REVIEW ARTICLE
Chopin Online

Introduction

This article reviews some of the most significant digital resources for Chopin scholarship currently available on the web, focusing on The Online Chopin Variorum Edition, Chopin's First Editions Online and The Chopin Early Editions collection. Readily accessible websites such as these have opened up new possibilities for researchers and offer unprecedented opportunities for performers to take ownership of editorial decisions, building their own interpretations based on authentic, original sources. The following investigation tests the search functions and capabilities of these websites while exploring any unique features and assessing their potential use and value as a research tool for scholars and performers.

The Online Chopin Variorum Edition (OCVE)[1]

The updated Online Chopin Variorum Edition was launched in 2015, correcting many technical issues from the earlier iteration (http://www.ocve.org.uk). This new website also hosts Chopin's First Editions Online (CFEO) and the Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions (AC Online) under the same portal – an impressive amount of material now in one integrated place, providing an invaluable resource for Chopin scholarship. The OCVE has been described as 'An online, collaborative edition of Frédéric Chopin's works, built to allow comparative analysis and annotation of manuscripts and early editions'.[2] It currently hosts primary source materials for the Ballades, the Preludes (opp. 28 and 45), the Nocturnes, the Mazurkas, the Scherzos, the Sonatas, the Fantasy op. 49 and the Polonaise-Fantasy op. 61.

The 'Browsing the Edition' section of the user guide has practical technical guidelines that include search capabilities and simple explanations for the various icons. The user can search using four filters: work, genre, publisher or source type, and the book icon beside each of the works provides a link to general information about that work. There are four subsections (Getting started, Source-level views, Bar view and Notes view) that are currently unpopulated.[3]

The earlier edition of this website explained that it was not necessary to register to use the site, but there were increased possibilities to create and save your own annotations if you did, which you could then choose to share publicly. The latest version of the site (2015) makes no explicit reference to this feature but there is a login button on the landing page and, on accessing the works, we find an

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[1] http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve.
[2] Yale University Subject Guides for Digital Collections http://guides.library.yale.edu/content.php?pid=307175&sid=2567357 (accessed 14 July 2015).
[3] Accessed 17 March 2016.

annotations tab with options to show or hide commentaries and notes on the image (score). I was unfortunately unable to explore the user annotations feature, receiving a 'recipient refused' response to my registration attempt. Subsequent attempts to login with my original user name and register with others were similarly unsuccessful.

When a piece is selected the first page provides a list of all available sources and the information icon (**i**) provides information about each of these sources. Once you click on any of these it opens in the main pane showing the full contents of each source using thumbnail pictures. You can then select an individual thumbnail to see the whole page of music. Clicking on a particular bar number subsequently opens up all available sources enabling direct comparison in an efficient manner. The same sections of music from different editions can thus be clearly and effectively compared, as illustrated in Figure 1, which shows bar 1 from the Prelude op. 28 No. 14. The two icons below each bar allow the user to zoom in on that bar or open the full page of the score.

In a recent article, John Rink outlines the long-term goals of this project:

> the long-term intention is to incorporate sound recordings such that a notionally complete repository of all instantiations of each constituent work appears within the resource. Another long-range goal is to develop a collation tool whereby every notational detail of the sources within the OCVE collection is digitally identified and thus 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 an array of sources within OCVE, yielding a composite version of the music according to their preferences. In principle, unique editions could be created for each performance occasion.[4]

These were also identified as aspirational goals in the final report for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2004, by the authors John Rink, Marilyn Deegan and Danae Stefanou.[5] This would be a wonderful addition for scholars and performers and would certainly further enhance this resource. In summation of its musicological achievements OCVE highlights the following:

> OCVE's chief achievements include the reassessment of the 'work concept' that has prevailed in music and musicology since the mid-nineteenth century; the development of a 'dynamic edition' (as we refer to it) as against the static versions manifest in printed editions; and the creation of an innovative critical apparatus delivered by means of online technologies (e.g., pop-up annotation boxes) and structured in categories inviting novel modes of comparison between sources.[6]

This resource does not attempt to guide the user towards specific editorial choices, nor does it advise on the relative values of different sources, but rather seeks to inspire creativity and individual research: 'OCVE is research-driven rather than simply

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[4]   John Rink, 'Making the Music Work: Towards a "Dynamic Edition" of Chopin', in *Genèses musicales*, ed. Nicolas Donin, Almuth Grésillon and Jean-Louis Lebrave (Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2015): 264.

