

A PERFORMANCE EDITION OF THE  
ALESSANDRO ROLLA CONCERTO IN F, Op. 4 (BI 549)

[REDACTED], B.M., M.M.

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## PURPOSE

My dissertation will promote the Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) by Alessandro Rolla (1757-1841) as a complement for existing standard Classical repertoire for the viola, thus providing the means for greater stylistic education and technical foundation for viola study from this time period. In order to make the music from this lesser-known composer more readily available for future performers, I will edit this concerto into a performance edition from current unpublished sources using the notation software "Finale." I will also combine separate parts into a conductor's full score, which currently does not exist. A performance edition consisting of a full score and parts will provide greater access to Rolla's music for viola performance and study.

Rolla's viola concerti are valuable and should be made available for three main reasons. First, the viola has a lack of Classical repertoire compared to the violin and cello. At present, the most-often played viola concerti from the Classical era are those of Stamitz and Hoffmeister. The Rolla concerti provide an excellent alternative or complement to the Stamitz and Hoffmeister viola concerti because Rolla's writing for the viola is different than that of either of these two composers. Second, the Rolla concerti can serve a similar purpose for the viola as Mozart and Haydn concerti do for the violin and cello. The Mozart and Haydn concerti for violin and cello are currently used not only for instruction, but also in the evaluation process for auditions. As the violists do not usually have classical concertos on audition repertoire lists, the Rolla concerti would be very useful in this role. Finally, the Rolla concerti provide a viable choice for research and performance to represent the style of the Classical Era at a time when musicians are turning to the study and performance of historically-informed performance practice.

## SIGNIFICANCE AND STATE OF RESEARCH

Rolla's concerti for viola, fifteen in number, remain widely unknown. The author of Rolla's entry in the *Oxford Companion of Music*, Antonio Rostagno, gives a slight editorial comment concerning the popularity of Rolla's works for viola in stating that "[they are] *inexplicably* neglected by 20th-century performers" (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup> The SHAR Catalogue, the largest resource for string music in the United States, has only recently added works for viola by Rolla in the catalogue but still offers none of his viola concerti.<sup>2</sup>

A closer comparison between the standard viola concerti from the Classical Period of Stamitz and Hoffmeister and the lesser-known Rolla concerti reveal differences in style. One basic difference is more use of the higher register of the viola in the Rolla concerti. The highest note in the Stamitz and Hoffmeister Concerti is a B-natural (B<sub>4</sub>). In the Rolla Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549), the highest note written is almost an octave higher (B-flat<sub>5</sub>). In general, Rolla explores the higher register of the viola in three ways: in melodic content, in figuration and passagework, and in virtuoso gestures that feature the extreme high register. Stamitz and Hoffmeister composed more for the lower register of the instrument to highlight its darker tone, as if to set it apart from the violin. Rolla, on the other hand, allows the viola freedom to express its entire register.

Only three sources for the Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) exist. I downloaded the manuscript for the Concerto from the website [imslp.org](http://imslp.org), where it was made accessible thanks to the efforts of Carlo Barato, a Rolla performer and scholar. I was also able to obtain a copy of the original manuscript sent to me online from the Giuseppe Verdi

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Rolla, Alessandro."

<sup>2</sup> Shar Catalogue, search for works by Alessandro Rolla for viola, <http://www.sharmusic.com/shop.axd/Search?keywords=alessandro+rolla>, (accessed June 23, 2011).

Library in the Milan Conservatory.<sup>3</sup> The source contains fifty-five pages consisting of one copy of the solo viola part and each of the orchestral instrument parts. In addition to the manuscript, I purchased a digital copy of an edition by Johann André from the Westfälische Wilhelms University in Muenster, Germany.<sup>4</sup> Like the manuscript, this edition, published in 1799 (actual date of composition unknown), consists of a solo viola part and each of the orchestral parts. There is no full score. The concerto is in the standard three-movement format. Many inconsistencies exist within the manuscript and within the André edition, and these two copies of the concerto differ from each other in bowings, articulations and, in a few cases, notes. The third source is a piano and viola score by "Günther" from 1938.<sup>5</sup> This edition is a secondary source, comes from a time when different stylistic elements were valued, and only exists in piano score. For these reasons, I will not be using this edition in my study.

