

Work: Leopold Koželuch, *Complete Sonatas for Keyboard, Volumes I and II*
Editor: Christopher Hogwood
Publisher: Bärenreiter 2010.
Reviewed by John Collins

Christopher Hogwood is preparing the first modern collected edition of the keyboard sonatas by Leopold Koželuch (1747-1818), whose works form an important bridge between Haydn and Beethoven. They will run to four volumes and by being ordered by date of publication of the original print, the development of Koželuch's style and transition from clavichord to piano forte may be the more readily appreciated. His sonatas were published in Vienna, Paris and London, and copies were to be found not only in the best libraries throughout Europe but also in the USA and Benares. Although William Newman mentions some 100 sonatas for keyboard solo in his *History of the Sonata* vol 2, Christopher Hogwood has revised the figure substantially downwards to 50.

Volume I contains 12 from op. 1 to op. 10, with Volume II a further 12 from op. 13 to op. 20. Most are in three movements in the traditional order of fast-slow-fast or medium,

(although *Allegro* is sometimes qualified by *moderato*, and *allegretto* warns about too fast a tempo; other qualifiers include *molto* and *maestoso*) no. 6 in C Minor opens with a *Largo* that leads into a *poco presto*, finishing with an *Allegretto* in C Major, no. 7 has a *Menuetto* as its middle movement. Sonata 16 opens with a *Largo* that leads into an *Allegro molto* before a recapitulation of the opening of the *Largo*, followed a *Rondeau* with a written-out cadenza. No. 18 in A-Flat opens with a pastoral-like *Andante con variazioni*, followed by an *Allegro molto*, no. 19 opens with a *Largo* that leads into an *Allegro agitato*, closing with a *Finale-allegretto* (each movement in F Minor). No. 21 is in two fast movements only. The *Rondeau* as a closing movement is very popular occurring in no fewer than 13 sonatas, frequently marked *Presto* or even, in no. 7, *Prestissimo* – frequently a central section is specifically marked *minore* to indicate the treatment in the minor. Only five of the 24 published here are in minor keys and only in no. 5 is there a middle movement in the minor. Alternative final movements are given for sonatas 9 and 10 – the former has a different *Rondo* (note spelling!) and the latter an *Aria con Variatione* in place of the *Menuetto & Trio*.

The sonatas are generally spacious in each movement with much apparent graceful and natural ease of composition, the slow movements in particular being full of beautiful long-spun, lyrical, tender melodic lines. Texture ranges from thin two-part to full chordal writing. The small number in minor keys do have a greater sense of "Sturm und Drang" in their tragic lines, substantially anticipating both Beethoven and Schubert in the slow opening movements. Thought there are plenty of fiery passages these lack the deep sense of surprise and drama found in C.P.E. Bach. Throughout the sonatas there are few merely showy passages that seem to be written to illustrate technical requirements from the player in the manner of the later étude. Also interesting is the use of quintuplets, whether as semiquaver groups in the first movement of Sonata 11 as a demi-semiquaver motif that pervades the opening movement of Sonata 12. Overall they reflect an individual approach not dependent on previous models, and cover a wide range of expression from fiery passagework to expressive charm. The player today must convey the subtlety contained within the writing. There is extensive use of Mürky bass, but Alberti patterns occur only rarely.

The printing is clear and well laid-out and there is a full critical commentary collating the textual variants from both printed and

manuscript copies, explaining why the versions in this edition are composite. This makes for interesting reading and shows how complex the editing and presentation must have been. The introduction contains an appraisal of Koželuch's sonatas as seen by his contemporaries and later commentators, a detailed discussion of the original printed sources (no manuscripts appear to have survived) and the criteria for inclusion, and helpful information on the interpretation of ornaments as well as the inconsistency between dot and dash in the engravings. An impressively long list of libraries and institutions whose holdings were consulted, and also of individuals who assisted in this project, are also included.

A few of these attractive sonatas will require a well-developed technique to do them justice, especially the many passages in octaves for the left hand. The semiquaver alternations of thirds in the first movement of no. 12 are challenging. In addition, the *Aria* concluding Sonata 11 uses the left hand thumb as a pivot while crossing the 1st finger over up to a fifth, which will sorely test small hand. However, as the composer himself wrote, the majority are "pas difficile" and do indeed require a more modest attainment with much of the fast passagework sounding most impressive to the listener but falling very happily and naturally beneath the fingers. This is less difficult than the considerably more formidable demands of Dussek or Cramer; all will handsomely reward the player for the time spent on them, and fully deserve to be regarded as heard in recitals as more than just lesser examples of the Classical period. Furnished with a relatively sparing use of dynamics, most movements will succeed on the harpsichord but the fortepiano will do them major justice. A thematic index to each of the four volumes is also included.

Each volume contains some 180 pages of music, making them real value for money in these straitened times. Christopher Hogwood has done the composer a real service in making these gems available in such a scholarly yet accessible edition. All of Koželuch's 44 published sonatas appeared in London during his lifetime, attesting to their well-deserved popularity and success in the UK. Today we can make our contribution by playing them and raising these pleasing and practical pieces above "music for the lady dilettantes on the piano".