

PRECIOUS OFFERINGS FROM POMERANIA THREE CONCERTOS AND A SINFONIA BY CHRISTIAN MICHAEL WOLFF (1707–1789)

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Izyleček: *Christian Michael Wolff, organist iz Szczecina, je skladatelj, katerega pesmi, sonate s spremljavo, koralni preludiji za orgle in motet so že znani. Na drugi strani pa je bila njegova orkestrska glasba, ki obsega tri koncerte in sinfonio, ohranjeno v rokopisu v Stockholmu, doslej prezrta. Podrobna raziskava je pokazala, da so ta zgodnja dela, verjetno skomponirana v štiridesetih letih 18. stoletja, ambiciozna, očarljiva in vredna sodobne oživitve.*

Ključne besede: *Christian Michael Wolff, Szczecin, Stockholm, koncert, sinfonija*

Abstract: *Christian Michael Wolff, an organist from Szczecin, is a composer already known for his songs, accompanied sonatas, chorale preludes for organ and a motet, but his orchestral music, comprising three concertos and a sinfonia preserved in manuscripts in Stockholm, have hitherto been overlooked. Close examination reveals these early works, probably composed in the 1740s, to be ambitious, attractive pieces fully deserving modern revival.*

Keywords: *Christian Michael Wolff, Szczecin, Stockholm, concerto, sinfonia*

The present article is an analytical description, with surrounding contextual discussion, of three particularly fine concertos for woodwind instruments plus a sinfonia by a comparatively obscure German organist of the mid-eighteenth century whose works in other genres have in recent times received a modicum of attention from scholars and performers, but who has so far entirely escaped mention in the literature as a composer of orchestral music.

The four works in question survive in contemporary copied parts held by Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket in Stockholm (the institution that has inherited the RISM siglum “S-Skma”, which dates back to an earlier time when this was the library of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music alone). They are certainly not “new discoveries” so far as this library is concerned – indeed, they have already been digitized with open access by virtue of belonging to the musical works owned between 1766 and 1795 by the prominent Stockholm music society bearing the name of its Latin motto, *Utile Dulci*.¹ A database accompanying this digitized collection very usefully includes copious bibliographical

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¹ Home page: <http://utiledulci.musikverket.se/>.

data on each item as well as a comprehensive identification of individual scribes, both known and unknown.²

An important part of the reason why scholars and baroque music enthusiasts have been slow to appreciate the existence of, still less evaluate, Wolff's orchestral compositions may well be that the shelfmarks allocated to many of the instrumental compositions held by Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket are not individual but generic: thus "O-R" denotes simply orchestral works, while "FbO-R" stands for flute concertos and "FdO-R" oboe concertos. It is symptomatic that Wolff's oboe concerto is not yet listed in the Haynes Catalogue, a compendious online bibliography of music for oboe,³ while his two flute concertos are similarly absent from Frans Vester's published bibliography of eighteenth-century music for that instrument,⁴ although they appear in the slightly more recent thematic catalogue of flute concertos compiled by Ingo Gronefeld.⁵ One imagines that this unusual lack of a one-to-one correspondence between shelfmark and musical item has acted in the past as a deterrent to casual browsing, which is the most likely route through which works in genres not already associated with this unfamiliar composer would come to the notice of those in a position to perform or discuss them. But digitization of sources with open access is an instantly transformative act that can facilitate browsing immeasurably. And so it has proved in the present instance.

In the particular case of Wolff, an additional barrier to investigation, bearing in mind the understandable reluctance of scholars to risk misidentifying a composer, may well have been the existence of numerous musicians, including at least four who wrote music, with the same surname (also frequently spelled "Wolf" in the sources) who are recorded as active in Germany during the eighteenth century.⁶ Unfortunately, the Swedish sources for the four orchestral works under discussion follow standard local practice by omitting given names: their titles declare them simply to be "da Wolff".⁷ It is in fact mainly through a lucky happenstance – a probable date of composition slightly too early to fit any other

² The database employs a system of scribal identification originally devised by Ingmar Bengtsson and Ruben Danielson in the 1950s, principally in connection with research into Johan Helmich Roman (1694–1758), the leading Swedish musician of his generation (see Bengtsson and Danielson, *Handstilar och notpikturer i Kungl. Musikaliska akademiens Romansamling*). All the hands are prefaced by the letters "H/N" (equivalent to "hand number"), Roman himself duly occupying pride of place as H/N 1.

³ Created by the late Bruce Haynes, this database (<http://www.haynes-catalog.net/>) is now managed by Peter Wuttke.

⁴ Vester, *Flute Music of the 18th Century*.

⁵ Gronefeld, *Die Flötenkonzerte bis 1850: Ein thematisches Verzeichnis*, vol. 3, 312–313.

⁶ Besides our Christian Michael (1707–1789), the known composers comprise: Adolph Friedrich (d. 1788), an amateur musician who was a civil servant in Berlin; Ernst Friedrich (d. 1772), an organist in the Thuringian town of Kahla; and the latter's younger brother Ernst Wilhelm (1735–1792), a prolific, highly regarded and versatile figure active in several centres (Jena, Leipzig and finally Weimar).

⁷ It is interesting that all four of Christian Michael Wolff's publications similarly omitted the composer's given names. In compensation, however, they identified him securely by appending "in [or, in one case, "à"] Stettin" to the surname.

composer named Wolff plus some significant stylistic affinities to Christian Michael's published compositions – that one can be reasonably confident of having found the right man.

Most of this article will be devoted to a technical and aesthetic appraisal of the four compositions, but it is necessary to precede this with, first, an outline of Wolff's life, cultural context, career and compositional achievement, and, second, a review of the source materials transmitting his orchestral works.

Wolff in Stettin – and also (briefly) Berlin

Stettin (today Szczecin in Poland), which at the time of Christian Michael's birth in 1707 was a smallish port town with a population well under ten thousand situated a little inland from the Baltic Sea (to which, however, it is connected via a lagoon) in the duchy of Pomerania, is at first sight an unpromising birthplace for a composer. Up to the Second World War its population was overwhelmingly German-speaking and Lutheran (Evangelical) by confession. Between 1648 and 1720 Stettin and its hinterland belonged to the Swedish crown, though remaining part of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1720 it was ceded to the Prussian crown, and in the more stable and pacific conditions that followed grew considerably in size, economic activity and prosperity, becoming the provincial capital of Pomerania. Nevertheless, Stettin never regained its earlier status as a *Residenzstadt*, with the result that its musical life continued to be dominated by church musicians (cantors or organists) and civic musicians (*Stadtmusikanten*) rather than persons employed by a court or theatre. Until the end of the eighteenth century the town had no regular public concerts.⁸

Christian Michael's grandfather, Friedrich, and father, Christian Friedrich, both held the office of Cantor (or "Director Musices") at St. Marien, Stettin's major church. The young heir to this tradition attended the local Gymnasium and was taught composition and organ-playing by the organist of the same church, Michael Rohde (c. 1681–1732). In 1728 he obtained his first organist's post, which was as an *Adjunkt* (deputy) at another local church, St. Nicolai. The following year he was granted leave to take up a "Vertretung" (probably a similar deputizing duty) at an unspecified location in Berlin, where he remained until 1732, when he returned to Stettin to succeed Rohde as organist at St. Marien.⁹

The three- or four-year sojourn by Wolff in the relatively close (150 kilometres distant) metropolis of Berlin, of which nothing more is known, was undoubtedly a very important episode in his life that must have brought him into personal contact with some major figures in German musical life, who may have included the flautist, composer and theorist

⁸ The sole detailed introduction to musical activity in Stettin during the eighteenth century, as well as to Wolff's life and background, remains Werner Freytag, *Musikgeschichte der Stadt Stettin im 18. Jahrhundert*, which for its time (1936) is an admirably objective account making maximum use of local documentation, even if Freytag appears a little unsympathetic towards the aesthetic and the associated compositional techniques of the *galant* period. The section on Wolff in Werner Schwarz, *Pommersche Musikgeschichte*, vol. 2, 95–99, largely reprises Freytag's account in condensed form without challenging its basic viewpoint, but here and there adds an interesting new detail.

⁹ Freytag, *Musikgeschichte der Stadt Stettin im 18. Jahrhundert*, 8, 17–20 and 68.

Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773), the Graun brothers Johann Gottlieb (1703–1771) and Carl Heinrich (1704–1759) – the first prominent in instrumental, the second in vocal, music – and Johann Gottlieb Janitsch (1708–1763). In the light of his developing musical style, it would be fully justified to regard Wolff from that time onwards as a member – indeed a fully representative figure – of the so-called Berlin school of composers, later to be augmented by C. P. E. Bach.

From 1732 onwards Wolff's life in Stettin became settled and tranquil until his retirement from St. Marien in 1787 and death two years later.¹⁰ He acquired a new post, that of castle organist, in 1745 – but only, it appears, for the sake of the additional income it brought rather than in pursuit of professional advancement. In the last decade of his active life, however, his ambition to make a name for himself as a composer belatedly matured, so that between 1776 and 1782 he committed to print, in at least two cases at his own expense, four collections of music in genres of special interest to him.¹¹ These publications were:

- 1776 *Sei Sonate per il Clavicembalo Obligato, col Violino o Flauto Traverso, o Violetta, Composte Da Wolff In Stettin, Alle Spese Dell'Autore.*
- 1777 *Sammlung von [37] Oden und Liedern, zum Singen beym Clavier und Harfe, in Musik gesetzt von Wolff in Stettin. Auf Kosten des Autors.*
- [1778] *Six Duettes A Deux Flutes Traversieres Composées Par Wolff, Organiste a Stettin Oeuvre Premier: Chez Jean Julien Hummel, à Berlin avec Privilège du Roi, à Amsterdam au grand Magazin de Musique et Aux Adresses ordinaires.*
- 1782 *Orgelübung-Vorspiele vor fünfzig [sic] Melodien bekannter Kirchen-Gesänge von Wolff in Stettin. Leipzig, bey Johann Gottlieb Immanuel Breitkopf. 1782.*

Wolf as Composer

The accompanied sonatas and flute duets listed immediately above were well enough received in their own time to be included, respectively, in the eleventh (1776–1777) and fourteenth (1781) supplements to the Breitkopf catalogue:¹² presumably, Breitkopf used the published editions as copy texts for manuscripts produced to the specification of his customers. Interestingly, Breitkopf provides incipits for a quite different set of flute duets (“VI Duetti di WOLF, a due Flauti”) in the sixth supplement (1771).¹³ These were in all probability never published, which shows that even before he ventured into print in 1776 Wolff was writing *Hausmusik* in popular genres for amateurs in a systematic manner.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid., 8–10 and 14.

