Meyerbeer Edition of Works
The Edition of Meyerbeer's Works will be published by G. Ricordi & Co., Munich, in collaboration with the Meyerbeer Institute Schloss Thurnau.

The edition is being planned as a historical and critical edition of the works. Because of the particular situation regarding sources, and the losses to Meyerbeer-Estate sources that occurred during the Second World War, it is not currently possible to embark on a Meyerbeer Complete Edition. The main focus will be on the stage works.

Meyerbeer's compositions will be presented in editions which on the one hand match up to all the demands of modern philology, and on the other, satisfy the needs of performance practice. The Meyerbeer Edition will make Meyerbeer's musical output available to scholars. Meyerbeer's Correspondence and Diaries are being issued by the de Gruyter-Verlag, Berlin. In conjunction with the edition of Meyerbeer's Works and the edition of letters and diaries, preparatory work will commence on an Index of Meyerbeer's Works. Participants in the Edition of Works, the edition of letters and diaries, and the Index of Works are in contact with one another.

The scholarly work on the text of the Meyerbeer Edition forms a basis for making Meyerbeer's works a renewed subject of discussion in the theatre and the concert hall.
In the wake of attention aroused by the premiere of *Robert le Diable* (1831) at the Paris Opera, Jean François Le Sueur, himself an opera composer and Hector Berlioz’s teacher, summed up the impression of a new artistic epoch that the work had created among critics and audiences in a neat formula: “The era of music devoted to pleasure and enjoyment was now over, and a new era of music had begun – one of power, energy and human maturity. A few years later, after the appearance of *Les Huguenots* (1931) at the Paris Opera, Jean François Le Sueur, Meyerbeer himself an opera composer and Hector Berlioz’s teacher, summed up the impression of a new artistic epoch that the work had created among critics and audiences in a neat formula: The era of music devoted to pleasure and enjoyment was now over, and a new era of music had begun – one of power, energy and human maturity. A few years later, after the appearance of *Les Huguenots* (1836), Heinrich Heine revived these ideas, confirming the view of leading European critics that the composer was creating “socially modern music” in which a mankind ensnared in spiritual collapse regains its hopes and desires, and a little later the young Richard Wagner explained Meyerbeer’s role in the history of opera precisely in terms of this idealist dimension of his music: “Meyerbeer wrote world history, the history of hearts and feelings, he shattered conventions and arias are still known and popular. But on the whole, for the general public, Meyerbeer is little more than a name in the history of opera. Yet in terms of musical and theatrical scholarship, a very different picture emerges. In recent times Meyerbeer research has gained enormous impetus, and people have once again become aware of the predominant role of this composer in the history of opera. In the process, the form in which Meyerbeer’s operas were handed down is turning out to be more and more problematic. Investigation of the sources has revealed complicated genealogies, whose course was determined as much by conceptual changes as by varying performance situations. In this light, the printed scores and piano scores emerge as incomplete, unreliable, and hence unusable. So the theatres that would like to perform Meyerbeer’s works find that, to a great degree, their hands are tied. This makes a historical-critical edition of the works an urgent necessity. Only then can opera audiences rediscover the “real” Meyerbeer. Moreover, the defamiliarizing attacks on the composer and his works which had already begun during his lifetime, and often had an anti-semitic aspect, have had lasting consequences. These days, Meyerbeer is by no means forgotten: his operas are still performed, though not very often; individual scenes and arias are still known and popular. But on the whole, for the general public, Meyerbeer is little more than a name in the history of opera. Yet in terms of musical and theatrical scholarship, a very different picture emerges. In recent times Meyerbeer research has gained enormous impetus, and people have once again become aware of the predominant role of this composer in the history of opera. In the process, the form in which Meyerbeer’s operas were handed down is turning out to be more and more problematic. Investigation of the sources has revealed complicated genealogies, whose course was determined as much by conceptual changes as by varying performance situations. In this light, the printed scores and piano scores emerge as incomplete, unreliable, and hence unusable. So the theatres that would like to perform Meyerbeer’s works find that, to a great degree, their hands are tied. This makes a historical-critical edition of the works an urgent necessity. Only then can opera audiences rediscover the “real” Meyerbeer.

