

Introduction

Among his many other compositions, Jean-Baptiste Bréval wrote three sets of six cello sonatas: Opus 12 in 1783 (technically demanding), Opus 28 in 1788 (of moderate difficulty) and Opus 40 in 1799 (relatively easy). Of these 18 sonatas, two in particular are very well known today and have been published frequently: the Sonata in C major, Op. 40, No. 1, which probably every cello student plays at some point even today, and the Sonata in G major, Op. 12, No. 5, which is considered particularly beautiful but is also quite demanding. Most editions of these sonatas published since the beginning of the 20th century present them as works for cello and piano.¹

In fact, however, these works are written for cello with the accompaniment of a second cello. The original title of Opus 40 reads *Six Sonates non difficiles pour le Violoncelle avec Accompagnement d'une Basse* [Six easy sonatas for cello with bass accompaniment].² In his cello method, *Traité du Violoncelle*, Bréval makes it clear that, in this context, he uses the term *Basse* to refer to the cello.³ This is also evident from the score itself, through the range, double stops and the occasional use of the tenor clef. It seems likely that the composer had a pupil-teacher situation in mind here.

This edition of the six sonatas, Op. 12, follows the original print, which was published by Bréval himself in Paris and is dated 1783 according to several sources.⁴ The title reads *SIX | SONATES | A Violoncel et Basse | Ces Sonates peuvent se jouer sur le Violon. COMPOSÉES | PAR | J. B. Breval | ... | Gravées par Richomme | OPERA XII. | A PARIS | ...* [Six sonatas for cello and bass; these sonatas may also be played by the violin; composed by J. B. Breval ... set by Richomme, op. 12, in Paris ...]. It is a performance score comprising 24 pages of music, with the notation quite densely written.

As is customary in the classical cello repertoire, the solo part is written in the treble clef and should be read an octave lower. In many passages, however, this octave transposition is cancelled out by an 8^{va} marking above the notes, and the range sometimes extends far upwards: in the first three sonatas up to G⁶, and in Sonata No. 5 even as high as E⁶

and in Sonata No. 6 still as far as D⁷, which means that intensive use of the thumb position is required in these sonatas. In contrast, the C string is not necessarily used. This technique, which was quite common in the cello solo repertoire of the time, also means that the solo part can be performed on the violin without any alterations, as indicated in the title. The bass clef, which appears very occasionally in Sonatas Nos. 3 and 5, should not be a hindrance.

Our edition is a true Urtext edition, which reproduces the original musical score without any alterations or additions. This is possible because the original manuscript is remarkably free of errors and complete. Clefs, bar lines, slurs, appoggiaturas, accidentals, dynamics and repeat signs appear exactly as they do in the original manuscript. We have only written out the tremolo abbreviations and, on occasion, added a triplet symbol and a warning accidental. Any accidentals that we suggest deviating from the original, as well as any added text, are shown in brackets. The minor changes we have made to comply with modern notation conventions are listed in the Critical Commentary.

Our edition offers two versions of the solo cello part: the part in treble clef corresponds to the score and thus to the original source, whereas in the second variant we use the clefs commonly used today, namely bass, tenor and (non-octave) treble clefs.

We would also like to mention that, from our own experience, we know that passages in the upper register sound also very good in combination with the bass when played an octave lower.

We hope that this edition will enable cellists, teachers and students to enjoy the original musical text of these sonatas once again, free from the burden of outdated 'arrangements' and piano parts.

We would like to thank Christoph Habicht for his detailed and knowledgeable trial performance of all six sonatas.

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¹ See, for example, *A Cellist's Companion ...*, H. Lambooi & M. Feves (eds.) (Utrecht 1999), p. 91.

² Bréval, *Six Sonates non difficiles ...* op. 40 (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2010), G172, G173.

³ Bréval, *Traité du Violoncelle ...* op. 42 (Paris 1805), p. 2.

⁴ RISM ID No.: 990006986; we follow the copy in F-Pn. In fact, RISM lists five further (later) historical prints from Paris, London and Berlin, which attests to the popularity of these sonatas.