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# Gaetano DONIZETTI

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## Concertino in F

*for English Horn and Orchestra*

SOLO PART AND PIANO REDUCTION

Edited by PEDRO DÍAZ

Piano Reduction by MARK BIGGAM

Historical Notes by MICHAEL FINKELMAN



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## HISTORICAL NOTES

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Among the major highlights of the otherwise operatically-filled musical seasons in Italy were the annual spring prize conferment exercises of the various conservatories throughout the country. Nowhere was this truer than at the world-famous Liceo Filarmonico in Bologna, where the young Gaetano Donizetti, then a student, was already making his mark. This institution had a notable record of presenting such commencement concerts, offering the very best of what the young composition students and their professors had recently produced. These works included symphonies, concertos, and vocal concert pieces of every kind imaginable, often in their first performances. In 1811, for example, Bologna witnessed the première rendition of an attractive concerto for the corno inglese by Giuseppe Pilotti, one of the instructors at the Liceo, and later Donizetti's counterpoint professor. With this, one could say that the stage had been set in Bologna for future offerings from an instrument not often heard as a concert soloist.

Just as the work by Pilotti had been intended for a specific performer (Marianno Angiolini), so was the piece by the then not yet nineteen-year-old Donizetti. The performer in question was one Giovanni Catolfi, also a student at the Liceo, and a clarinet/corno inglese doubler. This odd form of multiple instrumentalism was not unusual at this time, particularly in Italy, although the combination of bassoon and English horn was more common, given the needs of the opera orchestras of the day. (This tradition extended back to the mid-18th century in Italy, and was well established by the young Donizetti's time. It would disappear during his lifetime, as orchestras grew in size, and such doubling was no longer necessary.)

The young composer's honoring one of his colleagues with a concert piece to show off his abilities was of course the genesis of the first version of the score and parts, dated 1816. There is, however, no record of a performance in that year. For reasons undocumented, the original score of this work became separated from the parts, and was acquired decades later by the French musicologist Charles Malherbe (1853-1911), who later bequeathed his fabulous collection of holograph manuscripts to the library of the Paris Conservatoire. It was here that the Swiss flutist and musicologist Raymond Meylan (b. 1924) discovered the hitherto unknown piece in 1964, just prior to that collection's permanent removal to the French National Library. He copied the score, albeit with many errors, and soon published the same via Litolf-Peters Edition (1966-67).

The principal matter of concern here is that the score in question is in the key of G, with the solo line scored in the C transposition clef on the first space, indicating an instrument ostensibly pitched in G. Given that English horns in this key are no longer to be had, Meylan allowed his edition of the score to remain in G, and transposed the solo part up a whole tone to accommodate the normal English horn in F. This resulted in an unnecessarily high

tessitura for the solo instrument. The original solo part contains numerous challenging virtuosic passages: its transposition from C major to D major only compounds the many difficulties already present. (It was in fact the orchestral accompaniment that needed to be transposed, not the solo part.) Nonetheless, this one published version has stood until now as the accepted standard. It has been performed often, and recorded several times, first by Swiss oboist André Lardot in 1965, even before its publication, and by Holliger the following year. (The other recordings were made much later.)

There seems to be some confusion regarding the English horn in G. In fact, there is ample evidence of tenor oboes in this pitch throughout the 18th century, and continuing into the early years of the 19th century. There are solo sonatas for the oboe in G by Bissoli and Ravet, and an ensemble piece by Pepusch, to name just a few examples of the literature. The important maker Bizet produced and advertised oboes in G in 1749, of which a handsome example survives in Paris. The late Bruce Haynes, the early oboe's most distinguished historian, notes that the Lot brothers' tenor oboes were pitched in G (although the length of their extant instruments would not outwardly indicate as much. However, as Dr. Haynes points out in his brilliant 2002 book, *A History of Performing Pitch*, this does not tell us anything, as innumerable pitch standards were in force in the 18th century.) Short tenor oboes ostensibly in G exist today from the hands of Cahusac, Denner, Fornari, Kenigsperger, Kinigsperger, and Kirst, in addition to a few unmarked ones. Collection catalogues note a number of specimens as being in G, including one by Grassi of Milan, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

We know too that the Oboi di Selv Graupner occasionally used at Darmstadt were pitched in G, although the name of the maker does not seem to have survived. Benjamin de Laborde's 1780 *Essai sur la Musique* notes that the hautbois de forêt was an instrument that existed both in F and G, with the instrument in G apparently preferred at that stage. Philip Bate refers in the 1980 Grove Dictionary to tenor oboes as originally pitched in G, but [latterly] more often in F.

By the early 19th century, then, what was left of this was a tradition (more common in some areas than others) of the use of tailles and later English horns in G concurrent with the use of such instruments in F. Thus, the concept of young Catolfi arriving in Bologna with a corno inglese in G (or indeed of the school owning same) is not at all surprising or even unusual in the context of the time. (It is to be noted, however, that Pilotti's concerto from 1811 is in F.) What we have in the case of the Donizetti work is a possibly unique portrait of the transition taking place at this time, which would result in the permanent obsolescence of tenor oboes in G, and the universal establishment of English horns pitched exclusively in F.

Pedro Diaz, the Metropolitan Opera's English hornist, became interested in this piece, and wondered why it was written in the unlikely key of G, with an uncomfortably high range for the soloist, as in the Peters edition. In collaboration with composer Mark Biggam, he prepared an edition and piano reduction in F for English horn and string quartet, and performed this at the Alba Music Festival in Italy, on May 30, 2014. While in Italy, Diaz made contact with musicologists who directed him to the Museo Donizettiano in Bergamo, the composer's home town. The curator of this facility, however, was unable to help in this regard, except to direct the inquiring English hornist to the Biblioteca della Musica in Bologna, which owns the complete remaining archive of the Liceo Filarmonico di Bologna, where the young composer studied from 1815 to 1817. An appointment was quickly made, and the original music soon put under eye.

