

# MAKING THE MUSIC WORK: TOWARDS A 'DYNAMIC EDITION' OF CHOPIN

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## *Preamble*

My keynote paper at the SMI's Annual Conference in 2007 – 'Sounding out Chopin: New Sources and Resources' – reviewed three projects in the pipeline at the time: Chopin's First Editions Online (launched in 2007), *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions* (eventually published in 2010) and the Online Chopin Variorum Edition (then in its first developmental phase). The original version of this essay covered similar ground, focusing in particular on the last of these initiatives; it was published in 2015 in an anthology entitled *Genèses musicales*, edited by Nicolas Donin, Almuth Grésillon and Jean-Louis Lebrave. A surprising amount of updating was required before it could be reprinted here. Not only did the OCVÉ project complete the second developmental phase that was in train when I first wrote the essay, but another workphase would follow in which major technical advances would occur along with changes in the online display and functionality. The essay is therefore quite different from both the 2007 keynote and its original counterpart. Although the bibliographic apparatus has not been systematically updated, some new references have been added to fill the most significant lacunae.

The speed with which the online environment continues to evolve never ceases to amaze, and in that light the relative lack of progress in online approaches to the critical editing of music since Frans Wiering's lament in 2009 (quoted below) seems remarkable. But there have nevertheless been important developments, and this essay and the recent publications cited in it allude to them, even if much more could be said to do justice to all that has happened over the last fifteen years.

It seems astonishing in this post-Barthes age to think 'Vive l'auteur!' rather than 'L'auteur est mort', but that is precisely the attitude of many professional musicians today.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, modern performers regularly insist that their goal is to realize 'the

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<sup>1</sup> I refer here to musicians based in the Western classical tradition. For further discussion of the issues adumbrated at the start of this article, see John Rink, 'Work in Progress: l'œuvre infini(e) de Chopin', in *Interpréter Chopin*, ed. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger (Paris: Cité de la Musique, 2006), 82–90; see also John Rink, *Music in Profile: Twelve Performance Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024).

composer's intentions',<sup>2</sup> though it is rarely made clear whether they are referring to authorial intentions at the time of the music's conception, or when the first manuscript was finished, or when proofsheets of the first edition were corrected, or at the first performance, or after years of performances and, if so, by whom.

Chopin offers a particularly interesting case study of how a 'composer's intentions' can change over time. His artistic convictions were more or less immutable and passionately, if quietly, held; with few exceptions he dismissed those whose performances of his works violated the aesthetic principles that he professed. But he was far from rigid when performing his own music. On the contrary, we know from Alfred Hipkins – Chopin's piano tuner during his 1848 visit to Britain, and a noted musician himself – that 'Chopin *never* played his own compositions twice alike, but varied each according to the mood of the moment'.<sup>3</sup> Charles Hallé similarly reported that in a concert in Paris towards the end of his life, Chopin 'played the latter part of his "Barcarolle", from the point where it demands the utmost energy, in the most opposite style, *pianissimo*, but with such wonderful nuances, that one remained in doubt if this new reading were not preferable to the accustomed one. Nobody but Chopin could have

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<sup>2</sup> By way of example, consider the views of cellist Lynn Harrell in a blog from c15 years ago which is no longer available online. Although he was right to observe that musicians should understand the meaning of musical notation, Harrell was on shaky ground in claiming: 'The idea that a composer doesn't have de facto the best and most illuminating approach to the work is fundamentally ridiculous.'

For an example of how a leading nineteenth-century virtuoso ostensibly suppressed an original approach to performance in favour of one subservient to 'the composer's intentions', see Franz Liszt's ecstatic (but dubious) *mea culpa* in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, quatrième année, 7 (12 February 1837): 55, where he writes: '[...] afin d'arracher les bravos d'un public toujours lent à concevoir les belles choses dans leur auguste simplicité, je ne me faisais nul scrupule d'en altérer le mouvement et les intentions [des œuvres de Beethoven, Weber et Hummel...] je déplore ces concessions au mauvais goût, ces violations sacrilèges [*sic*] de l'ESPRIT et de la LETTRE, car le respect le plus absolu pour les chefs-d'œuvre des grands maîtres a remplacé chez moi le besoin de nouveauté et de personnalité d'une jeunesse encore voisine de l'enfance'.

'[...] in order to win the applause of a public always slow to appreciate beautiful things in their august simplicity, I had no scruples about altering the pace and substance [of the works of Beethoven, Weber and Hummel...] I deplore these concessions to bad taste, these sacrilegious violations of the SPIRIT and of the LETTER, because the most absolute respect for the masterpieces of the great masters has replaced in me the need for novelty and for youthful character still linked to childhood. (Translation by author).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by His Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet with Krysia Osostowicz and Roy Howat, ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 55.

accomplished such a feat'.<sup>4</sup> (Nor would anyone *dare* such a feat if the 'composer's intentions' manifest in the score were to be strictly observed, as some would have it).

Not only did Chopin live at a time when music was understood in terms of its performances rather than platonically idealized works – an aesthetic which increasingly took hold from about 1840 onwards<sup>5</sup> – but his creative genius was irrepressible and forever engaged. To that extent he continually modified his compositions on paper as well as in performance. Sometimes the aim was to redress errors in the first editions, either by making changes in later printed impressions thereof or by pencilling corrections into students' scores.<sup>6</sup> More often, Chopin revelled in the music's creative potential by indulging in all manner of variants, whether at the return of earlier passages in a given piece or at successive stages of the compositional process.<sup>7</sup>

The Barcarolle Op. 60 again offers a good example.<sup>8</sup> Chopin's working manuscript (now in Kraków) was eventually used by the Paris publisher Brandus for the French first edition, released in November 1846. It was also the basis of an additional autograph manuscript (no longer extant) copied out by Chopin himself for his London publisher Wessel to use when engraving the contemporaneous English first edition. A third autograph (held by the British Library) was prepared by Chopin for the publisher of the German first edition, Breitkopf & Härtel. Comparison of the two surviving autographs – presumably completed within weeks if not days of one another – as well as the English first edition reveals countless discrepancies of pedalling, dynamics, pitch and so on. Some appear to have been deliberate; others arose from unconscious notational habits,

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Eigeldinger, 66.

