

# THE PERIODICAL OVERTURE IN 8 PARTS XXIV

FRANCESCO PASQUALE RICCI

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

Issued: ca. 1768; price 2 shillings

Source: Courtesy of the British Library Archives: h.3210.(30.)

Instrumentation: 2 violins, viola, basso, 2 oboes, 2 horns [originally in B $\flat$ ]

Editors: Barnaby Priest & Alyson McLamore



## COMMENTARY

It is sometimes difficult to fathom the logic behind the publishing strategies of printer Robert Bremner (c.1713–1789). After featuring five different composers in the first “opera” of his *Periodical Overtures*—Johann Christian Bach, Francesco Pasquale Ricci, Johann Stamitz, Anton Fils (Filtz), and Pietro Maria Crispi—he immediately issued four more works by Stamitz in the second *opera*, suggesting that the initial sales of that composer had been particularly strong. Bremner also printed a second symphony by Fils in Opus 2 and returned to Bach in the middle of Opus 3. Crispi, however, was never featured again in the series—but Ricci (1732–1817) returned as the concluding composer in “Opera Quarto.” By this point, it had been five years since Ricci had previously figured in the series—the longest gap between issues by a single composer that Bremner had yet presented (although longer gaps were to come for some subsequent individuals). The return to Ricci for *Periodical Overture No. 24* may have been motivated by a desire to showcase a familiar name at the conclusion of the only “all-Italian” set within the entire run of *Periodical Overtures*, especially since the earlier symphony by Ricci had exhibited some staying power.

As had been the case with *Periodical Overture No. 2*, we have no knowledge as to how Bremner acquired the subsequent work he published by Ricci, but it may have been through a direct encounter: Ricci spent some time in London in the spring of 1767, and a friend congratulated him the following year on his progress with spoken English.<sup>1</sup> (It was during this trip that Ricci premiered the *Dies irae* that became one of his most celebrated compositions.<sup>2</sup>) It is possible that a personal introduction came through Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782), who, along with Ricci, had enjoyed the patronage of Count Agostino Litta (1728–1781) in Milan some years before.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, while in Milan, Ricci directed a musical academy that brought amateurs and professionals together for performances.<sup>4</sup> It is conceivable that the B-flat major symphony published by Bremner as *Periodical Overture No. 24* had initially been composed by Ricci for the academy’s concerts.

The exact date of publication for *Periodical Overture No. 24* is also unclear. The preceding issue in Bremner’s series was still being advertised on 9 March 1768, while the subsequent *Periodical Overture No. 25* was announced on 10 June 1769. Unlike Ricci’s first appearance in the series five years earlier, when he seems to have been little known, Ricci’s reputation was expanding, thanks to extensive international performances. Rather than following the path of his prosperous merchant family, Ricci—who had changed his family’s “Rizzi” surname to a more “noble” spelling—started his career in the service of the church: after ordination as a priest

Periodical Overtures.	
Opera Prima	
Bach N <sup>o</sup> 1. Pasquali Ricci 2.	
Stamitz 3. Filtz 4. Crispi 5.	
Stamitz 6. . . . .	12
Opera Seconda	
Stamitz 7. Filtz 8. Stamitz 9.	
Canabich 10. Stamitz II and 12.	12
Opera Terza	
L <sup>o</sup> Kelly 13. Jomelli 14. Bach 15.	
Abel 16. L <sup>o</sup> Kelly 17. Richter 18.	12
Opera Quarto.	
Pugnani 19. Piccini 20.	
21. 22. and 23. Ricci 24.	12

<sup>1</sup> Helen Metzelaar, “‘Mon Cher Ami’: A New Source on Francesco Pasquale Ricci (1732–1817), His Music Career and His Dutch Pupils,” *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 60, no. 1/2 (2010): 103.

