

CARL CZERNY, A COMPOSER AND TEACHER WHOM WE DO NOT KNOW

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Abstract

Very little is known about Carl Czerny in Russia. He was the author of about thousand musical compositions in various genres, but many of them have not been published, which considerably impoverishes the image of the versatile composer and deprives performers of an interesting repertoire. Czerny is credited with making piano arrangements and editing classical compositions. Furthermore he was the author of fundamental instructional works. As a teacher Czerny strived to reveal individuality in his numerous students from all over the world.

Key words: Czerny , composer, teacher

We come to know the name of the great 19th century composer and teacher Carl Czerny (1791 - 1857) in early childhood, when we begin learning to play the piano. From the classes with the first teacher to the studies at a musical school to refining the skills at the conservatory, young piano players practice lots of Czerny etudes all over the way to develop the finger dexterity. Until today virtually everyone who committed themselves to the art of playing the piano, whether a pianist or a teacher has had "the lessons from Mr. Czerny". We only know the composer as the author of collections of exercises: a selection of piano studies for beginners in two parts, edited by H. Germer (part 1, containing 50 short etudes and part 2, containing 32 etudes); more difficult studies in "The School of Velocity" in four parts, op.299; and "The Art of Finger Dexterity" op.740. Anyway our knowledge about works by Carl Czerny is limited to that. Unfortunately, little is known about C. Czerny in Russia, and the prolific activity of the outstanding composer and teacher has never received coverage. His achievements and contribution to the development of the piano art worldwide are yet to be evaluated. Sheet music by Czerny are waiting to be published in Russia, as well as his books and theoretical works. The lack of printed music strips the image of the composer of his versatility depriving performers of an interesting repertoire. Carl Czerny devoted his life to music. He was extremely hard-working and spent his entire life in composing and teaching activity. Czerny lived almost all his life in Vienna.

The musical and cultural life in Vienna of the early 19th century was rich and versatile. From the onset of the 19th century Vienna as well as London became the centre of emerging pianistic art. Musical geni lived and worked in Vienna. Virtuosi from many countries sought recognition there. The evidence of booming musical life is the emergence of musical societies like the society of Spiritual Concerts, or Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (the Society of the Friends of Music), or opening of the Conservatory, or chamber concerts organized by violinist I. Schuppanzigh, a friend of Beethoven.

The first half of the 19th century is notable for flourishing virtuoso art. Fantasias to opera tunes, paraphrases and transcriptions were extremely popular. These pieces would be made off the cuff without any excessive creative effort. Selected tunes from popular operas would be "trimmed" with spectacular pianistic decorations. Each author was striving to make a musical piece most advantageous for himself with "laced" passages and octave sequences. Pieces to be played at salons and concerts appeared in great numbers and concert etudes became very popular. They were referred to as "romantic" and "melodic".

In their struggle for the success with the public some players kept the listeners' attention with showy stunts. A. Dreyschock played Chopin's etude in c-moll with octaves. This manner was approved and elicited an encore. When F. Herz toured the USA the playbills informed that the concert would take place in the hall lit by a thousand candles. The performing art of the time was under the effect of the struggle between followers of the classical and romantic styles. Those piano players who follower the Romantic style kept far from calm and poised performing manner. They would base their performance on creative impulse and emotional openness to astound the audience. The Romantics opposed

everything which might restrict their artistic identity or limit the manifestation of emotional elements. Tempo rubato was especially typical for the romantic performance. The capabilities of the pedal use were also extensively discussed. Those who preferred musical classics could not approve of the romantic performance manner and often shared their sarcastic comments. Wide discussions were held about free interpretation, too. Musical magazines published numerous articles on the topic. Piano teaching practice was influenced by the virtuoso art of the time. The popularity of virtuosic performance gave rise to a host of exercises and etudes. Piano school authors focused on polishing the playing technique.

Vienna in the early 19th century was far from short of virtuoso pianists. Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) was one of them. In the first half of the 19th century Hummel was mentioned among the greatest musicians. Chopin referred to him as the great master, while young Franz Liszt compared Hummel to Beethoven and Mozart. In Vienna, Johann Hummel was highly reputed as a piano player. Hummel's perfect pianism and his skill in refining the smallest details made a great impact on Carl Czerny, a would-be classic of piano etudes. Hummel's performance was a paragon of clarity and clearness, elegance and refinement.

