



# August Alexander KLENGEL

## PIANO AND CHAMBER MUSIC

FANTASIE SUR UN THÈME RUSSE, OP. 25

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Trio Klengel

# ALEXANDER AUGUST KLENGEL, A LOST ROMANTIC

by Anna Petrova-Forster

I received Klengel as I would receive few persons in my life; definitely, I love him as if I had known him for thirty years. [...] One always learns a great deal whenever one talks with Klengel.

Fryderyk Chopin<sup>1</sup>

Most musicians and music-lovers, when asked if they have heard of a composer by the name of Klengel, will think (if, indeed, the name rings any bells at all) of Julius Klengel (1859–1933), a composer and cellist who left a large *œuvre* for his instrument. Alexander August Klengel (1783–1852), half-cousin of Julius' paternal grandfather, Moritz Klengel, is remembered only because of a series of 48 Canons and Fugues for piano. Very little is known about his life and compositions. He never married, and it seems that after the death of his younger sister, the painter Emilie Charlotte Klengel (1785–1858), his archive was lost. A single, short biography, written by Rudolf Jäger and<sup>2</sup> published in 1927,<sup>2</sup> constitutes the entire Klengel bibliography. In Klengel's works one can trace the gradual creation of the new musical style and the new ideas of the young generation of musicians in the early nineteenth century.

Born in Dresden, August Alexander Klengel began his music studies early. One of his teachers was Johann Peter Milchmeyer.<sup>3</sup> Klengel was known in Dresden as a child prodigy and, in later life, as one of the best pianists in the city. When Muzio Clementi arrived there in 1803, Klengel became his student. In the same year he

<sup>1</sup> Letter to his parents, Prague, 21 November 1830, published in E. L. Voynich (ed.), *Chopin's Letters*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1931; reprinted by Dover Publications, New York, 1988, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Jäger, *August Alexander Klengel und seine 'Kanons und Fugen'*, M. & C. Brückmann, Hamburg, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Milchmeyer (1750–1813) was active as a piano- and harp-teacher in Paris, Mainz and Dresden. He wrote the treatise *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen*, published in Dresden in 1797.

accompanied his teacher first to Prague, where he befriended the Czech composer and music-teacher Jan Václav Tomášek (1774–1850), and then to Vienna. Here he made the acquaintance of Friedrich Wilhelm Kalkbrenner (1785–1849), and they both took part in a concert with a concerto for two pianos in C major of ‘their own composition.’<sup>4</sup> How he met Beethoven can be learned from a story told by Ferdinand Ries:

When Clementi came to Vienna, Beethoven wanted to call on him at once; his brother, however, put it into his head that Clementi had to visit him first. Clementi, despite the fact that he was much older, would probably have done this anyway, if some gossip about it had not arisen. So it came about that Clementi was in Vienna for a long time without knowing Beethoven other than by sight. We frequently ate lunch at the same table in the Swan, Clementi with his pupil Klengel and Beethoven with me. Everyone knew who everyone was, but no one spoke with each other or even nodded a greeting. The two pupils had to imitate their masters, because presumably each one risked losing his lessons otherwise. I certainly would have suffered that, since with Beethoven compromises were never possible.<sup>5</sup>

In 1804 one finds Clementi and Klengel in Zurich, where they were expected by the Swiss publisher Hans Georg Nägeli (1773–1836), who wished to do business with Clementi. In one of his letters Klengel mentions that his own Sonatas, Op. 1, are to be published by Nägeli, but they could not be found in Nägeli’s archive in Zurich, and so that may have remained an unfinished project. Back in Berlin, Clementi married his first wife, Caroline, and departed with her for Italy in autumn of the same year. After the couple returned to Berlin in 1805, Caroline died giving birth to a son. In September 1805 Clementi and Klengel, together with another pupil, Ludwig Berger,<sup>6</sup> began a journey to Russia. A manufacturer of pianos as well as a composer, Clementi wished to refresh his

<sup>4</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 1804, No. 37, 13 June, p. 621.