<sup>5</sup> See John Rink, 'Les *Concertos* de Chopin et la notation de l'exécution', in *Frédéric Chopin, interprétations*, ed. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2005), 69–88. See also Nicholas Cook, 'Music as Performance', in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 204–14. For a more general discussion see *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> See for example the scores of Chopin's students Jane Stirling, Camille Dubois and Zofia Zaleska-Rosengardt reproduced in the Chopin Online resource ([www.chopinonline.ac.uk](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk)). (All internet sites referenced in this article were last visited in December 2023.)

<sup>7</sup> For discussion see Jeffrey Kallberg, 'The Chopin "Problem": Simultaneous Variants and Alternate Versions', in *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 215–28. See also John Rink, 'Chopin in Transition', in *La Note bleue. Mélanges offerts au Professeur Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger*, ed. Jacqueline Waeber (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 45–71.

<sup>8</sup> For further discussion of the sources for Op. 60 and details of the manuscripts referred to here, see John Rink, 'Chopin Copying Chopin', in *Rund um Beethoven: Interpretationsforschung heute*, ed. Thomas Gartmann and Daniel Allenbach (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2019), 349–65.

or mistakes, on Chopin's part.<sup>9</sup> But the vast majority are rich in musical potential, inflecting the sound in infinitesimal but significant ways. So, which of the two extant manuscripts better reflects Chopin's intentions: the earlier of the two, prepared when he was most alert and his ideas freshest, or the later one, copied out more or less mechanically but with the opportunity to refine initial thoughts and introduce new ones?

Editors of the music of innumerable composers – not just Chopin – have often regarded ‘final authorial intentions’ as definitive, whereas earlier versions are shunned as inferior prototypes. Not only is such an approach conceptually flawed, but, at least in Chopin's case, it is indefensible both historically and aesthetically. For Chopin, ‘later’ generally means not better but different. To systematically prioritize his final intentions would therefore be unwise – though it would be equally unjustifiable to ignore them altogether. What is needed is an understanding of the Chopin work, and indeed the works of any composer, as existing in a state of flux, in an endless process of change involving not only the given composer but all those who engage with it later (by which I mean editors, performers, listeners, critics and so on). For individual musicians, this view of the work may be as bewildering as it is potentially liberating – bewildering because the range of possibility is infinite and the criteria for determining relative value within that range less than obvious (a heavily doctored edition, for instance, might be more useful to a given performer than a relatively ascetic one prepared in the name of authenticity); liberating because they no longer need to regard ‘the composer's intentions’ as fixed and, in that sense, necessarily constraining.

But what does this mean in the context of musical performance, given that the performer has to commit to, or at least project, a single version of the music on each performance occasion? And what about the editor, whose work exists not ‘in a state of flux’ but, typically, in a fixed form on the page? For all the reasons I have mentioned, editors of Chopin's works have generally failed to capture the ongoing creative process at the heart of his music. Most Chopin editions have been too restrictive by failing to account for the range of possibility I have alluded to – in other words, by omitting the variants that flowed from Chopin's pen – or too eclectic by presenting a composite

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<sup>9</sup> Consider for example the opening bar of the Barcarolle, which reveals interesting differences between the three main sources for this work (i.e. the two extant *Stichvorlagen* and the English first edition, from which the contents of the respective *Stichvorlage* must be deduced); these have to do not with changing intentions but with Chopin's erroneous transmission of his original compositional conception. See note 7 for further discussion.

version of the music which purportedly reflects the composer's intentions but which he himself might not have recognized, let alone authorized.<sup>10</sup>

Editing Chopin requires a delicate balance between inclusivity (that is, of all the relevant sources) and fidelity (that is, to each source in its own right, so that individual identities are not compromised). Admittedly, striking that balance is far from easy, not least because numerous relevant sources exist for most of Chopin's compositions – often including one or more sketches, autograph manuscripts, authorized copies, proofsheets, first editions, subsequent impressions published during Chopin's lifetime, autograph glosses in the scores of his students and associates, and so on.<sup>11</sup> Even the approach adopted by the most sophisticated recent Chopin editions<sup>12</sup> – nominating a principal

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<sup>10</sup> A notoriously eclectic edition which purports but fails to be faithful to Chopin is the so-called 'Paderewski edition', published by PWM and edited by Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Ludwik Bronarski and Józef Turczyński. Although the editors claimed to have established 'a text which fully reveals Chopin's thought and corresponds to his intentions as closely as possible', diverse elements are freely drawn from the editions of Mikuli, Sauer, Debussy, Mertke and others, thereby producing a musical patchwork.

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of these sources and the implications arising from them see John Rink, 'Playing with the Chopin Sources', in *Chopin et son temps / Chopin and His Time*, ed. Vanja Hug and Thomas Steiner (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 41–53.

<sup>12</sup> Consider for example *The Complete Chopin – A New Critical Edition* (London: Peters Edition/Faber), in which eight volumes have been published since 2004 under the direction of Series Editors John Rink, Jim Samson, Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger and Christophe Grabowski. This edition is based on two key premises:

- there can be no definitive version of Chopin's works, in that variants form an integral part of the music
- a permissive conflation of readings from several sources – in effect producing a version of the music that never really existed – should be avoided. (See note 10 above.)

