

COLLECTION OF CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE WORKS OF

*Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin*  
No. 9

Sonate Op. 58

*Introduction, Text, Fingering and Commentary*

*by*  
*Franco Luigi Viero*



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In the previous page: sculpture of Chopin's left hand carried out following the cast made by Jean-Baptiste Clésinger shortly after the death of the Composer.

## Preface

*Even before Paul Badura-Skoda died (September 25, 2019), Bärenreiter had announced a new edition of the Sonata Op. 58 edited by Badura-Skoda himself. We welcomed the news with joy, because at last the re-edition of a Chopin work was being entrusted to a scholar-pianist equal to the task. Then, unfortunately, Badura-Skoda passed away, and the publication continued to be postponed. According to the latest postponement, the release was announced for December 2024 by Britta Schilling-Wang and Hardy Rittner. In our impatient wait for the Bärenreiter edition, however, we had missed the fact that Henle had in the meantime released its new edition of the Sonata Op. 58 (2023): we immediately bought it. After briefly examining it, we decided to interrupt the revision of our Polonaises to devote ourselves to a new edition of the Sonata Op. 58. The respect and veneration we have for Chopin forced us to do so.*

*The Henle edition is not a critical edition, but an “Urtext” edition, so to speak, of a new generation: it presents, separately, the first French edition and the first German edition, so that the Sonata Op. 58 is split into two sonatas! The editor expounds a series of personal opinions, of which he provides no evidence, and the notes (Bemerkungen) are more like passive Beschreibungen, passive descriptions: actually, they are totally uncritical and, for the most part, completely useless; nor is there a lack of embarrassing errors. The only positive contribution is due to Wolfram Schmitt-Leonardy who took care of the fingering (he is not a Chopinesque pianist, although he has recorded several works by Chopin, including the three Sonatas, but he is an excellent pianist).*

*Close together, then, two new editions of the Opus 58: one recent, the other very recent! We had not considered that the upcoming Chopin Competition would be a driving force. The preface of the Bärenreiter edition is indeed signed by Paul Badura-Skoda (April 2019, five months before his passing!), but also by Britta Schilling-Wang (July 2024), who availed herself of Hardy Rittner’s contribution, without which the edition would have been nothing more than a decent Urtext edition. We do not agree on several points; after all, Schilling-Wang’s forma mentis appears to be conditioned by the German editorial tradition, which cannot do without the passive Beschreibungen, mentioned above; nevertheless, there is no lack of correct critical observations, and above all, our Sonata returns to being one, not two!*

*The text of Opus 58 presents many author’s variants, nearly all executable, which the student has the right to have before his eyes so as to be able to choose and combine them to his taste. The philologist’s task is to identify and separate the outdated variants from the still active ones. To do this, it is necessary to know the musical language that many Chopinologists and pianists do not know; it is necessary to have understood the principles of the new piano school conceived by Chopin (many Chopinologists and pianists do not even know what it is); then, it is necessary to know Chopin’s piano technique.*

*Obviously, there is no perfect critical edition, but it is certainly possible to establish whether one is better than another. And the Bärenreiter edition, albeit with some reservations, is definitely better than the Henle edition, even if it does not entirely replace the Polish one.*

*In this edition of ours, students will find everything they have a right to know, without getting lost in the ballast of boring and useless descriptions.*

*As is our custom, we conclude by stating that any signalling of errors or inaccuracies and any constructive criticism will be greatly appreciated.*

*Dorno, May 2025.*



FIRST OF ALL, it must be emphasized that this *Sonata* is one of the most beautiful in all piano literature, and, secondly, it is the composition in which, more manifestly than in any other, the founding principles of the new piano school conceived by Chopin are put into practice, a school based on two pillars: *Belcanto* and the quality of touch. Principles that are not only inapplicable to the digital piano, but also require an instrument that is sensitive to the infinite variety of each individual performer's touch. In other words, a piano that emits an identical sound, whatever the pianist, is not an instrument worthy of Chopin.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

In the year the *Sonata* was composed, 1844, Mrs Sand and Chopin were supposed to leave for Nohant on Sunday, May 26. But on that very day, the novelist wrote to Doctor Molin: "Chopin has learned of his father's death. He is devastated, and so am I. He doesn't want to see anyone. But I want to talk to you about him."<sup>1</sup> The same day she also wrote to Franchomme: "Our poor Chopin has just learned of his father's death. [...] I beg you to come and see him tomorrow, because you are one of the two or three people who can do him good." And yet, on May 29, the novelist, in a letter addressed to Chopin's mother, full of rhetorical phrases and false promises, writes: "You know how deep his grief is and how downcast his soul is; but, thank God, he is not ill, and in a few hours we are leaving for the country."! Understand?! She had already called the doctor twice, but Chopin was fine!<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the sad bereavement is followed by an event as joyful as it is exceptional: his eldest sister Ludwika, accompanied by her husband Kalasanty, travels to Paris to hug her brother. The decision to undertake such a journey was taken almost there and then, for in the letter sent

in June, his younger sister Izabella writes: "Belza [*a cohabiting family friend*] is leaving for Paris at the end of the month,"<sup>3</sup> but there is no mention of Ludwika's departure. In any case, in a note to Marie de Rozières (July 1844) Chopin writes: "It is possible that in 10, 15 or 20 days my sister Louise will come to Paris."<sup>4</sup> If Ludwika and her husband made the journey with Belza, they arrived in Paris in the first days of July. Instructive is Sand's early July letter to Ludwika. After all the lies told to Chopin's mother about her son's good health, she had to take precautions, since Ludwika was neither blind nor deaf: "[...] Do not be too frightened by his state of health; it has remained unchanged for more than six years and I see him every day. A fairly strong coughing fit every morning; every winter two or three more intense crises, each lasting only two or three days; some neuralgic pain from time to time. This is his normal state. Besides, his chest is healthy and his delicate organism shows no lesions."<sup>5</sup> There follows a frankly stomach-churning chatter.

