

SPOHR AND THE BATON

by Arthur Jacobs

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SPOHR asserts in his Autobiography that he introduced “a novelty” by conducting with a baton in London in 1820. Though it is accepted by Grove’s Dictionary, this is a claim which contemporary accounts of his visit do not sustain.

Spohr declares that at a certain concert of the Philharmonic Society he used a baton, thus for the first time in England replacing the system by which control was divided between a violinist-leader and a “conductor” seated at the piano; and that this event put an end to the old system, baton-conducting henceforth becoming the rule at the Philharmonic. The second of these statements has been disproved by Adam Carse, who has shown by the testimony of Moscheles, Fétis and other witnesses that the “conductor at the piano” still functioned at these concerts as late as 1832. Carse is content to treat Spohr’s visit as providing an isolated demonstration of a practice that did not become regular until the season of 1833.

Myles Birket Foster, the Philharmonic Society’s historian, names April 10, 1820, as the date when Spohr used a baton. Quoting from a letter written by Spohr to his friend Wilhelm Speyer (reproduced in Speyer’s biography), Carse proves that Spohr used no baton at that day’s concert. Carse therefore picks the concert of May 8th 1820, as being the one at which the baton appeared.¹

But Spohr’s Autobiography, our only authority for the statement that he made use of a baton, is not a trustworthy source. It was not begun until twenty-seven years after the 1820 visit, and it is demonstrably inaccurate in other reminiscences of this period. Spohr’s account is inconsistent: his own description of the alleged baton-conducted concert fits none of the concerts at which he appeared. The use of a baton would have constituted a great novelty: yet among the many references in contemporary journals to Spohr’s concerts there is no mention of it. Further evidence against the baton comes from those very letters from Spohr to Speyer to which Carse drew attention. The passage in the Autobiography seems to have been the product of the confused memory of an aging man.

Before examining the details of the case, it will be necessary to assemble the facts of Spohr’s visit from a mass of miscellaneous evidence.

By resolution of the Directors’ Meeting² of September 2nd 1819 Spohr was invited to take part in the Philharmonic Society’s 1820 season. He was “not to perform at any other concerts whatsoever, or suffer his name to be announced, until he shall have performed twice at the Philharmonic Society”. Except for this provision, the terms of the engagement were those of a letter (no longer traceable) which the Society had received from Spohr; according to his Autobiography he was to direct (*dirigieren*) some of the concerts, appear as solo violinist in some of them, play in the orchestra in all of them, and leave one orchestral composition as the Society’s property. For all this he was paid, according to the Society’s ledger, 250 guineas – a sum not specified in the Autobiography but referred to as “a considerable remuneration”. (His wife, for her one appearance as harp soloist, received fifteen guineas.) In addition, according to the autobiography, the Philharmonic Society bore the cost of hiring the New Argyll Rooms (situated

on the corner of Regent Street and Little Argyll Street, and used for the Philharmonic performances) for Spohr's own benefit concert.

The opening concert of the 1820 season was to have been given on Monday, February 21st; but in consequence of the mourning for the death of George III (January 29th) it was postponed till Monday, March 6th. The 'Guardian', a Sunday paper, announced on March 5th that "Spohr, the first violinist of Germany, has arrived to perform at the Philharmonic Concerts".

The season's eight programmes are reproduced in Birket Foster's history, but without strict fidelity. The phrase "conducted by the composer", for instance, referring to the performance of a symphony of Spohr's on April 10th, is an insertion of Foster's own. Other discrepancies may be detected between Foster and the following extracts concerning Spohr and the direction of the concerts. These extracts are taken from the copies of programmes once owned, and in certain cases annotated, by Sir George Smart, and now in the British Museum. It will be noted that the title of the piece is followed by the name of the performer, and only then (as was the custom) by the name of the composer.

First Concert, March 6th. Concerto Violino (nello Stilo drammatico), M. Spohr, his first performance in this country. ... Spohr. ... Leader, Mr. F. Cramer. Piano-forte, Mr. Ries.

Second Concert, March 20th. Quartetto, two violins, viola, and violoncello, Messrs. Spohr, Watts, Cooke, and Lindley ... Spohr. ... Leader, Mr. Spagnoletti. Conductor, Mr. [J. B.] Cramer.

Third Concert, April 10th. New Sinfonia, MS. (Never performed) ... Spohr. ... Leader, Mr. Spohr. Conductor, Mr. Attwood.