<sup>5</sup> Franz Gerhard Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven*, Bädeker, Coblenz, 1838, p. 101; translated by Frederick Noonan in *Remembering Beethoven: The Biographical Notes of Franz Wegeler und Ferdinand Ries*, Great Ocean Publishers, Arlington (VA), 1987/André Deutsch, London, 1988, pp. 88–89.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Ludwig Heinrich Berger (18 April 1777–16 February 1839) was a German pianist and composer, and the teacher of Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, Wilhelm Taubert and many other German musicians.

contacts with Russian music-lovers and to reinforce his business connections: his rival in piano-manufacture, John Broadwood, had already discovered the huge possibilities in Russia, and Clementi did not wish to miss such an opportunity, either. He hoped that John Field, also his pupil, who had gone to live in Russia in 1804 (although still sending Clementi his compositions for publication), would work as his agent in St Petersburg, but that plan came to nothing, and Clementi wrote to his partner Collard, complaining that Field was 'a lazy dog'.<sup>7</sup> In June 1806 Clementi wrote to Collard from St Petersburg:

The 2 pupils I took with me from Berlin have met with much success in this country; & I have advised them to make hay while the sun shines. Therefore they stay. I have procured them plenty of scholars, & as they will now and then want instruments to sell, I have persuaded them to send for ours on their own account; & to encourage them I have promised to furnish them for 50.00 £ each grand (good plain mahogany). Their names are Klengel and Berger; 2 very honest industrious young men as ever lived. They make it a joint concern to avoid all disputes.<sup>8</sup>

Very little is known about Klengel's stay in Russia. Only two letters of this period have been preserved, both sent to the publisher Härtel. In the first, from July 1806, Klengel assumes that he will not have the time to compose because he has too many pupils (over twenty), and in the other, from July 1809, he declines Härtel's offer to act as a correspondent for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, explaining that he has too much to do. He also writes that he has composed different piano pieces and a piano concerto but, as the local engraving is too bad, he hopes to see them printed by Härtel. This statement notwithstanding, Klengel did publish at least three works in St Petersburg: in 1809 a *Sérénade pour le pianoforte*, and in 1811 a *Rondeau pour le Piano-Forte* and a *Polonoise* arranged from an opera of Méhul. He was much in demand as a pianist, and a frequent guest in the musical salons of the city. Here, too, he met a friend of the family, the painter Vogel von Vogelstein, a pupil of his father, who spent some years in Russia.

<sup>7</sup> David Rowland (ed), *The Correspondence of Muzio Clementi*, Ut Orpheus, Bologna, 2010, p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Thanks to Vogelstein there are two portraits of Klengel (one of which is on the cover of this recording), as well as a portrait of Klengel's father.

Klengel left Russia at some point in 1811, probably at the same time as Berger. While Berger went, via Stockholm, to London, where Clementi had meanwhile settled down, and looked after him there, Klengel decided to go to Paris. He spent one-and-a-half years in France before travelling to Milan and Rome, where he gave concerts. Klengel may have been one of the first musicians to play music by Bach in public: as early as 1814 he gave a concert in Milan, which included some preludes and fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Bach played an important role in Klengel's life. For years he insisted that Härtel should begin to publish Bach's works, and he later became the editor of Härtel's edition of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Klengel was also among the first to be interested in the metronome in Germany.

Back in Dresden in 1814, he spent some time with his family, but in autumn 1815 he departed for London, intending to stay there for some time. Here he was among the musician friends he had known for a long time, people like Clementi, Kalkbrenner, Ries and Johann Baptist Cramer. Yet no matter how strong his desire to live as a travelling pianist, he had to return to Dresden because of the failing health of his parents. From 1 February 1817 Klengel (although a Protestant) was appointed as Hoforganist at the Catholic Hofkirche in Dresden. Klengel's mother died in 1818; six years later, his father died. Moreover, Klengel's job required his presence for only six months of the year; for the other six he was free. In the next years he visited Paris, Brussels and Vienna on several occasions, travelling also to Italy. In Germany he took part in a number of concerts and was hailed as 'one of the greatest piano-players and the most outstanding composers for this instrument in Germany.'<sup>9</sup> For many years, he was active as a teacher, but once again there is very little information about this last part of his life.

