Karl Klingler

Portrait and Pedagogic Achievement

Essay in accordance with his writing “Dies und Das”
about Rode’s Caprices

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Prof. Karl Klingler.

Karl Klingler: Portrait and Pedagogic Achievement

I. Introduction and Listening Sample

I owe my first knowledge about Karl Klingler to Prof. Friedrich v. Hausegger who gave me Agnes Ritter’s edition of the essays “Dies und Das”, “Vom Rhythmus” und “Vom Musikalischen Einfall und seiner Darstellung” (“This and That”, “About the Rhythm” and “About the Musical Idea and its Interpretation”). These three writings have been published in a book together with the reprint of his work “Ueber die Grundlagen des Violinspiels” (“About the Basics of Violin Playing”; Breitkopf & Haertel Leipzig 1921 and accordingly Georg Olms Verlag 1990).

Today I would like to take a look at “This and That” which is a research on Rode’s Caprices No. 1 – 8, and was first presented posthumously at the occasion of his 100th birthday 1979.

In order to get an impression about Klingler’s playing and interpreting, may I suggest to shortly listen into a historic recording:

Mozart Duo in B flat major, 2nd movement, Adagio
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91NA9j5jO4E
Karl Klingler, violin, Fridolin Klingler, viola (?)

II. Biographic Details

Karl Klingler (1879-1971) studied violin with Joseph Joachim [2], and composition with Max Bruch and Robert Kahn, in Berlin. As a composer he won the Mendelssohn Prize at age 19, and at age 21, he became concertmaster of Berlin Philharmonic under Arthur Nikisch [3]. He was an accomplished soloist, once also with his own violin concerto in Berlin. His acquaintance with Joachim played a vital role in his life. He became his successor as a violin professor in Berlin, and after having played viola in Joachim’s famous quartet (a great honor and achievement, being 50 years younger then Joachim), he emphasized this quartet tradition throughout his life. [4] We can hear his own Klingler Quartet still today through recordings of particularly middle and late Beethoven string quartets. Historic testimonies mentioned “almost incomparable balance in sound and a refined technical achievement” (Riemann Encyclopedia 1929) and “unrivalled in formed sound and unmatched in dynamic accentuation” (Alexander Berrsche 1912). Klingler had to face a number of political obstacles in his life. The quartet in its first international constellation, with the Russian 2nd violinist Josef Rywkind and the British cellist Arthur Williams, had to stop when Klingler was called as a soldier in the First World War. [5] Later at Nationalsocialist time, Klingler refused to exchange the jewish cellist Ernst Silberstein. Silberstein emigrated and the quartet had to dissolve again. When Klingler resisted the taking away of Joachim’s bust in Berlin Hochschule, he lost his professorship, and shortly went to Switzerland, for safety reason and inner emigration, and to concentrate on composing. Later after bombing in Berlin he settled in the inherited house “Schloss Krumke” of his wife [6], together with homeless and victims, together over 30 persons. Then he was supposed to be detained, however, American troops arrived shortly before. When the house became subject to be state property under Sovjet and DDR regime, he had to leave within a few hours, and decided to take along: Bach’s Solo Sonatas and Rode’s Caprices.
With part of his family he traveled by horse and cart to Hannover and later settled in Munich. Still today, through activities by his daughter Marianne [7], there is the “Klingler Foundation” and the Quartet Competition, that supported among others the Cherubini-, Auryn- and Fairfield-Quartets.

Among his students were Alice Schoenfeld (today in Los Angeles), Agnes Ritter (his late 2nd violinist, to whom we owe the edition of his writings), and Shinichi Suzuki [8]. Suzuki’s famous Talent Education Institute and Method with Klingler’s inspiration and influence in particular is emphasizing early education with improved early teachers and methods. The Klingler Foundation in accordance in their charter included the understanding that serving human kind is our highest mission, and that artistic ambition has to serve the betterment of society.

III a. “This and That”

This somewhat humble title refers to a basic question.
“This and that” means something like a collection, of thoughts and details.
Teaching musical issues is the aspect we aim to reach at work.
It is personal, complicated, demanding and self-demanding, and thus: of highest value.
With growing progress this becomes increasingly difficult to systematically organize.
Klingler in his research and introduction admits this effect and suggests:
in high estimation and appreciation for Rode’s caprices, to take the first 8 numbers as chapters to discuss musical, violinistic and violin-technical issues.
He also assumes that this may have been Leopold Mozart’s reason to after all refrain from writing his second book on musical topics.
His student and late quartet colleague Agnes Ritter edited commented this work.

