

MUSIC REVIEWS

EDITED BY MATTHEW ERTZ



VOLUMES FROM SAINT-SAËNS'S *ŒUVRES INSTRUMENTALES COMPLÈTES*

Camille Saint-Saëns. 3^e Symphonie en ut mineur, op. 78. Edited by Michael Stegemann. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2016. (*Œuvres instrumentales complètes*, Sér. I, Vol. 3) [Front matter in Fr., Eng., and Ger.: foreword, p. vii–xii; preface, p. xiii–lxxxiv; documents, p. lxxxvi–cv; score p. 3–192; crit. rep. in Fr. p. 195–213. Cloth. ISMN 979-0-006-55950-3. €365 (\$438).]

Camille Saint-Saëns. *Poèmes symphoniques* [Le Rouet d'Omphale, op. 31; Phaéton, op. 39; Danse macabre, op. 40; La Jeunesse d'Hercule, op. 50]. Edited by Hugh Macdonald. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2019. (*Œuvres instrumentales complètes*, Sér. I, Vol. 4) [Front matter in Fr., Eng., and Ger.: foreword, p. vii–xii; preface., p. xiii–lviii; documents, p. lx–lxxiv; score p. 3–241; crit. rep. in Eng. p. 245–60. Cloth. ISMN 979-0-006-56115-5. €378 (\$454).]

Camille Saint-Saëns was involved in the first wave of monumental editions, serving as general editor of *Œuvres complètes* of Jean-Phillipe Rameau (published by Durand in eighteen volumes between 1894 and 1924, but never completed). Now, it seems, it is his turn.

An astonishingly prolific composer, Saint-Saëns started early and stayed active to the end of his very long life (1835–1921). The sheer quantity of material poses a significant challenge to the publication of a complete edition of his works. The two volumes reviewed here are from a series aspiring to comprise only his instrumental works, but even so this entails a projected thirty-six volumes. It is an ambitious and even worthy endeavor, but it is off to a shaky start.

Michael Stegemann points out in his series foreword that most of Saint-Saëns's instrumental works “have not been newly edited since their first publication (and are often full of errors, typical for this period)” (p. ix of both

volumes). That may be true of the corpus as a whole, but it is not the case of the works under review here—each of which appeared in a second edition during the composer's lifetime, and the texts of these corrected second editions were actually very good—judging from a review of the original sources and these volume editors' decisions. Indeed, as Hugh Macdonald notes, for three of the symphonic poems—all but *Le Rouet d'Omphale*—“all the sources agree closely with one another” (pp. 252, 259). And there are a numerous sources to collate in this repertoire: autographs of the orchestral version as well as keyboard versions, two editions of the full score and the performing materials, sometimes sketches and marked proofs, plus derivative transcriptions. Even in the case of *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, the 1906 second edition of the full score presents an accurate text, correcting a number of errors in the first. The differences between the second edition and this new edition al-

most entirely involve the regularization of articulations and dynamics. (The only error I spotted in the new edition of this work [m. 48, Vc and Cb] is obvious enough that any user can recognize it as such, and so does little harm.) The *Poèmes symphoniques* volume is fine, but it hardly makes a strong case for the need for a new edition of any of these works: we may not have had as complete a grasp of the textual situation until Macdonald had finished the project, but the texts presented here have negligible differences from what was already in the public domain. Is an *œuvres complètes* of his instrumental music necessary? I shall return to this issue below.

The first volume of the new edition to be published was Symphony no. 3, one of the composer's best loved and most impressive works, and perhaps intended to serve as the flagship for the edition as a whole. The work is in a similar textual situation to the symphonic poems: Durand's 1907 second edition is actually very accurate. The problem—and it is a catastrophic one—is that this new edition is riddled with errors. My copy arrived with an errata sheet listing thirty-seven items; as I reviewed the volume, I amassed two dozen more—including two items that are “corrected” on the errata sheet to yet another erroneous reading. (I have communicated my list to the publisher.) Ideally, this volume would be withdrawn and reprinted; in the current economic climate that is impossible, but at least a full and updated errata list should be maintained on the publisher's website in perpetuity. Bärenreiter offers a paperback offprint of the score (BA7896) without the critical apparatus; I have not examined it, but one hopes that at least the thirty-seven known errata were corrected for that issue. Libraries that acquire both would ordinarily not shelve them together: in the Library of Congress sys-

tem, for example, the practical offprint would be classified M1001, while the collected works volume would be classified M3. A user might expect the more complete and more impressive-looking M3 to be the better source to consult. As the maxim goes, you can't judge a book by its cover. In this instance, it might be worth affixing some notice to this volume that a better text is found in the M1001s—not just in Bärenreiter's (corrected?) offprint, but indeed even in the 1907 second edition and its many reprints.

