

## Online Chopin Variorium Edition: Report

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This is one of the most exciting web-based music projects that I know of, not only for its specific content but also for the possibility that it can serve as a musicological and technical model for similar work on other composers. During the course of the meeting on 26 October 2004 I expressed my unreserved admiration for the project, so I will concentrate here on aspects of the samples posted on the web that I found slightly less than ideal (many of these points were already raised in the discussion).

1. One slight problem I found was comparing a large number of samples. I'm not sure what can be done about this, since each image requires space and inevitably there isn't enough room on a single screen to accommodate all of them. Certainly I found it a wee bit extra work in trying to move items from the bottom of the page to the top that I had to drag the image part way up the page, stop, scroll up and drag again until the two images were side by side or superimposed.
2. I also found it slightly difficult to compare images because the superimposition sometimes made one of the images too difficult to read. By the same token, even when unneeded images were hidden, the physical distance between the images made comparison either awkward or potentially confusing since I was forced to hide and restore several images and it was easy to lose track of which images I needed to restore or hide. This problem could be avoided, I think, by identifying the images differently, by sigillum only. Then, if I lose track, I can at least easily record the identifier and check against a master list; long identifiers, as they are now, are more confusing.

These admittedly very minor points were the chief difficulties I had using the site and I need to stress that they are particular to the way I would use this kind of information – which is to say in a highly specialized way and so possibly not typical of the majority of users. Nevertheless, this is such a magnificent resource that I would like to see it serve the needs of every possible user, from the most casual to the most detail-oriented. Given the tremendous work that has already gone into this project, it seems to me only natural to hope that it serves a variety of constituencies. For my own purposes what I think would be necessary, in order to carry out a detailed comparison, is to rely in the long run on a paper copy that I can annotate (but bear in mind this is only for my very specialized needs). It might be an idea, however, to provide what amounts to an annotatable master copy that I can store at the site or on my computer. By this I mean, if I were presented with a score based on a single source, or a score entirely lacking articulation, that I could use as my own personal record-keeping document, it would be a big help.

As a specialized user there are two other, related, functions that would help me. One would be the possibility to enlarge individual images and to store them in their own file. I would like to see this because, of course, my reading of the length of a slur or the placement of a dynamic, for example, could well be different from the usual. A dedicated file of readings I'd want to look at in more detail would help me to identify patterns across different works. This is the second point. Ideally, I'd like to be able to use this resource not just to compare readings of individual bars or pieces, but to compare readings across works. Ultimately the real use for me of this resource would be to fashion my own reading of Chopin sources in general, perhaps an untraditional one, and this requires quick access to, for example, a series of readings that I may wish to interpret in ways different from the ways they are usually interpreted. If I could build up *my own picture* of what I think is going on in the sources, I'd be quite pleased.

In this respect, it would be helpful, when it comes to reporting variants in the sources, if I could search in any way I can imagine and not be restricted to lists either for individual works or of an individual type. I presume, given that the details are stored in a database rather than on the page, that this is possible. The search function, then, should ideally allow me to search by all conceivable parameters including those that are perhaps not evident in the structure of the database.