The Solos, op. 1, and Sonatas, op. 42/43 of Berbiguier

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By Tom Moore

An earlier article for Flute Focus\(^1\) introduced Tranquille Berbiguier (1782-1838) and presented three of his later collections of music for unaccompanied flute. That article includes transcriptions of two works-lists, both published close to the end of the composer’s career, by Fétis, from 1835, and by Sarrut, from 1837. Among his large oeuvre both scholars highlight the Six Grand Solos for the Flute, which heads Sarrut’s list by Sarrut, and comes third in the enumeration by Fétis (where they are preceded by the fifteen books of duos for flutes, and the two books of duos for flute and violin). Notably, the solos are distinguished from the composer’s sonatas, although the two terms had been virtually synonymous for most of the eighteenth century. Fétis lists “seven books of sonatas, with accompaniment for bass or alto”; Sarrut lists “eleven books of sonatas”. To our misfortune, and to the detriment of the composers’ reputation in posterity, neither the solos nor the various books of sonatas have been republished since their publications in the nineteenth century. This article will look in more detail at the Six Solos, op. 1, and the six Sonatas, op. 42/43, both of which were arguably intended originally for performance by unaccompanied flute, after trying to identify the “seven” or “eleven” books of sonatas referred to by the authors above.

Among the various surviving published scores of sonatas by Berbiguier, there are volumes identified as books 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8. I will try to fit the remaining unnumbered volumes in their context. Firstly, although, as noted above, one might be inclined to include a book of “solos” among the list of “sonatas”, these are clearly considered to be a separate species, and indeed the title page reads “Six Grands Solo ou Etude”, a distinction reproduced by Fétis in his list.

What seems likely to be considered the first book of sonatas from Berbiguier is the set of six “Sonates méthodiques et progressives” which are published as article 2 of the second part of his Nouvelle Méthode (pp. 126-175). The Method was published in about 1818, according to a reference in the Bibliographie de la France. The set was published independently of the method by Breitkopf at the same time (plate no. 2887, which would point to the same date), with a note stating that it is the Deuxième supplement à la Méthode de flûte du même auteur.

Book two of the sonatas is then represented by op. 14, the Six sonates pour flûte avec accompagnement de basse, Livre 2, issued in Paris by Janet et Cotelle, with no date or plate number. Following op. 14 in sequence by opus number is the set listed as op. 27, and held by the British Library (no publisher or plate number given by the bibliographical record). Book four is the Trois sonates pour flûte avec accompagnement de basse (the

\(^1\) http://www.flutefocus.com/Students-Corner/three-later-berbiguier-collections.html
Books five and six are helpfully identified by the Whistling Handbuch der musikalischen Literatur, and included, tellingly, under Solos für die Flöte (that is, music for unaccompanied flute). The Handbuch lists editions of op. 42, nos. 1-3 by Schott (Mainz) and Spehr (Braunschweig), an edition of op. 43, nos. 1-3 by Schott (Mainz), and 3 Sonates brillantes et faciles avec Viola ad libitum, op. 42 et 43 (Livre 5 et 6 des Sonates), by Breitkopf et Härtel (Leipzig). Likewise, op. 42 is listed in the Bibliographie de la France for 1819 as Trois Sonates brillantes et faciles pour flûte, avec accompagnement d’alto ad libitum, œuvre XLII. 5e livraison de sonates. — A Paris, chez Berbiguier, rue des Maçons-Sorbonne, hôtel de la Paix. Finally, Yale University holds an edition of op. 43, published by Janet et Cotelle, with the same title as given for op. 42 by the Bibliographie above, a dedication to “son Ami George de La Romain”, and the note that this is the sixth book of sonatas and the second continuation of Sonates Brillante et Faciles. Op. 52 (no existing copy, to my knowledge) is the seventh book, according to the list of works for the flute by Berbiguier found on the verso of the title page of the Janet et Cotelle op. 42 (which only goes as far as the seventh book).

Book eight is the Trois nouvelles sonates pour flûte, avec accompt. de basse (ad libitum) published in Berlin by Schlesinger and Leipzig by Probst. Finally, the latest volume of sonatas is the op. 102 listed in the Bibliographie de la France, vol. 33, p. 779 (1830): Trois grandes sonates, etc., pour la flûte, avec accompagnement de basse, dédiées à M. Auguste Vern, par T. Berbiguier, op. 102. A Paris, chez Janet et Cotelle, rue Saint-Honoré, n. 123. These are also announced as “splendid new works of T. Berbiguier” and offered both as “Three Grand Sonatas for the Flute, with Bass Acompaniment, op. 102” or “Nos. 1 and 2 of Ditto, with Piano as Concertante Duets”, published by Paine and Hopkins (advertised in the April and May numbers of the Harmonicon for 1831).

The Solos, op. 1

To examine the Grand Solos, op. 1, in more detail, the work was published in two sections (solo 1-3, and 4-6). Part 1 survives in the library of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Part 2 in the library at Yale University. Part 1 was published at Paris by Madame Duhan & Cie, au Magasin de Musique et d’Instruments, Boulevard Poissonniere, attenant le Jardin Bouainvilliers. Aux deux Lyres, with plate no. 47. This edition is already described as a “Nouvelle edition, corrigée par l’Auteur”, and the author is an “Eleve du Conservatoire”. The title page is set up so that the number of the part is inked in by hand. The edition of Part 2 surviving at Yale is printed from the same plates (the plate no. is 48), but with differing publication information at the bottom of the title page – it was issued by Janet et Cotelle, Editeurs Marchands de Musique ordinaires du Roi, au Mont d’Or, Rue St. Honoré, No. 125…..

