

Score Review

Franz Schubert, *Klaviersonaten II: Die mittleren Sonaten*, ed. Walburga Litschauer (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2023). BA9643.

Franz Schubert, *Fantasie f-Moll für Klavier zu vier Händen*, ed. Walburga Litschauer (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2024). BA11862.

Frédéric Chopin, *Berceuse pour le Piano*, ed. Britta Schilling-Wang (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2023). BA11830.

In recent years, the value of Urtext editions has changed dramatically. Before the internet, they offered the only means – short of an expensive, exhaustive trip through various libraries and archives – of acquiring the most authoritative reading of a composition, which (according to the prevailing science of the time) in turn allowed musicians to get as close as possible to the composer's intent. However, with the increasing ease of online and digital access to manuscripts, prints, and other forms of printed music – mainly due to the near-total dominance of the International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org) as a one-stop (free) shop for nearly every non-copyrighted musical work ever published – the Urtext has seemingly lost much of its appeal as a mediator between past composer and present performer, at least for the majority of practitioners. The three editions under review all seem aware of this new reality, as each tries to offer scholars and performers something that no digital source(s) alone can provide, according to the unique opportunities and challenges that their respective musical works call forth.

Walburga Litschauer's edition of Franz Schubert's 'middle sonatas' – those written between 1818 and 1825 – is a complex example of Bärenreiter's efforts to produce what Walther Dürr called an 'open edition', which 'must not succumb to the fiction that it can produce valid, definitive texts – it must preserve the instructional character of the notation, must render ambiguous marks ... more precisely, but must leave open that which the composer wanted to leave open'.¹ Based on readings first published in 2003 as Series VII, Section 2, Volume 2 of the *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, this edition tries to meet the needs of scholars and performers. This task is particularly challenging due to the nature of the middle-period sonatas. To begin with, the edition publishes only five sonatas despite extant materials for 'four completed and five unfinished works, the composition dates of which reveal these creative phases' (p. xix).

The German and English preface reveals the fundamental challenge of offering a practical edition that still meets the standards associated with modern critical editions of complete works. 'Complete' is the operative word, as Schubert's middle-period sonatas include four complete works (D664, D784, D845, D850), drafts or fragments of six more (D505, D613, D625, D655, D769, D840), and one sonata with two completed movements and two fragmentary ones (D840). The

¹ Dürr outlined this philosophy in 'Musikphilologie und musikalische Praxis: Die Neue Schubert-Ausgabe', in *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz 1949–1989*, ed. Gerhard Thews (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989), 569–80. The extract is taken from the preface to Litschauer's edition, xxv.

Gesamtausgabe includes the complete and incomplete sonatas in a single volume with a comprehensive preface and critical apparatus. The Bärenreiter offprint, however, includes only the completed sonatas. (A note below the table of contents page refers readers to the 'Extras' tab of the edition's homepage, which provides a downloadable PDF of the incomplete middle-period sonatas.²)

This division of content was no doubt decided on economic and practical grounds. The average pianist would be about as interested in tackling an unfinished composition as a Schubert scholar would be in relying on a practical edition to answer complex codicological questions. However, Litschauer's preface delves into all of the middle-period works as if the separation never happened. Moreover, the preface refers to the music in a different order in which pieces appear: Litschauer briefly covers D664, a complete sonata, before devoting significant attention to the half-complete D840. Going from D664 to D840, the preface also inadvertently omits any mentions of D784, a complete Sonata in A minor.³ In short, the editorial preface can be confounding for those looking to match word and music, since such efforts require a lot of extra page flipping and screen scrolling.

Fortunately, the clarity of the introductory material improves with Mario Anschauer's cohesive and informative set of 'Notes on Performance Practice' that follow. Relying on Albert Stadler's recollection from 1858 that 'Schubert belonged to the old school of good pianoforte players, whose fingers had not yet begun to attack the poor keys like birds of prey' (p. xxvi), Anschauer draws heavily on three piano tutors from the first half of the nineteenth century to support his observations and recommendations: Friedrich Starke's *Wiener-Pianoforte-Schule* (1821), Johann Nepomuk Hummel's *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel* (1828), and Carl Czerny's *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule* (1839). Anschauer mines these and other contemporary sources for insights into touch, legato, pedalling, staccato vs. portato, accents, dynamics, embellishments, triplet and dotted rhythms, and tempo modification. Most importantly, he regularly connects the prescriptions of these contemporary writers to passages in the edition itself. As a result, pianists making their way through the edition are well-prepared to tackle the ambiguities and idiosyncrasies of Schubert's writing.⁴

