Online Chopin Variorum Edition

Resource title: Online Chopin Variorum Edition

Director: John Rink

Published by: University of Cambridge; King's College London

Address: http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/

Date of last access: 16 February 2020

Bytes in total: 24,130 excluding Bibliography and Sitography

Introduction

Frédéric Chopin [1] (born March 1, 1810, Żelazowa Wola, Poland - died October 17, 1849, Paris, France) is a polish composer and pianist of the Romantic period, best known for his solo pieces for piano and his piano concerti. He was a restless artist, with a tendency to continually change his mind. He constantly edited his work on paper by correcting mistakes and perfecting the notation. He considered music as something that cannot have borders and for this reason most of his works do not have a single and definitive version. Nevertheless, Chopin is one of greatest musician of the nineteenth century.

With regard to the music field technology is transforming research and how we can access data. Scholars in musicology base their work on a wide range of materials, especially written sources and images. Getting access to these sources has never been easy for musicologists. In this specific case are consider different primary source of Chopin's music; these have been organized in a digital environment which is currently available online.

1. Opening the review

1.1. The reviewer

Francesca Genovese is currently attending the "Digital Humanities and Digital Knowledge" Master Degree, at the University of Bologna. Last year she attended the Italian Literature course, held by Professor Simone Magherini, at the University of Florence. Part of the course involved studying the preliminary notions of philology. For contacts: francesca.genovese2@studio.unibo.it.

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[1] Wikipedia: "Fryderyk Chopin" https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fryderyk_Chopin.

1.2. Bibliographic identification

Online Chopin Variorum Edition is available at URL http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/ (figure 1). Browsing the website is easily find information related to:

- The name of the editors, the member of the OCVE team and the participating institutions. The researchers are from the University of Cambridge, Royal Holloway, University of London, and from the technical team of King's College London. The main team members from the University of Cambridge are: John Rink [2] (the director of the project), Christophe Grabowski (Research Fellow) and Sarah Williams (Project Manager). The main members of the King's Digital Lab (King's College London) including Miguel Vieira (Technical Director), Elliott Hall and Ginestra Ferraro as research developers. It possible to consult the list of all collaborators involved, in the "Participants" sub-section of "About".

- The project lifespan, 2003-2017, with a detailed description of the various development phases in sub-section "Timeline" of "About".
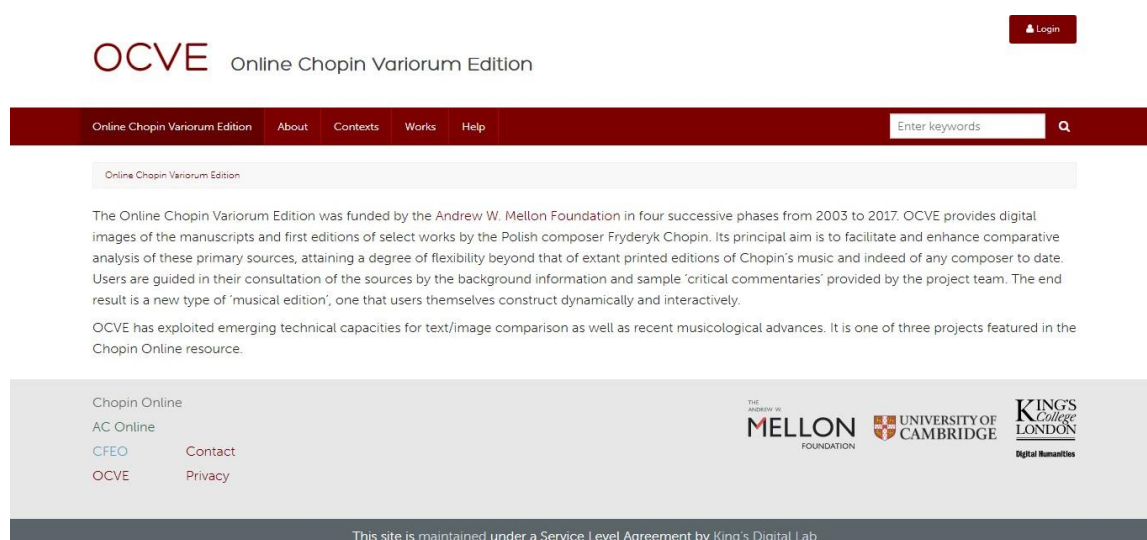

Figure 1. The homepage of Online Chopin Variorum Edition.

