

IDENTIFYING FIVE SPOHR ITEMS (WoO.26, 32, 39, 40, 139)

home

by Martin Wulfhorst

THE task Folker Göthel faced when he compiled his thematic catalogue of Louis Spohr's works was gigantic¹. He was able to build on several incomplete thematic catalogues and work lists – some published, others preserved in various libraries – yet no one had ever combed systematically through all sources for Spohr's oeuvre – thousands of printed editions and arrangements, hundreds of autograph parts and scores, drafts and sketches.

Considering the amount of material, on the one hand, and the lack of thorough bibliographic studies, on the other hand, it was unavoidable that here and there mistakes crept into Göthel's 576 pages of acerbically compiled lists. One hesitates to point to such minor errors, but for the benefit of Spohr scholarship it is important that they be corrected.

Göthel had to cope with especially difficult problems in identifying manuscripts and printed editions of pieces without opus numbers, to which he assigned "WoO" numbers². The present article discusses the identities of five of the 139 WoO items in SpWV: four items listed by Göthel as works for violin and piano (WoO.26, 32, 39 and 40) and a song listed among compositions attributed to Spohr (WoO.139). Included are two autograph sketches (WoO.39 and 40), a nineteenth-century manuscript copy by an unknown hand (WoO.139), and two printed editions (WoO.26 and 32).

Most easily identified are the two autographs which appear in SpWV as drafts for violin and piano: the "Rondo (A minor) for Violin and Piano (Incomplete)", WoO.39, and the "Salon Piece (E minor) for Violin and Piano (Incomplete)", WoO.40³. Already Carl Rundnagel's remark on the autograph of WoO.40 ("Bruchstück eines Salonstückes") pointed in the right direction, and Göthel's assumption that the draft "...could have originated in connection with Spohr's work on Op.145" is correct; the item turns out to be part of a once complete draft for the Salon Piece Op.145/iv (1851).

WoO.39 served as a draft not for a salon piece, but a string quartet movement. Göthel's error is easily explained, for Spohr notated the four parts, as usual in his quartet drafts, on three staves, using the middle ones for the two inner voices. A pizzicato marking in the bass, though, is a first indication that the scoring could not have included a piano. One does not need to look far to discover that WoO.39 is a first, shorter version of the last movement of the Quartet No.30, Op.93, Spohr's sixth and last *quatuor brillant*.

The other three items to be identified are a manuscript copy and two printed editions. Göthel listed the song "Jüngst hört ich, welchen süßen Lohn" in the category "Works Attributed to Spohr" as WoO.139⁴.

In reality the manuscript preserved in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin is an arrangement of Emma's Aria "Was treibt den Waldmann in den Wald", WoO.92, from the drama *Der Erbvertrag* – a composition written for a performance of the play in Kassel in 1825⁵. WoO.92 is scored for voice, French Horn, and piano, whereas WoO.139 lacks the horn part, as do several others of the numerous arrangements of WoO.92.

Between 1884 and 1896 the Berlin publishing house of Ries & Erler brought out a collection of four pieces for violin and piano (pl. R. 2282 E. and R. 6202 E.):

Vier Stücke für Violine komponiert von Louis Spohr.

Mit Clavierbegleitung bearbeitet von Carl Rundnagel.

No.1 Adagio (E dur) komponiert 1809 in Gotha ...

No.2 Adagio (G dur) komponiert 1820 in London ...

No.3 Romanze (B dur) komponiert 1805 in Gotha ...

No.4 Scherzino (D dur) komponiert 1859 in Kassel ...

(Four pieces for Violin composed by Louis Spohr.

Arranged with Piano accompaniment by Carl Rundnagel.

No.1 Adagio (E major) WoO.32 composed 1809 in Gotha ...

No.2 Adagio (G major) WoO.37 composed 1820 in London ...

No.3 Romance (B flat major) WoO.26 composed 1805 in Gotha ...

No.4 Scherzino (D major) WoO.43 composed 1859 in Kassel ...)

Because no other sources seem to survive for any of these pieces and because the Kassel organist Rundnagel (1835-1911) had access to manuscripts then preserved in Spohr's estate, Göthel accepted Rundnagel's identifications of the four items. He overlooked, though, that Rundnagel admitted to have "arranged" the works and that only the last piece of the set is known for certain to have been scored originally for violin and piano⁶.

As Spohr's earliest surviving piano composition that is mentioned in his autobiographical writings or listed in his own thematic catalogue, the Introduction and Rondo Op.46, dates from 1816, one doubts immediately that the Adagio WoO.32 and the Romance WoO.26, both composed in the first decade of the century according to Rundnagel, were intended originally for piano and violin⁷. With respect to WoO.37, though, there is less reason for scepticism. If Rundnagel gave the correct date and place of composition, it is possible that Spohr wrote the Adagio to provide his wife and himself with a short work for private performances in London in 1820 when Dorette had difficulties switching to the Erard double-action harp and decided to concentrate on the piano⁸. If, on the other hand, WoO.37 is one of Rundnagel's arrangements of compositions for other scorings, the original still needs to be identified.

Skimming through Spohr's oeuvre one quickly discovers the models for WoO.26 and WoO.32. The Romance WoO.26, the third piece in Rundnagel's set, is an arrangement of the slow section (mm. 56ff.) of Malvina's Aria "Oskar! Umsonst!", WoO.75 for soprano and orchestra – a work Spohr composed for his mother-in-law-to-be for a concert at the Gotha court⁹. Rundnagel assigned the voice part to the violin and provided a piano reduction of the orchestral accompaniment¹⁰. That WoO.26 is most likely not authentic should not keep violinists from incorporating the Romance in their recitals as a programme opener or encore; the beautiful Mozartian lyricism will delight audiences and give the player an opportunity to display his "Spohrish" Adagio cantilena. Furthermore Spohr himself did many instrumental transcriptions of vocal works, and the Romance, though originally part of a multi-sectional Scena, can very well stand on its own.