Fourth Concert, April 24th. Duetto, Harp and Violin, Mr. and Madame Spohr. ... Spohr. ... Leader, Mr. Loder. Conductor, Sir George Smart.

Sixth Concert, May 22nd. Quartetto, for two Violins, Viola, and Violoncello, Messrs. Spohr, Watts, Mountain, and Lindley. ... Spohr. ... Leader, Mr. F. Cramer. Conductor, Mr. C. Potter.

Eighth Concert, June 19th. Sinfonia (never performed in this country). ... Spohr. ... Nonetto for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, and Bassoon, Messrs. Spohr, W. Griesbach, Lindley, Dragonetti, Ireland, F. Griesbach, Willman, Arnall, and Mackintosh. ... Spohr. ... Leader, Mr. Spohr. Conductor, Sir George Smart.

At the fifth and seventh concerts (May 8th and June 5th) Spohr, though presumably playing in the ranks of the orchestral violins, appears neither as soloist, leader nor composer on the programmes, which do not mention his name.³ Although Spohr was bound not to have his name announced in connection with any other concerts until he had performed twice for the Philharmonic, none the less on the actual morning of his second Philharmonic appearance, March 20th, the 'Morning Post' advertised his benefit concert, in the traditional style of the period:

Mr. Spohr's Concert. – Mr. Spohr most respectfully acquaints the Nobility and Gentry, that his Concert will take place on Thursday Evening, June 8th, at the New Argyll Rooms. Leader of the Band, Mr. Spohr; at the Pianoforte, Sir George Smart. ...

Sir George Smart himself, as director of the so-called "Oratorio Concerts" which were presented at Drury Lane Theatre during the Holy-Days when plays were prohibited, was responsible for Spohr's first appearance outside the Philharmonic series. An advertisement in 'The Times' reads:

Last Night During Lent. – Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. – This evening, March 22, a grand selection of music, under the direction of Sir George Smart, from the works of Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and other eminent composers. [Thirty-one items listed, including:] 'Pot-pouri [*sic*], Violino Obligato, Mr. Spohr (for this night only, being his first public appearance in this country), in which will be introduced (with variations) "La ci darem" (Mozart) and a Russian air.

Neither in his correspondence with Speyer (where the item above is referred to as "my pot-pouri in B \flat ") nor in his Autobiography does Spohr fail to comment on the predominantly secular nature of the programmes on these "oratorio" nights. In the Autobiography Spohr speaks

of performing twice for Sir George Smart at his “oratorio” concerts; but the only other oratorio concert run by Smart during Spohr’s stay was that of Whitsun Eve, Saturday, May 20th. Neither the announced programme of this concert (‘Morning Chronicle’, May 15th) nor the reviews of it (‘Sun’, May 22nd; ‘Morning Herald’, May 22nd; ‘Guardian’, May 28th) mention Spohr’s name. And indeed on that date, May 20th, Spohr was otherwise engaged: he was booked to play another pot-pourri (“the subjects taken from two popular airs of Mozart; never performed in this country”) at the annual concert of Charles and William Knyvett (‘Morning Herald’, May 19th). Spohr seems to have been deceived by his memory into thinking he played twice at the “oratorio”; he was perhaps confused because he did, on two other occasions, play for Smart. At the charitable concert, in aid of the New Musical Fund, which Smart directed at the King’s Theatre on April 27th, Spohr played a concerto (‘Morning Herald’ advertisement, April 24th) and some variations on a theme of Mozart (report in the ‘Quarterly Musical Review’, Vol. II, No. 7, 1820). The City Amateur Concerts at which Smart directed a mixed orchestra of “gentlemen” and professionals had Spohr as soloist on April 13th. He played (as he wrote to Speyer four days later) his “Gesangs-scene” concerto and, with his wife, a sonata for violin and harp.

In the same letter he wrote of having played a concerto in A major⁴ at the so-called “Vocal Concert” series on April 14th, in the “very fine” Hanover Square Rooms. He performed a concerto also at the first of the Argyll concerts (held in the New Argyll Rooms) on Thursday, April 18th. (The review of this in ‘The Times’, April 22nd, wrongly gives the day of the concert as Friday.)

Many London vocal and instrumental performers made a steady additional income by playing at “society” parties. But, unlike theirs, Spohr’s name does not appear in the reports of such functions in the newspapers’ social columns. Spohr did play at one event, at which the Duke of Sussex, brother to George IV, was present; but, according to his Autobiography, he customarily declined such engagements, because of the offhand, not to say insulting way in which artists were treated.

