

SCORE REVIEW

Fryderyk Chopin. *Polonaises, Op. 40: Facsimile Edition of the Manuscript Held in the British Library in London*, commentary by Zofia Chechlińska. Facsimile Edition A VI/40 (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2015), 2 vols, 12 and 55 pp. € 67.

Fryderyk Chopin. *Mazurka in A flat major: Facsimile Edition of the Manuscript Held in the Bibliothèque Polonaise in Paris (MAM Rkp. 973)*, commentary by Irena Poniatowska. Facsimile Edition A IV/WN 45 (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2015), 2 vols, 2 and 92 pp. € 48.

The Fryderyk Chopin Institute is well on the way to realizing an ambitious project: to publish all the available Chopin music autographs in facsimile edition, each with a critical source commentary in six languages (Polish, English, French, German, Spanish and Japanese). 2015 saw the addition of two facsimile editions to this undertaking, which began in 2005. The first of these reproduces the *Stichvorlage* of the French first edition of the *Polonaises, Op. 40*, the other, a mazurka in A-flat major from the album of Maria Szymanowska. These two facsimiles illustrate the tremendous scope and significance of this project, as well as some of the less fortunate consequences of making Chopin's autograph manuscripts the main focus of the series.

One need not even open these editions to sense that something precious lies within. Each facsimile is bound in deep blue cloth, the accompanying commentary likewise bound in a separate volume, with the two slim volumes fit snugly together in a protective case of the same deep blue. Inside, the colour reproductions of the manuscripts, printed on high quality paper, are stunning – capturing with clarity not only Chopin's every mark but also the accumulated signs of use and accident. One can trace the fine gradations, for instance, of a coffee-coloured stain that diffused from the final page of the second polonaise, where it left a large smudge in the upper left corner, through each prior page of the piece, until one finds but a light-brown circle around the fifth measure of the manuscript.

Every commentary volume includes a statement of the series' editorial policy. Each facsimile edition in the series presents a complete manuscript, whether of a single work (as in the case of the *Mazurka in A-flat major*) or opus (as in the case of *Op. 40*). Additionally, each volume is designed to match the size of its original manuscript. Thus, true to form, the *Mazurka in A-flat major* volume contains a single folio of music, at a diminutive 17cm x 10.6cm (or a little more than 6.6 x 4.1 inches). The *Op. 40* volume is larger, featuring six folios measuring 28cm x 27.1cm, including a final folio of blank staves but for the faint bleed from another (unidentified) text. The series has not yet progressed to more complicated cases, such as when works belonging to different *opéra* appear on the same folio or when multiple autograph sources exist for the same work. But the stated policy for handling such cases prioritizes the unity of the manuscript source and the uniformity of the resulting edition; so, for example, multiple autographs for the same work will be reproduced in a single volume only if they appear on paper of similar dimensions and are currently held in the same place. As a result, the series now projects – and stands poised to continue to project – an image of Chopin's

compositional process coming to fruition in discrete and finalized texts. The familiar yet distorted nature of this image is a matter to which we shall return.

The Polonaises, Op. 40, volume makes the autograph *Stichvorlage* of the French first edition available in facsimile for the first time. The accompanying commentary places the compositions in the context of their genre, noting nineteenth-century listeners' associations with Poland's struggle for independence, and the opus's participation in a trend away from dance features and toward monumentality. Also mentioned is a reversal of fortunes for the two polonaises that make up the opus. While the superior value of the Polonaise in C minor is taken to be common knowledge and self-explanatory today, the Polonaise in A major is shown to have been more highly prized in the nineteenth century, a fact attributed to its greater conventionality and hence accessibility.

The Op. 40 manuscript is neatly written with minimal correction; the occasional crossings out of individual chords, figures or symbols reflect not compositional rethinking but rather errors immediately caught and corrected. The accompanying commentary provides an exhaustive – one might even say excessively detailed – description of the manuscript, informing the reader as to its current condition at the British Library in London as well as various measurements and what is known of its ink, stains, folds and stamps. By contrast, only a single paragraph is devoted to the complicated relationships between this manuscript, other manuscript sources of Op. 40, and the resulting print editions. We do learn that there was an earlier autograph of the Polonaises that was lost during World War II, which survives now only in photographic reproduction at the Paderewski Archive in the Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw. As Jim Samson demonstrated in 1986, the main difference between the earlier autograph and the French *Stichvorlage* lay in the middle section of the Polonaise No. 2 in C minor. This Chopin thoroughly rewrote in response to criticism from Julian Fontana, his friend and assistant, and the ultimate dedicatee of the Op. 40 Polonaises.¹ 'I will change for you the second part of the Polonaise until I die', he wrote to Fontana on 8 October 1839, before adding with evident irony that 'yesterday's version may also not be to your liking – although I racked my brains for some 80 seconds' (*Polonaises*, p. 17).

Chopin's habit of continually changing his compositions – the permanent state of flux conjured by their many variants – has been a guiding interest for other recent projects aspiring to offer comprehensive access to Chopin sources, notably the Chopin Early Editions project launched by the University of Chicago in 2003, the multi-institutional effort Chopin's First Editions Online begun in 2004, and the 2011 expansion of the latter into the Online Chopin Variorum Edition. These projects leverage digital tools to facilitate comparison between primary sources, the hope being not to discover original compositional intentions but rather to give today's readers more choices in and control over their engagement with Chopin's musical texts. These three projects bring into view the provisional nature of any particular Chopin text. Chopin's First Editions Online has a special 'compare' tool to facilitate examining editions side by side. Chicago's Early Editions project includes not only first editions but also editions printed through the later nineteenth century, giving a longer view of the life of these texts. And the Chopin Variorum Edition gives the most comprehensive view of Chopin's relation to these print editions. It includes also any available sketches, rejected *Stichvorlagen*, presentation manuscripts, *Stichvorlagen*, and proofs; and it offers a more granular

¹ Jim Samson, 'An Unknown Chopin Autograph', *Musical Times*, vol. 27, no. 1720 (June 1986): 376–8.

