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Introduction: the task of the editor

No passage in Western art music has created more editorial controversy than the retransition in the first movement of Beethoven’s Hammerklavier Sonata, Op. 106 (bars 224–26).\footnote{For discussion and bibliography, see P. Badura-Skoda, “Noch einmal zur Frage An oder A.” See also Mies, Textkritische Untersuchungen bei Beethoven, pp. 65–66; E. Badura-Skoda, “Textual Problems,” pp. 303–4; and Roser, The Classical Style, pp. 420–21.} The facts are well known: two sketches contain the reading A; the first edition gives A; no autograph survives.\footnote{The better-known sketch appeared in the “Baldrit” sketchbook, now lost; see H. Schmidt, “Von den Skizzen des ersten Beethoven,” no. 71, p. 47; Johnson, Tyson and Winter, Beethoven Sketchbooks, pp. 347–50; Adler, Verzeichnis der musikalischen Autographen, no. 75, p. 20; and Marston, “Approaching the Sketches for Beethoven’s Hammerklavier Sonata.” The sketch is published in Nottebohm, Zweiter Beethovenana, pp. 126–27 (reprinted from Musikalisches Wochenblatt, 6 (1875), 297–98, 305–7). The second sketch was once part of the Klinkerferd collection in Stuttgart, but its whereabouts are today unknown. It was inspected by Rudolf Serkin, whose findings P. Badura-Skoda reports (“Noch einmal zur Frage An oder A.” pp. 60–61). On the early editions, see Kinsky and Halm, Das Werk Beethovens, pp. 292–96; and Newman, “On the Problem of Determining Beethoven’s Most Authoritative Lifetime Editions,” pp. 132–35. On the autograph, see Kinsky and Halm, Das Werk Beethovens, p. 292.} Some editors would accept the reading of the print on the grounds that it must represent Beethoven’s final thoughts on the matter; others would claim, with equal justification, that a variety of influences other than Beethoven’s own compositional thinking may have intervened to generate the reading of the print, and therefore the sketches preserve the correct reading. In fact, both explanations are equally plausible. Either Beethoven changed his mind between the sketches and the first edition, or the natural (that would cancel the sharp in the signature) was omitted erroneously from the print.

And the autograph, were it to reappear, would probably not decide the issue. If it agreed with the sketch, Beethoven could still have changed the text during the publishing process; if it accorded with the print, he might have erred while writing the autograph, an event not
without parallel in other sources of Beethoven's music.\textsuperscript{3} Only if the autograph were to exhibit Beethoven's modification graphically would it determine the reading, as, for example, if Beethoven first wrote a natural and then cancelled or erased it, showing that he began with the idea of specifying A, and then consciously changed the text.\textsuperscript{4}

Editorial theorists would normally appeal, in such a case, to the composer's intentions, but the state of the sources does not permit us to know Beethoven's intentions, to hold any certainty about the truth as to which reading is correct. Such theorists attempt to return to a historical moment, the moment when Beethoven decided on the reading of the retransition, that is simply irrecoverable. The sources do allow us to know, however, what Beethoven wrote for most of the work. Otherwise we would not be able to acknowledge the existence of a \textit{Hammerklavier} Sonata at all, or to distinguish it from any other sonata, by Beethoven or any other composer. But when the sources transmit genuine ambiguity, a crux in the parlance of Classical Philology, we must recognize the futility of appealing to Beethoven's intentions.

Now critics may feel safe enough in this scholarly uncertainty, and blissfully continue to debate the merits of the two competing readings from that privileged position without committing themselves one way or the other. But the editor who would print this sonata and, especially, the pianist who would play it, enjoy no such luxury. They must decide between A and \textit{A1} for better or for worse. (Editors are always free, of course, to express their uncertainty in some way, for example, through a footnote, but performers cannot have it both ways.) This example shows that the decision, no matter what it is or how it is achieved, is the decision of the editor or the performer alone. We cannot know what Beethoven intended, and the best we can do is to make a choice.

