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Printed in the United States of America

ISMN 979-0-58039-016-5 (score and parts)

Greenway Music Press / A-R Editions
8401 Greenway Blvd., Ste 100
Middleton, Wisconsin 53562
www.areditions.com

Preface

During his years at the Brussels Conservatoire, the young Belgian composer Christian Joseph Anton Franz Alexander Stadtfeld (1826–53) appeared destined for a remarkably successful career. Born in Wiesbaden to the military bandmaster and composer Benedict Stadtfeld (1788–1878), Alexander Stadtfeld began his musical education at the age of nine, studying piano at the Wiesbaden Conservatory. His pianistic abilities advanced quickly, and within a few years he began giving public concerts, including one in 1839 at which King Leopold I of Belgium, who visited Wiesbaden frequently, was in attendance. According to a later report by François-Joseph Fétis, the king was amazed by Stadtfeld's talents and offered him a stipend to study in Brussels, something the young musician's family could not have afforded otherwise. Stadtfeld accepted, and at the age of thirteen he left Wiesbaden to enroll at the Conservatoire. There he spent the next decade of his life, studying piano with Jean-Baptiste Michelot and theory with Fétis and winning numerous *premiers* and *seconds prix*. The earliest of his compositions date from 1842. His first major work to receive a public premiere was his piano concerto (1845); the following years saw several other performances of his orchestral works, including his second symphony, under the aegis of Fétis, who often championed his students' compositions. The zenith of Stadtfeld's conservatory education came in 1849, when he secured the Belgian Prix de Rome for his cantata *Le songe du jeune Scipion*. Over the next few years, he divided his time between Brussels, where Conservatoire director Fétis continued to program his former student's works, and Paris, where he primarily occupied himself with composing his opera *Hamlet* (1849–53). Sadly, he did not live to see the opera premiered: having contracted tuberculosis some time before, he was forced to return to Brussels in August 1853 and died there in November of that year at the age of twenty-seven. A handful of his most successful compositions—in particular his Overture in E (1849) and the overture to *Hamlet*—continued to be performed periodically after his death, including the eventual complete premiere of *Hamlet* in Weimar in 1882 (attended by Franz Liszt, who declared the opera “one of the best that I know of the Meyerbeer-Donizetti genre”).¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, his name and his music had largely faded from memory.²

Beyond the aforementioned works, Stadtfeld's output of approximately one hundred twenty compositions comprises four complete symphonies, several single-movement orchestral pieces, choral-orchestral works including a mass and a Te Deum setting, numerous smaller choral and solo vocal compositions, piano

works including a concerto and a sonata, a fantasy for tenor trombone and orchestra, and a variety of other solo and chamber instrumental compositions. While chamber music comprises a relatively small portion of his oeuvre, he did produce a handful of compositions for string instruments and piano, a string quartet, and his sole work featuring woodwinds, the Trio in F Major for oboe, bassoon, and piano.

The trio manuscript offers no hints as to what prompted its creation, although Stadtfeld may have been inspired in part by his collaboration with oboist Franz Schidlik (1814–1900), whom he had accompanied in a performance in early 1846.³ The final page bears the colophon “Décembre [18]46,” thus placing its composition squarely in the middle of Stadtfeld's student years. Consisting of a short introduction, a theme and three variations, an adagio, and a finale with coda, Stadtfeld's trio follows the general structure of the earlier oboe-bassoon-piano trios by French oboist Henri Brod (1799–1839), who composed around fourteen such works.⁴ As Magdalena Weber notes in her 1969 catalog of Stadtfeld's music, the theme (mm. 15–38) is identical to that of his *Grand Duo concertante*, op. 10, for violoncello and piano, composed two years earlier in 1844.⁵

The Source

The edition is based on the composer's autograph manuscript in the library of the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles, shelfmark 11805/22, pp. 37–60. The first page (see plate 1) bears the label “Trio, Hautbois, Basson & Piano,” followed by an annotation in the hand of one T. A. Broustin, a Brussels notary who cataloged Stadtfeld's works in 1854, which reads “Inventaire du notaire Broustin à Bruxelles du 10 avril 1800 cinquante quatre[,] Cote quatre[,] Cinquième ouvrage contenant quarante huit feuillets paraphés” (Inventory of notary Broustin of Brussels of 10 April 1854. Call number four. Fifth work containing forty-eight initialed leaves). Clearly Stadtfeld's working draft, the score employs copious shorthand notation for repeated material and reveals an abandoned sketch of the first four measures of the second movement (oboe only) at the bottom of its tenth page. Two pages of the manuscript, 58 and 59, lack notation other than a few barlines and a “fine” marking on page 59, but there seems to be no interruption of the music between the bottom of page 57 and the top of page 60 (in the edition, this break occurs in the finale between measures 137 and 138). The trio thus appears to be a complete work, contradicting Weber's description of the piece as fragmentary.⁶ The copying is generally legible but occasionally ambiguous, with numerous small inconsistencies between parallel sections. At one point in each movement Stadtfeld

Trio in F Major

I. Introduction, Theme, and Variations

Alexander Stadtfeld
ed. Alex Widstrand

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. The Oboe and Bassoon parts begin with a *ff* dynamic. The Piano part also starts with *ff* and transitions to *pp* in the third measure. The second system (measures 4-6) includes Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. The Oboe and Bassoon parts start with a *f* dynamic and increase to *ff* in the second measure. The Piano part starts with *f* and increases to *ff* in the second measure, then transitions to *pp* in the sixth measure. The third system (measures 7-9) features Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. The Oboe and Bassoon parts begin with a *p* dynamic and transition to *pp* in the second measure. The Piano part starts with *p* and transitions to *pp* in the second measure.

113 *ad lib.*

Bn.

Pf.

f

115

Bn.

Pf.

p

118

Bn.

Pf.

121

Bn.

Pf.

II

Adagio sostenuto

Oboe *solo*
p

Bassoon *pp*

Piano *p*

5

Ob.

Bn.

Pf.

9

Ob. *cresc.* *fz*

Bn. *cresc.*

Pf. *cresc.*

III. Finale

[Allegro]

Oboe

Bassoon

Piano

6

Ob.

Bn.

Pf.

11

Ob.

Bn.

Pf.

p

p

p

cresc.

[cresc.]

[cresc.]

ff

p

pp

p

pp

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for 'III. Finale' contains measures 1 through 11. It features three systems of staves for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. The first system (measures 1-5) is marked [Allegro] and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Oboe and Bassoon parts play a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, while the Piano provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving bass lines. The second system (measures 6-10) shows a crescendo in the Oboe and Piano parts, with the Bassoon playing a sustained note. The Piano part reaches a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic at the end of measure 10. The third system (measures 11) shows the Oboe and Bassoon parts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, and the Piano part with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic.

Trio in F Major

I. Introduction, Theme, and Variations

Alexander Stadtfeld
ed. Alex Widstrand

ff *f* *ff*

6 *p*

10 *pp* *f* *cadenza ad lib.*

(14) Theme 4 *rit.* a tempo 3 *solo* *p*

25

29 *rit.* ----- a tempo *fz*

34 *p*

(38) Variation 1 (Oboe tacet) *Più anima* 7 15

Trio in F Major

I. Introduction, Theme, and Variations

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5

10

Theme solo

(14)

p

rit.

7

rit.

30

a tempo

fz

p

35

ad lib.