

THE PERIODICAL OVERTURE IN 8 PARTS XIX

GAETANO PUGNANI

Published by Robert Bremner at the Harp and Hautboy, opposite Somerset-House, in the Strand

Issued: 20 August 1767; price 2 shillings

Source: Henry Watson Music Library – Courtesy of Manchester Libraries,

Information and Archives, Manchester City Council: BR580Pz31

Instrumentation: 2 violins, 2 violas, basso, 2 oboes, 2 horns [originally in E-flat]

Editors: Barnaby Priest & Alyson McLamore



COMMENTARY

When Robert Bremner (c.1713–1789) chose a symphony in E-flat by Gaetano Pugnani (1731–1798) to serve as *Periodical Overture No. 19*, he clearly had made the decision to launch a fourth opus in his series. This “Opera Quarta” would prove to be unique, since it would be the only set in which all six works were written exclusively by Italian composers. Two were new to the series—Pugnani and Niccolò Piccinni (Piccini) (1728–1800)—while Francesco Pasquale Ricci (1732–1817) had been included four years earlier as the composer of *Periodical Overture No. 2*. In the case of Pugnani, it was very likely that proximity had led Bremner to include him in the series, since the virtuosic violinist had just been hired as the leader of the orchestra at the King’s Theater in London.¹

Pugnani first built a reputation as a prodigy in his birth city of Turin, and a royal stipend sent him to Rome for compositional study in his late teens. After his return to Turin, his international fame began to spread, assisted in 1754 by a trip to Paris that led to the first publication of his music as well as a very successful appearance at the Concert Spirituel. In fact, a French reporter wrote, “The connoisseurs insist that they have never heard a violinist superior to this virtuoso.”² This admiration stemmed in part from his “arco magno” (“grand bowing”), which was assisted by his straighter and longer bow (also equipped with a screw); it was known as an “archetto alla Pugnani.” Accordingly, he is believed to have contributed to the modern bow’s development.³ It was again in Paris—probably in 1766—that two different printers published versions of Pugnani’s E-flat symphony: a *Sinfonia periodique à piu strumenti* (issued by Bailleux), as well as the fifth item in a set titled *Six Simphonies A Plusiers Instruments dediées a Monsier le Marquis de Barol*, Oeuvre IVe (engraved by Madame Oger and printed by Maillet).⁴



Cataloguer Elsa Margherita von Zschinsky-Troxler suggests that it was through the influence of Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782) that Pugnani was invited to London in 1767 to lead the opera orchestra.⁵ It is possible that the two men had met when Bach went to Turin to oversee the production of his first commissioned

¹ MGG Online, s.v. “Gaetano Pugnani,” by Annarita Colturato, accessed 20 October 2024.

² Boris Schwarz; rev. by Marita P. McClymonds, “Gaetano Pugnani,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), Vol. 20: 589–590.

³ Schwarz and McClymonds, “Gaetano Pugnani,” 590.

⁴ The British Library, h.2785.rr.(3); Bibliothèque nationale FRBNF39791099.

⁵ Elsa Margherita von Zschinsky-Troxler, *Gaetano Pugnani 1731–1798: Ein Beitrag zur Stilerfassung italienischer Vorklassik* (Berlin: Atlantis-Verlag, 1939), 26.

opera seria, *Artaserse*, in December 1760. In any event, the musicians were good friends in England, and Pugnani performed at many of the concerts directed by Bach and his colleague Carl Friedrich Abel (1723–1787).⁶ Simon McVeigh suspects he served as the orchestra leader at their performances.⁷ Also in London, Pugnani successfully premiered his own first opera, an *opera buffa* titled *Nanetta e Lubino*, in 1769. He returned to Turin the following year, however, to begin serving as leader of various royal ensembles.⁸ In subsequent years, he was given additional responsibilities in the court, and Turin experienced its musical heyday under his leadership—a flowering that quickly withered a few months after Pugnani’s death, when the Savoy capital was captured by the French.⁹

The earliest known advertisement for *Periodical Overture No. 19* is dated 20 August 1767, and it contains the standard phrase “This Day is published” that Bremner used when each issue was newly released. He did repeat the identical verbiage in another advertisement two days later, so it is possible that the symphony

