

A NOTE FROM *Johnstone-Music*

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Notes on Cadenza Preparation:

How does one play a Cadenza? Certainly a most pertinent question... Many years ago many an innocent asked 'Can you teach jazz or is it in-born to be developed by instinct by each individual?' Today Jazz has been introduced as a main-stream subject in many of the important conservatoires of the world. The same could well be said of cadenzas. It can be left to instinct but it is usually far safer by 'guidance'. The form to deliver them convincingly can be more-or-less self-taught but usually needs both a good 'professor' and someone who's been through it – meaning knows perfectly what it is like to be in those moments on the concert platform – and apart from the glorious moments where one can truly express oneself with a well-meaning and sincere support team, anything might happen from sheer tiredness, to lack of rehearsal time, a strange language, or even a slightly 'hostile' orchestra or conductor, or even a 'manager' or 'representative' who simply does not care for the welfare of the artist! All these things are very difficult for the great majority of us to take in our stride and will usually seem far-removed from the well intentioned practising we make in our home or in our modest 'music studio'. On top of these present-day considerations one has to acquire a historical perspective; a truth of course for all musical performance but above all with relation to the production of Cadenzas where one is the 'true artiste' – it is impossible to 'hide' tucked away in the 2nd Violins of an orchestra or even be supported by a weighty pianist in a Brahms or Beethoven sonata. The history of Cadenzas and cadenza playing goes back a long time in history (for us as cellists to 1700-10) and it would be difficult for a young cellist, however talented, to assume these centuries of knowledge all by himself or herself. The present author of 'Cadenzas and Cadences' has had the opportunity, and the privilege, of performing nearly all the standard 'great' concertos with orchestras, and has generally thoroughly enjoyed those special Cadenza moments. One does simply the very best that one can, comforted by the realization that very well delivered phrases give an enormous inner satisfaction, but also with the conviction that less than 100% delivered phrases might not seem perfect to us, the 'executors', but to virtually the entire general public are certainly most convincing. However, when this same author has occasionally sat on an exam panel in a conservatoire, or on an audition panel for an orchestral job, he frequently has found instrumentalists who have played decently well during the entire movement arrive at the point of the cadenza and suddenly (rather blatantly) present their up-to-now not portrayed 'nerves' which unfortunately then proceeds to rather limit their cadenza 'delivery'. Even worse, he has even been almost embarrassed to witness plain fear which has on occasions led to a

sense of failure almost before they have got going. To see someone stutter or stop altogether in a Cadenza is so sad from any humane musical point of view that one has to question what they are doing, and why they are presenting themselves at that moment. What is happening? Why cannot this be a moment to 'enjoy', a moment to gladly 'exhibit' regardless of the technical and musical level that one has attained at that moment? Perhaps students have tackled difficult cadenzas before they are really ready after all a Concerto is not by nature an easy type of piece, it is a 'concertante' work, and the cadenza to the movement in question simply cannot be easier than the material of that movement for it would not make sense nor serve its purpose. Maybe this leads to a moment of being unduly worried, of not coping. However one should remember that preparing a solo work of any kind with orchestral accompaniment (or even if presented with the piano reduction) means that whoever might be present will in any case be able to easily listen to the soloist virtually throughout the work – a concerto work is thus constructed! – and this sense of being the chief 'actor' is evident in almost every moment regardless of how the accompaniment is presented; and this furthermore is true throughout virtually all of the duration of each of the great works of cello musical history. So in this sense the Cadenza is nothing afresh as if suddenly in new territory. It is more accurately speaking, the culmination of the music, even the part that leads to 'ecstasy'. One can think positively of this merely as an 'extension' to what they are already doing. Therefore a mental awareness of the Concerto forms relating to the 'leader' (soloist) with those who 'support' him/her (accompanists) and the Cadenza lying within this framework are important to learn as a performer. This realization probably helps in part determine who is destined for a professional career as a performer and who is not. However, these objectives are best learned with good close influences by those who may understand what the soloist is feeling, rather than from a book or with the purpose of just trying to fulfill a syllabus list obligation with the single goal of passing an exam or passing an audition.

On the other hand, the present author does feel that the uneasiness relating with cadenza playing also evolves from a decided lack of material – meaning that there are very few choices available in the playing and planning of cadenzas. We have to remember that composing, improvising, arranging and general experimenting always played a large part in cadenza playing through the centuries. Many virtuosi had from the outset their cadenzas carefully planned note-for-note; others used their rough pre-conceived guides as a model and from this base enjoyed the 'relative' security of an easy improvisation; whilst occasionally a few even dared to leave the whole thing to a wild moment of

