

## Chapter 1

### *Ideas on Editing, 1985 – present:*

When I began my transcriptions, I had the stated goal of creating an edition serviceable to performers and scholars. The place to begin, therefore, was the existing scholarship on editing. As it happens, the published literature on editing is limited enough to summarize here. Two general studies exist – James Grier’s 1996 wide ranging *The Critical Editing of Music*, and John Caldwell’s slightly narrower *Editing Early Music*, published in 1985, and revised ten years later.<sup>5</sup> Philip Brett’s outstanding “Text, Context, and the Early Music Editor,” found in *Authenticity and Early Music*, is another important contribution to the field.<sup>6</sup> The principles of editing early music remained largely un-discussed, until a 2008 conference held in Utrecht, which resulted in the 2013 collection of essays: *Early Music Editing: Principles, Historiography, Future Directions*, edited by Theodor Dumitrescu. Studies specific to composers appear in other volumes, of course, and the editorial principals published in most scholarly editions can also provide interesting reading – yet if one is looking for a manual on how to create an edition, these sources are where you must begin.

The universal opinion, returned to again and again in this body of literature, is that one edition *cannot* satisfy performers and scholars. As early as the 1920s, Rudolf von Ficker publishes both a “musical-artistic” edition and a “critical-scholarly” one.<sup>7</sup> Almost eighty years later, Margaret Bent writes:

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<sup>5</sup> James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and John Caldwell, *Editing Early Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Philip Brett, “Text, Context, and the Early Music Editor,” in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Rudolf Von Ficker, “Primäre Klangformen” translated and cited in Andrea Lindmayr-Brandl’s “Early Editions of Early Music,” in *Early Music Editing*, 95.

“Editions intended to serve both scholars and performers...have often resulted in compromises which satisfy neither constituency,”<sup>8</sup> and offers plenty of examples of this. As a performer, I have come across many editions that are undeniably scholarly, and completely unsuitable for performance either through attempts to retain archaic notation, or through sheer size of the volumes.<sup>9</sup> Why is this such a difficult task to achieve? Particularly in the early music community, where many of us have a professed attention to “historically informed performance,” and a fascination with primary source material, why should our performance edition not be able to include enough information to satisfy the scholar?

First we look to what the scholar desires. James Grier, in his introduction to *The critical editing of music* outlines a thoughtful and academic approach to editing – that “editing is critical in nature” and that “criticism, including editing, is based in historical inquiry.” He goes on to write, “the final arbiter in the critical evaluation of the musical text is the editor’s conception of musical style.”<sup>10</sup> This places a tremendous amount of responsibility on the editor – both as scholar and transcriber - but also allows them the leeway to make choices according to their “conception.” Compare that to Caldwell’s opening statement:

*There are really only two fundamental requirements for an edition of music: clarity and consistency. In this respect there is no difference between a ‘scholarly’ and a ‘practical’ edition. The aim in both should be the same: to provide a musical text which can be trusted, and to do so in such a way that the music can be easily assimilated by the eye.*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Margaret Bent, “Early Music Editing, Forty Years On: Principles, Techniques, and Future Directions,” in *Early Music Editing*, 255.

<sup>9</sup> The new *Opera Omnia* of Claudio Monteverdi, for instance, contains complete facsimiles of partbooks, and only has a few measures per page, resulting in massive volumes (25x35 cm) of 400 to 500 pages.

<sup>10</sup> James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>11</sup> John Caldwell, *Editing Early Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1.

At face value, these two ideas do not conflict. Clarity and consistency can be provided as results of criticism and historical inquiry. But ultimately, Grier is advocating for an act of criticism, placing the editor *between* the text and the performer, and Caldwell is looking simply for a text in itself.

Caldwell and Grier do not agree on details, either. For example, Caldwell writes “baroque key signatures...are often archaic in the sense that they do not correspond to the modern conventions for indicating the minor or major key of the music for which they are being used...it is a great mistake to modernize these.”<sup>12</sup> Grier writes “in my experience, however, the addition of an editorial signature can simplify the presentation considerably,” and when discussing *musica ficta* goes on to suggest that Caldwell’s proposed solutions are “too complex.”<sup>13</sup> Grier suggests not marking editorial changes in the score, and reserving them all for the critical report, while Caldwell writes, “not all editorial material need be confined to the critical commentary.”<sup>14</sup> However, when writing the aforementioned critical commentary, Margaret Bent warns that scholars are “expected to provide and to use critical commentaries of often forbidding appearance and indigestible compression that, at worst, may be merely uncritical dumps of unmodulated data.”<sup>15</sup>

My personal quest (rooted in the music of Johann Rudolph Ahle) led me to editions of other music from the same time. Where did I find clarity and consistency, what was lacking in historical inquiry, which edition didn’t clearly identify the editor’s role in the musical criticism? I found myself suddenly much

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<sup>12</sup> Caldwell, *Editing Early Music*, 73.

<sup>13</sup> Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music*, 162-4.