Accordingly, the editorial procedure is to identify a single principal source for each work and to prepare an edition of that source (which can be regarded as 'best' if not definitive). At the same time, important variants from other authorized sources are reproduced either adjacent to or, in certain instances, within the main music text, in footnotes or in the critical commentary, thus enabling scholarly comparison and facilitating choice in performance. (Conflation may be inadmissible for the editor, but it remains an option and right for the performer.) Multiple versions of entire works are presented when differences between the sources are so abundant or fundamental that they go beyond the category of variant.

Compare the Polish National Edition (*Wydanie Narodowe*), under the editorship of Jan Ekier and Paweł Kamiński. Although similar in many ways to *The Complete Chopin*, the Polish National Edition aims in general for 'ideal' (or idealized) editions, which is to say that different sources are mined for the best version of a given passage in the view of the editors. Although copious variants are provided as in *The Complete Chopin*, the main music text itself may not correspond to any particular source used or authorized by Chopin, thereby undermining the edition's musical integrity.

source and showing significant variants from secondary sources alongside the main music text or elsewhere – proves inadequate given the sheer quantity of variants and the impossibility of fitting all onto the page. Just a few bars in the Waltz Op. 64 No. 1, for example, would fill two whole pages if one tried to include the entirety of the material emanating directly from Chopin.<sup>13</sup>

The solution to these difficulties resides not in printed editions but in digital media, thanks to the development of technologies for storing, retrieving, combining and supplementing the information that previously would have fed into or emanated from conventional printed editions but which could not easily have been presented within them. Notwithstanding certain limitations (discussed below), there are remarkable practical advantages to on-screen rather than in-print display. It is therefore surprising that although abundant digital editions exist of collections of letters, historical documentation and literature of all kinds, many fewer counterparts have been produced in the field of music. This was certainly the case in 2009, when Frans Wiering lamented the ‘almost complete silence [within the musical community] as to the more radical possibilities for innovation’ in the critical editing of music. According to Wiering, the implications of information and communications technologies in this respect ‘are likely to go far beyond currently accepted practices such as the use of music notation software for the preparation of scores, the online distribution of music in PDF format or even the interchange of score data in some encoded format’.<sup>14</sup> Even now, after nearly 15 years, these observations remain all too relevant.<sup>15</sup>

Wiering noted in particular that, apart from the Online Chopin Variorum Edition (discussed below), ‘hypertextual editions of music do not seem to exist yet’, although ‘some attempts have been made to provide deeper access to the materials from which an edition [of music] is created’.<sup>16</sup> Early examples include the computer-based stemmatics with which Thomas Hall experimented for the New Josquin Edition in the 1970s;<sup>17</sup> the databases that Yo Tomita configured for storing musical variants in J. S.

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<sup>13</sup> See the comparison of bars 21–8 in five different sources in Kallberg, ‘The Chopin “Problem”’, 222–3; see also Christophe Grabowski’s edition ‘with variants’ of Chopin’s Nocturne Op. 9 No. 2 in *The Complete Chopin – A New Critical Edition* (London: Peters Edition, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Frans Wiering, ‘Digital Critical Editions of Music: A Multidimensional Model’, in *Modern Methods for Musicology: Prospects, Proposals and Realities*, ed. Tim Crawford and Lorna Gibson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009): 23.

<sup>15</sup> For discussion see John Rink, ‘Digital Editions and the Creative Work of the Performer’, *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 18/1 (2021), 51–81; doi:10.1017/S1479409819000673.

<sup>16</sup> Wiering, ‘Digital Critical Editions of Music’, 28 and 29.

<sup>17</sup> See Thomas Hall, ‘Some Computer Aids for the Preparation of Critical Editions of Renaissance Music’, *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 25/1 (1975): 38–53.

Bach's *Wohltemperiertes Klavier*, Book 2;<sup>18</sup> and the Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae Electronicum (CMME: [www.cmme.org](http://www.cmme.org)), in which 'the separation of logical structure and visual presentation is especially exploited [...] Out of one encoded score, different transcription styles can be generated: one can for example choose between original and modern clefs, and different barline styles. CMME will also provide access to variants and manuscript context of works.'<sup>19</sup> Another pioneering initiative – DiMusEd (Digitale Musik Edition/ Digital Music Edition) – sought to develop a digital critical edition of the music of Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), the notational characteristics of which have 'the advantage of reducing the difficulty of the task of visualization on the screen compared to a multi-part score', while also presenting 'a good test for the flexibility and extensibility of the data format'.<sup>20</sup>

As Wiering suggests, the Online Chopin Variorum Edition (OCVE)<sup>21</sup> stands apart from many digital music editions partly because of the fusion of its constituent scholarly and technical elements and also because of unique presentational features, as a result of which users can juxtapose selected passages from a range of digitized sources for the sake of comparison (see Figure 2 below), and add annotations according to individual prerogative (see Figure 5 below). This is of course what editors of all kinds have done in the past, juggling and marking up different sheets of paper on which the sources are

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<sup>18</sup> See Yo Tomita and Tsutomu Fujinami, 'Managing a Large Text-critical Database of J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier II* with XML and Relational Database', in *International Musicological Society: 17th International Congress. Leuven, 1–7 August 2002*, ed. Ivan Asselman and Bruno Bouckaert (Leuven: Alamire, 2002): 256–7. Wiering notes, however, that 'a drawback to [Tomita's and Fujinami's] approach is that the information is logically separated from the score' (Wiering, 'Digital Critical Editions of Music', 8).

<sup>19</sup> Wiering, 'Digital Critical Editions of Music', 8.

<sup>20</sup> Wiering, 'Digital Critical Editions of Music', 8; see [www.digitale-edition.at/o:konde.139](http://www.digitale-edition.at/o:konde.139). Other relevant projects include Freischütz Digital ([www.freischuetz-digital.de](http://www.freischuetz-digital.de)), Edirom ([www.edirom.de](http://www.edirom.de)) and The Lost Voices Project (<http://digitalduchemin.org>). A comprehensive review of such projects appears in Rink, 'Digital Editions and the Creative Work of the Performer'.