Chopin, who was in Nohant, arrives in Paris to welcome his sister before the 16th and is back with her and his brother-in-law on July 25th.<sup>6</sup>

On August 28, Sand writes in a letter to Dr. Véron: "Mr Chopin leaves in an hour..."<sup>7</sup> So Chopin accompanied his sister and brother-in-law back to Paris, from where they returned to Warsaw. He is supposed to return to Nohant together with the writer's son, Maurice, who, however, having lost his head for Pauline Viardot, the singer, does not show up, so Chopin returns to Nohant alone, not without writing Maurice a note urging him to inform his worried mother.<sup>8</sup>

These details are useful in establishing the date of composition of our *Sonata* and the condition Chopin was in.

#### COMPOSITION AND PRINTING.

It is unlikely that Chopin could compose during his sister's stay. After all, they had not seen each other for years and it is natural that Fryderyk devoted all his time to his sister. Hence, unless Chopin had already sketched out some theme in the first half of July—which is not impossible—the date of composition—as Belotti writes—"is easily

<sup>1</sup> Cf. CGS VI, p. 556. The Composer was already unwell, because Molin was called on Friday 17th May: "Dear Doctor, Chopin is in pain: can you come after dinner? Please do", cf. *ibid.* p. 550.

<sup>2</sup> This is contradicted by Chopin himself, who writes to Molin in a note published by Dr Cabanès (cf. *ibid.* p. 560 n. 1): "Dear Doctor, everything is ready to leave tomorrow evening. I do not want to leave Paris without seeing you and without bringing your prescriptions. So have the goodness to give me a minute, between visits, today. Your devoted Chopin. Please also come to the aid of my memory, for my notebook is even more chaotic than I am (if that is possible). Tuesday morning", i.e. 28 May.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CFC III p. 159.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.* III p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. CGS VI, p. 574.

<sup>6</sup> On July 16, he signs the sale of *Opp.* 55 and 56 to Brteitkopf.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. CGS VI, p. 611.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 617.

determinable: [...] between early September 1844, when his sister left Paris to return to Warsaw, and the following 28th November, the date of his [*scil.* Chopin's] return to Paris from Nohant..."<sup>9</sup> This is confirmed by the Composer himself in his letter to Ludwika and Kalasanty in early August 1845: "After your departure I have written nothing but this Sonata."<sup>10</sup> In just three months, then, Chopin managed to conceive and write a supreme masterpiece. It is plausible to assume that the joy of seeing his sister again had a very positive influence.

In July 1844, Chopin learns that Schlesinger wants to delay the publication of *Opp.* 55 and 56, which had already been decided upon. Becoming apprehensive, on August 1 he writes to Franchomme: "If Schlesinger persists in his resolution, give my manuscripts to Maho, so that he can get Meissonnier to take them for the same price."<sup>11</sup> After an agitated exchange of correspondence, Franchomme's intervention proves decisive, because he succeeds in convincing Schlesinger to keep his commitment: "I was right to count on your friendship," writes Chopin, "so the speed with which you have resolved the Schlesinger affair does not surprise me at all."<sup>12</sup> But Schlesinger would not publish anything else by Chopin. In fact, he refused the *Sonata* and the *Variants* offered to him by the Composer: "For the two works I ask one thousand two hundred francs."<sup>13</sup> "We do not know," writes Grabowski, "whether the high price was the reason for the refusal or whether Schlesinger was already thinking of closing down and, for this reason, did not want to buy anything."<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact, Schlesinger retired and sold his music editions to Brandus.<sup>15</sup>

The receipt for the sale to Breitkopf of *Opp.* 57 and 58 is dated 21 December 1844.<sup>16</sup> The transfer to Wessel is dated 16 May 1845,<sup>17</sup> while the registration at Stationer's Hall is dated 22 April 1845! For France, the legal deposit is dated 23 June 1845. In all likelihood, therefore, the second run of the French edition, the English edition and the German edition appeared on the market almost simul-

taneously in July 1845.<sup>18</sup>

#### MANUSCRIPTS AND EDITIONS.

For the three editions, German English and French, Chopin prepared three different manuscripts. To date we only possess the one sent to Leipzig, which we shall call *A1* (*v. infra*). According to Müllemann, "a strict comparison of the sources makes it possible to establish that the autograph for Breitkopf & Härtel was probably written most carefully and last."<sup>19</sup> Such assertions, however, must be proven, and this is up to the philologist who makes them, so that the Reader is enabled to form a precise opinion without being forced to rely on providence.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Breitkopf, the first to acquire the property of the *Sonata*, would have received its autograph last. We will see below that the collation of sources suggests otherwise. We will show that there are no multiple versions of the *Sonata* Op. 58, but only one version with many author's variants.

But Müllemann never ceases to surprise us when he states that "the version found in the English printed edition is the least well-documented, for we have neither the autograph engraver's copy, nor did Chopin check the proofs. For this reason the London version can largely be discounted for our new edition."<sup>21</sup> But we do not possess the autograph of the French edition either, and Chopin did not correct the proofs of the German edition! These reckless statements can perturb the Reader, who will ask himself: why? Where is the philological proof that justifies such a discarding?! We shall see that the English edition actually contains some valuable variants.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. ACCFE pp. XXXIX, XLV and IV.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *HN*<sup>2</sup> p. v: "Durch einen genauen Quellenvergleich lässt sich rekonstruieren, dass das Autograph für Breitkopf & Härtel vermutlich das am sorgfältigsten und zuletzt notierte war."

<sup>20</sup> All notes (*Bemerkungen*) in *HN*<sup>2</sup> are actually passive descriptions (*passive Beschreibungen*) of no use.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *HN*<sup>2</sup> p. VII.

