

The German years

A third position: the King of Prussia's court

Leaving St-Petersburg, Josef Beer went to Prague where he took part in the concert for the coronation of the Emperor Franz II, in July 1792 and where he made a very good impression.¹ On December 21st 1793, Beer received a praising review underlying his extraordinary breath control, a characteristic Fétis mentions with equal enthusiasm: he « possessed the great advantage of being able to regulate his breathing with the greatest ease, so that his countenance had no outward appearance of fatigue while he performed, neither by inflation of the cheeks, nor reddening of the complexion. »²

The reason why Josef Beer left the Empress Catherine II in St-Petersburg, besides perhaps wanting a change in his life, was because he accepted a position at the King of Prussia's court. Little information is known about the first years Beer spent at his new position besides that he travelled a lot for tours, having apparently lots of liberty from his employer. Early in 1799, Beer did a small tour that brought him to Copenhagen where he performed with the horn player from Berlin Jean Brün, and in Hamburg for a concert on February 25th. According to a critic, he had not the same warmth and technique precision as he used to have.³ In the following years, Beer did not travel a lot from Potsdam, or only for short stays in cities around such as Gotha or Weimar.

Although Berlin was provided with great players, criticism towards the small size of the orchestras in concerts were often occurring. A reporter in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of January 1799 complains:

Least of all can I accustom myself here to the fact that with the great number of excellent virtuosos in the royal orchestra - such as Ritter the great bassoonist, those two outstanding cellists, the Deports, and their worthy pupils Hausmann and Gross, the excellent violinists Haak, Möser and Seidler, a fine french horn player in Le Brun and two very good

¹ Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales de la musique...* p.367.

² Fétis, F.J.. *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*. Tome 1. Firmin Didot. 1860. p. 296.

³ Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1971. p. 38.

*clarinetists in Bähr and Tausch - that will all this wealth of virtuosos, no proper concerts on a large scale are given either at court or in the city. To be sure, I have often attended single concert performances by foreigners or by natives of Berlin ... but still, there is seldom anything really complete.*⁴

The real purpose of this quotation (although musical context in Berlin is passionating) is of course the presence of Josef Beer (here written Bähr) in the list of the outstanding players of the city. Berlin musical scene was indeed facing new aesthetics and the institutions were having trouble to be up to date. Beer would obviously have been playing outside the circle of the King's court, for the pleasure of clarinet enthusiasts in Berlin. Moreover, this complain could explain the rather small orchestration in regards to the date (1807) of Beer's last concerto, which is also the only one edited nowadays as Opus 1. Considering Carl Maria von Weber wrote his Concertino in 1811, orchestrated for strings, flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets and timpani, Beer's opus 1 seems somewhat economical.

As surprising as it may sound, another clarinetist active from the 1790s was named Josef Bähr. The latter made himself well-known in the Viennese scene by premiering some of the most important works by Beethoven putting the clarinet upfront. Born in 1770, he was employed already at seventeen-years-old by the Prince Kraft Ernst of Öttingen-Wallerstein in Bavaria. In 1797, the young Bähr changed employer and followed the Count Joseph Liechtenstein to Vienna who was bringing his orchestra to the capital for the warm season. The Liechtenstein family had some connection with Ludwig van Beethoven and the composer met with their new talented clarinetist. Their friendship resulted in many clarinet solos composed for Bähr between 1796 and 1802. Their first public collaboration was on April 6th 1797, when they performed together Beethoven's Quintet op. 16 for winds and piano. Josef Bähr is also responsible for the choice of the theme in the final movement of Beethoven's trio op. 11 for clarinet, cello and piano. The theme taken from Joseph Weigl's opera *L'amour mariano* never pleased Beethoven and he admitted he regretted to have written this third movement he found of « lower taste ». ⁵ Without surprise, modern scholars have for a long time mixed up the two « Beers » and more often amalgamate their two biographies, thinking they were one same person. Happily, this misunderstanding of the sources came to an end in the 1970s, mostly because of the researcher Pamela Weston.