N E W M U S I C K.
This Day is published, Price 2s.
 Number XIX. of
T H E Periodical Overtures. Com-
 posed by Sig. Pugnani.
 Printed and sold by R. Bremner, facing Somerset
 House, in the Strand.
 Of whom may be had, just publish'd,
 Six new Overtures, being Opéra 7th, by Mr. Abel.

had made its actual debut a few days before 20 August, with no earlier newspaper issues surviving today to document the fact. Still, it is certain that the work appeared during August 1767, and thus Bremner once again honored his pledge to publish only music that had not yet appeared in the British Isles. In 1939, Zschinsky-Troxler muddied the waters somewhat by assigning a date of 1763 to Peter Welcker’s issue of *Six Overtures in Eight Parts*, Opera IV, in which the E-flat symphony is again the

fifth item, as it had been in the Parisian Oger/Maillet set. In actuality, the Welcker print employs the identical plates used in the Oger/Maillet publication, apart from a new British title page (containing no acknowledgment of Madame Oger). Zschinsky-Troxler attributes her 1763 publication date to an announcement by Welcker, but she does not provide any citation data for an actual advertisement.¹⁰ Albert Müry, writing two years later, pointed out that Welcker’s edition could *not* have appeared any earlier than 1768, since the Welcker title page announced another Pugnani work already in press—*12 Minuets Compos’d for the King of Denmark’s Masquerade*—and that event did not take place until the Danish monarch’s 1768 visit to Britain.¹¹ It is perhaps possible that Zschinsky-Troxler might simply have misread an “8” as a “3” at some point.

Curiously, the version of the symphony published by Bremner differs in numerous respects from its Parisian predecessors (as well as from the subsequent Welcker edition, since that is a duplicate of the Oger/Maillet print). Some of the changes reflect Bremner’s customary practices: he added figured bass to the Basso part, which is not present in either French publication. As was often the case, Bremner eliminated the “Minuetto” movement that appeared in the Oger/Maillet edition; that movement is also absent from Bailleux’s *Sinfonia Periodique*. Indeed, it seems probable that Bremner used the Bailleux version as his source, since his Basso part matches the many pitch register differences that distinguish the two French parts, as well as the duration of the multi-measure rest in the first movement that starts at measure 43; Bailleux and Bremner give the basses ten measures of rest, while it is only nine bars in Oger/Maillet.

In other ways, however, Bremner differs fairly significantly from both of the French prints. The viola part is divided in all three movements of *Periodical Overture No. 19*, whereas the Oger/Maillet version divides the violas solely in the Andante movement (which Bremner labels as “Adagio”). Moreover, the viola parts in that French edition are completely different than the parts in Bremner’s issue. Instead, Bremner’s Viola I melody is derived from the Bailleux print (which contains only a single, undivided part), and Bremner has crafted his own Viola II part, harmonizing it primarily in thirds with Viola I, along with occasional polyphonic interweavings.

An even more surprising change is Bremner’s simplification of the syncopated pulsation that Violin I plays at the opening of the work in both French editions. Instead of off-beat quarter notes (reinforced by Violin

⁶ MGG Online, s.v. “Gaetano Pugnani,” by Annarita Colturato, accessed 20 October 2024.

⁷ Simon McVeigh, “Italian Violinists in Eighteenth-Century London,” in *The Eighteenth-Century Diaspora of Italian Music and Musicians*, ed. Reinhard Strohm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 145.

⁸ Schwarz and McClymonds, “Gaetano Pugnani,” 590.

⁹ MGG Online, s.v. “Gaetano Pugnani,” by Annarita Colturato, accessed 20 October 2024.

¹⁰ Zschinsky-Troxler, *Gaetano Pugnani 1731–1798*, 178.

¹¹ Albert Müry, *Die Instrumentalwerke Gaetano Pugnani’s: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der frühklassischen Instrumentalmusik in Italien* (Basel: G. Krebs, 1941), 51–52.