<sup>22</sup> But that is not all. At the beginning of his *Preface*, Müllemann states that the unhappy fate of Chopin's first *Sonata* "may have held him back for a long time from pursuing sonata form. But it perhaps also points to the fact that the classical sonata was not Chopin's preferred form of expression, particularly if we recall the great number of nocturnes, polonaises, mazurkas, waltzes and other small forms that made him famous from the 1830s onwards." Incredible! Chopin composed four *Sonatas*, as well as four *Scherzos*, four *Ballades*, four *Impromptus* and four *Rondos*. According to the German scholar's bizarre reasoning, we should think that the Scherzo, Ballade, Impromptu, Rondo were not, compared to the many Nocturnes, Mazurkas, etc., "Chopin's preferred form of expression"!

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Bel.[1984] p. 156.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *CFC* III, p. 213.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.* III, p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.* III, p. 163.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ibid.* III, p. 188. *V. infra*, p. XII, the original note.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Grab.[1992] I, p. 41 n. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 41 e n. 53.

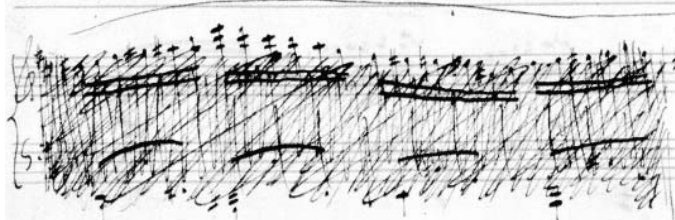
<sup>16</sup> Cf. Kallb.[1983] p. 823 f.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Kallb.[1982] p. 367. Müllemann claims that the agreements with Wessel date back to 2 May, *i.e.* to a date after the entry in the Stationer's Hall records (!), but does not indicate his source (cf. *HN*<sup>2</sup> p. IV).



Setting aside the unfortunate *HN*<sup>2</sup>, let us return to the manuscripts and, in particular, to *A1*.

This autograph contains no corrections, except for errors inadvertently made during the copying itself and which Chopin noticed. For example, after having copied mm. 86÷87 of the *Finale*, almost identical to mm. 84÷85, he rewrites the pair for the third time; realizing it immediately, he erases them.



Again in the *Finale*, he commits the opposite error, that is, a classic omission by homoeoteleuton: in fact, having reached mm. 175÷176, which are repeated in mm. 177÷178 (in *F*, however, the first triplet of the left h. of m. 177 differs slightly), he skips them; realizing it, but not immediately, he adds a note for the engraver: "These 2 measures must be



engraved twice."<sup>23</sup> This means that he was slavishly copying a complete manuscript and was not concerned with anything other than copying. In such circumstances, in addition to the two classic errors just shown, a third error is represented by the involuntary omission of something: an accidental, a slur, an accent, a hairpin or something else, as in m. 13 of the *All.<sup>o</sup> Maestoso*, where in *G*, which copies *A1*, *C*<sup>3</sup>, its tie and the intensive accent are missing:

What is true for *A1* is also true for the manu-



<sup>23</sup> The note is written in German and in Gothic cursive, which according to the editors of the facsimile (*v. infra*), was written by another hand, not by Chopin. However, from Friederike Müller's weekly reports (see *Bibliography*) we know for sure that Chopin spoke fluent German; furthermore, from the facsimile the ink seems to be the same and the handwriting is entirely compatible with that of Chopin. Hence, the note is by Chopin, as Bronarski also believed (*cf. PW* p. 134).

script used as an antigraph by Wessel, and for the one delivered to Meissonnier. In other words, the first English edition (*E*) and the first French edition (*F1*) may contain errors of the same kind. A rigorous collation of *A1* with *G*, of *F1* with *F2* and of the three editions, *F2 G* and *E*, is necessary to outline the characteristics of \**MO*, the autograph from which Chopin took the three copies delivered to the three publishers.

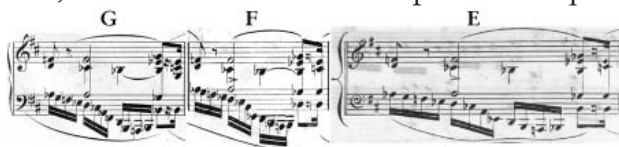
Before going on to the collation of some passages, it is interesting to note that the aforementioned Friederike Müller, whose weekly reports have been published, in which she describes in detail the lessons with Chopin and the environment that surrounded him, returned to Paris at the end of 1844 for a further cycle of lessons. In the letter of Sunday 22 December (p. 8) she writes: "On Tuesday Chopin will give me the *Berceuse*;" and in that of Thursday 26 she specifies: "On Tuesday I had the joy of receiving from Chopin the manuscript of the *Berceuse*: it is a lullaby, and at the same time it is not, graceful, melancholic. I read it carefully and Chopin was very satisfied with it. [...] Today I brought Chopin his *Berceuse* back, which I was supposed to play for him, but we saw him only briefly, because he was about to go out, even though he was reluctant to do so. He came to meet us with a thousand excuses: he had to go out; and he asked me to play him the *Berceuse* on Saturday."<sup>24</sup> Chopin had sold the *Berceuse* and the *Sonata* to Breitkopf a few days earlier, but he only showed Miss Müller the *Berceuse*. Why? There are two most likely hypotheses: a fair copy of the autograph was no longer available because it had been delivered to the printer; or Breitkopf, although he had committed to buying the *Berceuse* and the *Sonata*, would have paid for them only upon delivery of the manuscript, which was not yet ready. In the first case, there were at least two fair copies of the *Berceuse*; in the second, it means that Breitkopf would have paid an advance for the *Berceuse*, and the settlement would have been paid upon delivery of the *Sonata*. The receipt's text, somewhat ambiguous, would lean towards the second hypothesis: "... and I acknowledge having received the agreed fees, for which a special receipt has been issued."<sup>25</sup> Be that as it may, the opinion that *A1* was the last manuscript copied is contradicted by the dates, and the fact that *A1* was the most accurate of the three manuscripts is entirely irrelevant, since this does not mean that it represented the best or definitive version.

