

# Beer in Russia

## *The change of embouchure: a total reformation*

Already in 1780, Josef Beer is found to perform in Russia. Having left Paris in 1779 for a tour bringing him first to Belgium, where, according to Fétis in his *Biographie Universelle* he would have heard in Bruxelles the clarinetist Schwartz who impressed him so much with his German-style tone that Beer decided to greatly improve his:

*Beer, passing through Belgium on his way to Holland, had the occasion to hear Schwartz, regimental bandmaster of Kaunitz, in Brussels; it was the first time that the softness of the German sound had caught his ear; he was enchanted by it, and immediately resolved to set to work to change his style under this influence. In less than six months of study, he succeeded in adding to his admirable accuracy in the execution of difficulties and his beautifully expressive style, the soft quality of sound which was not the least among his cleans of glory, and which he transmitted to his pupil Baermann.<sup>1</sup>*

It is important to underline the general trends of reed positioning toward the end of the 18th century. As Eric Hoeprich points out in his article on the subject,<sup>2</sup> the habit in France, Italy and England was generally to perform with the reed above the mouthpiece, according to a few surviving methods and iconographical evidences from these countries. The Paris Conservatoire accepted the reed-below technique only with after the employment of clarinetist Frederic Berr, as late as 1831. A great number of amateur musicians and perhaps a lack of employment for the clarinetists, as well as a strong tradition of publishing led to a much larger production of tutors and methods in France and England, compare to other countries such as Germany, Bohemia or Austria. The lack of methods in the latter makes it easy to oversimplify the reality of reed-positioning in the 18th century, saying that the general trend was to play reed up. However, as the author mentions it, iconography and

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<sup>1</sup> Fétis, F.J.. *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*. Paris. 1866, p. 297:

*Beer, passant en Belgique pour se rendre en Hollande, eut occasion d'entendre à Bruxelles Schwartz, maître de musique du régiment de Kunitz; c'était la première fois que la douceur du son allemand frappait son oreille; il en fut charmé, et sa résolution fut prise à l'instant de travailler à la réforme de son talent sous ce rapport. En moins de six mois d'études, il parvint à joindre à son admirable netteté dans l'exécution des difficultés, et à un beau style dans le phrasé d'expression, la moelleuse qualité de son qui n'est pas un de ses moindres titres de gloire, et qu'il a transmise à son élève Baermann.* (English traduction: E. Hoeprich. *The Clarinet*. 2008. p.166.)

<sup>2</sup> Hoeprich, Eric. *Clarinet reed position in the 18th century*. *Early Music* (vol. 12, #1, Feb., 1984). p. 48-55.

study of early clarinetists lead us to a different path. For instance, on the engraving « Lutherie » in their *Encyclopédie*, Diderot and D'Alembert<sup>3</sup> depict a clarinet, visibly using a reed-down system. Moreover, some soloists such as Villement had an engraved portrait of himself made by Pierre Bazin in 1780<sup>4</sup> with his clarinet, showing a reed pointing the lower lip. This is however, an exception in France when taking into account the other evidences pointing towards the general trend of reed-above preference. As one can see, the trends of placing the reed on either the upper or lower side of the mouthpiece was not systematically attached to a country and diversity in the embouchure existed both on the French and German sides. In the specific case of Josef Beer, proofs exist stating he changed drastically his technique in the 1780s. The change of embouchure would be the most plausible change he made. (See chapter *Beer and clarinet performance practice*)

Other arguments clarifying the national trends point towards artifacts of the time. When looking at period clarinets available nowadays made by the greatest German makers such as August Grenser (1720-1807), who sold clarinets to some of the finest soloists of the 18th and early 19th century, the absence of a stamp on the mouthpiece can be, as suggested by E. Hoeprich, a « tacit vote on the parts of these makers for a choice of reed position, since German makers are well-known to be eager at stamping their instruments. » The French makers, however, stamp clearly the mouthpieces on the same side than the facing, so that the stamps on all parts would line up.

This way of playing stayed alive for many years in those countries until the beginning of the 19th century, although fierce criticism against this practice was well-established. Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770-1834), teacher of philosophy and aesthetics in Leipzig, signed the article « Ueber die Klarinette » in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in March 1808, in which he vividly condemn the French way of playing the clarinet with the reed against the upper lip. According to him:

*if this instrument is of great interest to the music lover, it is because of its essential qualities, although there are certain aspects regarding its use which must change. First of all, one must stop playing with the reed on top, as the French do, who even recommend doing so in their Méthodes. One will lose of course the extreme high notes, but gain, I would say, the whole instrument. Even holding the instrument is more difficult this way, especially the angle of the head, which is held in an awkward position. How is it possible to produce a*

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<sup>3</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*. Paris 1751-65.

<sup>4</sup> Portrait of clarinetist Villement (1780) by Pierre Bazin (Amsterdam, Rijksarchief voor kunsthistorische Dokumentatie).

*soft and gentle sound if one touches the vibrating of the reed with the teeth? Playing this way it is as inevitable as the swing of a pendulum that the sound will become a shrill. This sound is far less pleasing to the ear than the gentle and round sound of the clarinet, very often similar to the harmonica, without having its irritating glass-like quality.<sup>5</sup>*

In any case, there is no teeth mark on the great majority of the surviving mouthpieces. Since clarinet playing is very probably born from oboe technique, the embouchure was until the early 19th century very similar. Ivan Müller (1786-1854), who was playing with the reed against the lower lip in France from a fairly early date, is reported by Frédéric Berr in his *Traité Complet de la Clarinette* published in 1836, that he was « biting » his embouchure, using his upper teeth as an anchorage on the mouthpiece, allowing him more dexterity and freedom. <sup>6</sup> Himself from German origin (he was born in Mannheim and trained in Frankenthal), the acceptance of the German clarinet embouchure through Berr teaching by the Paris Conservatoire is a true conquest over the French tradition.

The six months of work as an autodidact Josef Beer did to achieve his new German-style tone can be a clue that he totally changed his technique and switched from the traditional way to play the clarinet with the reed against the upper lip to the German way to play, the reed leaning rather on the lower lip. The rapidity of Beer's switch of technique might be attributed to the fact he possibly learned to play the clarinet in Bohemia when he was a child, although he perhaps didn't master the instrument at that moment. Remembering his first steps with the instruments, he could have put aside his lately acquired in the army French technique. A switch of technique would have been very realistic as the change Fétis mentions since Beer's French pupil Michel Yost writes, in his own method, that one should place the reed above the mouthpiece:

*The embouchure of the clarinet is the easiest of all wind instrument - but one must not put the mouthpiece too far in the mouth, otherwise one will not be able to govern it with ease or give the tonguing at will. One must press the mouthpiece on the inferior teeth and cover the reed with the upper lip without letting the upper teeth touch it, because they give the*

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<sup>5</sup> Hoeprich, Eric. « *Regarding the clarinet* »: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 1808. *Early Music*, Vol. XXXVII, no. 1. Oxford University Press. 2009. p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> Hoeprich, Eric. *The Clarinet*. Yale University Press. 2008. p. 133.