<sup>21</sup> The original version of this essay described the state of the OCVE project in August 2014; as noted in the Preamble, essential updates have been made to reflect the project in its current state. Previously at [www.ocve.org.uk](http://www.ocve.org.uk), the current OCVE site is at [www.chopinonline.ac.uk](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk). OCVE was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and was directed by John Rink. OCVE's first developmental phase took place from November 2005 to September 2010, subsequent to an eighteen-month pilot study (also funded by the Mellon Foundation) from May 2003 to October 2004. A second developmental phase (October 2011 to March 2015) was in progress when the essay was first written, after which a further developmental phase ensued before the project ended in 2017. The scholarly research was conducted by Christophe Grabowski in conjunction with John Rink, and a team at King's College London (initially Department of Digital Humanities, i.e. DDH, later King's Digital Laboratory, i.e. KDL) handled the technical development.

reproduced (often less than clearly) in order to trace the evolution of compositional ideas between them. Not only does the OCVE facilitate such comparisons, but the process is further enhanced by the abundant metadata on offer within the resource.<sup>22</sup> In short, OCVE allows users to construct unique ‘dynamic editions’ of their own that transcend the fixity of the printed page.

Not only does the OCVE interface attain a level of manipulability outstripping that of extant printed editions of Chopin's music, but it both challenges and has implications for established ways of conceiving and using music editions more generally, in addition to setting a precedent for the integration of scholarly and technical components. This

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<sup>22</sup> OCVE exploits musicological advances in cognate projects such as Chopin's First Editions Online (CFEO) and the *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions*. CFEO ([www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo)) was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Resource Enhancement Programme) from 2004 to 2007. The project created an online resource uniting all of the first impressions of Chopin's first editions in an unprecedented virtual collection, thereby providing access to musicians and musicologists to some of the most important primary source materials relevant to the composer's music. The c5,500 digital images in the CFEO archive were obtained from five lead institutions (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Bodleian Library, British Library, Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina and University of Chicago Library) and seventeen other libraries. The full score of each first impression appears on the CFEO website along with commentary on particularly significant textual features. In addition, there are excerpts from the *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions*. Innovative methodologies for complex textual interlinking and web delivery of this material were devised at DDH using advanced imaging techniques allied with relevant open standards for metadata and interface design.

The *Annotated Catalogue* (Christophe Grabowski and John Rink, *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010)) is the principal outcome of an eleven-year research initiative which began in 1998 with funding from The Leverhulme Trust. Its chief aim was to produce an inventory of the first editions of Chopin's music held by the principal European and American libraries, and to analyse the contents of those editions in detail. The sixty institutions and five private collections that were originally targeted hold some 4,830 copies – representing c1,552 distinct impressions – most of which could be described as ‘Chopin first editions’ in the most general sense. Identifying, classifying and ordering these scores according to transparent and consistent criteria are the main purposes of the *Annotated Catalogue*, which focuses on three broad types of edition:

- publications released during Chopin's lifetime;
- the first editions that appeared posthumously, between 1850 and 1878;
- successive reprints of all of this material up to the point of their disappearance from the market.

Newly engraved versions of these editions bearing the original plate numbers are also included. An expanded, updated internet resource was developed during the second developmental phase of the OCVE project and was released in 2015; this ‘Annotated Catalogue Online’ (ACO; [www.chopinonline.ac.uk/aco](http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/aco)) has a wide range of search and navigational tools as well as a complex system of links within and between the three Chopin Online sites (i.e. ACO, OCVE and CFEO), along with external links where relevant.



has partly to do with the fact that OCVE is research-driven rather than simply creating a digital archive or resource which, however valuable in terms of assembling material otherwise beyond the musician's or musicologist's easy reach, neither represents an advance in research terms nor offers a fundamentally new way of conducting musicological investigation. The emergent system in OCVE is intended not only to make research on musical sources more straightforward, but also to encourage wider modes of comparison and the reconstruction of creative histories to an extent which could not be readily achieved outside a digital environment.

Its focus on core research issues thus distinguishes OCVE from projects of a more archival nature. From its inception the OCVE team grappled with the following key questions:

- What is a musical work, and how is the work concept that has prevailed since the mid-nineteenth century challenged by the Chopin sources?
- What is the best means of capturing in an edition the creative history implicit in the sources, ranging from the earliest sketches through to the last impressions of the first editions and beyond?
- How can the intellectual and logistical difficulties routinely experienced by editors when handling disparate source materials be overcome by means of technological support?
- In what ways might technology change the mode of presenting information previously contained – or, conversely, uncontainable – within printed editions of music?
- Moreover, how might technology fundamentally alter the musician's and the musicologist's understanding of individual sources, their interrelationships and their significance as artistic and cultural artifacts within a rich history of publication, pedagogy and performance?

Accordingly, OCVE's principal outcomes include:

- an online musical edition demonstrating the ways in which scholarship and technology can interact to mutual advantage;

- an interlinked archive of digitized manuscript and printed sources of a large body of music,<sup>23</sup> all of which can be displayed in various formats (see for example Figures 1 and 2);
- detailed background information and philological descriptions written by the scholarly team (see Figures 3 and 4); and
- personal annotation tools allowing individual users to add comments at several levels of granularity (see Figure 5).

The following features are particularly noteworthy:

- An important body of primary source material has been comprehensively assembled for the first time, facilitating philological and style-historical investigation and encouraging a new understanding of Chopin's compositional and publication histories.
- The OCVE resource – totalling some 8,000 images<sup>24</sup> – provides musicians and musicologists with direct access to Chopin's manuscripts and a range of impressions of the first editions of his music.
- The display features have considerable practical and scholarly potential but are simple to use and intuitive in design.
- The online catalogue excerpts and scholarly commentaries foreground the major differences between the manuscripts and multiple first editions, in addition to highlighting their chronological and filial relationships.
- The annotation tools provide users with unprecedented scope to construct their own critical commentaries within a unique 'dynamic edition'.
- The technical outcomes are generalizable to similar projects of a musical and/or non-musical nature and to other initiatives.