<sup>14</sup> Grier, 169, and Caldwell, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Bent, “Editing Early Music: The Dilemma of Translation” in *Early Music* 22, No. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), 390.

more critical of published editions, but I also found myself answering questions about the smaller details Grier and Caldwell could not agree on. For instance, the edition of Samuel Scheidt's collected works quickly answered my questions about altering meters and note values.<sup>16</sup> The biggest problem is that the note values in triple sections have been quartered, while the duple sections have been unaltered. This creates passages like this, in which the relation between the two sections is completely lost:



Figure 1 - Scheidt, "Angelus ad Pastores" mm. 96-102, from the 1622 print, and as rendered in the 1971 Scheidt Werke.

It is also no help that a signature that signifies tripla has been substituted for an original which represents sesquialtera. The discerning reader can find both an acknowledgement of the value adjustment and the original meter signature in the critical commentary at the back, but a similar situation in the following volume (the *Concertuum Sacrorum*, Scheidt's 1622 collection of twelve pieces, was split across two volumes edited by Hans Grüss in the Scheidt Werke, published in 1971 and 1976), where the triple values have once again been quartered and the signature changed from 3/2 to simply 3, goes without

<sup>16</sup> Able to do a side-by-side comparison of print and edition, I examined the following volumes: Scheidt, Samuel, ed. Hans Grüss. 1971. *Samuel Scheidts Werke, Concertuum Sacrum Bd.XV, Bd.XVI*. Samuel Scheidts Werke. Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik. 1971, 1976.

comment: inconsistent, unclear, failing to acknowledge alterations, and showing, in fact, a complete disregard for historical inquiry.

Just as I discovered these blunders, I also discovered well thought-out editions, which helped shape my editorial methods. Gregory Johnston's web-based edition (published by the Society for Seventeenth-Century Music) of a publication by Wolfgang Briegel (incidentally, an acquaintance of Ahle), presented a good solution to the question of spelling and punctuation in the texts of this music.<sup>17</sup> The layout in the same edition is questionable, however, and the critical notes hold information that could be displayed much more simply and comprehensibly in prefatory staves.

Where does this leave us? Caldwell and Grier are unable to agree on specific notational issues, and while Bent proposes interesting solutions, her research focuses on music with a completely different set of parameters to Ahle's. Recent editions of seventeenth century German music each propose different solutions to different problems, but none seem to have found a flawless formula. Perhaps it is best to disregard any specific suggestions regarding notational practices (Grier's and Caldwell's, by 2018, are almost twenty-five years old, and collected editions begin to be replaced almost as soon as they are completed), and focus on the overall ideas presented in the literature. Caldwell, at least, believes that an edition could be of use to scholars and performers, and Grier does not say it cannot be.

As editor, these concepts place us on a quest for clarity, consistency, and

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<sup>17</sup> Gregory S. Johnston, ed., "Wolfgang Briegel: Zwölff Madrigalische Trost=Gesänge" in *Web Library of Seventeenth Century Music* (Society for Seventeenth Century Music, March 2016). Accessed October 28, 2016, <http://www.sscm-wlscm.org/main-catalogue/browse-by-composer/363-zwoelff-madrigalische-trost-gesaenge>.

historical inquiry, while we attempt to commit acts of criticism – and all four of these concepts are artificial constructs from the current ideas of musical society when any edition is published. Referring to text underlay, Thomas Schmidt-Beste writes:

*It remains the editor's responsibility to weigh the evidence critically and to present a well-reasoned solution...the admission that there might be more than one 'correct' solution...is difficult both to conceptualize and to represent on the printed page. But we owe it to the users of our editions and to ourselves as scholars to come to grips with this, rather than resorting to the pseudo-authenticity of presenting 'the original.'*<sup>18</sup>

These are the acts of criticism to which Grier refers, and this is the reason for investigating this literature in the first place. What becomes clear through trying to comprehend the (recent) history of critical editing, is that every solution has a possible problem, but every possible solution can be justified, so long as the editor clearly presents his involvement. There are those who will only be satisfied with a facsimile of an original source (in which cases Philip Brett suggests “the editor will be lucky to find employment running the copying machine and brewing the herbal tea.”<sup>19</sup>), but they cannot be the editor’s concern. Bent suggests that we must realize that “all transcription translates; that a transcribed and scored version is no longer the original text.”<sup>20</sup> And indeed, in the digital age, those seeking original sources can much more easily be satisfied, and can be removed from the potential audience for a critical edition. The editorial goal, then, according to this body of literature, is to present a **translation**, with any decisions made carefully documented, and all possible information from the source clearly and cleanly presented. This is the standard

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Schmidt-Beste, “Editorial Text Underlay Revisited,” in *Early Music Editing*, 139.

<sup>19</sup> Brett, “Text, Context, and the Early Music Editor,” 84.

<sup>20</sup> Bent, “Editing Early Music,” 390.

against which I judge previous editions of Ahle's music. And this is the standard which forms the basis of my editorial methods.