1.3. General introduction

"The Online Chopin Variorum Edition provides digital images of the manuscripts, music text and first editions of select works by Fryderyk Chopin" [3]. It has been developed and updated over the years, from 2003 to 2017, with the aim of making it increasingly a useful tool for research. The main goal is to facilitate and improve comparative analysis of these sources, providing a website with different means that enrich the user experience.

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[2] John Rink https://www.mus.cam.ac.uk/directory/john-rink
[3] Online Chopin Variorum Edition http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/

The OCVE is one of three projects featured in the "Chopin Online" [4] resource. The other two are: "Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions" [5] and "Chopin's First Editions Online" [6]. Together these three websites constitute a resource of unprecedented breadth and depth, providing new access to the most important sources, fostering new understanding of their individual and collective significance, and facilitating scholarly research and performance alike.

The purpose of this review is to verify whether this website can be classified as a Scholarly Digital Edition (SDE). For this reason, the review will focus on the analysis of the contents, characteristics and purposes of the website, with particular attention to the theoretical aspects of an SDE.

1.4. General parameters

The team started the development of the project in 2003 under the academic supervision of John Rink[7], professor of Musical Performance Studies in the Cambridge Faculty of Music, director and editor of this projects.

The Online Chopin Variorum Edition was made possible through the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which has provided three phases (2005-2009, 2011-2015 and 2015-2017) of funding through its Scholarly Communications Program to create this initiative. Further support was offered by the Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge; Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London; CCH/DDH at King's College London; and indirectly by the Resource Enhancement programme of the Arts and Humanities Research Council through funding awarded to Chopin's First Editions Online.

1.5. Transparency

The general parameters are easily accessible and the information about the timeline are complete. The team and the founding that contributed to the development of the project are provided in the sections "About" of the main menu navigation. Furthermore, the Online Chopin Variorum Edition provides institutional links to contact "The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation", the university of Cambridge and the King's College London. These links are in the footer of the homepage.

2. Subject and content of the edition

2.1. Selection

OCVE currently comprises 6.000 digital images of individual pages of Chopin's music, comprising music text and other elements of manuscripts, sketches, autographs, copies, proofs, first editions, and later impressions produced during Chopin's lifetime or after his death. It currently hosts Ballades, the Preludes (op. 28 and 45), the Nocturnes, the Mazurkas, the Scherzos, the Sonatas, the Etudes, the Waltz, the Impromptu, the Fantasy op. 49 and the Polonaise-Fantasy op. 61.

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[4] Chopin Online http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/
[5] Annotate Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/aco/
[6] Chopin First' Editions Onlinehttp://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/
[7] John Rink https://www.mus.cam.ac.uk/directory/john-rink

Considering the first editions and selecting the materials the historical context becomes crucial, due to the inadequate protection of copyright among the main European countries, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that led Chopin to employ several publishers in France, England and Germany. Thus giving rise to three "first editions" of most tracks. So the first editions pose particular challenges for both musicians and musicologists because of their diversity and complex interrelationships.

2.2. Previous and project's achievements

The resource has been reworked over the years. The OCVE is the first attempt to bring together all Chopin's manuscripts and musical scores in a structured way. It has two main goals: facilitate comparative access of the document and enriching the contents. From the first developmental phase (2005–2009) to the second (2011 - 2015) resource had increased in size from 2.200 to 6.000 digital images.

