

Nineteenth-Century Arrangements in Perspective: *Piatti's Version of the Locatelli Sonata*

David A. Starkweather

Several pieces in the cello literature exist in arrangements by Alfredo Piatti (1822-1901), a phenomenal Italian cellist educated at the Milan Conservatory. His playing elicited the admiration of Franz Liszt, who played concerts with Piatti and gave him a Nicolo Amati cello. Mendelssohn and Molique both wrote cello concertos for him,¹ and Piatti himself wrote many works for cello including sonatas, concertos and caprices. He had a marked influence on cello history, particularly in England where he had a long career as both performer and teacher.

Piatti's arrangement of sonatas by Locatelli, Valentini, Haydn, Mozart, Boccherini, Brahms and Veracini,² while extending the literature for cello, took considerable liberty with the material. The *Sonata in D Major*³ by Locatelli is a good example of the freedom Piatti took in his arrangements. The three movements of the Locatelli-Piatti sonata are originally movements from two Locatelli violin sonatas, listed below. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the movements used by Piatti.

Sonata in D Major, Op. 6 No. 6

- I. Largo - Andante
- (1) II. Allegro
- (3) III. Minuetto

Sonata in D Minor, Op. 6 No. 12

- (2) I. Adagio
- II. Allegro
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegro
- V. Capriccio

Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764) was an Italian composer and violinist who moved to Amsterdam in 1729. He was a virtuoso violinist, and his compositions are all concertos, sonatas and violin caprices. The twelve violin sonatas of Opus 6, published in Amsterdam in 1737, are "considered to be among Locatelli's best works."⁵ The sonatas of Opus 6 generally follow the pattern shown in the outline of No. 6 above: a three movement scheme having a slow first movement, a fast middle movement, and concluding with a third movement set of variations, often on a minuet theme. No. 12 is a surprise, having five movements that conclude with a Capriccio, a predominantly solo movement subtitled "Prova del intonatione."

Comparison of the Arrangement with the Original

The cello part in much of Piatti's arrangement is one octave lower than the original violin part, although several passages in the Allegro and Minuetto movements remain at original pitch. In the comparison examples that follow, the upper part is Piatti and the lower part is Locatelli (except in Example 6). The only alteration to the Locatelli is that it has been transposed to match the register chosen by Piatti. Editorial fingerings and bowings have been added to make the comparison more accessible. Locatelli's notation for trills, "+," has been preserved.

Piatti remained true to the length and form of the Allegro and Adagio movements. In an examination of the changes Piatti made to the original compositions, it appears that many alterations seem to be on a whim, having no cellistic advantages such as to make the passages more suitable for cello technique. Quite often Piatti chose to smooth out sharply defined rhythms. In the opening Allegro some small changes can be seen in the comparison

of Example 1. The removal of a chord (marked with an arrow) and alteration of the rhythm in measure 5 are quite unnecessary, and result in a performance which is stylistically incorrect and more distant from Locatelli's composition.

Example 1: Allegro movement, mm. 3-5; octave below original

Example 2 is a passage Piatti chose to leave at the same pitch as the original violin part. There are two aspects of the change in the original 32nd-note figure. Rhythmically, Piatti again re-wrote Locatelli's fastest rhythms, substituting sextuplets in measures 19 and 20. Examining the pitch changes reveals that Piatti wrote a more cellistic passage by avoiding the G-sharp indicated with arrows in measure 18, and by moving the lower part of the sextuplet figures in measure 20 one octave above the original. The original is playable, but certainly awkward. The octave registration of the double-bar cadence has also been altered, eliminating Locatelli's characteristic octave displacement.

Example 2: Allegro movement, mm. 18-21; original pitch

Example 3 demonstrates that the simplification of Locatelli's double-stops in measures 31-32 is not really necessary for cellistic reasons. Likewise, there is no logical explanation for the rhythmic changes in measures 33-35, other than that these liberties are to be expected in a nineteenth century arrangement.

Example 3: Allegro movement, mm. 30-35; octave below original

At the final cadence of the Allegro movement, shown in Example 4, we again find the alteration of Locatelli's Lombard rhythms, as well as Piatti's introduction of the dominant seventh (G-natural) on the penultimate chord. It is interesting to note the abbreviated notation Locatelli used. He would frequently write out only the first appearance of a repeating figure, abbreviating it thereafter by notating only its highest and lowest pitch. This is found extensively in the Capriccio movement of *Sonata No. 12*.

Example 4: Allegro movement, m. 69 at original pitch, m. 70 an octave below original

Aside from the cadenza-like passages at measures 9 and 21, Piatti kept most of the original intact in the Adagio movement, transposing the solo line down an octave. An example of the small-scale alterations he made is shown in Example 5. The figure with the trill, measure 15 beat 1, was re-written using a dotted rhythm and grace notes. Piatti then repeated the figure on beat 2, marked with a bracket. At the end of the bar, a rest was removed and a fermata added in typically romantic fashion. The run in measure 16 was altered, eliminating the notes marked with arrows and absorbing the grace note of the following beat. Thus Piatti's revision results in seven sixty-fourth notes in the time of eight. On the following beat Piatti changed the original B-flat to a B natural.

