

JOHANN SEDLATZEK

Johann Jean Sedlatzek (also Johann John Sedlaczek; 6 December 1789 – 11 April 1866) was a Silesian flautist born in Głogówek (OberGlogau), Kingdom of Prussia, into a family of tailors, often referred to as "The Niccolò Paganini of Flute".

After beginning his career in the family trade as an apprentice to parents Johanna and Josephy, Sedlatzek taught himself to play flute and eventually toured throughout Europe as an admired master of the instrument, playing on a unique thirteen-key Viennese flute.

Sedlatzek served in the Royal Court Orchestra of Count Franz von Oppersdorff of OberGlogau and as Royal Chamber Virtuoso to Prince Paul III Anton Esterházy of Austria. He also gave several successful concert tours through Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, and England as featured performer.

During his tour of Italy, Sedlatzek not only survived the Palermo earthquake of 1823 (which canceled his second performance in Sicily), he also performed for the King of Prussia, Frederick William III of the Order of the Black Eagle, in Verona, for Pope Pius VII in Rome, and played alongside violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini in Genoa. His Paris tour of 1826 included performances with the Italian Soprano Giuditta Pasta, with whom he would perform again, along with other prominent musicians, after his move to London.

Johann Sedlatzek was a friend and collaborator to Ludwig van Beethoven and played several times with the universally known composer; most notably as the principal flautist in the world-premier of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in Vienna's Kärntnertortheater in 1824 under the direction of Beethoven himself.

While working as a tailor's apprentice to his father, Johann, and playing flute on the side, Johann Sedlatzek came to the attention of Count Franz von Oppersdorff, a nobleman of OberGlogau known for his intense love of music. Oppersdorff valued music so highly, in fact, that he would not hire any help who could not play a musical instrument. The young tailor and budding flautist suited von Oppersdorff's requirements and soon was invited to study music formally with the musicians of the Royal Court of OberGlogau. By September 1806, the sixteen-year-old Sedlatzek had become a full member of the Royal Court Orchestra of Count Oppersdorff, affording Johann the opportunity to play for Ludwig van Beethoven during his visit to the Count's Castle that year with the orchestra's performance of Beethoven's own 2nd Symphony.

In March 1810, Sedlatzek left his family home to pursue his musical aspirations in Opava, the cultural heart of Silesia at the time, earning his living as Master Tailor while also working as a

doorman at the local theater. He then traveled to Brno, Moravia and later to Vienna, Austria repeating this occupational strategy in each new city.

Johann Sedlatzek was finally able to put aside the family trade and focus on music exclusively when he was hired as first flute to the "Theater an der Wien" in September 1812.

A joint concert with the well-established Viennese musician Raphael Dressler in 1816 at Karntnertortheater, where Dressler was principal flautist, brought Johann to wider attention. The first printed review of a Sedlatzek performance appeared shortly after this event when the "Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung" gave the first of many positive reviews that would follow him throughout his long career in music.

Sedlatzek joined the Vienna Society of Musicians (Tonkünstler-Societät) in 1817. That same year, after Dressler moved to London, Sedlatzek was chosen to replace the eminent performer as principal flautist at the Karntnertortheater, a position he would hold for the next eight years while also performing concerts in Germany, conducting a lengthy tour of Italy, and playing around Vienna with his own ensemble, the "Sedlatzek Harmonie Quintet". German author of "Faust" and other notable works, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), mentions in his diaries hearing Johann Sedlatzek perform on more than one occasion in Austria during this period.

Sedlatzek's early years in Vienna culminated in the premier of Beethoven's 9th Symphony on 7 May 1824 at Karntnertortheater, where Sedlatzek served as principal flautist. Certain passages of Beethoven's score required the use of the particular Viennese flute which Sedlatzek was known to play with exceptional virtuosity. Only the Viennese flute was capable of playing as low as G, which was required for the proper interpretation of Beethoven's symphony.

