

## *Bibliographical Sandtraps: The Klavierschule, Pleyel or Dussek?*

Julius Zsako

According to the detailed reactions expressed by many of its readers, the "Bibliography of Performance Practices" (PPB) which appeared in *Current Musicology*, Number 8/1969, seems to have filled the dire need for a study of this type, however studded with beginners' constraints this work turned out to be. Such an undertaking, even as a point of departure, a "working tool," deserves praise and encouragement. Yet, in terms of this project's very nature and the circumstances surrounding its inception, errors of commission and omission were expected *a priori*.

It is, in fact, one such curious bibliographical reference which prompted the present article. This concerns entry number 816, "Pleyel, Ignaz. *Klavierschule*, 3rd ed. Leipzig: Hoffmeister & Kühnel, 1804 . . .," a publication attributed, whether by accident or intent, to Pleyel alone.

Toward the end of the 18th century several well-known composers established themselves as publishers, too. One reason for this tendency was to protect the authenticity of their own compositions, in the absence of copyright laws, against the malpractices of other publishers. Nevertheless, as entrepreneurs, they occasionally became involved in complicated mercantile and legal problems, sometimes even concerning the question of authorship. Entry number 816 is the culmination of an apparently inexplicable exchange between two, or rather three, such noted composer-publishers.

The PPB is correct in making no reference to the first and second editions of the *Klavierschule*, since there were no such editions under that author-title listing. However, the bibliography fails to mention the two earlier works which show different titles but contain the *raison d'être* for entry number 816.

The Leipzig (third) edition is a revised, German version of a French edition published in Paris by Pleyel himself in 1799. Surprisingly, in this edition Pleyel claims to be only a co-author and entitles the work: *Méthode pour le piano forte par Pleyel et Dussek*.<sup>1</sup> To further confuse bibliographers, if the original English edition is referred to, Dussek is credited with sole authorship. The first publication, *Dussek's Instructions on the Art of Playing the Piano Forte or Harpsichord*, was published by Dussek's firm, Corri Dussek & Co., in London during 1796.<sup>2</sup>

Dussek's bewilderment upon seeing that the third edition of his book did not even mention his name is expressed in his open letter, "Jedem das Seine," in the *AmZ* of 1802:<sup>3</sup>

Herr Pleyel in Paris . . . lies vor einiger Zeit die von mir in London unter dem Titel: *Dussek's Instructions* etc. bey Corri Dussek et Co., herausgegebene Klavierschule, in französischer Uebersetzung, drucken,

und that mir die unerwartete Ehre an, sich auf dem Titel als Mitverfasser derselben zu nennen. . . .

Bey meiner jetzigen Reise in Deutschland finde ich diese meine Klavierschule in einer deutschen Uebersetzung aus dem Verlag der Herren Hoffmeister und Kühnel in Leipzig, denen es jedoch, ich weis nicht warum, gefallen hat, meinen Namen auf dem Titel derselben ganz zu unterdrücken und Hrn. Pleyel allein als Verfasser derselben zu nennen.

Since Dussek's protest appeared in 1802, the year of 1804, reported in the *PPB* as the year of the third edition, should be changed accordingly.<sup>4</sup> In the same *AmZ* letter Dussek also declares that he has undertaken a revision of *his* Klavierschule, which was to be the only authentic German edition.

The publication of this edition, which was to hand the authorship back to Dussek, was announced by Breitkopf and Härtel in 1803 as follows:

Dussek, J. L., Pianoforte-Schule. Nach der englischen Originalausgabe (Dussek's Instructions) übersetzt und von dem Verfasser selbst, verbessert und mit vielen praktischen Beyspielen vermehrt, herausgegeben. 1 Thlr.<sup>5</sup>

To further complicate this story, yet a fourth edition of the Dussek *Pianoforte-Schule* is reported by *Craw*.<sup>6</sup>

Although Dussek made it clear that this *Pianoforte-Schule* was the outgrowth of his original work (not to be confused with Pleyel's *Klavierschule*), the title page of the English original already carried the seeds of the forthcoming controversy. The long and explanatory title page of *Dussek's Instructions* makes the following reference to Pleyel:

*Making the Compleatest [!] Work ever offered to the Public. | to which are added Op. 32 expressly Composed by | Ignace Pleyel, | Six progressive Sonatinas w.<sup>th</sup> Violin accomp.<sup>ts</sup> ad Libitum; | which the Author has so constructed, that the Passages are | first immediately under the Performers Hand, not exceed.<sup>s</sup> | in Compass one fifth, and gradually extended & connected w.<sup>th</sup> | the Improvement of the Pupil.*

It is further explained that the work is divided into two books and that each can be purchased separately. On the bottom of the title page the following announcement appears:

*N.B. A Continuation of Six progressive Sonatas, by Ignace Pleyel, | will shortly be Publish'd . . . the whole of this Work, consisting of | Three Books, may be had . . .*

In addition to the above evidence of Pleyel's involvement with the first edition, there are other good reasons to explain why Pleyel added his name to Dussek's for the Parisian edition. Pleyel not only provided the French translation but also added some eighteen of his own exercises to those of

Dussek.<sup>7</sup> Enjoying an excellent reputation in Paris as both composer and publisher, Pleyel knew that he would also increase the sales potential of the book in France by listing himself as co-author. These facts do not, however, explain the controversy surrounding the German edition, especially since Pleyel was never so popular in Germany as he was in France and England. This third edition would seem to suggest that Pleyel unscrupulously declared himself the sole author of Dussek's volume.

Tracing the authorship of the *Klavierschule* is only half the story. The fascinating complexity in this evolution of authorship, and the psychological facets which might have constituted such an unusual state of affairs are not readily apparent.

Since it was Hoffmeister who published the third edition of the *Klavierschule*, one has to consider the relationship between Pleyel and Hoffmeister, dating back to 1798–99. The issue is again a question of authorship; however, the progression is now reversed. Here are the words of Hoffmeister as expressed in an open letter, again in the *AmZ*:<sup>8</sup>

Herr Ignaz Pleyel hat in seinem Verlag 3 grosse Duetten für 2 Flöten herausgegeben, und mir die unverdiente Ehre erwiesen, auf dieselben als das 50ste Werk meinen Namen zu setzen, und dadurch mich zum Verfasser erklären . . .

Ich entsage demnach öffentlich den süßen Vaterfreuden, und stelle solche 3 Duetten dem Herrn Pleyel anheim, mit der Bitte, Statt meines Namens den wahren Verfasser, der Ihm wohl am besten bekannt seyn wird, auf das Titelblatt zu setzen . . .

While Dussek and Pleyel managed to settle the matter of the *Klavierschule* amicably, the relationship between Pleyel and Hoffmeister remained rather embittered for many years. There is evidence that Dussek was not seriously concerned about the elimination of his name from the third edition; he did not directly blame Pleyel for it, and the two composer-publishers maintained a continuous and friendly personal and business relationship.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Dussek was made aware that Pleyel's contribution was significantly valuable, as becomes readily apparent when one compares the original and third editions. On the other hand, several letters of Pleyel to Hoffmeister evidence a continued implacability on the part of Hoffmeister and also reveal the burden of a distressing monetary debt which Hoffmeister owed Pleyel.<sup>10</sup> This, in fact, led to severely strained relations between the two; Pleyel, sarcastically, even changed to the "Sie" form of address and threatened to come to Leipzig in order to personally collect what he was owed.

There is no proof, of course, that the third edition of the piano method (without the name of Dussek) was directly related to this unsettled and alarming situation, nor that Hoffmeister, in turn, was trying to cause Pleyel the pains of undeserved "sweet parental joy." Nonetheless, it was published in the midst of heated mutual mistrust, and the above letters do reflect Hoffmeister's ire.

There is yet another impugnable issue related to the background of the above controversy, and again in the *AmZ*.<sup>11</sup> Preceding Hoffmeister's open letter, a reviewer (signing as M . . .) discusses the duets of "Hoffmeister." Expressing his "sincere opinion" (very assuredly), the commentator suggests that the style of the duets strongly indicates Pleyel, rather than Hoffmeister, as the composer. The presentation of this overly-expert stylistic evaluation leads one to believe that the reviewer's opinion was guided by inside information. Interestingly enough, this review was written almost a year before Hoffmeister's protest.