As the date of Spohr’s benefit concert drew near the advertisements in various papers gave details. ‘The Times’, June 6th:

Mr. Spohr most respectfully acquaints the Nobility, Gentry, and his Friends, that his concert will take place at the above [New Argyll] rooms, on Thursday next, which will be the last time of Mr. Spohr’s performance in public, prior to his return to the continent. ... In the course of the performance will be introduced a Sestetto ... [by] Ries; a grand Duetto (MS.), harp and violin, Madame Spohr and Mr. Spohr, Spohr; several other new (MS.) compositions of Mr. Spohr will be performed; Leader of the Band, Mr. Spohr; at the Pianoforte, Sir George Smart. Particulars ... may be had of Mr. Spohr, 49, Charlotte-street, Portland-street; and at the principal warehouses. ...

The programme of the concert as reproduced in the Autobiography gives the other works by Spohr as a Grand Sinfonia (MS.); “Irish Melodies (MS.) with variations for the violin ... composed expressly for this occasion”; the nonet; a rondo for the violin; and an overture. Writing to Speyer shortly afterwards, on June 18th, Spohr identifies the rondo as being taken from his seventh concerto, in E minor, Op. 38, and the overture as being that to ‘Alruna’.

The Autobiography, in both the German original (1860) and the English translation (1865), gives the date of the benefit concert as June 18th, while the date June 20th is given in George Hogarth’s ‘The Philharmonic Society of London’ (1862); but there is no doubt that the concert did actually take place, as advertised, on June 8th – a day also marked by popular rioting on behalf of Queen Caroline, who had just returned to London from the continent.

After this there remained only the final Philharmonic concert, June 19th, to detain Spohr before leaving for Germany. To Speyer, on the eve of the final concert, he wrote of his intention to quit London on the following Thursday, June 22nd.

With the context now established, the case of Spohr's alleged baton-conducting may be dealt with in detail. It will have been noticed that Spohr can in any case have been no stickler, at this time, for baton-conducting: even at his own benefit concert he and Sir George Smart divided control between them in the old fashion.

The word "conductor" did not at that period carry any association with the baton. The conductor was the man in charge of a concert. During performance his customary job was the direction of choir or orchestra from the piano or, more rarely, from the organ; but as Carse shows in 'The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz', the title "conductor" is sometimes encountered – with the meaning simply of "concert-director" – where there is no choir or orchestra and no conducting (in the modern sense) to do. The fact that on the Philharmonic programmes the word "Piano-forte" was changed to "Conductor" during the 1820 season does not imply the introduction of the baton, and is not to be associated with any innovation of Spohr's. The change took place, anyway, in the programme of the second concert – not the third, as Foster's history says, nor "after Spohr's visit" (Carse). And this was before Spohr could possibly have used a baton, since at the first concert he appeared only as soloist in a concerto and at the second only as leader of a quartet.

When, then, did the alleged baton-conducting take place? The well-known passage in Spohr's Autobiography describing the event is quoted at length in Carse's book, and it is unnecessary to reproduce it here. The account does not give a date for the event; though since, at another point in the Autobiography, there is a quite separate passage on a concert explicitly dated April 10th, it would seem that the account of the baton-conducted concert is meant to refer to another date.

The use of the baton, says this account, took place "when my turn came to direct"⁵ – and the only programmes in which Spohr's name occurs in a "directing" position are for the concerts at which he was "leader", namely the third (April 10th) and eighth (June 19th). "But fortunately, on the day when I directed, Mr. Ries was at the piano, and [at rehearsal] he readily assented to give up the score to me and to remain wholly without access to it". Now the only concerts at which Ries was at the piano were the first (March 5th) and the fifth (May 8th, the date picked by Carse as being the one Spohr refers to). In other words, it never happened at one and the same concert that Spohr was leader and Ries was at the piano, as the Autobiography alleges.

The Autobiography gives a negative clue in its description of the effect of the novelty: "The audience were at first startled by the novelty, and were seen whispering together; but when the music began and the orchestra executed the well-known symphony with unusual power and precision ..." That is to say, the concert began with a well-known symphony, which is true for all that season's concerts except the eighth, when Spohr's symphony in E \flat ("never performed in this country") opened the programme. But a more surprising statement is made in a passage of the Autobiography not quoted by Carse: "On this evening also, the concert-overture which I had composed before I left Frankfurt was given for the first time." The fact is that at no concert at all in this Philharmonic season was any overture by Spohr performed. (A concert-overture in F minor, however – it is this to which Spohr presumably refers – was given next season, on March 12th, 1821. It was dedicated to the Philharmonic Society.)