Of the Rolla concerti that remain unpublished, the Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) is the most feasible for my study and would most significantly contribute to the viola repertoire. Other Rolla concerti under consideration for this study were the Concerto in B-flat, BI 555 and the Concerto in F, BI 551. The BI 555 was not complete, and the BI 551 was an alternate version of the Concerto in F, BI 550, which has already been published. Unlike many Rolla viola concerti, the Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) has all complete parts in all instruments. In addition, this concerto has two primary sources, the original manuscript and the André edition from 1799, for editing purposes that will

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<sup>3</sup> Alessandro Rolla, Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549), MS score, n .d. Biblioteca del Conservatorio "G. Verdi" di Milano.

<sup>4</sup> RISM sigla R OI 44.

<sup>5</sup> Michael and Dorothea Jappe, *Viola Bibliographie: das Repertoire für die historische Bratsche von 1649 bis nach 1800*. (Winterthur/Schweiz: Amadeus, 1999), 298. Jappe does not give complete information for this edition.

ensure a reliable finished product. In comparison to other unpublished Rolla concerti, the form, pleasing melodies, and idiomatic writing for the viola make the Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) a better choice.

Most of the research on Alessandro Rolla has been done since the 1970s with the work of two Italian scholars, Luigi Alberto Bianchi and Luigi Inzaghi. In addition to publishing articles in journals, Bianchi and Inzaghi wrote a biography of Rolla and also a catalogue<sup>6</sup> of his works organized by genre. This catalogue includes fifteen known viola concertos, four sonatas, eight pieces for viola solo, and seventy-eight duets for violin and viola. Shortly after this time, a brief biography of Rolla was included in Maurice Riley's *The History of the Viola* (1980). Recently, new developments have emerged in the research of Rolla's life and works, including an important collection of essays published in 2010 entitled *Alessandro Rolla: Un caposcuola dell'arte violinistica lombarda*, edited by Mariateresa Dellaborra.<sup>7</sup> Entries on Rolla are also included in the most recent editions of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*<sup>8</sup> and *Die Musik Geschichte und Gegenwart*<sup>9</sup>.

The date of this piece is significant because of the stylistic issues that influenced Rolla by Mozart and Beethoven, his contemporaries. Bianchi and Inzaghi's catalogue does not specify in what chronological order Rolla's pieces were written, nor does it give dates of his compositions. Online access does not allow for any physical analysis that would provide information of the exact time the concerto was written, i.e. watermarks,

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<sup>6</sup> Luigi Alberto Bianchi and Luigi Inzaghi. *Alessandro Rolla: Biography and Thematic Catalogue of his Works*. Milan, Italy: Nuovo Edizioni Milano, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Mariateresa Dellaborra, ed., *Alessandro Rolla: Un caposcuola dell'arte violinistica lombarda* (Milan: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Rolla, Alessandro."

<sup>9</sup> *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, s.v. "Rolla, Alessandro."

type of paper, etc. Though this concerto is undoubtedly attributed to Rolla, it is not certain in whose hand this concerto was written, as his manuscripts bear different handwriting styles. However, it is known, according to the date of the edition by André, that the Rolla Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) was written before 1799. The surmised date of this piece falls after the death of Mozart and at the beginning of Beethoven's rise to fame.

Earlier editions of Rolla's concerti and his other works for viola and orchestra do not sufficiently address stylistic issues. This is especially true for the first modern edition of a Rolla viola work: Rolla's Concerto in F Major, BI 550, published in 1970 by Edizione de Santis and edited by Paolo Centurioni. For example, issues of the *vorschlag* appoggiaturas are not directly addressed in any kind of commentary. Some additions in bowings and articulations, as well as one passage in the solo viola that is rewritten without explanation, make the edition by Sydney Beck of Rolla's Concerto in E-flat, op. 3 (BI 545), published in 1990 by Rarities of Music inadequate for stylistic study.<sup>10, 11</sup> The Rolla concerti edited by violist Kenneth Martinson through Gems Music Publications are labeled with the word "Urtext," implying that the edition is true to the original score.<sup>12</sup> Works currently published of Rolla include his Concerto in C Major, BI 541 and his Concerto in D Major, BI 543. These works are available in full score plus parts, or in piano reduction plus solo part. Martinson's edition of the BI 550 is much closer to the

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<sup>10</sup> Alessandro Rolla, *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, op. 3* (BI 545), ed. Sydney Beck. (New York: Rarities of Music, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> This same concerto is also published in full score in Kenneth Cooper's *Three Centuries of Music* in 1989, also edited by Sydney Beck but differing in some respects in the solo part, and is more stylistically true to the original manuscript. Alessandro Rolla, *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, op. 3* (BI 545), ed. Sydney Beck. *Three Centuries of Music in Score*, Vol. 6, ed. Kenneth Cooper (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988-90).