*strength to the upper lip to pinch the high tones (...)*<sup>7</sup>

The German embouchure eventually established itself as the standard way to play the clarinet, even in countries traditionally in favor of the reed-below position, such as France. The Bohemian of origin Frédéric Berr<sup>8</sup> (originally spelled « Beer »: when arriving in Paris from Mannheim 50 years after his illustrious colleague, the memory of the great Josef Beer and his numerous performances in the capital was so strong, that Frédéric had to change his last name for Berr to be sure to not be confused with his older colleague)<sup>9</sup>, teacher at the Paris Conservatoire states in the section « On the necessity of playing with the reed underneath » from his *Traité* that:

*The advantage of playing with the reed underneath has been shown by the most skillful clarinetists. All artists here (Paris) recognize that no one can obtain the piano and the pianissimo as they do in Germany. The famous Baermann, whom we hear in Paris in 1818, played piano in a way that in fact was unknown here at the time. He played four-bar phrases very loudly, and then repeated the phrase so softly as though it came from another room.*<sup>10</sup>

This theory is very accurate if one would agree that Josef Beer taught himself the clarinet only when he arrived in France in 1763, with the France style of playing as a model, but can also be disputable since he started his career as a *hautboist* in the army. The probable thing is that when he arrived in Russia in the early 1780s, his embouchure technique was changed or soon to be changed, since he then developed characteristics that were later praised as typical to the German style of clarinet playing and were transmitted through his teaching to one of his greatest students, Heinrich Baermann. (see the chapter *The German Years*)

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<sup>7</sup> Yost, Michel. *Méthode de Clarinette*. ca. 1800. p. 3. Translated by the author from original text:

*L'Embouchure de la clarinette est la plus facile de tous les instruments à vent - mais il ne faut pas enfoncer le bec trop avant, car on ne sauroit alors le gouverner facilement, ni donner le coup de langue à volonté. On doit appuyer le bec sur les dents inférieures et couvrir l'anche avec la lèvre supérieure sans que jamais les dents d'en haut y touchent, car ce sont elles qui donnent la force à la lèvre supérieure pour pincer les tons aigus (...)*

<sup>8</sup> Frederic Berr (1794-1838) is often considered the founder of the later French school of clarinet playing. He was indeed the first to standardize the playing with the reed below, instead of up, as it was the tradition in France. He was active at the Vaudeville Theater, Italian Theater and the Court Orchestra.  
Birsak, Kurt. *The Clarinet; a cultural history*. Translated from Germany by Gail Schamberger. Druck und Verlag Obermayer GmbH. 1994. p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> Weston, Pamela. *Heroes and heroines of clarinetistry*. Trafford. 2008. p 36.

<sup>10</sup> Hoeprich, Eric. « *Regarding the clarinet* »: *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 1808. Early Music, Vol. XXXVII, no. 1. Oxford University Press. 2009. p. 93.

## *A second appointment*

Thence to Belgium, Josef Beer's tour brought him to Holland, then to Germany, where he appeared successfully in Berlin<sup>11</sup>, to Italy, before he headed in Bohemia to see his parents. Following a straight line to the North, he performed in Poland, where he had to promise to come back again in the future,<sup>12</sup> crossed the Russian border and finally entered St-Petersburg.

When Beer arrived in Russia, the Empress Catherine The Great was on the throne. Her reign was decisive for the growth and development of Russian culture and her inclusion of international artists to the cities' life brought Russia, for the first time in History, on the same height than other cultural European capitals. Indeed, Josef Beer arrived in a moment of real cultural blooming and perhaps contributed himself to the flourishing of artistic innovations.

As Nikolai Findeizen underlines the change of musical life in the capital in his comprehensive two-volume book *History of Music in Russia from Antiquity to 1800*:

*The second half of the 18th century, presented new problems in this respect: music and theater gradually ceased to serve solely as entertainment for court circles and became part of public life in general. This circumstance, in turn, led to establishment of a Russian public theater and to the emergence of native talents in the realm of theater and music. (...) Musical life gradually relinquishes its links to the caprices of the court and begins to develop independently; previously linked closely to the czars' personal tastes, musical life now becomes separate, conditioned by social trends.*<sup>13</sup>

Public theaters were then flourishing side by side with private concert halls and the diversity of concert was greater than ever. The nobles were investing in private serf orchestras and theaters that allowed them to invite the finest people of the capital. The counts Naryshkins, who had a

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<sup>11</sup> Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past. 1971*. Emerson Editions. London. p. 35

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Findeizen, Nikolai. *History of Music in Russia from Antiquity to 1800*. Vol. 2 (The eighteenth century). Indiana University Press. Bloomington and Indianapolis. 1928. Reprint of 2008. p. 25

tremendous impact on the development of the traditional horn band,<sup>14</sup> and Sheremetev who was the greatest patrons of arts toward the end of the 18th century and produced numerous memorable events with his private orchestra of no less than 35 musicians in 1800, including two conductors - Stepan Anikievich Degtiaryov and Pyotr Kolmykov - and two foreign well-known soloists, the pianist Meier and cellist Johann Facius. He owned also, beside this large symphonic orchestra, his private ballet companies, opera, brass band, chorus and horn band. This sudden establishment of theaters and serf orchestras by the wealthy ones shows how the music was not exclusively reserved to the tastes of the court and, on the contrary, was spreading to multiple circles and taking over both the capitals and provinces. The golden years of this cultural peak was coinciding with the middle of Catherine II's reign. As Findeizen mentions it, these years were also the time for Russian musicians to be more and more included in courts and theaters along with foreign ones. The taste of Russia had for long been for Italian and French music. Young Russian musicians, such as Dmitry Bortniansky, Berezovsky, Matinsky, Fomin and Skokof, were sent to Italy at an early age to complete their learning in music, returning to Russia with a truly Italian style of writing. It is well established today that Russian music really came to life with Glinka and the following generation, although this assertion can be challenged by the presence of Russian composers in the cultural landscape such as Yevstigney Fomin (1761 - 1800), Vasily Pashkevich (1742 - 1797) and Mikhail Matinsky (1750 - 1820) who really built the Russian opera tradition, using mostly Russian libretti and including folk music in their works, letting aside pioneer symphonists in Russia like Maksim Berezovsky (1745 - 1777).

The Empress was not particularly fond of music, an art she herself explained was only organized noise to her ears. Nevertheless, it was primordial for her to have in her court the best musicians, the most imaginative composers, the brightest of all virtuosi. She wished to keep two orchestras at her service at all time. Being herself a writer, Catherine the Great encouraged the production of theater and literature, as well as opera, a medium for which she occasionally wrote libretti that were put in

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<sup>14</sup> Derived from the hunting tradition, the horn band is a typical ensemble found in Russia. The main characteristic is that it uses long, straight horns of various sizes, each producing one single pitch. Thanks to the experimentation of Jan Mares, when he was employed as the Master of the Hunt and Director of the Court Theaters for the count Semyon Kirillovich Naryshkin from 1751, the horns used in this formation found their definitive peculiar straight shape. Horns from all sizes are used in a horn band, from the largest measuring 98 inches long to the smaller with its short nine inch length, to create a organ-like type of sound. Naryshkin's horn band was well-known for being comprised of up to 32 musicians. The band was used both for inside and outside performances. Many composers, including foreign ones, took interest in this distinctive ensemble and wrote music for it. This is the case of Giuseppe Sarti, who included a horn band in an oratorio he composed in honor of the Prince Grigory Potemkin, Catherine II's lover. Spohr visited St-Petersburg in 1803-1804 and kept a vivid impression of the horn band of 40 musicians accompanying a choir of more than 200 voices, stating it was « giving both majesty and power to the pieces sung by the choir ».

music by the greatest maestros of her court. Many specialized theaters emerged, such as Italian or French companies. It was a statement of wealthiness for nobles to own their own opera company and orchestra to enchant their guests with sumptuous spectacles. The Empress' court was an absolutely flourishing playground for all sorts of arts. In 1791, a list was made of those orchestras letting us have an idea of the size of them: one, comprised of 39 musicians, was serving the dance under the direction of Vasili Pashkevich, and the other one gathering 43 of the best musicians she had on hand, included a harpsichord, as her chamber musicians orchestra conducted by Carlo Canobbio. Both orchestras had a section of no less than three clarinetists. Mooser insinuates that Josef Beer stopped being an orchestra musician quite early in his career in St-Petersburg, for becoming a « chamber musician ». Looking at the detail of this chamber musician orchestra make me think that, perhaps he played less in the « utilitarian » concert, but he might have been the first of three clarinetists, the soloist required only for important occasion, chamber music, solos (concertos) and big obligate parts, like we shall see in the case of Bortniansky.