The early 19th century French virtuoso school of Louis Adam was represented by Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785-1849). He was born in Germany, took classes from Adam at the Paris Conservatory and continued his education in Vienna. He lived for some years in London and then in Paris, growing into authority in piano playing and teaching. Kalkbrenner was a first-class virtuoso. By comments from his contemporaries, his playing was calm, steady and masterly in every note played. Kalkbrenner combined these merits with the brilliant musical palette typical of early Romanticists. At the same time, his performance was characterized by specific French elegance. In 1830 Kalkbrenner released his "Anweisung das Pianoforte mit Hülfe des Händleiters spielen zu lernen", the most famous piano school of the first half of the 19th century. The book contained the principles of mechanical drills and the exercises to keep fingers isolated during studies. Kalkbrenner was among the first who gave a detailed description of the expressive pedal capabilities, maintaining that the use of the right pedal adds overtones to the sound of piano and enlivens it.

An outstanding representative of the Vienna pianists and one of the most famous virtuosos of the time was Sigismond Thalberg (1812-1871). Welcomed in aristocratic salons, he won the audience with his art and his elegant looks as well. The contemporaries called him the king of pianists and the pianist of kings. Thalberg was a student of Hummel, but considered Mittag, a faggot player from the Vienna Opera to be his main teacher in playing the piano. Concert tours brought Thalberg wide popularity. He gave concerts in Europe, the USA and Russia. Elegance and virtuoso brilliance were characteristic of his performance. His repertoire contained salon pieces and fantasias to opera tunes, mostly composed by himself. Thalberg was famous for making the piano "singing". He resorted to various techniques to produce the best sound volume. He liked rendering a melody in the middle register, divide it between the two hands and surround it with the garlands of passages making use of the entire instrument range. All this made the illusion of three-handed playing.

Another prominent virtuoso of the first half of the 19th century was Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870). Born in Prague, he spent his youth in Vienna, where he fell under the influence of Beethoven, Hummel and other pianists who lived in Vienna. Beethoven praised Moscheles high and entrusted to him to arrange for the piano one of his operas "Fidelio". While Thalberg was mainly a virtuoso composer, Moscheles was a virtuoso interpreter. He propagated Beethoven's compositions, and also revived some forgotten pieces by J.S. Bach Scarlatti and his contemporaries, like Mendelssohn, Schumann and others. In his creative works, Moscheles originally preferred the Classical style, later turning to the Romanticism. His most famous compositions are two collections of etudes: 24 etudes op. 70 and "Charakteristische Studien" op. 95. Music lovers of the time appreciated Moscheles' performance. One had to have an outstanding talent to earn the esteem of the musicians in the city so full of talents and musical events. Czerny did not become famous, but his performance activities are worth attention because he popularized Beethoven's compositions. He himself left a vast composer's legacy in various genres, abundant instructing on the playing techniques, theoretical works, not to mention lots of pupil musicians.

The artistic life of Carl Czerny deserves closer attention. Although his life was not rich with public events; it would be unjust to call uninteresting the life of a person who was a pupil and the closest aide to Beethoven, and a teacher to F. Liszt – the figure in the thick of European musical culture. Carl Czerny is an Austrian musician. Born in Vienna, he felt part of it, always considering himself a keeper and successor to the traditions of the city. He spent his days assured that Vienna was the focus of the authentic, veritably high musical art. Czerny's image was far from that of a romantic artist, so favored by biographers: his was not a "restless soul", he had no conflicts with the ambience whatsoever, nor did he stand up for his views with any temperament or fury. He did not like moving to new places, neither did he have human foibles, was never noticed at friendly binges or love affairs. The portrait made from the engraving by K. Meyer presents a modest person with looks of a school teacher. True, he was well-tempered and sober-minded. Neither vanity nor self-conceit were typical for him. Deliberate, accurate rhythm and measured and sturdy quality of everything he had done serve best to describe the great pianist, composer and teacher. Carl Czerny did not live a well-off life. He had to exercise persistency and grit in the struggle with life's hardships, facing doubts and losses. He was never married, nor had he any children. He earned a reputation of a cold and unemotional person. But he had a profound sense of duty and was capable of self-sacrifice. His affectionate love to his parents deserves admiration. Instead of his own children, he had pupils and cared about them sincerely. Carl Czerny was a perfect teacher, an embodiment of the trade's spirit.