**Il crociato in Egitto**

Melodramma eroico in due atti
First performance: 7.3.1824, Venice. Teatro La Fenice

With Meyerbeer’s last Italian opera, whose lead role was written for the famous castrato Giovanni Battista Vellutti, the composer achieved the greatest triumph of his career so far. In this work Meyerbeer took a step towards historical opera that was crucial to his later operatic output. Admittedly, the plot is clearly determined by personal conflict, but this conflict is embedded in the historical events of the Sixth Crusade. To create a drama of contrasts, Meyerbeer uses the confrontation between two cultures and religions, the antagonism between knight crusaders and Egyptians. The dramatic means range from separate number to integrated solo/choral tableaux, from traditional vocal virtuosity to a modern dramatic use of timbre, from melodic turns typical of the 18th century to anticipations of middle-period Verdi, these antitheses being held together purely by the strikingly forceful individual style.

The autograph is lost. The critical edition is based on surviving copies (Venice, Bologna, Boston, and others).

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Meyerbeer's first work for the Paris Opéra represents a high-point in the history of the genre. With the title figure, Scribe and Meyerbeer created the typical vacillating hero, reaching naively and almost helplessly. Many saw Robert as representing the July Monarchy; thus even this work was being credited with a political accent which was to become far more prominent in the later operas. The character of the "fallen angel" Bertram, who must destroy what he loves, enables Meyerbeer to raise the work above the sphere of melodrama, and endow it with the dimensions of a modern character drama.

It is not beauty that is central to the work, but characterisation and expressive force. There are considerable parallels to E.T.A. Hoffmann, but also to the Faust theme. The invocation of the Huguenot warrior Marcel, "an iron statue, clad in buffalo hide, his soul alight with divine fire" (George Sand), and the Valentine/Raoul "Grand Duo" from Act IV, whose "auratic "Tu l'as dit" phrase has been described as "Meyerbeer's trombone symphony", are notable examples: para-digms that constantly recur in new but similar compositions by other composers.

The critical edition is based on the autograph text (locations: Paris and Cracow), and the printed scores of 1831 and 1837. It takes into account the performance material of the Paris première as well as numerous autograph sketches, expansions and arrangements. Previously unknown material is presented here for the first time, making possible performances of a completeness hitherto unknown.


Text: Eugène Scribe and Germain Delavigne

Characters:

Robert de Normandy (t)
Bertram, his friend (b)
Raimbaut, a Norman peasant (b)
A Priest (b)
A Majordomo to the King of Sicily (t)
A Herald (t)
Alberti, a knight (b)
4 knights (2t, 2b)
5 gamblers (3t, 2b)
8 heralds (4, 4, b)
Isabelle, Princess of Sicily (s)
Alice, a Norman peasant (s)
A lady-in-waiting to Isabelle (s)
Hélène, abbess

Silent roles:
King of Sicily
Prince of Granada
Roberts chaplain
Corps de ballet
Chorus
Extras

Orchestra:
2 picc, 2 fl, 2 ob (2nd also c a), 2 cl, 4 f, 4 hn, 2 tp, 2 tpt, 2 keyed tpt, 3 tbn, ophicleide, 4 timp, perc (bs dr, cym, tamb, tr, bell in b), 2 hp, strings; stage ensemble: picc, 4 fn, 2 tp, 2 keyed tpt, 3 tbn, b tbn, ophicleide, cym, trg, ml dr, tamb, 2 hp, org, thunder machine

Place and Time of the Action:
In and around Palermo, about 1300

7 Scenes:

Act I:
Harbour of Palermo

Act II:
Hall in the palace of the King of Sicily

Act III:
Rocks near St. Irène
A ruined convent

Act IV:
Isabelle's room

Act V:
In front of Palermo Cathedral
Inside the cathedral

Autograph score of the beginning of the Valentine/Raoul/Marcel trio from Act V of Les Huguenots (Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Cracow, Mus. Mb.944 Vol.3, p.103v, excerpt). This sheet has the character of a sketch, something which is typical of long stretches of Meyerbeer's operatic autograph scores. One can see Meyerbeer experimenting with the bass clarinet entry, and anticipating a "chant-like" variant for the beginning of Marcel's part.
In choosing the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century, Scribe and Meyerbeer once again opted for religious-historical materials: a conflict that is stirred up by sectarians and zealots and gives the dramatist an opportunity for crowd scenes and large-scale choral music, among other things, and it is the kind of theatrical element that is most characteristic of their collaboration. It is the kind of theatrical element that is most characteristic of their collaboration. The drama of the plot invites critical scrutiny of the figures and the events, leading up to the uncovering of a plot against the tsar by Catherine, who has lost her mind as a result of fears that her beloved has been unfaithful. The couple finally comes together at the tsar’s court in St. Petersburg. Catherine recovers, becoming Péters’ wife and the new empress. At times, the opera’s lavish musical and theatrical demands go way beyond the confines of an Opéra comique, evolving into an extravaganza Grand opéra with dialogue. Péters is portrayed throughout as an ambivalent character, as a popular regent and a resolute man. Particularly notable is Catherine’s mad scene, a rondo which is expanded to a tableau, with musical reminiscences of the two preceding acts, as fragmentary memories, being linked in a collage of quotations.