'comparison' feature, which allows the user to click on any measure of a source to see all available variations for that particular measure.

Facilitating the comparison of variants is not a central aim of the Chopin Institute's facsimile project. Rather, it keeps alive a staple rationale for modern facsimile editions: to 'bring performance practice closer to the composer's intentions'.² And with its focus on Chopin autographs of complete works or *opera*, and their exact reproduction in print together with hefty commentary volumes, the series asks us to find the composer's intentions not in sentiments such as 'I will change for you the second part ... until I die', but rather in texts permanently fixed in the composer's authorial hand. In fact, the editorial statement seems to suggest that a multiplicity of sources for a single work is the exception rather than the norm: 'in cases where a number of sources of a given work exist, the role of the particular source in relation to the remaining sources is described in the commentary'. With Chopin, however, the supposed exception is the rule; more often than not, he authorized editions for England, France and Germany that contained musical text that differed. One simply cannot account for all Chopin's authorized versions without considering sources beyond the autograph manuscripts.

Yet, issues of authorial intent aside, the series' devotion to the facsimile reproduction of Chopin autographs has important benefits. The decision to include *all* Chopin music autographs, rather than only those corresponding to published works, is a boon for scholars interested in the social lives of music manuscripts. The Mazurka in A-flat major provides a case in point: the source commentary offers a wealth of information on this diminutive manuscript from the autograph album of Maria Szymanowska, including about its conservation, and about the beautiful calfskin volume in which it was bound. At the same time, the commentary leaves questions unanswered and beckoning further investigation. Who, for instance, was Maria Szymanowska? From the commentary, which makes no mention of the fact that Szymanowska was, like Chopin, a Polish pianist and composer, we simply learn that she died in 1831, that her daughter Celina Mickiewicz and grandson Władysław preserved her album prior to its donation to the Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris, that it was likely her daughter who added the Chopin autograph, and that the album comprised 130 music autographs, including by canonic figures (e.g., J.S. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven), contemporary celebrities (e.g., Paganini, Giuditta Pasta, Henriette Sontag) and Polish composers (e.g., Franciszek Lessel, Michał Kleofas Ogiński). The omission of biographical information about the woman whose album contained the mazurka autograph is a missed opportunity to make Szymanowska known to a wider international audience and to contextualize the autograph more fully, and it is a particular shame in view of the fact that the author of the commentary, Irena Poniatowska, has previously published on Szymanowska's compositions. Clearly, Szymanowska stands outside the Chopin facsimile series' mission. Nevertheless, one can read the facsimiles against the grain to discover such fascinating figures in their margins. Indeed, to connect the music a manuscript contains to the circumstances of its production and consumption would seem a most valuable reason to reproduce such documents.

² 'Editorial Note' in *Polonaises*, p. 50. On the relationship between facsimiles and accessing composers' intentions, see Deirdre Loughridge, 'Making, Collecting and Reading Music Facsimiles Before Photography', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 141/1 (2016): 27–59, esp. 58.

Another important contribution of the series lies in the medium of the printed facsimile. The editorial statement does little to make the case for this medium. The promise, 'thanks to the use of modern technology, the series *Works by Chopin. Facsimile Edition* provides an access to Chopin's musical manuscripts that is comparable to direct contact with the originals' (p. 54) invokes the value of the manuscripts' materiality while evading the more difficult question of how that materiality matters to the goals of bringing performance practice closer to the composer's intentions and making Chopin's autographs more widely available. The kinds of questions to which a document's materiality might be most relevant – questions about how a document was handled and circulated, for instance – are ones in which the series editors seem to have little interest. Instead, the aura of the original – and a desire to come close to that original by means of its reproduction – allows the sense of approximating 'direct contact' to go unexamined.

But there are other reasons to produce print facsimiles in this digital age. For instance, print has a decided advantage over the digital when it comes to archival purposes, in that it allows for passive storage. In the upgrade environment of hardware and software, there are no guarantees that – should priorities shift or financial support disappear – resources like the Online Chopin Variorum Edition will remain operable. While its editions are certainly more difficult and costly for readers to access compared to digital reproductions at this moment, then, the Chopin Institute series performs a valuable function in safeguarding the future availability of Chopin's autographs.

Print facsimiles can also be put to different purposes than digital facsimiles. Autographs hold fascination for multiple audiences, making facsimiles relevant not only for the professional purposes of musicologists and performers but also for the recreational purposes of music lovers and collectors. While digitization projects promise enormous gains for scholar and performer, they largely bypass the collector whose attachment is to the material artefact. Chopin himself was such a collector, preserving not only original autograph manuscripts from fellow musicians, but also facsimiles of musician's scores, letters and signatures published in the Parisian music journal, *Revue et Gazette Musicale*. Though Chopin may not have shared the Chopin Institute facsimile series' view of his handwriting as an enduring locus of compositional intent, he very likely would recognize its high valuation of the handwritten artefact. Indeed, it is when we – like Chopin – decouple the allure of handwritten documents from overriding concerns with compositional intention that we stand to learn the most from music autographs and their facsimiles.

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