¹¹ Ibid., 125–128.

¹² See Brook, *Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue*, 614 and 726.

¹³ Ibid., 425. The very numerous other works by “Wolff” or “Wolf” listed in the Breitkopf catalogues all appear – on the basis of added initials, concordances, date or the musical style revealed by their incipits – to be by Ernst Wilhelm.

¹⁴ A manuscript of the D major duet that closes Wolff's unpublished set is preserved in Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket (S-L), Samling Kraus 195.

The published duets received a rapturous notice in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* shortly after their appearance, the anonymous reviewer writing:

Die Freunde der Flöte werden diese Duetten mit Vergnügen spielen: sie sind angenehm, fließend und unterhaltend. Und wenn sie auch gleich in Absicht auf die Arbeit nicht mit der Strenge gearbeitet sind, die der scharfsinnige Theoretiker von dem Duettenkomponisten zu fordern, gewohnt ist, so übertreffen sie doch an fleißiger Arbeit sehr viele und fast alle Duetten, die wir nach den Quanzischen Flöten-Duetten, gesehen haben. (Friends of the flute will play these duets with pleasure: they are pleasing, fluent and entertaining. And even though they are not composed, in respect of the work that has gone into them, with the strictness that a perceptive theoretician is accustomed to demand of composers of duets, they nevertheless surpass in diligent workmanship very many, and practically all duets that we have seen since Quantz's flute duets.)¹⁵

Since the journal in question was published in Stettin as well as Berlin, one suspects that the writer had a prior reason to appear particularly sympathetic, but an inspection of the duets fully confirms his favourable impression.

Further evidence of Wolff's solid contemporary reputation as a composer emerges from the subscription list of his last publication, the chorale preludes for organ. There were 118 individual purchasers, who collectively subscribed for 176 copies (predictably, many of the acquirers of multiple copies were book dealers).¹⁶ The profile of the purchasers is obviously conditioned, as usual, by the genre and purpose of the particular collection, but one cannot help noticing, first, the even larger than expected preponderance of organists, most of them today very obscure,¹⁷ and, second, the complete absence of noble patrons. The cities, towns and villages from which the subscriptions come number an impressive eighty-three,¹⁸ but nearly all lie in the north, and predominantly the east, of

¹⁵ *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 41/I (1780), 170. The translation into English here and elsewhere in this article is my own. The surviving second flute part from a copy of this publication donated by Wolff to the Stettin Gymnasium in 1778, according to a note on the cover, is consultable in digitized form at <http://zbc.ksiaznica.szczecin.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=19207>. An example containing both parts is held by S-Skma (Fl. 91, 92).

¹⁶ Freytag, *Musikgeschichte der Stadt Stettin im 18. Jahrhundert*, 125, gives the total number of copies as 172, which I think is a miscalculation.

¹⁷ The most distinguished among the subscribing organists appears to be Johann Heinrich Rolle (1716–1785) in Magdeburg.

¹⁸ For the record, the locations (of which I give the names in diplomatic transcription) are: Adorf, Alten-Damm bei Stettin, Annaberg, Auerbach im Erzgebürge, Aurich, Bausitz, Bautzen, Berlin, Beuthen in Schlesien, Borna, Breßlau, Brockwitz bey Meißen, Cammin, Cößlin, Colberg, Cunzendorf, Eckardtsberga, Elbingen, Elbingerode, Elstertrebenitz bey Pegau, Falkenburg in Pommern, Frankfurt a. d. Oder, Frauenhayn im Ohlausehen, Freyrode, Friedland im Mecklenburg-Strelitzischen, Gera, Glauchau, Golnow in Pommern, Greiffenberg in Pommern, Greiffendorff bey Waldheim, Groß-Glogau, Guhrau in Schlesien, Güstrow, Hamburg, Hochwetschen, Hohenstein im Schönburgischen, Jüterbog, Kaurm bey Ronneburg, Kißkerau im Ohlausehen, Königsberg in Preußen, Langenhennersdorf bey Freyberg, Langen-Oels im Nimptischen, Leipzig, Lunzenau, Lychen bey Prentzlow, Magdeburg, Marienburg in Westpreußen, Marschwitz im Ohlausehen,

historical Germany, while many major centres of Evangelical worship within the same extensive area – for example, Hanover, Bremen, Halle and Dresden – are simply missing. The provinciality of Wolff’s existence is laid bare by this list.

In more recent times the first two collections, and also the last (the flute duets are yet to be studied), have attracted a certain amount of comment. Freytag is in general a little dismissive towards them all. The accompanied sonatas, all in only two movements (very normal for the time), he finds “undemanding” (anspruchlos), although seeing some merit in the fourth sonata, where viola or viola da gamba on one side and harpsichord or harp on the other “alternate prettily” (hübsch abwechseln), and also in the fifth, where harpsichord and violin have “pleasing themes” (gefällige Themen).¹⁹ Alfred Wierichs (1981) deals briefly with the sonatas, adding some pertinent details about their structure and style that are more descriptive than evaluative in intention.²⁰

The *Oden und Lieder* undoubtedly constitute Wolff’s most important, original and altogether forward-looking publication. Their modern reception began badly with a curt, three-line entry in Max Friedländer’s study of the lied in eighteenth-century Germany (1902), which dismissed the collection as “unbedeutend und [die Sammlung] enthält keinerlei Einfälle” (insignificant and containing no inspired thoughts of any sort), noting merely the proliferation of *Murky* basses (with alternating octaves for the player’s left hand) and Lombardic rhythms.²¹ Freytag rather weakly defends the composer and collection, though insisting that Friedländer’s accusation of a paucity of significant musical ideas is exaggerated.²² For a fuller redemption we have to turn to an investigation by Annette Richards into the fantasia genre and “picturesqueness” in music (2001), which contains a detailed descriptive analysis of one particular song from Wolff’s collection, “An das Clavier”, from which it will be useful to quote a substantial extract:

In *Christian Michael Wolff’s* setting of Ernestine von Hagen’s “An das Clavier” poem “Erleichtre meine Sorgen”, published in his *Sammlung von Oden und Liedern zum Singen bey dem Clavier und Harfe* (Stettin, 1777), an extensive keyboard introduction, interludes and postlude, replete with chromatic harmonies and wild passagework, bizarrely disrupt the generic boundaries of the lied while supporting with great intensity the poetic text [...]. The song, in A minor, opens with a fourteen-bar prelude for the clavichord which is unstable and chromatic and immediately establishes a dark and searching mood. [...] One thing this

Meuselwitz, Militisch, Mühlbeck, Mühlhausen, Muskau, Neschwitz bey Bautzen, Northausen, Oels, Ohlau, Osterrode, Pless in Oberschlesien, Raghun, Remmiße bey Waldenburg, Rochlitz, Schlieben, Schwarzenberg, Schweidnitz, Schwerin, Schweta, Seiffertshayn, Stargardt, Stendal, Stettin, Stolberg, Stolpe in Pommern, Treptow in Pommern, Volkersdorf, Wehlen bey Pirna, Wiegandsthal, Wintzig, Wolgast in Pommern, Wüstebriese im Ohlausehen, Zedenik bey Berlin, Zedlitz im Ohlausehen, Zwödnitz.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

²⁰ Wierichs, *Die Sonate für obligates Tasteninstrument und Violine bis zum Beginn der Hochklassik in Deutschland*, 69–71.

²¹ Friedländer, *Das deutsche Lied im 18. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, 241.

²² Freytag, *Musikgeschichte der Stadt Stettin im 18. Jahrhundert*, 127–128.

prelude does not do is to introduce the melody of the song to come – instead the overtly fantastic introduction immediately establishes the unusual primacy of the keyboard over the voice, for this is indeed a piece about keyboard playing. [...] In making the song the vehicle for the clavichord's music itself Wolf has created here a strange creature: not only does he identify the private emotional discourse of the instrument with the free fantasia, but, in a bizarre integration of song and fantasy, he makes repeatable the manic passagework and "original" modulations, thus inventing the conceptually impossible strophic fantasy.²³

Richards is absolutely right to insist on the boldly experimental, progressive and quintessentially *empfindsam* quality of this song, which finds several echoes elsewhere in the same collection.²⁴ It stands at the cutting edge of the Berlin lieder school, and its picturesque aspect arises from the happy idea of using the *Clavier* (equated by Richards and some others perhaps a little too narrowly with the clavichord rather than with domestic keyboard instruments in general) to illustrate itself.

Wolff produced two other song collections, both with some overlap of content with the published one of 1777. One is a published collection, compiled by an anonymous amateur, of *Fünf und zwanzig Lieder mit Melodien für das Clavier* (Berlin, 1773), of which the great majority turn out to be compositions by Wolff; the other is a manuscript collection of thirty-nine songs (headed "Oden Composte da Sign: Wolf in Stettin") in Berlin.²⁵ Besides these many songs Wolff wrote at some stage of his career a choral (SATB) motet on the text of Psalm 8, *Unendlicher Gott, unser Herr*, which has since become his best-known and most widely admired work. Freytag, who provides a concise analysis, styles it "das kunstvollste und wertvollste erhaltene Werk Christian Michael Wolffs" (the most accomplished and precious preserved work by Christian Michael Wolff).²⁶ Besides a copy belonging to the former Poelchau collection in Berlin (which has been digitized),²⁷ there are six further copies in German libraries listed by RISM and even a mid-nineteenth-century copy in Stockholm, its text translated into Swedish as *Oändlige du världars Gud*.²⁸

Wolff's final collection, the fifty (counting alternative settings, actually fifty-seven) *Orgelübung-Vorspiele*, has puzzled commentators. On one hand, it is obviously highly utilitarian and deliberately miniaturistic music that belongs more to the tradition of Telemann's *Fugirende und veraendernde Chorale* (Hamburg, 1735) or – to take its Catholic equivalent – Gottlieb Muffat's *72 Versetl sammt 12 Toccaten* (Vienna, 1726) than to that

²³ Richards, *Free Fantasia and the Musical Picturesque*, 167–170 (with the entire song transcribed on 168–169). "An das Clavier" (Erleichtre meine Sorgen) appears on pages 38–40 of the original edition of 1777, which is accessible via Google Books (<https://books.google.com>).

