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Scholarly Editions, Historical Monuments and Sets

When covering the subject of scholarly editions for a graduate bibliography class, I approach the topic from a number of different angles. Naturally, I give some attention to a description of the LC classifications M2 (for historical monuments) and M3 (for composers' collected works) and introduce students to the key reference materials that are helpful for finding individual works within these editions: Anna Harriet Heyer's *Historical Sets, Collected Editions and Monuments of Music: A Guide to their Contents*, George Hill and Norris Stephens' *Collected Editions, Historical Series & Sets & Monuments of Music: A Bibliography*, and of course the works lists for composers in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Since these resources are probably familiar to all of us, I would like to focus my talk here on three additional topics that I cover that deal with the nature of historical editions and how scholars and performers can profit by using them. The first is the purpose of scholarly editions and a description of some of the factors that affect the editorial process; second, the ways that scholarly editions reflect changes in the discipline of musicology and changes in the musical canon; and third, the impact that scholarly editions can have on performance.

In covering the first point, I usually require students to read the article on historical editions in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The definition given there by Sydney Robinson Charles, George Hill, Norris Stephens, and Julie Woodward is one that I cite frequently. As they put it, scholarly editions are "prepared

on the basis of a critical evaluation of all known primary sources” and are intended “to present the most authoritative authentic version of its contents, with editorial material clearly distinguished from the original.” In order to flesh out this definition, I often begin by pointing out two common misconceptions that I have often encountered among students and even faculty about the purpose of these editions. First, they do not represent some kind of pure “urtext” that represents the composer’s music without any editorial intervention. In any edition, whether scholarly or not, an editor will have to make decisions about the composer’s intentions in a wide range of areas from consistency in articulation and dynamic markings to the actual rhythms and pitches. Some compositions exist in multiple versions, and each of them may be sanctioned (or at least permitted) by the composer. This situation can be especially common in the realm of opera, where composers often substituted arias to match the capabilities of singers available for a particular production. Second, it is often assumed that the composer’s autograph is almost always the most reliable source for a scholarly edition. Certainly the autograph is important, but other sources can be equally valuable. If the composer oversaw the publication of a piece, then that source may take priority over the autograph.

A work that I have used to illustrate these points, and to help students understand how a scholarly edition is actually realized, is Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy*. I have found this work to be an especially useful example for a number of reasons. *Harold in Italy* is, of course, a part of the standard repertoire and therefore likely to be familiar to students. It is a relatively recent volume in the *New Berlioz Edition*, a scholarly edition that has maintained consistently high standards, one which moreover has front matter and a critical report in English, so there is no language barrier for students. Finally the work

has a small number of principal sources, which can be easily grasped, and some interesting textual problems. I would like to expand a bit on these last two points.

In creating the edition for *Harold in Italy*, the editors Paul Banks and Hugh Macdonald relied on three main sources: the printed full score, first edition, which was published in 1848, the first publication of orchestral parts from the same year, and the composer's autograph, which survives in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It is the first of these, the printed full score, which serves as the primary basis of the edition. Why this is the case is an interesting question, and the answer tells us much about some of the considerations that are involved in preparing a scholarly edition.

In their Foreword to the edition, Banks and Macdonald explain that Berlioz revised the work extensively between its premiere in 1834 and its publication fourteen years later. Some of these changes are present in the autograph, such as the passage near the conclusion in which two violins and a cello are placed off stage and recall thematic material from the second movement, the Procession of the Pilgrims. The addition of the solo viola to this passage was an even later addition to the score. The trumpet and cornet parts underwent many changes to take advantage of changes in the design of these instruments during the 1830s and 1840s. In the appendices, the editors have provided a detailed overview of Berlioz's revisions in the autograph as well as reconstructed the earlier versions of the parts for trumpets and cornets. Obviously, these appendices are immensely helpful in studying the compositional process in this work.

Some of the other changes, however, are present only in the published score, including the addition of metronome markings and some of Berlioz's instructions to the performers, [such as the direction at the beginning that the solo violist be placed in the

foreground close to the audience and isolated from the orchestra]. The published score of 1848 therefore represents Berlioz's final thoughts and logically is the basis for the score in the *New Berlioz Edition*. To give the students some appreciation of the number of editorial decisions involved, I show them the List of Readings and decipher a few of the entries for them. I explain that the editors have compared the three primary sources measure by measure and noted any differences among them, especially the lack of dynamic or articulation markings in either the autograph or parts that are included in the published score. In doing so, they understand the painstaking attention to detail that is required in creating a scholarly edition.

Having covered the basics of what comprises a scholarly edition, I often conclude this part of my presentation by emphasizing that these editions are useful resources for learning the historical background and the genesis of a work. In my experience, students tend to rely only on biographical studies for this kind of information and often are not aware how helpful scholarly editions can be in writing papers for music history classes.