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<sup>23</sup> By the end of the third developmental phase, the OCVE resource included digitized primary source material for the four Ballades, Etudes Op. 10 and Op. 25, the four Impromptus, Fantasy Op. 49 and Polonaise-Fantasy Op. 61, the complete Mazurkas and Nocturnes, Preludes Op. 28 and Op. 45, the four Scherzos, and the Sonatas for solo piano and for cello and piano.

<sup>24</sup> This was the total image count when the third developmental phase was completed in 2017.

Online Chopin Variorum Edition About Contexts Works Help

Help guide: take a quick tour

**Ballade Op. 23, 23-1-Sm, p. 2, bs 1-22**

**User tips:**

- Hover over the image to see bar numbers.
- Click on a bar to display the variations of that bar in all available sources.

Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1. ‘Page view’ of the Ballade Op. 23, bars 1–17, first impression of the French first edition. Note the navigation tools to the left; users can open or close the contents list for each witness, the individual pages of which are displayed by clicking on the page-number/bar-range link under ‘Jump to page’. Annotations can be displayed on the right, and clicking on ‘Catalogue’ produces the corresponding entry in the Annotated Catalogue Online. The small double arrow (to the right of the score) yields full-screen viewing. Bar 7 is framed because the cursor has been positioned over it. Clicking on an individual bar such as this results in a ‘bar view’ display of the same bar in each witness of the given piece (see Figure 2).

## OCVE Online Chopin Variorum Edition

Online Chopin Variorum Edition About Contexts Works Help Enter keywords

Back to page view Ballade Op. 23, Bar 6 Select sources Reset bars Bar range Workspace

23-A-Stichvorlage p. 11, Music text bs BarRegion object (444985)–BarRegion object (444986)

23-1-5m p. 2, Music text bs BarRegion object (266478)–BarRegion object (266479)

23-1-BöH p. 4, Music text bs BarRegion object (266247)–BarRegion object (266246)

23-1-BöH (Zaleska-Rosengardt) p. 4, Music text bs BarRegion object (300373)–BarRegion object (300372)

23-1-W p. 2, Music text bs BarRegion object (266757)–BarRegion object (266756)

23-1e-A6P p. 2, Music text bs BarRegion object (281348)–BarRegion object (301599)

Figure 2. Bars 6–7 in six witnesses of the Ballade Op. 23, displayed in ‘Bar view’. From left to right in the upper row, Chopin’s manuscript (*Stichvorlage* for the French first edition), French first edition (first impression), German first edition (first impression) and exemplar of the latter used by Chopin’s student Zofia Zaleska-Rosengardt; in the bottom row, English first edition (first and later impressions). Note that in bar 7 the uppermost left-hand note in the French edition is an intentionally arresting e-flat<sup>1</sup>, whereas in the German first impression it has been rendered a more conventional d<sup>1</sup>. An interesting evolution can be discerned within the English prints, whereby the left-hand pitch eventually changes from the original e-flat<sup>1</sup> to d<sup>1</sup> because the publisher (Wessel’s successor, Ashdown & Parry) was influenced by the German source. The Zaleska-Rosengardt score has a telling pencil correction to the erroneous d<sup>1</sup> (see discussion below).

**OCVE** Online Chopin Variorum Edition

## Ballade Op. 23

The sources for the Ballade Op. 23 reproduced in OCVE consist of a manuscript by Chopin, three first editions and corrected reprints of the latter. In addition, there is a second 'German first edition' marketed for a time in parallel with the first of the Leipzig editions, as well as a score of the German first edition itself containing annotations and apparently owned by a student of Chopin's, Zofia Zaleska-Rosengardt.

The existence of an autograph page containing only the beginning of Op. 23 which probably had nothing to do with the publication process is noted by Krystyna Kobylańska (see *Rękopisy utworów Chopina: Katalog*, 2 vols., Cracow, PWM, 1977, vol. 1, p. 126 and *Frédéric Chopin: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, ed. Ernst Herttrich, trans. Helmut Stolze, Munich, Henle, 1879, p. 46). This manuscript is in a private collection in England and cannot be accessed; therefore it has not been possible to include it in OCVE.

The autograph manuscript (A) served as the basis of the French first edition. Identification of the *Stichvorlage* of the German first edition is difficult in various respects, given that the Breitkopf & Härtel print contains many unique variants despite its general similarities with the French first edition. In contrast, the English first edition clearly was based on the French one.

The evolution of the printed editions after their initial publication was remarkable. Chopin participated in the correction of **F1** as well as **F2**. Two corrected reprints of both the German and the English first editions (respectively **G1** and **E1**) also appeared on the market. The analysis of **G2** and **G3** on the one hand and **E2** and **E3** on the other provides insight into the modifications that were made at the successive stages of correction. As for the second 'German first edition' (**G4**), it faithfully reproduces the text of its *Stichvorlage*, **G1**, apart from a few minor discrepancies.

The analysis of the sources for this work highlights the principal characteristics of each one.

- ▶ Second German edition (G4) 23-2-BBH
- ▶ EFE: first impression (E1) 23-1-W
- ▶ EFE: corrected reprint (E2) 23-1b-W
- ▶ EFE: corrected reprint (E3) 23-1a-ARF

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Figure 3. 'Work overview' of the first impression of the French first edition of the Ballade Op. 23. Note that this is superimposed over the list of witnesses for the work.

The screenshot displays the OCVE website interface. At the top, a dark red navigation bar contains the text 'Online Chopin Variorum Edition' and 'About Contexts Works Help'. A search bar on the right of the navigation bar contains the text 'Enter keywords' and a magnifying glass icon. Below the navigation bar, the page is divided into two main sections: 'Filter by' and 'Browse sources'.