Enough has been said to show that Spohr's Autobiography is too inaccurate to be considered a reliable historical source for this period. Spohr, indeed, did not begin to write it until 1847, when he was sixty-three. The story of his baton-conducting in London in 1820 surely requires corroboration. London newspapers, which supplied Carse with plenty of comment on the introduction of the baton in the 1830s, are the source from which such corroboration might

naturally be expected. But no mention of any baton-conducting by Spohr at the 1820 Philharmonic concerts, or indeed at any of the London concerts of that year in which he appeared, seems to have been made in any of the numerous press references to him.

Spohr himself, in his Autobiography, has a reference to the English press. Discussing – separately from the alleged baton-conducted concert – the performance of his symphony in D minor on April 10th, he wrote: “Next morning all the London newspapers carried reports of the new symphony which had been composed in their town, and outbid one another in their praise.” Spohr’s memory had played him false again. It was extremely rare at that period for a concert to be reviewed the next morning; notices were usually up to a week, and sometimes several weeks, late. On this particular occasion ‘The Times’, ‘Morning Post’, ‘Courier’ and ‘Morning Herald’ did not review the concert at all, and the ‘Morning Chronicle’ not until May 4th, when it printed a combined review of this and the fourth Philharmonic concert. A selection from press reviews of Spohr’s appearances are here given in order of their occurrence.

First Philharmonic Concert, March 6th:

Mr. Spohr, who is considered as the best violin-player in Germany, was presented for the first time to a British audience. His fame had long preceded him, and our expectations, though raised very high, were fully realized. He performed a Concerto “in the dramatic style”... The composition is in itself full of melody and taste, and he imparted so much sentiment to it that his violin, if it did not exactly speak a language, “discoursed most eloquent music”, and was more passionate than many singers we hear. ... He laboured under great difficulties from his nervousness⁶ hence his intonation was not always quite perfect on his high notes, which were rather hard, and his double stops were hurried and indistinct; but ... [he is] one of the most accomplished and delightful players we have ever heard. The band was most admirably led by Mr. Cramer and conducted by Mr. Ries. (‘Morning Chronicle’, March 13th; reprinted, ‘Guardian’, March 19th.)

Second Philharmonic Concert, March 20th:

Mr. Spohr, accompanied by Messrs. Watts, T. Cooke and Lindley, played a charmingly expressive and scientific Quartett, in the most finished and elegant manner, and was rewarded by repeated plaudits. ... The Band was led with great spirit by Signor Spagnoletti, and conducted by Mr. Cramer. (‘Morning Chronicle’, March 28th; reprinted, ‘Guardian’, April 2nd.)

“Oratorio” Concert, March 22nd:

On last Wednesday, the celebrated Spohr played a *pot pourri* at Drury Lane. ... No equal violinist has arrived in England for many years. Application has done for him all that it could do. He has a complete command of the bow, his tone is smooth, pure, and powerful, and his execution singularly rapid, delicate and clear. But we are not so well assured of his brilliancy, and the selection of his *solo* disappointed us in his taste. The *pot pourri* was grounded on Mozart’s “La ci darem” and a Russian air, neither fortunate in its adaptation, and both forcing the performer to turn to the variations for proof of his manual skill. He was loudly applauded in several passages at the close. But this *pot pourri* was not *encored*. Yet he is altogether a most admirable artist. ... (‘Guardian’, April 2nd).

... Spohr is a violinist of the first rank; he has tone, taste, and facility, and all admirable. But ... “La ci darem” is a charming duet, but unsuited for the violin; and the Russian air was the mere vulgar chaunt of boors. His skill is perfect and exquisite; and only prejudiced by his selection. This fine performer, who is reputed the first in Germany, is a tall and manly looking person, bold, and in mature manhood. He seemed embarrassed by heat, though the night was chill; twenty years of public appearance have obviously been unable to establish his nerves. (‘Guardian’, March 26th.)

Third Philharmonic Concert, April 10th:

The third concert was, as a whole, a brilliant performance, and owed much of its *éclat* to a new symphony by M. Spohr, performed for the first time, which places him among instrumental composers of the highest class, being as remarkable for the eloquence and vocality of its melody, and the consistency of its design, as for the scientific knowledge which it exhibits throughout. ... Mr.