The number of typographical errors is of course a concern; but even if there were no typographical errors—if, that is, the text was presented as the editor intended it—I still have some concerns about some of Stegemann's editorial decisions. For example, the *Poco adagio* which concludes the first movement presents first a long-breathed melody in binary form, AABB. The first A and B statements are presented by the unison strings (with organ accompaniment); the second A and B statements by *sol*i clarinet, horn, and trombone. Saint-Saëns accomplishes the transitions after each of these phrases with two bars of *legato* arpeggio: in the first instance this is given to lower strings; in the second to flute, cor anglais, and bassoon; in the third and fourth to organ. In the second, third, and fourth examples, a slur extends across the two bars of arpeggio. The first example begins with violas and cellos in unison, but the contrabasses take over the viola arpeggio (at pitch) to double the cellos for the remainder of the figure. The composer has craftily staggered the slurs here so that the effect is an unbroken *legato*. Stegemann opts—with no source to justify it—to adjust the cello slurring to agree with the double basses, resulting in a definite break in the middle of the arpeggio that occurs only in this instance (mm. 364–65, not in 379–80, 389–90, or 401–2). Stegemann records

this substantial alteration in the critical notes, but there should at least be a footnote on that page of the score. As a footnote, it would then be more likely to appear in the offprint—as a user without access to the critical apparatus might assume that this articulation reflects a better understanding of the composer's intention. (If this were indeed the case, Stegemann should give his evidence for it.) It seems to me an unwarrantable change.

Regarding the critical apparatus, the descriptions of the sources in both volumes is a little muddled; a single example may suffice here. Macdonald describes the first edition of *Phaëton*: "First engraving by Louis Parent (fl. 1860–1902) in 1875, and re-engraved by Charles Douin (fl. 1904–1927) in February 1903." Why not call this second engraving the "second edition"? True, Durant & Fils. used the same plate number (2106) for the second engraving—but philologically it is a true second edition, coming from entirely new plates. As Macdonald assigns the scores produced by both Parent and Douin the same siglum (P-e1), there is potential confusion in the critical notes—but since no note appears to refer to the "re-engraving" as such, perhaps no damage is done. (He reserves the label "second edition" for the miniature score published in 1906, which seems to be a photographic reduction of the Douin engraving [with a new plate number, 6696].)

In the symphony volume, Stegemann wastes a considerable amount of space in the critical notes reporting on every alteration made by Saint-Saëns to the proofs of the first edition; as this document is available online [<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55007810j.r=78>] and especially as these alterations are flagged and easily spotted in that source, virtually all of these comments could be omitted from the present edition—excepting those few that

remained uncorrected in the first edition or have some other relevance to the text. The vast majority of these comments offer nothing substantive. (Macdonald's notes are admirably concise.) In what I consider a significant misreading of the source, Stegemann speculates that the composer made a mistake when he added "movement du 1^{er} morceau" on the proof to the metronome mark at the end of the scherzo (♩. = 72). Stegemann suggests that this must be an error, as the beginning of the scherzo is marked 80 dotted quarter-notes to the minute. He seems not to have considered that this "1^{er} morceau" is really the first movement: there the *Allegro moderato* (m. 12) indicates ♩. = 72.

Both volumes include extensive reception histories by Michael Stegemann. It is in these that he really shines, and his compilation of early reviews and correspondence is useful to put these works into a broader context. Macdonald's introductory essay is also admirably lucid and comprehensive. Also to be praised is the variety of documents that are included in the front matter: in addition to facsimiles of manuscripts, there are also reproductions of early prints (for example, the first edition of the song "Danse macabre," which preceded the symphonic poem by three years), the analysis of the Third Symphony as it appeared in the program at its premiere in London in 1886, and transcriptions of compositional sketches. It is inevitable that in projects like these—often measured in decades rather than years—there will be refinements to the editorial principles. The principles listed in Macdonald's volume state that "Saint-Saëns frequently resorts to musical abbreviations; for the sake of precision, they have been spelled out whenever necessary." This item really should have appeared in Stegemann's volume also, in which he routinely replaces the

composer's abbreviations of reiterated notes (with strokes across the stems) by writing them out in full, without editorial comment. Macdonald has generally allowed the original abbreviated notation to stand, and so his volume appears a little less fussy on the page. Another oddity in the series is that while the front matter is given in French, English, and German, the back matter is in either French *or* English (not both), which results in different systems of pitch-register notation in the two volumes. In Stegemann's notes, middle C is *ut*³; in Macdonald's it is *c*⁴. The potential confusion here could have been avoided by consistently using the same language for the commentaries.

Looking ahead to future volumes, I am delighted to see that the project is taking their adjective "complètes" seriously: it appears that all five works in these volumes will appear also in Series IV, Volume 1, "Œuvres originales et transcriptions pour deux pianos." *Le Rouet d'Omphale* actually started out as a two-piano scherzo before it was orchestrated; the composer made transcriptions of all the other works shortly after completing the orchestral score, and it is good to see the provision for these transcriptions to be included in the edition. (Those autographs of the two-piano versions are among the sources collated by Stegemann and Macdonald.)

