

In the final scene the Brahmin priests are gathered for the suttee ceremony. But just as the pyre is about to be lit, after Jessonda has sung the great aria *Hohe Gotter* in an appeal to the gods for mercy, a violent storm occurs, during which, the Portuguese army breaks in and overwhelms the priests. Jessonda is rescued and the curtain falls on the reunited and happy pair.

For this dramatic story Spohr wrote some of his strongest and most original music, no doubt the reason for the opera's enormous success. But of course it was scored for small orchestra, and parts of the libretto do appear somewhat dated for our modern tastes.

But the music has appealed strongly to great musical minds over the years. Richard Strauss, in fact, had a project in mind to re-edit the score and to fit it to a new libretto by Dr. Josef Gregson, librettist of Strauss's three penultimate operas *Friedenstag*, *Daphne* and *Die Liebe der Danae*. But he died before he could carry this out.

The music would be worth it - the great storm scene in the final Act has wonderfully expressive music, but needs orchestration larger than that which Spohr wrote for the small theatre in which he produced it.

The production at Kassel certainly did something to reveal to a modern audience an opera which, a sensation in its day, still has much to give to music-lovers of today in music and drama.

SPOHR'S "VIOLIN SCHOOL"
by
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Many violin teachers may at some time have used the "45 Exercises" from Spohr's *Violin School*.²

Some years ago I pointed out to the publishers what a travesty this work is of the real "School", and offered to bring the complete school up to date in a modern edition.³ As was to be expected I was completely and utterly snubbed!

The fact remains that there is some magnificent "music" in these exercises which are far more tuneful than the dull old tripe - endless bars of quavers for instance - still published and used as exam music.

If the "school" is re-issued, I think a considerable amount of revision may be necessary. For instance, it might be wise to omit the many pages on the rudiments of music and, maybe, the lithographs of the old fashioned way of holding the violin. On the other hand the remarks about choosing a good violin are quite historical now, and therefore interesting.

As to the Lay-out, we have advanced in many ways since Spohr's day. For instance, his "school" begins in the key of C because it is the easiest key. But it is by no means the easiest on the violin; and I am not sure that a few modern interludes should not be inserted in order to bridge some of the technical difficulties as between one study and another.

As to limiting the work to 45 exercises only, and then without the second violin part⁴ - I can only look on it as one of the biggest desecrations in musical history! Not only does the splendid writing of the 2nd violin part bring the simplest study to life, some of the best music is in the second half of the book not published (even in the desecrated form) in the "45 Exercises". Here is some fine music for two violins⁵ which could well take its place on a recital platform.

Of course there is already a bewildering mass of violin teaching material on the market these days, and no publisher in his senses should lightly consider adding to it. Therefore the economic problem is a serious one and careful thought would have to be given to the venture I suggest before it is undertaken.

It is possible, I think, the conclusion might be reached that the music is so beautiful, that unlike so many other studies and exercises, the interest of students may well be motivated by its sheer beauty.

(Footnotes)

1. Montagu Cleeve is the founder of the "New Viola d'amore Society".
 2. Spohr wrote his "Violin School" in 1831, which was published by Haslinger of Vienna. An early review of the work says "..... this embraces the whole art and science of violin playing, and lays down clear principles for an art which hitherto has been taught more by oral precepts, or, at the utmost, by small fragmentary pamphlets". Publication of this work alone would have ensured for Spohr undying fame, and did in fact enhance his status as a great teacher.
 3. The Spohr Society is at the moment negotiating for a re-print of the original English translation of the "School".
 4. There were also piano forte accompaniments written to the exercises as an appendix to the English edition of the "School".
 5. By this time Spohr had written sets of violin duos Op. 3, 9, 39, and was to go on and write the duos Op. 67, 150 and 153, his supreme achievements in this field.
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