

dissertations

Rita Benton

Nicolas Joseph Hüllmandel and French instrumental music in the second half of the 18th century

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Nicolas Joseph Hüllmandel, composer, author, pianist, teacher, and virtuoso on the glass harmonica, was one of a number of Alsatian musicians who worked in Paris during the second half of the eighteenth century. Most of his compositions are keyboard sonatas with violin accompaniments. Similar in style to the sonatas of Johann Christian Bach, his works show real compositional skill. Dr. Benton's dissertation is the first full-length study of Hüllmandel, and it substantially adds to our knowledge of this musician.¹

The chapter dealing with Hüllmandel's life is particularly rich in new information.² Dr. Benton shows that he was born not in 1751, as was previously believed, but in 1756, and that he was the son of Michel Hüllmandel, a musician at the Strasbourg Cathedral. N.J. Hüllmandel was highly regarded in his own day and frequented aristocratic circles in Paris. Like many musicians in the late 18th century, he apparently was not regularly in the service of the

¹Material from this dissertation appears in Dr. Benton's article, "Nicolas-Joseph Hüllmandel (1756-1823): quelques aspects de sa vie et de son oeuvre," *Revue de musicologie* 47:177-94 (Dec., 1961). The best previous studies are Georges de Saint-Foix, "Nicolas-Joseph Hüllmandel, 1751-1823," *La revue musicale* 4:193-205 (April, 1923); Eduard Reeser, *De Klaviersonate met Vioolbegeleiding in het parijsche Muziekleven ten Tijde van Mozart* (Rotterdam, 1939), and Reeser's article "Hüllmandel," in *MGG* 6:833-39. A very helpful discussion of Hüllmandel may be found in William S. Newman, *The sonata in the Classic era* (Chapel Hill, 1963), pp. 652-55.

²Dr. Benton has written an interesting biographical study of another Alsatian sonata composer who worked in Paris. See "Jean-Frédéric Edelman, a musical victim of the French Revolution," *The Musical Quarterly* 50:165-187 (1964).

aristocracy. He seems to have earned his living as a piano teacher. Among his students were Georges Onslow and Hyacinthe Jadin, who was one of the first professors of piano at the Paris Conservatoire.

Two chapters relate Hüllmandel to the period in which he lived. One is a brief but useful discussion of French attitudes towards instrumental music. The other, entitled "Historico-Musical Factors in Hüllmandel's Background," summarizes the findings of previous research dealing with the following topics: music in Alsace, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach,³ French keyboard music, the transition from harpsichord to piano, Hüllmandel's Parisian predecessors, the accompanied clavier sonata, and concert activity in Paris during the second half of the 18th century.

The dissertation contains other valuable features. There is a thematic index of Hüllmandel's works, and a list of original and early editions that is more complete than any previously available. The appendix to Dr. Benton's study includes both the original French text and her annotated translation of Hüllmandel's article, "Clavecin," which appeared in an edition of the *Encyclopédie méthodique* in 1791.⁴ This interesting article shows the viewpoint of an 18th-century pianist who regarded the harpsichord as an outmoded instrument. A musical supplement to the dissertation contains the *Divertissement* in F major for piano or harpsichord, Op. 7, No. 6, a selection from the *Petits airs* for harpsichord or piano, Op. 5, and two sonatas (Op. 4, No. 3 and Op. 8, No. 3).⁵ The Sonata in C minor, Op. 8, No. 3, has a very important violin part and is a fine work that is well worth performing.

Studies dealing with the 18th century are frequently least helpful when it comes to the analysis of musical style. As Jan LaRue has recently observed, "the techniques of style analysis. . . are neither widespread nor fully developed."⁶ It is not surprising, then, that the sections treating Hüllmandel's music are somewhat less informative than other parts of the dissertation. There is no thorough discussion of thematic material, thematic contrast, or developmental procedures. However, there are some perceptive observations about individual works, and the relationship between the keyboard and violin parts is well-described.

In this dissertation, as in many other studies, one is not often given

³Along with Eduard Reeser, Dr. Benton accepts Fétis' report that Hüllmandel studied with Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. It seems very possible, however, that Fétis was in error here. (See William S. Newman, *Op. cit.*, p. 652.)

⁴Dr. Benton's translation of this article may be found in *The Galpin Society Journal* 15:34-44 (March, 1962).

⁵Hüllmandel's sonatas Op. 1, No. 2 and Op. 6, No. 3 are included in the musical supplement to Eduard Reeser, *Op. cit.*, and the sonata Op. 3, No. 2—without the violin part—is the musical supplement to Georges de Saint-Foix, *Op. cit.*

⁶Review of William S. Newman, *Op. cit.*, in *The Musical Quarterly* 50:398 (1964).

the precise frequency with which certain style characteristics occur. Instead, expressions like "sometimes" or "quite often" are employed. For example, Dr. Benton observes that "*sometimes* [italics mine] the second theme-group begins with material similar to that of the first group but in a related key and treated differently" (p. 155). She then gives two musical examples which illustrate this procedure. One would like to know exactly how frequently this does occur. Then one could determine whether Hüllmandel employs this procedure more or less often than other composers. There are other advantages in tabulating the precise frequency of the style characteristics studied. One is that such a tabulation tends to oblige the writer to define the characteristics with greater care. Another is that it assures the reader that the writer has not relied merely upon his general impressions when making statements of frequency.

My last two paragraphs should not obscure the fact that Dr. Benton has written a good book that is of real value to students of 18th-century music.

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Arthur Michael Daniels *The De musica libri septem of Francisco de Salinas*

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Peter Bergquist

Arthur Daniels' dissertation is a detailed study of Salinas' *De musica* (Salamanca, 1577; facsimile reprint, ed. Kastner, in *Documenta Musicologica*, Bärenreiter, 1958) based on a complete translation from the original Latin. *De musica* is a massively learned treatise on harmonics and metrics by a blind organist who was also one of the most eminent musical scholars of his day. In this work Salinas is concerned with music only as a mathematical science and touches on problems of composition and performance peripherally as they impinge on harmonics and metrics. Yet, he is not so doctrinaire as to reject the testimony of the ear; he emphasizes throughout that sensory perception must join with reason in the study of music. Reason is the ultimate authority and must supply proof for what the senses perceive as correct, since the unaided senses may judge