[5]   Online Chopin Variorum Edition (OCVE) *Final Report for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. November 2004*, p. 2. http://pilot.ocve.org.uk/redist/pdf/final-report.pdf (accessed 4 January 2016 in cached form).

[6]   *Final Report for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*, p. 7.

Fig. 1   OCVE Comparison of bar 1 from Prelude op. 28, No. 14

creating a digital archive'.[7] Responding to potential concerns regarding quality and safeguards surrounding allowing users to directly edit the site, Rink states:

> 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 … One safeguard that has been adopted is to segregate and explicitly designate user comments, thereby separating them from the core scholarly resource.[8]

OCVE has implemented a unique approach to developing a 'dynamic edition' for Chopin's works – one that incorporates technology in a symbiotic manner and

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[7]   Rink, 'Making the Music Work', p. 259.
[8]   Rink, 'Making the Music Work', p. 264.

provides scholars and performers with simple and cost-effective access to the many varied sources and editions of Chopin's works.

Chopin's First Editions Online (CFEO)[9]

Under the direction of John Rink, Chopin's First Editions online (CFEO) was developed between 2004 and 2007 with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. According to the website,

> the project's chief aim was to create an online resource uniting all of the first impressions of Chopin's first editions in an unprecedented virtual collection, thereby providing direct access to musicians and musicologists to some of the most important primary source materials relevant to the composer's music.[10]

To achieve this, CFEO gathered *c*. 5,500 digital images from major institutions and libraries around the world, including what they name as their five lead institutions: *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, Bodleian Library, British Library, *Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina* and the University of Chicago Library.

Chopin's works were simultaneously published principally in Paris, London and Leipzig (or Vienna), resulting in three potentially quite different first editions and, as noted by CFEO, additional interventions from editors and proofreaders were commonly made. CFEO provides comprehensive publication histories for each work, acknowledging that these do not include all manuscript materials related to each piece, but rather focus on those directly pertaining to the first editions. CFEO adopts a two-fold analytical approach that provides detailed analysis of particularly noteworthy or interesting passages of music while also offering a broad overview of the main disparities between first editions, highlighting in particular anything that Chopin himself would have altered: 'In all cases, the analytical discussion identifies unique features in each source, including errors, omissions, distinctive typography, idiosyncratic musical elements etc. The imperfections common to two or three sources are also highlighted'.[11] Detailed source information is provided for each of the first editions.

The format of CFEO has been restyled, providing a complementary interface to the other resources within chopinonline.co.uk and enabling immediate access without registration or subscription. The inclusion of a glossary (derived from that in the Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions) is particularly beneficial for students.[12] As with OCVE, users can filter their searches by work, genre or publisher (see Figure 2) and the chain-link icon opens up further information on each edition in the Annotated Catalogue.

Figure 3 shows a screenshot of part of the work overview of the Barcarolle op. 60. This pop-up window is accessed by clicking on the book icon next to the title of the work. A comparison with the older version of the website (Figure 4) highlights the difference in style.[13] The drop down menu on the left displays

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[9]   The revised version of this website, http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo, replaced the earlier http://www.cfeo.org.uk in 2015.

[10]   http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo (accessed 18 March 2016).

[11]   http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/using-cfeo/work-overviews/analysis (accessed 18 March 2016).

[12]   http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/using-cfeo/glossary (accessed 18 March 2016).

[13]   http://www.cfeo.org.uk, accessed 31 July 2015. This link now redirects to the newer website.