Dispensing with the cramped spacing of the Gesamtausgabe, the music in the Bärenreiter edition has been newly engraved with enough white space for readers to add marginalia, analyses, and other personal performance aides. Bärenreiter's high standards of typesetting and legibility are on full display, although the added a running head on the recto of each page (e.g., 'D845 II') is downright ugly. Editorial notes are few and far between, although they pick up considerably

² See www.baerenreiter.com/en/shop/product/details/BA9643/. Similar supplemental material is available on the homepage of the Fantasy in F minor, www.baerenreiter.com/en/shop/product/details/BA11862/, albeit under the tab 'Description'.

³ It does not help matters of clarity that the PDF of fragmentary sonatas follows a different pagination scheme as the Bärenreiter edition, whose music begins on p. 135. The PDF begins on p. 142.

⁴ It remains unclear why Schubert opted for mordents (*Pralltriller*) in bars 257–261 instead of the two-note appoggiatura found everywhere else in the first movement of the Sonata in A minor, D845, since Anschauer's evidence (see xxxi–xxxii) suggests that they are identical in practice.

for D850, possibly due to the availability of Schubert's autograph draft and a print whose engraving the composer probably supervised.

Litschauer explores these and other thorny editorial issues in the following critical commentary. In yet another effort to offer easy access, while also accounting for the music's critical complexity, the commentary provides short descriptions of sources⁵ followed by 'special comments' that 'include the relevant editorial emendations in the musical text and performance suggestions' (136).⁶ Such emendations are thoughtful yet somewhat formulaic. Litschauer adds or alters slurs, dynamics, and other markings only when authentic parallel models can be found. Hence, many of the special comments follow the phrasing 'X after Y' (ex., 'm. 36: *f* added after m. 115'). For D845 and D850, where Schubert's manuscript and an authorized print exist, Litschauer also provides significant deviations between the two sources.

Litschauer's edition of the great Fantasy in F minor for four hands, D940, follows the same editorial and philosophical approach as her edition of the sonatas. Yet unlike the sonatas, this edition of the Fantasy is not the first to publish its reading from the Schubert Gesamtausgabe. That distinction goes to volume 3 of Schubert's *Werke für Klavier zu vier Händen*, published by Bärenreiter in 2013 and edited by Litschauer and, for D908, Werner Aderhold. While the music is identical in both editions, the 2024 edition is superior, especially for performers. First, the music is printed in landscape format, with primo and second on recto and verso pages, respectively, thus creating a shorter span of pages – 29 compared to the earlier edition's 37 – that cuts down on the number of risky page turns. Second, and even more helpful, is how each system of music includes the same number of bars for each player. For pianists who use the Dover edition of the Fantasy (from the 1888 volume of the first Schubert Gesamtausgabe), whose bar numbers only line up at page turns, this feature is a major advantage of the new edition, since it will save pianists countless frustrating minutes of asking their partner where they should pick up playing.

While the format of Litschauer's 2013 edition aids analysis, the 2024 edition is further enhanced with new details and prescriptions to support performers. Mario Aschauer's 'Notes on Performance Practice' have been tacitly updated; they now conform to the content and organization found in the edition of the piano sonatas, save for the occasional omission or addition of a phrase to better orient his comments to the Fantasy. For instance, his prescriptions for the execution of short appoggiaturas are illustrated in passages from D840, D845, and D850 in the edition of the piano sonatas. In contrast, in the edition of the Fantasy they are applied to the piece's haunting opening.

Save for a single comment in the footer of page 3, unlike the edition of the piano sonatas, the music of the Fantasy includes no editorial comments. These instead are restricted to the short critical commentary that concludes the edition. Litschauer

⁵ This edition references digital copies of several relevant sources that can be viewed through the portal, <https://links.baerenreiter.com/referenz.php>. Unfortunately, none of the provided inputs (ex. 'BA09643-0012') worked for me.

⁶ All of the special comments appear as 'Bemerkungen' in the Gesamtausgabe's critical commentary, although not all of the Gesamtausgabe's 'Bemerkungen' appear as special comments. The Bärenreiter edition also lacks the detailed lists of corrections that the Gesamtausgabe provides for the principal sources of D784, D840, and D850. Critical commentary on the fragmentary sonatas contained in the PDF only appears in the Gesamtausgabe.

adds five unremarkable comments to her 2013 report, while Wolfgang Thein, who is credited on the edition's title page as having 'reviewed' ('durchgesehen') the edition, provides 'additional comments' in the English-language critical report that mainly concern the differentiation of accents and decrescendo hairpins. Such matters could affect performance, and thus their presence in this new edition is appreciated, as is the high standard of care and rigour that the editors consistently bring to their work.