His own reminiscences were always connected with music. As far back as he could remember he had played the piano. His first teacher was his father Wenzel Czerny, a demanding but experienced and unordinary thinking teacher. Bach's compositions for keyboard instruments, rarely played at that time, made the basis for Wenzel Czerny to build his pupils' performance skills on. Father's lessons with his son were running smoothly and at the age of 7 young Carl acquired quite a wide repertoire including compositions by Mozart, Haydn and Clementi; he was capable of free improvisations and could play at sight, even play from a score. At the same age he began to note down his own compositions. His childish opuses were by intuition made correct to the extent that later as Czerny recollected, after he learned the laws of harmony he only had to introduce minor amendments. Another rare merit Czerny had was his musical memory. When he was ten years old, Carl knew almost all musical literature by heart. His father taught him diligence, patience and restraint. The father brought up in his son the most important trait that carried Carl through all hardships – persistence – which became a habit.

C. Czerny gave his first show in Vienna in 1800, with Mozart's concert in B-dur and Clementi's pieces; it did not pass unnoticed among musicians. A great event in Czerny's life was a meeting with W. Krumpholz, a passionate admirer of Beethoven. Krumpholz initiated the young piano player into the compositions of the great musician and helped to learn some of them. It was he who facilitated the meeting between Carl Czerny and Beethoven in 1800. Beethoven listened to Mozart concert in C-dur played by Czerny, saw the boy's talent and agreed to give lessons to him. From evidence, though scarce, Beethoven appears a confident and at the same time patient teacher. He strived at bringing up an artistic personality in a musician. That was why he made the focus of developing in his pupils a consistent, artistic perception of a musical composition. Beethoven recommended his pupils practice the compositions by Bach, Handel, Cherubini and Clementi. He maintained a seamless balance between artistic education of his pupils and the development of their pianistic capabilities. He based his teaching methods on a well weighted sequence of exercises to work over difficulties in playing piano. The first lessons with Carl Czerny were dedicated to practicing scales in all keys. With scales, Beethoven instructed to position fingers correctly and to move hands properly. Also much attention was paid to fingering. Beside scales, Beethoven also asked Carl to bring "An Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments" by C.P.E. Bach. The work offers several variants of scale fingering in various keys. Beethoven also referred to C.P.E. Bach when he explained the rules of using the thumb. Later, Beethoven's methods found their continuation in Czerny's teaching activities, as the latter made scale exercises an important component of his own training method. Beethoven's idea that the thumb is the main pianist's finger threads the teaching activity of Czerny. Also, Beethoven had his own exercises to offer to his pupil. After many years, the exercises became samples for Czerny's etudes. At the same time, Beethoven instructed Czerny to play in melodious legato coming "from heart". In earlier, Mozartean times, the sounds were typically produced in a prickly sharp manner, while after

some time musicians came to understanding that piano is a melodious instrument. The young musician was fascinated by expressive phrasing shown by his teacher and the sound volume, and the bold use of the pedal. Czerny was Beethoven's pupil for three years; these lessons made a major impact on the life of the musician and musical teacher. Carl Czerny esteemed Beethoven as a tutor, but also knew by heart all published Beethoven's works. He was the first to undertake profound studies of Beethoven's handwritten scores.

Besides playing music, since the age of 13 young Czerny began giving lessons himself, to earn money. A year after he was a highly esteemed teacher and by fifteen he was reputed among of the best teachers in Vienna, and lots of piano players regarded learning from him an honor. The young teacher looked at his success with his typical modesty, believing it to be the whim of fate. But numerous willing to be his pupils were of a different opinion. There was no coincidence that in 1816 it was Carl Czerny whom Beethoven entrusted to give lessons to his nephew, and in 1819 Adam Liszt took his son Franz to him. From that time on, Czerny established a daily routine for himself. He would have a working day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. He managed to give twelve lessons a day. But after that, he did not stop working. In the evening, he played the piano and composed music. It is difficult to imagine how, after twelve hours of everyday teaching, Czerny could find the nerve to continue self-development and musical composition. His efficacy was really astonishing. No wonder that his creative life yielded remarkable amount of compositions in various genres, revisions of other musicians' works and many written works.