Towards the end of 1780, the Gazette of St-Petersburg announced on September 29th two concerts of the great soloist:

*Mr Beer, virtuoso-clarinetist recently arrived, inform the honorable public that on the coming October 10th and 17th, he will be giving two concerts in the house of S.A. the Prince Potemkin. The first virtuosi of the Chapel of Her Majesty will play in these concerts...*<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, the events had to be postponed, as seen in the Gazette of October 6th:

*Mr Beer has the honor to inform the public that, the coming 10th, in the house of S. A. the Prince Potemkin, he will be giving a concert where we will play different concertos of his*

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<sup>15</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au 18e siècle*. Mont-Blanc. Lausanne. 1948-52. p. 364. Translated by the author from original text: *Mr Beer, virtuose-clarinettiste arrivé depuis peu, informe l'honorable public que les 10 et 17 octobre prochains, il donnera deux concerts dans la maison de S. A. le prince Potemkine. Les premiers virtuoses de la Chapelle de Sa Majesté joueront dans ces concerts...*

*composition. Mrs Bonafini, MM. Compagnucci and Bambini will sing, and Mr Paisible will play a violin concerto...<sup>16</sup>*

...And postponed a third time, as seen on the Gazette of October 30th:

*Mr Beer announces that his first concert will absolutely take place on Sunday November 1st, in the house of the General Chtcherbatchef; he will play diverse pieces of his composition for clarinette...<sup>17</sup>*

Josef Beer must have given a strong impression on his public and grew a good reputation, since he rapidly performed for the court, as the advertisement seen in Moscow's Gazette on January 16th shows it:

*Mr Beer, came here from Paris, who had the honor to show his art in St-Petersburg in the presence of Her Imperial Majesty and of Their Imperial Highnesses, will give next Thursday, the 21st of the current month, in Her Highness the countess Serguïévna Saltykov's theater, a great concert in which we will play a lot of concertos and other new musical pieces of his composition, for the clarinet...<sup>18</sup>*

As R. Aloys Mooser points out, some primary sources create doubt concerning the exact date Beer left France. Fétis, in his *Biographie Universelle*, states that Beer left the French service only in 1788 and Hugo Riemann in his *Lexikon*<sup>19</sup> implies that Beer left in 1782. Although Beer had a lot of liberty in the following years and could have easily come back to Paris a couple of times, his farewell concert in 1779, contradicts Fétis' and Hiermann's assertions. This statement can, however,

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<sup>16</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au 18e siècle*. Mont-Blanc. Lausanne. 1948-52. p. 364. Translated by the author from original text: *Mr Beer a l'honneur d'informer le public que, le 10 courant, dans la maison de S. A. le prince Potemkine, il donnera un concert ou l'on jouera divers concertos de sa compositions. Mme Bonafini, MM. Compagnucci et Babbini chanteront, et Mr. Paisible jouera un concerto de violon...*

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem. Translated by the author from original text: *Mr. Beer annonce que son premier concert aura lieu absolument le dimanche 1er novembre, dans la maison du général Chtcherbatchef; il jouera diverses oeuvres de sa composition pour clarinette...*

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 365. Translated by the author from original text: *Mr Beer, arrivé ici de Paris, qui a eu l'honneur de de montrer son art à Saint-Pétersbourg, en présence de Sa Majesté Impériale et de Leurs Altesses Impériales, donnera jeudi prochain, soit le 21 de ce mois, dans le théâtre de S. A. la comtesse Serguïévna Saltykov, un grand concert dans lequel on jouera beaucoup de concertos et d'autres pièces musicales nouvelles de sa composition, pour la clarinette...*

<sup>19</sup> Riemann, Hugo. *Musik-Lexikon*. Max Hesses Verlag. Berlin. 1919. p.89.



be explained by the fact that another clarinetist with a very similar name, Josef Bähr (1770-1819)<sup>20</sup>, was working in Austria toward the end of the 18th century. Since Riemann attribute to Josef Beer the position of clarinetist at the Oettingen court in Wallerstein from 1787 to 1794, which was the official position of the younger Bähr, we can assume Riemann is mixing incorrectly the two players. Anyhow, I also wish to underline that Beer's name is the very first to appear in Hiermann's list of the great clarinetists, followed by Franz Tausch, Xavier Lefèvre, the Baermanns (father and son) and other players until 1900 (p. 575), which makes him the earliest memorable virtuoso on the clarinet.

Beer seems to have had a strong network of players with whom he enjoyed performing. The name of Henri Paisible, French virtuoso on the violin, conductor, composer and concert manager, comes back a lot in his programs, as well as the name of a friend of the later whom he met in Vienna at the Tonkünstler-Societät and convinced to follow him to Russia, the soprano (and... procurer!<sup>21</sup>) Cristoforo Arnaboldi, known also as *Il Comaschino*. The group was also completed by the Czech bassoon virtuoso Anton Bullandt, the Italian violinist Antonio Lolli, who was indeed Paisible's rival. The musicians were playing in various ensemble settings, from orchestra to chamber music, depending on the needs and tastes of the court and the type of event.

Beer left Moscow in company of one of his pupil, Franz Dvorak, also from Bohemia, as mentioned in the Moscow Gazette of February 3rd 1781. Perhaps Beer travelled with him since he went back to see his parents, during his European tour and took him under his wings. Dvorak (or Dworschak), besides being a virtuoso on the clarinet, was a bassoon player and a well-known basset horn player. He had the opportunity to tour with some of the finest players of the instrument, including Vincent

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<sup>20</sup> Josef Bähr was a known soloist mostly in the Viennese circle. He played with Ludwig van Beethoven at the creation of his Quintet opus 16, on April 6th 1797, as well as for the Septet op 20 on April 2nd 1800 and the Sextet op. 71 in April 1805. He was many times preferred to Josef Beer and the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung said about his playing in Beethoven's Sextet that the clarinet part was « absolutely perfectly played by Bähr and that there will surely be few comparable masters of his instrument ». After his death, at the age of 49 years old, Beethoven then asked Josef Friedlowsky for advices about technique on the clarinet.

Weston, Pamela. *Beethoven's clarinetists*. The Musical Times (Vol. 111, #1534, Dec., 1970). p. 1212.

<sup>21</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au 18e siècle*. p. 247. *Il Comaschino* was known to perform the function of procurer for the libertine count Alexander Bezborodko (1746-1799), Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had a strong appetite for young female artists. Some anecdotes around this character are truly alike some finest stories of the Marquis de Sade in *Les Crimes de L'Amour!* Having met the very young Lisa Fedorova, student at the Theater School and fiancee to Sila Sandounof, a fellow comedian, he decided to seduce her. Very soon, he was pushed away by the faithfulness of the young girl to her lover. He then dismissed Sandounof from the school to attain more easily his libidinous goal, making the directors of the Theater School his accomplices in crime. Fortunately, the Empress, who had strong values about the theater, realized what was going on and took care of the situation. Indeed, Catherine II thought, as stated « ...Comme le théâtre doit être l'école des mœurs, il est désirable que tous ses membres se conduisent constamment avec décence, afin que les sentiments de vertu et de pureté qui les auteurs se sont efforcés de susciter par leurs oeuvres, ne soient pas compromis par des actes déréglés. » (Mooser, p. 418) Although his perfidy, Bezborodko stayed a very important sponsor for St-Petersburg's music and theater scenes.

Springer and Anton David with whom he performed bassoon trios in Germany, Italy, Holland and England.<sup>22</sup> It is also possible they met in Moscow and chose to continue their trip together.

Beer and Dvorak arrived in Warsaw, Poland, where concerts were given in company of the singer G.-B. Brocchi and the violin player Federigo Fiorillo, who chose to perform on the mandolin. Beer played concerts at the public theater on April 20th and 27th, during which some of his compositions were performed, alongside with Haydn symphonies. In the concert of the 20th, given at 6:00 pm, Beer would have made a stellar appearance, delighting his audience with no less than three clarinet concertos, including one by himself, in the first part of the concert, and two in the second one by unspecified author; one described pompously as « A Grand Clarinet Concerto, with Trumpet and Drum »<sup>23</sup>. It is not clear if the event on April 27th displayed the same music.<sup>24</sup>

It is possible Dvorak took part during those concerts, especially since Josef Beer is known to have written three concertos for two clarinets. It is also possible Beer came back at the service of Prince de Lambesc in 1781-1782.<sup>25</sup> He would then have had to leave France early in 1782 to travel to Poland for concerts.