Editing, therefore, consists of series of choices, educated, critically informed choices; in short, the act of interpretation. Editing, moreover, consists of the interaction between the authority of the composer and the authority of the editor. Composers exert their authority

\textsuperscript{3} For a selection of Beethoven's own comments on the problem, see Unmiert, \textit{Die Eigenschaften und die Originalausgaben}, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{4} Mies, \textit{Textkritische Untersuchungen bei Beethoven}, p. 190, and E. Badura-Skoda, “Textual Problems,” p. 311, cite a similar example from the first movement of the \textit{Waldstein} Sonata, Op. 53 (bar 105), where autograph and first edition disagree, but the reading of the first edition originally accorded with the autograph and was subsequently changed at the stage of engraving, presumably on the instructions of the composer.
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over sources created by themselves or under their direct supervision, although, as I discuss below, that authority is affected and limited by the social, political and economic institutions through which those sources are produced and disseminated. The authority of composers extends, at least indirectly, to sources whose production they do not directly supervise, for the very act of reproduction exhibits at least a token acknowledgement of that authority.

When editors come to evaluate both types of sources, they invoke their own authority in forming judgements about what the sources transmit. And in some cases, they must call into question the accuracy, the truth of a particular reading that is recorded in a source or sources. Here lies the point of interaction between the authority of the composer, as transmitted in the sources, and the authority of the editor in the course of evaluating and interpreting those sources. Editing, therefore, comprises a balance between these two authorities. Moreover, the exact balance present in any particular edition is the direct product of the editor's critical engagement with the piece edited and its sources.

This position has long been acknowledged in philology, whose practitioners know it as textual criticism. The achievements of textual criticism over its long history show that the critical judgement of the editor is engaged at every stage of the editorial process, beginning with the choice of project. (Textual critics have always focused their most intensive efforts on the texts that hold the greatest importance for them and their culture: Homer for the Greeks, the Bible in medieval and modern Europe, Shakespeare for students of English literature.) But many music editors exhibit a reluctance to address the issue of their own authority, and some actively suppress it in their editions, seeming to feel that its presence is so obvious that it hardly requires stating, never mind discussing.

That behaviour, in itself, reveals much about music editing and the nature of the discourse surrounding it. Joseph Kerman rebukes the discipline for giving too much emphasis to the uncritical reproduction of documents, in place of their critical evaluation. In response, Margaret Bent presents what could be considered a credo for this book. "Making a good edition is an act of criticism" that engages centrally with the musical material at all levels, large and small.” But later in the same address she acknowledges that all is not what it should, perhaps, be. “Much

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6 Bent, "Fact and Value," p. 5 (Bent's emphasis).
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editing, for example, is less critical than it ought to be. Many so-called
critical editions are indeed neither very critical nor very interesting.”

Philip Brett, in an article whose spirit inspires much of this book,
moves beyond these comments to address the central problem in
modern scholarly music editing. “But editing is principally a critical
act; moreover it is one (like musical analysis) that begins from critically
based assumptions and perceptions that usually go unacknowledged. If
these assumptions were to be openly stated, if we began to recognize
and allow for legitimate differences in editorial orientation, and if we
ceased to use the word ‘definitive’ in relation to any edited text, then
much of the polemics surrounding editing might subside.”

Since the first inscription of Western art music in Carolingian
Europe through Petrucci and Artaria to the most recent scholarly edi-
tions, music editors, scribes and publishers have acted as mediators
between composer and audience. They standardize notation, adapt
works for current performing or institutional needs, correct errors that
are obvious to them, introduce corruptions of their own, and gener-
ally influence the musical text in every conceivable way. Their motiva-
tions include, but are not limited to, preservation, the requirements
of the moment and caprice. In many cases their actions are governed by
astute critical thought based on a profound knowledge, and even love,
of the repertory.

