

Gioachino ROSSINI

INTRODUCTION, THEME AND VARIATIONS FOR CLARINET

Edited by Charles Neidich



Charles Neidich 21st Century Series for Clarinet



Rossini, Introduction, Theme and Variations

Very little is known about the genesis of the Introduction, Theme and Variations. In fact, there is no evidence that Rossini actually wrote the work. It is not listed in any scholarly catalogues of Rossini's works. An old set of Breitkopf & Härtel parts exists as well as a florid and very awkwardly ornamented manuscript clarinet part definitely not in Rossini's hand. As far as I know, there is nothing else. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most popular virtuosic works for clarinet and piano or small orchestra and one of the most challenging works for clarinet of the early 19th century.

The arias on which the work is based, however, are not only definitely by Rossini, they are two of his most beautiful arias coming from two of the eight dramatic operas (opera seria) he wrote while he was Director of Music in Naples. Rossini may be more famous for his comic operas, but comedy was only one side of his genius. In his day, his dramatic side was, if anything, more prevalent and the two operas in question are two of his most striking dramatic works: *Mosè in Egitto* (Moses in Egypt) which he wrote in 1818 after Francesco Ringhieri's play, *L'Osiride*, taken from the story of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and *La Donna de Lago* (The Lady of the Lake) which he wrote in 1819 based on the poem of the same title by Sir Walter Scott.

It is important for the performer of the Introduction, Theme and Variations to understand that when it was composed, both the performers and the audience knew the arias and the operas very well. In an age before recorded performance, arrangements were the way people were able to listen to their favorite musical works and popular tunes with florid variations were the ideal way virtuosi could both move and impress those who came to listen to them. The point of the performance was not only to dazzle; it was to present a version of the famous melody which would remind the listeners of the emotional impact of the original. Nowadays, too often performers approach works such as the one in this edition as technical exercises with little sense of any connection with the source of the arrangement.

This is not the place to give a detailed synopsis of these works, but a brief explanation of the drama surrounding the two arias should help foster a basic understanding of the character one should try to communicate. Hopefully, it will also peak enough interest for whoever is performing these variations to listen to the operas and to appreciate their inventiveness, their beauty and their drama.

Mosè in Egitto

Mosè in Egitto, one of Rossini's most original operas combines the story of the Exodus from Egypt with a romantic subplot involving *Osiride*, the son of the Pharaoh, who is in love with *Elcia*, a young Jewish girl. The aria, *La pace mia smarrita* (My peace is lost, Ah, I breathe! I hope my wishes will be seconded in Heaven) on which the introduction is based is from the beginning of the 2nd act sung by *Amaltea*, Pharaoh's wife, who is sympathetic to the plight of the Israelites, after Moses enlists her help to make sure the Pharaoh does not go back again on his word to let the Israelites leave. The text of the aria is as follows:

La pace mia smarrita
Ah! respirar vorrei!
Spero che i voti miei
Il Ciel seconderà.

My peace is lost
Ah! I breathe
I hope that my wishes
Will be seconded in Heaven

La Donna del Lago

La Donna del Lago, set in then exotic Scotland, combines political rebellion and a love triangle. The leader of the Scottish highlanders, Rodrigo (Roderick Dhu in Scott's poem) together with his closest friends, Malcolm Graeme and Douglas of Angus plot to overthrow Giacomo (King James V of Scotland). Douglas has promised his daughter Elena (Ellen in the poem) to Rodrigo, however Elena and Malcolm have secretly been in love.

Malcolm arrives, unbeknownst to Elena, and overhears Douglas telling her of his plans for her marriage to Rodrigo thus bringing us to the wonderful aria, *Mura felice ... Elena! oh tu, che chiamo ... Oh quante lacrime finor versai*. Malcolm, the part sung by a contralto, first sees her, remembers their lovely times together and notices that she does not look as happy and carefree as before. He overhears Douglas' plans for Elena, is distraught, but even so declares his eternal love for her. After Douglas leaves, he makes himself known to Elena and in a subsequent duet they reaffirm their love for each-other.

The theme of the variations is taken from the final part of the aria where Malcolm, though distraught, affirms his love for Elena.