Sometimes the question will arise: why are there two scholarly editions for the music of Berlioz and some other composers. This question can serve as a useful transition to a discussion of how editions reflect changes in thinking within the field of musicology. In the case of Berlioz, the old edition was never finished and the texts for many volumes were unreliable. As we all know, editorial standards and the criteria for what materials should be included in an edition have changed dramatically over the past 100 years. It can be instructive to show students older editions and why scholars have decided to replace them with newer ones. The old Monteverdi edition by Gian Francesco Malipiero with its liberal addition of dynamics, phrasings, and so forth looks startling

today. I also often talk about the old Lasso edition by Franz Haberl and Adolf Sandberger, which in some volumes included comments on individual pieces by the nineteenth-century scholar Carl Proske. The decision to include Proske's terse descriptions, such as "very original" or "excellent," for some pieces as a kind of editorial commentary suggests the esteem in which his work was viewed by scholars in the late nineteenth century but appears odd or even amusing to us. A more serious problem with the edition was the decision to publish Lasso's motets based on an edition prepared by his sons Rudolph and Ferdinand some years after his death, the *Magnum Opus Musicum*. Haberl and Sandberger followed the organization of this publication, which arranged the motets by number of voices. As a result, it is very difficult to use the edition to study the motets chronologically based on their publication during Lasso's lifetime. Given that Lasso composed over 500 motets, it would be a time-consuming task for someone to attempt a chronological study by rearranging them based on their date of publication. This is one reason why Peter Bergquist began a new edition of the motets in the series *Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*.

Another point I stress is the way a critical edition is often a sign that a composer's status has been revised upwards in the musical canon. The publication of Rossini's and Verdi's works in scholarly editions was an indication that their works were at last deemed worthy of study and called for authoritative texts. These editions were begun relatively recently, in 1979 for Rossini and 1983 for Verdi, and were due in part to a heightened critical regard for their music and, in the case of Rossini, a new found appreciation for his historical importance in the development of serious Italian opera. Perhaps an even more dramatic example is the appearance of a Kurt Weill edition. During the 1970s and 1980s

an impressive amount of scholarship devoted to Weill was published on both sides of the Atlantic, and performances of his music increased markedly. Prior to this time, there would have been little interest in starting a scholarly edition of Weill's music. Now, given the consistent advocacy of scholars and performers on his behalf, the time is ripe for such an edition, and one was started in 1996.

Most of my talk up to now has been oriented around musicological concerns, but in my final point, my goal is to help students understand how performers may use scholarly editions. In order to facilitate this discussion, I have students read an article by Philip Gossett entitled "Scholars and Performers," which appeared in the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 45 (March 1992). In the article, Gossett describes the preparation of Rossini's *Semiramide* for the Rossini edition and its subsequent use for a production of the work at the Metropolitan Opera in 1990. Gossett lays out four areas in which the new edition supersedes earlier ones. First, it is complete, thereby restoring passages that had not been heard in previous revivals in the 20th century. Second, it incorporates autograph material that had previously been unknown. Gossett explains how Rossini often used "spartitini," that is little scores separate from the autograph that accommodated the parts for winds, brass, and percussion in large ensembles. These spartitini, previously thought to be lost, actually came to light during the preparation of the edition. Thus, the new edition was able to use Rossini's original writing for these instruments, rather than parts that had been devised by editors in previous editions. Third, the new edition provides the original parts for the stage band, which appears in several scenes. Fourth, the new edition is more accurate and consistent

in its handling of articulation and dynamics. All of these changes resulted in a cleaner musical text and one that more closely represents Rossini's intentions.

While he is eager to show how these changes are beneficial to performances, Gossett also recognizes that musicians have to adapt any edition to their own needs. This is particularly the case in the theater, where practical considerations are paramount. The production at the Metropolitan Opera cut several numbers to bring the performance within a manageable length. In addition, ensemble problems arose in coordinating the stage band with the orchestra. The eventual solution was to reassign the parts for stage band to instruments in the orchestra, a decision that Gossett believed was unfortunate but the only realistic solution given the limitations in rehearsal time.

My hope in assigning this article is that students will appreciate the value of scholarly editions in preparing a performance while also appreciating the need for interpretation and imaginative recreation of the music on their part. The score of a scholarly edition is not to be viewed as sacrosanct, a text engraved in stone never to be altered. Rather, the edition is a reliable one which seeks to represent the composer's intentions as fully as possible and assists musicians in making informed decisions about interpreting the work. The volumes in the M2s and M3s form the backbone of many of our collections, but they are often under used. If students have a greater understanding and appreciation for them after taking a bibliography course, then the time spent covering this topic will be well spent.