

Abstract and Corrections

Wulfhorst, Martin. "Pierre Baillot: Against the Odds. Pierre Baillot Battled Against Financial Hardship and Suffered Personal Tragedy, Yet He Became a Leading Exponent of the 19th-Century French Violin School. Martin Wulfhorst Reveals His Importance as an Instrumentalist, Pedagogue and Composer." *The Strad* (Feb. 2022), pp. 38–45.

Abstract

Baillot suffered personal tragedy, battled against financial hardships, and had to cope with the upheavals of the French Revolution and Restoration periods. Nevertheless he became a leading exponent of the 19th-century French violin school as an accomplished instrumentalist, pedagogue, and composer. After lessons with Francesco Polani in Rome, he joined a provincial administration and obtained his bachelor of law: this enabled him to work at the Ministry of Finances when he realized that he could not support his dependants even with his prestigious musical positions and performances. Critics and audiences admired his virtuosic technique, and prominent musicians such as Paganini and Mendelssohn praised him for his beautiful, moving playing. At the root of his extreme expressive intensity was his uncompromising urge to comprehend and convey the composer's intentions (a ground-breaking conception of the performer's role that placed him in a line of development that began with Spohr and led through Vieuxtemps and Joachim right to the modern type of 'authentic' or historically informed performance). Every performance became a unique event, in which the artist brought the composition to life. Baillot saw his primary role as championing other composers' music that he considered valuable — particularly the emerging canon of classics. His first repertoire tier comprised Baroque violin works, the second, concertos by Viotti, Kreutzer, and Rode, and the third, mainly quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Baillot helped to create the modern-day chamber-music or quartet concert format, and his most important mission became grooming players as promoters of this repertoire. He taught more than 150 students, privately and at the Paris Conservatoire (which he helped shape over four decades) —including prominent players from other European countries and even women (at a time when violin playing was still considered a male domain). His "L'art du violon" was a guide to advanced violin technique as well as a compendium of practice strategies, performance-practice conventions, and stylistic principles. Though his compositional oeuvre is largely forgotten, his 27 *airs variés* show him to be a master of the art of variation.

Corrections

Baillot apparently gave up his position at the Ministry of Finances after "ten years," that is, before his Russian tour in 1805 (letter to his uncle Perreau of 25 March 2015).