Other notable musicians who performed in the Vienna premier of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in 1824 included soprano Henriette Sontag, contralto Caroline Unger, tenor Anton Haizinger, and pianist Conradin Kreutzer. Among the violinists performing that evening were Joseph Bohm, Leopold Jansa, and Joseph Mayseder. In the wind section, playing along with Sedlatzek, were Karl Scholl, Joseph Friedlowsky, Wenzell Sedlak, Thobold Hurth, and Edward Levy. Beethoven, too hard of hearing at this point in his life to conduct, directed the presentation while Ignaz Schuppanzigh led the orchestra and Michael Umlauf conducted the whole.

Between the years after his appointment as Principal Flautist at Karntentor Theater in 1817, and his performance with Beethoven in the premier of the 9th Symphony in 1824, Sedlatzek

managed a busy schedule which included tours through Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, while also performing (by private subscription) in Vienna with his Harmonie Quintet.

After his March 1818 performance with Carl Czerny in Vienna, Sedlatzek embarked on his first European tour as a featured performer. The first stop was in Zurich, where he performed with the pianist Johann Peter Pixiusem, prompting the "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" to write about the flautist "with great delight". In the summer of 1820, Sedlatzek performed in Prague. The Wiener Allgemeine Theaterzeitung wrote of this performance: "Sedlatzek captivated the audience with his variations on 'God Save the King' and captured the hearts of all!"

Sedlatzek gave two shows in Berlin in July 1821. The first was to accompany Carl Maria von Weber. The second was as the featured player.

Back in Vienna, 1 August 1821, Sedlatzek performed with cellist Vincez Schuster and pianist Karl Maria von Bocklet. Sedlatzek and Schuster performed together portions of "Schone Minke, op. 78". And, as a bonus, at the end of the show, Johann Sedlatzek performed publicly, for the first time, on the newly invented Viennese Flute with which he would become synonymous during his later career. In 1822, Sedlatzek embarked on a two-year tour of Italy, which began with his performances to the Congress of Verona (where he performed for the Prussian King, Frederick William III), and continued through Sicily, Parma, Milan, Naples, and Genoa, where he performed alongside Niccolò Paganini. The Gizetta di Miliano said Sedlatzek "captured his audience", and also noted that "even with Paganini performing in town, Sedlatzek's Halls were "bursting at the seams".

In a letter to his parents, Johann wrote of his Italian tour and his stay in Sicily:

"Once again, as in every city, I have been enthusiastically received. I have meals each day with General Field Marshal, Graf von Wallmoden, and in the evening, I go to parties. My first show was a good one, but the second was unfortunately prevented by the terrible earthquake ."

The Palermo earthquake of 5 March 1823 was the worst earthquake in the area of Sicily in the 19th century and one of the worst in Italy's history since such records have been kept.

Sedlatzek left Sicily after the earthquake and traveled to Rome, where he performed for The Pope of the Roman Catholic Church at that time, Pope Pius VII. On 3 April 1825, Sedlatzek gave a farewell concert in Vienna at which he performed works from Beethoven and Rossini

as well as his own compositions "Capriccio for Flute" and "Neue Variations for Flute", with the well-known Ignaz Schuppanzigh conducting.

While Sedlatzek's farewell concert was held in April 1825, an entry in the Journal of the conductor Sir George Thomas Smart dated 11 September 1825 in which he describes a visit to Beethoven's home, shows that Sedlatzek remained in Vienna through the end of that year:

"... most of the company departed (after the performance), but Schlesinger invited me to stop and dine with the following party of ten. Beethoven, his nephew (Karl), Holz, Weiss, C. Czerny, who sat at the bottom of the table, Lincke, Jean Sedlatzek- a flute player who is coming to England next year and has letters from the Duke of Devonshire, Count St. Antonio, etc.- he has been to Italy- Schlesinger, Schuppanzigh, who sat at the top, and myself." Afterwards, Sedlatzek visited his parents in OberGlogau and his sister, Josephina Maise, in Warmbrunn before embarking on a concert tour of Paris in 1826, with the following personal letters of recommendation from Ludwig van Beethoven in hand:

To Monsieur Kreutzer,

Sir! This is with hope that you favor your old friend, I dare to recommend to you the bearer of this letter, Monsieur Sedlatzek, a most distinguished Artist, and am begging you not to refuse him ... I take this time to testify my friendship and perpetual consideration. Sir!