<sup>24</sup> *Cf. G.-STR.*[2018] p. 541 f.

<sup>25</sup> *V. supra*, n. 16.

## COLLATION AND RECENSIO.

M. 21: in G the eighth semiquaver of the left hand is an *F*, but the *E<sup>b</sup>* of F and E improves the quality



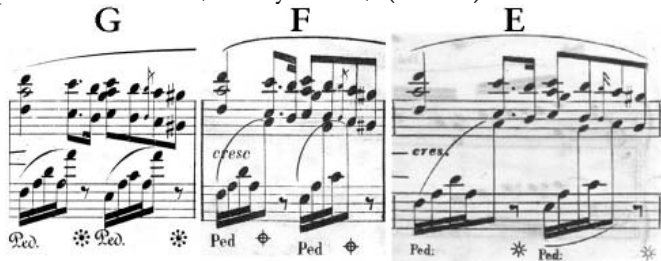
of the diminished seventh chord given by the second quadruplet, changing it into a semidiminished seventh, hence that *F*, which cannot be considered a variant any more, testifies to a previous version.

M. 29: *F2* differs from *G* in having an additional pedal, a slur and the fingering, but does not have



the initial *staccato*. Compared to *F2* in E some accidentals and the dynamic sign *f* are omitted, but not the slur or the fingering, which is already found in *F1*. This means that Chopin copied *A1* from a different and previous sheet, while F and E have the same source, only \*2/3 (→E) was written with much less care, *i.e.* in haste; which leads one to suspect that the antigraph for Wessel was prepared last and in a hurry, as is shown by the many omissions.

M. 61: the addition of *cres.* in F and E and the replacement of *C#-A* by *G-C#* (left h.) show that the



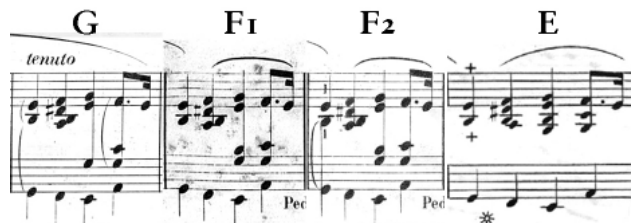
reading of *G* (←*A1*) is not a variant but an earlier version.

M. 62: in F and E, in the 1st quaver of the triplet



there is *D<sup>5</sup>* which is still missing in *G*: another sign that makes the version of *G* earlier than F and E.

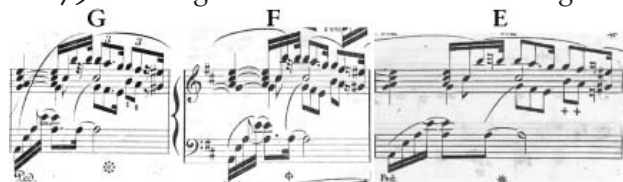
M. 69: the absence in *G* of *B<sup>3</sup>* (third chord in the bass), the fingering and the different slurring gives evidence that there was an earlier version in



regard to that of F and E, although Chopin in *F1* omits the curved lines, one of which, however, is restored in *F2*.

M. 73: in *G* the first triplet of this measure shows an outdated version. In any case, to be indulgent to the less lucky chaps, we have included the reading of *G* as a variant (*see text*).

M. 79: although in E some ties are missing— due



to the haste already mentioned—and the second *A<sup>3</sup>* is not dotted, *G* attests to an earlier version in the third beat.

M. 140: the version of *G* in the bass, although very similar to that of F and E, is clearly earlier (*see text*).

M. 178: here we have one of the rare examples (fourth crotchet), where *A1/G* present a more re-



cent reading than F and E. We explain below how this happened.

M. 181: in *G* the writing of the left hand un-



doubtedly attests to an earlier version.

M. 184: besides the correction attested by *F2<sup>D</sup>*,





here the additional stem of the last but one semi-quaver (right hand) is of interest: in G and F it indicates a semi-quaver, while in E it is a quaver, which is the correct reading (see the Commentary).

M. 197: here too (left hand) E, together with F,



offers the most recent version.

The above demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that Müllemann's statement, according to which "the manuscripts for Meissonnier and Wessel derive from earlier stages of the work" with respect to A1<sup>26</sup>, is quite far from truth.

Of the *Scherzo*, the most challenging section for the editor is undoubtedly the TRIO because of the complex intersection of the voices. Nevertheless, we believe we have given the writing as close as possible to the original conception of the Composer. The curious student will find all the details in the Commentary.

With the *Largo*, however surprising it may be, apart from the changes made by Chopin correcting F1 (see, for example, m. 59), the picture changes. In fact, A1 and \*23 (the antigraph of E) seem to derive from a more updated version. In the Commentary the demanding student will find some notes to support what we say.

The *Finale* presents several variants that connect E to G. It is not unlikely that Chopin, revising the piece, would have introduced further harmonic refinements. We have tried to point out everything that a performer should claim to know, without getting lost in the ballast of useless annotations.

#### THE SOURCES.

The *recensio* is based on the following sources:

**A1:** it is the only autograph we possess. We read it in the facsimile edition published by the Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopin and edited by Z. Chechlińska e I. Poniadowska (Warszawa 2005).

**F1:** first printing of the first French edition, which we could consider as the last proofs. Published by Meissonnier with No. "2187" it was registered on 23 June 1845 (cf. ACCFE p. xxxix and

414). It can be consulted on the CFEQ website.