II starting in measure 6), Bremner has his violins play steady eighth notes. It is not clear why he made this change; was it intended to make it easier for less-skilled ensembles to perform? A need for simplification does not seem fully warranted, since there had been many other symphonies already published as *Periodical Overtures* that presented greater rhythmic challenges. The modification seems even stranger in light of the fact that Bremner retains the French off-beat notation during the recapitulation of the opening material (m. 114). The purpose for these alterations remains a mystery, but perhaps it was a justifiable decision, given the subsequent longevity of the work. Although Bremner published only this one symphony by Pugnani in the *Periodical Overture* series, it remained in the repertory for a long time. Scholar Jenny Burchell has documented at least five performances of *Periodical Overture No. 19* at concerts of the Edinburgh Musical Society, starting in 1769 and persisting for twenty years after it was published.¹²

Even with Bremner's modifications, Pugnani's ingenuity as a composer remains apparent. Rather than the bold *coup d'archet* openings of so many Mannheim composers, the start of Pugnani's "Allegro assai" is a mysterious *pianissimo*. Only in the second bar, still at *pianissimo*, do the low strings present the simple rising-and-falling motif that comprises the first "melody" of this sonata form. Finally, in measure 19, a *subito forte*, reiterated triplets against "drum 8ths," and the tutti ensemble combine to jolt the listeners. Three homorhythmic chords—played by the full ensemble—mark the end of the bridge (m. 42) and the start of the second theme (m. 43), which again starts quietly. This time, the first violins play little fragmentary motifs above the harmonic "carpeting" provided by the horns and lower strings. The theme ends with a striking series of whole-note chords (m. 62), drawing attention to the end of the exposition and the start of the development, which is filled with measured tremolos (m. 71). Three strong chords (m. 113) again articulate the structure, with the recapitulation beginning in the subsequent bar. This time, however, the low strings start their melody during the first measure of Violin I's pulsations. Again, three emphatic chords (m. 135) herald the return of the second theme (m. 136), and the delicious whole-note chordal passage recurs in bar 155.

For the slightly melancholy "Adagio," Pugnani shifts to the relative minor and eliminates the horns. Not only does this movement again open quietly, but it sustains the *piano* dynamic throughout, and all the string instruments are continuously muted. The movement is structured in three parts, each of which has a very similar rhythmic profile: a melodic line that emphasizes off-beat eighth notes against an on-the-beat accompaniment, often in a steady eighth-note/eighth-rest pattern. The second of the three sections, **B**, at measure 10, shifts to the mediant key, and a variant of the **B** material recurs at bar 29. The third section, **C** (m. 41), restores the movement to its opening C minor tonality, but does not reprise the melodic material heard at the start.

The strong emphasis on the downbeats and the bouncy contour of the melody during the closing "Allegro assai" reflect the gigue's influence on this finale. The opening key of E-flat major is restored, and Pugnani employs a binary-sonata pattern that James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy call a "Type 2 Sonata"; it can be diagrammed as an || **a/I b/V a/V b/I** || structure.¹³ A crescendo for the full ensemble (m. 37) points to the arrival of the second theme (m. 45). This melody is presented by the oboes, initially unaccompanied, but then joined by the tutti in bar 49. The first theme reappears in measure 66, and in the process of transitioning back from the dominant to the tonic, the oboes are given another solo feature (m. 84). They return to the spotlight a third time in bar 123, when the second theme is now played in E-flat major. Overall, the finale creates a strong contrast to the distinctive first and second movements, giving the audience a wide variety of musical experiences within a single work.

EDITORIAL METHODS

Transposing instruments: Transposing instruments are written in conventional modern format indicating original key—parts in original keys are available [e.g., Horn I in F (orig. in D)].

Slurs and ties: Editorial slurs are indicated using dotted lines; editorial ties are indicated by brackets.

Triplet/rhythmic grouping indications: In general, modern practice is followed. Occasionally (especially in slow movements), original subdivisions are used. Where groupings are inconsistently realized in the original source material, modern groupings are adopted.

¹² Jenny Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts?: Concert Management and Orchestral Repertoire in Edinburgh, Bath, Oxford, Manchester, and Newcastle, 1730–1799*, Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities, ed. by John Caldwell (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 312, 319, 337, 344, 347.

¹³ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 353–4.

