

The *revolutionary* oboe

by Geoffrey Burgess

The revolutionary oboe - as shown on the cover of this album - is by Christophe Delusse. Very little is known about him except that he made exceptional oboes; so exceptional that they were likened to the violins of the great Cremonese makers Stradivarius, Amati and Guarneri, and sought out by top Parisian oboists. Born in 1729 in the reign of Louis XV, Delusse died in 1794, by which time France was transformed by the Revolution. Whether he was related to Charles Delusse (c.1715–74) the composer and author of a flute method, or was the son of instrument builder Jacques, it is clear is that Christophe had an uncanny understanding of how to craft oboes with lasting musical qualities. His oboes withstood the Reign of Terror, Consulate, First Empire, Bourbon Restoration, and continued to be used into the democratic monarchy of Louis Philippe. Each period brought shifts in musical style and greater technical demands that tested the adaptability of Delusse's oboes.

This recording pays tribute to Delusse's workmanship and the talents of three prominent French oboists who played Delusse oboes and had virtuosic chamber works written for them by three renowned composers active in Paris. In turn, these players held the most prestigious post an oboist could gain in Paris: Principal Oboe at the Opéra. All three also served as oboe professor at the Paris Conservatoire. **Charles Garnier** was one of the most remarkable oboists of his day, and a close personal friend of the violin genius Rodolph Kreutzer. **François-Alexandre Sallantin** was equally proficient on flute and oboe, and his pupil **Gustave Vogt** was the longest serving oboe professor in the history of the Paris Conservatoire and a composition pupil of Antonin Reicha.

The recording has been made with one of about twenty original Delusse oboes known to survive. It could very well have been known to any one, or all three, of these oboists.

What Makes a Revolution?

In a sense the revolution in oboe making had already taken place. Delusse's instruments were not intrinsically revolutionary; in fact, they were modelled on Italian instruments brought to Paris by travelling virtuosi such as Gaetano Besozzi and the Pla brothers. Like other makers across Europe, he registered the advantages of the new Classical design. With their slender profiles and narrow bores, these oboes had brilliant tonal qualities and greater facility in the upper register that made them admirably suited to the demands of the latest musical fashions. But Delusse did not just copy: he gave the Italian Classical oboe a veneer of French sophistication with a resonant tone and richer low register, coupled with impeccable tuning. He was also one of the first makers to experiment with exotic hardwoods in place of European boxwood.

One feature that gave Delusse oboes an advantage over others was that they were made with multiple *corps de rechange* – alternate top joints of different lengths that allowed the instrument to function over a range of pitches. Only one Delusse oboe has survived with more than one top joint – in this case, an oboe owned by Vogt with three *corps de rechange*. Delusse also made pitch pipes. These indicate that he was working to a pitch standard of around 420 Hz. But in those days pitch was by no means fixed. Musicians in Paris had to contend with conflicting pitch levels as well as the gradual but inexorable rise in pitch. This meant that the longer joints of Delusse's instruments were the first to be abandoned. Delusse marked the single surviving top joint with the oboe played here no. 2, meaning that it was shorter than the longest of the set. The overall length of this instrument is also shorter than any other oboe by Delusse, and probably for that reason alone it withstood the test of time. Its previous owner, veteran Baroque oboist Michel Piguet (1932–2004), played it at 440Hz. For this recording, 430Hz was found to be appropriate.

In addition to their pitch flexibility, Delusse oboes enjoyed longevity thanks to some assistance. Sallantin proposed that Delusse add an addition two keys to the standard 2-key design. Later Delusse instruments were fitted with an F#-vent key and a long key to close one of the vent holes on the bell to adjust the

tuning of the lowest note, and these keys were also added to earlier 2-keyed oboes. Recognizing that they were not part of the original design, collectors and museum curators stripped them from the oboes; but these keys are important indicators that the instruments were considered worth adapting to changing musical circumstances. The oboe heard here has a C-corrector key, but no F# key. The added keys heralded the next revolution in French oboe building. The 1840s saw a proliferation of keywork to equalize the scale and make the instrument more practical in a wider range of tonalities.