In the last update (2015-2017) the focus was on three aims. The first one was about how music digital editions might be more effectively constructed and made available to an increasingly wide range of users. The second was about conceptual and practical improvements of the OCVE, especially in research field. The third one was about the user experience.

3. Aims and methods

3.1. Documentation

The project has very detailed and easily accessible documentation in the "About" section, regarding:

- Timeline;
- Methodology;
- Technical methods, related to allow source manipulation and online research;
- Digitization, information related to the image acquisition process; with an in-depth analysis related to rights and licensing.

So the documentation is helpful to understand the aim and method used to make available the sources.

3.2. Scholarly objectives and mission

This musical resource is unique in its kind: OCVE offers opportunities to compare and reconstruct Chopin's creative process in a way that would not be possible on the printed page, as the comparison of score's bars in different sources requires great attention and patience. It offers more than just an archive of digitized manuscripts and printed editions selected by international libraries and private collectors. OCVE appears as a critical and dynamic edition, when comparison tools allow the user to reconstruct the creative and ever-evolving history of Chopin's music. Users can consult a complete index of the materials loaded, select a work, then view the different versions on offer. John Rink hopes that this project can serve as a model for "dynamic editions", also for works of other composers. He during an interview state:

"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 and structured in categories inviting novel modes of comparison between sources." [8]

The edition is mainly dedicated to music researchers and students. To fully understand the sources a basic knowledge in the field of music is required. In particular, reading music text and a specific knowledge related to nomenclatures is strongly recommended. On the other hand, the website is very intuitive and thanks to the numerous analysis and comparison tools, a more or less superficial understanding of the contents is possible, also by inexperienced users.

Starting from this reflection it is suggested to see the four key research questions in the section "About".

3.3. Method and representation of documents

As mentioned above OCVE is more than a simple archive of digitized manuscripts and printed editions. It could be called 'critical edition', it tries to reproduce the will of Chopin through the comparison of the various witnesses, both manuscripts and copies. In fact, users can select and compare particular bars or passages of a musical score through different sources, compared side by side on the same web page (figure 2). This functionality allows to easily understand the major differences between the manuscripts and multiple first editions, but also to highlighting their chronological and filial relationships.
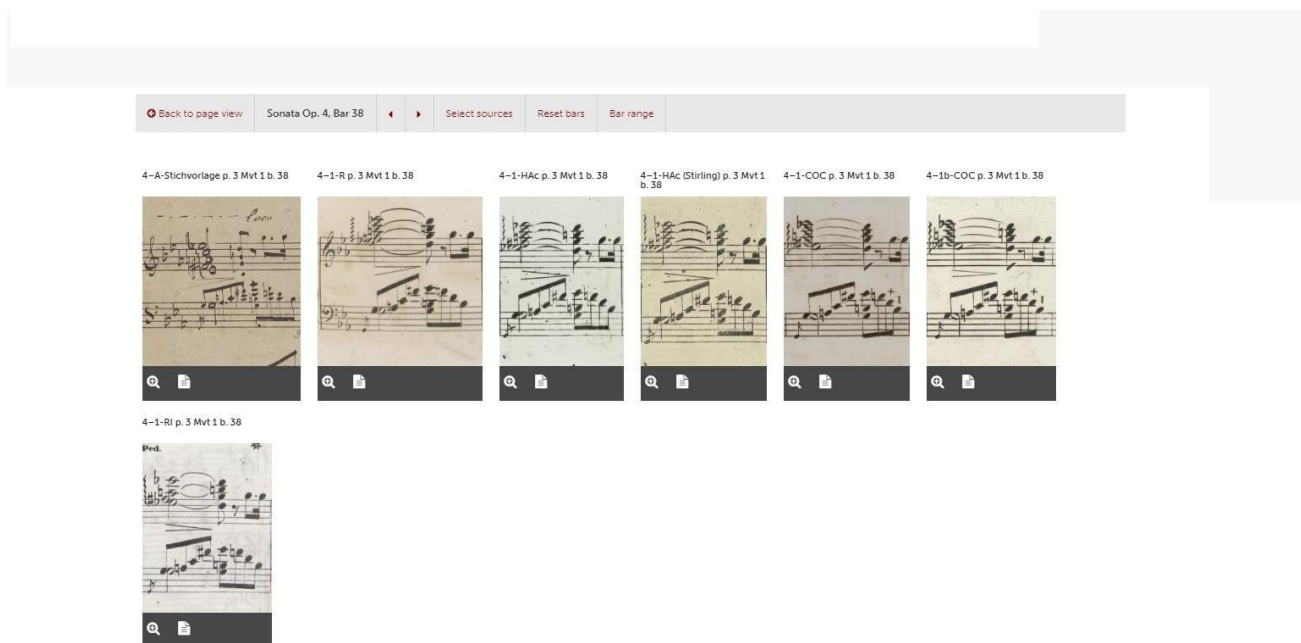