<sup>2</sup> Matteo Giuggioli, “Introduction,” in *Francesco Pasquale Ricci: Sinfonie*, vol. IV of *Archivio della Sinfonia Milanese*, ed. Vanni Moretto (Milan: Ricordi, 2017), xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald R. Kidd, “Ricci, Francesco Pasquale,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), Vol. 21: 319.

<sup>4</sup> Harriet St. Clair Jones, “Francesco Pasquale Ricci—An Enlightened Music Master,” *Francesco Pasquale Ricci*, 2024, <https://fpricci.com/essays/francesco-pasquale-ricci>.



assume that it was a three-movement work from the start, and it probably had suited Bremner's eight-part ensemble model as well.

The first movement of the B-flat symphony lives up to its “Con spirito” designation from the start, opening with a bold *coup d’archet* of an ascending dotted-rhythm pattern for the entire ensemble. “Drum 8ths” sustain the excitement when the dynamic level drops to *piano* in the eighth bar. Although the meter is a less-common  $\frac{3}{4}$ , the structure is an uncomplicated sonata form. The animated first theme is followed by a more delicate second subject at measure 25 in the expected key of F major. Like the quieter second phrase of the first theme, it, too, is supported by steady drum 8ths, and the violins add measured tremolos as they approach the development (m. 41). The sudden transition in measure 41 to a one-on-a-part string ensemble supporting a fairly elaborate Violin I solo gives the passage a concerto-like intensity. The development’s harmonic wanderings are compounded by constant *subito* shifts between *piano* and *forte*, and the passage ends with an exhilarating downward scale into the recapitulation at measure 65, when the full ensemble rejoins at last. The first theme is virtually unchanged during its reappearance, and after yielding to the second theme in measure 96, the first theme’s opening *coup d’archet* wraps up the movement in measure 115.

The string-only slow movement of *Periodical Overture No 24* is unusual in its true “Maestoso” qualities. The unison violins present the stately opening F-major arpeggiated melody for two measures before being echoed by the lower strings in the dominant harmony of C (again in octave unison). This imitative polyphony acknowledges the “learned” approach, which differs markedly from the “grazioso” style of the middle movements in many of Bremner’s symphonies. Like the first movement, the meter is again triple, and the structure is again sonata form, although without repeats. Similar to the development in the “Con spirito,” Ricci reduces the scoring to solo strings repeatedly during the course of the movement, with the first instance

<sup>5</sup> Giuggioli, “Introduction,” xxii; Oscar Tajetti, “Francesco Pasquale Ricci: A Portrait,” transl. David S. Talbot, booklet for *Francesco Pasquale Ricci (1732–1817): Sacred Works, Vol. 1*, Capriccio Italiano Ensemble, conducted by Daniele Ferrari, Nuova Era 7243, compact disc, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Metzelaar, “Mon Cher Ami,” 121–123.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Sue Morrow, “The Symphony in the Austrian Monarchy,” in *The Eighteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. Mary Sue Morrow and Bathia Churgin, Vol. I of *The Symphonic Repertoire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 424.

<sup>8</sup> Tajetti, “Francesco Pasquale Ricci: A Portrait,” 15.

<sup>9</sup> 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), 313, 344.

in 1758, “Abbate” Ricci was hired by the Como Cathedral the following year to be the *maestro di cappella* and organist.<sup>5</sup> The cathedral granted him leave in 1764, however, and he traveled widely for many years, journeying to Austria, France, Germany, England, Switzerland, and especially the Netherlands.<sup>6</sup> Ricci appeared in numerous concerts in The Hague between 1766 and 1780, and most of his published music was issued there or in Amsterdam. Music by Ricci was still listed in 1811 among the holdings of the Archbishop Colloredo in Olmütz.<sup>7</sup> Although Ricci had made brief visits to Como during those years, he returned permanently in 1780. When he died in 1817, he bequeathed his estate to the city’s Ospedale S. Anna.<sup>8</sup>