In 1837 the poet and music-critic Ludwig Rellstab (1799–1860), a pupil of Klengel's old friend Ludwig Berger, wrote in the *Gazette musicale*:

<sup>9</sup> Anon., *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Vol. 18, No. 9, 28 February 1816, p. 139.

Above all, I must name a man who will be known only to a small number because the old musicians may have forgotten him, while the younger ones have never heard of him: it is A. Klengel. [...] He was handsome, as the artist is easily imagined, and as he is seldom: with fine and almost Italian features, slender and graceful waist, black and romantic eyes. Such an artist generally is adored, especially by the beautiful ones. He exhausts, to the dregs, the cup of earthly joys, and often enjoys goods more precious than those which are reserved for princes. Such could have been the destiny of Klengel. Did he feel the disgust of satiety? [...] In short, he left the agitation of the big world to become an anchorite in Dresden [...]. Who cares for him? And yet he was once famous, and today deserves to be more than ever. [...]

He has written a series of fugues, in which are found, according to the most enlightened judges (like Bernard Klein, for example), a much more stronger work and more skilful combinations than in those of Sebastian Bach, and these fugues unite, which is the most important in terms of art, a noble invention and beautiful effects to this learned science. And who knows this work? No one. Who knows the master who created it? Almost nobody. He is forgotten amidst the tumult of the contemporary world. I myself was in Dresden a few weeks ago, and I did not think of Klengel; I do not even know if he is still alive.<sup>10</sup>

Rellstab was not quite right. In musical circles, Klengel was not forgotten, despite his withdrawal from an active social life. He corresponded with many of his colleagues (François-Joseph Fétis, for example), and his name can be found in Schumann's journal in 1840. Klengel was also known as one of the best of pedagogues. When asked for advice in 1841, Felix Mendelsohn wrote

that I have to regard him [Klengel] as one of the best teachers I know, that I would wish anybody lucky enough to enjoy his lessons from the beginning. Nor do I think it possible that his aversion to teaching, especially in such a case, would be insuperable. [...] If you should decide that your son will come to Dresden, I would have to recommend by deep conviction lessons with Klengel and no one else.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 1837, No. 49, 3 December, p. 527.

<sup>11</sup> Helmut Loos, Wilhelm Seidel, Susanne Tomkovic, Christoph Koop and Sebastian Schmidler (eds.), *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Sämtliche Briefe*, Volume 8, März 1841 bis August 1842, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2013, p. 135.

Klengel's set of 48 canons and fugues, composed in obvious honour of J. S. Bach, have obscured all the other piano works he wrote: several sonatas, two piano concertos (No. 1, Op. 4, and No. 2, Op. 29<sup>12</sup>) as well as one for two pianos (performed with Ignaz Moscheles on 28 December 1816 in Dresden), fantasies, variations, nocturnes, rondos, polonaises and romances – all now completely forgotten. William Newman, in a chapter on early Romantics in and around Dresden, in *The Sonata after Beethoven*, the third volume of his magisterial survey of the history of the sonata, offers this assessment of Klengel's Opp. 2 and 9: 'the weak ideas, dull accompaniments, and lack of any compelling sense of form do not suggest that master nor explain the respect in which he was held by his young friend Chopin'.<sup>13</sup> But why should Newman assume a link between the first works of a young composer and the friendship that would connect him with Chopin at least twenty years later? The three sonatas of Op. 2 are undoubtedly still Classical, and yet Klengel not only experimented with form (the first one has three movements; the second, two; and the third, four), but he had original ideas for the accompaniment: one rarely finds him relying on the so-called 'Alberti bass'. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* dedicated only a few lines to Klengel, written by Joel Sachs: 'Musically conservative, Klengel eschewed the contemporary trends of brilliance and emotionalism, favoring the classical clarity of his teacher's generation'. Yet Klengel's works do not only contain Romantic elements – some of them are indeed early-Romantic works.