**F2:** second printing of the first French edition, corrected by Chopin.

**G:** first German edition, published by Breitkopf & Härtel with No. "7260" in July 1845. It can be consulted on the CFEQ website. It reproduces A1 not without errors and omissions.

**E:** first English edition, published by Wessel & C.<sup>o</sup> with No. "6314" in July 1845; registered on 22 April 1845 (v. *supra*). It can be consulted on the CFEQ website.

**F2<sup>D</sup>:** exemplar of F2 from the so-called *partitions Dubois-O'Meara* (cf. EIGELD.[2006] pp. 257 ff.).

**F2<sup>St</sup>:** exemplar of F2 from the so-called *partitions Stirling* (cf. *ibid.* pp. 245 ff.).

**F2<sup>Fr</sup>:** exemplar of F2 that belonged to the cellist Franchomme, a friend of Chopin. Being part of a private collection, we were unable to consult it. However, ignored by HN<sup>2</sup>, it was exploited by BR, from whose notes we conjectured a *varia lectio* (see *Comm.* on mm. 102÷103 of the *Allegro*).

**Tl:** *Collection | des | Œuvres pour le Piano | par | Frédéric [sic!] Chopin | 3 SONATES | 1 AIR ALLEMAND VARIÉ | 8.<sup>e</sup> LIVRAISON, PUBLIÉ [sic!] PAR | T. D. A. TELLEFSEN, PARIS CHEZ SIMON RICHAUDT EDITEUR, s.d. (ma 1860), pp. II+90.*

**Kl:** *FR. CHOPIN. | Oeuvres complètes revues, doigtées et soigneusement corrigées d'après les éditions de PARIS, LONDRES, BRUXELLES et LEIPSIC | PAR CHARLES KLINDWORTH. | Seule édition authentique. Vol. II.9. Sonates. Berlin (ED. BOTE & G. BOCK), s.d. (but post 1880). It is a new layout of the Moscow edition from the 1870s. It should be emphasised that Liszt considered this edition the best possible and that Chopin would have approved of it.<sup>27</sup> After the collection edited by Tellefsen, Klindworth's precedes all the others; its importance does not lie in the text, but in the 'interpretation' that he, Liszt's pupil and a great admirer of Chopin, gives of it. It is also very likely that he knew the manuscript version that Liszt had prepared, perhaps for his pupil Olga Janina (v. *infra*, p. 53).*

**Mk:** *Fr. Chopin's Pianoforte-Werke, revidirt und mit Fingersatz versehen (zum größten Theil nach des Autors Notirungen) von Carl Mikuli, Band 7, Sonaten, Leipzig (Fr. Kistner) s.d. (but 1880), pp. IV+84. From a piano-playing standpoint this is a very careful edition. As for*

<sup>26</sup> Cf. HN<sup>2</sup> p. VII. Moreover, in A1's title page the French publisher is still Schlesinger not Meissonnier!

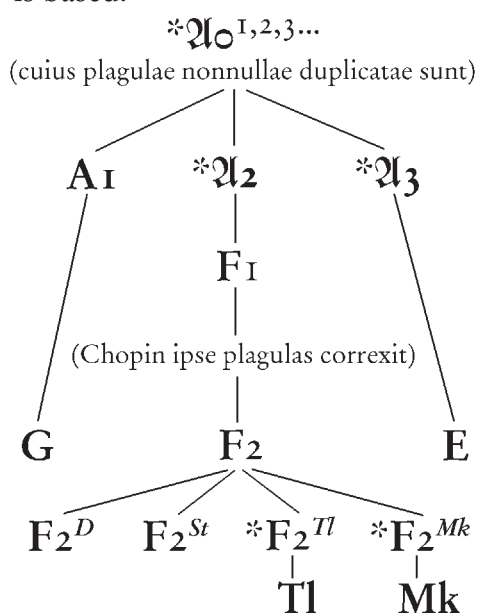
<sup>27</sup> See our edition of the *Préludes* on this site, *Intr.* pp. XII ff.



the text, Mikuli, treating his sources without a philological criterion, does not specify the provenance of the changes he makes. In the case of this *Sonata*, he certainly used his own materials, i.e. from lessons he had with his Maestro.

*BH<sup>cw</sup>*: see *Bibliography*. This edition, the first *kritisch durchgesehene*, though ignored by all scholars, requires attention.<sup>28</sup>

Let us come, then, to the illustrative *stemma* of the filiation that links the sources, on which the *recensio* is based.



The collation ruled out that the three manuscripts prepared for the three publishers were derived from a single autograph. It follows that Chopin, when a page ran out of space for corrections, copied it out, but did not replace it, so that in the end *A<sub>0</sub>* became an autograph with several double pages, which the Composer could not let go of. In preparing the manuscripts, therefore, he ended up copying—more or less consciously—a little here and a little there, thus giving rise to three versions of the *Sonata*, which was thus enriched with author's variants.

Again, the collation also shows that the editions of the two male pupils contain material from their personal scores, about the existence of which, although unavailable, no one can reasonably advance doubts.

The asterisk indicates sources that have been lost and/or hitherto not examinable.

<sup>28</sup> Among the sources, *HN<sup>2</sup>* and *BR* quote a few sketches/fragments of a few measures, which are of no value for the text's constitution and certainly do not form the basis of the more than 800 measures that make up the entire *Sonata* (see p. 44)!

FORTUNE.

In philology, what Anglophile musicologists call reception, or rather 'reception history', is called 'fortune', which can take four forms: (1.) editorial fortune, (2.) critical fortune, (3.) public fortune and, finally, (4.) recording fortune. The first is detected by the separate sale of the work; the second by the reviews of musicologists; the third by the frequency of its performance in concert halls; the fourth by recordings.