But at early times a young musician would work over musical composition hard. Every free minute was used by Carl Czerny for making music. In 1806 Czerny' first musical composition was printed, "Concert Variations for Piano and Violin on a Theme by W. Krumpholz". At the same age Czerny produced "The Great Symphony in C-moll". In 1810 he composed "The Piano Trio", and in 1811-1814 there appeared two concerts for the piano and orchestra. In 1814 he produced "The Symphony in D-dur". These early works by the composer survived in handwriting. Czerny remarked that before 1817, apart from variations he had mainly produced sketches to be used later in subsequent compositions. In addition to composing, Czerny liked making piano arrangements. Beethoven asked him to make arrangements of Beethoven's works and even entrusted to produce a piano version of his opera "Leonora", which is no doubt an evidence of his high esteem of Czerny. The latter, a champion of Beethoven's works striving to preserve for the descendants the basics of Beethoven's style, published all Beethoven's sonatas with finger notations and metronomic signs. The genuine comments from Carl Czerny who was a frequent listener to Beethoven's playing should be fully trusted as they concern the tempo, dynamics, articulation, fingering and pedal use. The first publication of "The Well-Tempered Clavier" by J.S. Bach was edited by C. Czerny. Everything had been done for the performer to better understand it. Czerny added tempo marks as per Maelzel's metronome and comments concerning the character of the performance: the tempo, articulation, dynamics and agogical nuances. Czerny also indicated fingering; in the foreword he maintained that the hands should feel comfortable, every single voice be independent from another and at the same time be conjunct and consistent in motion.

Through his efficiency, Czerny produced many musical compositions. He is the author of more than thousand works of various genres including masses, symphonies, sonatas, trios, quartets, rondos, compositions for four and six hands, lots of etudes and exercises for different techniques, where even the different forms of hands were taken into account: for small hands he made the collections "25 Übungen für kleine Hände" ("25 Exercises for Small Hands") op. 748 and "32 tägliche Übungen für kleine Hände" ("32 Everyday Exercises for Small Hands") op.848. Just before 1831, the composer published more than 220 various works. In 1842 he classified his 734 works into four groups:

1. Formal in style
2. Concert compositions for broad audience
3. For amateurs
4. For practice during training.

In 1839 in Vienna the best among Czerny's works dedicated to the theory of teaching was published, "Vollständige theoretisch-praktische Pianoforte-Schule von dem ersten Anfange bis zur höchsten Ausbildung fortschreitend, und mit allen nötigen, zu diesem Zwecke eigens komponierten zahlreichen Beispielen, in vier Teilen. Mit dem Porträt und Facsimile des Verfassers" ("Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School: from the First Rudiments of Playing to the Highest and Most Refined State of Cultivation with the requisite Numerous Examples Newly and Expressly Composed for the Occasion") op. 500. Czerny's "Schule" illustrated the development of motion principles. Thus while playing a melody his advice was to quit playing with fingers only and produce the sound by using the weight of the hand and applying internal "pressure" onto the keys. This work is an illustration of the profound Czerny's approach to teaching. Summarizing the legacy of the pianoforte art from the previous century, Czerny took a new, progressive attitude to its fundamental problems. Unlike earlier playing methods, practiced, for example, by Cramer, Hummel or Kalkbrenner, the "Schule" op. 500 by Czerny is a handbook encyclopedic in nature bringing the pupil from the very beginning to the perfection in playing the piano. He compiled the most critical principles, the basics of the pianism; a vast circle of problems was marked and ways to solve them were shown. One of the conditions in the book said that with the piano one could produce at least a hundred of shades of sound intensity.

Following his own criteria, Czerny indicated three periods in learning a musical composition:

- a. Diligent, most precise learning of the text;
- b. Exercising in the tempo set by the author;
- c. Studying the playing methods. Analysis of the composition's contents and practicable indications.

