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"A discussion of various editorial trends and how a conductor's decision to use a particular edition may impact the librarian"

In the earlier days of music publication, a composer submitted a manuscript to a publisher, who sent it to a copyist or engraver and that was the end of the process.

There is evidence that many pieces did not go back to a composer for proof reading prior to publication.

Obviously, this method resulted in publications that were fraught with errors. Also, because of the nature of publishing at that time, or the composer's need to recycle some of his pieces for financial reasons, differing versions of the same composition would occur. In the case of manuscript copies, different copyists would interpret the composer's intentions and notation differently. Engraved compositions seem to have many errors as a result of the engravers having to work in mirror image of the final printed product.

With differing versions of the same composition in existence, and the composer not being available for consultation due to geographic location or mortality, it became necessary for somebody to figure out just what was intended and to bring some consistency and order to the music materials. Thus the job of editor was created.

An editor collects as many sources of each composition as possible, gives weight to the sources in order to try to ascertain the composer's intent and then proceeds to reconstruct the work as accurately as they perceive it. The question of whether it is the composer's original intent or final intent is paramount in understanding the differences in existing editions. The editor should make clear in a preface, what procedures were followed in arriving at the edition and what weight was placed on the sources that were available.

Editors often, but not always use the following guide for establishing relative importance to sources:

Primary sources:

- holograph = composers original hand written manuscript.
- autograph = A copy of the holograph, can be a copyist's manuscript or in some cases, a composer's made some time after the original holograph. Can be original copy or facsimile thereof.
- Orchestral material used for the first rehearsals and premiere performances conducted by the composer.
- Orchestral material and scores used for subsequent rehearsals and performances with the composer present, or with his approval.

Primary sources often leave unacceptable inconsistencies unresolved and fail to seek solutions to the most complicated problems. This situation led to the passing on from edition to edition of a series of errors which recent "critical" editions undertake to clarify and rectify.

Secondary sources include piano editions of works, vocal scores and adaptations of the work such as suites.

Composers often extensively revise their works, especially those who have occasion to conduct them. The question of balance and colour often affect the decisions to alter passages as does the question of form in longer or stage works.

A fault of many editors is their reliance on full scores only. Often the performing materials used when a composer has conducted his own work or was present during the rehearsal process have revisions made by the composer which were not entered into any score. Further, many composers assumed an understanding of performance style and did not indicate every nuance or articulation as it was felt to be redundant. Unfortunately today many editors, conductors and musicians do not have knowledge of these performances styles, just occasional opinions and tend to assume the original ink is meant to be taken literally.

Currently the trend in editing is towards the "come escrito" approach, only putting down what the composer actually wrote, with minor editing denoted by a different font in the printed music. The trend at the end of the 19th century was to notate the performance style, which was generally omitted by the composer. An example of this can be found in the Mozart Werke published by Breitkopf und Härtel around the turn of the century compared with the Neue Mozart Ausgabe more recently published by Bärenreiter. The Breitkopf publication included editors such as Hans Sitt, who added dynamics and articulations he believed consistent with performance style during Mozart's time. Modern musicology tends toward a more austere approach and so the Bärenreiter edition is more closely aligned with what Mozart actually penned on his manuscript paper.

It is common today, for many conductors to automatically insist on the Bärenreiter editions for Mozart. They are indeed very good. However the edition alone will not guarantee an accurate or even interesting performance. There have been major conductors such as Erich Leinsdorf and Wolfgang Sawallisch insisting Breitkopf is superior to Bärenreiter. Others swear by Bärenreiter. Which is the better edition? Ask your conductor which he prefers. It

will be “better” for him.

Perhaps this is a good time to relate a recent anecdote concerning Haydn’s *Sinfonia Concertante in Bb*. The Met Orchestra performed this work in Carnegie Hall in New York and on tour throughout the United States. When determining the edition we were to use, James Levine had the librarian obtain scores and solo parts to all the available (and some not so available) editions. The criteria used to determining the edition was largely based on the part layout with which the soloists felt most comfortable. Issues such as engraving, layout, page turns and print size influenced their decision. In this case, they preferred the Breitkopf parts. There were two Breitkopf editions - an out of print edition by Hans Sitt and a currently in print edition by Marguerre. The decision was made to use the Sitt, Maestro Levine stating that it was better to take 20% out of the Sitt to get the performance style he was interested in rather than adding 80% to the Marguerre.