There are those, like Müllemann, who have a strange idea of the *reception*, whose witnesses would be three editions: Mikuli's, Scholtz's and Paderewski's. But since they are complete editions, it is inevitable that they also contain the *Sonatas*. To value the editorial success of the third *Sonata* published in them, we should first know whether a separate edition was printed and, secondly, the sales figures compared with those of, e.g., the *Funeral March* of the second *Sonata* or the *Polonaise* Op. 53 or the *Nocturne* Op. 9 No. 2. At this point, however, the research should be extended to all Chopin's editions. Mikuli, then, was a pupil of Chopin and, therefore, should appear among the sources for the constitution of the text; in other words, his edition has nothing to do with the editorial fortunes of our *Sonata*. The Paderewski edition should be consulted because of the great competence of the editor of the commentary, who was not Paderewski, but Bronarski, who had at his disposal almost the same sources that we have today, namely the three first editions, the *A<sub>1</sub>* autograph and Mme Dubois' copy. Hence, even this historic Polish edition has nothing to do with the *reception*—unless the publisher provides the sales figures mentioned above. And the same goes for the edition by Scholtz, even though the editor claims to have consulted three volumes that belonged to one of Chopin's pupils, Generalin von Heygendorf, née von Könneritz, only mentioned in his *Preface*. Moreover, Scholtz bases his edition on personal convictions, far removed from the new Chopin piano school.

Success with the critics comes from the reviews in the specialist journals. After the first review written by Schumann, which was a little ambiguous indeed,<sup>29</sup> a second review appeared the following year, of which we will only quote the last

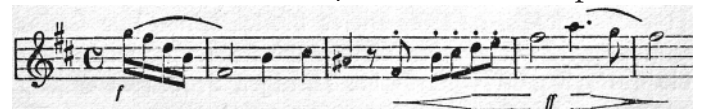
<sup>29</sup> Cf. NZfM of 16 September 1845, p. 89 f.: the review is anonymous, but it can only be by Schumann. To our knowledge the only one who quotes it is ERNST BURGER in his splendid volume devoted to Chopin (*Eine Lebenschronik in Bildern und Dokumenten*, München [Hirmer] 1990, p. 267).

sentence: “Moreover, it [*Sonata*] is in general more suited to (private) drawing rooms, where more attention is paid to art, than to concert halls.”<sup>30</sup> In his biography of Chopin, Karasowski expresses a less than glowing judgement: “[...] The richness in ideas is so great that it was difficult for the composer to keep within requisite bounds [...]. In general, strict forms are less favourable to Chopin’s mode of expression...”<sup>31</sup> In other words: Chopin did not know how to write sonatas. Niecks gives another negative but explicit judgement: «[...] The first movement by far surpasses the other three in importance; indeed, the wealth of beautiful and interesting matter which is here heaped up—for it is rather an unsifted accumulation than an artistic presentation and evolution—would have sufficed many a composer for several movements. The ideas are very unequal and their course very jerky [...]. In short, this is the old story, *plus de volonté que d’inspiration*, that is to say, inspiration of the right sort. And also, *plus de volonté que de savoir-faire*.”<sup>32</sup> Niecks makes Liszt’s words his own<sup>33</sup> but adds *que de savoir-faire*. In brief, even for Niecks Chopin did not know how to compose a sonata.

Anton Rubinstein’s judgement is very positive: “A great work and extraordinarily beautiful is the Sonata in B minor Op. 58, which is admittedly very much played, but not as much as the first in B flat. All the gold in Peru is not worth the second motif: what chisel work! There is not a single bar that is not sprinkled with melodious and passionate beauty. The conclusion of the first movement, which is not really a conclusion, is completely original; this shows that the sonata concept of this creation is not to be taken literally. The Scherzo is laconic, consisting, we might say, of only two parts, of which the second is dreamy, but not serious; it is an Impromptu rather than a Scherzo. Wonderful is the Largo, full of feeling and magical modulations. The last movement is also well done, it’s just strange, that the motif leads at once to passages of agility.”<sup>34</sup> An interesting and well-organ-

ized judgment is given by a Berlin biographer, who, referring to Opus 35, writes: “This painting in sonata form, unique even in Chopin, did not merely stumble over the form; it aimed, as a faithful reproduction of a transcendent realm, to go beyond the keys;” then adds that “the Sonata in B minor Opus 58 is different: here the stumbling of the inventive vein over the form was not so impetuous; here the Maestro was able to reconsider the rights of the ear.” Some suggestive considerations follow, leading to the following conclusion: “This Finale makes us forget all the sins against the holy spirit of the sonata. Chopin’s struggle with the sonata form has thus created two unique works: one that shocks, the other that enchants.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, for Weissmann, beauty prevails over dull rigour.

But for a penetrating evaluation of our Sonata one must go as far as Leichtentritt, who, in spite of the immature juvenile essay (*unreife jugendliche Versuche*) in Op. 4 and the questionable (*angreifbar*) use of the sonata form in the Concertos, recognises that on the two *Sonatas* Op. 35 and 58 “the last word is by no means yet spoken: they call for in-depth examination, which is amply rewarded, as the following analyses will show.” He observes that the main theme of 4 measures is composed of



the almost mirror-image reversal of the first 2, and



that this theme constitutes the cell out of which the

entire musical matter of the first two movements is developed, as can be deduced from the juxtapositions proposed by the musicologist himself. “The second movement is doubly connected to the last measures of the first movement, from which it takes

<sup>30</sup> Cf. AMZ of 4 February 1846, cl. 74 f. Walker mistakenly believes that this is the first review (cf. WALKER[2018] p. 482).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. M. KARASOWSKI, *Fr. Chopin. Sein Leben, seine Werke und Briefe*, II, Dresden (Verlag von F. Ries) 1877, p. 152.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. FR. NIECKS, *Fr. Chopin as a Man and Musician*, II, London (Novello) 1902, p. 228 f.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. FR. LISZT, *Chopin*, Paris (Bücheler/Chastel) 1977, p. 83: “He wrote beautiful Concertos and Sonatas; however, it is not difficult to discern more will than inspiration in these productions.”