²⁴ One could single out here the songs "An die Nachtigall" and "Der Schlaf".

²⁵ Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek – PK (D-B). See Freytag, *Musikgeschichte der Stadt Stettin im 18. Jahrhundert*, 127.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 126–127.

²⁷ D-B, Ms. mus. 30285.

²⁸ S-Skma, K/Sv-R. It is on balance rather unlikely that there is any relationship by origin between this manuscript, evidently customized for use in Sweden, and the instrumental works by Wolff preserved in the same library, but the possibility should for the moment be left open.

of the chorale settings in the third part of J. S. Bach's *Clavier-Übung* (Leipzig, 1739), which to many would initially seem the obvious comparator. But even when set against Telemann's and Muffat's collections it wears its fugal garments extremely lightly and, moreover, does not always choose to keep a tight focus on the chorale material. Freytag is unforgiving, appending to his just observation that the collection was in its day rather popular a sharp sting in the tail: "wenn es ihm an irgendwelchen genialen und überhaupt über dem Durchschnitt liegenden Einfällen fehlt" (although he lacks any inspired or even better-than-average musical ideas).²⁹ The criticisms start to fall away, however, once one ceases to view these settings as organ chorales (including chorale fughettsas) of traditional type and starts to consider them instead as freely contrapuntal meditations, or very condensed fantasias, on the chorale melodies (or simply their opening notes). In fact, the constant interweaving of the parts, their surprisingly but fascinatingly complex rhythmic co-ordination, the abundant use of decorative chromatic alteration and the ever-changing distribution of the contrapuntal lines between the two hands and the pedals frequently display great inventiveness and subtlety. It is little surprise that Freytag, for all his strictures, has to point, at the end of his discussion, to the inclusion of individual pieces from this collection in several post-1900 anthologies.

The Sources of Wolff's Orchestral Music

The first thing to remember about Wolff's concertos and sinfonia is that they clearly date from a period considerably earlier than the one of the published collections and all or most of the manuscript vocal works. The surviving parts for the orchestral works cannot date from much later than 1745, and they may well have been copied from scores that preceded that period by several years. As will be shown, the orchestral music certainly anticipates compositional habits and preferences seen in the four published collections, but it does so in a musical language more *galant* and less *empfindsam*: in other words, more conventionally Italianate and a little more conservative, looking back to such figures as Vivaldi, Tartini, Locatelli and Hasse as models for the concertos and perhaps to the Neapolitans, starting with Vinci, for the sinfonia.

The driving force behind the copying of the repertory to which the *Utile Dulci* works (identifiable by a special stamp on the folder enclosing the parts for individual compositions) mostly belong was the violinist Per Brant (1714–1767), who became concertmaster of the Stockholm court orchestra (*Hovkapellet*), thus effectively Roman's deputy, in 1738.³⁰ From that time onwards Brant was active as a collector of orchestral music and promoter of performances of it at local concerts as well as within the ambit of the court itself. On

²⁹ Freytag, *Musikgeschichte der Stadt Stettin im 18. Jahrhundert*, 125. This withering put-down contrasts with an admiring remark in Johann Adam Hiller, *Nachtrag zum allgemeinen Choral-Melodienbuche*, 16, that Wolff's settings "zeigen von einem gründlichen und in seinem Fache erfahrenen Componisten, empfehlen sich außerdem noch durch Leichtigkeit" (attest to a meticulous, professionally experienced composer, and are moreover recommendable for their fluent character).

³⁰ Eva Helenius-Öberg, "Handstil 128 i Romansamlingen", 32.

the basis of duplicated serial numbers on the folders identifying individual works (used by Brant, perhaps, as actual shelfmarks) Eva Helenius-Öberg has identified at least two discrete phases in this collection's formation, the second beginning around 1746.³¹ She places Wolff's oboe concerto (numbered 46) within that group, and if the numbers followed each other in exact chronological sequence as the collection grew (this is suggested but not claimed outright by Helenius-Öberg), his two flute concertos in C and G major (numbered 88 and 90, respectively) will have been copied in close succession at a slightly later point, with the accession of the *sinfonia* (numbered 101) occurring later still. This is, of course, not necessarily the order of the four works' composition; nor should it imply that their copy texts became available to Brant at different times or in different circumstances: they may well have arrived in Stockholm (or been acquired in Germany) at exactly the same time.

The route by which the works reached Stockholm is a matter for guesswork. One might be tempted to fasten on Stettin's earlier political connection with Sweden as a vital link, but this would be rather arbitrary, for all the major ports of northern Germany, from Hamburg to Königsberg (Kaliningrad), were active in the Baltic trade and therefore inevitably connected with Sweden, one of the regional powers and also, not surprisingly, a frequent destination for emigrant German musicians. It is considerably more plausible that Wolff's "passport" to Sweden was simply his membership, in compositional terms, of the Berlin school, whose leading composers, notably the two Graun brothers, Janitsch and Quantz, form a dominant group among the authors of concertos and *sinfonias* found in Brant's collection. By the time he composed the works Wolff's Berlin days were long since over (this is established by certain stylistic features, to be discussed), but it is nevertheless reasonable to suppose that he retained a lifelong contact with musicians and musical circles in Berlin and its environs. The four compositions, which all require professional-level performance for good effect, bear all the marks of having been commissioned by patrons or fellow musicians. Stettin itself is an unlikely destination, but large cities such as Berlin or Hamburg and *Residenzstädte* such as Schwerin had orchestras and soloists eager for such music. After passing out of Wolff's hands the four works could then have proceeded onwards to Sweden.

The titles of the works, penned on the front of the folders by Brant himself, are transcribed below. To complicate matters, supplementary inscriptions have been inserted by Per (Pehr) Frigel (1750–1842), a central figure in Swedish musical life who directed music for the *Utile Dulci* society during the 1780s. In 1778 Frigel became a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music (founded in 1771), which he served as secretary from 1797 to 1842, librarian from 1797 to 1840 (in which role he made these additions, the library of the Academy having acquired much of this society's music at auction after its dissolution in 1795), professor of theory, aesthetics and musical literature from 1814 to 1830 and supervisor of its educational wing from 1811 to 1834. For clarity, the transcriptions reproduce Frigel's text in italics. All deletions are his.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

Oboe concerto in E flat major (RISM 190023769):32

Concerto $\text{D}\{\text{f}\}\text{is}\}^{\sharp}$ per il Oboe Solo | in Ess h . | Con a 5. Parte. | Oboe Obligato ___I. | Due Violini ___II. | Viola ___I. | e | Basso ___I. | [flourish] $\text{N}:\text{o}$ 46 [space] da Wolff.

Flute concerto in C major (RISM 190023768):

Concerto in C h per il Flauto Solo / a 5. Parte. | Flauto Traversiere *Conc.* ___I. | Due Violini ___II. / Viola ___I. / e / Basso ___I. / $\text{N}:\text{o}$ 88 [space] da Wolff.

Flute Concerto in G major (RISM 190023770)

Concerto in G h per il Flauto Solo / a 5. Parte. | Flauto Traversiere *Concert.* ___I. | Due Violini ___II. / Viola ___I. / e / Basso ___I. / $\text{N}:\text{o}$ 90 [space] da Wolff.

Sinfonia in B flat major for strings (RISM 190023771)

[Incipit: bars 1–5 of movement 1, Violino primo part. Added by Frigel].33 | Sinfonia in B h C | Due Violini ___II. | Viola ___I. | e | Basso ___III. | $\text{N}:\text{o}$ 101 [space] da Wolff.

As usual, Brant allocated the task of copying out the parts to a pool of collaborators, most if not all of them members of the court orchestra. Table 1 shows the distribution of this work. The two copyists whose names are known, Franz von den Enden (H/N 4) and Johann Georg Menges (H/N 62), were particularly active on Brant’s behalf. The first, a German-born member of the court orchestra, died in 1769; the second died in 1793. Both commenced their activity as copyists prior to 1751, when Adolf Fredrik ascended the Swedish throne.³⁴

Sadly, none of the several copyists executed his work either neatly or accurately. The result is in fact so bad that real problems would have been encountered in any attempt to perform the compositions.³⁵ It is almost as if these parts had been created in deliberate illustration of the shortcomings of music copyists excoriated at length by Johann Adolph Scheibe in the first volume of his *Critischer Musicus an der Spree* essays. Describing the grossly defective copies he regarded as typical, Scheibe writes:

Dort stehet ein Kreuz, wo ein Be Platz haben soll; hier ist eine Ziefer mit der andern verwechselt. Dort stehet ein g anstatt eines a; dort ist ein Tact ausgelassen, hier stehet einer zuviel. Dort ist etwas ausgekratzt, dort etwas ausgestrichen, woferne man nicht etwann ein Blättchen darüber gekleistert hat. Hier sind die

³² It needs to be pointed out that the first deletion in Brant’s text made by Frigel was in order to update the description of the concerto’s tonality. Brant followed an old, possibly tablature-derived German custom by using “Dis” (D sharp) rather than the modern “Es” to denote the pitch and key we know today in English nomenclature as E flat. The natural that follows refers simply to the mediant of the key, defining its modality as major.

³³ Frigel’s musical handwriting is apparent from the autograph manuscript of his *Inaugurations-Musique* (1784) in the Utile Dulci collection.