<sup>12</sup> However, these editions are not critical editions, as they do not include critical notes or descriptions of sources, aside from a preface.

original score than Centurioni's edition. It is worth noting that, though the Concerto BI 541 has been published and recorded, the Concerto in F, BI 549 is arguably more idiomatically written for the viola.

Rolla's increasing popularity is reflected not only in published editions of his music, but also in the number of recordings that have been released since the year 2000. Fabrizio Merlini recorded the Concerto in C Major (BI 541), the Concerto in D Major (BI 543), and the Concerto in E-flat Major (BI 547). Victor Nagy has recorded the Concerto in F Major (BI 550), and Massimo Paris uses Sydney Beck's edition of the Concerto in E-flat, op. 3 (BI 545) in his recording with I Musici. Some of Rolla's chamber music also has been recorded, mostly under the Italian label Tactus. In my opinion, the most beautiful playing of Rolla's music was featured in Carlo Barato's recording with Francesco Lattuada of Rolla's viola duets. Because audio media can make such a powerful impression in the music industry, a recording of the highest level of playing and artistry is one of the most crucial factors to promote and increase the popularity of a piece new to the listening audience such as the BI 549.

## METHOD

A performance edition of Rolla's Concerto in F, op. 4 (BI 549) will be made based on manuscript sources downloaded from [imslp.org](http://imslp.org) and the edition of Johann André (1799). This edition will be a performance edition rather than a critical edition for the following reasons. First, the purpose is to make this music available to performers. Second, the sources for this piece have been accessed online or through digital copies. Consequently, source material such as manuscripts, types of paper, etc. will not be

examined in depth. The focus will instead be on stylistic issues. The music will be edited to a digital format using the notational software “Finale.” Once finished, this performance edition will be submitted for publication.

The research for this edition will include several different components. First, a brief summary of Rolla’s influences, education, and the culture in which he lived will be made in order to have a greater understanding of matters of interpretation from his manuscript. Two sources shed light on these issues, *Alessandro Rolla: Biography and Thematic Catalogue* and essays from *Alessandro Rolla: Un caposcuola dell'arte violinistica lombarda*. Second, the methodology of making a performance edition will be addressed. The main assumption of making an edition is that “editing... consists of choices, educated, critically informed choices; in short, the act of interpretation.”<sup>13</sup> Editions of past Rolla works for viola will also be helpful as models, despite their various standards of methodology. Finally, commentary will be focused on performance and stylistic issues more than source issues. For this concerto, the most pressing point is that of bowings: whether or not bowings, such as slurs, should be added due to common performance practices. Though ornaments are not as much of an issue in the Concerto in F, BI 549 as they are in his other concertos, their execution still must be clarified. Leopold Mozart’s *Treatise* and Geminiani’s *Art of Playing on the Violin* will be used as a primary resource, while Lawson and Stowell’s *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction*, Clive Brown’s *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice: 1750-1900*, and David Boyden’s *The History of Violin Playing* will be used as guides.

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<sup>13</sup> James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.



## CHAPTER HEADINGS

### Part I

#### Chapter 1: A Presentation of the Thesis Topic and State of Research

Chapter 1 will include a statement of purpose in researching Rolla's Concerto in F Major, BI 549 and will show previous research done on the composer and his works.

#### Chapter 2: A Consideration of Rolla's Importance in the Development of the Classical Concerto for the String Family

This chapter will begin with a brief discussion about Rolla's place in history, including his relationship to other composers and performers, his importance in the history of the viola, and his own mentors and influences.

#### Chapter 3: Methodology of Creating a Performance Edition

In this chapter, I will investigate the process of transcribing Rolla's Concerto in F, BI 549 from manuscript, including critical commentary of any unclear markings and issues of performance practice.

#### Chapter 4: Summary

The final chapter will explain the importance of research on this work, summarize the results of research done, and project future endeavors on the subject.

### Part II

#### Performance Edition of Rolla Concerto in F, BI 549

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