

**A RESEARCH ON FLUTE AND BASSOON PERFORMER FRANÇOIS  
DEVIIENNE'S FLUTE, BASSOON AND HARPISICHORD SONATA IN C MAJOR**

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**ABSTRACT:** *In this study, musical works, contributed by François Devienne, who has an important place in the classical period music, to the period in which he lived as a performer and productive composer, were studied. Devienne contributed a lot of works to the repertoire of classical period wind instruments, especially to the flute and bassoon's solo repertoire. At the same time, he also wrote an important method contributing to Flute's educational repertoire. The fact that Devienne was a professional flute and bassoon performer has an important place in the formation of the works. In the study, the place and musical attitude of François Devienne in the classical period music was examined by limiting with the composer's flute, basson and harpsichord sonata in C Major.*

**KEYWORDS:** François Devienne, Flute, Bassoon, 18th Century, Classical Period, C Major Sonata

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Classical Period**

In the history of music, the classical period covers a period extending from the middle of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. As in every new era, this period was developed as a reaction to the previous period. Baroque period's complex spelling language structured with long sentences and often used by ornaments, left its place to a more plain and clear musical understanding. In this period, many new movements emerged in all areas of art. One of them is Rococo. Rococo represents the transition from the Baroque period to classical period and it attracted great attention in France especially in the mid-18th century.

The effect of this movement on music can be clearly observed between 1725 and 1770 (Daugherty, 2014). In the works that were written on this style, composers headed for a simpler and more elegant expression. For the work which is written in Rococo style, İlyasoğlu says that (1994), "It is a composition for small forms rather than serious and long structures" (p. 49). This style, which is also effective in orchestral music, shows itself in instrumental music, mostly in the area of harpsichord and chamber music (İlyasoğlu, 1994, p.49). François Couperin (1668-1733) and Jean Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) in France and Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782) in Germany are among the most important composers of the Rococo style. From the second half of the 18th century, reactions began to occur to the Rococo movement, which had been continuing its influence for a long time. Most of the composers thought that the use of exaggerated ornamentation in this style of works created a superficial effect on the work. On the other hand, the lack of musical expression and also the view that the work has no depth, are among the most important reasons for the reactions to Rococo. This approach is one of the factors setting the beginning of the classical period.

The period beginning with the death of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750 and ending with the death of Ludwig van Beethoven in 1827 (Ilyasoglu, 1994, p.49) is known as the classical period. In the classical period's artistic texture, it is seen that there is an admiration and emulation for the classical art and literary heritage of Ancient Greece and Rome. For this reason, it is called the classical period. At the same time, this period is also known as the Age of Enlightenment (Daugherty, 2014).

The most important innovation of the classical period is the adoption of the view that music is a collective entertainment of the society regardless of class distinction. This approach allowed the music to get out of the administration of the church and nobilities and open its windows to the public. From now on, the music has been presented not only to the court authority but also to the public's taste. The best example of this is that public concerts have started to be given. Public's participation in artistic formations has given a new direction to the musical understanding of both performers and composers. There is a deep difference between the music that is written with the order of an authority and the one that is written to an unknown community. The works made by an order are generally written in order to listen just once. However, in the works presented to the public's taste, this situation changed and it was aimed that the work gain a place in the long term. This approach enabled composers to reflect their individual thoughts to the work rather than the concerns about completing the works on time and transferring the desired emotions.

The escape of the composers from strict rules that restrict their productivity also made a great contribution to the development of the instrumental music repertoire. The form understanding of classical period music is linked to an elegant and simple presentation. In this period, significant developments were experienced in all of the instrumental forms. The development of forms such as symphony, concerto, and sonata is the greatest innovations of the classical period in terms of music history.

In the classical period music which the melody is at the forefront, the perception of simplicity and elegance forms the basis of thematic development and harmonic performance. In general, while characterizing this period's music, it can be said that rule-based approach was showed. While the form of the work is being created, everything is organized within certain rules, and also the tendency to avoid excessive exaggeration is a priority. This controlled approach can be prominently observed, particularly in the use of parts or dynamics of a work. For example, when comparing with the Baroque period, contrasting dynamics (such as piano and forte) were at the forefront, in the classical period, this approach gained a new meaning as crescendo and decrescendo which are softer transitions.

### **Objective**

The purpose of this research is to give information about the musical works of François Devienne, the important flute, bassoon performer and composer of the 18th century, and his selected work, the flute, bassoon and harpsichord sonata in C major. In accordance with this purpose;

- The Classical Period music style,
- The place of François Devienne as a performer and composer in this period,
- Composer's musical examination of the flute, bassoon and harpsichord sonata in C major are dwelled on.