Here is the text:

*Oh quante lacrime finor versai
lungi languendo da' tuoi bei rai!
ogn'altro oggetto è a me funesto;
tutto è imperfetto, tutto detesto;
di luce il cielo no, più non brilla,
più non sfavilla astro per me.
Cara! Tu sola mi dai la calma,
tu rendi all'alma grata mercé!*

(trans. Robert Levine)

*Oh how many tears I've shed,
languishing far from your lovely eyes
Everything else is dreary to me;
all is imperfect, I detest it all;
the sky no longer shines with light,
the stars no longer gleam for me.
Darling! you alone give me peace,
and I render you my grateful thanks!*

The question still remains, did Rossini compose the Introduction, Theme and Variations? I would say, however, that in the end the authorship is not so important. It is a brilliant work which combines affect and virtuosity in a way worthy of the best operatic arrangements of the 19th century. Rossini may very well have written it. Naples was home to many virtuoso clarinetists, the most famous of whom, Ferdinando Sebastiani, a younger contemporary of Rossini who was himself an accomplished composer and who, for sure, knew the Rossini operas very well, may also be a prime candidate for the composer of the work. Whoever wrote it, there are moments, for instance the **Largo Minore**, of the type of genius worthy of Rossini.

I have tried not to clutter the score with markings, however, as the original material is virtually devoid of markings, I have put in phrase marks and articulations which, I hope, will help convey the sense of "bel canto" flexibility so important to Rossini. These, of course, are only my suggestions. Please feel free to use your own creativity to make the edition your own. For fun, I have also included a few colorful Italian musical terms which would have been typical had the work been published in Italy in the early 19th century. Finally, I have included notes explaining certain textual corrections I have made as well as explanations for the execution of certain phrases which I have often heard performed in a way ignorant of bel canto tradition. I have also included my favorite fingerings for some of the more difficult passages.

Enjoy,
Charles Neidich

Translations

a piacere as you wish, freely

a tempo resume tempo

con with

con affezione with warmth, tenderness, affection

grazioso gracefully, elegantly

maestoso majestic, dignified

ossia alternate version

più more

più mosso more motion, faster

poco a little

rallentando (rall.) gradually slowing down

risolutamente boldly, resolutely

risoluto bold, resolute

ritenuto held back, suddenly slower

senza without

senza affretare without rushing

singhiozzando sobbing, crying

INTRODUCTION, THEME and VARIATIONS

Edited with a Newly Arranged
Piano Part by Charles Neidich

for Clarinet in B \flat and Piano

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
(1792–1868)

Introduction (Adagio)

Clarinet in B \flat

Piano

8

13

(echo, poco tenuto) a tempo, poco a poco cresc.

16

2) poco ritenuto 3) a tempo, poco animato

(quasi pizz.)

20

4)
3 3
più f

25

dolce
3 3 3 3

30

2)
calando
p
Ped. * Ped. *

34

p cresc.
f
Ped. * Ped. *

Gioachino ROSSINI

INTRODUCTION, THEME AND VARIATIONS FOR CLARINET

Edited by Charles Neidich

Clarinet in Bb

LAUREN KEISER
MUSIC PUBLISHING

Copyright © 2012 Lauren Keiser Music Publishing (ASCAP).
All rights reserved. International Copyright Secured.

Notes

1) m. 11

The G should be played before the beat. It is not an appoggiatura, but rather an instrumental indication of what would have been a graceful vocal portamento.

2) m. 16

Trill from the upper note, leaning on the initial A.

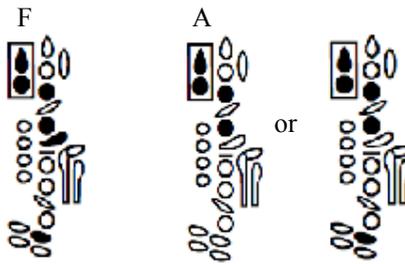
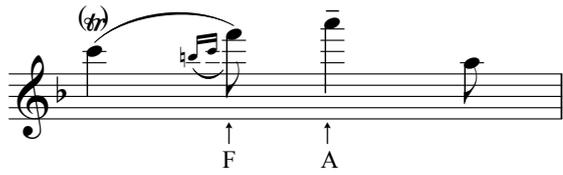
3) m. 18

It is important to play ornaments such as the turn above as a definite rhythmic subdivision of the larger beat. They should be elegant and well formed.

