The Works for Bassoon of Gustav Schreck

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Gustav Schreck's *Sonata for Bassoon and Piano* is now considered a standard work in the bassoon repertory, and one of the few sonatas from the Romantic period of music for the bassoon. Little, however, is known about the composer. In addition to the bassoon sonata, Schreck also composed a *Nonett* for two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons.

BIOGRAPHY

Gustav Schreck was born in Zeulenroda on September 9, 1849. He studied at the Lyceum in Greiz, from 1863-67, where he gained some musical experience singing in the choir. After short stays in Gommla and Remptendorf, Schreck entered the Leipzig Conservatory in 1868, where his primary teachers were Ernst Friedrich Richter (1808-79), Robert Papperitz (1826-1903), and Salomon Jadassohn (1831-1902). After graduation in 1870, he taught at a private high school in Viborg (now in Denmark) until 1874. It was during his time in Viborg, that he met his wife, who would later write several of the texts to his vocal works. Schreck moved back to Leipzig in 1874 and in 1887 began teaching at the Leipzig Conservatory as a theory instructor. In 1892 he was appointed as Kantor of the Thomas School (where J. S. Bach [1685-1750] had previously taught). In 1898 he began teaching at the University of Leipzig, and was awarded an honorary doctoral degree from the university in 1909. He started to become ill in the Fall of 1917 and passed away on January 22, 1918.

Since Schreck worked at the Thomas School for much of his adult life, it is no surprise that the majority of his compositions are vocal. He is probably most known today for his editions and piano reductions of many of Bach's cantatas and other compositions. His work with the boys' choir at the Thomas School is also very noteworthy. Under his direction, the choir began to perform outside of just Sunday services, gaining a national reputation, performing with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and other notable ensembles.

Gustav Schreck only wrote a few works for instrumentalists. These include the *Sonata for Bassoon and Piano*, a *Sonata of Oboe and Piano*, and the *Nonett* for winds. His music falls into many of the traditional forms and structures of Romantic instrumental compositions.

BASSOON SONATA

Schreck's *Sonata for Bassoon and Piano op. 9* is in three movements with the melody given equally to both instruments. The piano part, however, is quite thick at times, which may require the bassoonist to play slightly louder than the marked dynamics. There are many opportunities to use rubato throughout the work. It is not known for whom Schreck composed this work. However, a very prominent bassoonist in Leipzig up until 1888, was **Julius Weissenborn** (1837-88), so perhaps it was written with him in mind.

The first movement is marked "Allegro ma non troppo" and is in a sonata-allegro form, beginning in the key of E♭ Major. The transition begins in measure 15, which leads to the second theme at measure 32 in the key of B♭ Major. The closing theme begins in measure 43 in B♭ Major, which ends the exposition at measure 64. All of the melodic material in this movement is slurred and is mostly scales and arpeggios. The development begins in measure 65 and goes through several key areas before the recapitulation occurs at measure 109, back in the home key of E♭ Major. The transition is eliminated in the recapitulation, so the second theme immediately follows the principal theme, beginning in measure 117 in E♭ Major. The closing theme begins in measure 127 and there is a short coda to finish out the movement in measure 143.

The difficulties in this movement lie in getting all the slurs to be smooth, and balancing with the heavy piano part. Some of the slurs are quite large and may require a flick or alternate fingering to produce the slur effectively. For example, in the first measure of the movement, there is a slur from g to e♭1, which may require either flicking the c♯ key or lifting the first finger in the right hand for the e♭ to speak. The range of this movement is not terribly large, only go-

ing up to a♭1 a few times.

The second movement is marked "Largo" and is in an ABA form. This movement in particular, has a lot of 'vocal' qualities, almost in imitation of an opera aria. The movement presents the first theme in the key of A♭ Major with the piano accompaniment being much thinner in this section. The 'B' section of the movement begins in measure 17 and has a thicker and more agitated piano line. There is a short cadenza, beginning in measure 29, which leads to the return of the 'A' theme in measure 33. Another short cadenza at the end of measure 44, leads to a coda in the next measure, which ends the movement.

The difficulties in the second movement are very similar to those in the first, as most of the passages are slurred and have some larger intervals within these slurs. The range of this movement is a bit wider, going up to d♭2 in the second cadenza.

The final movement is marked 'Allegro' and is also in a sonata-allegro form, beginning in the key of E♭ Major. After a four bar introduction, the principal theme is presented in measure 5, with the transition beginning in measure 13, leading to the second theme, which begins in measure 38 in the key of B♭ Major. The closing material begins in measure 50 and the development begins in measure 64. The principal theme does not return in the recapitulation so the development ends at the return of the second theme in measure 105, back in the tonic key of E♭ Major. The closing material begins in measure 117, leading to a short cadenza in measure 140. A slightly faster coda begins in measure 145, which brings the work to a resounding close.