Figure 2. The same part of a music score bar, from different sources of "Sonata Op.4 Bar 58".

On the other hand, it is also a 'dynamic edition', which is organize by categories and exploits technologies tools in order to facilitates the comparison of sources (see paragraph 4.3 for more details about online tools, browsing and modalities of sources comparison).

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[8] "The Online Chopin" https://www.cdh.cam.ac.uk/research/research-projects/research-project-pages/online-chopin-variorum-edition

From a textual-critics point of view, each manuscript is a facsimile edition, since it reproduces the source as high-quality digital image. The transcription is formally diplomatic, which means that it reproduces the content as it is in the source, including any errors, abbreviations, erasures.

3.4. Text criticism, indexing and commentary

The project provides a detailed description of each document. It is easier to explain the criteria used with an example (figure 3).

Figure 3. "Nocturnes Op.15" in the Online Chopin Variorum Edition.

The image represents all the sources available for the musical composition "Nocturnes Op.15". For each source, its kind is defined in the following way: Autograph, Skecth (Stichvorlage), Exemplar (the copies of printed editions used by Chopin's students: Camille Dubois, Marie de Scherbatoff, Jane Stirling and Zofia Zaleska-Rosengardt, or owned by his sister Ludwika Jędrzejewicz. They are differentiated by the relevant surname appearing in round brackets after the source code), First Impression but also Correct Reprinted of the second edition. In this specific case the descriptors of printed editions are "FFE", "GFE", "EFE"; they indicate the place of publication (France, Germany, England) and the edition, in this case "First Edition". The source descriptor is highlighted in gray and it gives information about the opus (the first number starting from the left), the edition and the impression (the number indicates the edition and the letters the impression, if there is only one number it means that the impression is by default the number one.) and the name of the publisher (indicated with an abbreviation).

The codes of individual works from multipartite opuses, or from editions originally published in two parts, contain an oblique after the opus number followed by the number of the constituent work in question.

So in this case, consider the first source given, with the source code "15/3 – A-sk", meaning: Opus 15 N.3, autographed manuscript, skecth. Another example for the first impression with the source code "15–1-Sm" means: Opus 15, of the first edition, published by Schlesinger Maurice. Another example for the Second German edition: corrected reprint, with the source code "15–2d-B & H", means: Opus 15, fifth impression of the second edition, published by Breitkopf & Härtel.

The terminology and the abbreviations are explained by the glossary section (derived from Annotated Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions), and the list of the "Sigla of publishers" and the "Library Sigla".

3.5. Data modelling

All the materials have been encoded with XML. In the first and second development phases metadata was particularly taken into consideration. Nevertheless, no further explanations or concrete example are provided.

4. Publication and presentation

4.1. Technical infrastructure

All documents are organized in a website. It has been created in the languages of the web: HTML, CSS and Javascript.

