

Probstücke Digital

A critical digital edition of Johann Mattheson's 24 Probstücke (Ober-Classe)

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Probstücke Digital is an open and critical digital edition project of the 24 test pieces of the “Ober-Classe” (upper class) by Johann Mattheson and as such an example for the use and application of MEI and TEI in an integrated environment.¹

Although by now there are many digital edition projects on the web to be discovered, surprisingly most of them seem to use MEI only as a basis for an engraving with Verovio.² In many projects the editorial process is done within Sibelius and then simply exported with SibMEI for a web representation³ or not even encoded in MEI in the first place.⁴ The goal of this project is to provide a full critical edition in pure MEI and TEI⁵ with correct encoding of variants in reading, editorial additions and regularizations, which require heavy manual encoding. And in addition there will be an English translation to the German text parts. But there is more to it:

As the musical material that is being edited consists of commented partimenti, unrealized bass lines, that are conceptually open and are yet-to-be-finished drafts rather than self-contained works, this project is an interesting example for the use of digital editions particular regarding the linking and presentation of additional material, such as:

1. lessons (oral, encoded as transcribed speech in TEI)
2. theoretical analyses (encoded in MEI)
3. realizations⁶ (encoded in MEI)
4. recordings⁷ (linked and referenced in MEI)
5. notes on key and meter characters (encoded in TEI)

¹ For aspects of combining MEI and TEI see e.g. Raffaele Viglianti et al., “Visualizing Fedora-managed TEI and MEI documents within Islandora,” in *Code4Lib* 44, 2019-05-06 (<https://journal.code4lib.org/articles/14532>).

² Verovio is an open-source library for engraving MEI music scores into SVG (<https://www.verovio.org/>).

³ E.g. *Gesualdo Online* (<https://ricercar.gesualdo-online.cesr.univ-tours.fr>).

⁴ E.g. *Tasso in Music Project* (<https://www.tassomusic.org>).

⁵ The edition uses an slightly adapted TEI customization based on the DTA-Basisformat (<http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/doku/basisformat/>).

⁶ Certainly including the mostly incomplete realizations by Mattheson himself.

⁷ E.g. by Jean-Christophe Dijoux (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_F6Qxvt-QQ) or by Niels Pfeffer (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X01XX_btmi4).

As keyboard pieces the Probstücke of Johann Mattheson are highly relevant yet not often played due to different reasons:

1. often hard-to-understand and hard-to-read comments (Fraktur) and music (due to the limitations of 18th century music printing)
2. mistakes by Mattheson himself e.g. when counting and referencing particular measures
3. ancient clefs and frequent clef changes that are potentially unusual for modern-day performers
4. lack of space to notate own musical thoughts or ideas

These problems can be addressed by a digital edition, e.g. by providing tools to automatically replace typographic peculiarities of 18th-century prints like the long s (ſ) as well as potentially unfamiliar clefs in the score with their modern equivalents or by adding an arbitrary number of empty staves above the original bass.

Furthermore, *Probstücke Digital* provides linking and presentation of the digitized sources⁸ as either full-page facsimiles embedded with Mirador⁹ or as the extracted zone of particular measure or paragraph.

Mattheson often refers to works by other composers or texts from older music theorists. A modernized bibliography and names index based on authority controlled data will help scholars to find and get into those external sources.

Technical components are amongst others CETELcean¹⁰ and Verovio. The project receives no public funding.

The presentation will thematise the subject matter, explain the advantages of this specific digital edition and it's goals, and as well give a demo of some features and the overall progress so far.

⁸ Utilizing the International Image Interoperability Framework (<https://iiif.io>) and images provided by the Bavarian State Library (<https://www.bsb-muenchen.de/en/>).

⁹ Mirador is an open-source, web based, multi-window image viewing platform (<https://projectmirador.org>).

¹⁰ <https://github.com/TEIC/CETELcean>.

References

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- Johann Mattheson, *Grosse General-Baß-Schule Oder: Der exemplarischen Organistenprobe*. Hamburg 1731
- Johann Mattheson, *Grosse Generalbass-Schule 1731*, neu hrsg. und bearbeitet von Wolfgang Fortner, Mainz 1956
- Franck Thomas Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-bass*. Oxford 1931
- Jean-Christophe Dijoux on Mattheson's *Grosse Generalbaß-Schule*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzslUbNrVoY>
- Peter Stadler, Joachim Veit, *Digitale Edition zwischen Experiment und Standardisierung: Musik – Text – Codierung*, Berlin 2009
- Jane Harrison, *The Possibilities of MEI for Digital Critical Scores and Transcriptions*, July 17, 2017, <https://janeharrison.me/2017/07/17/the-possibilities-of-mei-for-digital-critical-scores-and-transcriptions/>
- Hugh Cayless, Raffaele Viglianti, "CETELcean: TEI in the Browser," in *Balisage: The Markup Conference 2018*, <https://www.balisage.net/Proceedings/vol21/html/Cayless01/BalisageVol21-Cayless01.html>