harmonic sequence itself, consisting of eighteen bars. The two variations, or *fantaisies*, do not adhere exactly to this sequence and also have a bigger number of bars, 24 and 25, which has the effect of making the variations sound slower than the theme. The principle, then, is that melody and rhythm are variable, but not harmony. The same sort of structure, with six *fantaisies*, is found in No. 20, 'Harmonie', of Reicha's

keyboard collection *Practische Beispiele* from around 1803. The work here, in Op. 30, has something of the ornamental and broad character of some of Haydn's and Beethoven's slow movements, but its serene stillness, especially in the second variation, marks it out as typically Reichan, if I may coin that term.

No. 8: *Allegro*

Like No. 3 in Book 1, this piece is a *perpetuum mobile* and a technical exercise in the fast shifting of positions of the hands, and it is the only piece in the whole collection where there are fingerings, although for no more than a few bars 19. It shows the influence of some of Scarlatti's most technically demanding sonatas. It might seem surprising that Reicha should write such a piece: many composers of virtuoso piano music at that time had made their name by performing their own works in public, but Reicha, of course, did not follow that path. The harmonic language of this piece is bold, as when broken chords in D major are immediately followed by ones in A flat major, that is, at the tritone. Particularly striking are the last nine bars. The piece is in common time, but here the left hand, playing only the note C, at three levels over two octaves, has a repeated pattern of six semiquavers, thus creating a counter-pulse to the right hand, which remains in $\frac{4}{4}$, and those nine bars in the right hand are full of dissonances.

No. 9: Fugue – *Allegro moderato*

This fugue 20 was later included as No. 11 in the collection *Trente-six fugues*, first published in 1804. Apart from showing the strong influence of Bach, it also displays Reicha's interest in creating a 'new' type of fugue. In some other of the 36 Fugues, the novelty comes from unorthodox harmonic patterns caused by unusual entries of the voices, or themes that might be considered 'unsuitable' for a fugue, or from mixing the contrapuntal with the homophonic. Here, though, Reicha is more interested in developing a kind of 'phrased' fugue: the flow of semiquavers is twice interrupted by interludes devoted to the main subject of the fugue, in contrast to traditional Baroque practice and pointing towards Beethoven's later works and beyond. The second of these interludes, with its dramatic sequences and chromatic boldness, foreshadows Liszt, as in his piano work *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen* (1852), which happens to be based on

Bach (on a *basso continuo* theme in the cantata of that name and the 'Crucifixus' theme from the Mass in B minor).

No. 10: *Adagio molto*

One of the most extraordinary of Reicha's many short pieces in design, structure, character and harmonic vocabulary, this work has no equivalent among other composers [21]. The character is sombre, subdued, almost lugubrious in a Lisztian way, the harmonic language somewhere between Bach and Berlioz, the tempo extremely slow and the design utterly original for the period. It is written on two pairs of staves, the top pair labelled *Droite* (right hand) and the bottom pair *Gauche* (left hand). Furthermore, while the top stave remains in the treble clef and the bottom one in the bass clef, the middle staves change, the higher one alternating between alto and treble and the lower one between tenor and bass. To complicate matters even more, there is a section of ten bars where the left hand starts with a single voice and then, by imitation, increases it to four, following which the right hand does the same thing, thus producing a passage in eight voices. The first section of the piece, with its ornamented melodic gestures, has an ingenious harmonic pattern: the bass line falls in small steps but, when some notes are repeated, the harmony is changed, so that the bass notes are in ever new positions in relation to the chord. This technique would become one of Berlioz's hallmarks, and this passage is reminiscent of the introduction in the slow section of *La mort de Cléopâtre*. Though clearly divided into different sections, the piece has as its unifying trait the semitone appoggiatura. It is one of several pieces by Reicha without any dynamic or driving force. It is more like something turning around itself, moving but yet motionless. Reicha's only comment is that it is good for pianists who want to get used to reading several staves and several clefs as a preparation for reading scores!

Fantaisie sur un thème de Girolamo Frescobaldi

Another strange and in every aspect utterly personal piece, this *Fantaisie sur un thème de Girolamo Frescobaldi* [22] existed only in manuscript (Ms 12062 in the Bibliothèque nationale de France) until very recently; happily, there is now an edition in modern

notation.[1] On the title page there is a dedication to 'citoyen Lachnith', most certainly the very same person referred to in Op. 30, also indicating that the piece was composed during Reicha's stay in Paris around the turn of the century. The originality of the piece lies not only in the working out of the idea but also in the very incentive to compose it. In an *avertissement* in the manuscript Reicha writes that Frescobaldi composed 'a very ingenious fugue, in that he continually repeats its theme in the upper part. [...] There is much to be gained from this really ingenious idea of his, even for music for the theatre'. The appeal to Reicha is clear, as in many of his own pieces he keeps one aspect the same while changing everything else. Following his *avertissement*, Reicha writes out Frescobaldi's ricercar, adding the words s*egue fantaisie*, to imply that in a performance his own work might be played immediately after Frescobaldi's.