As some archive documents prove it and as Mooser underlines it being a truly important event due to the « exceptional value of the artist », Beer was admitted unofficially to the court orchestra of St-Petersburg on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1782, meaning he probably came back to Russia soon after his concerts in Poland. However, Beer rapidly received the Imperial favors and was considered as an irreplaceable player, as a letter signed by the count A. A. Bezborodko, informing the direction of the Imperial Theaters of Catherine II wish, shows it:

*..As it was brought to Her Majesty's knowledge that the clarinetist Beer has been employed at the service since May 1<sup>st</sup> of last year, for concerts as well as for operas, Her Majesty deigned to order Your High Excellency to conclude a contract with the musician, counting*

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<sup>22</sup> Rice, Albert. *From the Clarinet d'Amour to the Contra bass*. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2009 p. 206

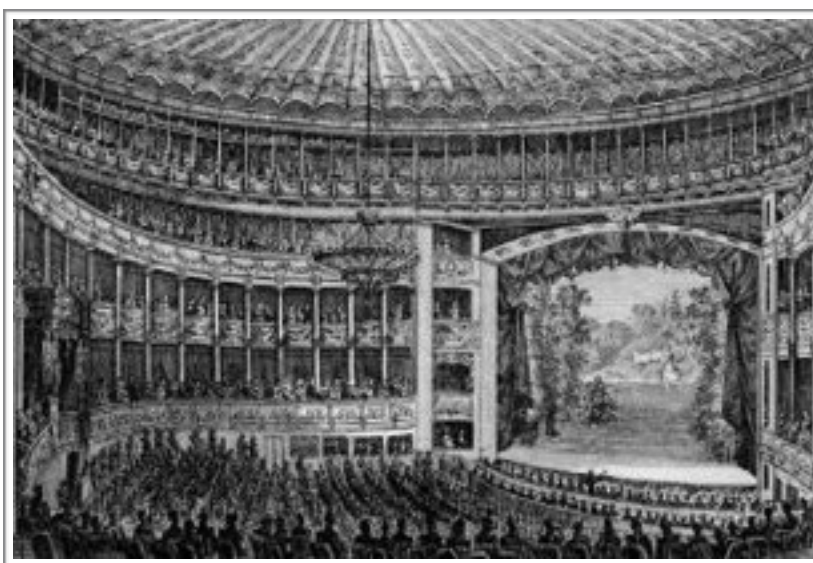
<sup>23</sup> Probably Joseph Leopold Eybler's clarinet concerto: it includes trumpets and drum in the orchestration and was popular enough to be played by famous virtuosos such as Josef Beer.

<sup>24</sup> Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1977. p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> Rice, Albert. *Joseph Beer*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music. Bibliography updated 30/08/04. Last accessed on July 2nd 2016.

*from said May 1<sup>st</sup> of last year 1782, and this not only for operas, but also for concerts and the table.<sup>26</sup>*

The contract with Josef Beer was then concluded and tied him as the concertmaster of the first orchestra for three years to the Imperial court from May 1<sup>st</sup> 1783 with an annual fee of 1 600 roubles. Beer was thereby receiving the highest remuneration of the court musicians, besides the first violin and conductor of the Italian opera, Carlo Canobbio. This detail is a clue of the importance and value of the virtuoso for the Empress, since the spent of his fee was made in a period of tenuousness in the budget for the arts at the St-Petersburg's court.



*Auditorium of Bolshoy (Kamenny) Theater. Engraving by S.F. Galaktionov. 1828.<sup>27</sup>*

In 1784, Beer's name is mentioned in an advertisement of February 16th from the St-Petersburg's gazette, announcing a very peculiar piece of music:

*On Wednesday the 21st, Mr J. F. Klöffler, maestro di capella of Bentheim-Steinfurt, arrived here recently, will have the honor to give, at the Kamenny Theater<sup>28</sup>, un great concert in which he will make play the music specially composed by him representing a musical*

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<sup>26</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au 18e siècle*. p. 365:

*...Comme il a été porté à la connaissance de Sa Majesté que le clarinettiste Beer fut employé au service depuis le 1er mai de l'année passée, aussi bien pour les concerts que pour les opéras, Sa Majesté a daigné ordonner que Votre Haute Excellence conclue un contrat avec le musicien, en comptant depuis le dit 1<sup>er</sup> mai de l'an passé 1782, et cela non seulement pour les opéras, mais encore pour les concerts et la table.*

<sup>27</sup> Saint-Petersburg Encyclopedia. Accessed on August 30th.

<sup>28</sup> Kamenny, or Bolshoy, theater is today known as the Mariinsky Theater, directed by the famous conductor Valery Gergiev.

*battle, which has already been received with pleasure in London, Berlin, Copenhagen, Königsberg, etc. The orchestra will be formed of sixty-six people divided in two choruses. At the end of the concert, Mr Beer will play the clarinet; and a symphony with the choirs, in which we will hear an echo, will end the concert...*<sup>29</sup>

Josef Beer was particularly appreciated by the Empress. The same year he was officially hired in the court orchestra, he received on October 16th a monetary gift weighting the same amount as his annual fee. Moreover, according to Mooser, Beer was probably removed from his orchestral engagements, since he doesn't appear in a list of the theater musicians published by the newspaper *Russische Theatralien* in St-Petersburg in October 1784 (the clarinet players mentioned were Joseph Grimm, Georg Brunner and Christoph Schiller). But one must notice that Beer travelled a bit towards the end of that year, notably to Berlin for a concert on August 28th. This list could have been printed for events in which the famous clarinetist was not required, although he was the official first clarinetist. Mooser states that Beer was then only found playing concerts organized at the Winter Palace of the Ermitage in which he performed with a group of exquisite virtuosi related to the chamber orchestra including the singer Luiza-Rosa Todi, *Il Comaschino*, Giovanni-Mane Giornovicchi (Jarnowick) and Anton-Ferdinand Titz, with whom Marina Ritzarev, in her book *Eighteenth-century Russian music* (2006) underlines he played frequently. As said previously, the chamber musicians were indeed gathered as a whole orchestra with two conductors! This small group of virtuosi would be pulled out of this orchestra to play specific chamber music in more intimate settings, for special dinners or exclusive entertainment, and would be invited for soloist appearances. The task to perform only in the concerts given in the Ermitage for the Empress was not a light one, since concerts were performed everyday for the court.<sup>30</sup>

Moscow's public had the pleasure to hear Beer again in February 1785 three times, having asked the Empress to leave St-Petersburg for five weeks for « personal needs ». He played three concerts in which a few of his own compositions, including a *Royal French Hunting Song* and a very special Quintet, performed in company of three fellow musicians from Bohemia playing the oboe d'amore. Many modern sources, including Pamela Weston's works about Josef Beer, talk about a Quintet for

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<sup>29</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au 18e siècle*. p. 420: *Le mercredi 21, Mr J. F. Klöffler, maître de chapelle de Bentheim-Steinfurt, arrivé ici depuis peu, aura l'honneur de donner, au Théâtre-Kamenny, un grand concert dans lequel il fera exécuter la musique composée spécialement par lui et représentant une bataille musicale, qui a déjà été reçue avec plaisir à Londres, Berlin, Copenhagen, Königsberg, etc. L'orchestre sera formé de soixante-six personnes divisées en deux choeurs. À la fin du concert, Mr Beer jouera de la clarinette; et une symphonie à deux choeurs, dans laquelle on entendra un écho, terminera le concert...*

<sup>30</sup> Ségur, Louis-Philippe de. *Mémoires* tome III, p. 276.

clarinet, three violas d'amore and a hunting horn, but a new translation of the original Russian newspaper add allowed me to discover that the real orchestration include oboe d'amore and not violas; an information that changes a lot the direction of research in order to find the piece. Beer was also accompanied by musicians from Moscow during this concert, among them the cellist Johann-Heinrich Facius.<sup>31</sup> As in Warsaw, Haydn's symphonies were very likely played, although the name of the composer is never mentioned.

