

An Examination of Sonata in C Major for Bassoon By Johann Fredrich Fasch in Terms of Performing Skills

Sabriye Özkan 1

*Associate Professor, Music Department
Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey

Abstract: The bassoon repertoire of the Baroque period has recently become more remarkable for bassoonists. Among the main reasons for this, it can be said that the works composed by the important composers of the period for bassoon are used both in educational repertoire and in performance practices. Examples of these composers are Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Frederich Fasch and George Philliph Telemann.

From the perspective of the instrument's development, the transition from the old one-piece bassoon to the new four-piece Baroque bassoon made a significant contribution to the solo repertoire of the instrument. These developments in the mechanical structure have provided the performers with significant opportunities for virtuosity. These developments attracted the attention of the composers of the Baroque period and allowed the bassoon to gain importance as a solo instrument rather than as an accompaniment in the bass partition. In this study, bassoon sonata in C major of Johann Friedrich Fasch, the important composer of the baroque period, has been studied in terms of periodical style features and performance skills.

Keywords: Johann Friedrich Fasch, Bassoon, Sonata, Baroque period

Introduction

Johann Friedrich Fasch

It is accepted that the Baroque period started in 1600 and ended with the death of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750. In this period, which lasted for about 150 years, the bassoon, which is one of the woodwind instruments, had an important place in instrumental music. The works composed for bassoon by Antonio Vivaldi, George Philipp Telemann and Friedrich Fasch, who were among the important composers of the Baroque period, maintain their importance in the education and solo repertoires of the instrument today.

The alternation of the old one-piece bassoon by the new four-piece baroque bassoon in the Baroque period enabled the technical and musical opportunities of the instrument to be advanced, while the enhanced mechanical structure made the playing easy for the performer, it also enabled the composers of the period to evaluate the bassoon as a solo instrument instead of just seeing it as an accompanying instrument in the bass partition. This innovative approach is one of the most radical changes that has been made to the solo repertoire of the instrument. At the same time, this period was a period in which there were important developments for musical forms such as suite, sonata, and concerto.

Johann Friedrich Fasch who was a contemporary of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Friedrich Handel, was one of Germany's leading composers of the first half of the eighteenth century. Fasch was born in Buttstedt near Weimar on 15 April 1688 and died in Anhalt-Zerbst in 1758. He started his musical career as a boy soprano in the towns of Suhl and Weissenfels, however; since Fasch could not afford to take lessons for his music education, he tried to learn on his own at the beginning. The influence of Telemann and Vivaldi is quite evident in the inspiration for composition of the composer, who played violin and keyboard instruments.

Fasch, who also studied theology and law, founded his own music ensemble ("Second Collegium Musicum"), including Johann David Heinichen, Johann Georg Pisendel and Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel. As the director of this society, Fasch had the chance to study a wide variety of music and to give public concerts. At the same time, as the number of members of the ensemble increased, the variety of instruments expanded, and it became a much wider range of society. The Collegium Musicum played an important role in Fasch's musical career. Thanks to this ensemble, he made various arrangements, and this situation was considered as a very innovative music movement for the period that he lived in. This ensemble was later taken over by G. P. Telemann and J.S Bach after Fasch.

Between 1711 and 1713, Fasch wrote his first opera, Comire, for the Peter-Paul Fairs in Naumburg, then he began to expand his musical compositions by writing two more operas. The great success of these operas enabled Fasch to be recognized by the composers of the period. Considering going to Europe to make perfect his compositional skills, the composer travelled and performed in central Europe in 1713, especially throughout Germany. In 1714 he came to Darmstadt where he spent about three months, studied composition with Kapellmeister, Christoph Graupner and Gottfried Grünewald.

Johann Friedrich Fasch C-Dur Sonata for Bassoon

I. Largo

The first part of the piece should be between 40 and 60 metronomes, which needs to be performed slowly and widely in largo tempo. The first prominent structural feature of the chapter is that it is structured with long statements. For this reason, the most obvious technical and musical difficulty is that long musical statements do not allow the performer to breathe and rest.

This situation is quite challenging for the performer to play the piece correctly and with a good performance. For this reason, it is important for the performer to have a very strong technique and breathing condition in order to reflect the musical and technical skills correctly and to ensure that the dynamic never falls in the performance of the Fasch Sonata. The part begins with a plain and simple introductory theme of the bassoon. For this part of the piece, it cannot be said that the instrument pushes the limits of sound, but it can be challenging in terms of rhythmic structure. It is very important that the performer avoids hastiness and plays quiet and calmly in revealing the musical structure of the part.