⁴ Ringer, Alexander ed. *The Early Romantic Era; Between Revolutions 1789 and 1848*. Man & Music. 1990. p. 110.

⁵ Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1971. p. 40.

In 1807, the Beer based in Berlin performed in Vienna, where he faced the preference of the Viennese for their own player and received a bitter review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, where it was said « our (Josef) Bär surpasses ‘the Berlin clarinetist Beer’ in the finer manipulation of the instrument ».⁶ He also had the unpleasantness be compared unfavorably to his colleague Wenzel Farník, during performances in Prague in the summers of 1807 and 1808.

Those were not isolated reviews, since one of Beer’s colleague at the Berlin’s court, the horn player Karl Türschmidt, was also more in favor of the younger Bär, as his letter to his friend Ignaz von Beecké shows it:

The gentlemen Witt and Bähr⁷ are here, but they are going away tonight. I must confess that everybody liked them very much so that we were sorry the gentlemen hurry home so soon, Witt’s symphony was liked very much and also Bähr’s blowing, and as we already have a Bähr (Beer) they make a good pair, for our clarinetist is heartily bad, and Witt would be the man who could help us blowers...⁸

Although this last critic found that Beer was not in his greatest shape towards the end of his life, praise have been tremendously enthusiastic after a concert he gave at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on February 16th 1809. Despite his sixty-five years old, it was underlined that his « tone was strong and resonant, but gentle when required, and his finger dexterity was still remarkable as ever. »⁹ Sources say he performed a similar program than in Prague: a clarinet extravaganza mixing one of his own concerto and variations on the *Marche des Samnites*, from Grétry’s opera by the same name, reputed to have been written expressly for him by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Unfortunately, we do not know under which circumstances this could have been commissioned, knowing the lower esteem Mozart had for Beer. The manuscript of this piece, only possessed by Beer, has since disappeared, but one can imagine it could have a strong compositional link with Mozart’s previous eight variations on the same theme for fortepiano (*Les Mariages Samnites* K.

⁶ Weston, Pamela. *Beethoven’s clarinetists*. The Musical Times (Vol. 111, #1534, Dec., 1970). p. 1012.

⁷ Witt was a violin player with whom Josef Bähr developed a friendship. They performed a lot of music Witt wrote for his colleague and toured extensively together.

⁸ Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1971. p. 39.

⁹ Ibidem. p. 38.

352). Pamela Weston states that Josef Beer would have preferred those variations to Mozart's well-known concerto.¹⁰

Beer as a teacher: thriving of the German school of clarinet playing

In Potsdam, where Beer was mainly positioned, was held a school for military music where he was appointed to teach clarinet to young players. A few of his students would deserve to be mentioned, but his best known was indisputably Heinrich Baermann, who had the joy to receive Carl Maria von Weber's clarinet music. At the age of 11, the young Baermann was accepted at the military school in Potsdam (*Hautboisten*¹¹ *schule des Militärwaisenhauses*), where he received his first musical instruction. In 1798, he was accepted at the band of the Second Regiment of Royal Prussian Life Guards, and benefited from eight years of clarinet lessons from the great Josef Beer, « his much venerated instructor »¹². Baermann was rapidly noticed by the Prince Louis Ferdinand who took the clarinetist in his private orchestra in 1804 and complete his formation by sending his *protégé* to Franz Tausch. Although lots of credit in Baermann's formation is given to Franz Tausch, the teacher who built the core of his technique and sound is truly Beer, since he spent the biggest part of his teens as his pupil. As Joseph James Estock points out, « Beer's clarinet playing, his tone, execution, and interpretation, undoubtedly influenced and inspired Baermann and served as a model for the style that this virtuoso developed ».¹³

Franz Wilhelm Tausch was an important colleague of Josef Beer when he was appointed in Germany. Born in Heidelberg in 1762, Tausch grew up at the Mannheim court, having moved there at the age of three after his father received an invitation from prince Karl Theodor to play the clarinet in the orchestra. Influenced by his incredible musical environment, the young Tausch learned the clarinet from the age of 6 with his father. A true virtuoso, he was playing solos in front of the orchestra already two years after. Jacob and Franz Tausch played together in the Mannheim

¹⁰ Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1971. p. 38.