The 'Filter by' section on the left contains four filter categories: 'Work', 'Genre', 'Publisher', and 'Source Type', each with a right-pointing arrow. The 'Browse sources' section on the right is titled 'Ballade Op. 23' and features a 'Selected filters' section with 'Work: Ballade Op. 23'. Below this, a list of sources is displayed, each with a right-pointing arrow, a source identifier, a date, and a red 'i' icon. The sources listed are:

- Autograph: Stichvorlage (A) 23-A-Stichvorlage
- FFE: first impression (F1) 23-1-5m
- FFE: corrected reprint (F2) 23-1a-5m
- GFE: first impression (G1) 23-1-B6H
- GFE: Zaleska-Rosengardt exemplar (ZR-G1) 23-1-B6H (Zaleska-Rosengardt)
- GFE: corrected reprint (G2) 23-1f-B6H
- GFE: corrected reprint (G3) 23-1g-B6H
- Second German edition (G4) 23-2-B6H
- EFE: first impression (E1) 23-1-W
- EFE: corrected reprint (E2) 23-1b-W
- EFE: corrected reprint (E3) 23-1e-ASP

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer section with links for 'Chopin Online', 'AC Online', 'CFEO', 'OCVE', 'Contact', and 'Privacy'. On the right side of the footer, there are logos for 'THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION', 'UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE', and 'KING'S College LONDON Digital Humanities'.

Figure 4. Options under 'Works' (in the navigation bar), i.e. Work, Genre, Publisher and Source Type. For the piece here – Ballade Op. 23 – philological descriptions, or 'witness overviews', are displayed by clicking the 'i' symbol to the right of each witness in the list, with additional links (see the chain symbol) to corresponding entries in the Annotated Catalogue Online. A 'work overview' can be displayed by clicking the book symbol to the right of the work title (see Figure 3).

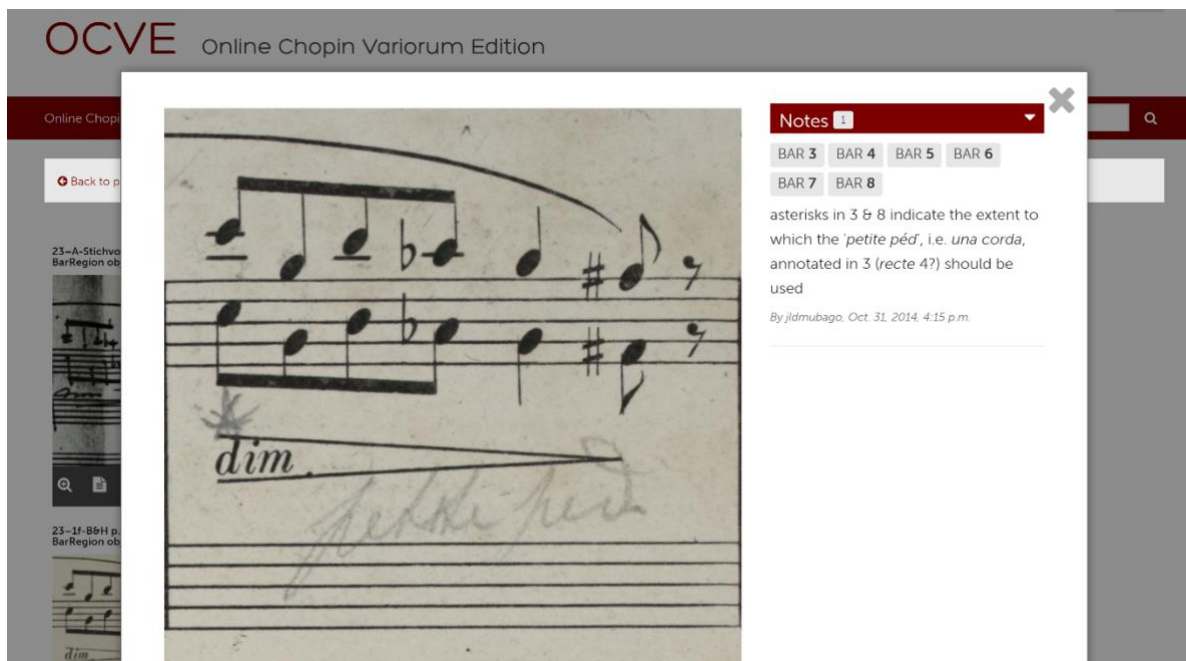


Figure 5. Annotation added by a user in 2014 to bar 3 of the Ballade Op. 23 in the exemplar of the German first edition owned by Chopin's student Zofia Zaleska-Rosengardt (see Figure 2), with cross-references to bars 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 shown at the top. The annotation highlights the handwritten gloss in pencil – possibly entered by Chopin himself – to indicate the use of the 'petite ped.' (i.e. *una corda*, or soft pedal). If this is Chopin's marking, it is exceptionally rare: nowhere is soft pedal marked in his published scores, although he is known to have employed the *una corda* frequently for timbral effect in his playing.