But the solution to the problem that Brett identifies comprises the
disclosure of that mediation and of the critical acts that constitute it.
For music editors are often reluctant to assume authority over the texts
they print, wishing to give the appearance that they present only the
text of the composer. And so they rely, or appear to rely, on the sources
themselves instead of acknowledging their own critical initiative.
Nowhere is this tendency more transparent than in the Utext indus-
try, whose products purport to reproduce the “original” text. I discuss,
below, the historical and intellectual context of the concept, but it suf-
fices to note here that even its most devout exponents acknowledge
that editorial intervention is unavoidable, if not outright obligatory,
no matter how undesirable.

It is my aim in this book to examine the nature of editorial media-
tion, and to show how the editor’s critical engagement plays an active

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7 Ibid., p. 7 (Brett’s emphasis).
9 Henle, “Über die Herausgabe von Utexten”; Feder and Unwassert, “Utext und
Utextausgaben”; and Bente, “Ermüdung und Vernünftung.”
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role in every aspect of editing. I hope to penetrate some of the
unstated assumptions mentioned by Brett, and make them the subject
of debate, bringing into the open some of the critical perspectives and
issues that affect every editorial decision. In the course of making any
edition, editors confront many problems, like the one from Beethoven
cited above, that admit no definitive answer. At such points, they must
assume authority over the text, for the state of the sources leaves it
uncertain as to whether the composer’s authority generated the
reading of the source. In order to reach a decision, they engage in a
critical transaction that involves the careful consideration of the evi-
dence bearing on the problem. Understanding of the musical idioms
that make up a piece, knowledge of the historical conditions under
which it was composed or the social and economic factors that influ-
enced its performance, coupled with an aesthetic sensitivity for the
composer’s or repertory’s style, can all contribute to a heightened criti-
cal awareness.

A second aim of the book is the presentation of a generalized theo-
retical framework for editing, within which each editor can develop a
particular methodology for the project at hand. Most of the limited
theoretical discourse on editing music that exists is concerned with the
practical application of editorial method to specific repertories. While
each repertory, indeed, each piece, presents special challenges for the
editor (as I discuss below), there is a common group of problems that
underlies the process of editing irrespective of the repertory in ques-
tion.

(1) What are the nature and the historical situation of the sources of
a work?

(2) How do they relate to one another?

(3) From the evidence of the sources, what conclusions can be
reached about the nature and the historical situation of the work?

(4) How do this evidence and these conclusions shape the editorial
decisions made during the establishment of the edited text?

(5) What is the most effective way of presenting the edited text?

I organize the book around these stages in the editorial task, showing
how critical thought affects each phase of the undertaking.

The recognition that editing is a critical act leads directly to the
corollary that different editors will produce different editions of the
same work, even under the most rigorous, scholarly circumstances.
Such has always been the case, or the Bach-Gesellschaft edition would
not need to be replaced by the Neue Bach-Ausgabe (NBA). The
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editors of the NBA, operating under different social, economic and cultural conditions, and with access to new sources and new information about familiar ones, felt that the existing edition was no longer adequate. Knowledge continually broadens and deepens, while aesthetic sensibilities remain in a perpetual state of flux. And new critical perspectives inevitably address the concerns of their own historical context. Not only is this the normal situation, but editors would do their audience the greatest service by stating and discussing the critical point of view from which their edition emanates. This is a goal I stress in this book.

Long before the post-structuralists, editing, whether of literature or music, assumed many of the attributes of deconstruction. As the rich tradition of editing in Classical Philology shows (about which I say more below), editors have always shaped the texts of their editions to conform to their personal interpretative conception of the work. This attitude echoes the concerns of recent writings in musicology, which acknowledge the plurality of interpretation, and the necessity to articulate the critical observer’s standpoint. Rose Rosengard Subotnik in particular questions the tendency towards objectification and determinism in discourse about music, and suggests that all scholarship originates in subjectively formed value judgements. Although individual editions cannot avoid objectifying a particular state of a work by determining its written text, the discipline of editing, like all critical undertakings, undergoes continual change in response to a changing critical environment. In these two respects, editing is analogous to performance. For each performance creates and objectifies a unique state of a piece, but no two performances of the same piece are exactly the same in all details. Similarly, no two editors would render its score in exactly the same way.