Your very humble servant, L v. B

To Monsieur Cherubini,

Sir! The bearer of this letter, Monsieur Sedlatzek, ardently desires to pay you his tribute. I am convinced of his esteem as an Artist worthy of my name, and hope for a favorable welcome from you. Accept him with the highest assurance and the same consideration with which I have been honored. Sir!

Your very humble servant, L v. B

After the Paris tour, Sedlatzek moved to London. Thirty-six-year-old Johann Sedlatzek arrived in London in the summer of 1826. By the spring of 1827, his British audience had grown beyond his expectation, as the following announcement in the May 12, 1827 edition of the "London Literary Gazette" attests:

"Under the patronage of His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, their Highnesses the Prince and Princess Esterhazy, and the Duke and Duchess of Leister, Mr. SEDLATZEK, (of Vienna, Performer of the newly invented German flute), finding that the Number of Tickets in demand for his concert on the 18th of May far exceeds his expectation, respectfully announces that he has been obliged to remove it from Queen Square, to Willis's Rooms, and that tickets can be had at the Bar of the Thatched Roof Tavern; Willis's Rooms, and of Mr. Sedlatzek, No. 37, Castle Street East, Oxford Street." A survey of English Newspapers from 1826 to 1842 shows Sedlatzek was very active in the London music scene at that time. His performances were reviewed frequently in London papers, such as The Musical World, The London Gazette, The Harmonicon, and the Court Journal, to name a few, with commentary ranging from reverent: "We are much indebted to J. Sedlatzek for his arrangement of the music of this great violinist (Josef Mayseder), executed with taste and skill." to rapturous: "These compositions are superb specimens of modern magnificence ... listened to by a very full audience with the united sensations of rapture and admiration."

A review of a concert held 8 July 1838 shows how performances by Johann Sedlatzek were generally received:

"Mr. Sedlatzek, The eminent flautist, gave a "Soirie Musicale" in the smaller room at the Anthenmeum. The room was quite filled by a very select and fashionable company and, the concert conducted by Mr. J. A. Pickering, was of the highest order.

The first piece was remarkable for the beautiful manner in which the instruments harmonized. Mr. Sedlatzek has this advantage over every other flute player of the present day: his tone is the nearest approach to the human voice we ever heard. He has, moreover, a facility and neatness of execution which must stamp him as a performer of the highest order. Personally acquainted with several of the deceased great German Masters, his style has been drawn from the purest sources. And it follows that, apart from the merely mechanical operation of playing, he is a first-rate musician."

Sedlatzek spent sixteen active years in London where he frequently played to crowded halls and performed with renowned musicians including Johann Strauss, Signor Brizzi Nicolas Mori, Felix Mendelssohn, double-bass master Domenico Dragonetti, and guitar virtuoso Trinidad Huerta. He would also meet again with the notorious Paganini in 1831 when London hosted a bevy of foreign performers for the season. In the midst of his busy performance schedule, Johann Sedlatzek earned an Honorary Degree in 1835 from Green College in London where he was an instructor.

Sedlatzek was also married in London on All-Hallows Eve, 31 October 1827 to Ann Ward, and, in the years following, fathered at least five children. The first of these births was announced in the August 9, 1828 edition of the "London Literary Gazette":

At the request of our good friend M. Sedlatzek who plays the German flute better than he writes the English Language, we insert the following interesting announcement:

"Dear Sir! I am sorry not having the pleasure to find you at home. I was come to thank you for your kind report on my Concert. [sic.] And in the same time to tell you that my wife is delivering with a baby Girl, and that the Prinzesses [sic.] Esterhazy will be the Good Mutters (God Mothers- ed.)- should you find convenient to mention in your next week Journal- Sedlatzek"

