

The Viola Concertos of J. G. Graun and M. H. Graul Unconfused

Marshall Fine

Introduction

The Berlin Singakademie library, recently repatriated from longtime internment in Russia, yields a treasure trove of previously unknown viola concertos, some of mysterious provenance due to stylistic and orthographic eccentricities. Three of these are by King Frederick the Great's court cellist Markus Heinrich Graul (alternatively spelled Grauel or Gravel). Until the repatriation of the Singakademie collection, Graul was known, if at all, as a performer and the teacher of the cellist Johann Heinrich Viktor Rose from 1756 to 1763,¹ with only unnamed, unpublished compositions to his credit. He wrote a significant number of viola concertos, and some are of high quality, deserving of a place in our repertoire.

However, there appears to be confusion in the Singakademie collection between these viola concertos and those of Johann Gottlieb Graun (1702–1771), a complex matter that among other things has led to the recent recording of a Graul concerto under the name of Graun, performed by Ilia Korol with his own ensemble. It is therefore of great importance to not only introduce Graul to the viola-playing public, but also extricate him from confusion with Graun.

The Singakademie collection's extraordinary history must be mentioned as background for the Graul concertos. It was begun by Karl Friedrich Christoph Fasch, who had succeeded C. P. E. Bach as Frederick's keyboardist, and further enlarged by his successor, Karl Friedrich Zelter (also the author of a viola concerto and the teacher of Felix Mendelssohn). The collection includes several manuscript copies made by Rudolf von Beyer (1803–1851), better known as an author and colleague of J. W. Goethe, and incidentally as an amateur violist who had the distinction of being assistant principal to the young

Mendelssohn in Zelter's orchestra.² Besides his copies of the Graul concertos, he copied three others orchestrated in the *galant* style by one J. N. Triebel, a mysterious figure who cannot be accounted for elsewhere in music history.

On Zelter's death in 1832 the library was catalogued under the title "Zelter Collection" and maintained for the next hundred or so years, past the abdication of the last Prussian king, William II, in 1918, until the Nazis took over the administration of Prussia. Hitler moved it to Poland to protect it from the dangers of war. When the Soviet Army took Poland, it transported the collection to Kiev. For more than fifty years it remained in the library of the Ukraine Music Conservatory, where it was inventoried by the Soviet authorities and given the catalogue numbers (beginning with SA) by which they are identified today. It is fortunate that all the viola concertos in the collection were catalogued more or less in chronological order.

The West presumed the collection destroyed until its rediscovery in 1999 by Christoph Wolff and Patricia Grimsted. On its repatriation in 2001, an extensive microfiche scanning project was undertaken, which was completed only in 2009.³ Thus the collection has been available to the public only in the last five years or so. Meanwhile, the Korol recording was made in 2008, with material from the just-published third volume, before the microfiche project was completed.

Biographical background

The biography of Graul is fragmentary. His birthdate is unknown, although it is known that he was born in Eisenach and was apparently the brother-in-law of the Baroque composer J. W. Hertel. Neither is his education

known. The first firm date mentioned for Graul is his initial employment in Berlin as a cellist in 1742; the next, his appointment to King Frederick's court in 1763, succeeding the king's longtime viola da gambist Ludwig Christian Hesse. (The succession of a gambist by a cellist is a telling marker of stylistic change.) On this basis it can be inferred that he must have been born in the early or mid-1720s. As court cellist in Berlin, Graul served C. P. E. Bach until the latter's move to Hamburg in 1767, and thereafter he served Fasch. This career, which also included military service, lasted past Frederick's death until 1798, when Graul apparently retired, dying the next year. This career is documented by the royal pay records, which list Graul as a stipendiary member for the entire time.⁴ His exact death date is unknown at this time.⁵ Likewise, it is unknown whether or not Graul ever married.