Example 1. Part 1 Intro Theme

It is not possible to say the same for the slow parts, as opposed to the Italian style of the fast parts in the work. Instead, it is often observed that it was decorated with trills and French-style dotted rhythmic figures. As is seen in the Fasch Sonata, the tendency to embellish the melody with rhythmic diversity emerges as the Baroque period gallant style.

Example 2. Part 1 The Use of Dotted Rhythms

It is important to maintain calm in rhythmically in order to give the peace and internality in the musical structure which is observed throughout the section. What is meant here is not to play slowly, but to stay out of the tempo of the piece. This part of the piece has a very colorful and intense musical richness. It should be performed with a soft tone authority, nuance quality and great calm. In particular, it is necessary to avoid harshness in tone and always have a strong dynamic. What is meant by dynamic here is not only the power of condition, but also the performance with the same power throughout the work and the completeness of the nuances.

The structure of the thematic material used in the first part of the piece is so fascinating that it offers the performer a wide range in terms of interpretation. In this part, it is seen that both musicality and technique are used equally. For this reason, another important element for the performer is the ending of statements. The ends of the statements are expected to close with a warm tone and an impressive slowing effect. Another important issue that the bassoon performer must approach meticulously in order to perfectly reflect all these skills described in the performance of such works is the choice of the reed. A very soft reed may cause the sound to crack, while an excessively hard reed may cause the sound to be difficult and limit the possibilities of musicality. The general preference for the reed is to be medium strength.

Again, when we examine the piece structurally, we can say that there is an increasingly dynamic phrasing structure for the Bassoon partition. It is recommended that the sounds be played widely and legato, in addition to supporting the sounds with vibrato.

II. Allegro

The second part of the piece is a lively, cheerful and fast part in allegro tempo. In this part, the performer does not push the instrument's sound limit. However, the uninterrupted continuation of the part does not allow the performer to rest, and this occurs as the most important difficulty of the part. When this situation is evaluated in general, the same situation exists for the second and fourth parts, which are the fast parts of the work. It would not be wrong to liken the melodic structure to the string instrument technique for continuous arpeggiated and leaping passages with the Italian violinistic figuration reminiscent of Vivaldi, designed differently from the slow movements.

It can be said that these passages are the parts that challenge the performer both technically and musically. In this part, bringing the challenging parts from a slow tempo to the desired metronome speed with a metronome and studying the passage in different rhythmic structures are among the studying methods to be used in eliminating the technical problems that may occur. It cannot be said that it has a rhythmically complex structure, but it is observed that it is challenging in terms of finger technique when the tempo of the piece which needs fast speed is added to the passages that are constantly leaping and tonguing. For this reason, the second part of the piece is technically a part that the performer needs to practice meticulously. Maintaining the tempo of the passage and avoiding the tendency to accelerate are the elements that should be paid attention to. It's important to keep the musicality alive and dynamic as the passage needs to be technically accurate. In the part, which has a very rich musical structure, performing the piece by taking into account all the dynamics after providing technical mastery in order to exhibit the musicality perfectly should be considered to reflect the musical style of the period,

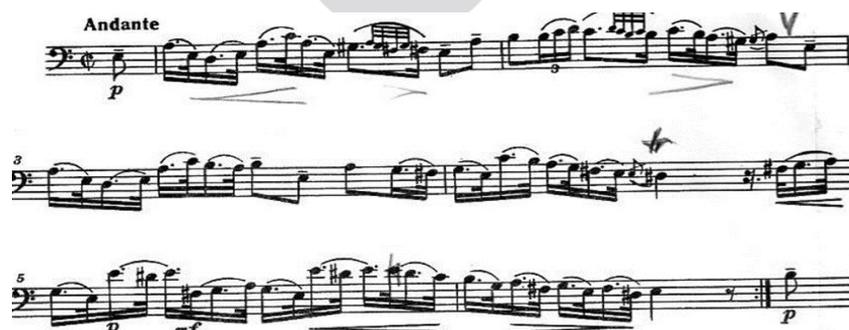


Example 3. Part 2 Leaping Passages

When compared to the opportunities of today's modern bassoon, it is thought that overcoming all these technical difficulties with the Baroque bassoon was one of the important challenges for the performers of the period. Compared to the Telemann F minor sonata for bassoon, which was a work of the same period, it is observed that the technique is easier, and it does not push the limits of the instrument. From here, it can be thought that Fasch approached the bassoon like a stringed instrument.

III. Andante

The chapter has a structure that needs to be played slowly and widely in andante tempo. It does not have passages that force the performer technically and does not have a complex rhythmic structure. The piece should be played with a soft tone authority, nuance, and calmness like singing a song. Especially avoiding harshness, making correct nuances, and paying attention to the musical features of the Baroque period are important in revealing the character of the chapter.