On December 18th 1786, probably at the Anitchkof Palace<sup>32</sup>, under the patronage of Mr Lyon, Beer participated in a virtuosi concert given by other colleagues including the harpsichordist Minarelli, recently arrived in the capital and played clavichord for the occasion, the singer Luiza-Rosa Todi and Guglielmo Jermolli. Beer found in Minarelli a partner with whom he would later play accompanied by a keyboard instrument.<sup>33</sup>

During his stay in Russia, Beer continued to compose and seek for publishing opportunities. In 1787, Breitkopf editions list two concertos by Josef Beer in their catalogue.

From *The Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue; The Six Parts and Sixteen Supplements 1762-1787*. Edited and with an Introduction and Indexes by Barry S. Brook. Dover publication. New York, 1966. Supplement XVI: 1785, 1786, 1787. p. 860.

Those two themes are not listed in any biography of Beer and constitute a new track for finding Beer's lost music. It is also a clue Beer could have been a more prolific composer than we might think today.

<sup>31</sup> Findeizen, Nikolai. *History of Music in Russia from Antiquity to 1800*. Vol. 2 (The eighteenth century). Indiana University Press. Bloomington and Indianapolis. 1928. Reprint of 2008. p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> Dmitri Anitchkof was a Russian philosopher living in St-Petersburg at the end of the 18th century.

<sup>33</sup> Stepanov, A. A. « The Clarinet and Clarinet-Players in Russia During the Second Half of XVIIIth Century ». From the history of instrumental music culture. The state institute of the theater, music and cinematography. p. 83 - 97. Leningrad. 1988. (in Russian)

Beer passed by Pressburg in 1789 to give a concert before performing his function of Imperial musician by staying in St-Petersburg until 1790, traveling occasionally to Moscow to give more appearances. The records show that the Imperial Theaters answered positively to Beer's wish of October 11th to travel again to Bohemia on October 23rd:

*The clarinetist Beer wishing to go abroad to see again his parents, decided to grant him a leave of two months, with the upkeep of his pay, charging him to search, in Bohemia, musicians who could complete the orchestra.*<sup>34</sup>

Beer stayed away for quite some time, since he is reported to play in a concert held at the house of the restaurateur Jahn in Vienna, in March 1791, as the advertisement mentions it:

*Herr Bähr, Chamber Musician in actual service of H. Russian Imp. Majesty, will have the honor on Friday next, 4 March, to hold a grand musical concert at Herr Jahn's hall, letting himself be heard several times on the clarinet; at which Mme. Lange will sing and Herr Kapellmeister Mozart will play a concerto on the fortepiano. Those who are still desirous of subscribing can be provided with tickets each day at Herr Jahn's. To begin at 7 o'clock p.m.*

This was indeed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's last public performance with his Bb major piano concerto K.595. The Wiener Zeitung of March 12th immortalized Beer's appearance, stating he « won the unanimous approbation of an audience consisting for the most part of connoisseurs, by his extraordinary skill on the clarinet. »

Josef Beer probably felt a certain urge to conquer new audiences, since he probably prolonged his stay abroad for a few months, being found to perform with great success in Prague as late as March 28th. Thence to Hungary for more performances, he came back to Russia to, soon after, demanding his official leave of his position in 1792. He possibly signed a contract with the King of Prussia, Frederick Wilhelm II, since the latter would have asked Franz Tausch to take « the place of the famous Beer in the court orchestra until the latter returned from Petersburg », in 1791.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps judging that the musician Beer was taking too much liberty with his frequent requests for leaves, the new concert director from Paris in St-Petersburg, Jean-Baptiste Cardon, was considering to make

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<sup>34</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales...* p. 366. Translated by the author from original text: *Le clarinettiste Beer désirant se rendre à l'étranger pour revoir ses parents, décidé de lui accorder un congé de deux mois, avec maintien de ses appointements, en le chargeant de rechercher, en Bohême, des musiciens nécessaires pour compléter l'orchestre.*

<sup>35</sup> Weston, Pamela. *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*. Emerson Editions. London. 1977. p. 37.

changes in the small group of chamber musician, including Beer. The direction of the Imperial Theaters thereby answered Beer last request in a report dated April 24th, stating that the virtuoso is from now on free from the service, at his will. It has been reported that Beer left Russia on April 23th 1792 with one of his Bohemian pupil, the oboist Theodor Czervenka, son of a bassoonist from the Viennese court, who became soon after second oboe in the first orchestra of the St-Petersburg's court.<sup>36</sup> The two musicians played together in Riga in 1791, where Czervenka was only fourteen-years-old, and in St-Petersburg, just before Beer's official departure. The well established fact that the young musician was an oboist brings the question of the repertoire he was playing with his master. Apparently, Czervenka learned to perform more than one instrument with his master (who himself grew up learning a few), choosing the oboe in the end for his professional life.



### *Music for Beer in Russia*

It is known that Josef Beer played in the court orchestra and in opera productions since 1782 and that his talent has there been noticed. It is then possible to draw a line between Beer's playing and a few comprehensive, or should we say flattering, music written for the clarinet for court orchestras and operas from that date. Beer was at the St. Petersburg's court for nearly ten years, and had the chance to meet many talented composers, including Giovanni Paisiello, Giuseppe Sarti and Dmitri Bortniansky. Most of the following works could have very likely been written especially for him, taking in account his personal tastes. It is also possible some clarinet passages were composed with Beer's help for technicalities and lyricism of the instrument and resulted in a more idiomatic form of writing from various composers. Clarinets were present at the Imperial Court since around 1768 with the composer Traetta who wrote obbligato parts for clarinet and bassoon in his opera *Antigone*.

The Russian court had a long love relationship with Italian opera. The first appearance of Italian opera in St-Petersburg was as early as 1736 and never left the musical life, making itself irreplaceable in every wealthy circle. At first, foreign troupes were imported to Moscow and the borders of the Neva river, thanks to diverse impresarios. Although not meant to be eternal, those visits of foreign musicians created a real need for Italian music in educated circles and their taste for the exotic lyrical art always had to be nourished. Because of their almost unlimited financial weight,

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<sup>36</sup> Mooser, R. - Aloys. *Annales...* p. 761.

the official institutions, such as the Imperial Court Theatre, had the chance to choose and invite the finest musicians and had music composed specifically for them. The Italian maestros who lived in Russia and composed remarkable music for the court are numerous: Galuppi, Paisiello, Sarti, Cimarosa, Canobbio, Galletti, Andreozzi... The favorite genre at court was the comic opera, in the sense of a short one-act opera performed by actors who has singing basics more than lyrical singers. As Taruskin points out, « the rise of nationalism occurring at the rise of Romanticism in Russia contributed to kill opera seria, favoring the comedies and opera buffa. »<sup>37</sup> The two Russian composers Pashkévitich and Fomin are known as the masters of comic opera and they brought this style to a further complexity, putting on stage Russian peasant folkloric themes. From around 1770, more foreign composers started to write operas on Russian libretti. Court musicians such as Anton Bullandt, Raupach, Satubinger, Giuseppe Sarti, although late in his career, and Martín-y-soler are among those who took their adopted land's language very serious, putting in music Russian words.<sup>38</sup>



The first striking example of clarinet music written during Beer's presence at the opera is Giovanni Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, R. 1. 64. Created on September 15th 1782 at the Hermitage Theater of St-Petersburg and composed over a libretto by Giuseppe Petrosellini, the work displays very little clarinet music. Surprisingly enough, one of the only aria with clarinet, *Gia riede primavera* (a soprano aria written for Anna Maria de Bernucci in the role of Rosine) in the third act, is a beautiful solo line accompanied by a solo bassoon which includes a written-out cadenza for the three soloists. (See Appendix 1)

This is no coincidence Paisiello uses the clarinet with a soloistic approach all of a sudden in his Russian career.<sup>39</sup> Before coming to St-Petersburg in 1776, Paisiello worked in Italy where he was one of the first composer to introduce the clarinet in the orchestra in his country. His *I scherzi de amore e di fortuna*, created in Naples in 1771, includes two D clarinets. He also included instruments pitched in C and Bb in one aria of the revised version of his opera *Socrate Imaginario* in 1775. *Il gran Cid* was his last opera written in Italy to include clarinets (in Bb and A), before he moved to the cold Russia.