³⁴ Helenius-Öberg, “Handstil 128 i Romansamlingen”, esp. 27, 28 and 32.

³⁵ The cover of the sinfonia indicates that at one time it housed four copies of the Basso part, of which only two remain today. This implies that it was at least prepared for performance, something less certain for the concertos.

Noten nicht untereinander gesetzt. Da stehet ein Viertel, wo ein Achttheil seyn soll, da sind die Pausen nicht richtig verzeichnet, hier kömmt ein falsches Schlüssel vor; dort findet sich nicht die rechte Sylbe aus dem Text unter ihrer Note. Diese beyde Noten sind getrennet, die durch ein Band aneinander hängen sollten; hier stehet das Zeichen eines Trillers anstatt eines Vorschlages. Hier ist der Punct bey einer Note weggelassen &c. (There is a sharp, where a flat should stand; here a [bass] figure is confused with another. There stands a g instead of an a; there a bar has been left out, here there is one too many. There something has been scratched out, there something struck through, unless, as sometimes happens, a strip of paper has been pasted over it. Here the notes are not aligned vertically. There stands a crotchet where a quaver ought to be, there the rests are not correctly notated, here appears an incorrect clef; there a syllable of the text is not placed under its correct note. These two notes are separated, although they should be joined by a tie; here a trill is marked instead of an appoggiatura. Here a dot is missing from a note etc.)³⁶

The absence of any alterations other than ones obviously made during the act of copying itself opens up the possibility that these parts remained merely archival and that the pieces were never performed in Sweden.

Table 1

The Swedish copyists of the parts for Christian Michael Wolff’s four orchestral works

H/N	Copyist’s Identity	Oboe Conc. in E ^b	Flute Conc. in C	Flute Conc. in G	Sinf. in B ^b
4	Franz von den Enden		Viola	Viola	
35	?	Viol. 1	Viol. 1, Viol. 2	Viol. 1	
62	Johann Georg Menges	Oboe, Viola	Flauto	Flauto	
602	?	Basso	Basso	Basso	Basso
602	?				
616	?	Viol. 2		Viol. 2	
620	?				Viol. 1
647	?				Viol. 2
648	?				Viola
649	?				Basso

There is, however, a somewhat more accurately copied set of parts, likewise dating from the middle of the eighteenth century, for Wolff’s oboe concerto. Preserved in Schwerin, these parts are in the hand of their original owner, identified by RISM as “D. Wagner”.³⁷ The surviving concertos and sonatas in the same library copied and collected by this Wagner, who was perhaps a musician attached to the ducal orchestra of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, display a profile very similar to that of their counterparts in Brant’s collection

³⁶ Scheibe, *Des kritischen Musicus an der Spree erster Band*, 312–313.

³⁷ Landesbibliothek Mecklenburg-Vorpommern “Günther Uecker” (D-SWI), Mus. 1899/2 (RISM 240001619). I am very grateful to Dr Andreas Roloff for sending me scans of this item.

in Stockholm, with a few Italians (Tartini, Tessarini, Locatelli) but a larger number of contemporary Germans including J. G. Graun, Hasse and Christoph Förster. At the head of the oboe (“Hautbois”) part for this concerto is an inscription reading merely “de Sing:” and followed by a space.³⁸ This unfinished inscription shows that Wagner did not forget to include the composer’s name but, rather, lacked the information to do so.

In Otto Kade’s thematic catalogue (1893) of what was at the time the musical collection of the princely house of Mecklenburg-Schwerin the concerto is duly listed under the *anonyma*.³⁹ In more recent times, there has been speculation on the part of RISM that the concerto is by Förster, since this composer, whose style, though more conventional and a little less advanced than Wolff’s, is not dissimilar, is named as author in three out of a group of five oboe concertos copied by Wagner.⁴⁰ This attribution, always flimsy, is now unsustainable in the light of the Stockholm concordance.

In its musical text, once errors are discounted, the Schwerin source does not depart from the Stockholm one significantly. Some of the errors, interestingly, are conjunctive (shared), suggesting that the two sources were quite close in stemmatic respects, perhaps having been prepared from the same copy text. The latter was most probably a score rather than another set of parts. One may draw this inference from the radically different way in which the two oboe parts treat the solo instrument during ritornello sections. In both sources, for some of the time, the oboe doubles the first violin, with a few adjustments of pitch to avoid notes lying below the bottom of its compass, Middle C (for “baroque” instruments), or alternatively pauses for a short while. In such situations it is reasonable to suppose that the two scribes copied literally what they saw notated in a score, hence the lack of divergence between them. But in many other instances, particularly in the Stockholm source, the oboe is indeed allowed to descend below c’. This is in all likelihood the result of following a cue in the score (such as “ut infra”) directing the copyist of the oboe part to reproduce, ostensibly without alteration, the text of the first violin part. The apparent tolerance of the “impossible” notes resulted from a widespread convention that the copyist himself would make any required adjustments of pitch or necessary simplifications in order to accommodate the wind instrument’s more restricted compass and lesser agility in comparison with the violin. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in earlier years had worked as a professional music copyist, explains in the huge and immensely informative article headed “Copiste” in the first volume of his *Dictionnaire de musique* as published in his complete works:

Les parties de hautbois qu’on tire sur les parties de violon pour un grand orchestre, ne doivent pas être exactement copiées comme elles sont dans l’original: mais, outre l’étendue que cet instrument a de moins que le violon; outre les *doux*

³⁸ “Sing:” was a very common mangled form of the correct Italian abbreviation, “Sign:” used in northern Europe at the time.

³⁹ Kade, *Die Musikalien-Sammlung des Grossherzoglich Mecklenburg-Schweriner Fürstenhaus aus den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten*, vol. 1, 70. Kade mistakenly identified the central slow movement in C minor, whose incipit he reproduced, as the opening movement, perhaps because he was reading from the reverse side of the opened bifolio containing the oboe part.

⁴⁰ D-SWL, Mus. 1896, 1897, 1899, 1899/1 and 1899/2.

qu'il ne peut faire de même; outre l'agilité qui lui manque ou qui lui va mal dans certaines vitesses, la force de hautbois doit être ménagée pour marquer mieux les notes principales, et donner plus d'accent à la musique. Si j'avais à juger du goût d'un symphoniste sans l'entendre, je lui donnerais à tirer sur la partie du violon, la partie de hautbois; tout *copiste* doit savoir le faire. (The oboe parts that one extracts from violin parts in the case of a large orchestra must not be copied exactly as they are in the original: but, leaving aside the compass of this instrument, which is smaller than the violin's, the *piano* dynamic that it cannot produce to the same extent and finally the agility that it lacks or is found wanting at certain speeds, the strength of the oboe must be managed in order to mark the main notes more strongly and lend more accent to the music. Had I to judge the taste of an orchestral player without listening to him, I would set him the task of extracting an oboe part from a violin part; every *copyist* must know how to do this.)⁴¹

Regarding how to execute this task, the two copyists part company. Menges in Stockholm makes scant modification to the violin part, in effect dumping on the player the task of customizing it for the oboe, whereas Wagner in Schwerin prefers to cut the Gordian knot by inserting extra pauses, often prolonged, for the soloist.⁴² There is no clear-cut right or wrong here, but merely a different personal (or perhaps locally preferred) solution to the same problem.

One very important thing that the Schwerin source does tenuously establish, at any rate, is that Wolff's orchestral music was already circulating in Germany before making its way to Sweden. In this repertoire, too, he was evidently not entirely a "prophet without honour in his own land".

Wolff's Orchestral Works: Some General Considerations

Table 2 lays out a few basic structural features of the four works. The concertos conform quite strictly to what one would expect in a work belonging to that genre by a north German composer around 1750 – admirably summarized, albeit in a rather over-prescriptive manner, in paragraphs 33–41 of the eighteenth section (*Hauptstück*) of J. J. Quantz's *Versuch* of 1752⁴³ – but nevertheless assert a personal preference in certain smaller matters, as we shall see later. (Quantz's much briefer discussion of sinfonias in paragraph 43 is more an

⁴¹ Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 11, 271.

⁴² Menges does, however, like to pause the oboe for a bar or so after concluding a solo episode before making it join the violins in the ritornello. This short break in continuity may well already have been specified in his copy text. For a wind instrument, it has the obvious merit of allowing the player briefly to draw breath after his exertions.

⁴³ Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, 295–301. There exists a much-used English translation of Quantz's essay by Edward R. Reilly (*On Playing the Flute*, 1966), but since I find Reilly's translation in many places rather too approximate, I will use my own translation of Quantz's words where needed.

acerbic critique of contemporary practice, focusing on their frequent composition by men more expert in vocal than instrumental music and their lack of any intrinsic connection to the individual work they precede, than a recipe book for composers, for which reason it is less relevant here.)⁴⁴

Table 2

Christian Michael Wolff's four orchestral works: basic data

Work	Movement and Tempo	Key	Metre	Length (bars)	Form
Oboe Concerto in E ^b major	1. Allegro ma non presto	E ^b	e	133	Ritornello form
	2. Adagio con affetto	c	$\frac{3}{8}$	95	Ritornello form
	3. Allegro molto	E ^b	$\frac{6}{8}$	130	Ritornello form
Flute Concerto in C major	1. Moderato	C	e	94	Ritornello form
	2. Affettuoso	a	$\frac{6}{8}$	77	Ritornello form
	3. Allegro	C	$\frac{3}{8}$	250	Ritornello form
Flute Concerto in G major	1. Moderato	G	e	95	Ritornello form
	2. Largo	e	$\frac{3}{4}$	100	Ritornello form
	3. Allegretto	G	$\frac{3}{8}$	187	Ritornello form
Sinfonia a 4 in B ^b major	1. Allegro	B ^b	ϕ	148	Sonata form (no repeats)
	2. Andante sempre <i>piano</i>	E ^b	e	54	Sonata form (no repeats)
	3. Allegro	B ^b	$\frac{3}{8}$	116 (42 + 74)	Sonata form (2 repeats)