Since the tempo in the final movement is a bit faster than the first, there are a few more technical demands in this movement. There are several 16th note passages throughout, some repeating just a few notes in close succession. For example, at the beginning of the development in measure 64, there are 16th notes going up and down between d1, e♭1, and f1, which may require an alternate f1 fingering to produce this passage smoothly. A common alternate for the f1 in a passage such as this, is to play the e♭1 normally, then lift off all the fingers in the left hand to produce the f1. Again there are some balance issues with the piano, which may require louder playing by the bassoonist. The piano part is fairly difficult, so you will need a competent player to perform this work, but it certainly is an enjoyable and satisfying work to play for both the bassoonist and pianist.

NONETT FOR WINDS

Schreck's *Nonett op. 40* is for the unusual combination of two flutes, one oboe, two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons. It was composed in 1905, however the reason for its writing is unknown. Perhaps it was written with members of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in mind. As with the bassoon sonata, this work has many 'vocal' qualities to it. Melodic material is constantly passed between all instruments, sometimes only a measure at a time. It is not an overly difficult work, and could be handled by a competent college ensemble. Probably the most difficult aspect of this work for wind players is the primary key of E Major.

The first movement begins with a Largo introduction in the key of E Minor in a 6/4 meter. There is a slow quarter note melodic fragment passed between many voices with dotted half note chords primarily in this section. This leads to an Allegro ma non troppo in measure 31, which begins the sonata-allegro section in the key of E Major, marked in a cut time. A transition beginning in measure 39 leads to the second theme in the key of B Major at measure 50. The closing area, beginning at measure 61, then completes the exposition. The development begins in measure 70, and is quite lengthy, lasting until measure 166, where a return of the principal theme back in the tonic key occurs. The transition begins at measure 175, with the second theme following at measure 186. The closing material returns in measure 195, and a coda, beginning in measure 208, completes the movement. The melodic material throughout this movement is comprised primarily of quarter note and eighth note passages, incorporating several triadic figures. Most of the melodic material is slurred throughout and there are not many large jumps in any of the parts.

The second movement is a scherzo and trio, primarily in the key of C Minor. There are much lengthier melodic lines in this movement and one instrument will keep the melody for a longer period of time. Section two of the scherzo begins in measure 19, also mainly in the key of C Minor. The Trio begins numbering at measure 1 again in the Edition Compmusic score in the key of A Minor. This section moves to A Major beginning in measure 38, with a return of the first section in measure 78, back in the key of A Minor. A da capo brings a return of the scherzo portion and coda finishes out the movement, which concludes in the key of C Major. In this movement, a staccato quarter note melody of mostly stepwise mo-

tion prevails the scherzo section, while the trio portion has a slurred dotted quarter note melody, often with a held drone beneath. There are several abrupt dynamic changes within, adding to the excitement and intensity of this movement.

Movement three is marked Adagio di molto in a 3/4 meter beginning in the key of B Minor, and appears to be a theme and variations. Most of the key areas do not settle for very long before they move to another tonality. After a four bar introduction, the main theme is presented in measure 5. Variation 1 begins in measure 37 in the key of A Major. The second variation begins in measure 49, primarily in the key of A Minor. A third variation begins in measure 65 in the key of B Minor, which moves to a coda in measure 86, with the movement concluding in the key of D Major. There is a bit more rhythmic variety in this movement, with the melodic material moving between quarter notes, eighth notes, eighth note triplets, sixteenths, and dotted rhythms. Most of the material is slurred and the dynamics are much softer here, with several piano and pianissimo markings.

The fourth movement is in a sonata-allegro form in the key of E Major. There are a few instances that the first flute part is to double on piccolo. There is somewhat of a march-like quality to this movement, with many dotted rhythms throughout. After the principal theme is stated, the transition begins in measure 19, leading to the second theme in measure 29, in the key of B Major. A closing section begins in measure 51 brings an end to the exposition, in the key of B Major. The development section begins in the new key signature of E Minor and lasts until the return of the principal theme in measure 101, back in the home key area of E Major. There is no return of the second theme in the recapitulation, so the closing area follows the principal theme in measure 119, and a coda beginning in measure 131 completes the movement. The melodic material in this movement is again mostly stepwise and has a greater variety of dynamics throughout. The dotted rhythms appear in the accompaniment, as well as within the melody. The coda has a sixteenth note E Major scale going through a large portion of it, mainly in the upper winds.

I know it is hard to get an idea of the sound of this piece from my description, and there is no commercial recording available of which I have been able to locate, but this is a wonderful piece to add to your chamber music repertoire list. All of the instruments are given melodic material and it would be a nice change of key areas, from the more common wind band works in two or three flats. There are sections that are a bit more adventuresome harmonically, in that the key areas move around quite a bit, which will give your performers a little more of a challenge. None of the individual parts require a great deal of technical proficiency. The horns must transpose in E and D, and clarinets in A are needed as well, along with a piccolo for the final movement. There is also a bit of variety in the rhythms presented, in that several times it will move from duple to triple rhythms, for a measure at a time. Both of the bassoon parts fall fairly well on the instrument, and neither part goes extremely high; with the first bassoon going up to b1 one time, and the second bassoon ascending once to g♯1. This work might be a good opportunity to practice the left hand F♯ fingering, as there are many passages that go between F♯ and G♯.

If you are not familiar with these works of Gustav Schreck, I hope you will find the time to read through them. Bassoonists have very little repertoire from the Romantic period, and these compositions would be great additions to your library. ◆