Though Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski suggests Graul was fairly prolific,⁶ only six pieces are extant. Five of them—a violin concerto, a cello concerto, and the three viola concertos discussed in this article—are in the Singakademie collection. A violin sonata (possibly a late work), is in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek.⁷ Two more are merely cited in publication catalogues of the time. A cello concerto, which may be different from the one treated by Griffin Browne, is mentioned in Supplement XV of the 1782–84 Breitkopf catalogue. Finally there is apparently a viola sonata, titled “I. Solo di Gravel. A Viola con Basso,” cited in Supplement II of the 1767 Breitkopf catalogue.⁸

The viola concertos are largely mysteries that generate further sharp questions. Firstly, why so many viola concertos, from a cellist? And secondly, for whom? To this writer, these questions seem to be related. The concertos are technically quite difficult, not so much exploiting the high registers, featuring complicated low passagework; they must have been written for a violist Graul knew, either personally, or else by reputation.

Berlin's violists remained remarkably stable from at least 1766 through 1783; they included one Johann Georg Stephani—possibly cognate with the 1754 violist Hans Jürgen Steffani—who would certainly have been able to play them. The others—Franz Caspari, Johann Christoph Tennenberg, and Karl Ludwig Bachmann—were equally good; indeed, Bachmann was favorably reviewed by Forkel in his *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland*.⁹ Yet

it is uncertain whether or not they actually played any of Graul's concertos. They might just as possibly have been written for a violinist who could also play the viola. The best-known touring virtuoso, Karl Stamitz, is known to have visited Berlin in 1786.¹⁰ Other possibilities, for at least the 1780s on, include Alessandro Rolla of Parma (1757–1841), Georg Benda (1722–1795, formerly of Berlin and himself the author of at least two viola concertos), and Johann G. H. Voigt of Leipzig (1768–1811). There remains a further possibility for a performance history after Graul's death: owing to Zelter's custodianship of the collection and the contributions of Rudolf von Beyer, they may have been performed as part of the Mendelssohn entertainment evenings.

The Manuscripts

How many viola concertos did Graul actually write, and when? The Singakademie collection has five manuscripts of viola concertos attributed to Graul—none of them in score, only in parts with viola *concertato*, first and second violins, *tutti* viola, and *basso* parts with figures written out. The manuscripts are as follows:

- SA 2685. Concerto in E-flat for Viola Concertato, 2 Violins, Viola, and Bass (Concerto No. 3)
SA 2721. Concerto in E-flat for Viola Concertato, 2 Violins, Viola, and Bass (Concerto No. 2)
Copy: SA 2723. Concerto in E-flat for Viola Concertato, 2 Violins, Viola, Bass and Violone
SA 2722. Concerto in C for Viola Concertato, 2 Violins, Viola, and Bass (Concerto No. 1)
Copy: SA 3011. Concerto in C for Viola Concertato, 2 Violins, Viola, and Bass

No Graul composition can be definitively dated at this point. The cello concerto is probably an early work, by the evidence of Charles Burney who heard this concerto in 1772 and reviewed it as “ordinary music, [but] well executed.”¹¹ The violin concerto may likewise be a fairly early work. The two concertos SA 2721 and SA 2722 are definitely a pair. The title page of SA 2721 designates it with the Roman numeral III, indicating that it was the third; SA 2722 must therefore be the first or second. But exactly what the Roman numeral signifies is not clear; is it the third of three concertos written at the same time, or merely the third of all those in the collection? SA 2721 has an inscription below the incipit of the first

movement, struck through by a single line that makes most of it illegible; but the year 1781 is still readable, suggesting that both it and its mate were written at that time. SA 2685 is captioned likewise at the top of the page, with a loop open at the top. This may or may not be the number 1—probably not 0 or 6.

There are unfortunately no extant manuscripts in Graul's hand. SA 2721 and 2722 are in Beyer's hand. Their duplicates (SA 2723 and 3011) are in another hand, which is presumably Fasch's or possibly Zelter's, and is the same hand that copied the violin concerto. They may be distinguished on a unique basis: the solo viola part is notated in mezzo-soprano clef. Not even Browne can account for this; he merely notes the apparent error of notes lying beneath the open C of the viola.¹²

It is with SA 2685, the concerto Korol misattributes to

the note on the title page. The other is the one published by Simrock in Walter Lebermann's edition, which was not in the collection but is in the Wissenschaftlichen Allgemeinbibliothek des Bezirkes Schwerin, and before that was owned by Adolf Karl Kuntzen, the Schwerin court concertmaster from 1749–1752.