The identification of the first piece in Rundnagel's set, the Adagio in E major WoO.32, poses the most difficult problem. As easy as it is to discover its similarity to the slow movement of the Quartet, Op.27, it is just as complicated to define the exact relationship between the two pieces. WoO.32 differs in several important respects from Op.27/ii:

1. Its key is half a tone higher;
2. Compositional substance and form show major discrepancies; it shall suffice here to quote the beginning in both versions (Examples 1 and 2);

3. WoO.32 was composed three years before Op.27 according to Rundnagel.

One could contend that Rundnagel took great liberties with his model, changing the key and rewriting much of the movement and that he gave an incorrect date or that Op.27 was composed indeed already in 1809. Yet there is another hypothesis which perhaps explains such differences as those between Examples 1 and 2 and which seems more likely in light of Rundnagel's general faithfulness to the works he transcribed or edited.

WoO.32 and Op.27/ii might represent different stages of the same composition from Spohr's pen. WoO.32 was perhaps intended as a slow movement for a quartet other than Op.27, presumably one he never completed, or for a violin concerto. If one ponders the explanation for a moment, one soon discovers arguments in its favour. The violin part of WoO.32 is more elaborate than the first violin part of Op.27/ii and thus better suited to a concerto than a string quartet.

Spohr scholars will recall that Spohr's Tenth Violin Concerto, Op.62, went through a long metamorphosis during which the slow movement especially was subject to revisions¹¹. The exact genesis is still in the dark; yet it seems that it began with the movement WoO.16 of 1809, from which the composer retained only the Adagio introduction in the second transposed version of the first movement, Op.62/i (1810). The Adagio WoO.17, the Adagio from Spohr's Sixth Concerto, and the Adagio later incorporated into the Ninth Concerto all served as the slow movement for the Tenth Concerto at different times. Is it not possible then that the manuscript of WoO.32 found by Rundnagel in Spohr's estate was yet another slow movement intended for one of the various versions of the Tenth Concerto? The date given by Rundnagel suggests that this version preceded even the one with WoO.17 as the slow movement. The key of WoO.32 is no argument against this hypothesis, for it is close enough to that of Op.62/i, A major.

Perhaps WoO.32 was coupled with another Allegro now lost or preserved in a different form. If one accepts this hypothesis about the origin of WoO.32, as far-fetched as it may seem at first, one has to conclude that Spohr decided not to use WoO.32 in his Tenth Violin Concerto. Perhaps he did not even finish the draft, but perhaps he went as far as writing out parts for a trial performance. Be this as it may, he turned to the piece again three years later when he was working on a string quartet for his trip to Vienna. He eliminated some of the elaborate ornaments, rewrote the accompaniment for string trio, and changed the key so that it would go better with the G minor first movement of Op.27.

Presumably the first version of the Adagio, WoO.32, stayed with his other manuscripts until Rundnagel found it and mistook it for a work for violin and piano or arranged it for this scoring. Perhaps someone will uncover material to prove or disprove this hypothesis, perhaps we shall never know.

The preceding observations and speculations illustrate how much nitty-gritty research Spohr scholars still need to do – even after the new ground-breaking work of scholars such as Folker Göthel and Clive Brown. For many of Spohr's compositions, chronology, motivation, and genesis are still unclear. If the present article succeeds in spurring further research into these and related areas, it will have achieved more than its author could have hoped for.

Notes

1. Folker Göthel, *Thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis der Werke von Louis Spohr* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1980), abbreviated SpWV from here on.
2. The 139 items without opus numbers listed on pages 267-504 of SpWV include works listed in Spohr's own thematic catalogue, compositions mentioned in his autobiographical writings, pieces found in Schletterer's work catalogue, as well as items previously undocumented in the


Spohr literature.

3. SpWV, p.300; both autographs are preserved in the archives of the Internationale Louis Spohr Gesellschaft in Kassel.
4. SpWV, p.504
5. SpWV, p.454
6. SpWV, p.30
7. WoO.31, a waltz Moritz Hauptmann claimed to have written down from memory more than fifty years after Spohr's student Franz showed him the composition, should have been placed into Göthel's category "Zugeschriebenen Werke". First, the young Spohr was striving to master the most serious and prestigious genres and showed no ambition to compose light music; the piece Hauptmann saw in 1809 must have been a scherzo or minuet perhaps for string quartet. Second, the similarities between the piece and the slow movement of Mozart's Symphony go far beyond the well-known Mozartisms in Spohr's early works, and it seems that Hauptmann's memory was not as accurate as he claimed. Therefore Hauptmann's claim that the work was intended for piano has to be taken with a grain of salt.
8. Spohr, *Lebenserinnerungen*, ed. Folker Göthel (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1968), Vol. II, p.73, 86-87.
9. SpWV, p.436; Spohr, *Lebenserinnerungen*, I, p.94.
10. Rundnagel's reduction could be used as part of a piano score of the lovely Scene.
11. SpWV, p.110.

Musical Examples

1. WoO.32, mm.2-3, violin.
2. Op.27, second movement, mm.2-3, first violin.

1.



2.