Klengel's *Divertissement*, Op. 6 (containing a Polonaise, the Romance recorded here 1 and a Rondeau), went through at least three editions during his lifetime: one in France (1813), one from Peters in Germany and another from Ricordi in Italy. The *Romance* in A major, written into the album of 22-year-old Maria Szymanowska,<sup>14</sup> is dated 9 July 1811,

<sup>12</sup> It appears that Peters published the Second Concerto also as Op. 15, as is revealed by the catalogue description of the manuscript in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. In the *Sankt Peterburgskie Vedomosti* in 1823 it was announced as a *Sonate pour le piano avec accompagnement de grand orchestre op. 15*. Peters also published Klengel's *La Gavotte de Vestris variée* as Op. 15.

<sup>13</sup> William S. Newman, *The Sonata since Beethoven*, Norton, New York, 1972, p. 279.

<sup>14</sup> Maria Szymanowska (1789–1831) was a Polish composer and one of the first professional women virtuoso pianists. She toured throughout Europe before settling definitively in St Petersburg in 1827. She composed piano pieces, songs and some small chamber works. One of her daughters married the poet Adam Mickiewicz, but she is not thought to have been related to Karol Szymanowski.

Warsaw. The title itself is already Romantic. The movement of the left hand, first in quavers, then passing to semiquavers, reminds one of the left hand in John Field's *Nocturnes*.

Since Szymanowska did not herself compose concertos, she often played Klengel's works with orchestra: the piano concertos and the *Polonaise* for piano and orchestra, Op. 35, which is dedicated to her.

Klengel's 6 *Nocturnes*, Op. 23, are probably the first Nocturnes composed after those of Field (the first of Field's *Nocturnes* were published also as *Romances*) and were written about 1818. But these are not short lyrical pieces: the character is more dramatic, as in *Nocturne* No. 5 in F minor [7]. In 1820 the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* commented:

The name Nocturnes probably leads one to expect something else than one receives; something else and something more trifling. One receives in fact six serious, diligently worked out, rather long movements, after the manner of great Exercises.<sup>15</sup>

The critic of *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*, based in London, found that:

We do not know when we have received more satisfaction than in the perusal of these pieces. They are the production of a glowing, yet cultivated imagination, rich in science as well as fine taste. They present a constant flow of beautiful melody, are full of harmony and agreeable modulation. [...] We have seldom, in modern music, met with such full and expressive basses as these six Notturnos display. [...] Although his modulations are frequent, they never distress or disturb the ear. In the midst of the most scientific progressions the same gracefulness of melody and expression is observable as in the simplest combinations of harmony.<sup>16</sup>

The three *Romances sentimentales de caractère mélancolique, passionné et calme*, Op. 34 [3]–[5], had many editions in Germany and Italy. The *Romances* could also be called songs without words, having a stylistic affinity with Mendelssohn's music, and are truly early-Romantic pieces. Even the tempo indications of the first and third suggest a

<sup>15</sup> Issue of 17 May 1820, col. 367, quoted in Jeffrey Kallberg, "'Voice' and the Nocturne", in Jane Gottlieb (ed.), *Pianist, Scholar, Connoisseur: Essays in Honor of Jacob Lateiner*, Pendragon Press, Hillsdale (NY), 2000, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*, Vol. IV, 1822, pp. 116–17.

Romantic mood: *Andante melancolico* and *Larghetto amoroso e passionato*. The tonality of the third *Romance*, D flat major, is also rather usual for the early-Romantic period.

Like most of the foreign musicians who lived in Russia or visited the country, Klengel used themes based on Russian folksong. He wrote two *Fantaisies*, Op. 23 and 25, and a set of Variations, Op. 11, on Russian themes. The *Fantaisie sur un thème russe*, Op. 25, in A minor [2], is a good example of how he combines polyphonic thinking with Romantic techniques. The *Fantaisie* is dedicated to the Comtesse Elise de Worontzoff, née Comtesse Branicka (1792–1880), and must have been written in 1821–22, when the Worontzoffs were visiting western Europe after their marriage in 1819. As in many other Klengel's works, the *Fantaisie* would probably have been qualified by his contemporaries as 'difficult even for very experienced piano players'.<sup>17</sup> Klengel is responsive to the features of the Russian melody, interestingly alternating major and minor tonalities. The use of many different pianistic techniques like chords, trills, octaves and scale passages indicate the richness of his compositional fantasy and his own pianistic abilities

The *Air suisse avec variations pour pianoforte et violon (ou clarinette)*, Op. 32, in B flat major [6], is dedicated to Victoire Niesiotowska, née Princesse Radziwill. Without any doubt, the emphasis in this work is in the piano part, but these variations remain light and graceful.