All four works adopt the Italianate three-movement design that in the *sinfonia* first matured near the end of the seventeenth century, and in the concerto a little later, in works by Torelli, Albinoni and, especially, Vivaldi. We will find constantly that Wolff, at least in this instrumental repertoire, is not minded to tinker with the basic specification of his works and movements: his drive towards original expression occurs more at foreground level, or, as Saussurean linguistics would put it, in the *parole* rather than the *langue*. He is content to place all slow movements of his concertos in the relative minor (as J. S. Bach and Handel invariably did in interior slow movements within major-key sonatas and concertos), although the *sinfonia* is more progressive in opting for the subdominant key, exactly as would come to be favoured in the high Classical era. The preference for common (or cut) time in the first movement, and for triple or compound metre in the remaining movements follows Quantz's precepts and the general practice in Italian and German concertos and *sinfonias* of the same immediately post-Vivaldian period; so does the perceptible front-weighting, although Quantz's recommendation of five minutes for a first movement of a concerto, five to six minutes for a slow movement and three to four minutes for a finale needs to be scaled up considerably: in his predilection for lengthy

⁴⁴ Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, 301–302.

musical periods Wolff is advancing resolutely towards the expanded dimensions of the Classical concerto.⁴⁵

The *sinfonia* is similarly proportioned and varied in tempo and metre, but much more concise. This is to be expected. First, there is no concertante part to put on display. Second, the chamber symphony of this period (assuming that Wolff's *sinfonia* was not simply plucked from a vocal work that it had originally prefaced) is not yet fully emancipated, stylistically speaking, from its origin as a supporting element, even when conceived *ab initio* as a free-standing work. Wolff's use of nuanced tempo directions such as "Allegro ma non presto", "Allegro molto" and "Allegretto" is typical for the period and was in fact necessitated by the growing use of "diminuted" metre, in which the half-beat rather than the beat becomes the essential metrical unit (one symptom of this is when phrases and even whole periods begin without incongruity on the third rather than the first beat of a common time bar).⁴⁶

Some eyebrows may be raised at my use of the term "sonata form" to describe the structure of each of the *sinfonia*'s movements. Musicologists have still not reached a consensus on the tipping point at which a "complex" (restating in the tonic the entire second group of themes) and "rounded" (reprising in the tonic the opening theme) binary form crosses over the threshold of sonata form. For me, the crucial element, assuming major tonality, is the emphatic separate articulation of the second group – plus or including codetta – either through "underpreparation" (an abrupt reinterpretation of the dominant of the home key as a tonic, Wolff's preferred option) or through "overpreparation" (entry into the dominant key via its own dominant). The possible absence of a distinction between codetta and coda or of a retransition (which the forward-looking Wolff nearly always includes in any case) seems to me less important. The lack of sectional repeats in Wolff's first two *sinfonia* movements is not a valid objection, since binary form, especially when used in slow movements, had long possessed a variant without repeats (sometimes even with a linking phrase bridging over the caesura between the two sections), which evolved naturally into a corresponding variant of sonata form.

Wolff and Ritornello Form

Most schemata for ritornello form (which are usually conceived as deliberately abstract and generalized points of reference that do not set out to capture the full potential for variety of this highly elastic form) present a rather symmetrical appearance: two ritornellos in the tonic enclose two, sometimes three (rarely more), interior ritornellos, of which the first is in the principal alternate key (in major-key movements this is virtually always the dominant), and any others are in so-called peripheral keys, which are mostly closely related keys in the contrasting mode. Between each pair of ritornellos lies a solo episode of similar length that has the dual function of showing off the principal instrument and effecting the necessary linking modulation. This appealingly clear-cut structure makes a

⁴⁵ Ibid., 297–300 passim.

⁴⁶ On "diminuted" metre, see Michael Talbot, *Vivaldi Compendium*, 66.

ritornello-form movement look almost like a special kind of *rondeau* in which the refrain visits various foreign keys in turn instead of remaining in the home key. And indeed: a few concerto movements by Vivaldi and a larger number by Telemann (always susceptible to French influence) conform quite closely to this model.

In reality, however, this symmetry began to be subverted almost as soon as it was created. Three mutually supportive main factors were in play. The first, fully embraced – indeed, spearheaded – by Vivaldi, was a tendency to increase the length and salience of solo episodes as the movement progressed, and in compensation to reduce that of the ritornellos. The “narrative” of the growing dominance of the soloist over the orchestra as the movement goes forward is epitomized by the presence of cadenza-like elements or, indeed, a cadenza *tout court* for him/her close to the end of the movement, while after the customary expansive opening ritornello all the subsequent ones are liable to be truncated or suffer major excisions. The second factor was the practice of recapitulating in the tonic towards the end of the movement (and occasionally even earlier, in a foreign key) the opening theme of the first solo episode, thereby imparting to the episodes collectively a nod towards thematic unity moving in the direction of that already characterizing the ritornellos.⁴⁷ This device occurred sporadically in Vivaldi’s earliest concertos – it is seen, for example, in the first movement of Op. 3, No. 3 (RV 310) and both outer movements of Op. 3, No. 8 (RV 522) – but had to wait until lyrical elements became more prominent in solo episodes, a process fully completed by Vivaldi only in the 1720s, before achieving a more normative status. The third, most radical, innovation was the dissolution of clear boundaries between ritornello and solo episode in the final, tonic-based part of the movement. Thus a movement that begins in an orderly, predictable fashion with a self-contained ritornello followed by an equally self-contained solo episode may end with an episode interrupted by one or more tutti incursions presenting ritornello material, this perhaps being followed immediately by its obverse: a ritornello laced with solo material. In narrative terms this prefigures the nineteenth-century (and subsequent) concept of a concerto as a tussle for supremacy between soloist and orchestra.

These interacting developments had created by the late 1720s a new orthodoxy in the treatment of ritornello form, the finer details of which composers naturally interpreted with some freedom according to individual preference. Quantz’s formula for writing concerto fast movements expresses to perfection the shared practice of leading German and Italian composers after *c.* 1730. To mention just two of his recommendations, Quantz writes: “Die besten Gedanken eines Ritornells können zergliedert, und unter oder zwischen die Solo vermischt werden” (The best ideas of a ritornello may be taken apart and inserted within or between solos); and “Es muß dasselbe [das Ritornell] aus zweenen Haupttheilen bestehen. Der zweyte Theil davon muß, weil man ihn am Ende des Satzes wiederholet, und damit schließet, mit den schönsten und prächtigsten Gedanken ausgekleidet werden”

⁴⁷ This custom of having a reprise of the first solo theme carries over into the Classical concerto. The *nec plus ultra* of the thematic integration of solo episodes is the first movement of J. S. Bach’s Sixth Brandenburg Concerto (BWV 1051), where every single episode commences with the same thematic idea in the manner, one might almost say, of a ritornello theme.

(The same [the ritornello] must consist of two main segments. The second of these, since it is repeated at the end of the movement to conclude it, must be decked out with the most beautiful and magnificent ideas).⁴⁸ Quantz therefore made an assumption that the last ritornello would be only a “dal segno”, rather than a full “da capo”, repetition of the first, which in Wolff’s case always proves correct.

The opening ritornellos of the nine movements in Wolff’s concertos that adopt this form average a little over twenty percent of their respective lengths, consistently making up the longest individual section. Most of these ritornellos are bipartite, being hinged on the dominant or relative major key and thereby providing in miniature a preview of the tonal trajectory of the movement as a whole. In displaying this feature, the movements are more imitative of Pietro Antonio Locatelli (whose *Arte del violino*, op. 3, published in 1733, is the earliest published collection to show it prominently) than of Vivaldi, even if in his late period the Venetian, ever-anxious to keep abreast of changing musical fashions after he had ceased to be their initiator, sometimes followed suit.⁴⁹ These ritornellos are highly segmented (Wolff follows in the Vivaldian tradition by composing in a modular fashion where motives often having a potential for multiple functions – such as either to open or to close a section – are stitched together paratactically), and the constituent segments commonly number between four and six. One of the later segments is usually of the type called by German commentators a *Pianoidée*: this features a reduced dynamic level, nearly always some form of reduced scoring (for Wolff, this regularly entails the replacement of the basso continuo by a *bassetto* for the viola) and very often a dip into the tonic minor key. The French traveller Charles de Brosses, always ready to apprise his correspondents of novel and interesting features in Italian music, commented appositely in 1739 on its marked preference for the major mode in arias, but then appended the remark, equally relevant to concerto ritornellos: “Ils y entremêlent, sans qu’on s’y attende, des phrases mineures qui surprennent et saisissent l’oreille jusqu’au point d’affecter le cœur” (They unexpectedly insert minor-key phrases that surprise and captivate the ear up to the point of affecting the heart).⁵⁰ Common, too, is a reprise of the initial segment in a slightly different, more urgent form close to the end of the ritornello – another element inherited from Vivaldi.

All these constituents are clearly visible in the opening ritornello of the finale of the flute concerto in C major, transcribed as example 1. It contains five segments, the content of which can be tabulated as follows:

⁴⁸ Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, 295 and 296.

⁴⁹ Concerning Locatelli’s use of ritornello form in Op. 3, McVeigh and Hirschberg correctly observe (*Italian Solo Concerto, 1700–1760*, 207): “A secondary key is clearly articulated in the middle of R1 [the first ritornello] in all cases”. Vivaldi’s late adoption of bipartite ritornello structure is strikingly illustrated by the opening movement of the concerto for several instruments RV 558, which dates from 1740.

⁵⁰ Colomb, *Le Président de Brosses en Italie*, vol. 2, 380.