He warned strongly against mixing these three periods in work.

Czerny's "dynasty" appeared to be among the most plentiful in the instrumental performance history. Dynasties are typically presented as a family tree. Anyway, Czerny's tree is impossible to draw. The huge number of his successors would not fit in any picture. Speaking about professional pianists only, thousands of musical "descendants" can be found. If we add amateurs, too, this figure will be even greater. His students made a constellation of outstanding performers and teachers, like T. Doehler, T. Kullak, L. Yaell, S. Heller, A. Beleville-Uri and others. Czerny's pupils could be met in many countries all over the world. The pupils of the Vienna teacher gave instruction to Russian, Polish and Hungarian piano players. In turn, their successors later also stood at the origin of emerging piano schools: the American, Chinese, Korean and Japanese. If we ever come to imagine "the musical family tree" of Carl Czerny, then the most outstanding were his pupils Franz Liszt and Theodor Leschetizky. These two in their turn brought up the next generation of musicians. Many names of those who took classes from Liszt are the same we refer to as the leading pianists of the second half of the 19th and early 20th century: Hans von Buelow, Carl Tausig, Karl Klindworth, Eugen d'Albert, Alfred Reisenauer, Bernhard Stavenhagen, Arthur Friedheim, Isaak Albeniz, Emil Sauer, Moriz Rosenthal, Giovanni Sgambati, Sophia Methner, Alexander Siloti, Vera Timanova. These are the most famous names, while among the pupils of the great master there were lots of less renowned musicians. Via Liszt, they all inherited "musical genes" from Czerny.

Another Czerny's pupil, the head of the Berliner piano school Theodor Kullak was the originator of one more branch on the family tree of Czerny. Kullak was born in Poland, and gave a concert in Berlin when he was six. Having no financial support, he had to quit music for some time. Anyway at the age of 24 Kullak turned to the art of music again; he went to Vienna to become a pupil under C. Czerny. Kullak toured with concerts extensively, but earned his fame as a teacher. He also became known as a teacher and the author of etudes / musical studies. The most famous is his "School of Octave Playing". In ensuing years his pupils were Nikolai Rubinstein, Moritz Moszkowski, Xaver Scharwenka. Czerny's family tree expanded its branches over numerous countries. An Italian musician Giovanni Sgambati, a pupil of Liszt, was among the founders of the musical lyceum at the Musical Academy in Rome. Classes of Paderewski were taken by major Polish pianists Stanislaw Szpinalski and Henryk Sztompka. Xaver Scharwenka and Mieczyslaw Horszowski left for the USA and founded their own piano schools there.

Endless are the names on the "musical family tree" originating from Carl Czerny. It is worth noticing that many of the successors were in Russia, too. Teaching concepts of Beethoven's student were introduced to the Russian culture as well. Czerny's influence in the musical life in Russia is considerable, embracing the impact of his pianistic creations, instructional works, concerts and teaching activity of Czerny's school successors. The periodicals for several years marked the popularity of pianistic legacy by Czerny in many Russian towns. Charity concerts took place in Orenburg (1827), Kursk (1833) and Simferopol (1838). In 1832 in Ekaterinburg the Zintl sisters among other compositions played in a duet pyuki the piano "Rondo" by Czerny at a soiree.

Among the most talented pupils of Carl Czerny was Theodor Leschetizky; after the death of the great teacher he became the head of the Vienna piano school, and it was he who could be nominated as the main heir to Czerny's pedagogics. Born in Poland, Leschetizky was reputed as a boy genius. At the age of 9, young Leschetizky had his first appearance with the orchestra playing Czerny's Concertino. The concert took place in Lemberg (now Lviv). At the age of twelve Leschetizky came to Vienna to begin studies under Czerny. Shortly thereafter the young musician began giving concerts and composing at the same time. In 1852 he came to Saint Petersburg to play to Emperor Nicholas the First. Leschetizky spent more than 25 years in Saint Petersburg giving lessons and concerts. In 1862 when the Saint Petersburg Conservatory was opened, its Director Anton Rubinstein invited Leschetizky as Professor to the piano class, and the latter retained the position until 1878. In his teaching, Leschetizky paid special attention to the quality of sound, melodiousness and expressivity, considering virtuoso passages only in the context of the composition. He maintained that this method he inherited from Carl Czerny. He played the key role in implanting the Czerny "dynasty" in the Russian soil. His instructive branch spread out widely with the work of his pupil Anna Yesipova who was the originator of one of the largest schools of pianism in Russia. Among her pupils were Sergey Prokofiev and Alexander Borovsky. Many of her pupils headed large piano schools themselves, with Anastasia Virsaladze and Olga Kalantarova among them.