Britta Schilling-Wang's edition of Chopin's *Berceuse*, Op. 57, follows the same format as that of the two volumes of Schubert's piano music. But because hers is not dependent on a larger editorial effort like a complete works edition, it can respond better to the peculiarities of the work and, by extension, better meet the needs of the performer and scholar. The *Berceuse* emphasizes the myriad challenges of producing a definitive reading of Chopin's music. English, French, and German editions appeared in 1845, but they differ so much that Schilling-Wang concludes that they were based on different models. Some of these models are known, such as the *Stichvorlage* of the German edition. Yet that *Stichvorlage* also contains some, but not all, of the passages that made their way into the French and English editions. At the same time, copies of the French first edition owned by Camille O'Meara-Dubois and Jane Stirling include additional material that can be directly traced to Chopin. As challenging as these variants pose to the modern editor, Schilling-Wang reminds readers that 'differences between the musical texts did not represent a contradiction for Chopin' (viii).

Nevertheless, while these sources qualify as Urtexte, their editorial value remains disputed. Schilling-Wang takes the first French edition as the principal source, primarily because of Chopin's direct involvement with the first print run (whose autograph corrections made their way into later print runs) and the additions mentioned above in copies by his students. Schilling-Wang's comments are extensive and comprehensive. Since the integrity of the English and German first editions is undeniable, but their value is debatable, the critical edition errs on the side of caution by including variants among all the first editions. As expected, most differences concern articulations, dynamics, and performance directions. More substantial differences that affect the notes themselves or aspects of execution are highlighted in two places: in the critical commentary and as footnotes within the music itself. This information distribution (and duplication) is the editorial sweet spot for performers and scholars.

Why a new edition of the *Berceuse* at all? Simply put, Schilling-Wang interprets the source situation differently than editors of recent editions. The excellent Henle edition, edited by Norbert Müllemann and published in 2015, also takes the reprint of the first French edition as a primary source. However, its rationale for doing so slightly differs from that of Schilling-Wang's edition. Müllemann lays out the route to publication as follows:

[Chopin] first had the copyists transcribe the draft of the autograph and then subsequently notated the pedal markings, articulation[s] and dynamics himself. He also corrected writing errors and revised individual passages. This phase of the text, which was authorised by Chopin and which goes beyond that of the autograph, was engraved in the German first edition; the sources for the French and English prints must have been very similar, since save for the pedal markings, no serious differences can be identified. (vi)

Given the apparent minor differences, the French reprint's distinction as 'Fassung letzter Hand' justifies its status as a primary source for the Henle edition. Yet

Chopin's hand continued, as witnessed by the two copies mentioned above of his pupils. Despite their later date, Müllemann argues that these alterations 'concern indications that stem from the respective teaching situation and thus cannot be evaluated as being generally applicable for the work' (p. 13).

Jan Ekier evaluates these sources quite differently in his 2002 edition of the *Berceuse* for the National Edition (Series A, vol. 12). Like the Schubert volumes under review, Ekier's volume is part of a larger editorial enterprise that attempts to abide by a singular yet all-encompassing editorial policy. For the *Berceuse*, it is the manuscript in an unknown hand, housed at Warsaw's National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa), that serves as a primary source. Schilling-Wang and Müllemann recognize this source as the engraver's copy but show concern for various errors contained therein; Schilling-Wang further notes that the manuscript 'Contains significant variants and additions not included in any of the other known manuscript sources' (9).

In other words, while these three editions agree on the state of the *Berceuse's* sources (see p. 10 of Müllemann's edition for a handy visual schematic), they disagree on the relative value of those sources. Traditional editorial policy, as established by the major Gesamtausgaben in the second half of the twentieth century, does not do well with deviance. Schubert and Chopin provide clear examples that composing and marketing music was deviant in the first half of the nineteenth century, characterized by multiple (often incomplete) drafts, copies, prints, reprints, and practical one-offs. In both its single editions and complete works editions, Bärenreiter is trying to thread the needle of providing access to the musician who just needs the notes and the scholar who needs the stories behind the notes. While the results are uneven, they are appreciated, since they open up a messy world of creation and consumption that has always characterized the best works of art. They also serve as a powerful reminder that the Urtext still has an important role in the work of the scholar, the performer, and every music-minded person.

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