A Trio of oboists and composer-colleagues

The three oboists certainly knew each other. Garnier and Sallantin were exact contemporaries, and both came from dynasties of woodwind players employed at the French court or at the Opéra. Garnier studied with Sallantin's uncle, and Sallantin became Vogt's teacher. It was a common for virtuoso musicians to compose music for their own use. All three oboists followed this tradition, but none composed chamber works for oboe and strings. For that they turned to close musical colleagues.

François-Alexandre Sallantin (1755–1830), the son of a member of the famous king's band of 24 Violons, created a sensation at a young age with his flute playing. Over time, Antoine (as he was called, to avoid confusion with his uncle François-Alexandre who was also a flute player) adopted the oboe as his primary instrument. In 1784 a writer in the *Almanach musical* named him "the most charming oboe player we have," praising not only his technical precision, but his supple embouchure, and sensitive expression. It is thought that he spent time in London perfecting his oboe playing with the famous German virtuoso Johann Christian Fischer (1733–1800), who had relocated there in 1768. On his return to Paris, Sallantin played first oboe at the Opéra, and taught at the Conservatoire from 1795.

In 1795 **Charles Bochsa** (d 1821) dedicated three *Quatuors Concertants* to Sallantin. The work on this recording is from another set of two quartets published around 1807–09, and while the title page does not mention Sallantin, it is very likely that the set was also composed for him. We have chosen the second of these for its superior musical qualities. In addition to being a composer and music publisher, Charles Bochsa was himself an oboist. Born in Bohemia, he moved to France, settling first in Lyons, then from around 1806 established himself as a music seller in Paris. As a composer, he specialized in music for wind instruments. In addition to the five quartets for oboe and strings, he composed wind-band music, military overtures, arrangements of Haydn symphonies, at least one clarinet concerto, and duets and chamber music for clarinets, oboes, and flutes. His *12 petits airs* are for wind quintet, and his nocturnes for solo instrument and piano or harp were celebrated in adaptations for different instruments. Charles Bochsa is often confused with his more famous son, Robert Nicholas Charles (1789–1856) whose remarkable career as a harp virtuoso was driven as much by his talent as a string of scandals that forced him to stay constantly one step ahead of the law, eventually landing him in Australia where he died.

Although Bochsa's work is lightly scored, it exudes charm and poise. The *Strum und Drang* opening is beautifully contrasted by a charming F-major second subject, and lyrical duets between 'cello and viola. There are passages to show off the oboist's dazzling finger-work, and mastery over the entire range of the instrument. In a finely calculated cadenza, the oboist is required to negotiate the leap from the lowest to the highest note of the instrument. The first movement ends in the parallel major, an unusual but effective way of resolving the troubled D-minor opening. The haunting melody of the Rondo is interspersed between lyrical moments and, as was the case in the first movement, a shift to the major, takes the music to an area of almost celestial calm.

A native of Lauris in Vaucluse, **Joseph-François Garnier** (1755–1825) moved to Paris where he studied with François-Alexandre Sallantin – not the oboist for whom Bochsa wrote his quartets, but his uncle who had played in the Opéra orchestra from 1746, and passed away in 1788. Garnier joined the section at a young age, and made appearances at the famous Concert Spirituel. In 1787 he played a concerted work with the Italian virtuoso Gaetano Besozzi, and three years later he composed a triple concerto which he played with his two brothers Charles-Ignace, who was also an oboist employed in the court

orchestra at Versailles, and Jean-Baptiste who played flute at the Paris Opéra. After participating in the Garde nationale, Garnier was, like Sallantin, among the first professors at the Conservatoire from 1795. His *Méthode raisonnée pour le hautbois*, probably conceived as study material for the Conservatoire students, became one of the most widely circulated oboe methods of the 19th century. In it Garnier provided a scale drawing of a Delusse oboe with two top joints and a fingering chart. Garnier's method is of particular value to oboists as it also contains the first written explanation of reed making for the oboe.

Weathering the Revolution proved more difficult for Garnier than the other musicians. He continued to be employed at the Opéra, but lost his post as principal oboe to Sallantin, who also took over as professor at the Conservatoire. Garnier would have met Kreutzer at the Opéra, and their friendship solidified while working in the Garde nationale.

Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766–1831) received his early musical education from his father, a wind player who had come to France from Breslau (now Wrocław in Poland) around 1760 to play in the Duke of Choiseul's newly formed Swiss Guards. From age 12 Rodolphe took lessons in violin and composition from Anton Stamitz, and his performance of one of his teacher's concertos at the Concert Spirituel on May 25, 1780 heralded a brilliant career. Four years later he performed his own concerto, having come under the influence of Giovanni Battista Viotti, an important musical influence on Parisian musical life prior to the Revolution. After the death of both of his parents, Rodolphe was a protégé of Marie Antoinette and the Count of Artois, who probably arranged for his appointment in the king's music. He had the opportunity to play a Stradivarius violin owned by Baron de Bagge, and in 1789 he moved from Versailles to Paris where he established himself as the city's a leading violin virtuoso.

Kreutzer's career in Paris is marked by successful concert appearances at the Théâtre Feydeau and the Opéra, some of which were made jointly with Pierre Rode (1774–1830), an equally prominent violinist who had continued in the tradition of Viotti. Kreutzer and Rode were jointly responsible for the Conservatoire violin method, and when Rode departed for Russia in 1801, Kreutzer took his place as solo violin of the Opéra.

The *Grand Quintetto* for oboe and strings was composed in the first years of the 19th century – precisely the period when Kreutzer's fame had spread to Vienna, and Beethoven dedicated his "Kreutzer" Sonata Op. 47 to him. We are fortunate to have a reference to a performance of one of Kreutzer's quintets for oboe and strings in a letter written on 2nd December 1802 by Johann Fredrich Reichardt.

The splendid violinist and instrumental composer Kreuzer [sic] visited me one morning and invited me to a quartet at Sieber's place. I no longer believed the reliable old music dealer could be alive, otherwise I would have visited him long ago... I heard some excellent quartets and quintets by Kreuzer. Among them, I particularly liked one with oboe, which was played by M. Garnier, a virtuoso who has retired from the public musical world – and who played in a very masterly manner. The power, purity, and clarity of tone with which Kreuzer himself performs even the most difficult pieces on the violin is indescribable.

Jean-Georges Sieber (1738–1822) had moved from Bavaria to Paris in 1758 to play horn at the Opéra, and began his publishing activities in 1770. It will come as no surprise to learn that shortly after the performance reported by Reichardt, Kreutzer entrusted Sieber with the publication of two quintets for oboe and strings. Garnier was considered the doyen of Paris's wind players but had not exactly retired (he was on the pay roll of the Opéra for another five or six years) and from Reichardt's description, his prowess remained undiminished..

Kreutzer's title page bears the inscription "À mon ami Garnier l'ainé." This casual dedication to a friend, also seen in the other works that he wrote for Garnier, suggests a sincere friendship where there was no place for honorifics or name-dropping. The epithet *l'ainé* (the elder) was a familiar way to distinguish Joseph-François from his younger wind-playing brothers.

Reichardt succeeded Johann Heinrich Graun as Kapellmeister to Frederick the Great, and his letters from his extended visit in Paris provide insight into the type of venues where chamber works like this were performed. There was an abundance of theatres in Paris, but dedicated concert halls were rarer. It took

some time for concert life to be wrested from the hands of the privileged classes, but gradually as the social ideals of the Revolution influenced cultural practice, chamber music moved from palaces and the salons of the aristocracy to the homes and studios of impresarios, publishers like Sieber, or instrument builders like Aldophe Sax and Ignaz Pleyel where entertainment mingled with commercial promotion.

More than in the other works on this recording, Kreutzer's quintet is characterized by a vigorous tension between musical content and virtuosic show. The tautly organized first movement with its almost cheeky opening melodic gesture, simple pastoral second subject, and chromatic modulations, is reminiscent of Beethoven's compositional games. As if the movement did not have enough technical bravura, Kreutzer added a cadenza where each player is given an extended solo. Printed in score on a separate page to be inserted at the appropriate point in the movement, this tips the scale towards Romantic excess. The individuals are coda reintegrated into the ensemble in the Coda, and with a final unison restatement of the signature motif, the movement is brought to a rousing conclusion.

The second movement is in variation form. The viola leads the way with the initial thematic statement. The beguiling simplicity of the tune soon gives way to extravagant variations from each of the players, and builds towards a climax of almost symphonic dimensions.