His children: Therese, Nina, Paul, Georg, and Marie each achieved their own musical successes. Nina and Therese performed as pianists in Vienna. Paul followed his Father's inclination, becoming a flautist. Marie became an opera singer and actress for the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and toured London with her father in 1854. Georg performed as solo cellist for Eduard Strauss and Johann Strauss II. Georg's son, Ludwig Maria Sedlaczek (3 January 1875 – 14 October 1965), extended the line of musicians begun in the 19th century into the 20th, as he performed and conducted throughout Austria and Germany in the early 1900s, and then, after moving to America in 1927, served as professor of Music at University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

Johann returned to Vienna in 1842 after the death of his wife.

Johann Sedlatzek encouraged his children in music from an early age. The August 1840 issue of The Musical World reviewed a June concert of that year at which:

"... the Misses Sedlatzek (the eldest of whom is not yet 12 years of age), played several pieces on the pianoforte in excellent style. They have been grounded in music by their father, and also tutored by Pio Cianchetti, and the style of Clementi and Dussek might be easily traced in their performances."

While all of Sedlatzek's children found careers as musicians in the following decades, his daughter, Marie, was most often referenced in the London journals in the latter half of the 19th century. The Musical World records that a farewell concert was given in the Netherlands, where she had been touring extensively as a featured performer in previous

months, on 18 February 1854 in Amsterdam at the Salle du Parc., which was "highly successful."

"Sedlatzek sang ... and was recalled at the end of each movement to receive the applause of the audience. This young vocalist, although she has scarcely reached her 20th year, has attained great excellence."

After her farewell performance in Amsterdam, she met her father in England in March 1854 for the start of their London tour together.

"Fraulein Sedlatzek, Principal Vocalist and Herr Sedlatzek, Principal Flautist to His Highness the Prince Esterházy, beg to announce their arrival in London for the season. All communications with regard to lessons and engagements for concerts and private parties to be addressed to them at their residence, 42, Manchester Street, Manchester." (The Musical World Saturday March 11, 1854.)

The Saturday March 18 edition of The Musical World included the item in their news section, saying: "M. Sedlatzek, the well-known flautist and composer has arrived in London with his daughter, who is reported to possess considerable talent as a vocalist. Fraulein Sedlatzek has been very favorably received in Vienna and Amsterdam."

Marie Sedlatzek soon became a performer of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane where reviews, at first, were mixed. One reviewer in the May 1854 issue of The Musical World said, "Mdlle. Sedlatzek acted well as Marcellina, (in a production of Beethoven's "Fidelio") but had scarcely voice enough for the part." However, a review from a month earlier in the April 29 edition of the same journal said of Marie (in a production of Weber's Freitschutz, starring Madame Caradori):

"Sedlatzek was recalled at the end with great enthusiasm ... (advancing) a step in public favor by the manner in which she sung the charming music of Annsehen and by the pretty and lively earnestness of her acting. She is young and inexperienced, but there is purpose in all she does."

However mixed her initial reception may have been, Marie continued her career with the Royal Opera in London after her father returned to Vienna at the end of 1854. Marie eventually joined Theatre Royal, Dublin (Ireland), where she is frequently listed in the Annals of the Theatre Royal, Dublin as a performer there between 1855 and 1861. Aside from the tour of London in 1854 with his daughter Marie, Sedlatzek spent the last years of his life in his

chosen homeland of Vienna, teaching flute, performing infrequent concerts, and training his children in music.

Johann Sedlatzek gave his final performance in 1865 to celebrate more than 50 years as a musician at Bösendorfer Salon in Vienna. In addition to the many prominent musicians who performed and paid tribute was his son Georg, the cellist.

Johann Sedlatzek died on April 11, 1866 at the Allgemeines Krankenhaus in Vienna and was buried in Währinger Kommunalfriedhoff (now Schubert Park) alongside his contemporaries Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Schubert.