The volumes are beautifully produced: disregarding the errors of the symphony volume, the scores look superb. (I noted one instance of a rest and clef superimposed [Symphony, p. 47]—the sort of spacing error an engraver would have had to make intentionally but that crops up unnoticed in computer setting.) I do feel compelled, however, to comment on the pricetags. The title page proclaims that this edition is a *Musica Gallica* project, listing the support not only of the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication and the Fondation Francis et Mica

Salabert—the principal underwriters of *Musica Gallica*—but also five other bodies as well: the Académie des Beaux-Arts, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Institut de Recherche en Musicologie, the Technische Universität Dortmund, and the city of Dieppe. What this support amounted to is not clear, but I cannot but wonder how much more astronomical the prices would have been without it. Of course, a scholarly edition is expensive; but when can we simply not afford it? Fine as the volume of symphonic poems is, does it really offer us much beyond the text that was already available? And why pay these prices for a volume so full of errors as is this edition of Symphony no. 3?

I began the process of reviewing these volumes in the week following the Music Library Association meeting in Norfolk. At that meeting I was struck by the disconnect between a session in which there was much hand-wringing about the limited and ever-diminishing acquisition budgets that music librarians face and—one ballroom over—an exhibit hall in which Bärenreiter, Henle, and Breitkopf were all promoting expensive Beethoven editions for the anniversary year. The canon still sells, and these firms have every right to follow the market. But do music libraries have a duty to acquire more Beethoven—or, in the present instance, more Saint-Saëns—when doing so will divert resources from other music that is not as well represented in the collections? With prices as substantial as these—and with such serious problems hidden between impressive covers—I think not. It is common for reviews such as these to conclude, almost as a formality, that "these volumes belong in every music research library." In an ideal world, with limitless funding (and with the flawed volume withdrawn and replaced by the publisher), I would say exactly that. But so many other things

belong in a music research library, and these pricey volumes do not really advance Saint-Saëns scholarship enough to warrant their list price. (A series of Saint-Saëns's vocal, choral, and dramatic works might be easier to justify in this regard, but it will not be found here.) Perhaps *Musica Gallica* and

Bärenreiter can find some way to bring these prices down in future volumes; in the meantime, I would not blame any library that returns Symphony no. 3 and demands a refund.

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JANÁČEK'S FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

Leoš Janáček: *Z mrtvého domu* [From the House of the Dead]. New critical edition, edited by John Tyrrell, with performance suggestions by Sir Charles Mackerras. Vienna: Universal Edition, 2019. [Study score (cix, 404 pp.) UE 35 556 ISMN: 979-0-008-089749. \$95.90; Vocal score (lxxiii, 223 pp.) UE 36 119, ISMN: 979-0-008-089732. \$59.90; Full score (hard-back) (lxxviii, 404 pp.) UE 35 867, ISMN: 979-0-008-089589. \$489]

From the House of the Dead was Janáček's last, strangest, and arguably greatest opera. It was the work he took with him on a trip to his cottage in Hukvaldy in the summer of 1928 in order to complete revisions to the last act (he had already revised the first two acts). The autograph had been written on hand-drawn sheets of manuscript paper and, even by Janáček's standards, it is notoriously hard to decipher. But Janáček's two most trusted copyists, Václav Sedláček and Jaroslav Kulhánek—both musicians in the Brno Opera orchestra—prepared a manuscript full score which constitutes the most important source for the opera, and include all of Janáček's revisions for acts 1 and 2. Only the revisions for the final act were never put into this authorized copy as Janáček died on 12 August 1928, before he could add them.

At the request of the director Ota Zitek, *From the House of the Dead* was edited and prepared for performance after Janáček's death by two Janáček pupils: the composer Osvald Chlubna, assisted by the conductor Břetislav Bakala. Chlubna was baffled by what he saw when he looked at the authorized

copy as well as the brutal dissonance of the harmonic language—the orchestration was so unusual (notably its extremely unusual voicing, often with large “gaps” in the texture between very high and very low pitches) that Chlubna believed it to be a kind of sketch. Accordingly, he set about normalizing the score, fleshing out the orchestration with warmer-sounding inner parts (for instance, moving trombone lines to French horns to create a richer sonority), and making a number of other changes to “improve” Janáček's original. Most controversially, Chlubna also composed a new ending, based on motifs from earlier in the opera but entirely different from Janáček's own conception of how the work should finish.

Chlubna used the authorized copy for his revisions, writing his changes in pencil. However well-intentioned they were—Chlubna was a loyal Janáček pupil—they did much to distort Janáček's intentions, and to lessen the impact of one of his most daring works. In 1930, Bakala conducted the work's premiere in Brno, and Universal Edition in Vienna published a full score and vocal score which both incorpo-