Beside Yesipova, Leschetizky raised a whole galaxy of famous musicians and teachers like A. Brailovsky, I. Borovka, I. A. Vengerova, P. Wittgenstein, O.S. Gabrilowitsch, G. Galston, M. Hamburg, S.M. Maikapar, B. Moiseiwitsch, I. Paderevski, D. Powell, V.V. Puchalsky, V.I. Safonov, I. Fiedman, B. Yan and others. To our pity, not much information is available as to the succession from Czerny to his students and to the following generation. This issue has not been studied yet so far. V.I. Safonov and V.V. Puchalsky continued another large branch from Leschetizky in Russia. Among Safonov's pupils were A. Scriabin, N. Metner, E. Beckman-Scherbina, E. Gnesina and other famous Russian musicians. Puchalsky and Safonov gave instruction to L. Nikolaev who started one of the most influential piano schools in Russia. Via L. Nikolaev, the musical genes from C. Czerny were inherited by S. Sofronitsky, D. Shostakovich, M. Yudina, P. Serebryakov and N. Perelman. Vladimir Puchalsky also had lots of students.

Kullak's pupil and thus a "musical grandson" of Carl Czerny Nikolay Rubinstein was Director of the Moscow Conservatory. One of the Conservatory Professors was Anton Door, also a student of Czerny. A. Door gave instruction to a famous pianist and teacher Pavel Pabst who in his turn was a teacher to A. Goldenweiser and K. Igumnov.

A powerful "Czerny family tree" expanded all over Russia and its branches are entwined. Before beginning the classes with A. Yesipova, S. Prokofiev studied under Winkler, a pupil of Leschetizky. S. Rakhmaninov could also be named one of "Czerny's kin", as he was a student under A. Siloti, who took classes from N. Rubinstein and Liszt. The immense dynasty of Czerny's pupils and an outstanding role of the Russian descendants was conducive to the development of the pianistic education in China. The person to be referred to as the first professional piano player in China was Italian musician Mario Paci. Boris Zakharov, a pupil of Yesipova in 1930ies became a conspicuous piano teacher.

In 1950ies T. Kravchenko, a pupil of L. Oborin who was a pupil of A.B. Goldenweiser came to China. Owing to T. Kravchenko Chinese pianists won numerous prizes and many of them continued their education in the USSR, where they also took classes from famous Czerny's descendants.

Carl Czerny never really left Vienna or visited Russia either, but in spite of that among his abundant compositions there are some dedicated to Russia. "A Hundred Plays for Pleasure and Pastime" contain two "Allegrettos on a Russian theme" and "The anthem of the Russian Empire" ("God Save the Tsar"). These are easy works for young piano beginners. The composer used Russian folk themes in his small studies to get young musicians trained for various methods of producing sound, nuancing, shades and precise fingering marked at every note. Typical Czerny's meticulous attitude to every detail to shape the discipline and perseverance of the pupil can be traced down to the minutest scruple. Among the works dedicated to the Russian subjects there are "The Rondeau Russe" op. 189 and "Variations on the Russian Theme" op. 206.

Outstanding performers of the 20th century turned to forgotten works by C. Czerny: Vladimir Horowitz played piano arrangements of arias from P. Rode's opera "La Ricordanza" op.33. Brilliant Czerny's variations on the theme from V. Bellini's opera "Kapuletti ei Montecchi" op.33 are played in six hands by V.V. Postnikova, E.G. Sorokina, and A.G. Bakhichev.

Turning to the musical or instructional works by Carl Czerny, musicians get an opportunity to reveal a treasure of excellent piano music, and to improve their own performance skills and teaching methods.

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