Grace notes and appoggiaturas: These are generally treated as appoggiaturas and are given a value of half the note they precede; in cases where it seems clear that grace notes are intended in the original, a slash is added.

Alternate notes/ossia passages, etc.: When a written note is unplayable, an alternative octave substitution is indicated in smaller font and within brackets.

Accents/articulations/fermatas: There is considerable inconsistency in articulation throughout the set of periodical overtures. Following the Bremner edition, a wedge is used rather than a staccato mark. In some cases, the printed edition uses wedges and staccato markings within a movement (usually the slow central movement). When this is the case, both marks have been used. Where parallel passages indicate the use of articulations, these have been included between brackets.

Dynamic markings: In the original edition, the placement of dynamic marks can be inconsistent within the bar and sometimes across the barline. Where the correct placement of the dynamic is clear from the musical phrasing, the dynamics have been repositioned without comment. Where dynamics are less clear, or missing, the editor's dynamics occur within square brackets.

Crescendo/diminuendo markings: "Cresc." and "dim." markings are generally used, but there are rare exceptions to this with the use of hairpins. Where these are editorial, they are enclosed in square brackets. Other markings such as *rinf.* have been retained except where it seems clear that this refers to a crescendo.

Realization of notational shorthand: For spacing reasons, some use of notational short-hand has been used. When this is the case, the first full beat has been written out.

Altered note values: In the sources, there are occasional errors and inconsistencies in note values. Where these occur, the altered note values are given within brackets.

Accidentals: As is standard modern practice, accidentals remain valid until the next barline. This differs from eighteenth-century practice where this convention was not consistently employed. Wherever this is the case, accidentals are added in brackets.

Figured bass: Although the eighteenth-century parts usually position the figured bass numerals above the relevant bass notes, the modern score and parts show them below the basso line.

Missing music: Where music is missing in the original, alternative sources are sought (e.g., when a bar is missing due to a printer's error or when music is unreadable). When eighteenth-century concordances are unobtainable, editorial notes are added in smaller font within brackets.

CRITICAL NOTES

The notation of dynamics and articulation has been standardized throughout. Where these are missing in the original source, they have been reconstructed from parallel passages. These are indicated by the use of dotted slurs and brackets. Where there is inconsistency in the use of staccato articulation marks, the editors have taken decisions based on the collocation of the markings. As is common with music printed in this period, *appoggiature* are inconsistently notated. These have been standardized. Copyist errors have been corrected in brackets (see notes below), along with errors in accidentals. The horn parts have been transposed into F in the score. Rehearsal letters, cues in parts, and bar numbers have been added for convenience.

Mvt. 1	Allegro assai	
m. 13	Basso	second note changed to D \flat 3 (continuation of harmony from previous measure)
m. 61	Hn 2	whole note changed to E4 (parallel with Ob 2)
m. 66	VA 1	final note changed to A \sharp 4 (continuation of harmony with Vn 2)
m. 91	Vn 1	3rd beat changed to E \sharp 5 (unison with Ob 1)
m. 93	Vn 1	fourth note changed to F \sharp 5 (unison with Ob 1)
m. 94	Ob 1	first two notes changed to C5 and D5 (unison with Vn 1)
m. 107	Ob 1	appoggiatura E \flat 4 and B \flat 4 changed to half notes (clarification of rhythm)
m. 108	VA 1 & 2	final eighth notes changed to G4, E4 (unison with violins)
m. 129	Ob 1	appoggiatura D5 changed to half note, whole note E5 changed to half note
Mvt. 2	Adagio	
m. 4	Vn 2	third note changed to E \flat 4 (maintain harmony of ensemble)
m. 9	Vn 2	first note changed to half note (rhythmic unison)
m. 23	Vn 1	second note changed to C5 (unison with Vn 2)

