

THE PERIODICAL OVERTURE IN 8 PARTS XXVI

JACOB HERSCHEL

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

Issued: 30 November–2 December 1769; price 2 shillings

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

Information and Archives, Manchester City Council: BR580Hn31

Instrumentation: 2 violins, viola, basso, 2 oboes, 2 horns [originally in C]

Editors: Barnaby Priest & Alyson McLamore



COMMENTARY

In the first twenty-five issues of the *Periodical Overtures*, publisher Robert Bremner (1725–1789) had issued a small handful of works by composers living in (or visiting) Great Britain.¹ This direct contact had certainly been the case with the inaugural symphony by Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782), and Bach—still resident in London—had been represented again (less happily) by *Periodical Overture No. 15*. Bremner's personal acquaintance with Thomas Alexander Erskine (1732–1781), the sixth Earl of Kelly, clearly had led to the publication of *Periodical Overtures Nos. 13, 17*, and the most recent issue, *No. 25*, which appeared in June 1769. It seems quite possible that Bremner also had contracted in person for the right to publish the twenty-sixth symphony in the series, since its composer—Jacob Herschel (1734–1792)—is known to have spent various periods of time in London during a two-year stay in England; in fact, his sojourn in Great Britain did not end until late July 1769, while Bremner's print was issued just four months later—and it seems to be the only symphonic music by Jacob Herschel to have been published during his lifetime.²

N E W M U S I C.
This Day was publish'd,
SIX Trios for two Violins and
a Violoncello Obligato. By Sig. Boccherini.
Price 6s.
Swindl's Easy Duets for two Violins. 3s.
No. XXVI. of the Periodical Overtures. By J.
Herschel, of Hanover. 2s.
Printed and sold by R. Bremner, facing Somerset-
House in the Strand.
Speedily will be published,
The Favourite Songs in the Operas of L.e. Contadine
Bizarre and L'Olimpiade.

By the time Bremner published *Periodical Overture No. 26* at the end of November 1769, Heinrich Anton Jacob Herschel had returned to his native Hanover. He was the eldest son of Isaac Herschel (1707–1767), an impoverished violinist and oboist in the band of the Hanoverian Guards. When Jacob was thirteen, Isaac persuaded his talented offspring to join his unit as an oboist; he also saw to it that Jacob received lessons on harpsichord and organ. Jacob was therefore able to win the post of part-time organist at the Hanoverian Garrison Church in 1753. In that same year, his younger brother Friedrich Wilhelm (1738–1822) also joined his father and brother as a musician in the Guards.³ Three years later, in 1756, when it seemed the French might invade England, George II (1683–1760)—also the Elector of Hanover—summoned his Hanoverian Guards to supplement the British defence. Although Jacob had petitioned for a dismissal from the military in order to accept a coveted position in the Hanoverian Court Orchestra, the necessary document did not arrive in time, so all three Herschels were obliged to travel to England with the regiment. By the time Jacob finally did receive his discharge, the vacant orchestral position had gone to someone else, and therefore Jacob returned to Hanover as a civilian.⁴

Having met several music-loving British families during the Herschels' time in England, Isaac saw the country as a natural refuge for his two eldest sons when the French threatened Hanover in 1757. Although the

¹ Bremner's birthyear differs from the "c.1713" currently listed in most published sources; it is based on information from Scottish baptismal records that was kindly conveyed to us by Rudolf Rasch.

² Constance A. Lubbock, ed., *The Herschel Chronicle: The Life Story of William Herschel and His Sister Caroline Herschel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 44.

³ Michael Hoskin, *The Herschels of Hanover* (Cambridge: Science History Publications, 2007), ix, 13.