¹¹ Here the use of the word « Hautboisten » designating a military music school reiterates the fact this term « hautboist » at the time indeed meant a military musician playing more than the oboe, since Baermann undertook his clarinet studies with Beer in this school.

¹² Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1971. p. 38.

¹³ Estock, Joseph James. *A biographical dictionary of clarinetists born before 1800*. PhD dissertation. University of Iowa, 1972. p. 57.

court orchestra when Franz was still a child. Father and son are responsible for the famous praise Mozart gave to the clarinets when he heard them during his visit to Mannheim in 1778:

*Oh, if only we also had clarinets! - you cannot imagine the beautiful effect of a symphony with flutes, oboes and clarinets.*¹⁴

When the Elector Carl Theodor and the Mannheim court moved to Munich in 1777 because of the extinction of the Bavarian line, the young Franz Tausch followed the orchestra and took from then on the opportunity to tour more in Germany and Austria.

From 1789, Tausch was invited to join the dowager Queen's private band. Soon after, in 1791, he was asked to replace Josef Beer in the King of Prussia's orchestra when he was away to St-Petersburg to ask for his official leave. When Tausch was released from this obligation in 1792, he started a concert series at the Hotel Paris in Berlin that knew a great success for many years. The dowager Queen and Frederick Wilhelm II both died in 1797 and Frederick Wilhelm III accessed the throne, asking Tausch to join Josef Beer as a clarinet player in his private orchestra. Chances are Beer and Tausch were frequently on stage side by side.

Tausch and Beer performed together many occasions in soloist context, including for the premiere of Peter von Winter's *Concertino for violin, clarinet, basset horn and bassoon* on April 23rd 1802 in Berlin. The performance, given in the garrison church, was directed by Bernhard Anselm Weber and included also Mozart's aria *Non piu fiori* for soprano and basset-horn obbligato. Tausch was playing the basset-horn for the occasion and Beer the clarinet, while their colleagues Möser and Ritter were respectively on the violin and the bassoon. The piece was performed again in 1804, but this time Tausch played the clarinet and his son Frederick Wilhelm the basset-horn. The manuscript parts of the piece were sold by the publisher Traeg in Vienna. Those are lost nowadays and, although it would be tempting to conclude that the now easily accessible *Concertante* by von Winter orchestrated for violin, clarinet, French horn and bassoon would have been in fact the same piece, John P. Newhill conclusions differ. Indeed, he argues that a extraordinary player such as Franz Tausch would not have agreed to perform on the basset-horn a line so simple as the one in the French horn version of the *Concertante*. Moreover, transposing a part for basset-horn to a French horn or vice-versa is not idiomatic at all and would imply lots of awkwardness. As a last argument, Newhill states that the French horn is playing in thirds with the bassoon, while a true basset-horn

¹⁴ Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. Letter to Leopold Mozart December 3, 1778. *Correspondance complète*, edited by Geneviève Geffray. Flammarion. 2011. p. 901.

part would have followed the clarinet by this interval. The conclusion is then that those two pieces, although having a similar orchestration, are two different things and that the basset-horn *Concertante* is lost.¹⁵

As Tausch and Beer played frequently together in Berlin and Potsdam, one can imagine their style of playing were not very far apart and that they blended well together, since one could replace the other with any problem. That would be one more argument in favor of the thought Beer had a German way of playing, putting the reed against the lower lip, at least at that part of his life. (*We will discuss this problematic later in the chapter about Performance Practice*). Tausch's tone was remarkably sweet and possessed all the German characteristics of dynamic qualities, tremendous virtuosity and contrasts. Ernst Ludwig Gerber, in his *Neues Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler* is enthusiastically describing Tausch's playing:

In 1793 I had the opportunity of hearing one of Herr Tausch's favorite quartets with variations at a concert in Paris. What variety in the tonal modifications of the instruments! At one moment it was the soft whispering of the leaves moved by the gentle breath of the zephyrs, at the next moment his instrument raised itself in rolling and brilliant broken passages above all other instruments in which the most dulcet melodies alternate with each other.