In analysing the extant materials, certain conclusions can be drawn. The fact that there is only one surviving solo part, heavily annotated and obviously used in performance, strongly indicates this as the only original such part. That this differs in many details from the solo part in the Paris score is further proof of it as original source material. Most or all of the insertions here would have been made by the soloist himself, in keeping with the normal practices of the time. The orchestral parts exist in three sets, from three different hands, of which only the first is complete. The only score present in Bologna, specifically copied from the complete set of parts there is, like them, in the key of G. The other two sets of parts are in F, and thus readily usable with the solo part (in concert C) when played on an instrument in F. While each of the complete sets of parts is marked 1816 in the upper left corner, the concertmaster's part is also marked *Li 19 Giugno 1817*, the day of the performance. That the same part has two dates on it, the one a year only, the other a specific date reflecting a documented performance has to be interpreted as meaning 1816 as the year of composition only, and indeed the 19th of June 1817 as the date of the first public performance. The two additional sets of parts (strings only) include only one with a date, and this is 1817. The concertmaster's part in the third set is noted "trasporto in Fa" (transposed to F, a direct reflection of the original in G, the former now obviously the preferred key). The second and third sets of parts are all labeled *Concertino*.

The surviving materials and general musical conventions of the time indicate a probable run-through of the piece in 1816 with the student orchestra, and the soloist performing on his instrument in G. Under the circumstances, one has to assume this version was quickly retired, due most likely to the shortcomings of the instrument. (This may also account for the holograph score being separated from the original performance material.) By the following year, the

extra string parts in F were copied in preparation for the upcoming prize distribution (commencement) concert. If indeed solely the surviving materials were used in that remarkable presentation, the fact that only some of the required string and none of the wind parts were transposed need not concern us any more than the absence of a score in F. (It is perfectly possible that a transposed score may once have existed that is no longer extant, although the key in which a score is set has no connection its practical usefulness in concert.) Moreover, there is considerable evidence in the two surviving concertmaster's parts, both the original in G and the later one in F (in Set 3), that first the one and then the other were in fact used to conduct the piece. This would have been entirely congruent with the norms of the time. More significantly, while there may well have been other transposed parts now no longer accounted for, conventions of the day required that orchestral players in the opera houses be able to make virtually any transposition at sight, to suit the vocal needs of the star singers. (This practice, surely part and parcel of the teaching in the Liceo, remained in force in the theatrical world until the mid-twentieth century.) Thus, the absence of a score, or even of orchestral parts in F would in no way have disqualified the piece from having been performed in that key. Given the evidence that remains, and the normal praxis of the day, this is very nearly certainly what occurred.

The piece in question was heard on a very lengthy program which began with a Sinfonia for full orchestra by the not yet twenty-year-old Donizetti, then proceeded through an extended program of varied music. Item 12 was a *Scena ed Aria* by the young Donizetti (likely from one of his three earliest operas, none staged in his lifetime), followed by the piece in question as item 13, designated *Concerto per Corno Inglese*, as worded on the Bologna score and complete set of parts. Two further numbers ensued to close what must have been an all-afternoon affair.

Pedro Diaz again played this work, in F, at the International Double Reed Society meeting in New York City in August 2014, this time enriched by the use of the original solo part. He has here prepared a definitive version of same based on the source materials from the archive of the institution under whose auspices it was originally given, in the key in which the dedicatee certainly appears to have performed it. This will at last give us a true picture of this cornerstone of the English horn solo repertoire, finally come of age, fifty years after it first saw the light in publication, and two hundred years since it was written. This is a welcome case of better late than never, and a major step in improving our cognisance of instrumental matters in Italy in the formative years of the Romantic period.

Michael Finkelman  
Boston  
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# Concertino in F

for English Horn and Orchestra

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Duration: c. 11'

GAETANO DONIZETTI (1797-1848)  
Edited by Pedro Diaz and Mark Biggam

**Adagio**

Piano

*f* *[p]* *f* *[p]*

6

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

10

*f*

13

16

(1) All markings indicated with [ ] are suggestions by the editors.

20

[p]

25 **Andante**

[mf-pp]

[mf-pp]

30

[p-f]

[p-f]

35

[f]

[f]

[Ripieno]

41

[f]

[f]

(2) This note appears in the original manuscript only in m. 24. Presumably, the note should also occur in m. 32 as an anacrusis to the repeated phrase.

(3) The fermatas occur on the first beat of bars 36 and 60 in the original manuscript. This is perhaps a copyist error and should more appropriately occur on the second beat.



### Variation 1

### [Ripieno]

(4) The ossia part of mm. 59–62 is an ornamented passage, presumably to be played in the repeat of this section.

(5) The first beat eighth notes were larger and bold (written in pen?) in the Catolfi English Horn part. These ornamentations are assumed to originate with Catolfi, although there is no conclusive evidence. In the full orchestral score, the part displays the 32nd note configuration found in the ossia.

(6) The triplets of the second part of m. 59 (of the ossia) occur in the full orchestral score, and are pencilled into the English Horn part that Catolfi used.

(7) Grace notes are unslashed in the original, suggesting that these should be played as even 32nd notes.

69 [ritenuto]

73 **Variation 2**

[*mf-p*]

77

81 *a piacere*

[*mf-f*]

85

(8) Although this grace note is slashed in the original, it is more customary to play as equal eighths.