Carl Maria Von Weber and Cadenzas

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This discussion of Carl Maria von Weber's life and music writing techniques is focused on one of his major works, "Concerto for Clarinet No. 1 op. 72." Throughout his travels, Weber discovered instrumentalists for whom he wrote music. He wanted to write the music in such a manner that when the instrumentalists played, the music would allow them to readily demonstrate their tonal and technical abilities. One of the ways to develop this type of music is through the use of musical flourishes or cadenzas. Through the years, however, the term cadenza has been often confused with that of the Eingang. The following paper discusses Weber's life as well as the difference in the two musical terms.

This study of Weber and "Concerto No. 1" will culminate on December 2, 1993, as I perform the clarinet solo during my Senior Honors Recital in Pruis Hall on Ball State University's campus.
Weber and Cadenzas

Famous musician and composer, Carl Maria Von Weber, was a role model for many throughout the Romantic period. This was acknowledged by such followers as Debussy, Hindemith, and Stravinsky. The Romantic period was a time of new ideas and greater emotional responses. Weber, being a very dramatic person, sometimes had "theatrical ideas" for the solo instruments of his Concertos.

On February 14, 1811, Weber started out on a concert tour. Munich was scheduled to be one of his many stops through Germany. There he met a good friend of his, clarinettist, Heinrich Baermann. The works on the concert given in Munich on April 5 included the Clarinet Concertino, which was performed by Baermann. After hearing the performance, the King of Bavaria commissioned two full-scale clarinet concertos. These Concertos were grounds for Weber's creativity. He wanted to create a personal relationship between the virtuoso solo player and his audience. His discovery of new characteristics of the clarinet and horn allowed him to develop dramatic contrasts throughout a movement. He wanted to demonstrate the brilliance of his solo instruments and reveal new aspects of their tonal characteristics and abilities.

One of the ways to develop these contrasts in style is to add ornamentation or flourishes of some kind. Weber used this technique in his Concertinos and Concertos. For example, in the first movement of Concerto no. 1 in f minor, he added a flourish of notes in the form of a cadenza, in order to achieve a contrast in style. The cadenza being defined as an ornamented passage performed by the soloist, beginning on the tonic 6-4 chord. The cadenzas could be written out with the musical piece
itself. However, often times the soloist would improvise the passage of notes during performance. This stylistic pattern of notes is usually utilized to bring a certain brilliance to the end of a movement or entire work. After the embellishment is complete, the passage is resolved to a five chord and finally ends on the tonic. During the cadenza the accompaniment either pauses or sustains a pitch or a chord. This allows for an even flashier ending. Later however, the reason for their use seemed more important. The composers felt they had to meet the increasing demands of famous singers who wanted to sing something similar to a cadenza to show their technical abilities. One quality the performer needed was stamina. The length of the cadenzas were and still are often determined by the common rule that they should never exceed what can be sung or played in one breath. Thus, these cadenzas often truly did challenge the performers.

In the Baroque period, Mozart and Beethoven distinguished between cadenzas and a shorter form of embellishment called the Eingang. This distinction had not been made in earlier periods. Contrasting the form and purpose of a cadenza, an Eingang was usually indicated by placing a fermata over a dominant 7th chord. It was intended to lead into a new section of a work, such as a ritornello of a rondo movement. There was usually no modulation, or change of the tonic key in an Eingang but simply some passage-work to serve as a transition. Classical concerto cadenzas, unlike Eingangs, contain modulations of a limited range and often have a firm spot in the concerto movement, between a recapitulation and coda.

Heinrich Baermann often toured with Weber, and as a result they became great companions and partners. Baerman's artistry helped to convince the musicians of Weber's talent and worth. On the flip side, this
was also great exposure for Baermann himself as he was given the chance to demonstrate his expressive playing and wonderful tone, which was a contrast to the style of some of the earlier players. Weber wrote six major works for the clarinet: the Concertino op. 26, Seven Variations op. 33, Quintet op. 34, Grand Duo op. 48, and Concertos op. 73 and 74. All of these, except the Grand Duo, were written for his friend. Baermann was a composer as well as a performer. He has a collection of works including quartets, quintets, and concertinos for clarinet and other various instrument combinations.

Weber often wrote his works in a hurry. The first movement of the Concerto op. 73 for the clarinet was written for an entire orchestra in one day. Though he wrote in haste, his works were reflections of nothing but clear purpose and consistency. However, through misunderstanding of his writing, Weber's work on this Concerto was distorted by Heinrich Baermann's son and pianist grandson. These two men took liberties to make strange markings and alter the great work. The following appendix page displays some of Carl Baermann's (Heinrich's son) work on the embellishment which appears in the first movement of the Concerto in f minor. He calls this flourish of notes a cadenza, however it is lacking several qualities which are typical of cadenza's. It appears that the term cadenza is coined and used in much too general of cases. An example of one of these general cases might be Carl Baermann's "cadenza," which has more qualities of an Eingang than a cadenza. There is no modulation throughout the passage like there would be in a cadenza, and it ends on a dominant 7th chord held by a fermata. His flourish is also used as a transition to the next section of the movement. These are all perfect criterion for Eingangs. After looking at several other examples of
"cadenzas" I have realized that this is a term that has become very
generalized to many composers, editors, and performers.

I took interest in Weber's Concerto in f minor for clarinet when it
was suggested as a piece for my Senior Honors Clarinet Recital. On
December 2, 1993, I performed the first movement of this major work.
The cadenzas I played can both be seen on the following Appendix page.
Heinrich Baermann's additional bars were played followed by Carl
Baermann's cadenza. Though said to be distorted, I found this particular
section to be challenging and exciting to perform. This study of Weber and
cadenzas made performing this piece, as a major work on my recital, even
more meaningful.
Heinrich Baermann’s additional bars to 1st Movement

Cadenza

Carl Baermann’s cadenza to follow the additional bars

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Bibliography


