

MAX BRUCH'S *DOUBLE CONCERTO FOR CLARINET AND VIOLA*

by Nicolai Pfeffer

Obtaining the orchestra parts for a large number of pieces for clarinet and orchestra is difficult, and is a common problem for clarinet players. As a result, many compositions, including Max Bruch's¹ *Double Concerto for Clarinet and Viola*², Op. 88³, are rarely performed in public.

This situation is quite unfortunate—on the one hand audiences may have the impression that the clarinet does not have a recognizable solo repertoire (besides the wonderful concertos of Mozart and Weber), and on the other hand, some really interesting pieces for clarinet and orchestra tend to be unavailable for listeners and clarinetists alike.

Regarding the Bruch *Concerto*, we are without a doubt talking about a valuable addition to the romantic solo repertoire for both the clarinet and the viola, written by a renowned composer of that period. Listening without prejudice, we immediately hear a warm, romantic score for an unusual soloistical (and even orchestral⁴) instrumentation that deserves to be performed regularly by professional and nonprofessional ensembles. This assertion is especially true since the alternative scoring for violin (instead of the clarinet) allows for different instrument combinations.

Nevertheless, the *Double Concerto in E-Minor* was lost for many years in unjustified obscurity. This neglect may be attributed to the work's anachronistic character and the fact that Bruch's compositions were banned from being publicly performed in Germany during the National Socialist Era⁵. Even though the conservative Cologne composer Bruch, a true admirer of Schumann and Mendelssohn, and himself a composer of masterly craftsmanship, was 73 when he composed the concerto in Berlin in December of 1911, he was still composing in the style of his most popular work, the *G-Minor Violin Concerto* of 1868⁶. Bruch, who was known during his lifetime mainly for his choral compositions, was a traditionalist and resolutely and uncompromisingly defended his romantic appreciation of art.

This defence led to controversial discussions with some of the most eminent composers of his time, including the New Germans Wagner and Liszt, followed by their successors Reger and Strauss, and finally resulted in a decline of Bruch's recognition towards the turn of the century.

As with the *Eight Pieces* (Op. 83⁷)—a set of trio compositions for the clarinet, viola and piano—the *Double Concerto* was written expressly for Bruch's son Max Felix Bruch⁸, a gifted clarinetist whose playing was sometimes compared to that of Richard Mühlfeld⁹, the famous clarinetist from the Meiningen court orchestra. In 1912, Max Felix gave the first performance of Op. 88¹⁰ from the manuscript parts together with Bruch's friend, violist Prof. Willy Hess¹¹, at the seaport in Wilhelmshaven, Germany. Another performance of the work was later given at the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik* (College of Music) on December 3, 1913. The work breathes the same air as Bruch's earlier compositions (even borrowing themes and melodies¹²) and many works by Mendelssohn and Schumann. But in 1913, music had already moved on to the revolutionary styles of Debussy¹³, Scriabin¹⁴, and the composers of the Second Viennese School, Schönberg¹⁵, Berg¹⁶ and Webern¹⁷. Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps*¹⁸ debuted in Paris only two months after the premiere of Bruch's *Double Concerto*. *Sacre* for example, provoked a musical debate such as had never been caused by any of Bruch's compositions. Moreover, nobody expected a musical sensation from this 73-year-old conservative composer whose creative energies were running low.

Hence, the first performance of the *Double Concerto* was described as "harmless, weak, unexciting, first and most of all too restrained, its effect is unoriginal and it shows no master-strokes" in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*¹⁹, criticism that may be justified in the light of the controversial premiere of *Sacre* and other works of the time.

Max Bruch's Op. 88 was first published in 1942 by the Simrock successor Rudolf Eichmann in Berlin 22 years after the composer's death. Since then, it has always been rather complicated or even impossible to rent the orchestral parts or a full score, since the publishing company has been sold several times and the num-

ber of copies published was quite limited due to the events of World War II. Additionally, it was assumed that the original autographs were destroyed during the last stages of the war. Fortunately, the manuscript of the full score showed up at Christie's auction house in London in 1991 and was finally bought by the Cologne Max-Bruch-Archiv after the British conductor and Bruch expert Christopher Fifield²⁰ had verified its authenticity. The Max-Bruch-Archiv belongs to the Musicology Department of the University of Cologne and is—believe it or not—in my direct neighborhood. It hosts a vast collection of important Bruch autographs including, for example, his second *Violin Concerto*²¹, the second²² and the third *Symphony*²³ as well as pictures and letters to or from his contemporaries and correspondence with the Simrock publishing company²⁴.