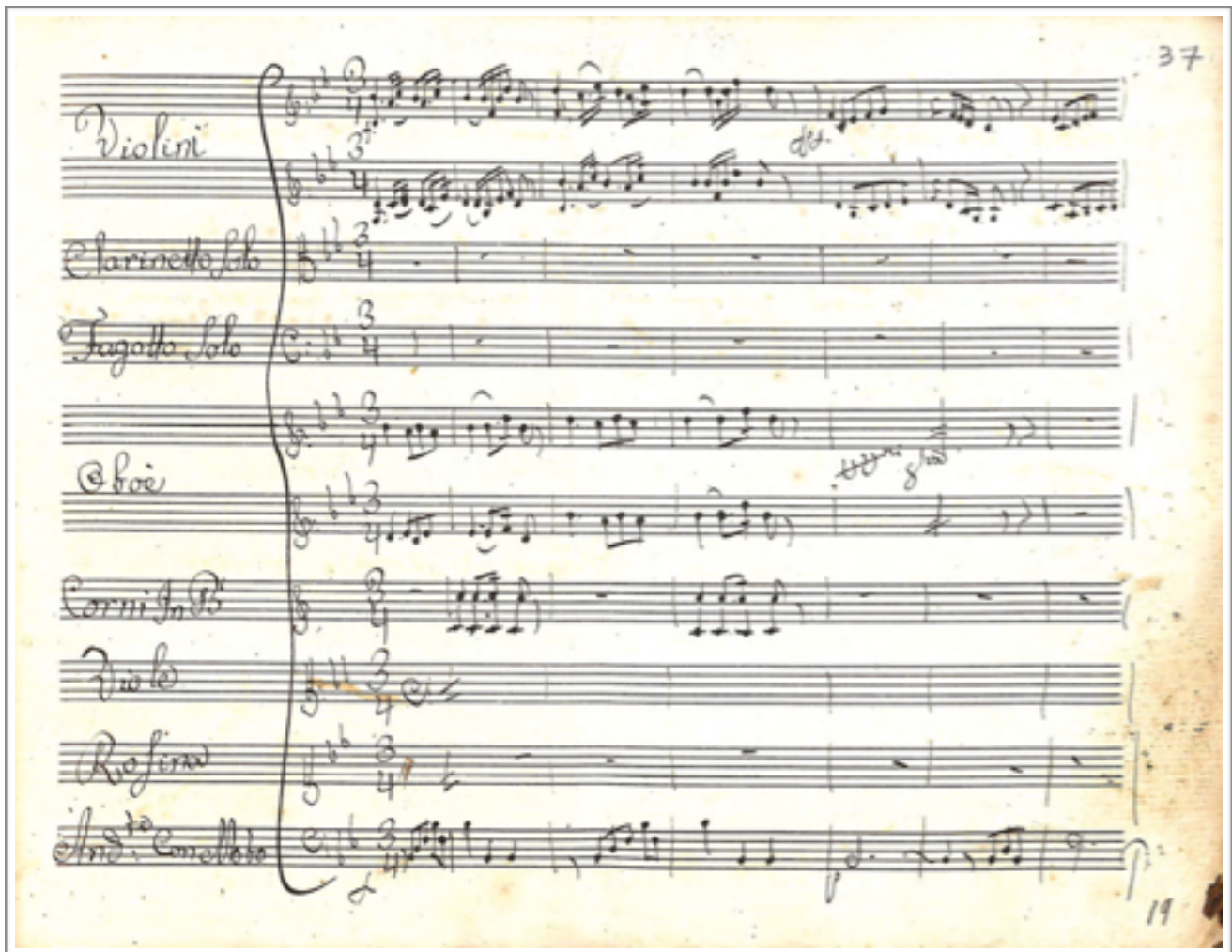
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<sup>37</sup> Taruskin, Richard. *On Russian Music*. University of California Press. September 2010. p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> Maximovitch, Michel. *L'opéra russe 1731 - 1935. L'Âge d'Homme*. Lausanne. 1987. p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Giovanni Paisiello (1740 - 1816) is an Italian composer who has worked in many important courts around Europe. He is well known for his operas and the influence they had on younger composers. He was composer at the court of Catherine II from 1776 to 1783, when he left after a fight with the new theater committee.





Giovanni Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, R. 1. 64, manuscript score circa 1782. Ricasoli Collection at the University of Louisville Music Library. Third Act. Aria for soprano with clarinet and bassoon solos « Gia riede primavera »

The clarinet part of the opera *Il Barbiere* is very likely written for Josef Beer and the bassoon for Anton Bullandt, his well-known colleague.<sup>40</sup> The fact that the clarinet appears almost only in a very soloistic manner towards the second half of the opera is a clue that the composer wanted to highlight the qualities of one of his player. This change of level expected from the wind instrumentalists is indeed a specificity of Paisiello's mature Russian operas which include *Il Barbiere*, but also *La Serva Padrona*, an operas displaying clarinets in a very flattering way, although not as evidently as in his *Barbiere*. Most of the opera he wrote in Russia have clarinet parts: *Lucinda ed Armidoro* (1777), *Achille in Sciro* (1778), *I filosofi imaginary* (1779), *Il Demetrio* (1779), *Il matrimonio inaspetto* (1779), *La finite amanita* (1780), and *Alcide al Bivio* (1780).

<sup>40</sup> Villinger, Chritine. "Mi vuoi tu corbellar", die opere buffe von Giovanni Paisiello : Analysen und Interpretationen. Die opere buffe von Giovanni Paisiello. Tutzing. 2000. p. 95.

Although the clarinet was clearly present at the court before Beer's time, the opera Paisiello wrote while he was there display the most soloist lines for the instrument.<sup>41</sup>

Paisiello uses of the clarinet is soloistic in the first clarinet part, while the 2nd player accompanied in the chalumeau register. The register is treated in a wider manner than usually orchestral clarinet parts. For instance, the score of the opera *La Serva Padrona* asks for a register from c to c''' from the clarinet, which is not that traditional. Clarinets were rather used in the clarion register, playing thirds or sixths.

Paisiello also wrote 24 divertimenti for wind instruments. The harmonie music was probably used in domestic settings, to entertain the guests of Catherine the Great.