One of the recommendations of external participants at early project workshops in 2003 was the inclusion of more scholarly content than had originally been envisaged, in the form of detailed commentary on the sources themselves, on the philological significance of the variants revealed through the juxtaposition of sources, and on the interpretative issues arising from those variants. This advice was followed but only to a limited extent. Scholarly commentary produced by members of the OCVE team exists at three levels within the online resource. First, each work has a 'work overview' section which describes the general character and provenance of the individual sources relevant to it. Second, each individual source, or 'witness', has a more detailed 'witness overview' including catalogue metadata. (See again Figure 3.) Finally, bar-level comments provided by the team have been entered into the annotation system for nominated works, with a view to highlighting salient details of that source. In the second developmental phase, OCVE also included 'key features' texts for select sources; these provided relevant background information about a given source, along with

references to other sources (whether or not in OCVE) for the sake of comparison. Significant modifications and errors were also highlighted; however, in no case was the discussion exhaustive, nor were ‘key features’ identified for all OCVE sources. Instead, the scholarly material available in the resource was meant to be instructive and indicative rather than fully comprehensive; this intentionally selective approach was deemed more consistent with the aims of the project in general, i.e. the creation of a flexible ‘dynamic edition’ produced not by a fixed body of editors but rather through an individual’s unique, creative interaction with the constituent source material. When the site was redesigned during the third developmental phase, the ‘key features’ texts were sacrificed in an effort to achieve more streamlined functionality, although annotations provided by the scholarly team remained in place.

The annotation system that is currently available represents a logical development of its counterparts at earlier stages.<sup>25</sup> This material has the potential to serve as a model for individual users in constructing their own critical commentaries, whether outside the resource or in the form of public annotations within OCVE itself. In principle, all of the individual comments pertaining to a given source could be combined to yield something akin to a conventional critical commentary. In keeping with the policy on scholarly annotations described above, OCVE’s editorial approach is neutral in respect of the available sources, in that these are presented without qualitative remarks on hierarchy or respective pre-eminence. As OCVE is not presenting a single version of a music text, individual editorial decisions of this kind are not required or indeed desirable.

The resource nevertheless allows users to identify variants and corrections of errors or omissions in one or more sources. A good example can be found in the third bar of the Prelude in C minor Op. 28 No. 20, where the uppermost note in the final right-hand chord is notoriously problematic.<sup>26</sup> Chopin’s autograph manuscript for the Preludes Op.

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<sup>25</sup> In the pilot phase, the presence of annotations was rather crudely indicated by asterisks which could be clicked by the user to reveal pop-up boxes containing the annotation content in question. These did have the advantage of anchoring the annotations to specific features within the bar, whereas the corresponding tool created in the first developmental phase lacked such specificity. I am grateful to Paul Vetch (formerly at DDH) for providing some of the technical information presented in the following part of the essay.

<sup>26</sup> The sources under discussion here are featured in a short film about the OCVE project entitled ‘The Virtual Chopin’ ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJDnc\\_nZT-A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJDnc_nZT-A)), in which I focus on the C minor Prelude and play passages from the different versions on a Pleyel piano from 1846. The film also provides more general information about the Chopin sources and the issues surrounding a ‘composer’s intentions’. For detailed discussion of the C minor Prelude see Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, ‘Le *Prelude en ut mineur* op. 28 n°20 de Chopin. Texte – genre – interprétation(s)’, *Revue de musicologie*, 100/1 (2014): 67–97.



28 (PL-Wn: Mus. 93; *terminus ante quem* 22 January 1839) lacks a flat sign before the e<sup>1</sup> in question; as a result, the natural before e<sup>1</sup> on beat 2 prevails to the end of the bar. This is how the music also appears in Julian Fontana's (lost) copy of Chopin's manuscript. The latter was used as the *Stichvorlage* for the French first edition (Paris: Catelin, 1839), whereas Fontana's copy served as the *Stichvorlage* for the German first edition (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1839); both of these editions remain faithful to their respective *Stichvorlagen* in respect of the absent flat sign. Intriguingly, a flat sign to the e<sup>1</sup> on beat 4 does appear in the English first edition (London: Wessel & Co., 1839), which apparently was based on proofsheets of the Catelin edition although it is not known when or by whom this important change was introduced. In contrast, a much later impression of the English first edition, released by Wessel's successor, Ashdown & Parry, in c. 1868, lacks the flat sign, quite possibly because the house editor or professional corrector preparing the later reprint slavishly followed the German first edition here – a phenomenon encountered in other late English impressions of Chopin's music.<sup>27</sup> More significantly, the corrective flat sign is absent from the presentation manuscript inscribed by Chopin into the album of J.-M. Du Bois de Beauchesne in January 1840 (F-Pn: W. 24. 88), although, conversely, there *is* a flat sign in another autograph presentation manuscript from 1845 (RUS-Mrg: M. 9817), found in an album formerly belonging to the Cheremetieff family. A further indication that Chopin at one point definitely preferred e-flat<sup>1</sup> on beat 4 can be discerned from the pencilled annotation in his hand in the score of Jane Stirling (F-Pn: Rés. Vma 241 [IV, 28, II]), whereby the natural to e<sup>1</sup> that would otherwise prevail is cancelled. All of this suggests either that Chopin always intended e-flat<sup>1</sup> on the fourth beat of bar 3 but simply neglected to add the essential flat sign in the earliest autograph sources, as a result of which both the French and the German first editions also lack this sign, or, alternatively, that he might have changed his mind in the mid-1840s (see the Stirling score and the Cheremetieff manuscript). There is no clear-cut solution to this conundrum, and the decision whether to play C major (acting as a dominant within a briefly tonicized F minor harmony) or C minor (as the restored tonic) is ultimately up to the performer, who can choose either or, in successive performances, both of these readings according to personal predilection. OCVE has been conceived in precisely this spirit of flexibility and opportunity, allowing users to view all of these sources side by side and, in addition, to consult the relevant overviews in order to make up their own minds. What it does not do is to make decisions for users about the relative merits of each source and the

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<sup>27</sup> For discussion see Grabowski and Rink, *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions*; see also Figure 2.

constituent musical material within. In other words, to paraphrase Chopin, OCVE *indicates*; the user must finish the picture.<sup>28</sup>

As, or after, they make their decisions, users can add personal annotations on a public basis, whereby the annotations in question will be visible to anyone consulting the web resource. One of the key aims in developing OCVE's web-based system was to ensure that the process of creating annotations would be as straightforward as possible,<sup>29</sup> and primarily for this reason it was decided to make these attachable only at the level of the bar (rather than to specific coordinates).