In the <header> there is the logo (with link to the homepage) and the login button. The <body> of the website is primarily created by the navigation bar which is horizontal and contains the sections: About, Contexts, Works, Help. In addition, on the right, there is an input text box for search by keywords.

Finally, the <footer> contains, on the left, the links of the other resources dedicated to Chopin and the contacts, while on the right the links of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, University of Cambridge and King's College London.

Furthermore, the website is responsive. It can change structure in order to be used on all devices, not only in the desktop version but also from smartphones and tablets. Therefore, providing a website with responsive technology is an advantage, because it contributes to increasing your visibility.

4.2. Interface and usability

On the homepage there is a brief description of the project, its characteristics and purposes. All Chopin's music texts available on the website are reachable by using the navigation bar located on top of every page. There is also the possibility to search by keywords, via text input box on the left. Another important orientation tool are the breadcrumbs, which allow the user to understand the hierarchy of the pages and to orient themselves within the web content, because at any time the user is aware of what content he is viewing and their location. (Figure 4).
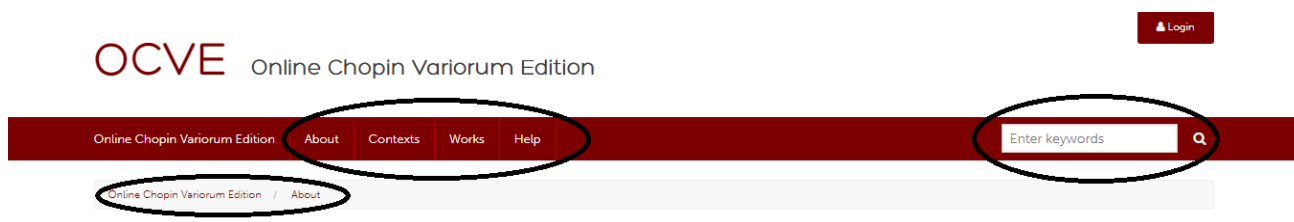
Figure 4. Navigation bar, input text box and breadcrumbs from Online Chopin Variorum Edition.

Even if the interface is very intuitive and simple, the section "Browsing the Edition", of the user guide, has practical technical guidelines that include search capabilities and simple explanations.

4.3. Browse and search

All documents are accessible in the "Work" section and they could be select by using a drop-down menu with four different filters: Work (the opus of the source); Genre (Sonata, Nocturnes, etc.); Publisher (The publisher for all printed sources) and source type (Printed edition and Manuscript).
When a filter is selected it appear above the returned sources. It provides a list of all available sources, related to the selection filter. To remove a single filter, click X inside it. To remove all filters and start again, click the arrow. The current filter choices will be remembered if you close the page and return. Clicking on any of these choices will not only display sources in the main window, it will change the available filtering choices. As an example, selecting "Edwin Ashdown Limited" as the publisher, only the opuses that Edwin Ashdown published will be available under "Work" rather than the complete set. Near the works there are some icons really useful for a better and precise understanding of the sources. (figure 5).
A book icon provides information about the work. Figure 6 is an example for "Scherzo Op. 31". The icon (i) provides details (such as full title, publisher, plate number) about each source (figure 7). If a source is available in the Annotated Catalogues there is a link, indicates with "chain" icon.
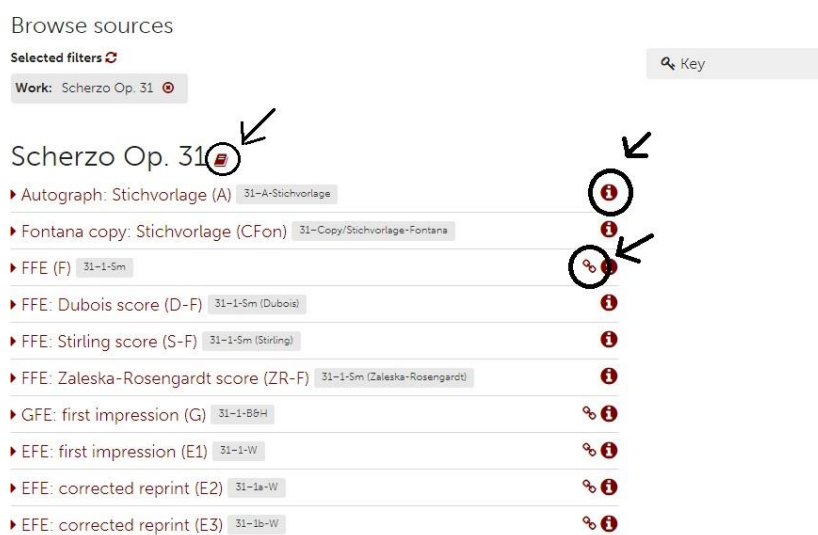