Spohr led the band in a very novel and superior manner, and Mr. Attwood conducted at the pianoforte. ('Morning Chronicle', May 4th; reprinted, 'Guardian', May 7th.)

Argyll Concert, April 20th:

... M. Spohr's execution, admirable as it is, forms the least of his merits. Mechanical difficulties may be mastered by application, with a common capacity; but the true genius is discovered in style and expression; in these, and his performance of an Adagio, he has few competitors. His instrument, in the slow movements, can scarcely be said to want a voice and words to give it sentiment and passion, and his manner might be studied by our best singers with advantage to themselves and the public. ('Times', April 22nd.)

Fourth Philharmonic Concert, April 24th:

M. And Mad. Spohr performed a duet for the harp and violin; the combination was interesting, but we were disappointed in the musical effect. ... ('Morning Chronicle', May 4th; reprinted, 'Guardian', May 7th.)

New Musical Fund Concert, April 27th:

... We were rather disappointed in Mr. Spohr: whether the orchestra or his violin was out of tune, we were unable to decide. ('Morning Post', April 29th.)

Fifth Philharmonic Concert, May 8th:

A very fine concert, ... Mr. Mori led the band with spirit and effect, and Mr. Ries conducted at the pianoforte. ('Morning Chronicle', May 15th.)

Sixth Philharmonic Concert, May 22nd:

It was an assemblage of choice things. ... Mr. F. Cramer led the band, and Mr. C. Potter conducted. ('Morning Chronicle', June 12th.)

Seventh Philharmonic Concert, June 5th:

... Very unequal to the former. ... We do not recollect any one of these concerts by which, as a whole, so little effect was produced. ('Morning Chronicle', June 12th.)

Press interest waned as the season drew to a close. The 'London Magazine', which in April had reported Spohr's performance as having been "the principal novelty and attraction of the present season", mentioned his benefit concert along with those of two other artists in a single sentence of its July issue; and the stalwart 'Morning Chronicle' did not review the eighth and last Philharmonic Concert of June 19th at all.

A more general article, with full mention of Spohr, appeared in the 'Quarterly Musical Review' (the only London musical periodical at this date). In the course of it occurs the following:

The play of Mr. Spohr, a celebrated violinist, has been the grand circumstance of attraction during the season. ... He first played a concerto in the dramatic style; the composition was very clever, and classed under its proper head. A quartet, in which he afterwards assisted, was so entirely calculated to display the single performer as to injure its effect as a concerted piece. ... Mr. Spohr has given very various proofs of his ability at different concerts. At that for the benefit of the New Musical Fund he played an air of Mozart's with variations. The theme was touched with prodigious feeling and taste, and he introduced staccato runs into the variations with admirable skill and effect.

Up to the date of this extract, covering the period of the first four Philharmonic concerts, Spohr was noticed as a solo violinist, a violinist-leader, and a composer, not a baton-conductor. Nor in the 1821 survey in the same magazine is there any reference to Spohr or to baton-conducting.

We turn from Press comment to the letters written by Spohr to his friend the composer Wilhelm Speyer (1790-1878) and reproduced in Speyer's biography, published in 1925. Carse uses one of these letters to disprove Birket Foster's assertion that Spohr conducted with a baton at the Philharmonic on April 10th. On April 17th (the date is wrongly given by Carse as April 14th) Spohr wrote, referring to that concert:

Here ... the "conductor", as he is styled on the bills, sits at the piano and plays from the full

score, but gives neither the beat nor the tempo. This is supposed to be done by the “leader” or first violin; but as he has only the first-violin part in front of him he can’t be of any help to the orchestra, so he contents himself with emphasizing his own part and letting the orchestra keep with him as best it can. ... However, at the rehearsals I conducted in the old-established way from the score, and in the evening when it is *de rigueur* for the “conductor” to be at the piano, I had it all so much by rote that I could help the orchestra even without the score.⁷

But these letters also go against Carse’s own contention that the baton was used at the concert of May 8th. Writing again on June 18th, Spohr dealt in some detail with his benefit concert (June 8th) but made no mention of using a baton – or indeed of being in a directing position – at any of the intervening Philharmonic concerts. He did say that “to-morrow” (that is, June 19th) he was to direct the Philharmonic again; for “to direct” he used the same word (*dirigieren*) as he had employed to describe his function on April 10th, when we know he did not use a baton. There is in fact no mention in Spohr’s letters (though admittedly they may not be complete) of having actually used a baton at any concert in London.