<sup>34</sup> Cf. A. RUBINSTEIN, *Die Meister des Klaviers*, Berlin (Harmonie) 1899, p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Adolf Weissmann, *Chopin*, Berlin (Schuster & Loeffler) 1912, p. 179 ff.



its cue, so to speak. Its theme derives: 1. from an inversion of the descending figuration that dominates the concluding part of the first movement; 2. from a reduction of the penultimate and third-last measures of the first movement.”<sup>36</sup> A. Walker had also noted the acuity of Leichtentritt’s analysis and reiterates it in his recent Chopin biography.<sup>37</sup> The critics, therefore, remained deaf for decades.

The fortune with the public can only be detected by the frequency with which our Sonata appeared in concert halls before the advent of discs and CDs. This would require a search of the now unobtainable programmes of the most important concert halls around the world. Walker claims that this work was never performed during Chopin’s lifetime, but this is not entirely true, because the first movement was chosen as the test for the annual competition at the Paris Conservatory of Music, women’s class.<sup>38</sup> Going by what the same Walker says, the *Sonata* was performed ‘for the first time’ in Warsaw in January 1866 by.<sup>39</sup> We have already reported (*v. supra*) the testimony of A. Rubinštejn.

Of the recordings, the least recent known to us are those of the *Scherzo* performed by Vladimir de Pachmann in 1916,<sup>40</sup> and the *Finale* performed by Olga Samaroff, pseudonym of Lucie Hickenlooper, on 28 April 1923.<sup>41</sup> The first complete recording appears to be that by Percy Grainger, done in 1926.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Cf. LEICHT, [1922] pp. 245÷266. Although modern musical analysis—useful only to those who do not understand the language of music—is done in the form of graphs that cannot make the ear hear what it does not hear, we advise the student to read not only this penetrating analysis in full, but also that of Op. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. A. WALKER, *Chopin and Musical Structure*, in *The Chopin Companion. Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, ed. by A. Walker, New York (Norton & Company) 1966, pp. 252÷257 (amusing is the comparison with Peter Gould’s brief analysis, *ibid.* pp. 161÷165); WALKER [2018] p. 478÷486.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. “RGM” of August, 1848, p. 240.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. WALKER [2018] p. 486.

<sup>40</sup> Transferred to CD in PEARL OPAL CD 9840. According to A. PANIGEL, *L’Œuvre de Frédéric Chopin. Discographie générale*, Paris (Editions de La Revue Disques) 1949, p. 212, the recording would be dated from 1921.

<sup>41</sup> This was reported by Geoffrey McGillen in the booklet enclosed with PEARL OPAL CD 9860.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. PANIGEL, *op. cit.*

In conclusion, with rare exceptions, our *Sonata* was not well received and remains misunderstood, testifying to the widespread ignorance of musical language in general and of Chopin’s refined eloquence in particular.

#### THIS EDITION.

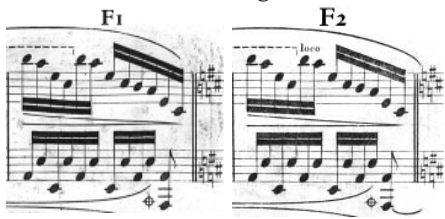
First of all, we start from the assumption that Opus 58 does not consist of two sonatas, but of a single Sonata with several author’s variants. Where it was philologically possible to establish with reasonable certainty that a particular variant imposed itself on the other *lectiones*, it was accepted in the main text; when, on the other hand, the doubt arose that it might be a valid *varia lectio*, we included it as an ‘ossia’, indicating its source. In this way the student learns, while reading, that that particular passage is susceptible to a different version, without getting lost under a heap of useless notes.

We have reported neither slurs nor pedalling signs among the *variae lectiones*, except in very rare cases. The breath, *i.e.* the agogics guided by the rhythm, and the resonance of the sounds, subject to the breath, may vary from one performance to the next according to the mood of the performer, the density of the audience, the environment and the instrument provided. The editors’ mania to demand that a slur starts on a precise note and ends on another precise note would be like demanding that an actor, reciting a monologue from “Hamlet”, always breathes between one precise word and another, raises or lowers the tone of his voice or accelerates or decelerates his recitation always at the same point. What an absurd claim! This is proven *ad abundantiam* by comparing performances of the same work in a recording studio (CD) and in public by the same performer. Chopin has a characteristic way of marking slurs, with which he suggests possible breathing, while his pedalling—as we have noted elsewhere—, usually added during copying, is somewhat mechanical: when the tonality changes, he closes one pedal and opens another. Sometimes one even gets the impression that he mechanically adds it where it is not needed and leaves it out where it might be needed. In any case, it is up to the performer to decide how much and how to use the pedal, as long as he keeps in mind that in Chopin the sounds are to be joined with the fingers, not with the pedal, as almost all pianists do nowadays.

Very important, then, is the respect of graphic preferences. Written music is a complex set of signs that symbolically represent sounds, and is compa-



able to a drawing that can act emotionally on the viewer. It is not uncommon for Chopin to erase a slur initially placed above a phrase and rewrite it below. Years ago, a well-known and esteemed musicologist judged it inappropriate (without mentioning our name, of course) to restore the word *loco* where the 8<sup>va</sup> ends. One example will suffice: in F1, m. 186 of the *Finale*, the 8<sup>va</sup> ends as it is still customary today, that is, with a vertical hook. Well Chopin, in correcting F1, takes the trouble to add *loco*, which the engraver had omitted; and he also

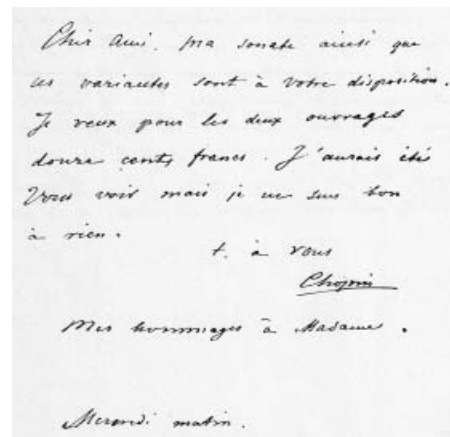


does so in mm. 190, 197, 254, 257 and 268. This means that, in spite of the new graphic convention, Chopin demanded that the 8<sup>va</sup> ended with *loco*! It is therefore not a matter of restoring an antiquated wording, but of simple philology.