Bars	Segment	Description
1–10	A	A five-bar phrase (consisting of a <i>forte</i> two-bar antecedent answered by a <i>piano</i> three-bar consequent), repeated with small variations.
11–20	B	Three three-bar phrases: the first two outlining, <i>piano</i> , a chromatic descent over a basso continuo pedal utilizing motivic material (pounding octaves) from segment A and followed each time by an “angry” <i>forte</i> gesture with an ascending <i>tirata</i> ; the third repeating a <i>forte</i> half-close initially in a <i>piano</i> , and subsequently in a <i>pianissimo</i> (more strictly, <i>più piano</i>), dynamic. This emphatic reduplicative cadence forms the main structural articulation in this ritornello at the conventional point just before its half-way mark.
21–29	C	A return to the tonic employing an ingenious combination of short motivic elements from segments A and B and arpeggiated figures introducing the semiquaver triplets so beloved of the <i>galant</i> age. Violin 2 displays a type of syncopated writing that has the status of a Wolfian trademark (to be discussed in more detail later).
30–36	D	The <i>Pianoidée</i> , in C minor (albeit with a <i>forte</i> interruption in bars 32–33).
37–44	E	Reassertion of major modality: conspicuous thematic rounding is achieved by recalling the antecedent phrase of segment A in a syncopated variant before the triplets of segment C and the scalewise- descending quavers present in segments A and D are reworked in combination to provide a suitably weighty ending for the section.

It will be observed in music example 1 that the orchestral texture, which frequently changes in almost kaleidoscopic fashion, varies between unison writing, a 3 writing (in two alternative versions: (a) with unison violins, usually doubled by the woodwind solo instrument), viola and basso continuo; (b) for violin 1 (plus solo instrument), violin 2 and viola) and a 4 writing. In purely quantitative terms three-part texture is the dominant – one might say, “default” – texture. To set this remark in context: the middle decades of the eighteenth century, starting in the time of Vivaldi and ending in that of middle-period Haydn, were perhaps the period in post-Renaissance musical history where composers and their audiences were most comfortable with lean textures that only suggested harmonic content rather than realizing it in complete form. In keyboard music this commonly resulted in two-part writing, with the technically convenient allocation of a single part to each hand. In orchestral music a comparable effect was achieved by shunting together nominally separate parts, for instance by uniting the violin parts and/or using the viola to double the bass in the higher octave. A particularly interesting commentary on this three-part texture, which was almost universally favoured in Italy and Germany around the middle of the century, occurs in Pippa Drummond’s study of the German eighteenth-century concerto when she comes to discuss the concertos, mostly for flute, of Johann Adolf Hasse (1699–1783).⁵¹ This Italian-influenced composer is a particularly relevant comparator for Wolff, being only slightly older and having a similar connection to the Berlin School. Drummond writes: “This unwillingness to write in more than three real parts at any given time is extremely characteristic of Hasse. It occasioned comment from no less a person than Emanuel Bach who, according to Burney, ‘once wrote word to Hasse that he was the greatest cheat in the world; for in a score of twenty nominal parts, he had seldom more than three real ones in action; but with these he produced such

⁵¹ Pippa Drummond, *German Concerto*, 238–283.

Music example 1

Christian Michael Wolff, Flute Concerto in C major, movement 3, bars 1–44

The musical score is for the first system of bars 1–44, divided into five systems of staves. The top system includes parts for VI I (+Fl) VI 2, Vlo, and Basso. The tempo is marked *Allegro*. The key signature is C major (one sharp). The time signature is 3/8. Dynamics include *unis.*, *p*, and *f*. The score features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and articulation marks. The bottom system includes parts for Piano, with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *f*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and articulation marks.

Music example 1

(continued)

divine effects, as must never be expected from a crowded score”⁵² Indeed, there was for any composer a potential “transparency dividend” from lean textures, especially when (as often in Wolff but less frequently in Hasse) the bass line is well varied in rhythm and periodically makes a genuine thematic contribution.

With regard to the succeeding ritornellos, the second ritornello, in the dominant or relative major key, is always condensed in some way, although it consistently retains the first segment, which is of course a prime marker of its identity. There is seldom a discrete ritornello in a peripheral key (the first movement of the oboe concerto has a brief one, however, between bars 76 and 81): instead, Wolff inserts modally altered fragments of ritornello material as accompaniments or momentary interruptions into the second solo episode, or else develops ritornello material in the retransition. This reduced emphasis on the peripheral tonal area in relation to the ritornellos – fortunately, not extending to the episodes – is probably a by-product of the *galant* aesthetic of mid-eighteenth-century style (foreshadowed in the observation by Charles de Brosses mentioned earlier), where

⁵² Ibid., 272. The Burney quotation comes from *Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, vol. 2, 253.

the major mode enjoyed a primacy never witnessed before or since. (For the generation of Vivaldi, conversely, the transformation of ritornello material from major to minor had often been the emotional fulcrum of a concerto movement and the principal motor of what contemporary commentators approvingly described as “fire”.) The final, tonic restatement of the ritornello is in Wolff invariably fragmented: its opening segments mingle with display writing from the solo instrument (which may assert itself also by playfully appropriating phrases of what has hitherto been purely ritornello material), so that only its concluding segments eventually arrive to form the final tutti.

For the opening of the first solo episode, which one may expect to find reprised in the same key towards the end of the movement, Wolff likes to give the obbligato instrument a paraphrase of the first segment of the ritornello. This is no novelty, for Vivaldi had quite often done the same (see, for example, the first movement of his concerto Op. 6, No. 1), and the procedure had acquired general currency during the previous decades. However, Wolff is exceptionally inventive in creating delightful lyrical and/or ornamental variants of ritornello phrases. Sometimes, a more relaxed rhythm, one or two inserted notes or a mere trill suffice to customize the phrase for the woodwind instrument, as shown in music example 2a, which compares the opening bars of the ritornello of the first movement of the C major flute concerto with the start of the first solo episode. On other occasions, Wolff starts with a harmonic paraphrase that clearly reveals itself as such only when he suddenly returns to the original melodic line, as found in music example 2b, taken from the first movement of the oboe concerto.

Music example 2

(a) Christian Michael Wolff, Flute Concerto in C major, movement 1, bars 1–2 and 17–18 (upper part); (b) Christian Michael Wolff, Oboe Concerto in C minor, movement 1, bars 1–2 and 27–28 (upper part)

The image shows two musical excerpts. Excerpt (a) is titled "Moderato" and is for flute. It shows two measures of music. The first measure is the opening of the ritornello, and the second measure is the start of the first solo episode, which is a paraphrase of the first segment of the ritornello. Excerpt (b) is titled "Allegro ma non presto" and is for oboe. It shows two measures of music. The first measure is the opening of the ritornello, and the second measure is the start of the first solo episode, which is a harmonic paraphrase of the first segment of the ritornello.

In the C major flute concerto (but not the two other concertos) Wolff extends this practice in each of the three movements by opening the second solo episode in the key – dominant or relative major as appropriate – of the second ritornello with a transposition of the same variant. Here, he follows a usage first popularized by Giuseppe Tartini, who arguably set a dangerous precedent, since it is all too easy to recycle this common opening to excess.⁵³ Luckily, Wolff does not fall into that trap.

Mixed in with, and often continuing, the lyrical phrases is what one may describe

⁵³ See the discussion of this point in Talbot, “Pierre Pagin’s Capriccios for Antonio Vivaldi’s Violin Concerto *La primavera*”, 165–193, at 181–185. Tartini even liked to re-use the same ritornello material in a new variant to open his written-out capriccios (long, unaccompanied cadenzas).

generically as passage-work: rapid, often sequentially patterned successions of notes in a variety of arpeggiated or scalar configurations that show off the soloist's virtuosity across the instrument's compass.⁵⁴ Wolff rarely uses simple "off-the-peg" figuration, and some of the patterns are complex enough almost to attain thematic significance. He is sparing with notated appoggiaturas (i.e., those written as grace-notes) but abnormally fond of trills, with which he sometimes embellishes each successive note in a long chain.

But the most impressive aspect of Wolff's solo episodes, where his individuality comes out most strongly, is found less in the solo part than in its ever-changing accompaniments. Considered individually, the various modes of accompaniment he employs (as distinct from intercalations by the tutti) are unremarkable. They comprise single-strand accompaniments for basso continuo or unison violins (sometimes augmented by viola), two-strand accompaniments for first and second violins and three-strand accompaniments (generally in repeated quaver chords) for the three upper strings. What is remarkable about them, however, is the way in which Wolff weaves them into organized patterns to create dialogues, echoes, imitations and other forms of interrelationship (often employing small thematic cells conspicuously derived from ritornello material) over and above the support each type offers independently to the soloist. Wolff achieves here in the highest degree an ideal of rational, integrated and thematically "economical" composition within a still recognizably Vivaldian ritornello form that Peter Ahnsehl viewed some decades ago as a typical product of the reception of this form by eighteenth-century German composers, who operated in a culture suspicious of showiness on the part of performers but admiring of compositional finesse. Regarding Johann Joachim Quantz, for example, Ahnsehl writes:

Quantz spart durchaus nicht mit instrumental-technischen Schwierigkeiten, aber seine Virtuosität wird nicht im Vivaldischen Sinne relevant. Damit in Zusammenhang stehen zwei Gestaltungsverfahren, die wir bei den deutschen Komponisten häufiger als bei Vivaldi beobachten: Thematisch-motivisch geprägte, dem Ritornell entnommene Gedanken im Ripieno unterbrechen den Ablauf des Solos für kurze Zeit oder werden dem Solo simultan beigegeben, wobei die Makrostruktur des Satzes zunächst erhalten bleibt. Diese thematischen "Zwischenrufe" mit ihrem hohen gedanklichen Associationsgehalt entsprechen der häufig erhobenen Forderung, Musik müsse auch eine Unterhaltung des Verstandes sein. Die Entfaltung der ungebundenen solistischen Virtuosität wird durch den thematischen Einwurf gleichsam zum Sinn der musikalischen Rede zurückgerufen. Aber das Solistische selbst – das ist das zweite Gestaltungsverfahren – erscheint gebunden, geordnet, "zur Vernunft gerufen" durch das Eindringen periodischer, liedhafter Elemente. (Quantz is not at all sparing when it comes to instrumental-technical difficulties, but his virtuosity does not become relevant in the way it is for Vivaldi. Related to this are two compositional processes that we observe more often in German composers

⁵⁴ The compasses for transverse flute and oboe observed by Wolff (ignoring doubled violin notes in tutti passages) are d'-c''' and c'-c''', respectively. For instruments of the time these compasses are conservative but in no way restrictive, especially since Wolff exploits their outer limits very thoroughly.

than in Vivaldi: thematically and motivically impregnated ideas taken from the ritornello and performed by the ripieno interrupt the course of the solos for a short while or are played simultaneously with it, while the macrostructure of the movement remains for the time being intact. These thematic “cross-references” with their high intellectual associative content are a response to the frequently raised demand that music, too, should be a recreation for the mind. As a result of this injection of thematic content, the exposition of untrammelled soloistic virtuosity is, so to speak, recalled to the arena of musical discourse. But the soloistic element itself – this is the second compositional process – takes on a restrained, orderly and “disciplined” character through the acquisition of periodic and songlike elements.)⁵⁵

Such words could be applied with equal or even greater force to Wolff’s concerto movements. Music example 3 shows the complete first solo episode of the opening movement of the G major flute concerto. Viewed superficially, it is a modified and rescored version of the first ritornello that instead of immediately returning to the tonic after the central modulation to the dominant remains in the second key in preparation for the next ritornello. But the admixture of independent elements for the soloist and the delicate interplay of the accompanists, mostly using snippets of ritornello material, transform it into something new and delightful.