IIIb. Examples

In order to illustrate Klingler’s work, I am trying to view some of his examples under various aspects.
Attached is the print of the 2 co-first publications (Peters Leipzig and Frey Paris), as well as Klingler’s own exemplar as reprinted in the book.

1. Working with Historic Sources:

   a) Tartini: at the occasion of discussing the trill (in this case at Caprice #1, bar 15; Grundlagen des Violinspiels page 176), Klingler explains the development of a brilliant trill from a quick finger beat, like a “nightingale beat”, rather than a regular finger stopping as many other books work with.
   He mentions that this in fact can disturb some good trill talent.

   b) Geminiani (#2 b. 51; G. d. V. p. 194): about spiccato string crossing in counterclockwise direction, he refers to Geminiani’s sign for lifting the bow.
c) L. Mozart (#4 b. 1; G. d. V. p. 204): with critical view for Mozart’s explanation, Klingler agrees that for a smooth bow change there needs to be a preparatory “weakness”, lightening the contact.

d) W. A. Mozart’s letter (#6 b. 11; G. d. V. p. 229), as a proof for rubato beyond notation.

e) Quantz (#3 b. 11; G. d. V. p. 197), about the traditional swell at alterations.

f) C. P. E. Bach (#7 b. 25; G. d. V. p. 238), about stressing larger interval steps.

g) Letters between Brahms and Joachim discussing portato/sostenuto for violin and piano (#7 b. 4; G. d. V. p. 241).

2. About Violin-technical Issues:

a) Close observation and suggestions, for example staccato (#7 b. 1; G. d. V. p. 237):
Mentioning the difference to Kreutzer #4, he explains that with the start on or off the beat, there is the danger of too much inner will at the preparatory rest before the beat. A sign of true life experience.
Second difference is the goal of one or 2 notes, legato or staccato.
With introducing the downbow, and groupwise altering, the development of the Viotti-bowing (#7 b. 23; G. d. V. p. 238).
A special remark is the danger of “circulus vitiosus” where staccato groups are linked to shifts. He emphasizes to leave that shift violinistically obvious rather than trying to hide it (#7 b. 23; G. d. V. p. 240).
He recommends free walking exercises, no exaggerations, and definitely no machines.
And after all with a wide number of literature examples, the beautiful conclusion is, to go for musical and inner freedom, and even in case of not achieving a safe staccato, to replace it in a convincing and natural manner.

A special topic seemed to me his experience with altered supporting fingers.
For trills and vibrato, in order to free hand and fingers, the supporting extra finger on the string is to be altered in the direction to get closer to the others (#1 b. 1; G. d. V. p. 169)

b) Sense of musical and technical correlation:
In Caprice #4 (b. 1-2; G. d. V. p. 218) he describes the repeated note b” as an organ point, that in this case serves for practicing the 4th finger.
In similar sense Rode later requests to keep the 4th finger down (b. 23; p. 219).
In Caprice #5 (b. 65; G. d. V. p. 226) Klingler suggests the larger musical groups to be supported by fouet.

3. Musical Views

a) Rhythmic Freedom:
Close to the field of rubato there is the aim for lively figurations:
Similar as in the “Handel-Rhythm” he suggests to keep the scales in the 4/4 bar of #5 (Moderato b. 1; G. d. V. p.233) free to avoid monotony.
-4-  

In #5 (b. 64; G. d. V. p. 226) he associates the 2-2 legato with the Tannhaeuser Ouverture, in order to be rhythmically sharpened.

b) Large Work Context:  
Understanding Rode’s remark “egalement” in #6 b 34. and #7 b. 56/57 (G. d. V. p. 234 etc.), Klingler states that this increases tension in the long 16th-note-passage before the impulsive recapitulation.

c) Risk:  
Similar to what Flesch wrote about Wieniawski (“il faut risquer!”), Klingler also suggests courage for the fingering and stormy character (#4 b. 40; G. d. V. p. 220).

d) Insight in Composer’s Character:  
With Beethoven op. 59/2 and Brahms op. 111 (G. d. V. p. 221) Klingler shows 2 beautiful examples where the composer has a rich imagination and harmonic hearing that enters before the actual main theme.

e) Literature:  
His musical views are nurtured by his multiple musical background and knowledge of literature. There are numerous examples from chamber music, solo, and orchestra literature, that enrich and support his writing.

f) Practical advice:  
In one explanation Klingler gives a valuable advice about dealing with the tone wolve (G. d. V. p. 167).