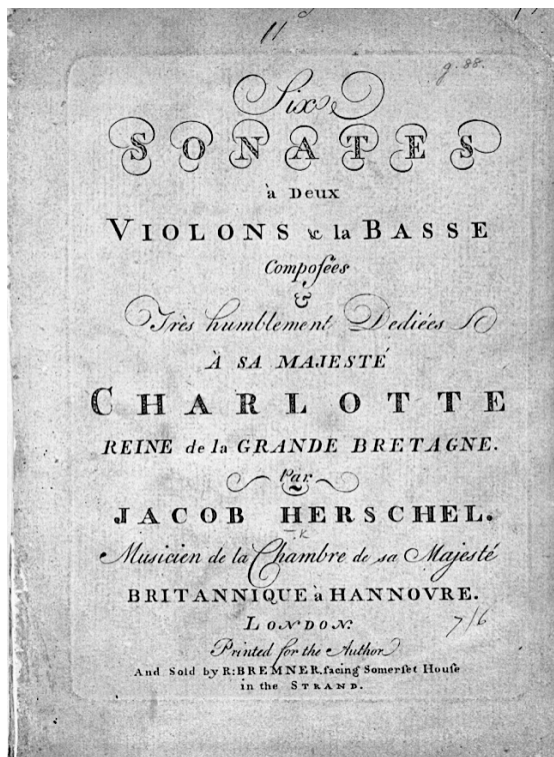
⁴ Michael Hoskin, *William and Caroline Herschel: Pioneers in Late 18th-Century Astronomy*, SpringerBriefs in Astronomy (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2014), 1.

teenaged Wilhelm was still serving in the regiment, he had not been officially sworn in when he joined at age fourteen; Isaac felt that that was a sufficient legal loophole to justify sending Wilhelm across the Channel to England for safety, along with Jacob, who had been in hiding to avoid being pressed back into military service.⁵ With the help of their British acquaintances, the two young men contrived to make a living by copying music, teaching, and performing. When the hostilities ended in 1759, Jacob returned to the Hanoverian Court Orchestra to take up a position as a first violinist.⁶ Wilhelm, in contrast, stayed in England, building up an increasingly successful musical career, including the composition of twenty-four symphonies. He also became fascinated with astronomy, which gradually pushed his musical activities aside. After discovering Uranus (initially named “Georgium Sidus” after King George III) and receiving an award of a £200 annual stipend, Wilhelm gave up music as a profession; his name was later changed to “William” by Act of Parliament.⁷

Despite their diverging career paths, the two brothers remained close, and their surviving correspondence contains various discussions about music, including compositional advice directed to Jacob from Wilhelm. In a 1761 letter, Wilhelm discusses an “Adagio” movement of a (lost) symphony by Jacob.⁸ Regrettably, it seems that quite a few pieces by Jacob are now lost, and this *Periodical Overture* is the only symphony by Jacob known to have been printed in his lifetime. In fact, his sister Caroline



described earlier “Quartet parties” in Hanover “where his new Overtures and other compositions were tried and praised; which my Father expected and hoped would be turned to some profit by publishing them, but no printer would bid high enough.”⁹



It is interesting, therefore, that when Jacob took a leave of absence from the Court Orchestra to visit his brother in England in 1767, several other published works resulted from the visit. For example, in addition to *Periodical Overture No. 26*, Bremner had previously issued Jacob’s set of six sonatas for two violins and bass, which were dedicated to the wife of King George III, Queen Charlotte. These trio sonatas—as apparently Jacob had hoped—were well received; the early musicologist Charles Burney called them “extremely pleasing.”¹⁰ Indeed, after a command performance of the works at court, the king (and Hanoverian elector) ordered that Jacob’s orchestral salary should be increased by 100 Thalers (which must have been “extremely pleasing” to Jacob as well!)¹¹ This mark of royal favour may have increased Bremner’s desire to ensure that Jacob was represented in his overture series; it is even possible that Jacob composed the symphony for Bremner “on demand.”

⁵ Lubbock, *The Herschel Chronicle*, 8–10.

⁶ Hoskin, *The Herschels of Hanover*, 15.

⁷ T. Herman Keahey, “Sir William [Friedrich Wilhelm] Herschel,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), Vol. 11: 443.

⁸ Image courtesy of The Herschel Family Archive, Letters (30 Dec[ember] 1762[1]), 333, with thanks to Dr. Sarah Waltz as liaison.

⁹ Lubbock, *The Herschel Chronicle*, 31–32.

¹⁰ Charles Burney, “Jacob Herschel,” in *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary, of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, 1st ed., ed. Abraham Rees (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), Vol. 17: [765].

¹¹ Michale Hoskin, ed., *Caroline Herschel’s Autobiographies* (Cambridge: Science History Publications, 2003), 44.