Fig. 2   CFEO Search Results for Barcarolle op. 60

Barcarolle Op. 60

General information

Op. 60 has many affinities with Chopin's nocturnes, not least in its masterful incarnation of a pianistic *bel canto*. The principal theme innocently unfolds above a delicately balanced ostinato in the left hand whose characteristic rhythm derives from the traditional barcarolle – that is, the boat song of the Venetian gondoliers. But initial appearances are deceptive, in that Chopin soon unleashes incredible passions within a harmonic framework that, despite its simple underpinnings, achieves some of the most audacious effects of any work by the composer. The extremely wide emotional palette ranges from the hushed, temporally suspensive 'improvisation' in the *dolce sfogato* section, to the heights of intensity in the recapitulatory climax and then the coda. But at the same time, the music lacks some of the dramatic qualities of the four ballades, which is simply to say that it follows a musical narrative that is very much its own. Here we find joy tinged with nostalgia, but also moments of great luminosity as well as occasional darkness. The Barcarolle is, in short, a beguiling work, to an even greater extent than its evocative title might suggest.

Relevant manuscripts

Autograph, serving as *Stichvorlage* to **F**: PL-Kj. Autograph, serving as *Stichvorlage* to **G**: GB-Lbl: Zweig 27.

Analysis

The music text is laid out differently in each of the three first editions: in **F** it occupies eleven pages, as against ten in **E** and nine in **G**. The initial page numbers vary as well, i.e. '1', '2' and '3' respectively. Despite these differences, a number of similarities in the three layouts do exist, though they are entirely fortuitous:

F and G
- p. 2/4: systems 3 & 4
- p. 7/8: system 2
- p. 11: systems 4 & 5

F and E
- p. 1/2: system 5
- p. 2/3, 3/4: in toto
- p. 11: systems 4 & 5

E and G
- p. 2/3: systems 1–3
- p. 3/4: systems 3 & 4
- p. 9: system 5
- pp. 10 & 11: in toto.

Fig. 3   CFEO Barcarolle op. 60 – Work Overview (partial screenshot)

Fig. 4 CFEO Barcarolle op. 60 – Publication History (older website)

Fig. 5   CFEO Barcarolle op. 60 – French first edition p. 11 bars 110–116

three colour-coded tabs for each of the first editions: French (F), German (G) and English (E). Figure 5 provides a screenshot of bars 110–116 from the French first edition of the Barcarolle published by Brandus in Paris.

The digital reproductions are clearly legible and can be enlarged for detailed examination. Unlike the earlier version of the website, there seems to be no information explaining how to compare images.[14] This could valuably be incorporated into the user guide but is easily worked out using the 'Add to

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[14]   As of 18 March 2016.

Fig. 6   **CFEO Screenshot demonstrating comparative capabilities using the first page of the Barcarolle**

Compare' and 'Compare pages' tabs (allocated right and left to each page), enabling comparison of two pages simultaneously (see Figure 6).

In the earlier iteration of the website up to three examples could be aligned and compared by using 'image comparison icons' and a user guide was provided to clearly explain each step.[15] Figure 7 shows the older site's comparative capabilities using the first few bars of the Barcarolle. It was a little tricky to align and size the examples within such limited space. The hand icon reveals the full page, highlighting the section under review (shown on the left for each edition).

While the older version of this website seemed more user friendly and intuitive with its colour-coded tabs for each of the first editions and clearer user guides, there is more information provided in the newer version, including links to the Annotated Catalogue. CFEO is an extremely beneficial research tool for scholars and performers. It is instantly accessible and provides direct access to all of Chopin's first editions, enabling close examination of primary sources without the necessity to travel to conduct archival research. The additional information provided in terms of publication history and source analysis is invaluable. Despite the obvious knowledge and expertise behind the creation of this website, CFEO recognizes itself primarily as an experimental research tool:

> It is endlessly fascinating to compare multiple sources for a given work and to attempt to derive a clear and consistent explanation for the differences between them as well as an understanding of the musical and philological implications that they raise. In this respect, the work of the CFEO team is more indicative than exhaustive. Users will need to examine the CFEO materials carefully and form their own conclusions about the issues alluded to here and throughout this resource.[16]

Projects affiliated with CFEO include the OCVE, the *Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions* and *The Complete Chopin: A New Critical Edition*.[17] The Annotated Catalogue Online (ACO) has digitized and significantly expanded the original 993-page printed volume published by Cambridge in 2010, enabling improved ease of access and upload as new impressions are discovered.[18] Its user interface mirrors that of CFEO and OCVE, offering clear search capabilities and linking the three sites. Like the original printed version, ACO provides comprehensive analysis of the publishing history of each first edition and details of subsequent impressions.