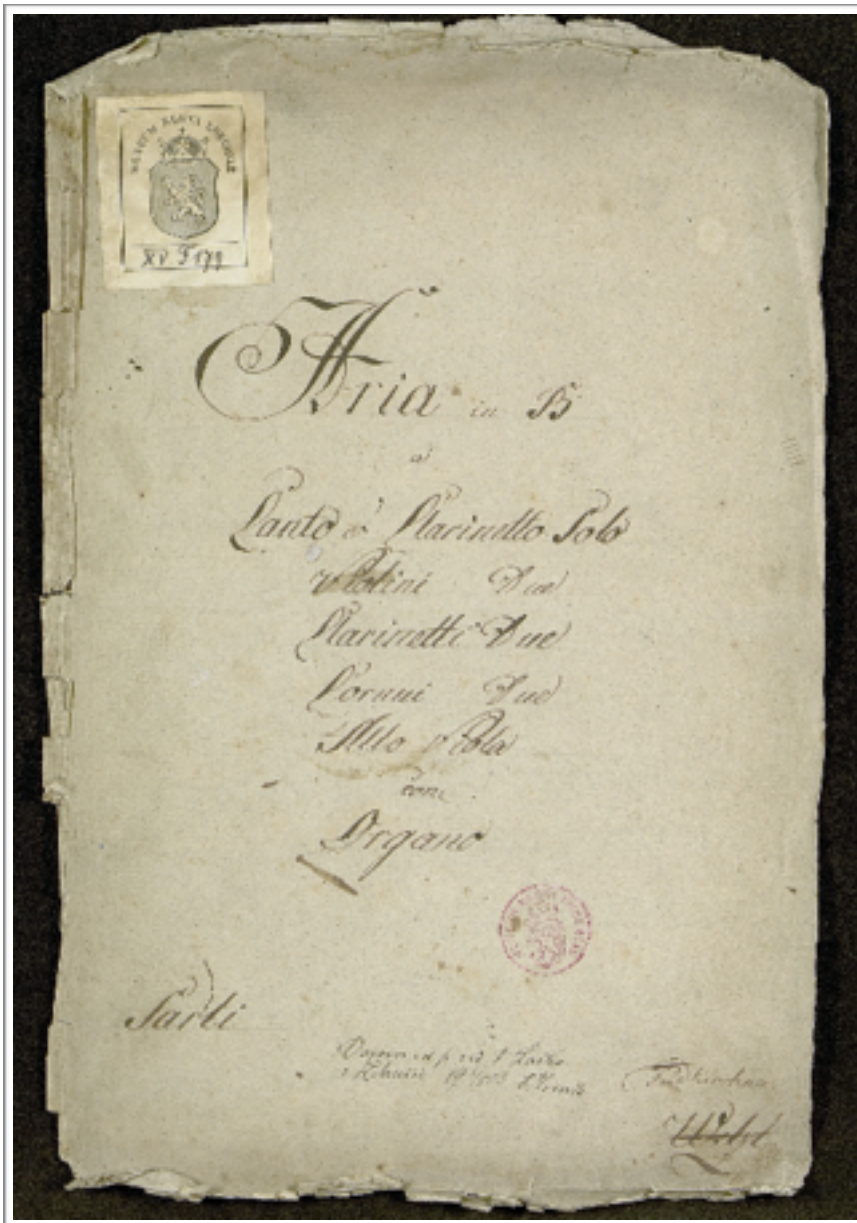


As we might remember, it was said previously that period data demonstrates that both orchestras at the St-Petersburg court were geared with three clarinets, which is a very unusual detail for the time. Most of the orchestra during the same years, for instance in Germany or France, had only two clarinets, when they only had some! This can help us conclude the third clarinet was sometimes the soloist or that the three clarinets could be use in different chamber music settings. In our case, Josef Beer was the extra clarinetist of the first orchestra, the « chamber » one. Two arias written by Giuseppe Sarti could reinforce this theory.

Extremely popular when he was working in Milan as *maestro di cappella*, Sarti was noticed by the Grand Duke Paul of Russia in 1782, who thought he could replace Paisiello wonderfully at the Imperial court. Sarti's lyrical works had a great success and one of his catchiest melody (*Come un agnello*, from the opera *Fra i due litiganti*) was quoted by Mozart in his *Don Giovanni*. By 1784, Sarti had signed a contract with the Empress Catherine II and became the director of the Imperial chapel in St-Petersburg. The years he spent in St-Petersburg are considered to be the peak of his artistic creativity, mastering the art of the comic opera and exploring different languages in lyrical works, including Russian, French and German. One of his great accomplishment is the Russian opera *Nachal'noye upravleniye Olega* ( The Early Reign of Oleg) in 1790, based on a libretto by the Empress herself, he wrote in collaboration with other maestri of the court, Pashkevich and Canobbio. Sarti was sent to a city given to him by Prince Potemkin in far Ukraine to punish him for

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<sup>41</sup> Rice, Albert R. *The Clarinet in the Classical Period*. Oxford University Press. 2003. p. 134.



Giuseppe Sarti, *Aria in B* for *canto solo clarinetto solo, violone due, clarinetti due, corni due, alto viola con organo*. Front page of the manuscript parts, undated for Narodní Muzeum, Prague.

are orchestrated for the same instruments: one soprano, one solo clarinet accompanied by two violins, one viola, one basso part (with figures), two clarinets, and two horns. The slight difference in the second aria is that the basso part specifies the organ.

an intrigue he had with the singer Luisa Todi. He took the opportunity to found there a school for singers. But soon after in 1793, the Empress appointed him director of a Conservatory in St-Petersburg inspired by the Italian model of teaching. He contributed to the orchestral life by inventing a device capable of counting vibrations and established the St-Petersburg's orchestral pitch at A=436hz. He left St-Petersburg in 1801 to return to Italy when the Emperor Paul I died.<sup>42</sup>

Two undated sacred arias by Sarti are of crucial interest. Both display a very flourishing soprano line on a latin text, interleaved by a no less virtuoso clarinet. Both

<sup>42</sup>DiChiera, David. *Sarti, Giuseppe*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Last accessed on July 29th 2016.

Of course, a watermarks test should be run and further investigation should be made to establish the exact dating of those arias and the place they were written, although the parts available nowadays are very likely made by copyists and not autograph, which make this task even harder. Nevertheless, one very honest theory could be that they were written by Sarti, the Imperial chapel composer, for the musicians of the chamber orchestra, comprised of three clarinets. Being an unusual feature of the St-Petersburg's court orchestra, the number of clarinets is a good clue to establish the place the arias were written. Very rare is the music for solo clarinet with two extra clarinets in the accompaniment. Usually, the color of the instrument is reserved for the solo line and should not be « spoiled » by the same texture in the accompaniment. Furthermore, the extremely soloist line for the clarinet was meant for anybody, but a great virtuoso; another special feature of the capital of Russia's chamber orchestra.

Clarinets in sacred music is itself a surprising thing. Religious music with clarinets is something related more often to late baroque music and is more seen in Italy. Perhaps Sarti kept a vivid memory of clarinets in sacred settings and tried to bring this sound to Russia. An instrument often related to pastoral atmospheres, this is extremely rare to hear clarinets in sacred settings, especially before the turn of the 19th century. Even composers well known for their affection for this instrument, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, prefer to let them aside for religious music: the C Minor mass KV427 doesn't have clarinet parts and the Requiem KV626 prefers the tenebrous timber of the basset horns. One of the rare apparition of clarinets in religious music was in France, at the tax-farmer Riche de La Pouplinière's orchestra in the 1750-60s. On Sundays and for festivals, his orchestra, including the clarinets, was performing in the morning preceding the mass and was then providing music for the ceremony. Moreover, each day of the Holy Week had its concert during which the clarinets could be heard alone.<sup>43</sup> Gossec is another composer known to have put clarinets in religious music: his *Messe des Morts* (1760) indeed include a wind section of three trombones, four trumpets, four horns, eight bassoon, and four clarinets. However, as one can notice, the religious use of the clarinet was generally an late baroque or early classical phenomenon.

The arias could have been played by some of the best chamber musicians available and sung by either a soprano of the calibre of Luisa Todi or the castrato *Il Comaschino*, both sharing often the stage with Josef Beer. Giuseppe Sarti is known in Russia to have brought the clarinet music one step further. His opera *I Finti Eredi*, dated 1785, ask for no less than five types of clarinets: one in

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<sup>43</sup> Rendall, F. Geoffrey. *The Clarinet, Some Notes on Its History and Construction*. London/Ernest Benn Limited. New York, 1954. p. 76.

A, in Bb, in B, in C and in D.<sup>44</sup> This is something absolutely unseen previously. The use of a B clarinet is extremely rare and its appearance is nowadays only attributed to Mozart who uses it in *Idomeneo*. The use of a small clarinet in D, or piccolo, is also very peculiar in late 18th century, a time when the norm was rather the Bb clarinet along with the C and A. Sarti choice to include the D clarinet in *I Finti Eredi* was no abnormality in his work, since he dared to use the brilliant timber again in the opera *Alceste* in the last act, as well as in the collaborative work *The Early Reign of Oleg*, composed with Cannobio and Pashkevich in 1790. Again, this could be an judicious amalgam of the late baroque sounding of the high-pithed clarinets with the darker classical aesthetic of the instrument.