spontaneity (the stories still abound of virtuosi getting almost to the end of the cadenza, but in a far-off key, having to 'botch-up' a series of cheap semi-tone trills or other similar effects to regain a sense of the tonic key once again!). As generation by generation has passed the innovative and spontaneous nature of cadenzas have continually lessened and lessened to the extent that it is now extremely rare for anyone to try to regularly include elements of improvisation in the twenty-first century. This is a shame because a number of romantic Germanic and other central European cellists did so – Popper even in to his old-age at the beginning of the twentieth century. However the logical reasoning is that one practises at home to get everything 'right' and 'correct', and the harder the concerto the lesser chance one has of including unforeseen elements (which may work or maybe not work!), for in today's globalization mistakes in musical delivery are (unfortunately) quickly seized upon by the music critics in the newspapers and magazines. It seems easier to 'dock' points for fleeting rocky moments or perceived hesitations than to award extra points for creative initiative and harmonic and technical individuality. That should not be associated with a decided lack of material for cadenzas though. What is obviously clear is that there have been literally dozens of cadenzas for some works, but they have so rarely been put into print. Many virtuosi have contemplated what cadenza to play for specific works, and where they were not entirely convinced by the (always) few offers available at that moment in history, have enjoyably set about to write/arrange/compose something different that suits them. A few consistently made their own versions. For example, Popper's cadenzas were extensive (not of substantial duration but simply he made numerous different versions for some concertos) and used by virtually all of his students (almost some two hundred cellists in all!) – these were in high esteem by his contemporaries – but it appears he simply 'lent' his manuscript for each student to copy 'by hand' – it was only in 1924 that a sharp-eyed former student George Vikár realized that these should not be lost and helped with their publication through Universal Edition in Vienna. Even these do not appear to have survived in print in recent years. In much more recent times a collection by Maurice Gendron was published (and his three known cadenzas to the first movement of the Haydn – D Major concerto are widely used, especially that which appears in the 'Schott' edition of the work), and Paul Tortelier (also a well-crafted composer apart from a virtuoso cellist) was also active in the preparation of many different cadenza moments and several of these were at some point prepared for printing. Yet other cellists have in some kind of way persuaded or coaxed other composers to try their hand as, for example, Rostropovich received from Benjamin Britten (for the Haydn – C Major

Concerto). Unfortunately, apart from relating some of these interesting and creative anecdotes, the choice is all too often sparsely limited however. Sometimes the student is expected to play the cadenza in the printed edition when there is an offering included, especially if his/her teacher has not performed the work. The possibility of another one often does not even come into question. Sometimes the teacher has indeed played the work, and even knows it intimately, frequently resulting in the student being passed their own cadenza (just as Klengel, Becker and Popper did in their day) on a manuscript page which may have in turn been passed on from the teacher's teacher, or may have been a dictation from a good professional commercial recording (historical or not) which is also to be welcomed. Unfortunately there is something a little hit-or-miss about all of this, and serious attempts at producing volumes of well-organized cadenzas for the Violoncello could be counted almost on one hand throughout history. This to the present composer-cellist seems so strange when these moments form such an important part of each concerto that contains one. What is more, finding suitable cadenzas that are eminently playable by good students when they initially study the work are even more of a scarcity, and virtually non-existent in a collectable set or volume whose objective is to be of optimum service for classical, romantic and twentieth-century styles. So in a nutshell that is what this volume tries to do – well playable cadenzas and cadences that sound impressive – suitable for auditions, exams, and for public performances with orchestra.

The titles 'Cadenza' and 'Cadence' have been separated. Generally more grandiose in character, 'cadenza' is used where the music more or less comes to a halt (frequently on a 6/4 tonic chord) which obviously invites the entrance of the soloist, who proceeds with almost invariably virtuosic passages. 'Cadence' has been titled where the entry is not so pronounced, and the soloist makes a short commentary or decoration (this can be with or without orchestra, but often above a simple pedal note or chord) which is generally more plaintive and lyrical in feeling.

Cadenzas need above all to be spontaneous – as if they seem improvised to the listeners' ears even though they well may have been practised for many, many hours at home. When the notes are in place, one has to coax out the musical intents – especially the planning of the volume levels and the give and take of the speed. A cadenza is rarely merely 'belting' in fortissimo, and the age-old advice of 'reduce volume before making a crescendo' works particularly well in cadenzas. The giving and taking refers to the building of tension (usually producing a forward direction in the music) or of the frequently-needed

relaxations (a gentle dipping of the tempo, punctuated by well-defined respirations at the end of short phrases). One should discover exactly to which notes one moves forward and arrive there with musical confidence; to the contrary the relaxation should be controlled and not be over-done so as to unnecessarily 'stutter' but neither too executed to so small a nature as not even to be appreciated as so by the public. Double and triple stops should not ever 'crunch' – often a lighter bow on the bottom two strings will produce a more-rounded harmonic sense in chord playing than forcing the sound out. High register notes should always sing out clearly with the bow contact suitably nearer to the bridge. Many faster passages will often help by envisaging a 'pianist' type left-hand with solid left-hand finger articulations, and vibrato will be used at least as much as in the general movement, especially where intensity is called for. Of course all these can, and should be, marked by a special teacher or by a colleague or guide to the already professional player, but then it can be even more productive to imagine how one is actually interpreting the cadenza; to have a sense of how it is actually sounding to the real (in concert) or imagined (when practising) public. One should listen to oneself even more in cadenza playing than in other 'easier' moments. Recording oneself at home in Cadenza 'takes' from beginning to end (without stopping, no matter what happens) is to be highly recommended, especially if one can make honest and relaxed auto-criticisms evaluating both for the good and bad points! Indeed it has been occasionally stated that one cannot really 'practise' a cadenza, one can only 'play' a cadenza! So we have to learn what makes a particular cadenza 'tick' and how it might be more convincing. As in previous centuries some form of improvisation is beneficial and helps to gain even more understanding – all the cadenzas/cadences in the present publication are only a base from which to work from. The composer is obviously very grateful for when a mention of 'his' cadenzas is made in performances, so they may become available knowledge for other performers, but an even more important thing is that they may serve for future developments, rather like many Scottish celtic melodies which have subtly changed their shape and decoration over the last 250 years or so sometimes resulting in little resembling the original effort!

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