Clearly Kreutzer was writing for a stellar team of string players. The interlocking passagework, stratospheric violin parts, and knuckle-busting viola passages, plus the ensemble cadenza all point to a specialist ensemble. We can imagine Kreutzer playing the first violin part himself. By the time of the performance at Sieber's, Rode had left for Russia, so the second violinist may have been Pierre Baillot (another Viotti student). The violist could have been Kreutzer's younger brother Jean-Nicolas (1778–1832) who studied with his brother, and succeeded him as teacher at the Conservatoire. As for cello, it is likely that the part was conceived for Kreutzer's close friend Jean-Henri Levasseur (1764–1823), principal cellist at the Opéra, who had joined Kreutzer and Rode in a performance of a *sinfonia concertante* in 1789. Levasseur also taught at the Conservatoire and collaborated on the cello method with Baillot.

Compared with Garnier and Sallantin, **Gustave Vogt** (1781–1870) was an interloper in the Parisian music scene. When he moved from his native Strasbourg to Paris in 1798, the Bastille had been stormed, and the *Ancien régime* was a thing of the past. As the most talented student of his day, and he quickly found employment in theatre orchestras. From 1812 he reigned as principal oboe at the Opéra, and also enjoyed a career as soloist both in France and abroad. In the 1830s he was seconded to lead the oboe section of the London Philharmonic Society. He weathered the vicissitudes of politics and musical taste up to his retirement from public performance around 1843, but he continued as professor for another ten years, exercising immense influence on an entire generation of French oboists. Like Garnier, Vogt wrote an oboe method, but his remained in manuscript and was never published. In it he provided exacting notes on tuning and fingering on Delusse oboes, and also mentioned Sallantin's role in the addition of keywork. Around 1826, Vogt adopted a second Delusse oboe, to which several newer keys were attached.

Vogt participated in the premieres of Reicha's woodwind quintets along with members of the orchestra of the Opéra comique: flautist Joseph Guillou, clarinetist Jacques-Jules Bouffil, Jean-François Dauprat on horn, and Antoine Henry on bassoon. All were fellow composition students of Reicha. In addition to these ingenious and ever-varied works – 25 in total, all premièreed by Vogt's group in the foyer of Théâtre italien in the late 1810s – Reicha, wrote chamber pieces where each of the wind players could be heard accompanied by a string quartet. The quintet op. 107 was probably composed around 1820 as a showpiece for Vogt, but when it was published, it was issued with a slightly adapted version for clarinet in addition to the original part for oboe. Perhaps because of this, the work has been slow to gain the attention it deserves from oboists.

Anton Reicha was born in Prague in 1770, spent time in Vienna, befriended Beethoven in Bonn, and moved to Paris in 1808 to escape the devastation that Napoléon was wreaking over the rest of Europe. Paris proved a nurturing environment, and Reicha quickly became known as a skilled composer and practical music theorist. In 1818 he was appointed professor of counterpoint and fugue at the

Conservatoire. He spent the rest of his life in Paris, dying there in 1836, one year after being named a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur. Reicha's musical travels and acquaintances say a lot about his compositional style, and while his woodwind quintets remain his most famous works, his innovative spirit comes through in the unceasing creative elaborations of Classical formulae he brought to all the genres he touched.

The Op. 107 quintet is characteristic of Reicha's unique blend of Classical phrasing and wit with Romantic melodic gestures and lightning changes of mood. The sequence of movements is what we would expect from a Viennese Classicist, just on a broader scale. Although Reicha provides plenty of opportunities for virtuosic display, he never allows that to disrupt the interplay of themes, and the charming dialogue between the players. Even when a cadenza is inevitable, its placement enhances the formal design, and its predictability is offset by harmonic surprise and contrapuntal interpolations.

The album artists and their instruments

Geoffrey Burgess, oboe by Christophe Delusse (c.1785)

Nicholas DiEugenio, violin by J.B. Vuillaume (1835)