The Chopin Early Editions collection (CEE)[19]

The Chopin Early Editions collection, hosted by the Special Collections Research Center in the University of Chicago Library, contains digital images of more than 400

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[15]   http://www.cfeo.org.uk (accessed 31 July 2015).

[16]   http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/using-cfeo/work-overviews/analysis (accessed 18 March 2016).

[17]   Christophe Grabowski and John Rink, *The Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). *The Complete Chopin: A New Critical Edition*, ed. John Rink, Jim Samson and Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, and editorial consultant Christophe Grabowski (London: Peters, 2004).

[18]   http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/aco (released in 2015).

[19]   http://chopin.lib.uchicago.edu/home.html (accessed 5 January 2016).

Fig. 7   CFEO Screenshot demonstrating comparative capabilities of the older website using the first few bars of the Barcarolle
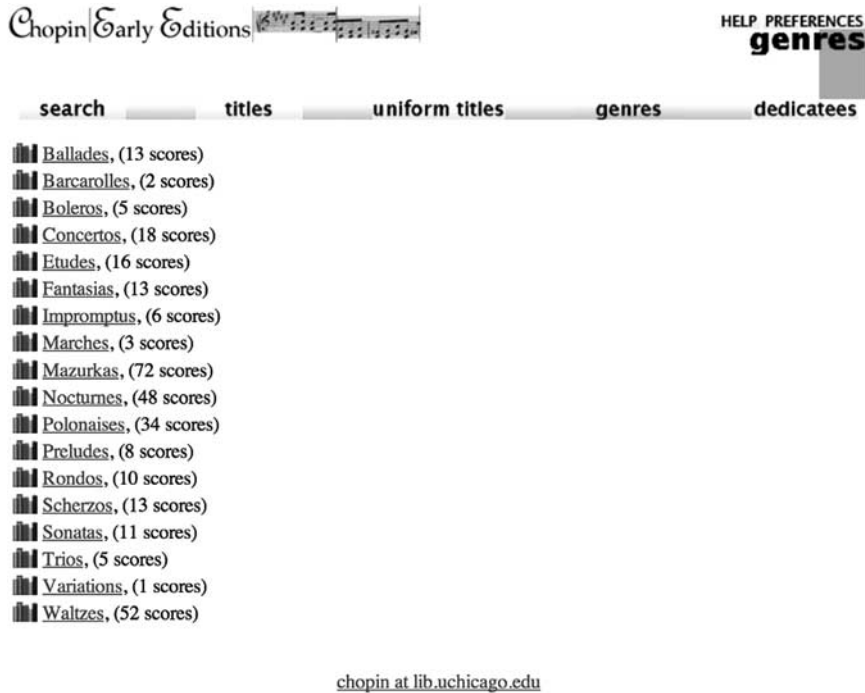
Fig. 8   Chopin Early Editions – Genres Screenshot

early editions of Chopin's works printed before 1881, including first and collected editions. The site is linked to the Chopin Online Catalogue and is thus kept up-to-date by incorporating new acquisitions.[20] The collection was conceived as a useful research tool for academics and performers, with the caveat that for those involved in source studies, it is better to view the original source in hard copy:

> The goal of the project was to produce digital images which would serve the needs of Chopin scholars interested in the publishing history of the scores, music scholars interested in analyzing the scores, and performers wanting to play the scores. The online scores were not intended for detailed, artifactual research which is best supported by viewing the originals.[21]

In the Chopin Online Catalogue, the 'Register of Scores' provides a complete list of all scores held, inclusive of 11 collected editions and first editions, and offers bibliographic descriptions for each entry.[22] The section on 'First Editions' comprises a list of all first editions before 1881, including those not available through CEE (entitled 'deficits').

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[20]   http://chopin.lib.uchicago.edu/chopin-catalog (accessed 18 March 2016).

[21]   http://chopin.lib.uchicago.edu/techinfo.html (accessed 21 August 2015).