Since it is not known whether the autograph has survived, the critical edition is based on Brands’s 1854 edition of the score.
For this simple, folk-based plot based on a Breton legend – in effect, a piece for three characters – Meyerbeer came up with music that contains some of his best inspirations. He knows how to make clever use of folk-music traits: memorable melodies are combined with an original musical language whose formal development indicates new paths. Among the coloratura soprano’s showpieces, the virtuoso Shadow Aria is still known today for extreme vocal demands and excellent dramatic capabilities it demands of the protagonist. One might think that in this demanding and varied score Meyerbeer was seeking to create a new type of ‘Grand comique’.


Text:

Jules Barbier, Michel Carré, Giacomo Meyerbeer

Characters:

Hoël (bar)
Corentin (t)
Loïc (spk)
Claude (spk)
A hunter (b)
A woodcutter (t)
Dinorah (s)
2 little shepherds (2 s)
2 girl gosperds (2 s)

Chorus

Extrav

Orchestra:

2 picc, 2 fl , 2 ob, c.a, 2 cl, b cl, 2 fg, 4 hn, 3 valve hn, 2 valve cornets, 2 tpt, 2 valve-tpt, 3 fbs, timp, perc (bs dr, cym, mil dr, trgl), hp, strings: backstage ensemble: harm, bell in A flat’, wind machine, thunder machine.

Place of the Action:

In Brittony

4 scenes:

Act I: ‘Evening’, Breton landscape
Act II: ‘Night’, birch forest; edge of a rocky gorge near the coast
Act III: ‘Morning’, in the country

L’ Africaine

Opéra en cinq actes
First performance: 28.4.1865;
Paris, Opéra

Plans for this opera date back to 1837. But it was only after the premiere of Le Prophète that Meyerbeer got to work on this adventure story about Vasco da Gama. Consistent work on the composition dates from March 1861. In his last opera, Meyerbeer again adheres to the typical indecisive hero, ensnared in the spontaneity of his feelings, reacting as a human being, but not as a hero. Meyerbeer was consciously putting himself at odds with the German conception of the hero. Accordingly, the ‘coloured’ roles – Sélïka and Nélusko – are more firmly shaped, and more inspired, than those of Vasco and his beloved, Inès. Meyerbeer died while composing this work. The final editing of the score for the premiere was undertaken by François Joseph Félix.

The critical edition takes account of all the published and unpublished parts of the work that were extant at Meyerbeer’s death. The main sources are the autograph of Acts I to IV in Cracow, and of Act V in Berlin, as well as the edition executed by Félix and published by Brandus in 1865.

Critical Edition, edited by Jürgen Schläder

Text:

Eugène Scribe

Characters:

Don Pédro, president of the King of Portugal’s council (b)
Don Diégo, admiral, council member (b)
Inês, his daughter (s)
Vasco da Gama, naval officer (t)
Don Alvar, council member (t)
The Grand Inquisitor of Lisbon (b)
Nélusko, a slave (bar)
Sélïka, a slave (s)
The High Priest of Brahma (b)
Anna, Inês’ confidante (s)

A beadle (t)
A priest (t)
4 sailors (2 t, 2 b)
8 bishops (8 b)

Silent role:

A servant

Corps de ballet

Chorus

Extra

Orchestra:

4 fl (2nd also picc), 2 ob, 2 c.a, 2 cl, 2 b cl, 4 fg, 4 hn, 2 valve hn, 2 valve cornets, 2 tpt, 2 valve-tpt, 2 cornets-a-piston, 3 fbs, ophicleide, 3 timp, perc (bs dr, cym, trg, dr, mil dr, tuntam, gspb), 4 hp, strings: backstage ensemble: 2 fl, 2 cl, 2 fg, 2 valve hn, 2 hp, cannon: onstage ensemble: 2 picc. cornets, 4 fgbn, 4 alto cornets, 4 tenor hn, 2 baritone hn, 4 tpt, 6 b tub, cym, trg, mil dr, bell in F’

Place and Time of the Action:

In Portugal and in India, beginning of the 16th century

6 scenes:

Act I: Council chamber of the King of Portugal
Act II: The inquisition’s prison
Act III: A ship
Act IV: In front of an Indian temple
Act V: The queen’s garden

A promonory by the sea
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