

ON THE COMPLETE CRITICAL EDITION

The *Béla Bartók Complete Critical Edition* is published in seven series and forty-eight volumes:

I	Stage works (six volumes)
II	Vocal works (five volumes)
III	Orchestral works (fifteen volumes)
IV	Chamber works (seven volumes)
V	Piano works (nine volumes)
VI	Piano reductions (four volumes)
VII	Appendix (two volumes)

The complete edition makes Bartók's entire oeuvre available to scholars and performers, including

- the most authentic version (*Fassung letzter Hand*) of works published with Bartók's approval;
- the most authentic version of finished compositions that remained unpublished in Bartók's lifetime;
- significantly different versions of both published and unpublished works;
- sketches documenting the genesis of works, and drafts that differ significantly from the final version;
- fragments and sketches unrelated to any finished compositions;
- documents of Bartók's studies in composition;
- transcriptions of Bartók's works by other composers or performers approved by him;
- Bartók's transcriptions and orchestrations of other composers' works (not including the approximately two thousand pages of performing editions of piano music that Bartók made).

Although a scholarly enterprise, the main text of the complete edition is also intended for practical use. The goal of the publication, however, is not to reduce the musical text to one authentic form. Problems with the musical text that would affect the performer are referred to in the main text as well as in a separate critical section, offering the performer variants and possible choices.

In Bartók's oeuvre, successive forms and published variants of a composition do not necessarily represent a straight line of development. Hence, authentic alternative versions form part of the main text of the complete edition. In several of his published compositions Bartók himself offered variants, including easier versions of difficult sections, alternative endings, and *Konzertfassungen* (concert versions) of easy piano pieces. Other typical variants involve alternatives based on scores that Bartók used in performance, as well as his recordings that preserve significant textual variations. As a result of repeated revisions and different publications, some of Bartók's compositions went through transformations that should be considered alternatives rather than obsolete or improved forms. In Bartók's definitive musical texts there are several contradictory or possibly erroneous tempo indications, metronome markings, information regarding dura-

tion, dynamic markings or performance indications, which are not corrected but only commented upon in the critical edition. An alternative reading of a shorter passage appears as an *ossia* line in the main text; the alternative version of an entire composition or its ending is published in an appendix. Possible errors are indicated in footnotes to the main text.

In the main musical text compositions are published with necessary adjustments to create consistency in the musical notation. Bartók's notation, however, is not completely consistent. Since during his career he changed his mind several times about notational questions, rules he followed in later years cannot automatically be applied to earlier works. Moreover, Bartók's relationship with his publishers, especially concerning the house rules of the various houses that published his works, affected the printed versions of his works so heavily that trying to make the notation of all his scores consistent would be impossible, and even misleading.

Based on the notation of the mature Bartók, and in the spirit of the letters he exchanged with his publishers about notation, the complete edition makes notation consistent in the following instances:

- the names of instruments are given in Italian;
- staves of instruments not playing (*tote Zeilen*) are left out of the scores of larger ensembles;
- parts for instruments of undetermined pitch are written on a single line staff;
- tempo indications, including *accel.*, *poco rit.*, etc., are generally written above the system;
- MM numbers are put in parentheses only if that was Bartók's intention, otherwise they are separated from tempo indications with a comma;
- generally, when two instruments are written on the same staff, they share a stem.

The following elements, however, cannot be made consistent:

- the introduction of rehearsal figures or boxed measure numbers, in some works indicated mechanically and in others carefully chosen to demarcate sections in the scores;
- size and location of time signatures where these apply across two or more staves;
- use of cautionary accidentals;
- the three versions of the legato slur ending in staccato (— · — · — ·);
- pedal indications (|_____| or *ped. **);
- information regarding duration of a whole movement as well as individual sections in it.

Following the *Introduction*, covering the genesis, early reception, and publication of the compositions, a second section, *Notation and Performance*, introduces the reader to Bartók's notation and its correct interpretation. Since a composer's notation can be interpreted correctly only if we know the conventions of his own readings, provided most immediately by the composer's own

performance, recordings of Bartók's playing are treated as a primary source by the complete edition. Preceding the main musical text we print information from the composer, such as a list of the instruments used, performance duration, and seating arrangements.

Quotations by the composer in the original language are always printed in italics. In the main musical text the majority of editorial additions appear in square brackets. Only editorially supplied accidentals are indicated by the use of a smaller font and without brackets.

In the *Critical Commentary*, sketches and drafts are published either in annotated facsimile, or in "diplomatic transcription," which reproduces the original without adapting it to current notational rules. Diplomatic transcription is used either when a facsimile reproduction of the original has not been possible, or when the transcription provides a more legible representation of the compositional process by separating out the composition's different chronological layers. Contrary to the principles applied to the main text, the goal of the transcription is the inclusion of as much information as possible, rather than easy legibility.