The final cadence of this episode prompts a comment that has relevance for the dating of Wolff’s orchestral music. It belongs to a type that briefly flourished in the eighteenth century, and for which I have elsewhere coined the description “arch” cadence on account of the characteristic contour of the principal melodic voice.⁵⁶ This shares the implied harmonic structure – the so-called “cadential six-four” – of the very familiar cadential form featuring the descending contour (referring to scale degrees) 3–2–1, but instead turns back on itself – hence my chosen metaphor of an arch – to produce the contour 1–2–1. This new type of cadence, which probably originated in vocal music of the Neapolitan school, is not encountered (outside the special domain of recitative) until the mid-1720s. Wolff employs it very freely, and in fact makes use also of the related “hook” cadence (with the contour 5–2–1: see bar 39 in the same music example), which seems to have arisen a few years later. Even without consideration of all the other quintessentially *galant* features such as reverse dotting, chains of semiquaver triplets, “sighing” figures (*Seufzer*), short phrases immediately repeated once or twice and supplementary (reinforcing) cadences, these cadential forms place the works certainly no earlier than 1730 (when Wolff was in his early twenties) and more probably in the following decade.

A brief mention must be made, finally, of Wolff’s elaborate and surprisingly weighty retransitions linking the final cadence of the second solo episode (in the outer movements, commonly in the submediant minor key) to the reprise in the tonic of the movement’s

⁵⁵ Ahnsehl, “Bemerkungen zur Rezeption der Vivaldischen Konzertform durch die mittel- und norddeutschen Komponisten im Umkreis Bachs”, 70–71.

⁵⁶ Talbot, “Maurice Greene’s Vocal Chamber Music on Italian Texts”, 113–114.

Music example 3

Christian Michael Wolff, Flute Concerto in G major, movement 1, bars 22–41

The musical score is presented in five systems, each with three staves: Flute (Fl), Violins and Violas (VI 1 + VI 2 Vln), and Bassoon (Basso). The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The flute part begins with a 'solo' marking and features a melodic line with trills and triplets. The string parts provide harmonic support with chords and rhythmic patterns, including trills and triplets. The score is marked with dynamics such as *p* (piano) and includes various musical notations like slurs, accents, and articulation marks.

Music example 3

(continued)

Musical score for Music example 3, continued. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 37-40) features a treble staff with a melodic line containing triplets and a trill, and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (measures 41-44) continues the melodic line in the treble staff and the accompaniment in the bass staff, with dynamics ranging from *f* to *p*.

Music example 4

Christian Michael Wolff, *Flute Concerto in G major, movement 1, bars 67–71*

Musical score for Music example 4, Christian Michael Wolff's *Flute Concerto in G major, movement 1, bars 67–71*. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features five staves: Flute 1 (Fl 1), Flute 2 (Fl 2), Violin 1 (Vln I), Violin 2 (Vln II), and Viola/Bassoon (Vln/Buss). The Flute parts play a melodic line with triplets and trills, while the strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics range from *f* to *p*.

opening theme.⁵⁷ It is unexpectedly here, in a section that for most composers would be treated as functional rather than expressive, that he is likeliest to employ a full texture and make the violins engage in passionate contrapuntal interplay. A case in point is the passage occupying bars 67–71 of the movement just discussed, shown as music example 4. The exaggerated contrast in note values between the viola and violin parts reminds one of Vivaldi’s fondness for “layered” textures of this kind where each component has its individual, strictly maintained style of rhythmic motion.⁵⁸

The Concerto Slow Movements

Structurally speaking, Wolff’s concerto slow movements hardly differ from his outer movements: their form is condensed only in the sense of compressing fewer notes or fewer bars into each section, not in that of employing fewer sections. In this, they are a little unusual, but certainly not unique, for their time. The fact that they are all in minor keys, however, gives them more opportunity to display Wolff’s wide harmonic palette and indulge strong emotion. Each movement has a highly individual character. The slow movement of the oboe concerto is fiercely passionate in its ritornellos but plaintive in its solo episodes, where the strings exchange their bows for finger tips, an imaginative touch. The *Affettuoso* of the C major flute concerto is in the style of a wistful siciliana. Even better is the sarabande-like slow movement of the G major flute concerto, which marries stateliness to tragic resignation.

The last part of the second solo episode in this movement, starting from its central tutti incursion, exemplifies Wolff’s lyrical writing at its peak (see music example 5). Notice, for instance, how the flute, in bar 74, picks up the closing gesture of the strings and turns it effectively into its own opening gesture. Such spontaneous-appearing transfers of musical ideas across instruments, a kind of *durchbrochene Arbeit* in the making, are extremely common in Wolff’s music. Even more arresting is the sustained bout of syncopated writing from bar 81 to bar 83, a kind of ragtime *ante diem*. If one were to single out one particular “signature” feature of his music, it would be this liking for prolonged syncopation, which is used both for elegant variation and in order to increase urgency.⁵⁹ The fermatas in bar 90 are the cue for a short cadenza, which is invited in two out of the three slow movements in Wolff’s concertos, but in none of the fast movements, perhaps in order to avoid overtaxing the woodwind soloist.

⁵⁷ Whereas in the early decades of the eighteenth century the last structurally important cadence occurring in a peripheral key was, for major-key movements, usually the mediant minor, often following an earlier cadence in the submediant (i.e., relative) minor, by Wolff’s time the general preference was to reverse this order, the mediant now preceding the submediant.

⁵⁸ A *locus classicus* of “layered” texture in Vivaldi’s music is the aria “Agitata infido flatu” in his oratorio *Juditha triumphans* (1716). Probably by coincidence, this aria features, in bars 17–18, the extraordinarily pungent superposition of a natural (Aeolian) minor scale over a diminished seventh on the leading note also seen in bar 16 of music example 1. Wolff’s harmony is on the whole less *outré* in these early compositions than in his later vocal and organ music, but that instance shows the shape of things to come.

⁵⁹ This predilection for syncopation is equally strong in Wolff’s late chorale preludes for organ.

Music example 5

Christian Michael Wolff, Flute Concerto in G major, movement 2, bars 70–90

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system (bars 70-74) includes parts for Flute (Fl), Violin I and Violin II (VI I + VI 2), Viola (Vla), and Bassoon (Basso). The Flute part begins with a *tutti* marking and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Violin and Viola parts also play with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Bassoon part is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system (bars 75-79) shows the Flute part continuing with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Violin and Viola parts continue with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Bassoon part is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third system (bars 80-84) shows the Flute part continuing with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Violin and Viola parts continue with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Bassoon part is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fourth system (bars 85-90) shows the Flute part continuing with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Violin and Viola parts continue with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Bassoon part is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Flute part has a *solo* marking at bar 85. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and trills.

The Sinfonia

At first sight, one would be forgiven for thinking that Wolff's sinfonia was a much slighter piece than any of his concertos. It is much shorter in duration; it is even leaner in texture; it belongs to a genre that in the 1740s had still far to go to achieve recognition as the summit of instrumental music. And yet Wolff achieves wonderful things in it that make for compelling listening. Its sheer fluency, the naturalness with which one idea flows into the next at precisely the right point, is perhaps its strongest attribute, and any latter-day disciple of Rudolph Reti will relish the subtle way in which common thematic shapes inform different places in the score.⁶⁰ These qualities emerge clearly from the opening of the first movement (its complete "first subject group" in traditional sonata form terminology), shown as music example 6.

Music example 6

Christian Michael Wolff, Sinfonia in B flat major, movement 1, bars 1–18

The musical score for the opening of the first movement of the Sinfonia in B flat major by Christian Michael Wolff, bars 1–18, is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 1–6) is marked 'Allegro' and features three staves: Violin I & II (VI I VI 2), Viola (Vla), and Bassoon (Basso). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The score shows a complex interplay of textures, including a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the bassoon and a melodic line with trills in the violins. Dynamics range from piano (p) to forte (f). The second system (bars 7–12) continues the melodic and rhythmic development, with the bassoon playing a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The third system (bars 13–18) concludes the passage, featuring a final melodic flourish in the violins and a strong bassoon accompaniment. The score is annotated with various musical notations, including trills (tr), accents (acc), and dynamic markings (p, f).

The flexibility of this passage's phrase structure, utilizing both three-bar and two-bar units, strikes one immediately, and the telescoping of its first and second segments

⁶⁰ Reti, *Thematic Process in Music*.

in bar 7, which is both a conclusion and a beginning, augments the sense of urgency. The wide, emphatic leaps of the first segment, especially its opening descending sixth, create a memorable thematic shape that will recur in various guises throughout the movement, including the quoted bars 13–14 in the bass part. Most imaginative are the quaver arpeggiations for the viola on the first beat of bars 7, 9, 11 and 13, a “flick of the tail” that lends excitement and makes the harmony suddenly richer.