## **Importance**

François Devienne is an important flute and bassoon performer of the classical period. At the same time, he has written a large number of works for wind instruments' solo and education repertoire especially for the flute and bassoon. In this research, works contributed by Devienne to the 18th century music were examined by limiting with the sonata in C major that he wrote for flute, bassoon and harpsichord, and it is thought that it can be a useful source for today's flute and bassoon performers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this research, general information about the classical period music was given, and period's important musician François Devienne's composer and performer identity was emphasized. The research was concluded with the musical examination of Devienne's Sonata in C Major written for Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord.

## **Limitations**

This research is limited to periodicals, articles, books, encyclopedias and internet databases published in Turkish and English and Devienne's Sonata in C major for Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord as data sources.

## **François Devienne**

Besides, François Devienne is among the most important flute and bassoon performers of the 18th century, he is a productive composer who contributed a large number of works to the woodwind instruments repertoire. With these features, his place in the classical period music is unquestionable. His symphonies written especially for woodwind instruments are among the most popular works of the period (Lorenzo, 1951, p. 92). In his short 44-year-old life, Devienne witnessed the establishment phases of the French Republic and the French Revolution and he also witnessed key events of the time (Montgomery, 2009, p.39). In 1779, Devienne began working as a bassoonist in the Paris Opera Orchestra and he started his flute education in the same period with the orchestra's first flutist, Félix Rault (1736-1800). Devienne (Montgomery, 2001, p. 266), who performed his first flute concerto composed by himself in 1782, and his first bassoon concerto in 1784, was highly appreciated by musical authorities. He took part in the first public concert series Concert Spirituel, beginning in 1725, as a bassoon soloist 18 times in total (Burns, 2001, p. 53).

Devienne, also an important contributor to classical opera music, wrote twelve operas between 1790 and 1799, and his first opera was performed in Théâtre Montansier in 1790. After this show, the French Revolution slowed down Devienne's works and productivity. This process has led his energy to his orchestra performance and to instructor in the conservatory rather than composing works (Montgomery, 2009, p.43). He was one of the first flute educators and founders of the Paris Conservatory founded in 1795. Although he was not on the Paris Conservatory's list as an instructor, he also taught how to play bassoon. François René Gebauer (1773-1845), known as an important bassoon performer and composer of the period, is among the students of Devienne (Burns, 2001, p. 53).

Devienne made significant contributions to the repertoire of flute education with his method called as method of Nouvelle Méthode Théorique et Pratique pour la Flûte which he wrote for one keyed flute. Moreover, this method is an important source for contemporary flute performers in terms of transferring classical period style features (Ponder, 2010).

Janice Dockendorff Boland (1998), stated that ‘‘this method was very popular among the flute performers in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and that it maintained its importance until the 1950s’’, he also pointed out the importance of this method by stating that it was the last French method written for a one keyed flute (p.207). Although Devienne had experiment multi-keyed flutes; he did not choose to use them in his own performance. However, he advised his students to use multi-keyed flutes (Toff, 1996, p.242). Devienne's Flute method is a very important resource for classical period performance practice. This method, which has a rich content, also includes tone and tongue exercises, articulation exercises, ornaments, exercises, duos and sonatas written for two flutes.

Devienne is one of the composers who contributed to the development of the classical period flute and bassoon repertoire with his works written in the late 18th century. The twelve concertos which he wrote especially for flute (Aktüze, 2005, p.690), are among the most significant works of composing career. While giving information about concertos, Robert Cumming (2015) says that Devienne’s music style is relatively metrical and the composer's music reminds Mozart from this aspect. However, he also states that Devienne’s music style has a slightly more academic and slightly more narrative form than Mozart’s music style. Even though concertos are structurally very simple in design, they require virtuosity in terms of performance and these works are among the best examples of the form. Concertos that were beginning to be forgotten after Devienne's death, were re-remembered with the reinterpretation of these works by today's major flute virtuosos such as Jean Pierre Rampal (1922-2000) and Emanuel Pahud (1970-).

Devienne also contributed a great number of works to the classical period bassoon repertoire. He wrote six sonatas for bassoon (Op.24), at least four concertos, three quartets for bassoon and strings (op.73), trios for flute, bassoon, and harpsichord and two duets for bassoon (Burns, 2001, p. 54). Devienne’s compositions are very important for understanding and interpreting the musical level of the woodwind instruments in France in the late 18th century. In the works he wrote for the bassoon, besides the elegant and stylish melodic form, the technical passages written to show the technical skill of the player were interspersed quite skillfully. Leaving a considerable amount of work to the bassoon’s solo repertoire, Devienne’s bassoon duets are among the main works that can be used both in stage performance and in the repertoire of education. The duos at the level that can be used during the training phase are very supportive both for the musical development and the performance of the performer.

At the same time, the concertos written by Devienne for the bassoon were highly regarded by Etienne Ozi, one of the founders of the Paris Conservatoire and one of the most important bassoon performers of the period, and considered to be a pioneering masterpiece written for bassoon (Ponder, 2010).

Works contributed to the bassoon and flute repertoire by Devienne are now seen as important works used both in education and stage performance. Devienne is one of the few composers who contributed to the formation of classical repertoire by writing a large number of works on the woodwind instruments. With the works he wrote, he inspired both his contemporary composers and next period composers.