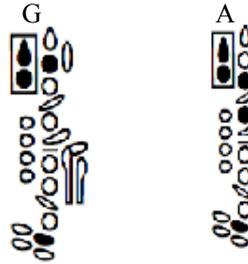
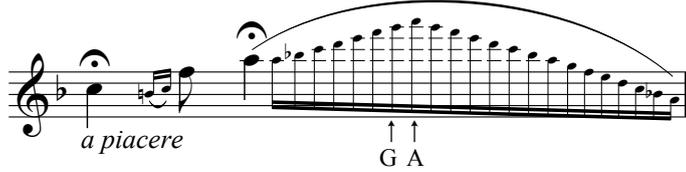
4) m. 21. Two possibilities for playing the appoggiatura F (there are more).

This is not a good possibility. The initial appoggiatura F should resolve to the final E. In this version it first resolves after the first F and then again. When the F is too short, it sounds as if it resolves once too early and then again.

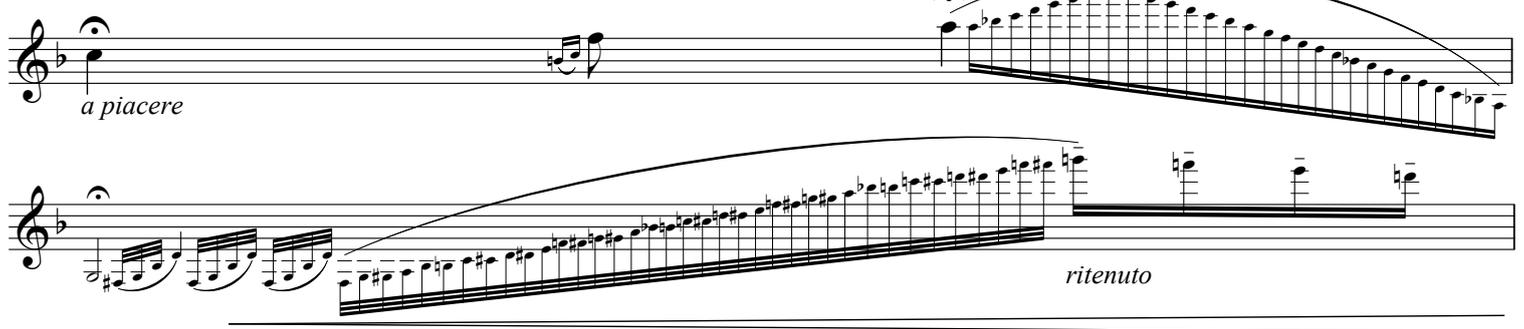
5) m. 39. Suggested fingerings (F and A)



6) m. 43. Suggested fingerings (G and A)



7) m. 43. Ossia

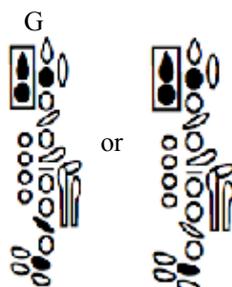


8) m. 44. Execution



This passage is an ornamented variation of the opening melody and should be played in a similar way, moving in this case to the ending D.

9) m. 44. Suggested fingerings (G)



10) mm. 53–60. Rossini’s original melody. The top line is the orchestral prelude; the lower line is the beginning of the aria.

oh quante la - grime fi - nor ver - sa - i lun gi lan - guen - do da_ tuoi bei_

ra_ i ogn'al-tr og - get - to è a me fu - nes to tutto im per - fet - to tut - to de - tes - to

11) m. 137. E♭ in the earlier editions. Corrected to C minor in this edition.

12) m. 180. Suggested fingerings

13) m. 204–205. Suggested fingerings

Play the high A and subsequent G, F, E, D, G without the right hand little finger A♭/G♯ key. Add the right little finger G♭/F♯ key for the next A and leave it on for the final G.

INTRODUCTION, THEME and VARIATIONS

Edited with a Newly Arranged
Piano Part by Charles Neidich

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
(1792–1868)

Introduction (Adagio)

7 *mp*

11 ¹⁾

14 ²⁾ *(echo, poco tenuto)* *a tempo, poco a poco cresc.* *poco ritenuto*

17 ³⁾ ⁴⁾ *a tempo, poco animato*

22 *più f*

25 *dolce*

29 ⁵⁾ *calando*