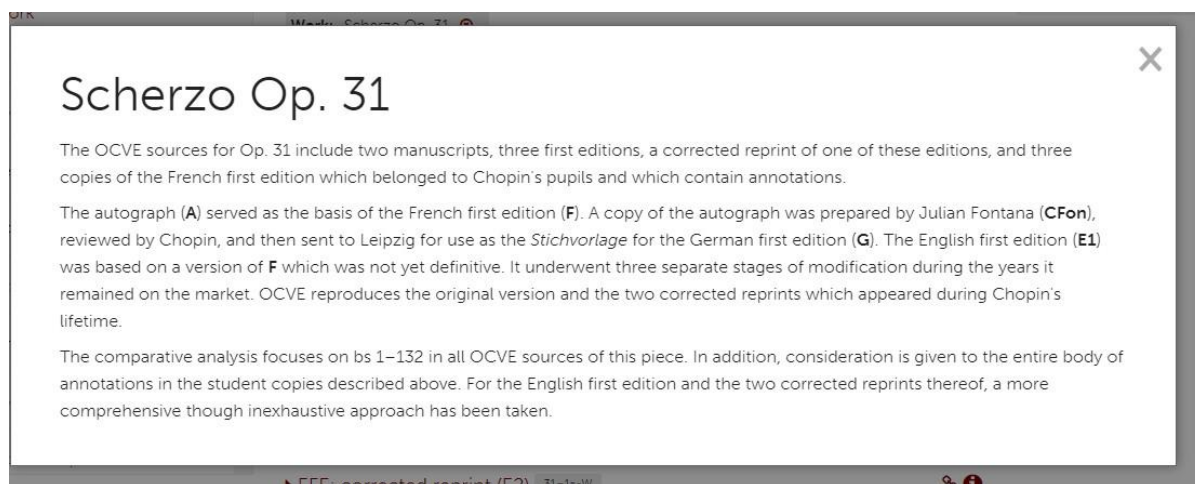*Figure 5. Icons from Online Chopin Variorum Edition.*

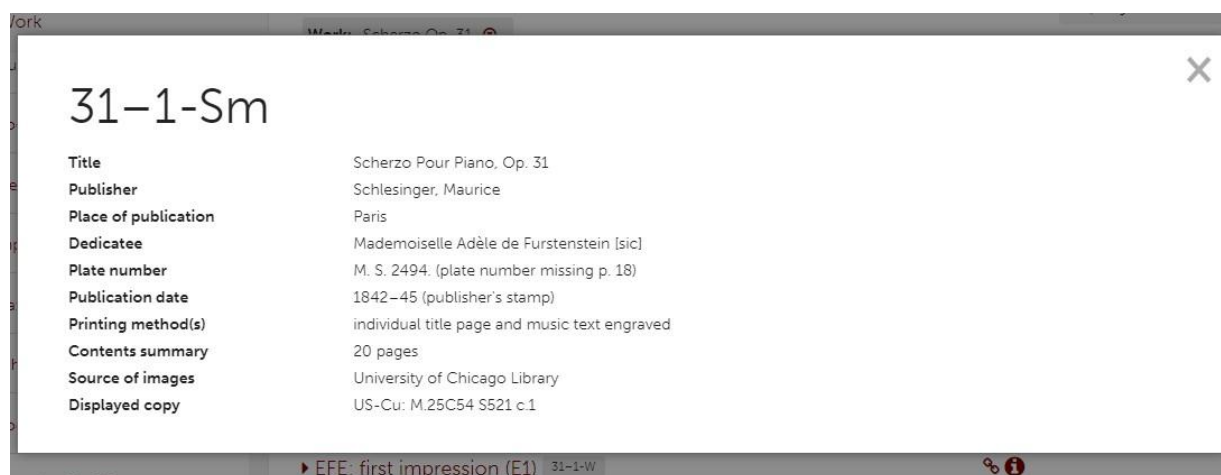*Figure 6. Pop-up information provides by book icon for "Scherzo Op.31".*