Back in 2004, when I began my clarinet studies at the Cologne *Musikhochschule* (College of Music), I got the opportunity to perform the *Double Concerto* with orchestra, but it was still not possible to buy or rent the performance material. This circumstance is why I began preparing a new Urtext edition of the *Concerto* on my own. Comparing Bruch's manuscript score from the institute with the Berlin first print of 1942, I realized that there were many discrepancies between the two sources. What was even more surprising was the fact that the editor of the first edition, Otto Lindemann²⁵, had made some significant changes in the manuscript score himself with a green pencil, which were later to be found in the printed editions of both the orchestra score as well as the piano reduction. The reduction was based on Bruch's lost manuscript but had also been significantly altered by Lindemann.

With the autographs of the piano reduction and the solo parts still lost, it seems an impossible task to determine who in the end was responsible for the abundance of different markings regarding dynamics, phrasings, and articulation between the printed editions of the score, the piano reduction, and the parts. The deviations between the manuscript, the first print of the orchestra score, and the first print of the piano reduction are probably due to either a belated revision by the composer himself or to arbitrary engraving at the publishing house. Concerning Bruch's original intentions, the only remaining re-

liable document is the manuscript of the full score of the *Double Concerto*, which therefore served as the main source for my new edition. All major differences between the sources are listed in an editorial comment.

I'm very happy that the first urtext edition of Max Bruch's *Double Concerto*²⁶ (including the full score, orchestra parts and a revised piano reduction) is now available through the renowned C. F. Peters publishing company in Frankfurt. The sheet music of the *Concerto* is now sold and rented worldwide through their website. Thus I hope to provide musicians with a clearly arranged and practically oriented edition that gives justice to Bruch's original score. A new, revised edition of the *Eight Pieces* (Op. 83²⁷), following the Cologne manuscripts, has been published by the Munich publishing company Edition Diawa and can be ordered through the German sheet music service from Stephan Zerluth²⁸ in Munich.

About the writer...

Twenty-five year old German clarinetist Nicolai Pfeffer studied clarinet performance with Prof. Ralph Manno at the Cologne *Musikhochschule* and with Prof. Howard Klug at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. In addition to his many chamber music and solo performances, he works as an educator and music editor for various major publishing houses in Germany.

Feel free to E-mail him at info@nicolaipfeffer.com

Endnotes

- 1 Max [Christian Friedrich] Bruch: born January 6, 1838 in Cologne; died October 6, 1920 in Berlin-Friedenau. Bruch was a German composer, teacher, and conductor. He received his first musical training from his mother, the music teacher and soprano Wilhelmine Bruch (née Almenröder, 1799–1867). His father, August [Carl Friedrich] Bruch (1799–1861) was vice president of the Cologne police. Bruch studied in Cologne with Ferdinand [von] Hiller (1811–1885) and Carl [Heinrich Carsten] Reinecke (1824–1910). Bruch received numerous academic awards, such as a professorship at the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik*, Dr. mus. h.c. (honorary degree) of the Cambridge University, the Berlin Honorary Doctor of Theology and Philosophy for his 80th birthday, and many others.
- 2 *Doppelkonzert für Klarinette und Bratsche mit Orchester* op. 88 (1911), Berlin: Eichmann, 1943
- 3 Prof. Dr. Dietrich Kämper: *Catalogue of Works*, in "Max Bruch Studien. Zum 50. Todestag des Komponisten," (in: *Beiträge zur Rheinischen*

Musikgeschichte Heft 87, Cologne 1970)