Gerber visibly prefers Tausch to another famous virtuoso, Anton Stadler, well-known for his collaboration with Mozart and the wonderful music the latter wrote for him:

And yet, it is truth that when in 1792 he (Stadler) was heard in Berlin, discriminating and impartial listeners asserted that « he does not have the pleasing soft, smooth tone and tasteful execution by which Herr Tausch usually charms his hearers.¹⁶

Tausch is well known for being a pedagogue. He founded the *Conservatorium der Blasinstrumente* in Berlin in 1805 and many talented pupils came to him. Among them, the memorable player and

¹⁵ Newhill, John P. *The Basset-Horn and its Music*. Printed by the author. 1983. p. 63.

¹⁶ Gerber, Ernst Ludwig. *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, Bd 4. Leipzig. 1814. p. 326.

composer Bernhard Crusell, who received the permission to travel to Berlin from Stockholm to benefit from Franz Tausch specialized clarinet teaching. He received instruction from him during seven month in 1798 and played with some of his students in chamber music settings.¹⁷

Franz Tausch composed few works that are regrettably hard to find nowadays, both in manuscript or edited form. He wrote no less than six concertos, including two for two clarinets that are among the most challenging music written for the clarinet, his No.2 including a c''' (one octave over the c over the staff!). This register is rarely pushed to the extreme as much as in this concerto, even in the 19th century. Oskar Kroll could not describe better Tausch's concertos: [they] « are brilliant pieces of composition, full of daring passages and leaps and it is extremely surprising the contemporary clarinetists were able to master them on their technically not as yet very highly developed instruments... Technically, Tausch made greater demands even than Weber and Spoor in their later concertos. »¹⁸

When he died, Franz Tausch was remembered as a player who had « acquired a rare perfection on his instrument and won over the whole audience by his seductive, gentle tone and tasteful execution. »¹⁹

The concertos for two clarinets, or Symphonies concertantes, by Tausch are worth of interest in this present research. While his *Concertante No. 2* Op. 26, dedicated to King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, was composed to be performed with his son Friedrich Wilhelm (1790-1845)²⁰ who was also a clarinetist, the first *Concertante* Op. 27 was written for another player. Published postmortem by his widow in 1818, No. 2 was premiered by the father and the son in 1805, when the young Friedrich Wilhelm Tausch was fifteen. This *Concertante* displays a rather simple second clarinet part intended for an advanced student, more than for a skillful professional. Franz and Friedrich would have been used to play together concertos for two clarinet and it was reported they did

¹⁷ Sacchini, Louis Vincent. *The Concerted Music for the Clarinet in the Nineteenth Century*. Ph. D. dissertation. The University of Iowa. 1983. p. 78-79

¹⁸ Lehto, Gail S. *A selected study of Symphonies concertantes for multiple clarinet soloists, 1770-1850, including works by Stamitz, Devienne, Krommer, Tausch, Müller, Schindelmeisser and Baermann*. DMA document. Ohio State University. 2002. p. 64.

¹⁹ Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, Tausch's obituary, March 19th 1817.

²⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Tausch became, unsurprisingly, an incredible player and replaced his father both at the head of his Conservatory and orchestra when his father died.



Clarinetto Secundo Principale. First page. Concertante no. 1, Franz Tausch. Hummel, Berlin.

Date unknown. Russian State Library. Moscow.

several performances of different works between 1803 and 1812.²¹ Tausch's first *Concertante* is, on the other hand, written for two equally virtuoso players. John P. Newhill guessed that the second part was composed for and played by Josef Beer, which is not impossible at all.²² Beer had admiration for Tausch and they very likely influenced themselves.

According to Peter Clinch, one of the rare specialist of Franz Tausch, the latter was playing with a five-keyed clarinet, because of the avoidance of the low c#. Beer could have

had the same kind of instrument than his colleague. However, since Xavier Lefèvre puts a plate showing a six-keyed clarinet in his method, published in 1802, this is very likely that the key was in use since up to ten-years. It is thus impossible to tell which kind of instrument they both were using.