According to Sarrut’s biographical sketch of the composer, Berbiguier appeared at the Conservatory in 1805, and entered the flute class of Wunderlich. In 1806 he won second
prize in the competition, and in 1807 was admitted to the harmony class of Berton. In 1808 he was named répétiteur for the flute class. Presumably the op. 1 dates to the latter part of this period (1807-1808), which seems to be corroborated by the plate number for the publication by Duhan. The copy at UNC has a date in ink (1815) following the name of the presumed own at that date, O. Helmrietz. Part 2 must have been published by Janet et Cotelle at some point following the Bourbon restoration in 1815.

The six solos are either single movements in sonata-allegro form, or a slow introduction paired with a faster movement in sonata-allegro form. These are large pieces in four or five large-format pages each. Solo 1 is in D major, marked Allegro Brillante, with the first section repeated; Solo 2 is in E minor, marked Allegro Assai; Solo 3 has an introduction, Largo, in F minor, leading to a half-cadence on the dominant, and an Allegro in F major, with a double bar at the cadence on the dominant, but no repeats for either section. Solo 4 is in G major, with no tempo marking (but predominant sixteenth note motion); Solo 5 in A major, marked Allegro, in 3/8; and Solo 6 in E-flat major, with an Adagio introduction leading to an Allegro Spirituoso.

The music is of a technical difficulty that recalls the Grand Etudes op. 13 of Hugot from about the same period (Hugot, a professor at the Conservatory, had committed suicide in 1803, prior to Berbiguier’s matriculation), but still retaining attention to musical expression and form (unlike the later etudes of Boehm, for example). This is clearly music more directed to study rather than diversion or public performance. It is worth noting that they are still recommended (along with Drouet’s studies, the Hugot studies mentioned above, and the more recent set (that is, op. 31) of Briccialdi studies) as material for the more advanced performer by James Alexander Hamilton in his New Musical Grammar of 1849.

**Op. 42 and Op. 43**

To move on to the fifth and sixth books of sonatas (op. 42/43), which seem to have been conceived as a set of six, and first published in 1819, these works are entirely different in character, though also fundamentally conceived as works for unaccompanied flute. Op. 42 contains three sonatas, in D major, E minor and C major; and op. 42, three, in G minor, A major, and D major, all five in tonalities that are among the most popular and effective keys for the instrument. The work survives in two contrasting editions. It is presented simply as Trois Solos pour la Flute (two sets op. 42, and op. 43, with otherwise identical title pages) in the publication in Mainz by Schott. Each individual work of the six has a sequential plate number (1327 through 1332). In contrast, the edition from Janet et Cotelle presents Trois Sonates Brillantes et Faciles pour Flûte avec Accompagnement d’Alto (ad libitum). Unlike many sonatas for flute with accompaniment, particularly those for flute and piano, where the accompanying part participates to some important degree in the presentation of the thematic material, and thus might be described as “concertante” or “concerted”, these works continue the French tradition of music for solo instrument with “basse”, in which the bass line is strictly accompanimental, and provides harmonic and rhythmic support, but never takes the role of real partner in
a musical dialogue (something much more important to the Germanic tradition). In comparing the editions for solo flute with those for flute with viola, I found only one spot where one could possibly surmise from the flute part that something important was missing that could be supplied by an accompanying part. This is after the double bar of the Presto (closing movement of the sonata in G minor, op. 43, no. 1), where after a cadence on the relative major the Schott edition marks two bars of rest for the flute. Here, the edition with viola gives the first of two imitative entries to the viola, with the flute entering after the first two notes of the theme in the accompaniment.

Of the six sonatas, all but one are in three movements, fast-slow-fast, with the opening movement in binary, sonata-allegro form (exposition repeated; no repeat for the second half). The second movement is usually a lyrical Romanza or other slow movement with ornamentation, and the third movement a Rondo. The exception is Op. 42, no. 3 in C major, where an extensive Andante (marked Dolce) with six variations plus coda follows the opening Allegretto.

It is worth noting that these sonatas seem to have been widely known and appreciated in their form as works for unaccompanied flute at the time of their publication, as both Op. 42, no. 1 (the closing rondo) and op. 43, no. 1 (the Romance in B-flat) were excerpted for the collection edited by Dressler for R. Cocks (Dressler’s selection of beauties with embellishments for the flute. Dedicated to amateurs), which was issued in about March 1828, and republished by Simrock as the Choix de jolies Bagatelles in early 1829. Likewise, the manuscript collections of General Ethan Allen Hitchcock include a transcription of a portion of the Andante and Variations of op. 42, no. 3 (MS HC 247 includes the theme and variations 2, 3 and 6, omitting the coda). Further research might well turn up additional publications of excerpts as well.

Of all these twelve works, and indeed of all the sonatas from Berbiguier, there has been only one republication in recent years, the modern edition (in the version for flute solo) of op. 43, no. 1 in G minor edited by Eppel and issued by Zimmermann (ZM 31900, published 1997). The complete op. 42 has been digitized by and can be downloaded from the site of the Royal Library in Denmark; the first half of op. 1 was digitized by UNC Chapel Hill, and is available through IMSLP - although the site says “complete score”, it only presents the first three solos.

Both op. 1 and op. 42/43 are well worth getting to know. The op. 1 will provide technical challenges for almost any flutist, even the most advanced, while the six sonatas of op. 42/43 would add interesting early Romantic literature for solo flute to any concert program, whether in the versions for solo flute or those for flute with viola.

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2 http://img.kb.dk/ma/berbiguier/berbiguier_solos.pdf
3 http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/1/1c/IMSLP166083-PMLP296187-Berbiguier_-_6_Grandes_solos_Fl_IArch.pdf