The *Grand Trio Concertant* in C minor, Op. 36, in four movements, was composed in 1824 and dedicated to Baron Charles de Bock. The anonymous critic of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* wrote:

This composition of M. Klengel, a respected and rigorous pupil of Clementi, is certainly one of the most excellent among the works he has delivered to us until now. Among the compositions which have become well-known, the reviewer may give it first place; the invention and the art of elaboration are not inferior to other works and a certain expression makes it even better than the other, at least for the reviewer.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 28 February 1816, No. 9, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 14 October 1824, No. 42, p. 684.

Like many sonata-form works of the period, the expansive first movement [8] begins with a slow introduction, marked *Largo*, before breaking into a spirited *Allegro non troppo ma con fuoco*. The second movement, an *Andante con moto* in E flat major [9], featuring an expressive, singing dialogue between the violin and the cello, with discreet piano accompaniment in the background, is followed by a sparkling Scherzo with a flowing trio [10]. The opening of the finale, *Molto Allegro* [11], presents the theme on the piano before it is picked up by the two stringed instruments and developed through the course of the movement until the lively *Presto* coda.

The Trio was Klengel's last work before he gave his undivided attention to the 48 Canons and Fugues. It is difficult to say whether this shift in his interest, this fascination with polyphony, arose from his position as an organist or whether it was a natural development of his preferences, but although it is curious that at the same time, his near-contemporary, the French composer Alexandre Boëly (1785–1858), took the same path.<sup>19</sup>

On 22 November 1852 August Alexander Klengel died from tuberculosis. The two volumes of Canons and Fugues on which he spent over 25 years of his life were published by Breitkopf und Härtel, only in 1855,<sup>20</sup> three years after his death, thanks to the efforts of his musician friend Moritz Hauptmann (1792–1868).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Boëly's early compositions, such as the *Trente Caprices ou Pièces d'étude pour le piano*, Op. 2, or the *Études*, Op. 6, show many Romantic features. The *Caprices*, although published in 1816, were written much earlier, many of them indicating the path taken later by the Romantic composers like Schumann. The *Études*, published in 1830, were composed in the 1820s. Over the years Boëly's preferences turned to the music of Bach, Couperin and Handel. He, too, was appointed as an organist, although much later than Klengel: in August 1840, he became the *titulaire* of the organ at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, but his interest in Baroque music caused his dismissal from the position in 1851 because of the 'austerity' of his playing. The Australian pianist Stephanie McCallum recently recorded a first album of Boëly's piano music on Toccata Classics TOCC 0471.

<sup>20</sup> This late appearance was not the publishers' fault: Klengel demanded such a high fee for the Canons and Fugues that no one was able to accept.

<sup>21</sup> There are also 24 canons called *Les Avantcoureurs*, published in 1841, which served as a preparatory study for the Canons and Fugues.



The first Klengel Trio, which was created in 1912 and existed until the Second World War, was composed of Hildegard Klengel (piano), Nora Klengel (violin) and Eva Klengel (cello), all three the daughters of Julius Klengel. The principle task of the **Trio Klengel** founded in 2016 – Keiko Yamaguchi (violin), Stefania Verità (cello) and Anna Petrova-Forster (piano) – is to perform rare and forgotten chamber music. Although Keiko Yamaguchi's repertoire stretches from the Baroque to contemporary music, her preference is to perform chamber music on historical and classical instruments. Stefania Verità, beside her intense concert activities as soloist, in chamber music and in orchestras using modern as well as Baroque cellos, has undertaken projects from jazz to experimental music, and she can be heard in many studio recordings. Anna Petrova-Forster has appeared on radio and television broadcasts as both soloist and chamber musician. Her wish to rediscover the compositions of lesser-known composers from the last has led to recordings of music by such unfamiliar figures as William Baines, Sergei Bortkewicz, Alexander Gretchaninov, Josef Matthias Hauer and Daniel Steibelt.



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