Most significantly, Beyer never copied the Graun SA 2724. The hand is distinct from both Beyer and Fasch; it is not nearly as neat, leaves out dynamics consistently, and is careless with ledger lines and flags on individual short notes. The solo part is designated *viola da braccio*, the old term, instead of *viola concertato*. *Basso ripieno* parts are included. Both Beyer and Fasch notate multibar rests in a now-defunct style, even for long periods over eight bars; but this hand notates them invariably with a diagonal double slash. Moreover, the stem goes to the right side of the notehead and as

often as not is short and unconnected with the note. It needs comparison with the Schwerin manuscript, however, to confirm whether or not the hand is Graun's.

SA 2685. Concerto in E-flat (Concerto No. 3)

SA 2721. Concerto in E-flat (Concerto No. 2)

Copy: SA 2723. Concerto in E-flat

SA 2722. Concerto in C (Concerto No. 1)

Copy: SA 3011. Concerto in C

A notable feature of the *basso* part of SA 2685 is the sudden absence of figures

Graul, that the confusion originates. It is in Beyer's hand and has the solo part in alto clef. The duplicate in the other hand is SA 2725, attributed to J. G. Graun. It is significant that the solo viola part is in alto clef here, not mezzo-soprano as in the other two Fasch copies. On this basis, I conclude that three Graul viola concertos actually exist: SA 2721, 2722, and 2725 as copied by Fasch, and their duplicates in Beyer's hand SA 3011, 2723, and 2685. In addition, all the Beyer duplicates add tutti bass parts, where the others have only a single part that includes solo and tutti.

Meanwhile Graun receives credit for the concerto catalogued SA 2724—however, this manuscript also has a note scrawled on the title page, "Nein! Nicht von Graun!" This note is suspicious. It may be in Beyer's hand. There is a possibility that it was intended for SA 2725, and was put on the previous concerto in error. As a result, Graun must be credited with two viola concertos—but only one of these from the collection, SA 2724, and this in spite of

after its third page (out of seven), amounting to nearly half the concerto. The figures break off in the same place in SA 2725, but in the middle of page four. Was it a desire not to have a figured bass, as Browne contends,¹³ or an omission? An inference from these details is that the lost Graul manuscript had the same defect, which was faithfully copied by both Fasch and Beyer. Be that as it may, Graul's figures—in the other two concertos as well—are given in detail, as befits the royal cellist who must have learned comprehensively from his justly famous keyboard partner C. P. E. Bach. Whereas Graun in SA 2724 has no figures at all; and the Schwerin concerto, at least in the Lebermann edition, likewise lacks them.

These considerations create two possibilities of numerical order of the Graul concertos: either 1) SA 2685 is the earliest concerto, possibly from the mid-1770s, and the two others date from 1781; or 2) the Roman numeral III on the title page of the viola concertato part of SA 2721 indicates that it is last of a group of *three* dating from



Illus. 1. Graul, *Concerto No. 1*, movement 1, mm. 30–35.



Illus. 2. Graul, *Concerto No. 2*, movement 1, mm. 14–17.



Illus. 3. Graul, *Concerto No. 2*, movement 1, mm. 1–4.



Illus. 4. Graul, *Concerto No. 3*, movement 1, m. 165.

1781, with SA 2722 as the first, and the second missing and possibly lost; and that SA 2685 is a later work in a more mature style—a total of four. The maturity of SA 2685 and its treatment of the tutti violas inclines me toward the latter possibility. But in either case they were all written too late to attribute to Graun.

The Contrasting Styles of Graul and Graun

All the Graul concertos hark back to the mature Baroque style of Vivaldi and Bach. Their first-movement ritornellos are quite extended when first stated and are generally also reprised nearly entire in the dominant. Graul regularly reprises in the tonic phrases formerly

heard in the dominant—but never so completely as to produce a true sonata form recapitulation. In two out of three slow movements he also does this. The lone exception is the slow movement of SA 2721 (*Concerto No. 2*), which is in the tonic (instead of a related key) and merely repeats the modulation to the dominant in a disarmingly simple, written-out binary form, the purpose of which is to convert the third iteration of this same modulation into a formal surprise, a half-cadence, as bridge to the finale.

Two representative Graul melodies are the opening themes of the *Concertos Nos. 1* and *2* (see Illustrations 1 and 2).