By whatever means the B-flat symphony came into Bremner’s possession, his second publication of a piece by Ricci also was played for many years after it was printed. For instance, the Edinburgh Musical Society is known to have performed it on 21 July 1769 and again, almost sixteen years later, on 15 July 1785.<sup>9</sup> The lasting appeal of this symphony is easy to understand, thanks to its clarity and straightforward energy. Since there are no other known sources for the work—either in manuscript or in print—we must

occurring in measure five. The second theme (m. 17) is much more conjunct, including a brief chromatic ascent (m. 20), and the exposition concludes with another short but regal passage of dotted rhythms (m. 26) that arpeggiate the C major harmony. The development (m. 29) immediately shifts to the dominant minor, but it is not long until the unison first theme re-enters (m. 41). Another passage in c minor (m. 52) serves as the bridge to the reappearance of the second theme, now in the tonic F major, and—after a fermata (m. 65), which suggests Ricci may have envisioned an opportunity for a brief first-violin cadenza—the dotted rhythms return in measure 66 to conclude the movement.

Ricci changes the mood entirely in the bouncy finale. The lively “Allegro,” back in B-flat major, is yet another sonata form. Its lilting first theme features the rising-and-falling *Bebung* gesture that was named by scholars who observed its use by composers of the Mannheim school, but which is also widely found in Italian orchestral music of the time. Drum 8ths and measured tremolos add to the zeal of the energetic melody, and their support continues on into the second theme (m. 23). This contrasting melody plays with frequent dynamic contrasts and is somewhat more disjunct than the first theme. Just as in the first movement, the development showcases another extended passage of one-on-a-part string scoring (m. 35). Again, one player propels the whole passage; after two unadorned dotted-half notes, the first violinist embarks on a nearly continuous string of sixteenth notes to drive back to the recapitulation and the return of the *tutti* (m. 51). The bridge between the first and second themes (m. 71) is underpinned by a six-measure F pedal tone in the basso and horn parts. The second theme’s dynamic contrasts resume in measure 81, while four measures of sustained B $\flat$  major harmony are an emphatic conclusion to the movement as well as to the overall symphony.



## 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.

*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, *appoggiatura* 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, with the assumption that Ricci intended “basso” parts; B-flat parts in their original register are also available. Rehearsal letters, cues in parts, and bar numbers have been added for convenience.

### **Mvt. 1 Con spirito**

- |       |            |   |
|-------|------------|---|
| m. 4  | Hn 1, Hn 2 | note shortened to quarter note (parallel with Oboes)                      |
| m. 6  | Hn 1       | note shortened to quarter note (parallel with Oboes)                      |
| m. 24 | Vn 1       | 2nd beat changed to four sixteenths (parallel passage with Vn 2)          |
| m. 29 | Hn 1, Hn 2 | 1st beat shortened to quarter note (parallel with m. 95)                  |
| m. 37 | Basso      | figured bass on 1st beat changed to natural (correction of copyist error) |
| m. 67 | Hn 2       | second and third notes changed to eighth notes (parallel with Hn 1)       |
| m. 84 | Basso      | 3rd beat figured bass upper interval changed to natural 4 (matching Vn 2) |
| m. 94 | Vn 1       | 2nd beat changed to four sixteenths (parallel passage with Vn 2)          |
| m. 98 | Vn 2       | final beat changed to dotted eighth + sixteenth (parallel with Vn 1)      |