Figure 7. Pop-up information provides by information icon for "Scherzo Op. 31".

Once the user click on any of these documents, the full content is shown in the main pane using thumbnail pictures. It is possible to select an individual thumbnail to see the whole page of music. Each page contains some "user tips" about how to explore the digital image. There is the possibility to zoom a page or visualize it full-screen. Each page is also navigable with a navigation menu, located on the left. It allows to the user to:

- "Back to results", to return to the main browser window at last search.
- The arrows move to the previous and next pages of the edition.
- "Jump to page" in order to jump to a specific page in the edition.
- "Annotations" to view any notes for this page and enter annotation mode to add your own.

Clicking on a particular bar number opens up all available sources enabling direct comparison. The same sections of music from different editions can thus be clearly and effectively compared. To view a range of bars, click "bar range" in the top bar. You may view up to four bars on a page at once. The bar images can all be moved into whatever position you like. Click on any image and hold to drag it to another point on the page. The bar positions are remembered by default and will remain in the places where they are dragged. To return the page to the beginning, press "reset bars" at the top.

It is also possible for each bar have a large view of the bar, selection the magnifying glass icon, and open the full bar's page, with the document icon.

For registered users there is the possibility to add annotations, that provides to the them the possibility to add annotations and so construct their own 'critical commentaries'. The login button is on the top right. Unfortunately, it was not possible to explore the user annotations function, because after registration, the website sent on an error page at every attempt to access. In any case, user's comments are separate and explicitly designated, in order to differentiate them from the main resource. This functionality is explained in the section "Notes view" of the website.

All the tools are well explained with the interactive guide, which can be activated by clicking on "Help: take a quick tour" which is indicated by the icon (?).

4.4. Quality of presentation

Each page of the music texts was to be scanned individually and saved as an individual file, with a unique filename. OCVE shows only pages with music text, along with title pages where relevant; so no wrappers, blank pages and advertisements are shown.

There are some basic quality standards for all digital images in OCVE: images should be scanned at 400 ppi, 24-bit colors; all page edges should be visible, and the images should not be cropped; scans should capture with fidelity the smallest significant details of each image. For more details about the standard quality of digital images consul the "Digitisation" section.

Not all the libraries from which the images were taken were able to provide material according to the defined standards. For this reason, users will notice some variability in the quality of the images, although every effort has been made to ensure consistency in this vast virtual collection, such variability is inevitable given that 6.000 images in OCVE were obtained from over thirty different suppliers.

There are some lacks regarding the content, for example some late reprints of the English editions do not appear in the online resource, due to the lack of collaboration with "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde" in Vienna. In addition, the "Museo de Fryderyk Chopin" and "George Sand" in Valldemossa have decided not to participate in the project.

Furthermore, it is necessary to specify that the name of the city in which each edition was published appears in its English form in the source descriptions, for example 'Mainz' instead of 'Mayence' (Polonaise in G-flat major, German first edition). So standardization has occurred where necessary.