A major area for librarian consternation lies in Bruckner editions. There is an excellent pamphlet by Deryck Cooke entitled “The Bruckner Problem Simplified”. (This is sometimes lovingly referred to by Clinton Nieweg, Principal Librarian of the Philadelphia Orchestra as “The Bruckner Problem Complicated”. Sometimes too much knowledge can be a burden) At last count we could refer to one hundred twenty-five different editions of the nine numbered plus two unnumbered Bruckner symphonies. This is further complicated by the fact that different conductors consider different editions as being the definitive or critical edition. There are editions by Oeser, Haas and Nowak, to name just a few of the Bruckner editors, which are considered authoritative editions.

In recent times, a trend towards a thoroughly researched, musicologically correct and therefore authoritative version, sometimes referred to as the “critical” or “urtext” edition has appeared. These editions should not be called “critical” unless reference has been made to the original manuscript or a facsimile thereof. They often include detailed commentaries describing the editing process and the discoveries and decisions made in creating the edition.

This information is always interesting. However, there are those who cynically wonder whether some of this was not merely a means whereby the copyright could be extended for a particular work. The editings themselves would be the only copyrightable material in these cases. There is no easy way to determine which edition contains groundbreaking material and which is hardly different from the older, probably public domain version. Some examples of the former come to mind. The Bärenreiter edition of Mozart’s *Linz Symphony* is considerably different from the Breitkopf in many areas including orchestration, articulation and dynamics. The Breitkopf edition of Mozart’s *Piano Concerto No. 27* is missing 7 bars in the first movement (between bars 46 and 47), which are contained in the Bärenreiter. However, the two editions of the Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique* are almost identical in content. The same is true for Mozart’s opera *Così fan tutte*.

It was amusing to discover that after having used, at the conductor’s insistence, the Bärenreiter edition of *Idomeneo* when the opera was performed with the Canadian Opera Company, the Metropolitan Opera uses the manuscript

edition reprinted by Kalmus. Conversely, the Canadian Opera Company used the manuscript parts reprinted by Kalmus for *La clemenza di Tito*, but the Met used the *Bärenreiter*. Chacun a son goût.

It is curious that in this day of trends towards accurately reproducing the composer's "ink", the celebrated and much used "critical" edition of *La barbiere di Siviglia*, by Alberto Zedda has done exactly the opposite, mirroring more closely the editorial style, now much maligned, which occurred at the turn of the century. He has notated the articulations and ornaments which most knowledgeable musicians and coaches would have automatically brought to their work.

As a cautionary note, do not assume that because an edition is considered "Critical" that is not without errors. Unfortunately, many of these editions are full of them. Among the eight hundred plus titles for which the Major Orchestra Librarians' Association Resource Center has errata lists, many are for critical editions. Furthermore, there are cases where only the score has been altered by the editor and for whatever reason, the orchestral material was not revised.

Conductors sometimes base their decision on which edition to use on what they know, what they own, what they were told was "best", on publisher pedigree or advertising, and occasionally on knowledge of the differences between the available editions. (We trust that none of the conductors we work with will be present when this is read). Many conductors have the "only" correct insight into how a piece should be performed and which is the most appropriate edition to achieve the performance.

As librarians, it is often difficult to convince a conductor to consider different editions, or that a reprint is really the same as the original publication and that reprint houses really do not add mistakes. The writers are familiar enough with the American reprint houses to know that they neither have the time nor the musical knowledge to purposely insert mistakes into their orchestra scores and parts. For we librarians, when asked which is the best edition of a piece, the most appropriate answer is "the edition the conductor wishes to use". Having a good relationship with the conductor or music director goes a long way toward avoiding the problems caused by obtaining an incorrect edition.

There is no "perfect" edition. They all will have arguable errata. They will not necessarily result in a stylistically or musically correct performance in and of themselves. It requires musicians, whether instrumentalists or conductors to bring the music to life.

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