### **Mvt. 2 Maestoso**

- |       |       |  |
|-------|-------|--|
| m. 3  | VA    | last notes changed to two sixteenths (parallel with Basso)   |
| m. 11 | VA    | final sixteenth note changed to D5 (parallel with Basso)   |
| m. 23 | Vn 1  | second sixteenth of beat 2 changed to G#5 (cancellation of G#5 appoggiatura)                                 |
| m. 23 | Vn 2  | final note changed to E4 (unison with Vn 1)  |
| m. 32 | VA    | eighth-note pulse on beats 1 and 2 changed to Eb5 (parallel octave with Basso)                               |
| m. 33 | Vn 2  | eighth-note pulse on beats 1 and 2 changed to Eb5 (parallel passage with VA in m. 32)                        |
| m. 39 | Basso | second eighth note of 2nd beat changed to E4; first eighth note of 4th beat changed to F4 (parallel with VA) |
| m. 42 | Vn 2  | final note changed to E4 (unison with Vn 1)  |
| m. 55 | Vn 1  | final sixteenth note changed to Bb4 (anticipation of Bb4 in following measure)                               |
| m. 68 | Basso | 1st beat shortened to half note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)  |

### **Mvt. 3 Allegro**

- |          |            |  |
|----------|------------|--|
| m. 1, 2  | Hn 1       | 1st beat shortened to dotted-quarter note (parallel with Hn 2)                             |
| m. 9, 13 | Hn 2       | note reduced to quarter note (parallel with Hn 1)  |
| m. 16    | Ob 1       | F6 appoggiatura added to 1st beat; D6 appoggiatura added to 2nd beat (parallel with Vn 1)  |
| m. 16    | Ob 2       | D6 appoggiatura added to 1st beat; Bb5 appoggiatura added to 2nd beat (parallel with Vn 2) |
| m. 18    | Hn 1       | 1st beat changed to dotted quarter note (parallel with Hn 2)                               |
| m. 22    | VA         | final note changed E#4 (parallel with Ob 2)  |
| m. 23    | Ob 2       | note reduced to quarter note (parallel with Ob 1)  |
| m. 31    | Hn 2       | note lengthened to dotted quarter note (parallel with Hn 1)                                |
| m. 34    | Vn 1, Vn 2 | 1st beat changed to quarter note (parallel with orchestral unison)                         |
| m. 41    | Vn 2       | 1st beat changed to dotted quarter note (parallel with VA)                                 |
| m. 43    | VA         | 1st beat changed to B#5 (parallel with Vn 1)   |

m. 44	Vn 2	2nd beat changed to E $\sharp$ 6 (octave doubling with Basso)
m. 50	Vn 2	1st beat changed to dotted quarter note (rhythmic unison with lower strings)
m. 51	Basso	fourth note change to quarter note (parallel with m. 52)
m. 64	Vn	second note changed to A $\flat$ 4 (parallel with Oboe 1)
m. 64	Basso	$\flat$ 3 added to figured bass (clarification of harmony)
m. 66	Ob 1	F6 appoggiatura added to 1st beat; D6 appoggiatura added to 2nd beat (parallel with Vn 1)
m. 66	Ob. 2	D6 appoggiatura added to 1st beat; B $\flat$ 5 appoggiatura added to 2nd beat (parallel passage with m. 16 Vn 2)
m. 71	Ob 2	note lengthened to dotted quarter note (parallel with Ob 1)
m. 85	Ob 2	1st beat increased to dotted quarter note (parallel with m. 27)
m. 90	Hn 1	note lengthened to dotted quarter note (parallel with Hn. 2)
m. 94	Hn 2	1st beat reduced to quarter note (orchestral rhythmic unison)

## CATALOGUE REFERENCES

RISM A/I R/RR 1277 [Répertoire International des Sources Musicales;  
<https://rism.online/sources/990049553>]

LaRue 1942 (R491) [Jan LaRue, *A Catalogue of 18th-Century Symphonies*, Volume I: Thematic Identifier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)]

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Bremner catalogue: Musikbibliothek der Hochschule der Künste Bern (Bernener Fachhochschule)

Ricci portrait (posthumous): Ospedale S. Anna, Como, Italy (Per gentile concessione di Asst Lariana, proprietaria dell'opera / Courtesy of Asst Lariana, owner of the work; <https://fpricci.com/about-ricci>)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY

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



## PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

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