Example 4. Part 3, Intro dotted rhythmic structure

This part of the piece is not difficult in terms of playing technique, namely finger positions. However, when we look at the section in general, it is necessary to pay attention to preserve the same soft and warm sound color in the legato dotted rhythmic structure and in the leaping passages which do not force the sound limit of the instrument. An important problem encountered in such passages is the emphasis that the performer involuntarily wants to put on the final note. In order to prevent such situations, it is recommended to use a crescendo without exaggeration, or it can be a solution to start the first note with a slight emphasis. We can diversify this piece by using detailed different rhythmic structures and nuances, which we call cell study. For example, playing these parts as decrescendo. It is also recommended that the performer strengthen his/her authority on the sounds in this part in order to avoid such a problem.

For this part, in general, it can be said that an intense musicality dominates in a calm and serene structure. In order for the performer to reflect this structure, it is recommended to remain calm and maintain the tempo.

IV. Allegro

The last part of the piece is a lively, cheerful, and fast part in allegro tempo. When evaluated in general, it would not be wrong to say that this section is the most challenging for the performer. Using the technical and musical difficulties at the same rate is the most obvious difficulty of the part.

Example 5. Part 4 Long Phrasing Structure

In such cases, the performer often thinks that he/she is struggling with two important factors. The first of them is technical and the other one is musicality. However, these two factors are intertwined in music. It would be wrong to think of one as more distinctive than the other. Instead, the performer must first perfect it technically and then analyzes it musically by identifying challenging passages in such situations. A second fault that can be experienced in order to perfect the performance practice is the way of thinking that musical tonguing need be accelerated. Tonguing technique is certainly very important in such passages with intense leaping and Staccato, yet another factor that is just as important is breath control. For this, it is recommended that the performer concentrate on both breathing and tonguing techniques. Since single tonguing will not be sufficient in these passages, which technically have a continuous staccato structure, the use of double tonguing is recommended.

If a full concentration is not achieved due to the long structure of the passages, it can be said that the performer generally accelerates here with the worry of slowing down. In order to be able to perform successfully in these passages, it is recommended to practice by grouping the notes. This practice should be done starting from slow until the piece reaches to its own tempo. This is important in terms of eliminating both technical and tempo problems. Practicing these passages with different rhythmic structures is recommended not only in terms of finger technique, but also in terms of providing tongue and finger coordination, namely unity. As a result of the complete application, it is observed that finger technique develops, and language technique accelerates.

Another application, which is the opposite of this one, can be a studying method by adding notes starting from the end of the passage. This practice is especially important in order to clearly see which sounds have problems. At the same time, it is observed that starting from slow and reaching the tempo of the piece provides additional benefit to language and speed endurance. Therefore, it is important to use metronome in individual practices. Besides, in order to understand the difficulty of transition more clearly, it is

recommended to determine the challenging passages and to study slower than the expected metronome speed, and to strengthen them with different rhythmic structures, instead of constantly studying the work as a whole.

In this part, which challenges the performer in terms of playing technique, the rhythmic structure is given so clearly and in detail that it is important to play it perfectly. Pushing the tempo, a little forward or pulling it back too much can cause the chapter to completely lose its musical integrity. The performer should consider the importance of finger technique in all technical passages that require such speed. Because the proximity of the fingers to the key is important in terms of speed. At the same time, reducing the distance that the fingers have to carry or using the right finger technique is an issue that should be considered very important in order to prevent possible injury to the wrist or fingers.

Conclusion

The works written for bassoon by Johann Friedrich Fasch, one of the important composers of the Baroque period, maintain their importance in the education and solo repertoires of the instrument today. The ornamental, structured with long statements, and sometimes complex, yet flamboyant musical expression style of the music of the period is fully seen in Fasch's C major sonata for bassoon. In the work, which consists of four parts, the slow/fast/slow/fast four-part sonata form of Arcangelo Corelli, who was both the important representative of the baroque period and the creator of the sonata form, is used. The work also maintains its importance in terms of conveying all these periodical style features.

Fasch's bassoon sonata in C Major is musically and technically quite challenging for the performer. For this reason, it should be preferred that such works are given in the education repertoire by taking into account the developmental differences. The main reason for this is that individual development features are very effective in instrument training. For this reason, especially in the selection of the piece during the education phase, it is recommended to choose a piece by considering the development of the student, the technique and sound authority on the instrument, The work can be considered as an example of this approach. Because in order to give a perfect performance of this piece, it is a priority to have a strong technical and musical skill on the instrument.

In this study, Johann Friedrich Fasch's C Major bassoon sonata has been examined in terms of performance skills, and some suggestions have been presented to today's bassoon players. The main difficulty of the study is that there are very few sources related to the selected piece. In this respect, it is thought that the study will be an important source for the literature.

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