- 4 The orchestration is curious: The piece starts with a chamber music scoring, adding more and more wind instruments as it progresses.
- 5 After having composed his *Kol Nidrei* for cello and orchestra op. 47 (1881)—a set of variations on two Jewish themes—it had been erroneously reported during the Third Reich that Max Bruch was Jewish. Bruch himself was Protestant, the grandson of the famous evangelical cleric Dr. Phil. Christian Gottlieb Bruch (1771–1836).
- 6 *Konzert Nr. 1 g-moll für Violine und Orchester* op. 26 (1864–1867), Wiesbaden: August Cranz, 1868
- 7 *Acht Stücke für Klarinette, Bratsche und Klavier oder Violine, Violoncelle und Klavier*. Berlin/Leipzig: N. Simrock, 1910. First published in eight separate booklets.
- 8 Max Felix Bruch (1884–1943) studied composition with his father in Berlin, but began his career as a clarinetist and conductor. Later he became the German representative of an international gramophone company.
- 9 Richard Mühlfeld (born February 28, 1856; died June 1, 1907) was a German clarinetist who inspired Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) and other important contemporaries to write chamber works and solo concertos for the clarinet. Please also see: Mühlfeld, Christian (Goltz, Maren/Herta Müller): *Richard Mühlfeld, the Brahms clarinetist*. Balve: Artivo Music Publishing, 2007
- 10 First performance on March 5, 1912, in Wilhelmshaven, Germany
- 11 Prof. Willy Hess (born July 14, 1859; died February 17, 1939) was a German violin virtuoso and violin professor at the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik*.
- 12 The second theme in the second movement of op. 88 derives from the first movement of Bruch's *Suite No. 2 for Orchestra* (Nordland Suite, 1906, WoO)
- 13 Claude-Achille Debussy (born August 22, 1862; died March 25, 1918)
- 14 Alexander [Nikolayevich] Scriabin (Russ. Александр Николаевич Скрябин) (born December 25, 1871; died April 27, 1915)
- 15 Arnold Schönberg (born September 13, 1874; died July 13, 1951)
- 16 Alban [Maria Johannes] Berg (born February 9, 1885; died December 24, 1935)
- 17 Anton [von] Webern (born December 3, 1883; died 15 September, 1945)
- 18 Engl. *The Rite of Spring* is a 1913 ballet with music by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), original choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky (1890–1950) all under impresario Serge Diaghilev (1872–1929). It was premiered on May 29, 1913 at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* in Paris and involved one of the most famous classical music riots in history.
- 19 *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* Nr. 40, 1913
- 20 Christopher Fifield, conductor and musicologist, is the author of the excellent biography: *Max Bruch—His Life and Works*, London: George Braziller, 1988
- 21 *Konzert Nr. 2 d-moll für Violine und Orchester* op. 44 (1878) Berlin: N. Simrock, 1878
- 22 *Symphonie Nr. 2 f-moll* op. 36, (1870, dedicated to Joseph Joachim) Berlin: N. Simrock, 1870
- 23 *Symphonie Nr. 3 E-Dur* op. 51 (1887) Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1887

24 My special thanks go to Prof. Dr. Wolfram Steinbeck and Thomas Fischer for granting me an impressive insight into the Cologne Max-Bruch-Archiv.

- 25 Otto Lindemann (1879–1946) was a Berlin music editor and arranger. Lindemann was well known for his piano arrangements and reductions, and potpourris of popular works by Johann Strauss (son), Franz Lehar, and Jaques Offenbach amongst others.
- 26 *Doppelkonzert op. 88 für Klarinette (Violine) und Viola mit Orchester*, edited by Nicolai Pfeffer, Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, 2010
- 27 *Acht Stücke op. 83 für Klarinette, Bratsche (Violine, Violoncello) und Klavier*, edited by Nicolai Pfeffer, Munich: Edition Diawa, 2010
- 28 http://www.zerluth.de/artikel/katalog/klarinette/volltext/Pfeffer/komponist/Bruch/schwierigkeitsgrad_kein_einschliessen/1/nur_neuheiten/0/nur_antiquariate/0/ergebnisse_pro_seite/50/seite/1
or http://www.koebel.com/english/8-stuecke-op-83.html?__from_store=german

Illustrations:

No. 1. Max Felix Bruch (Berlin, 1910, at a reception honoring his father's 70th birthday)

No. 2. Page 1 of the manuscript of the *Double Concerto*