Sarti's opera *Armida e Rinaldo* (1786) is also great interest in relation with clarinet music. Indeed, the overture of the opera, as well as a few arias, includes many soloistic comments from the clarinet, mostly when the character of Rinaldo is on stage. The aria *Vieni a me sull'ali d'oro* (Rinaldo, Act 1) has also a clearly indicated obbligato part for the clarinet, in which a cantabile melody embroiders the singer's interventions.

*Armida e Rinaldo* was one of Sarti's great success in Russia. Luisa Todi, the famous soprano who had the Empress protection, played the role of Armida. She had, however, disagreement with Sarti possibly because of her prima donna attitude. The latter asked to have the castrato Luigi Marchesi in the role of Rinaldo, to counterbalance Todi's effect on the cast. The Theater Directorate ordered the opera to be staged twice, once for the benefit of the soprano, as wished the Empress, and once for the benefit of Sarti and his castrato.<sup>45</sup>



Dmitri Bortniansky was a crucial Russian composer who contributed to the musical transition towards a true nationalism in Russia, with his creativity and popularity, and is considered by many scholars nowadays to be the first classical composer and placed on the same level then

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<sup>44</sup> Stepanov, A. A. « The Clarinet and Clarinet-Players in Russia During the Second Half of XVIIIth Century ». *From the history of instrumental music culture*. The state institute of the theater, music and cinematography. p. 83 - 97. Leningrad. 1988. (in Russian)

<sup>45</sup> Findeizen, Nikolai. *History of Music in Russia from Antiquity to 1800*. Vol. 2 (The eighteenth century). translation by Samuel William Pring ; edited and annotated by Miloš Velimirović and Claudia R. Jensen ; with the assistance of Malcolm Hamrick Brown and Daniel C. Waugh. Indiana University Press. Bloomington and Indianapolis. 1928. Reprint of 2008.

Glinka for his historical significance.<sup>46</sup> Bortniansky studied in Italy and succeeded to Paisiello as court composer for the Empress and was also in charge of giving piano lessons to some of the nobles. His best known music nowadays is the choir concertos, a choral style religious music leading the way to pieces such as Rachmaninov's Vespers. Bortniansky was also an opera composer who, as Paisiello, used the qualities of the players he had in his orchestra. He composed three main operas in the 1780s on French librettos: *Le Faucon* (1786, premiered at Gatchina Theater), *Le Fils Rival, ou la moderne Stratonice* (1787 premiered at Pavlovsk Theater in the court of Paul Petrovich and his small circle apart from the Imperial court) and *La Fête du Seigneur*. *Le Fils Rival*, however, demonstrates a greater diversity of musical expressivity and a wider variety of orchestral textures than his two previous opera written in Russia.

Born in Ukraine, in the city of Hlukhiv in 1751, Dmitri Stepanovich Bortniansky started his musical career by joining the school choir of his city at an early age. Very likely because of his easiness for music, he was sent to the Imperial court in St-Petersburg and became one of the most cherished choirboy of the Empress. He developed his voice enough to perform important roles in operas, such as Admetus in *Al'tsesta* by H. F. Raupach.<sup>47</sup> Having started his composition studies with Galuppi in Russia, he followed his master to Italy when he left for Venice in 1769. Bortniansky developed a truly Italian style of writing, as many of his first large scale works from the 1770s may demonstrate it. After a learning journey of ten years in Italy, Bortniansky was called back to St-Petersburg and was appointed assistant director at the Imperial court chapel, in addition to his teaching and composing tasks. When Paisiello left definitively his position in 1783, the Empress gave to Bortniansky one of Paisiello's former tasks; he became Kapellmeister at Maliy Dvor, the court of her son Paul. When at the service of Paul, Bortniansky composed the three operas *Le Faucon*, *Le Fils Rival* and *La Fête du Seigneur*. The music was written on French libretti, as the Empress was a well-known francophile, drawing its main components from the much appreciated *opera buffa*.

In this present work, *Le Fils Rival ou la Moderne Stratonice* is the most interesting opera, due to its great presence of the clarinet. Already in the overture, the brilliant C clarinet steals the show. As it is frequently the case at that time, the clarinet is associated with enchanting pastorelle settings. In *Le Fils Rival*, a vocal nocturne includes a clarinet obbligato unrolling itself on a light, transparent

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<sup>46</sup> Sapra, Barbara Shcherbakov. *Le Fils Rival ou La Moderne Stratonice (1787)*. Master Thesis. University of California. Los Angeles. 1975. p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Kuzma, Marika. *Bortnyans'ky, Dmytro Stepanovych*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music online. Last accessed on 16/10/2016.



Aria of Don Carlos with clarinet obbligato. Act 1. From *Le Fils Rival ou la Moderne Stratonice*. Manuscript. 1787.

orchestral texture.<sup>48</sup> The role of the clarinet as a leading voice in the wind choir can also be observed by the fact the instrument is notated above all the others in the complete manuscript score in passages putting in evidence the winds, such as the small elegant dance including in the middle of the third act.

The opera *La Cleopatra* written by Domenico Cimarosa (1749 - 1801) was commissioned by the Empress Catherine the Great for her theater at the Ermitage in 1788. Since it includes an extensive clarinet part, it is more than likely that it was intended for Josef Beer, especially since he was in Russia during this year. As one can imagine, ten years of playing in the court of the Empress and in important venues in Russia as a soloist and orchestral musician must have brought to Beer a gigantic amount of music, more or less designed for his specific playing characteristics. It is

<sup>48</sup> Sapra, Barbara Shcherbakov. *Le Fils Rival ou La Moderne Stratonice* (1787). Master Thesis. University of California. Los Angeles. 1975. p. 51.

impossible to shed light to all of it, though we can acknowledge that clarinet became an important feature in orchestral music in Russia, especially in opera, towards the end of the 18th century, not without the help of the famous soloist who was positioned there.



Beer was a witness of architectural changes that had an impact on the cultural life of St-Petersburg. In 1783, the Kamenny (or Bolchoï) Theater was built and Paisiello's *Il mondo della luna* was premiered. The Theatre, edified on the order of Catherine the Great in 1781, was meant to allow culture to enter all circles, even the modest ones.

Josef Beer left a deep mark in the Russian musical landscape. By contributing to strengthen the wind sections in operas and being a source of inspiration for composers, he contributed to the blooming of a new operatic tradition leading to composers such as Glinka and Tchaikovsky (who shows his deep respect for Bortinansky's *Le Fils Rival* by quoting note for note a passage in his opera *Pikovaïa Dama*)<sup>49</sup>. As a matter of fact, the clarinet obbligato part in orchestral music in Russia became a frequent thing, perhaps not without the influence of the Bohemian virtuoso.<sup>50</sup> Beer impression was strong enough to leave a trace in the Moscow papers, a few years after his definitive departure from Russia. An advertisement published in 1794 offers a new publication by Beer: a double clarinet concerto, which was very likely played with one of his advanced pupil (perhaps one of the pieces he played earlier on tour with Franz Dworschak or Theodor Czervenka!). Another publicity in Moscow papers dated 1814 advertise Beer's opus 11 for 10 roubles.<sup>51</sup> Beer visibly stayed in memories for years after his departure from the Palmyra of the North.

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<sup>49</sup> Maximovitch, Michel. *L'opéra russe 1731 - 1935. L'Âge d'Homme*. Lausanne. 1987. p. 202

<sup>50</sup> For instance, the Russian composer Yevstigney Fomin (1761-1800) included a solo clarinet part in his melodrama *Orfeo Ed Euridice* that was played at Sheremetev's private theater in 1793 in St-Petersburg.

<sup>51</sup> From « catalogue of different music you can buy in the shop of Karl Lengold in Moscow, 1814. »