Daniel Elyar, late 17th century viola Alt-Almanisch School

Edson Scheid, de Andrada mid-19th-century French violin attributed to Vuillaume

James Wilson anonymous English cello, c. 1720



Geoffrey Burgess has built a career as an oboist, and historian of the instrument. In addition to numerous recordings of orchestral and operatic repertoire with various groups – including Les Arts Florissants with whom he worked for over 20 years, his discography includes solo recordings of music by members of the Bach family, newly commissioned works for Baroque oboe and harpsichord, and chamber music with Kleine Kammermusik. Geoffrey holds a PhD from Cornell University, and has taught at Stony Brook, Duke, and Columbia Universities, and on the faculties of Oberlin, Longy and Amherst Summer Schools. Currently Baroque Oboe Instructor at the Eastman School of Music, he is sought after as a master teacher, giving workshops and guest lectures at venues such as the Utrecht Early Music Festival, the conservatories in Amsterdam, The Hague, Paris, and Leipzig, and the Mozarteum in Salzburg. As well as co-author with the late Bruce Haynes of *The Oboe* (Yale, 2004), the standard work on the oboe in the English language, Geoffrey's writings include *Well-Tempered Woodwinds: Friedrich von Huene and the Making of Early Music in a New World* (Indiana, 2015), and a critical edition of Bruce Haynes's Nachlass, *The Pathetick Musician* (Oxford UP, 2016). His historical novel *The Thorn of the Honey Locust* (2023) is based on the life of Bach's oboist Caspar Gleditsch.

Violinist **Nicholas DiEugenio** has been heralded for his “excellent...evocative” playing (*The New York Times*), full of “rapturous poetry” (*American Record Guide*). Nicholas is in-demand as a soloist, chamber musician, and ensemble leader, creating powerful shared experiences in music ranging from early Baroque masterpieces to contemporary commissions. His award-winning album *Unraveling Beethoven* with pianist and wife Mimi Solomon was released in 2018 by New Focus Recordings, and other recordings include the complete violin sonatas of Robert Schumann (Musica Omnia) as well as a tribute to Pulitzer prizewinning composer Steven Stucky (New Focus). Nicholas is a core member of The Sebastians as well as Associate Professor of Music at UNC Chapel Hill. He has performed with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Edson Scheid has been praised for his “polished playing” (*The Strad*), and for being a “virtuoso violinist” (*The Boston Globe*). A native of Brazil, Edson is based in New York City, where he is a member of the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He frequently travels the world playing as concertmaster with such ensembles as

Seraphic Fire, Opera Neo, Opera Lafayette, American Classical Orchestra, the Oratorio Society of New York, Clarion Orchestra, and Il Pomo d'Oro. He has been featured live in-studio on *In Tune* from BBC Radio 3, and his two recent album releases, *Paganini 24 Caprices* (Naxos) and *On Paganini's Trail* (Centaur), have been critically acclaimed. He holds degrees from the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, the Yale School of Music (recipient of the Broadus Erle Prize), and The Juilliard School where he was the recipient of a Kovner Fellowship.

Violist **Daniel Elyar** is an active performer and recording artist who has specialized in Baroque performance practice in Europe and North America for more than 25 years. He has performed with ensembles such as Tafelmusik (Toronto), Utrecht Baroque Consort, Concerto d'Amsterdam, Teatro Lirico (Bremen), Concerto Palatino (Leiden), Les Arts Florissants (Paris), Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Washington Bach Consort, Ensemble REBEL (NYC), Tempesta di Mare (Philadelphia), Clarion Orchestra and Choir (NYC), and Trinity Wall Street Baroque Orchestra and Choir (NYC). Daniel has recorded for Chandos, Naxos, ELECTRA, and Hungaroton, and has five GRAMMY nominations on the ATMA, Musica Omnia, and Radio Bremen labels. He is a proud founding member of the Franklin Quartet, and has taught for over 15 years at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia. Daniel holds a Bachelor's degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, an Artist's Diploma from the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam, and a Master's degree from the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Cellist **James Wilson** has enjoyed an exciting and varied career as performer, educator, arts administrator, conductor, and composer. He has appeared in many of the world's most illustrious performing spaces, including America's Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and Kennedy Center, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Sydney Opera House, the Basilica of Notre-Dame in Montreal, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, and the Musikverein in Vienna. Mr. Wilson is a member and Artistic Director and Programming Coordinator of the Grammy-winning Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and regularly serves as guest principal cellist of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He is currently on the faculty of the Music Performance Program at Columbia University in New York. Chamber music forms the core of Mr. Wilson's work. He is a former member of the Shanghai and Chester Quartets, and the DaCapo Chamber Players. In 2004, he founded the Chamber Music Society of Central Virginia and remains the group's Artistic Director.

Recording engineer Loren Stata, Producer Nathaniel Chase



The players with producer Nathaniel Chase