Also the names of publishers, within witness overviews, have been standardized where necessary and may not correspond exactly to their presentation in given music scores. This is because of the variable formats adopted by some publishers, for example the figure 8 shows a case for the publisher Friedrich Hofmeister.
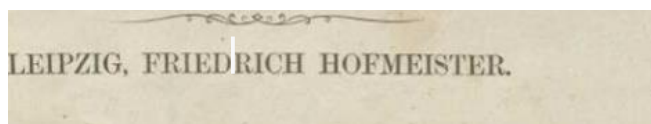
Figure 8. "Allegro Vivace Pour Le Pianoforte, Op. 51" (on the left) and "Allegro Vivace. Impromptu, Op. 51" (on the right).

4.5. Rights and licenses

OCVE signed license agreements or otherwise obtained permission from the various supplying institutions and private collectors to display the digital images in the online collection. According to the standard agreement, and as a rule of thumb, copyright in the digital images supplied by a given institution or collector is owned by the latter, whereas it owns the database rights in the OCVE resource. So users will find copyright notices above each of the images displayed in OCVE. As for

the textual material within it, normal scholarly citation is of course acceptable, provided that full attributions are given in accordance with bibliographic conventions. The image server uses the Kakadu (nota) JPEG2000 library under license.

4.6. Long term use

OCVE has not been significantly updated since 2017. Although some technical problems of the website, such as the failure of the login, the project can be considered complete because all the materials provided allow to widely reach the set goal.

5. Conclusion

OCVE can be defined as a rich collection of works by the composer Chopin. The definition of collection, however, does not simply indicate a digital archive. As has been shown so far, in the paragraphs of this review, OCVE can be called SDE, because it follows a digital paradigm.

As describe Patrick Sahle in "Digital Scholarly Editing. Theories and practices" [9], SDE offers the opportunity to overcome the limitations of print technology. OCVE is based on primary sources material that has been comprehensively assembled and made available online for the first time, in order to facilitating philological and style-historical investigation. In "The Virtual Chopin"[10], a video interview of John Rink, he discussed the rationales behind the project. Rink describes the OCVE as an ideal way in which to understand music as an evolving, creative force rather than as something that's fixed and static.

It provides a significant resource for scholars. OCVE is the demonstration that learning and technology can interact to mutual advantage. It is a 'dynamic edition' of digitized manuscript and printed sources of a large body of music, all of which can be displayed in various formats and compared in an intuitive way; through an interface with considerable practical and scholarly potential but at the same time simple to use and intuitive in design.

Detailed philological descriptions, written by the scholarly team, enrich the edition. Furthermore, personal annotation tools allowing individual users to create their own virtual 'Chopin Edition', with the addition of 'personal critical comments' and lists of scores or works.

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[9] Chapter "What is a Scholarly Digital Edition?" from Digital Scholarly Editing. Theories and practices, Matthew James Driscoll and Elena Pierazzo (eds.), OpenBookPublisher, 2016. (pp. 1- 137).
https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/483#page/1/mode/2up

[10] https://www.cdh.cam.ac.uk/research/research-projects/research-project-pages/online-chopin-variorum-edition

6. Sitography

- Online Chopin Variorum Edition
http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/ocve/

- Wikipedia: "Fryderyk Chopin"
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fryderyk_Chopin

- John Rink
https://www.mus.cam.ac.uk/directory/john-rink

- Annotate Catalogue of Chopin's First Editions
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- Chopin First' Editions Online
http://www.chopinonline.ac.uk/cfeo/

- Online Chopin Variorum Edition, Cambridge Digital Humanities
https://www.cdh.cam.ac.uk/research/research-projects/research-project-pages/online-chopin-variorum-edition

7. Bibliography

- Digital Scholarly Editing. Theories and practices, Matthew James Driscoll and Elena Pierazzo (eds.), OpenBookPublisher, 2016. (pp. 1- 137).
https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/483#page/1/mode/2up

The date of last access of the mentioned websites is 16 February 2020.