Example 5: Adagio movement, mm. 15-16; octave below original

The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is labeled 'Piatti' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Locatelli'. Both staves show measures 15 and 16. The Piatti staff has trills (tr) and dynamics markings *f* and *p*. The Locatelli staff has fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a figured bass line below the staff. The figured bass line includes numbers like 3, 0, 2, 4, 4, 2, 3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 2, 4.

In the Minuetto movement the variation shown in Example 6 was omitted. The figured bass in Example 6 is the original accompaniment for the entire movement. Certainly, the realization should change with each variation, but Piatti's variations of the realization went far beyond what is today considered historically appropriate.

Example 6: Minuetto, Variation 5; octave below original

The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is labeled 'Locatelli' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Figured Bass'. Both staves show measures 5 and 6. The Locatelli staff has fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and dynamics markings (V). The Figured Bass line includes numbers like 5, 6, #4, 6, #6, 4, 3, 6, #6, 6, 4, 3.

Example 7 shows how Piatti linked an extensive Coda in nineteenth century style to the last variation. The figuration which Piatti substituted in measures 125-128 is simply continued into the Coda. This Coda is Piatti's own addition to his sonata arrangement. Notice again Locatelli's characteristic octave displacement of the final cadence, measures 127-8.

Some of the variations were extensively revised, as can be seen in Examples 8, 9 and 10. In Example 8 (Variation 3), the unusual alternating dynamics indicated by Piatti are close to those found in the original, although Locatelli placed the "piano" markings on the second beat. Piatti cleverly used harmonics for these "piano" measures. Also in Variation 3, Piatti altered the sixteenth-note figuration and added dominant seventh harmonies in measures 33 and 35. Example 9 shows how Piatti devised a perpetual motion variation based upon the original. Locatelli's variation merely had steady sixteenth-note motion for about two measures at a time. In

Example 10 we see again Piatti's rhythmic alteration of material, in this case anticipating and lengthening the downbeat pitch of measures 106, 108 and 110. Locatelli's penchant for an octave displacement at the cadence is seen again at measure 112, and is again altered by Piatti. According to performance practices as perceived today, such liberties are only acceptable within the confines of the style of the time.

Example 7: Minuetto; m. 126 at original pitch, mm. 127-8 an octave below original

Example 7: Minuetto; m. 126 at original pitch, mm. 127-8 an octave below original

The score for Example 7 consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 126 and 127. The top staff is labeled 'Piatti' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Locatelli'. Measure 126 is at original pitch, while measures 127 and 128 are an octave below the original. The second system shows measure 128 and a CODA section. The score ends with '(Fine)'.

Example 8: Minuetto, Variation 3; octave below original

Example 8: Minuetto, Variation 3; octave below original

The score for Example 8 consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 33 and 34. The top staff is labeled 'Piatti' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Locatelli'. Measure 33 is marked 'leggiero'. Measure 34 is marked 'pp rit.'. The second system shows measures 35, 36, and 37. Measure 35 is marked 'a tempo'. Measure 36 is marked 'Piano' and 'Forte'. Measure 37 is marked 'P.'. The score includes various performance instructions and dynamic markings.

Example 9: Minuetto, Variation 6; octave below original

81 *animato*

85

Example 10: Minuetto, Variation 7, second half; octave below original

105

111

Putting Arrangements in Perspective

The examples chosen in this comparative study are but a selection from many possible passages. They serve, however, to illustrate the types of changes Piatti made in his arrangement of Locatelli. The present study will hopefully prompt cellists to explore the origin of standard repertoire arrangements, and helps to put present-day arrangements in perspective.

From the performer's perspective, it is a matter of conscience to attempt to be true to a composer's style and intent. In the particular case of Locatelli's music, cellists are indebted to Piatti for making this beautiful music part of our repertoire. But it is additionally rewarding to discover Locatelli's original conception and endeavor to re-create music from 258 years ago rather than a nineteenth century arrangement.

References

- De'ak, Steven. 1980. *David Popper*. Neptune City, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, Inc.
- Sadie, Stanley, ed. 1980. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. New York: Macmillan. "Piatti, Alfredo" by L. Rees.
- Locatelli da Bergamo, Carlo Cavalini di Pietro. 1737. *XII Sonate à Violino Solo è Basso Da Camera, Opera Sesta*. Amsterdam.
- Locatelli, Pietro. nd. *Sonata in D Major for Cello and Piano*. Arr. A. Piatti. New York: International Music Company.
- Sadie, Stanley, ed. 1980. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Vol. 11, pp. 104-107. New York: Macmillan. "Locatelli, Pietro Antonio" by A. Koole and M. Talbot.