Allowing annotations to enter the public domain without prior moderation inevitably creates risks to do with the quality of the material that has been generated, and OCVE's approach to these has been to wait and see what emerges. Self-policing as in Wikipedia is not a viable option: this works most effectively in popular, large-scale fora, whereas it is likely that a much smaller group of musicians and musicologists makes regular use of OCVE. One safeguard adopted by the team was to ensure that user comments are explicitly designated as such, thereby separating them from scholarly counterparts. As a result, a lack of monitoring and/or moderation of publicly generated user annotations has not been problematic to date.

In keeping with OCVE's aim to present a framework for 'dynamic' editing, the long-term intention has been to incorporate sound recordings such that a notionally complete repository of all instantiations of each constituent work would appear within the resource. Another long-range goal has been to develop a collation tool whereby every notational detail of the sources within the OCVE collection could be digitally identified and thus made available for selection, thereby allowing an unprecedented degree of manipulation on the parts of users. Among other things, this would enable performers to produce their own editions by extracting elements from the varied sources within OCVE, yielding a composite version of the music according to their preferences. In

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<sup>28</sup> This paraphrase is based on an anecdote of Chopin's pupil, Wilhelm von Lenz (*The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time from Personal Acquaintance: Liszt, Chopin, Tausig, Henselt*, trans. Madeleine R. Baker (New York: Schirmer, 1899), 56–7), the conclusion of which can be seen as a credo for Chopin's performance aesthetic and, no doubt, his compositional aesthetic as well:

Chopin had been sent for, to play the Beethoven *Sonata* (the variation movement). How did Chopin play Beethoven's Op. 26? He played it well, but not so well as his own compositions [...] Everyone was charmed; I, too, was charmed – but only by his *tone*, by his *touch*, by his elegance and grace, by his absolutely *pure style*. As we drove back together, I was quite sincere when he asked my opinion: '*I indicate*', he remarked, without any touchiness, – 'the listener must finish the picture'.

<sup>29</sup> See John Bradley and Paul Vetch, 'Supporting Annotation as a Scholarly Tool – Experiences from the Online Chopin Variorum Edition', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 22 (2007): 225–41.

principle, unique editions could be created for each performance occasion, explicitly drawing upon the range of possibility described here while avoiding the fixity so inimical to the work-as-process.<sup>30</sup>

Both the nature of the source material in OCVE and the amount of third-party manipulation available to users have complex copyright implications. Ownership is not easy to identify in the case of some witnesses; this is especially difficult with manuscripts and also when images have been derived from sources whose originals are either privately owned or lost. Licensing was therefore a major consideration from the earliest stages. The decision was taken to develop two licence agreements with regard to copyright protection:

- 1) an 'online display' licence aimed at the institutions supplying digital material, covering ownership and related aspects of the images used in the online resource;
- 2) a 'website access' licence targeted at OCVE's users, covering access to the online material.

The first of these saw the greatest development throughout the successive stages of the project. OCVE undertook to prevent, as far as possible, unauthorized usage of the material on the website: for that reason, although full-size images are viewable online, it is not possible to download them easily. Safeguards such as this are important when persuading private collectors to allow OCVE to display previously unpublished manuscript material in a freely accessible online environment.<sup>31</sup>

The issue of display is itself vexed. Of necessity OCVE's juxtaposition framework made use of the different web technologies available at successive stages of the project; the inexorable evolution in technical capacities over OCVE's fifteen years meant that the pilot site launched in 2004 was quickly superseded by much more sophisticated technical capabilities, notwithstanding the pioneering nature of various early features. OCVE's work consistently pushed current browser technology to its limits, and constraints to do with the size of computer screens among other things posed significant design obstacles that had to be overcome if the end results were to be both useful and visually satisfactory. One further intention was to ensure generalizability to the greatest possible extent, i.e. by creating mechanisms that in principle could be used for the music of other composers in which more or less similar source problems are encountered. This aim was kept in mind throughout all OCVE development so that the emergent technical systems and structures could be mapped as required onto other repertoires or an

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<sup>30</sup> For discussion see Rink, 'Digital Editions and the Creative Work of the Performer'.

<sup>31</sup> OCVE is free of charge to users, who at present are not required to register to gain access to the resource although additional functionality is available upon registration.

extended group of works for the same composer. Here again, however, the goal was more easily stated than realized: although some of Chopin's compositions are exceptionally 'messy' in terms of source material (for example, the Polonaise-Fantasy, for which a sizable body of sketches survives, although many more sketch sheets exist for the Cello Sonata Op. 65), the philological complexities surrounding the music of, say, Beethoven and Brahms typically extend far beyond those encountered in the case of Chopin. Furthermore, developing a dynamic edition of Chopin proved to be a good deal easier both practically and conceptually because the vast bulk of his oeuvre was written for solo piano, as against the chamber and large ensemble works (including opera) produced by innumerable other composers whose music would be more awkward to display on a single screen and to manipulate in bar-sized chunks, let alone compare across all of the different sources and types of source that typically exist – including sketches, fair copies, first editions (original and revised), *Handexempläre*, later editions, and so on. This partly explains why so many digital music editions have concentrated on relatively straightforward repertoire, including that of select 'early' composers (in the case of CMME, DiMusEd, etc.) or later ones such as Chopin (in the case of OCVE in particular).

If the digital revolution is to challenge well-established practices such that an online medium becomes the norm for presenting music editions, then considerable progress will be needed beyond the achievements of OCVE and the other projects discussed in this essay.<sup>32</sup> To that extent, the dynamic edition of music should still be regarded as 'work in progress' – fittingly so, given that music itself must be understood in precisely those terms.

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<sup>32</sup> For discussion see Rink, 'Digital Editions and the Creative Work of the Performer'.