Although Jacob returned to England on two subsequent occasions, and William visited him on the continent in 1786 while delivering a telescope to Göttingen University on behalf of George III, little is known about Jacob's subsequent career. He rose to the position of Vice-Konzertmeister of the Hanoverian Court Orchestra, but he seems to have been thwarted when trying to attain the concert-master position.¹² Sadly—and alone among the contributors to the *Periodical Overtures* series—Jacob Herschel met a violent end, on 23 June 1792. The following year, the *Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung* reported that Herschel had been found strangled “im Felde,” implying “in the field of battle,” which was probably a reference to the ongoing French Revolutionary Wars. Herschel's biographers doubt that he had rejoined the military; rather, they suspect that he was only “a civilian who found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time.”¹³

Despite Herschel's unfortunate demise, his *Periodical Overture* proved to have quite a bit of staying power, at least in Great Britain. It may or may not have been among the “new” *Periodical Overtures* performed intermittently by the Edinburgh Musical Society in 1770 and 1771, but it was definitely identified as “Number 26” in a concert given by that society some fifteen years later, on 20 January 1786.¹⁴ Herschel's overture was also owned by other organizations across England; it appears in the catalogue of the Oxford Musical Society as well as in the music library of a Moravian community in Fairfield (near Manchester) that was not founded until 1785.¹⁵ In addition, as seen in the sticker on the title-page facsimile used at the start of this volume, copies of Herschel's symphony were “Sold at Knapton's Music Shop Blake-Street. York.”¹⁶ Moreover, Breitkopf included it as a “Sinfonie Periodique” in the 1771 supplement to his thematic catalogue.¹⁷

As the sole published symphonic music by Herschel—and perhaps the first music of any sort by Herschel in modern edition—*Periodical Overture No. 26* presents a very fine calling card. The first movement lives up to its “Allegro con brio” designation with a bold *premier coup d'archet* in which the full ensemble plays a two-measure unison triadic figure to cement the tonic C major. After these hammerstrokes and several rising and falling scalar lines, the first violins perform an extended descending sequential pattern, supported by measured tremolos and “drum 8ths” in the lower strings. In measure 17, Herschel launches the first of several playful passages in which the first violins rapidly repeat a single pitch at a *piano* dynamic for two bars before crescendoing to *forte*. During that quiet passage, however, the violins are interrupted multiple times by the rest of the ensemble who interject quick *forte* appoggiaturas. After a similar interplay starting at measure 28 (now in G major), the movement takes an unexpected turn to the dominant *minor* to launch the “**B**” section (m. 38) of the movement's ternary form. During this mostly *piano* passage, Herschel again startles listeners with *subito* interjections of an ensemble *fortissimo* (m. 45, m. 53). At measure 74, a return of the dynamic interchange first heard in measure 17 is our cue that a reprise of the “**A**” section is near, and the opening hammerstrokes make their reappearance at measure 91.

The second movement of *Periodical Overture No. 26* mixes conventional and unconventional elements. The drop to a slower tempo and the omission of the winds are both expected, but the “Andante molto più tosto Allegretto” designation is unusually detailed. The change, harmonically, to F major—the subdominant of C major—is a standard transition, but the repetition scheme of ||: **a** :||: **b a** :|| **c a** || is a bit unexpected, expanding what initially seems to be an ordinary rounded-binary structure into a form that might be best described as a rondo. Herschel sets each melody apart, opening the refrain (**a**) with a five-note ascent (with a bit of chromaticism) that then gradually works its way downward above a busily “seesaw” pattern in Violin II. The **b** episode, in F's dominant key, C major, descends more directly, first in sequential three-note groups, and then in a longer scale. The **c** episode—in d minor—shifts to much longer (and louder) quarter-note values in most of the ensemble; their four-note descents expand on the three-note descents of **b**.

¹² Hoskin, *The Herschels of Hanover*, 18.

¹³ Arndt Latussek and Michael Hoskin, “The Murder of Jacob Herschel,” *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 34, no. 2 (May 2003): 234.

¹⁴ 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, 317, 347.

¹⁵ Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts?*, 213; Karl Kroeger, “An Unknown Collection of Eighteenth-Century Instrumental Music,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 35, no. 4 (October–December 1988): 277, 280.

¹⁶ The Drs. James and Margaret Whitby Music Collections, Western Libraries, Western University, London, Canada, Item: MZ2752; <https://archive.org/details/periodicalovertu00hers>.

