

Yo Tomita, Queen's University Belfast

The Bach Printed-Music Database and its roles in the reception study of Bach's works

In the last two decades, reception history has become one of the most popular research topics in Bach studies. The focus of investigations may be broadly classified into two chronological phases: before 1800 and after 1800. The studies into the period before 1800, on the one hand, usually deal either with the rediscovery or with the reassessment of manuscripts once owned by Bach himself, his family members and pupils, which reveal crucial details of how Bach's works were transmitted that sometimes helps us to identify the models for the early editions or the necessary background for understanding how Bach's works were introduced to the connoisseurs and musicians in wider geographical areas. Due to the scarcity of evidence, much work remains to be done in future.

The studies into the period after 1800, on the other hand, have become a fast growing area of research: numerous lines of enquiry have been established as countless details recorded in newspapers and private correspondences are identified. In fact, the process of reception is greatly assisted by the fact that by the middle of the nineteenth century Bach's works have become widely available to the general public in the form of printed editions to such an extent that it is often difficult to comprehend how and why each edition was introduced to the market, and how each is related to others.

The majority of the recent studies tend to focus on the examination of the final phase of the reception process where the influence from Bach's compositions is evaluated within a new historical tide or under different aesthetic ideals from those of Bach's own time. In other words, the process leading to the specific historical context, for instance how the specific version of Bach's works as manifested in a printed edition became available to the person under scrutiny, which should really be considered simultaneously as the other side of the same coin for the holistic understanding of the subject, tend to be ignored.

The richness of information printed edition can offer to scholars is often underestimated. Each edition reflects a work's market appeal, the ambitions of its editors and publishers, trends in its interpretation and the handling of source information at the time of its publication. To be able to gain a better understanding of it, I have started compiling Bach Printed-Music Database. In this paper I shall show how systematic examination of the printed music can give us access to the thoughts of the people who produced these editions, and how we can have a bird's eye view of all the threads of Bach reception spanning over a century from this unique perspective.