m. 24	Vn 1	second note changed to E \flat 5 (unison with Vn 2)
m. 38	VA 2	notes changed to B \sharp 3, C4, D4 (parallel passage with m. 36)
m. 47	Vn 1	first eighth note changed to E \flat 5 (octave with VA 2)
m. 53	Basso	first note changed to half note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)
Mvt. 3	Allegro assai	
m. 2, 10	Vn 2	first eighth G3 added (unison with Vn 1)
m. 10	Vn 1	first eighth G3 added (parallel with m. 2)
m. 16	Hn 1	note lengthened to dotted-eighth note (rhythmic unison with Hn 1)
m. 20	Vn 2	A \sharp 4 added to 1st beat (unison with Ob 2)
m. 21	Ob 2	second note changed to E \flat 5 (octave doubling with Vn 2)
m. 23	Vn 2	first sixteenth note on 1st beat changed to A \sharp 4 (repetition of final note in m. 22)
m. 52	Ob 1, Ob 2, Vn 1, Vn 2	first note changed to quarter note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)
m. 61	VA 1	2nd beat changed to A \sharp 5 (maintain harmony with violins)
m. 62, 63	Hn 2	1st beat changed to quarter note (unison with Hn 1)
m. 63	VA 1	2nd beat changed to A \sharp 5 (maintain harmony with violins)
m. 72	Ob 2, Vn 1	first sixteenth note changed to A \sharp 5 (repetition of final note in m. 71)
m. 75	Basso	1st beat changed to B \sharp 2 (parallel with m. 74)
m. 76	Basso	2nd beat changed to A \sharp 2 (continuation of harmony)
m. 76	Vn 1	1st beat rhythm changed (parallel rhythmic passage in Vn 2)
m. 80	Vn 1	final sixteenth note changed to A \sharp 4 (parallel with Ob 1)
m. 80	Ob 2	second sixteenth note on 2nd beat changed to A \sharp 4 (unison with Vn 2)
m. 81	Ob 1, Vn 1	fifth sixteenth note changed to A \sharp 5 (continuation of harmony)
m. 81	Basso	second eighth note changed to A \sharp 3 (continuation of harmony)
m. 82	Ob 1, Vn 1	third sixteenth note changed to A \sharp 5 (continuation of harmony)
m. 85	Ob 1	appoggiatura A \flat 5 added to 1st beat (parallel passage with Ob 2)
m. 89	Vn 2	third sixteenth note changed to A \sharp 4 (continuation of harmony)
m. 92	Ob 1	appoggiatura F \sharp 5 to first note deleted (parallel with Vn 1)
m. 92	Ob 2	1st beat, third triplet sixteenth changed to A \sharp 4 (parallel with Vn 2)
m. 94	Vn 2	1st beat, second sixteenth note changed to A \sharp 4 (parallel with Ob 2)
m. 98	VA 1, VA 2	second eighth note changed to A \sharp 3 (continuation of harmony)
m. 98	Basso	second eighth note changed to A \sharp 2 (continuation of harmony)
m. 115	Vn 1	quarter note on first beat changed to E \flat 5 (parallel with Ob 1)
m. 118	Hn 1	1st beat quarter note changed to B \flat 5 (unison with Hn 2)
m. 122	Ob 2, Hn 1, Hn 2, Vn 1	1st beat changed to quarter note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)
m. 124	Ob 1	appoggiatura F5 added to 1st beat (parallel passage with Ob 2)
m. 134	Hn 2	1st beat changed to quarter note (parallel with Hn 1)
m. 136	Vn 1	E \flat 4 added to 1st beat (parallel with Vn 2)
m. 136	VA 1, VA 2	1st beat changed to dotted quarter note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)

CATALOGUE REFERENCES

RISM A/I P/PP 5573 [Répertoire International des Sources Musicales;

<https://rism.online/sources/990052949>]

Zschinsky-Troxler 19 [Elsa Margherita von Zschinsky-Troxler, *Gaetano Pugnani 1731–1798: Ein Beitrag zur Stilerfassung italienischer Vorklassik* (Berlin: Atlantis-Verlag, 1939)]

ILLUSTRATIONS

Pugnani portrait: Royal College of Music / ArenaPAL.

Publication announcement: *The Public Advertiser*, 20 August 1767, p. 1 (courtesy of the British Library Archives)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY

<https://repertoire-explorer.musikmph.de/en/periodical-overtures-details/>



PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

Please contact *Musikproduktion Jürgen Höflich*: <https://musikmph.de/>

