



Bisel Classics



Friedrich
KUHLAU

SONATA
"AVE MARIA"
op. 5a

PIANO
SOLO

www.bisel-classics.com

Preface

Following the War of the Fifth Coalition in 1809, Napoleon took command of his forces across the Danube valley. With Austria the main combatant in league with the British against the French and the Bavarians a bloody conflict was enacted which would result in Austrian defeat and the loss of substantial territory to the French and her allies. So when Napoleon's troops marched on Hamburg in 1810, Kuhlau fled from conscription and took up residence in Copenhagen. His parents would join him four years later, and although he would give many concert performances in Scandinavia, Germany and Austria, Denmark became his adopted home. Such that today, he is regarded principally as a 'Danish composer of German birth'¹ having formally acquired Danish citizenship in 1813.

Kuhlau's contribution to Danish music is as the foremost representative of the High Classical / Early Romantic style in Denmark of his time, and he is considered to be one of the most modern and forward thinking composers who left a lasting impression on Danish music. Much of this reputation was to be generated after his arrival in Copenhagen however, and in January 1811 he was nothing more than a jobbing performer who earned his living from performing, teaching the piano and composing. Whatever political forces were shaping Kuhlau's destiny he had formed a successful and what would prove to be a lasting relationship with the firm of Breitkopf & Härtel who were to publish the present work under the designation of 'Oeuv.⁵' and who would be the principal publisher for the majority of Kuhlau's works.

The years 1810-1812 were subject to enormous changes in Kuhlau's personal life and it would have been very difficult for the young composer to set down new compositions at this time. This is reflected in the chronology of the works from this period. The historical record suggests that much of the work on the '*Piano Concerto in C*' opus 7, would have either been complete or close to completion when Kuhlau left Hamburg in 1810 and that as a matter of priority he completed this work for his introduction into Danish musical circles for the performance in 1811. This would have secured his reputation as a performer, and as a teacher he would have been able to secure a more or less meagre living, providing him with the practical means to think about composing again.

Plate numbers from Breitkopf & Härtel are instructive here as in these early series they are chronologically arranged in order of commission, but for order of composition we need to search deeper. The starting point for this investigation is the first '*Piano Sonata in E $\flat$* ' opus 4 with plate number 1576 and it would appear that Breitkopf & Härtel picked up the Concerto for publication after this with plates that were prepared with the number 1696. At this time, it would appear that Kuhlau was himself responsible for designating the opus numbers to his works and that he applied these to the order of composition. Thus we find that when the second '*Piano Sonata in D*' opus 5 was published the plate number 1734 showed that it was prepared for publication after the concerto but it may in fact have been composed before the Concerto. It is reasonable to assume then, that in the musical material itself we may find techniques and themes which predate the concerto and which may even anticipate the greater work and in fact this is the case with a number of thematic elements. Illustrating a creative bridge between the two works in familiar terms of style and execution. The

material is sufficiently original in both works however, to avoid the sense of simple reproduction.

The practical necessities of making a living as a musician were never very far away and it was common practice for composers to write works aimed at satisfying public demand. In this early publishing history for Kuhlau we see evidence that between 1810-1812 he relied on his back catalogue of already composed works to satisfy the demands of the publishers for works from his pen. The '*Piano Sonata in D*' opus 5 would appear to be part of this trend. Conspicuous in part because in his entire career, Kuhlau would never again express any religious leanings or write any other works with a religious character other than this, the sonata inspired by the tune for the "Ave Maria" a setting of the prayer asking for the intercession of the Virgin Mary. A common conceit (then as now) was to provide a musical illustration that best represents the work and so, on the front cover we find this musical quote:

The tune never appears in a literal sense, instead we find fragments of it embedded deeply into the structural motifs of the sonata and this gift for parody is a feature of Kuhlau's style. An ability to sublimate the primary source of the musical material so intensely that when it comes finally to composing the work, Kuhlau exhibits an extraordinarily free interpretation with a high degree of original thought. Time and again, Kuhlau would exercise these talents with arrangements from works by Cherubini, Weber, Rossini, and Beethoven to name a few.

This last association is particularly relevant to the present work because in it we may spot the transition from a relatively simple unadorned compositional style to the kind of attention to details of phrasing and articulation that Beethoven's works are renowned for. The influence is

already there in the piano concerto opus 7, which took its lead from Beethoven's first piano concerto. In this sonata then, we see evidence of the composer entering into a new, broader and more expansive style of writing for the piano which would find its fullest expression in the flowering of Danish Romanticism.

Stephen Begley, November 2010.

Vorwort

Dem Krieg der fünften Koalition im Jahre 1809 folgend, übernahm Napoleon den Befehl über seine Truppen jenseits des Donautals. Mit Österreich, dem wichtigsten Verbündeten Großbritanniens gegen die Franzosen und die Bayern, wurde ein blutiger Konflikt ausgetragen, der mit einer österreichischen Niederlage und dem Verlust von bedeutendem Territorium an Frankreich und dessen Verbündete endete. Als Napoleons Truppen im Jahre 1810 gen Hamburg marschierten, flüchtete Kuhlau vor der Wehrpflicht und nahm seinen Wohnsitz in Kopenhagen, wohin seine Eltern ihm vier Jahre später folgten. Trotz vieler Konzertauftritte in Skandinavien, Deutschland und Österreich wurde Dänemark zu Kuhlaus Wahlheimat. Heute wird er in der Tat hauptsächlich als 'dänischer Komponist deutscher Herkunft'¹ angesehen, nachdem er 1813 die dänische Staatsbürgerschaft angenommen hatte.

Kuhlaus Beitrag zur dänischen Musik macht ihn zum wichtigsten Vertreter des hoch klassischen / frühromantischen Stils im Dänemark seiner Zeit und er gilt als einer der modernsten und fortschrittlich denkenden Komponisten, die einen bleibenden Eindruck auf die dänische Musik hinterlassen haben. Ein Großteil dieses Rufs entstand jedoch nach seiner Ankunft in Kopenhagen: Im Januar des Jahres 1811 war er nicht mehr als ein jobbender Künstler, der seinen Lebensunterhalt mit Aufführungen, Klavierunterricht und Komposition verdiente. Welche politischen Kräfte auch immer Kuhlaus Schicksal formten, er gründete eine erfolgreiche und, wie sich später beweisen würde, dauerhafte Beziehung mit der Firma Breitkopf &