A second very important sign is the curved line, which all editors want to equate with the vertical squiggle of the *arpeggio*. We have already shown in our review of *BR's Barcarolle*<sup>43</sup> that in Chopin the two signs indicate two different performances: the vertical curve indicates a broken (*brisé*) chord, the vertical squiggle a chord in *arpeggio*. We will therefore not repeat ourselves. But *BR's* editor calls into question Ekier, who “distinguishes three periods: ‘wavy lines – to 1837;’ ‘mixed signs, i.e. wavy lines and vertical curves – to 1843;’ ‘vertical curves only – from 1843.’”<sup>44</sup> This egregious stupidity has two serious motives: if Ekier had admitted that he had not realised that the two signs did not mean the same thing, a corrected reprinting of many volumes of the national edition would have been necessary, with serious damage not only to his image as a supreme chopinologist but also with worrying damage to the coffers of the National Institute F. C. Be that as it may, to contradict the bizarre periods quoted by *BR* m. 80 of the *Mazurka* Op. 59 No. 2, composed well after 1843, is sufficient, where Chopin clearly writes a vertical squiggle! We refrain from speculating over what reason anyone would have to support the Eckerian ‘periods.’

Fingering is another point of primary importance, especially in Chopin. As in our other editions we prefer Mikuli's fingering (distinguished

by the following characters: 1 2 3 4 5), whose edition contains many clues from which we can deduce with reasonable certainty that he studied this *Sonata* with his Master. He also had at his disposal the score of Camille Dubois and certainly consulted T1 and K1 as well. Only where, in our opinion, his fingering deviates from Chopin's principles, or where it is lacking, do we propose our own (distinguished by the following characters: 1 2 3 4 5; No. 8 indicates the thumb when it has to press two keys, cf. *MOZZATI. Esercizi di tecnica pianistica*, a cura di A. BALDRIGHI, Milano [Ricordi] 1994, p. 5). The fingering from F2<sup>D</sup> and F2<sup>St</sup> is distinguished by the characters 1 2 3 4 5 (in the Commentary it is specified where it comes from). Chopin's fingering printed in early editions has the following appearance: 1 2 3 4 5. The  $\frown$  sign suggests the substitution of one finger with another, while the small arrows  $\swarrow$  ( $\nearrow$ ) indicate the sliding from one key to another; the horizontal dash (–) preceding a finger number, prescribes that an already struck key remains down, even if the finger has to be substituted.



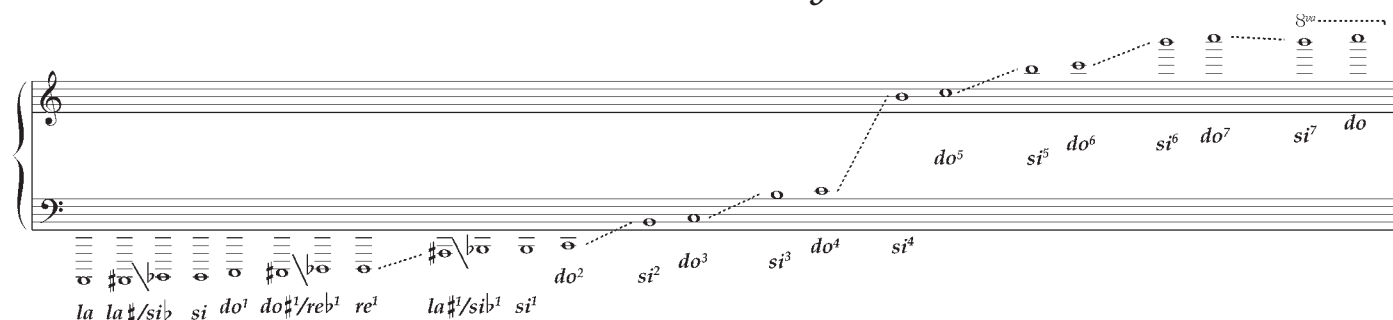
(Autograph of the above-mentioned note [see n. 13], in which Chopin offers Schlesinger the *Sonata* and *Variants*: “Dear friend, my sonata as well as the variants are at your disposal. For the two works I want one thousand two hundred francs. I would have come to visit you, but I am no good. | Yours | Chopin | My respects to Madame. | Wednesday morning.” The date is missing, but as it was written after his return to Paris, i.e. after Friday 29th November 1844, it is plausible to assume that this ‘Wednesday morning’ is either the 4th or at the latest the 11th December. – From *Deux Lettres de Chopin au Château de Mariemont*, par I. BLOCHMANN, Paris [Aux Editions de l'Arche] 1949.)

<sup>43</sup> V. la recensione in questo stesso sito.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *BR* p. 46 n. 7.



# Notes and keys



[To make a simple and immediate connection between the notes on the pentagram and the corresponding keys, we preferred a system of easy understanding for the piano student. Notes without number in superscript correspond to the few keys, which do not belong to full octaves and are at the ends of the keyboard; all the other notes are numbered from 1 to 7 depending on the octave (from C to B), to which they belong, from the lowest to the highest one.]

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# XIV

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