## Sonata Form in the Classic Period

Sonatas that consists of several parts, is a collection of works written for one or a few instruments. Generally, sonatas consist of three movements and they are also written in two or four movements. In the classical period, Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and Beethoven's chamber music and piano sonatas written for string instruments are among the best examples of this form. There are also sonatas written by these composers for wind instruments. At the same time, the sonatas written by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788), Franz Danzi (1763-1826) and François Devienne (1759-1803) for wind instruments are successful works of this form. These sonatas also form the basis of the education repertoire.

### François Devienne: Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major

Although, sonatas generally consisted of three movements in the 18th century, they were also written in two or four movements. Because the two-movements sonatas written in the 18th century were often used by Italian keyboard composers, they are also called the Italian sonatas. The beats of two-movements sonatas usually consist of the following way: Moderate-Fast, Fast-Fast, Fast-Rondo, Fast-Minuet (Hepokoski& Darcy, 2006, p.320).

Beethoven gave the best examples of these works with his two-movement piano sonatas in the 18th century. It is also known that Haydn, one of the important composers of the period, wrote many two-movement piano sonatas at the end of the 1790's. One of the important classical period composers who wrote two-movement sonata is Devienne. In the study, two-movement sonata in C major written by the composer for flute bassoon and harpsichord was examined as an example to this form.

### First Movement: All Moderato

The first movement of the All Moderato beat is striking with its cheerful and lively thematic form. In addition to the simple and unsophisticated musical form, the fast passages in the part have been skillfully interspersed, and they are presented to the performers with soft transitions, without forcing them both as technically and register. The composer has equally distributed the solos to all three instruments. The theme beginning with the flute, then is heard on the harpsichord, and finally on the bassoon. It consists of a deep musical form that does not have a rhythmically complex structure and, is made with the simplicity that performers can demonstrate their skills as soloist.

### Example 1. Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major, First Movement Flute Solo







**Example 2. Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major, First Movement  
Harpsichord Solo**



**Example 3. Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major, First Movement  
Bassoon Solo**



### Second Movement: Rondo

The second movement of the work is written as Allegro rondo, which is generally known as the most distinctive feature of the classical sonata form. The second movement was created with a simple and unsophisticated thematic form. When looking at the notation of the part, it is seen that the flute and bassoon parts are structured with quarter and eighth notes. As in the first movement, Devienne distributed the solo to three instruments equally. The second movement of the work starts with the introduction of the harpsichord to the main theme. In this simple and unsophisticated theme, there is not any challenging element for the composer in terms of playing technique, and the theme, starting with the presentation of harpsichord, is heard again in eighth meter with the strong dynamic introduction of flute and bassoon. It can be said that the most important detail for the performer in this part is the nuance quality. Even though the second movement does not force the performer in terms of breath and finger technique, it is a part that needs to be paid attention to reveal the colors of the musical form and to show the stylistic features of the period.

#### Example 4. Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major, Second Movement, Harpsichord Solo

#### Example 5. Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major, Second Movement, Flute Solo

**Example 6. Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord Sonata in C Major, Second Movement,  
Bassoon Solo**



The fact that Devienne was a professional performer of bassoon and flute and he also knew all the technical opportunities of the instruments are reflected on this work written by him. The distinctive and clear use of the musical characteristics of the classical period is an important feature of the work.

## CONCLUSION

Devienne, considered as a milestone especially in the classical period French music, was among the most important musicians of the period both as a performer and a composer. Devienne, a master performer of flute and bassoon, has also made a great contribution to the repertoire of these instruments. Devienne who left important works that never lose importance even today both to the solo and education repertoire of flute, is also one of the composers who left important works to the bassoon's solo repertoire. From this point of view, it can be said that Devienne is one of the main composers who developed main repertoire works of bassoon and flute and left a lot of works for them.

This new approach to the solo repertoire of woodwind instruments has enabled period's other composers to focus their attention on these instruments. It can be said that this innovative understanding, especially for bassoon, was the most important development of the period. Because, the bassoon, which has been usually at the forefront with the accompaniment in bass party until this period, also gained importance as a solo instrument and important composers preferred writing solo in their works.

The fact that Devienne knows all the technical opportunities of the flute and the bassoon also reflected on his works. In his works, the performer quite often encounters with rhythmically uncomplicated technical passages. However, in these passages, perhaps the most important detail of the works of Devienne is the remarkable the distribution of the technical parts. The calm and peaceful musical form, immediately following these passages, which offer performer a wide range of rendering rather than a restricted time, enables performer to reflect all soloist skills.

In this research, Devienne's sonata written for Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord in C Major has been studied musically, and the innovations which were contributed by Devienne both as composer and performer to the classical period music, have been dealt. It is thought that this research will show the importance of Devienne's works in the repertoire to today's flute and bassoon performers, and it will bring them a new perspective in rendering these works.



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