When looking closely at the second clarinet part in Tausch first *Concertante*, many features Beer was fond of are present. The extensive use of the very low register, along with the never ending alberti basses with moving bass melody are good examples.

²¹ Titus, Robert Austin. *The Solo Music for the Clarinet in the Eighteenth Century*. State University of Iowa. PhD dissertation. 1962.

²² Newhill, John P. *The Bassett-Horn and its Music*. Printed by the author. 1983.

Beer died at the age of sixty-eight years old at his post on October 28th 1812 in Potsdam. He had tasted a fulfilling life of wandering virtuoso, while enjoying the security of court employments.



I discovered three letters Josef Beer wrote in 1807 to his editor Anton Kühnel, about the publication of his concerto. In the first letter, we discover Beer had already been in contact with Kühnel and that they are discussing the publication of a second concerto (probably Opus 1 in this case). Beer is worried, because since the editor received the music, Napoleonic wars have been declared and the social climate has widely changed. Pretexting the war, the editor doesn't want to pay the promised fee to Beer. The musician is insulted, saying that a contract is a contract and when the fee was chosen, there was no war so it should be respected as is. Beer thinks that he could have received a higher fee from other publishers and ask, since he has not received any payment for month, to have his concerto sent back as soon as possible.

One of most challenging aspect in researching Josef Beer, is the fact his name is spelled in so different ways, depending on the time, the country, the city, the editor, etc... One can find his name with diverse orthography: Beer, Baer, Bähr, Bhère, Pär. The end of the first letter is of great interest, because it sheds light on a part of this problematic. Beer explains that the orthography « Bähr » should be used in the musical and professional occasions, but « Beer » is reserved for family and personal matters. He however concludes that this it is alright if it is mixed up.

The letters can be clues about Beer's personality. He is aware of his worth and wish to be paid respect, but never loose his politeness, although months have passed since his last due payment.



Beer's heritage should not be underestimated. Through the teaching of fine pupils, and more specially Heinrich Baermann, he started a tradition of playing that thrived for years. Baermann, one of the most notorious virtuoso of the past, had a famous pupil of his own: his son Carl Baermann with whom he toured extensively. Carl Baermann is best known for his pedagogical works and for contributing to the improvement of the key-system baring his name, the « Baermann-Ottensteiner » system, based on the one Iwan Müller conceived. In his clarinet method, Carl mentions the teacher

of his father as the only worthy representative of his generation. In his still well-known and used today *Klarinett-Schule*, he demonstrates admiration for Josef Beer's heritage: « Here I would like also to mention those artists who achieved importance or greatness with the clarinet: Backofen, Heinrich Baermann, [Josef] Beer in Berlin, Beer in Paris (*probably Frédéric Berr*), Beerhalter, Brothers Bender, Blatt, Crusell, Dacosta, Faubel, Friedlowsky, Gambaro, Gebauer, Hartmann, Hermstedt, Klein, Reinhardt, Kotte, Iwan Müller, Seemann, Schott, Tausch who has rendered great services to the instrument. »²³

Since the German playing tradition finally assimilated the French one, it is safe to say Josef Beer left a strong musical heritage that thrived through the Baermann family teaching and conquered vast audiences as well as numerous disciples.

²³ Baermann, Carl. *Klarinett-Schule von dem ersten Anfang bis zur höchsten Ausbildung des Virtuosen in 2 Teilen oder 6 Abteilungen*. Johann André, Offenbach. Main. 1864. p. 1: *Als ausgezeichnete oder doch bedeutende Künstler auf der Klarinette, verdienen genannt zu werden Virtuosen wie: Backofen, Heinrich Baermann, Beer in Berlin, Beer in Paris, Beerhalter, Gebrüder Bender, Blatt, Grusel, Dacosta, Faule, Friedlowsky, Gambaro, Gebauer, Hartmann, Hermstedt, Klein, Reinhardt, Kotte, Müller (Iwan), Seeman, Schott, Tausch u. a., die sich um das Instrument grosse Verdienste erworben haben.*