One of the more peculiar facts concerning this mystery is that, while Pleyel was better known in Paris and Hoffmeister in Leipzig, each published the *other's* work in the city in which that other was the less popular of the two. Why would Pleyel market his own compositions under the name of Hoffmeister when, during that time, Pleyel's compositions had the better sales potential in Paris. Moreover, there is no proof that the flute duets were composed by Pleyel. Around 1800 Pleyel's vogue as composer sharply declined. Dussek and Hoffmeister relinquished their publishing activities completely in 1800 and 1805, respectively. Pleyel, on the other hand, became quite well known as a publisher, but he stopped composing at this time.

The present author did not attempt to gather additional information pertaining to the *modus operandi* of the protagonists in this mystery, nor to follow up the other pedagogical publications attributed to, or associated with, the name of Pleyel.<sup>12</sup> This complex puzzle is the result of a foray into just one item in the PFB, noted in passing, and is in fact only remotely connected with the main concern of this author's doctoral thesis on Pleyel's string quartets. However, when one considers authorship pertaining to music in a period when unscrupulousness was a part of the publishing business, one wonders how much anyone really knows about the so-called lesser composers.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A copy of this 1799 publication is reported in the catalogues of several libraries, including the British Museum. Full title is quoted by Howard Allen Crow, *A Biography and Thematic Catalog of the Works of J. L. Dussek* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1964), p. 386, as follows: *Méthode | Pour | Le Piano Forte | Par | Pleyel et Dussek. | Cette Méthode contient essentiellement les principes du Doigté du Forte Piano. | On y trouvera aussi une nouvelle manière d'accorder cet Instrument.*

<sup>2</sup> A copy of this edition is in the New York Public Library.

<sup>3</sup> *AmZ*, *Intelligenz-Blatt* (December, 1802) 7:29-30. (The orthography is that of the original.)

<sup>4</sup> One copy of this third edition is in the Library of Congress. The *Klavierschule von J. Pleyel. Nebst 27 Uebungs-Stücken. Dritte, verbesserte und vermehrte Ausgabe* consists of two main parts: 42 pages of instructions (13 *Lectionen*, 8 *Regeln*) followed by 17 pages of (twenty-seven) progressive pieces. The latter part was printed separately and according to a different printing style, and its pages are engraved with a plate number "58." The folio following the title page contains a publisher's catalogue, and, interestingly enough, it bears the date December 1804. This date would indicate either a new printing of the *Klavierschule* or an insertion of the

publisher's catalogue into the material in stock, after Dussek's *Pianoforte-Schule* had already been published.

<sup>5</sup> *AmZ, Intelligenz-Blatt* (November, 1803) 4:14. (Original orthography).

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 287. Craw was unable to find references to the second and third editions; the fourth edition was published by Breitkopf & Härtel around 1815.

<sup>7</sup> Rita Benton, "Ignace Pleyel, Disputant," *Fontes Artis Musicae* (1966) 13:22.

<sup>8</sup> "Anzeige," *AmZ, Intelligenz-Blatt* (December, 1799) 5:19-20. (Original orthography).

<sup>9</sup> Benton, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Baron, letter to the present writer, London, July 11, 1970. Baron's unique collection of correspondence, dating from 1800 to 1805, testifies to a number of business dealings between Pleyel and the publishing house of Hoffmeister and Kühnel in Leipzig. Some of the letters reveal the fact that Pleyel lent Hoffmeister much cash and merchandise during the fall of 1800, probably while Pleyel was staying in Leipzig. This writer wishes to thank Mr. Baron for having provided him with this as yet unpublished information.

<sup>11</sup> "Recensionen," *AmZ* (February, 1799) 1:345-46.

<sup>12</sup> For the interested reader, there are a few such references available which are not reported in the PFB. The Library of Congress lists under Pleyel's name several instructive duets for two violins, progressive pieces for piano, and even instructions for the violoncello. Some of these publications include informative explanations. Pazdirek's list includes such items as: *Pleyel-Czerny, Klavierschule mit besonderer Rücksicht der jetzigen Leistungen auf diesem Instrumente*—Leuckart; *Pleyel & Schubert, Dance and Song, song for home & School*—Williams; *Pleyel und Wanhal, Kleine Pianoforte-Schule*—Cranz. C. F. Becker's *Systematisch-chronologische Darstellung der musikalischen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1836) offers about twelve different later or revised editions of the *Klavierschule* issued by German and Austrian publishers.