Performers and editors constantly make decisions in response to the same stimuli (notation) on the basis of the same criteria (knowledge of the piece and aesthetic taste). Only the results differ: performers produce sound while editors generate the written or printed page. Before Thomas Edison, performances could only be preserved in memory. But with the invention and ongoing development of recording technology, recorded performances have come to acquire the same

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10 Patterson, “The Logic of Textual Criticism,” addresses this issue in literary editing; see especially pp. 69–91.

11 See, for example, Subotnik, Developing Variations; Bergeron and Bohrman, eds., Disciplining Music; and Soler, ed., Musicology and Difference.
immutable qualities as print. These qualities have not been greeted with universal approval. Nevertheless, they highlight the inherent similarity between the two activities: the interpretation and communication of a piece of music via the fixing of a particular state, in sound or in written form.

This book, then, does not present a specific and prescriptive methodology for editing. All editors will inevitably develop their own methods with each new edition. Instead, the focus is on principles leading to a critical theory of editing, and a discussion of how criticism interacts with practice and method. Accordingly, the musical examples cited below are intended to illustrate the principles behind the editorial process, to raise the critical questions that challenge the editor at every turn. Thereby, I do not prescribe or imply a particular solution, which will vary with each editor. Rather, the examples demonstrate that, in each case, a variety of courses is open to editors, and show how critical thought might affect their choice. By conducting the debate in this way, I address the concerns not only of editors, but also of those who use editions, namely scholars and performers. This book brings to the forefront the critical positions that underlie the editions they must use daily in the course of their professional activities, and so it better equips them to approach the printed score with a more critical attitude.

The discussion and musical examples are limited to the literature of Western art music. For the most part, this is music that is closely linked with a written tradition. Obviously, musics of other cultures, especially those in which an oral tradition predominates, pose quite different and equally important problems for the editor. Moreover, editors in ethnomusicology have developed conventions of their own, especially in regard to the use of notation, that establish their work as an independent field. Rather than expanding the current discussion to include this separate but related area of endeavor, I wish to address the process of editing that begins with one written document (the source) and ends with another (the edition).

To return to our example from Beethoven, then, where the sources are irreconcilable, there is no need for despair. Even Heinrich Schenker, who initially declined to edit the work because the auto-


13 For theoretical discussions of transcription in ethnomusicology, see England, *et al.*, “Symposium on Transcription and Analysis”; and Stockmann, “Die Transkription in der Musikethnologie.”
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graph was lost, eventually relented.\textsuperscript{14} He acted as all editors and performers would, and chose the reading that he found most convincing. But that reading is his and his alone. It may coincide with Beethoven's intentions, but no one will ever know for sure, and so that issue is moot. More important to the critical users of an edition are two other matters. First, they seek unequivocal indication that a particular reading arises from editorial intervention. Not all editors are as frank with their audience as they might be. How frequent is the remark “Obvious errors are silently corrected?” Obvious to whom? And corrected in what way? Second, and even more important, the user would like to know why the editor preferred one reading over another. With that information at hand, the editor's choice becomes a point of departure for users of an edition to make up their own minds about the passage.

Within that context, I propose four constituent principles regarding the nature of editing music, each principle emerging as a consequence from its predecessor.

1. Editing is critical in nature.
2. Criticism, including editing, is based in historical inquiry.
3. Editing involves the critical evaluation of the semiotic import of the musical text; this evaluation is also a historical inquiry.
4. The final arbiter in the critical evaluation of the musical text is the editor's conception of musical style; this conception, too, is rooted in a historical understanding of the work.

Musicology and the practice of editing

Musicology can claim an illustrious history of editorial practice. Since the formation of the Bach-Gesellschaft in 1850, for the production of a complete edition of the music of J. S. Bach, musicologists have produced an enormous quantity of distinguished editions, from the Collected Editions of most important composers to the monumental series and national collections. Much of this enterprise was driven by the sheer necessity of making the music accessible. But a strong element in the undertaking was the creation of a canon, a central core of repertory, whose texts carried the same philological weight as their rivals in literature and political history. These editions constitute, in short, a statement, by the purveyors of the young academic discipline

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of music, of the seriousness and worthiness of their discipline within the academy.\textsuperscript{15} Even their presentation, in imposing folio volumes, reflects the gravity of their intent.