4. Harmonic Analysis  
   
Klingler was a widely studied man. His interest for mathematics partly may have lead him to elaborate on the tuning systems in the introduction.  
He there gives a stunning example of Spohr (G. d. V. p. 164), notating a keyboard chord in E double-flat major, and somewhat regrets lost values in the well-tempered system. He then applies this to the questions about intonation.  
For example in #8 b. 1 (G. d. V. p. 253), where the 2nd finger g#” is higher than at c#” for the third. There he also refers to Sevcik and mentions that these refinements are not part of his finger exercises.

5. About Rules  
   
a) Open Mind:  
On one hand Klingler uses sources with his own critical mind and consideration, on the other he always makes clear what is just his personal taste and preference: in #4 (allegro b. 12; G. d. V. p. 218), he prefers trills without Nachschlag, due to the vigorous character.
b) Search for Reasons:
In another example he understands why Rode is not going with the rules:
in #6 (b. 1; G. d. V. p. 228) he shifts on the notes between the notated lines. Klingler found out that this has to do with the French language, stressing the last syllables.

c) Terminology:
Particularly in the case of accents and f, dots, and the question of portato, Klingler elaborates in long explanations and possibilities. About portato he also states that a violinist will at some point remain not understood by a pianist, due to the more options on the string instrument (#7 b. 4; G. d. V. p. 241)). In the case of the dot, besides the well-known ideas of length and accentuation, I found worth taking an extra look into the beginning of the dotted note (theme of #5 b. 1, where the outstanding dots suggest a break before the note, while within the run this applies to the end only). This already touches the points of articulation and caesura, and where to ultimately give that up for the musical flow (G. d. V. p. 220).

d) Rubato:
About Rubato in the long research he sets up one convincing rule:
When the free passage is followed by one resulting goal note, the end of the passage can slow down – when the passage is followed by an appoggiatura or further figuration, its ending should not slow down (examples Bach Adagio and Beethoven Concerto, G. d. V. p. 230/31).

6. Notation
Klingler closely looks into miscellaneous writings.
For example in #1 (moderato b. 10; G. d. V. p. 184), the notation of 1 eith-note followed by 4 64th-notes does not work out mathematically, and has been adjusted into 32nd-notes in most editions. However Klingler suggests to take this literally and play it as a duplet rhythm figuration (within the 12/8 bar).
In the introduction of #1 (b. 2; G. d. V. p. 170) he found another detail that is adjusted in other editions:
Rode writes only one slur, to be applied for both, phrase and tied-over note.
In #4 (allegro b. 38; G. d. V. p.219), where Rode repeatedly writes open string, Klingler assumes that this emphasizes the vigorous fingerdropping in between and increases the courage.
In #5 b. 1 (G. d. V. p. 222) he leaves it open whether one slur has been forgotten in the edition or whether Rode wanted one retake and one hooked bowing. Klingler’s thorough and serious reading, may it be the only right option or not, is thus more precise than in various later editions that made easy adjustments in a first glance.
7. Language

Through his knowledge, his characterizations include poetic pictures, such as: the painter’s brush traces, similar to the supporting notes in the shift (#4; G. d. V. p. 212), or the sculptor’s free hand, in comparison to free ornamentation (#1; G. d. V. p. 169). With some humoristic sense he was able to cite Goethe, comparing the first button-whole with the start of the staccato (#7; G. d. V. p. 237).

Within the numerous different meanings of the dot, he calls it “chameleon-character” (G. d. V. p. 251).

In one instant a religious picture comes in: explaining Mozart’s dynamic in his grand G-major quartet, he calls the piano “holy spirit”, rather than a shocking contrast effect (#6; G. d. V. p. 236).

Generally his language is creating thorough descriptions and long sentences. His research about the 15-bar-introduction of #1 for example adds up to 10 A4 pages. He is aware of his demand to the reader and in one calculation about bow speed he addresses to the reader to find out why by himself (in #8 b. 12; G. d. V. p. 251).

Other than that he is recommending to read his works several times, in diligent manner, and in order to understand the book from beginning on.

And not to forget, entertaining among musicians, he also tells anecdotes. For example when he heard an audience wondering whether the Bach double concerto was by him or by Gounod (G. d. V. p. 252).

Or about a fellow student who was so eagerly practicing that he oversaw that Ernst’s Othello Fantasy was written after Rossini’s, not Verdi’s (which was impossible by life dates) (G. d. V. p. 244).