Dynamic contrast is exploited creatively through the movement. The opening segment of the second subject group in bars 43–46 is in fact a *Pianoidée* on upper strings in the dominant minor. This particular way of launching the second subject group will become a fairly common option throughout the Classical period (Beethoven, for example, chooses it in the first movements of his *piano* sonatas Op. 2, Nos. 2 and 3), and it enables the transformation into major that soon follows to be a dramatic, powerful act. The development section, which occupies slightly over a quarter of the movement’s length (bars 59–89), is rationally laid out. It begins innocuously enough with a partial restatement of the first subject material in the dominant, but then clamorously and energetically dives into G minor. Following a short paraphrase of the *Pianoidée*, it treats the opening motive for the first time in treble-bass imitation – first in D minor and then, sequentially, in C minor – before a retransition based on the main second subject material returns the music to B flat. The recapitulation is remarkable for only one thing: its transition section is slightly lengthened by comparison with that in the exposition despite the maintenance of B flat as the tonic. For this the explanation is that in the exposition the use of underpreparation obviates the need for a gradually prepared modulation, whereas in the recapitulation a desire, for the sake of tonal balance, to explore briefly the “flat” side of the key (i.e., E flat major) calls for extra bars.

We need not consider at length the structure and character of the remaining movements. The *Andante sempre piano* (which, contrary to the initial direction if taken literally, actually includes a considerable amount of dynamic shading) is noteworthy for its attractive use of syncopation as a propulsive device and sustained melodiousness. Light and bouncy, the final *Allegro* interchanges its simple materials with an infallible feeling for climax-building and an engaging playfulness. The concision and relaxed mood of the movements after the first is typical of a genre that in the 1740s had not yet outgrown, either in Germany or in Italy, the stereotypes inherited from the *sinfonia avanti l’opera*, which included a very pronounced front-weighting. Yet the seeds of a future expansion of their length and enrichment of their content are already germinating, manifested in an increased attention to small-scale contrast, rhetorical effect and thematic individuality similar to what we find in the compact, equally Italianate chamber symphonies of J. G. Graun or Janitsch.

Conclusion

Since this essay has dealt with a rather small quantity of unknown music by a composer not yet widely known, its scope and goals are relatively modest. First, questions of authenticity have to be resolved satisfactorily: the fact that the incidence of misattribution is especially

high in Swedish collections and also that more than one composer named Wolff was active in the mid-eighteenth century makes this matter more than usually acute. However, there is in my view sufficient bibliographical evidence and commonality of style to link the Wolff of the orchestral music with great confidence to the composer of the songs, sonatas and organ music published some decades later. It is indeed fortunate that he has such a markedly individual musical personality, since this tends both to validate the claim for the works' authenticity and to make an argument for their publication and performance.⁶¹ Second, these new works can tell us a lot about orchestral composition in general during a short, transitional phase in the evolution, in northern Germany, from the early *galant* style represented by Hasse, via the more mannered (*empfindsam*) and turbulent musical language of W. F. and C. P. E. Bach, towards – by now, on a more international plane – the fully-fledged Classical idiom. Wolff's orchestral style is not unlike that of Scheibe or the Graun brothers, all of whose birth dates lay very close to his, but – quite remarkably, in view of Stettin's remoteness – it appears significantly more Italianate, especially when it exhibits the quality of *sprezzatura*: the ability to make complex things appear merely natural and spontaneous. Above all, Wolff has total mastery of what Leopold Mozart called "il filo" (the thread): the ability to maintain an unbroken line of musical thought.⁶²

The excellence of these early works causes one to wonder whether a more sustained scholarly investigation – indeed, potentially a significant reevaluation – of Wolff's much more numerous later compositions is not now urgently needed. No investigator approaches his or her task without biases arising from prior expectations, and I cannot help thinking that the sheer improbability that a provincial German organist, hardly noticed by contemporaries, could produce work of exceptional merit and originality has in the past always acted to his disadvantage. After all, it takes only a tiny shift of judgment to convert what could in a more sympathetic climate be seen as "boldly original" into "bizarre" and therefore discountable.

Nearly sixty years ago the British academic and scholar Arthur Hutchings wrote an inspirational book that was the first full-length study of the baroque concerto in the English language. Its writing was hampered by a relative lack of access to original sources and the paucity of modern editions (though not, fortunately, by any inability of the author to read important books and articles on the subject in the major European languages), and in places it can today appear very opinionated, as well as annoyingly discursive, to those unsympathetic to the older British tradition of treating musicological writing almost as a belletristic exercise. Hutchings had, however, a fine ear for musical quality and was willing to stick his neck out on behalf of neglected masters. He writes near the end of a chapter entitled "The Main German School – I" a sentence reading: "If only some ten of the best 'Kapellmeister concertos' could be regularly heard we should add intrinsically attractive (not merely worthy) pieces to the repertory and recognize more clearly what is unique and what is not in the concertos of J. S. Bach".⁶³ The *Kapellmeister* in question

⁶¹ My editions of all four works are currently in press at Edition HH (Launton, UK).

⁶² The metaphor appears in a letter to his son Wolfgang of 13 August 1778 and refers to the music of J. C. Bach.

⁶³ Hutchings, *Baroque Concerto*, 225.

were such figures as Heinichen, Graupner, Stölzel and Fasch, and it takes no more than a glance at publishers' lists, catalogues of recordings and concert programmes to confirm that Hutchings' wish has by now been amply fulfilled. (Indeed, a cynic might argue – and I would up to a point sympathize – that the performance of early music has little by little become the servant of musicology instead of its master, sometimes leading to an increased tolerance of mediocrity.) But in the case of Wolff I firmly believe that my confidence in the value of his music, and most emphatically of his orchestral works, is not misplaced, and I look forward with eagerness to its future revival.

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DRAGOCENE DARITVE IZ POMERANIJE: TRIJE KONCERTI IN SINFONIA CHRISTIANA MICHAELA WOLFFA (1707–1789)

Povzetek

Organist Christian Michael Wolff (1707–1789), ki je skoraj celo življenje živel v rodnem mestu Stettin (danes Szczecin na Poljskem), je kot skladatelj do nedavnega pritegnil le malo pozornosti. Na to je vplivalo njegovo delovanje v obrobnem, provincialnem središču, zlasti pa dejstvo, da je svojo glasbo pričel sistematično objavljati šele v sedemdesetih letih 18. stoletja, ko je bil že v letih. Njegova štiri zgodnejša orkestrska dela (nastala ok. 1740) – dva koncerta za flavto in godala, koncert za oboo in sinfonia za godala –, ohranjena v knjižnici Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket v Stockholmu, so komaj poznana.

Zgodnejše razprave o Wolffovem življenju in delih, zlasti pisanje Wernerja Freytaga iz leta 1936, so predstavile njegovo kratko bivanje v Berlinu (1729–1732) in ga pravilno na splošno povezale z berlinsko skladateljsko šolo, katere predstavnik sta denimo J. J. Quantz in C. Ph. E. Bach. V njih so bile identificirane njegove poglavitne tiskane zbirke – niz šestih sonat za čembalo s spremljavo (1776), zbirka 37 pesmi z izpisano spremljavo za instrument s tipkami (1777), niz duetov za dve flavti (1778) in njegov zaključni *magnum opus*, zbirka 57 koralnih preludijev za orgle (1782). Znanstveno vrednotenje njegove glasbe pa je bilo že od samega začetka obarvano z negativnimi percepcijami galantnega sloga, od česar so se uspele delno distancirati šele najnovejše razprave.

Najnaprednejše, izvirne in privlačne poteze Wolffove kasnejše glasbe se že kažejo v orkestrskih delih iz Stockholma. Konsistenca njegove glasbene osebnosti in njegovo obravnavanje elementov, kot sta ritem in oblika, dokazujeta, da je »Wolff« (brez imena) skladatelj koncertov in sinfonie ista oseba kot avtor zbirk – ob upoštevanju, da si je ta priimek delilo kar nekaj nemških skladateljev, ki so delovali v istem obdobju. Toda orkestrska dela ostajajo zanesljivo v območju »poznega baroka« – njihove naravne primerjave so dela skladateljev, kot so Hasse, Quantz ali Vinci – medtem ko pozna dela bolj ali manj izkazujejo *sentimentalnost* in predklasicistične poteze.

Analiza rokopisnih partov iz Stockholma, ki v celoti pripadajo zbirki »Utile dulci« in so bili temeljito preučeni z bibliografske perspektive, kaže, da so bili prepisani v sredini ali na koncu štiridesetih let 18. stoletja, in sicer so jih napravili precej neveščji in neskrbni prepisovalci pod vodstvom koncertnega mojstra dvornega orkestra, Pera Branta (1714–1767), ki je bil tudi sam glasbeni zbiratelj in promotor koncertov. Ni verjetno, da so rokopise pridobili iz prve roke, od Wolffa samega. Kot kaže sekundarni, anonimno ohranjeni vir koncerta za oboo v Schwerinu, so skladateljeva orkestrska dela namreč že krožila po severni Nemčiji. Zato se zdi bolj verjetno, da v Brantove roke niso prišla neposredno iz Stettina, temveč iz kje drugje, morda iz Berlina.

Koncerte odlikuje mojstrska in domiselna raba oblike z ritornelom (v dobršni meri v skladu s Quantzovimi nasveti v delu *Versuch*), obširen, vendar ne prenapihnjen obseg, ritmična rafiniranost, pogosti dialogi med *bassom* in *bassetom*, obvladovanje idiomatskega pisanja za pihalna glasbila tako s tehničnega kot estetskega vidika, občasni dodatki kontrapunktske eksaktnosti in izrazit občutek za strukturno in melodično kontinuiteto. V teh delih je čutiti vpliv ne samo Vivaldija, kot bi pričakovali, temveč tudi Locatellija

in Tartinija. Sinfonia kaže vplive Vincija in Neapeljčanov, vendar se še bolj kot koncerti približa klasicističnemu glasbenemu idiomu.

Visoka vrednost Wolffovih orkestrskih del (in druge glasbe) kaže, da je bil strm spust v pozabo v zgodnjem 19. stoletju nezaslužen, zato je čas, da se njegovo glasbo in njega samega ponovno oživi.