The *Fantaisie* begins with five perfect, that is, triadic chords, the highest notes of which match the title of Frescobaldi's work, *Ricercar decimo sopra la, fa, sol, la, re* ('Ricercar No. 10, on A, F, G, A, D', published in 1615). This type of sequence reappears five times in the first half of the work, always *forte*, at various transpositions. Just before the last one, there is a different type of chordal sequence, played *pianissimo*, which, unlike the others, ends in a minor chord. It is like a Romantic 'echo' from the future, something one might find in Mendelssohn, or even Wagner.

In between the chordal passages, highly characteristic of Reicha and perhaps inspired by French revolutionary music for wind orchestra, are melodies and figuration that are unrelated to Frescobaldi's ricercar. After the adventures in various tonalities, the final 81 of the 186 bars remain in the key-signature of E flat major, a tritone away from the ending of the ricercar and the beginning of the *Fantaisie*. After a long succession of semiquavers in the right hand and a melodic bridge, the main theme returns in a passage that might bring Berlioz to mind: two solitary voices accompanied by fragments of an important earlier semiquaver motif – evocative of the middle section of Berlioz's overture *Les Francs Juges*, for example. Towards the end, the Frescobaldi sequence, but this time in the minor, is repeated twice, *pianissimo*, once in the right hand, then in

[1] Ed. Michael Bulley, Symétrie, Lyons, 2016.

the left, before the final resolution in E flat major brings this extraordinary piece to a conclusion like a serene Amen, in accordance with the origin of the theme.

Henrik Löwenmark was born in Gothenburg and educated at the university there but has long since lived in Stockholm. Since his graduation he has been active as a freelance musician in a multitude of contexts: solo, chamber music, accompaniment and song-coaching, orchestral piano, choir, opera and so on. His interest in Reicha began in the 1980s and in 1999 he started to collect all the piano music that had not been published in modern editions – almost all the extant music. In 2006 he finished his master's thesis, *The Piano Music of Anton Reicha*, at the University of Gothenburg.

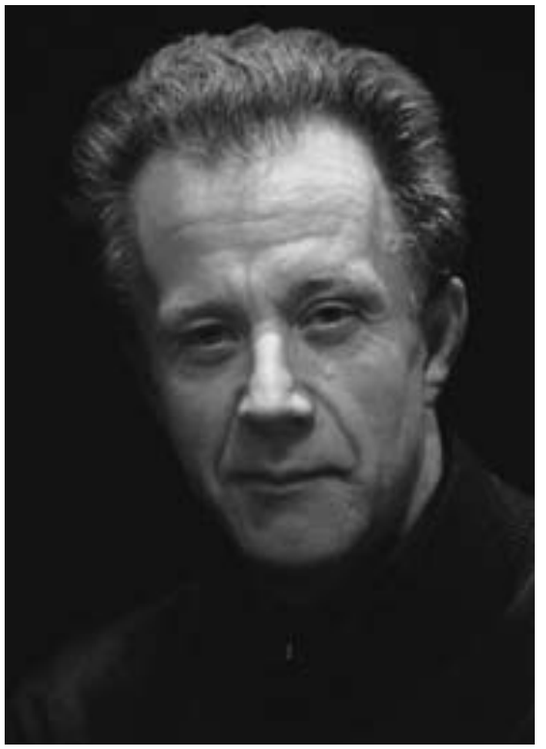

Photo: Emelie Kroon

Recorded on 3 November 2016 and 5 January 2018 in Studio 2, Radiohuset, Östermalm, Stockholm
Piano: Steinway D
Recording engineer: Olle Bolander
Editors: Olle Bolander and Henrik Löwenmark

Booklet essay: Henrik Löwenmark
Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)
Typesetting and lay-out: Kerrypress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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1 ***Rondeau* No. 2 in F major** (c. 1800)	**5:41**
***Études ou Exercices*, Op. 30** (c. 1800)	
Livre 1	**22:24**
2 No. 1, The twelve major scales – *Allegro*	1:40
3 No. 2, The twelve minor scales – *Un poco allegro*	2:23
4 No. 3, Chromatic scale – *Allegro*	1:42
5 No. 4, Trills – *Allegretto*	2:15
6 No. 5, Ornaments – *Largo*	4:19
7 No. 6, Broken chords	1:21
8 No. 7, Thirds – *Allegro moderato*	2:38
9 No. 8, Clefs – *Larghetto*	1:31
10 No. 9, Octaves – *Allegro*	2:44
11 No. 10, Enharmonic – *Andante sostenuto*	1:51
Livre 2	**40:05**
12 No. 1, *Adagio molto et sostenuto*	6:54
13 No. 2, *Allegro poco vivace*	4:13
14 No. 3, *Andante un poco adagio*	2:14
15 No. 4, Combined metre – *Allegro un poco vivace*	3:35
16 No. 5, *Andante*	4:54
17 No. 6, *Allegretto*	2:20
18 No. 7, Harmony – *Un poco largo*	4:54
19 No. 8, *Allegro*	1:18
20 No. 9, Fugue – *Allegro moderato*	4:31
21 No. 10, *Adagio molto*	5:12
22 ***Fantaisie sur un thème de Girolamo Frescobaldi*** (c. 1800)	**7:14**

Henrik Löwenmark, piano

TT **75:24**

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