The latter solo, interestingly, is complemented by the opening tutti, a stiff march motif based on a repeated E-flat, which remains in the tutti strings, never passing into the solo viola even for the purpose of later development (see Illustration 3).

The bass part is relatively high and never palls from melodic interest. Further, his figures, on first appearance clumsy through the use of redundancies such as a written-out 8/6 or 5/3, actually give important clues to a melodic realization of his thoroughbass (see Illustration 4).

SA 2685 (*Concerto No. 3*) is the longest, at about twenty minutes (as contrasted to sixteen for the cello concerto and fifteen to seventeen for the other two). The orchestration showcases the tutti violas: at times they bear the burden of accompanying the soloist, because the violins drop out, at other times they have



Illus. 5. Graul, *Concerto No. 3*, movement 1, mm. 143–46



Illus. 6. Graul, *Concerto No. 3*, movement 1, mm. 111–20



Illus. 7. Graul, *Concerto No. 3*, movement 3, mm. 137–43.



Illus. 8. Graul, *Concerto No. 3*, movement 3, mm. 222–25.

countermelodies with the violins inverted under them, and on yet other occasions they play the bass line in a high register *senza cembalo*. (To a lesser extent this happens in the other two concertos.) In the slow movement, a lament of melodic profile comparable to Mozart's in the *Sinfonia Concertante*, the tutti strings are muted throughout until just before the finale.

Graul's first movements, as often as not, are in some other meter than the commonly used slow or moderately paced 4/4. The cello concerto begins in 2/4 time, and SA 2685 and 2722 in *alla breve* time, both of which I regard as notational solutions to the phrasing problem of ending in the middle of a measure. This enables Graul to occasionally extend phrases, sometimes with a great flourish as at measures 143–46 in the first movement of *Concerto No. 3* (see Illustration 5):

Graul is also evidently aware of the viola's virtuosic element, as he was of his own instrument. Bariolage figures on three strings abound, sometimes in extended passages and even invoking hand-stretching difficulty, as in measures 111–20 in the first movement of *Concerto No. 3* (see Illustration 6).

He is unafraid of employing double-stops or chords; *Concertos Nos. 2 and 3* both contain episodes that exploit them freely, for instance, measures 137–43 in the finale of *Concerto No. 2* (see Illustration 7) or the obviously special final episode in *Concerto No. 3*, at measures 222–25 of the finale, where the style changes to a courtly minuet in sixths (see Illustration 8).

A distinct hallmark of Graul's large-scale musical form is that he connects the slow movement to the finale by a



Illus. 9. Graun, opening measures of the Schwerin Concerto.



Illus. 10. Graun, Concerto SA 2724, movement 2, mm. 13–15.



Illus. 11. Graun, Schwerin Concerto, movement 2, mm. 1–6.



Illus. 12. Graun, Concerto SA 2724, movement 3, mm. 1–6.

half-cadence. He allows many opportunities for cadenzas: two in Concerto No. 2 (first and third movements), one in Concerto No. 1 (second movement), and two in Concerto No. 3 (first and second movements). The manuscript of Concerto No. 1 actually has a cadenza for the slow movement in another hand—whose is unclear as yet.

In contrast, Graun writes triadic themes and figurations, always in single notes (just about the only exception in the viola concertos is in the third movement of the

Schwerin concerto, where he has two measures of thirds). Such a treatment of melody looks forward to Haydn, not in retrospect of the Baroque mainstream.

Representative Graun themes include the opening of the Schwerin Concerto (see Illustration 9), the soloist's main theme in the slow movement of SA 2724 (see Illustration 10), the opening of the Schwerin concerto slow movement (see Illustration 11), and the rocketing tutti opening in the finale of SA 2724 (see Illustration 12).



Illus. 13. Graun, Schwerin Concerto, movement 3, mm. 53–63.



Illus. 14. Graun, Schwerin Concerto, movement 1, mm. 59–62.



Illus. 15. Graun, Concerto SA 2724, movement 3, mm. 244–250.



Illus. 16. Graun, Schwerin Concerto, movement 3, mm. 78–81.



Illus. 17. Graun, Schwerin Concerto, movement 3, mm. 100–103 (repeated 104–107).