8. Tradition and Innovation

We know an artist has the duty to go with the time and its achievements. Where appropriate or necessary, and of course with a critical mind. Klingler also does. There is one specific example:

He talks about audible and inaudible bow changes, and thus clean and noisy detache. He states that this somehow vigorous expression in the noisy detache has proved to be disturbing on recordings (G. d. V. p. 225).

This bowing has come out of use during his time, and today our goal is clearly the clean detache.

At the same time he is maintaining awareness of the Joachim tradition:

Several times he cites him with the saying “im Forte nicht rauh, im Piano nicht flau” (not rough in forte, not flat in piano), and applies it.

One fine example is in Schubert’s dynamic. He sais, Schubert liked to write pianissimo when he had an especially beautiful idea, and that implies certainly an expressive effort.

Klingler likes that with little bow and good contact.
9. Value

Albrecht Roeseler in his foreword also compares his writings with the publications by Carl Flesch, who was Klingler’s colleague at Berlin Hochschule. He describes it as “certainly no disadvantage” that Klingler worked in a more philosophic style while Flesch’s research was in a more analytic approach. For the practical benefit Klingler’s contribution lies in awareness, reassurance and possible corrections – rather than in step-by-step pedagogic procedures. A special emphasis in Klingler’s understanding is the sensitivity of the finger tips, primarily in the right hand (in German language “Fingerspitzengefühl”). Also Capet in his foreword to his Rode edition mentions that the bow is the soul. In other words, the vibrato is emotionally following and must not be replacing the missing differentiation in the so-called “big sound” from the bow.

What makes “This and That” stunning is the immense experience and knowledge of details, explained and illustrated in numerous practical examples, rich in association.

10. Respect

With attributes like “masterhood”, Klingler liked to pay respect to Rode’s achievements. The fact that he took this work along with Bach’s solo sonatas speaks for itself. Even where f. e. Rode asks for “F segue” over repeated figurations (#5 b. 25/26; G. d. V. p. 223), Klingler understands to appreciate this monotony as an increasing tension. At the point of shifts between the beats he researched that this had to do with Rode’s French language, that likes to stress the last syllable (#6 b. 1; G. d. V. p. 228/29). Generally Klingler, with a strong profile, always maintained respect: About the transcription “Bach Air on the G-string”, he doesn’t mention the name, but clearly explains why this is against Bach’s intention: apart from the full character of the G-string, a ninth below the original high register in piano, it results in fifth-parallels (G. d. V. p. 249).

However he to a certain extent defends Gounod’s arrangement of the C major prelude (with mentioning his name), explaining that Gounod at a discussion improvised this, because there was a remark about monotonic rhythm in Bach’s work (G. d. V. p. 252). An example where he doesn’t mention any names is the use of separate whole bow in Schubert’s 9th Symphony, that creates bad wrong accents (G. d. V. p. 179).

11. Character

It probably has become visible that Karl Klingler was a personality of highest integrity and consequence. Regardless his achievements he was ready to and in fact did sacrifice his career, for personal and political reasons. It seems that his insights were not compatible with outer human conflicts. Several times in his life resignation was the only possible result he accepted. His education, cultivation and morality stood far above.
In Agnes Ritter’s rich characterisations he is described as being alert, saying habit and customisation are dangerous, unless one would supervise them from higher above. A wise and ever lively attitude of an experienced teacher. Original and free from patterns at the same time. Ritter witnessed him with high intuition, empathy and expressive power. His unresting diligence in literature reading and violin technical standards enabled him to express finest emotions. In one of the other writings, “About the Rhythm”, he proves himself to be familiar with ancient Greek art, in the sense of multiple disciplines. In Munich he became member of the “Zwanglose Gesellschaft”, a group of poets and artistic personalities that care for literature and exchange of values in society, free-thinking friends without stated rules.

12. Composition Sample

a) As an example of Klingler’s composing skill I am also attaching his cadenza for the first movement of Viotti’s a minor concerto. It involves traditional techniques, fugato and sequences, combined with free and virtuoso passages into far harmonies. Of course it reminds of Joachim’s cadenzas, yet it is of a strong individual profile.
IV. Acknowledgements

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V. Sources:


"Dies und Das" übereicht von Agnes Ritter, 1979

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Mozart Duo http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91NA9j5jO4E
Klingler Stiftung http://www.klingler-stiftung.de/

VI. Pictures

[1] Karl Klingler as professor in Berlin
Prof. Karl Klingler.
[5] Klingler Quartett um 1936

[6] Schloss Krumke

[7] Marianne Klingler †
[8] Shinichi Suzuki