

František (Franz) Xaver Brixí was born on 2 January 1732 in Prague. His father was Šimon Brixí (1693–1735), who belonged to a large north Bohemian family of musicians and had made a name for himself in Prague as a composer and Regens chori. The Brixis maintained close contacts with the Benda family, who in the 18th century produced a number of distinguished musicians that had significant influence on the development of music in northern and central Germany. Dorothea (Dorota) Benda (1686–1762), the mother of the composers Franz (František) Benda (1709–1786) and Georg Anton (Jiří Antonín) Benda (1722–1795), was a cousin of Šimon Brixí.

František Brixí enjoyed a comprehensive humanist education at the Piarists' grammar school in Kosmonosy, where he was also instructed in music. Around this time he is said to have composed his first sacred pieces. In 1749 he returned to Prague, where he was engaged as organist at a number of churches before in 1759 he was appointed kapellmeister at the Prague Metropolitan Cathedral of St. Vitus. He kept this office – the highest musical position in the city of Prague – until his untimely death on 14 October 1771.

Brixí is considered one of the most influential supporters of the stylistic changes in Bohemian music taking place around the mid-18th century. Gottfried Johann Dlabacž (1758–1820) describes him as follows: “He was particularly strong in fugues and counterpoint, original and versatile in his ideas. His works are still appreciated and continue to be performed to great acclaim both in the capital and in the countryside [...]”.¹ The main emphasis of his musical output lay on sacred music. He composed a large number of litanies, vespers, offertories, motets, cantatas, oratorios, and masses, but also school dramas and operettas, copies of which were disseminated widely. His instrumental works comprise several symphonies and organ concertos; two concertos for solo flute and a double concerto for two flutes and orchestra are also attributed to him. In addition he composed partitas for wind instruments and keyboard music.

On the Edition

It has been barely noticed until now that Brixí also composed a solo concerto for viola, strings and basso (continuo) in C Major. The only surviving source of this concerto is a manuscript score bearing the date “9/9 [18]59.” on its last page and the copyist's signature, “F. Engelhardt.” This copy was formerly owned by the anat-

mist and music collector Guido Richard Wagener (1822–1896),² who lived in Marburg and later in Berlin, and is kept today at the library of the royal conservatories of Brussels, shelf no. 26.729.

The original bass part of the concerto was probably figured. It is assumed that the piece was composed in the 1760s. In view of this time of origin, the at times high register of the solo part is a remarkable feature (highest notes in the *Allegro moderato*: b² in m. 42, c³ in mm. 73, 100–101; and in the *Adagio*: c³ in mm. 20–21 and 51–52).³ In any case the copy bears no evidence that the version for viola may be a contemporary arrangement based on a version for a different solo instrument. (For further information on the source, see Quellenbewertung and the individual remarks in the Kritischer Bericht).

We may thus assume with a significant degree of certainty that the original version was intended for viola,⁴ only that the soloist probably was not a viola player but rather an accomplished violinist.

The first edition of the concerto by Walter Lebermann was published already in 1970 by Schott in Mainz, but only as a piano reduction. The publication of a score or set of parts was never realized. Regarding its style, the concerto represents an important link between the late Baroque viola concertos circulating at the Prussian court of Frederick II and the classical viola concertos written only a little later. It is a welcome addition to the rather limited 18th-century repertoire for solo viola.

Translated by Stephanie Wollny

2 After Wagener's death, in 1902, his music collection comprising more than 7,000 volumes, was acquired by the Brussels librarian Alfred Wotquenne (1867–1939), who sold it to the Brussels Conservatory two years later. On Wagener's biography, the history of his collection and its significance for the transmission of Bach sources, see Ulrich Leisinger and Peter Wollny, *Die Bach-Quellen der Bibliotheken in Brüssel. Katalog*, (= Leipziger Beiträge zur Bach-Forschung, vol. 2), Hildesheim, 1997, pp. 95–134, esp. pp. 95–108.

3 The Národní muzeum – České muzeum hudby (National Museum – Museum for Czech Music) in Prague preserves an anonymous concerto for viola, two trumpets, two violins and basso (continuo?) probably from the 1770s or 1780s (shelf no. XL-E-341), in which the solo part also features very high registers (frequently c³, occasionally d³ and in isolated spots even e³); the solo part is noted in alto clef throughout.

4 There is also a mass for four-part choir, two trumpets, strings and organ in D Major attributed to Brixí, in which the Agnus Dei requires two violas as obbligato accompaniment (Národní muzeum, cf. footnote 3, shelf no. III-F-20).

1 See Gottfried Johann Dlabacž, *Allgemeines historisches Künstler-Lexikon für Böhmen und zum Theil auch für Mähren und Schlesien*, vol. 1, Prague, 1815, col. 224.