As valuable and important as these publications were, and are, to musicology, some have been found wanting in the light of modern scholarship, and are being superseded by newer editions, themselves not entirely infallible. Even in so scholarly an enterprise as the Collected Edition of Mozart (Neue Mozart-Ausgabe or NMA), some works were edited, in the absence of the autograph, from nineteenth-century sources when authoritative, contemporary (but not autograph) sources were available.\textsuperscript{16} These latter were rejected presumably because the editors of the NMA believed that they were more likely to preserve copying errors than nineteenth-century sources produced under ostensibly scholarly auspices. Subsequent scholarship has shown the reverse to be true in some cases.\textsuperscript{17}

This succession of events demonstrates that editing music, far from being an exact science, presents, in fact, a moving target. As our knowledge of repertories and their sources deepens, and our critical appraisal of that knowledge continues, new editions are needed to keep pace with, and reflect, the latest developments. No clearer affirmation of that situation can be adduced than the proliferation of new Collected Editions initiated since World War II, such as the NBA and NMA already cited. At the base of these projects lies a sharpening critical perspective. The original Collected Edition of Mozart (Alte Mozart-Ausgabe or AMA) provided an enormous service to musical scholarship by bringing together, for the first time, the works of Mozart in a uniform edition; the NMA presents substantial refinements in virtually every respect, refinements which result from several generations of intensive research that was stimulated and enabled in large part by the AMA; and the NMA, too, already needs revision in places, and will continue to be challenged in the future as research into Mozart’s music continues. These editions represent nodal points on the continually changing path of Mozart scholarship, and each subsequent step would have been impossible without the existence of its predecessor.


\textsuperscript{16} Eisen, “The Old and New Mozart Editions.”

\textsuperscript{17} Eisen, “The Old and New Mozart Editions,” pp. 518–19, identifies such a problem with the Piano Concerto in C, K. 415.
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Musicological discourse about editing

Only a limited discourse on the theory and methodology of editing accompanied this distinguished history of editorial practice. Most scholars who were interested in editing were doing just that instead of worrying about methodological niceties. They solved problems ad hoc, produced the best editions they could, and left questions of method to the philologists. Until very recently, when musicologists have commented on editorial technique, they focused most of their attention on mechanical issues of presentation, and critical issues received a low priority: scholars either skirt them without a clear statement of how criticism affects editing, or they avoid them altogether.

Guido Adler’s discussion of editing provides a typical example. Although he makes some stimulating comments about the role of style in evaluating variants, and the need for the critical appraisal of sources, he devotes most of his attention to technical matters such as the modernization of notation, and modes of indicating editorial intervention. Adler assumes that music editors employ philological methods borrowed from literary editing, and so focuses on problems with the scholarly presentation of music. Source study receives much more prominence in a pamphlet by Max Friedländer, who shows that a critical assessment of style provides the only guide for deciding between variant readings in the sources. Despite this promising start, no new contributions to the discourse appeared until after World War II, by which time the intellectual approach to editing had changed drastically.

Musicologists were reacting to two trends in editing. The first was the production of “performing” or interpretative editions, most commonly of keyboard music, but also of music for solo instruments with keyboard accompaniment, and usually prepared by famous performers. Musicologists complained that the numerous performance instructions added by the editors, such as tempo markings, dynamics, phrasing, fingerings and pedaling, obscured the original notation, and that, because very little or no effort at all was expended in differentiating editorial marks from those in the source, the editors’ users had no means of distinguishing between them. Already in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Königliche Akademie der Künste in

18 Adler, _Methode der Musikgeschichte_, pp. 69–84.
19 Friedländer, _Über musikalische Herausgabe_.

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