¹⁷ In the index to the Dover reprint of the catalogue, however, editor Barry S. Brook misattributes the symphony to Jacob's brother Wilhelm; see Barry S. Brook, ed., *The Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue: The Six Parts and Sixteen Supplements, 1762–1787* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 412.

Herschel's sense of humour seems to be in evidence yet again in the "Presto," written in a gigue-like $\frac{12}{8}$ meter. As in the first movement, the full ensemble bounces its way through a rising C major arpeggio as a *premier coup d'archet*—but when the ensemble catches its collective breath on the fourth beat of the measure, the violins quickly fill the silence with racing eighth notes. This lively gimmick is repeated in the second bar and again at many points during the movement. The finale employs two main melodies, **a** and **b**, that progress through the tonic and dominant harmonies in an || **a/I b/V a/V b/I** || pattern. James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy have labeled this structure as a "Type 2 Sonata"; Herschel's version does not contain the repetition that often divides the form in half.¹⁸ In contrast to the **a** theme with its opening disjunct bounciness, the **b** melody (m. 11 and m. 50) starts with rising and falling conjunct eighth notes that are occasionally interrupted by a large upward leap. Herschel also interjects short "block-chord" passages, such as measure 16—rather like the **c** episode in the slow movement—that underpin an effervescent melody in the first violin. In contrast to the flexible dynamics during the preceding movements, the finale sustains a robust *forte* or *fortissimo* throughout. Altogether, *Periodical Overture No. 26* gives listeners an exhilarating—but regrettably rare—illustration of Herschel's ample capabilities.

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.

¹⁸ 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.

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	
m. 20	Ob 1	appoggiatura A5 added to 3rd beat (unison with Vn 1)
m. 26	Ob 1, Vn 1	second note changed to eighth note (parallel passage with m. 24)
m. 30, 77	Vn 1	third note changed to quarter note (parallel passage with m. 19)
m. 72	Vn 1	first note changed to B \flat 5 (continuation of harmony from previous measure)
m. 83	Vn 2	second note changed to E \flat 5 (continuation of m. 82 harmony)
Mvt. 2	Andante	
m. 8	Vn 1, VA	note reduced to eighth note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)
m. 24	Vn 1	note reduced to eighth note (rhythmic unison with ensemble)
m. 44, 45	VA	3rd beat increased to dotted quarter note (rhythmic unison with Basso)
Mvt. 3	Presto	
m. 5, 6	Ob 1	appoggiatura G5 added to first note (parallel with Vn 1)
m. 29	Ob 1	appoggiatura D5 added to first note (parallel with Vn 1)
m. 29, 30	VA	seventh note changed to G \sharp 4 (parallel with Basso)
m. 30	Ob 1	appoggiatura D5 added to first note (parallel with Vn 1)
m. 31, 32	VA	seventh note changed to C \sharp 5 (parallel with Basso)
m. 31, 32	Ob 1	appoggiatura G5 added to first note (parallel with Vn 1)
m. 32	Ob 1	final note deleted (parallel with Ob 2)
m. 44, 45	VA	3rd beat lengthened to dotted quarter note (parallel passage with m. 43)
m. 62	Vn 1	final beat changed to three eighth notes (rhythmic unison with ensemble)

CATALOGUE REFERENCES

RISM A/I H 5194 [Répertoire International des Sources Musicales;
<https://rism.online/sources/990029307>]

Breitkopf Catalogue Supplement VI (1771) [Barry S. Brook, ed., *The Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue: The Six Parts and Sixteen Supplements, 1762-1787* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), col. 412].

LaRue 3240 (H570) [Jan LaRue, *A Catalogue of 18th-Century Symphonies*, Volume I: Thematic Identifier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)]

ILLUSTRATIONS

Publication announcement: *Whitehall Evening-Post, or London Intelligencer*, 30 November to 2 December 1769, p. 4 (courtesy of the British Library Archives)

Letter of 30 Dec[ember] 1762¹ from Wilhelm Herschel to Jacob Herschel (courtesy of The Herschel Family Archive, 333)

Cover page of *Periodical Overture No. 26* (courtesy of The Drs. James and Margaret Whitby Music Collections, Western Libraries, Western University, London, Canada, Item: MZ2752; <https://archive.org/details/periodicalovertu00hers>)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY

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



PERFORMANCE MATERIALS

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