Thus the allegation that Spohr used a baton at the 1820 Philharmonic concerts is unsupported by either the press or by the letters written by Spohr at the time. From the press, indeed, we have categorical statements about who “led” and who “conducted” each concert up to and including the seventh, and these are flatly inconsistent with Spohr’s supposed baton-conducting. For the eighth and last concert we have no such categorical evidence; but Spohr made no mention of any plan to use a baton when writing, one day before, to Speyer. And the use of a baton at that concert, which began with Spohr’s unfamiliar Symphony in E \flat , would be inconsistent with the Autobiography itself; for that account tells how, at the baton-conducted concert, “the music began and the orchestra executed the well-known symphony with unusual power and precision”.

Yet this Autobiography, demonstrably inaccurate in its particulars of this period, is the sole source (it appears) of the story that the baton was used. The story should surely now be dropped from the history books. There may be objections. Perhaps it will be said that it is one thing to find Spohr inconsistent on points of detail, and another to accuse him of plain historical mis-statement. But it is not necessary to imagine anything so absurd as that Spohr was trying to falsify history. The case seems simply that he mis-remembered the third concert. At the rehearsal for that concert, as we know, he did use a baton. At the concert itself Attwood was at the piano, in the usual position of the “conductor”, but Spohr “led the band in a very novel and superior manner” (*Morning Chronicle*). Probably he used his violin bow baton-wise to give cues (for he knew the full score “by rote”, as his letter tells us) and to give the tempo and the beat. What more natural that, writing at least twenty-seven years after, he should have confused in his mind the rehearsal and the concert?

The very fact that the baton-conducted concert, as described in the Autobiography, corresponds to no actual concert but takes in details from several different concerts (as well as referring to the concert-overture which was never performed at all) suggests that his memory was not clear and that his imagination was unconsciously at work.

Notes:

- 1) See Adam Carse, ‘The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz’, 1948; Myles Birket Foster, ‘History of the Philharmonic Society of London’, 1912; Edward Speyer, ‘Wilhelm Speyer der Liederkomponist’, Munich, 1925.
- 2) For permission to consult the minutes of these meetings and other documents of the Royal Philharmonic Society, the author is grateful to the Society’s Honorary Committee of Management.
- 3) The work played at the first concert was his Concerto No. 8, in A minor, Op. 47, “in Form einer Gesangsscene”. The symphony given at the third concert was that in D minor, Op. 49, composed in London

and dedicated to the Philharmonic Society. The minutes of the Philharmonic directors' meeting on June 11, 1820, as well as Spohr's correspondence with Speyer, establish that the symphony given at the eighth concert was an earlier one – in E \flat , Op. 20 – and not, as Foster asserts, a repetition of the D minor. The identity of the harp-violin duet at the fourth concert, and of the quartet at the sixth, is uncertain. So is that of the quartet at the second concert: Spohr's letter to Speyer of March 27th describes it as a "Quatuor brillant" in E \flat , but the quartets so far written by Spohr in that key – Op. 15, No. 1, and Op. 29, No. 2 – are neither of them styled "Quatuor brillant". (See H. M. Schletterer, 'Verzeichnis der Werke von Ludwig Spohr', Leipzig, 1881.) Spohr's Autobiography, though wrongly placing the work not in the second concert but in the second half of the first concert, is perhaps correct in giving the key as E – presumably the Quatuor brillant, Op. 43.

- 4) Spohr, or Speyer's biographer, has apparently made a slip here. Spohr wrote no violin concerto in A major. If A minor is meant, the work might be Op. 1, Op. 4 or (probably) Op. 62 (1810); not what Spohr always calls "meine Gesangs-scene".
- 5) In this and the following excerpts from the Autobiography, the published English translation has been revised, where necessary, to keep closer to the sense of the original text.
- 6) Spohr himself remarks on his "great nervousness": "I can explain it only through the presence of Viotti and other distinguished artists, whose possibly over-excited anticipations I had to satisfy." – Letter to Speyer, March 27th 1820.
- 7) Carse's translation. But he is surely in error in commenting: "So it appears that Spohr bowed to custom on this occasion, and conducted 'at the piano'." No; Spohr was no pianist. He says that he helped the orchestra "even without the score" – but, had he been at the piano, he would have had the score. The 'Morning Chronicle' review mentions that Attwood was at the piano.