Due to the style of most of Graun's scalar melody, it is less likely for Graun to be attributed for the kind of flourishes that appears in the Graul concertos. This is also true of Graun's bass parts, which are generally functional and lie lower in the cello than Graul's. As said before, Graun gives no figures; yet passages such as measures 53–63 in the third movement of the Schwerin concerto must have had a continuo part, considering the exposed and unchorded bass part here (see Illustration 13).

To generate rhythmic interest, Graun resorts frequently to syncopation of arpeggios and repeated notes, instead of creating tension with melodic dissonance. He also depends on repetition, in the form of both dual phrases and short sequenced melodic figures that are capable of accomplishing far-reaching modulations, but in return consistently impair the breadth of his melody. A notable instance of this is measures 59–62 in the first movement of the Schwerin concerto (see Illustration 14).

The difficulty of Graun's technical writing stems not from double-stops, chords, or range as with Graul, but from

its unidiomatic elements. When he has a bariolage, it is almost always on two strings, rarely on three; and in rapid music it is often embellished with a slurred lower neighbor or *gruppetto* that complicates bow distribution, such as in the extended episode beginning measure 244 in the finale of SA 2724 (see Illustration 15).

More often he resorts to chordal figures, such as in the extended passage beginning at measure 78 in the finale of the Schwerin concerto, which is based on the a chordal cell (see Illustration 16), which eventually recurs in D-flat at the bottom register of the viola, in figures against the line of the bridge that cannot be completely remedied by any strategic slurring (see Illustration 17).

Graun's large-scale forms are largely Baroque. Though he works freely with a tonic-dominant polarity, he rarely recapitulates a theme in the tonic, instead relying on further episodes. The pure and nobly worked-out sonata form in the slow movement of SA 2724 is a notable exception. The slow movements come to a full stop before the finale. In neither slow movement, nor any

other section of these concertos, does he ever use mutes. And he allows a cadenza only in the slow movement of SA 2724, and not at all in the Schwerin concerto.

In Graun's works, the tutti violas are subordinate to the violin sections, particularly in the Schwerin concerto where they drop out whenever the soloist plays. In contrast, Graul's tutti viola parts exist on an equal basis with the violin sections, and—as mentioned earlier—the violas are occasionally showcased to complement the soloist with the violins subordinate to them.

For these reasons SA 2685 (the duplicate of SA 2723, which is credited to Graul) cannot be attributed to Graun. All the Graul concertos are major finds well worth performing, as soon as performing editions are available. Meanwhile SA 2724 of Graun, despite its uneven quality, is certainly more representative of him than the Schwerin concerto, and should likewise have a modern performing edition. In any event both of these concertos deserve to include a realized figured bass, an element missing in the Lebermann edition of the Schwerin concerto.

The complete score and parts for Graul's Viola Concerto No. 2, prepared by Marshall Fine, may be found on IMSLP. The complete score and parts for Graul's Viola Concerto No. 3, prepared by Marshall Fine, may be found on the AVS website at <http://www.americanviolasociety.org/Resources/JAVS-Scores-Members.php>?



Please see the *In Memoriam* (pages 9–10) in the Fall 2014 issue of JAVS for biographical details on Marshall Fine.

1. Hans Gerhard Weiss, *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: H. Wigankow, 1947), 30–31.
2. Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, *The Violoncello and Its History*, trans. Isobella S. E. Stigand (London: Novello, Ewer, 1894), 72.
3. Griffin Browne, “Violoncello Concerto in A Major by Markus Heinrich Graul: A Performance Edition” (DMA diss., University of Memphis, 2013), 90–91.
4. Michael O’Loghlin, *Frederick the Great and His Musicians: The Viola da Gamba Music of the Berlin School* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 13.
5. Browne, 7.
6. Von Wasielewski, 72.

7. Browne, 17.
8. Ibid., notes 50–51.
9. Ann Woodward, “A Profile of Violists in the Classical Period,” in Maurice Riley, *The History of the Viola*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, MI: Braun-Brumfield, 1991), 126–37.
10. Ibid., 131.
11. Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*. (London: 1775; facsimile reprint, NY: Broude Brothers, 1969), 2:219.
12. Browne: 16, notes 48–49.
13. Griffin Browne, conversation with the writer, 2014.

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