[22]   See also George W. Platzman, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Early Editions of the Works of Frederic Chopin in the University of Chicago Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Fig. 9 CEE holdings for Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 11 in E minor

Users of the Chopin Early Editions collection can perform searches in multiple ways including by title, genre and dedicatee. The uniform titles, genres and dedicatees results also helpfully include the number of scores contained in the collection (as illustrated in Figure 8). CEE provides bibliographic descriptions of the sources as well as the 'view score' option. For each score, the user has the option to view a higher quality image of each page enabling more detailed inspection. The screenshot shown in Figure 9 lists the holdings for Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1.

Care should be taken in searching by word. Using the home page search tab, a simple search for 'nocturne' (as part of a title) results in the outcomes listed in Figure 10, as all instances of 'nocturnes' (plural) are omitted from this search. Compare this with the results listed for the latter under 'genres' (see Figure 11). Aside from this, however, it is generally very intuitive.

The help section is comprehensive and useful, and I was particularly attracted to the 'detach' button enabling comparison of two documents by opening the page in a new window. Unfortunately, however, this option was not available for any score I opened. In summary, while Chopin Early Editions lacks the functionality of CFEO, it provides a wonderfully rich and convenient resource for scholars and performers interested in early editions of Chopin's works.

Fig. 10   CEE Results of search for 'nocturne' (as part of a title using the search tab)

Other Resources

Other digital resources of note include the widely used IMSLP/Petrucci Music Library (http://imslp.org), which provides links to external Chopin resources such as CFEO, CEE and the *Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina*, as well as freely available recordings held by the Piano Society (http://www.pianosociety.com/index.php). IMSLP has recently added the option of paid-membership plans; nevertheless access remains freely available, albeit with a short wait in download times. Access is provided to a wide array of scores with options to purchase parts and complete scores. RISM (*Répertoire International des Sources Musicales*) (http://www.rism.info) aims to offer a comprehensive catalogue of musical sources worldwide and provides extensive access to Chopin sources, allowing filtered searches by genre, source type, scoring, publisher, etc. The Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov) is another particularly rich resource for Chopin scholars, offering direct access to online scores, recordings, photographs, drawings and letters, for example, and exact location and holdings for original offline sources, as well as links to external sites. The website of the Chopin Institute: *Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina* (http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/ institute) is a must-have bookmark for any serious Chopin scholar. The Institute organizes conferences, concerts and piano competitions as well as running the Chopin Information Centre (http://www.chopin.pl); a multimedia database for Chopin sources. The Institute's website also includes a wide-ranging list of digital resources for Chopin, including YouTube links. It recently launched two exhibitions currently hosted by the Google Cultural Institute:

> The first exhibition presents the composer's profile via objects from the collections of
> The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, as well as recordings from The Real Chopin series.

Fig. 11   CEE Listing for 'nocturnes' under 'genres'

The second presents the history of all editions of the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition via archival photographs of the pianists taking part in the Competition, the jury and the audience, as well as statements from participants and music journalists, along with information about the winners.[23]

Conclusion

In 'The Virtual Chopin' John Rink discusses the rationales behind OCVE, explaining how digital platforms open up future innovative research possibilities.[24] Rink describes the digital environment as 'an ideal way in which to understand music as an evolving, creative force rather than as something that's fixed and static' – a process that mirrors the way in which Chopin was known to have composed and performed. As Rink asserts, 'For Chopin there was no single version: he continually changed his mind'. Websites such as these provide a significant resource for scholars and performers, enabling users, in Rink's words, to 'engage in the process of change over time' and to 'create a unique version [of the work] for him or herself'.[25] These online resources provide invaluable and widely

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[23]   http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/institute/events/archives/date/1509/id/3927 (accessed 19 February 2016). These exhibitions were formally launched by the Institute in September 2015 and can be found at http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collection/narodowy-instytut-fryderyka-chopina.

[24]   http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/the-virtual-chopin (published 1 March 2013, accessed 4 January 2016).

[25]   http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/the-virtual-chopin.

accessible sources for informed performance. In the current climate with the recent surge of interest in performance practice and artistic research their contribution cannot be overestimated.

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