

- ESSAY -

## Francis Edward Bache and his Three Impromptus for Piano

Elizabeth French<sup>1</sup>  
University of Leeds

*We have met with no Englishman more likely to give us the English composer for whom we have so long been waiting than Mr Bache.*  
Henry Fothergill Chorley, *Athenaeum*, 19 June 1852.

The life and works of the English composer-pianist Francis Edward Bache, who died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four, have long been ripe for extended study. Although the only critical analysis published in the last 100 years is a brief article by David Brock from 1987, in writing from the period Bache is often singled out as the leading light in English composition in the mid nineteenth-century.<sup>2</sup> George Grove, in the first edition of his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, wrote that, ‘had he lived, [he] would in all probability have proved a lasting ornament to the English school’.<sup>3</sup> The pianist and teacher Oscar Beringer regarded Bache’s piano music as ‘the next step in the upward progress of pianoforte compositions’ from Stephen Heller, adding that Bache’s music ‘possessed more charm and poetic feeling, and showed considerably better musicianship’.<sup>4</sup> In 1902, John Fuller Maitland stated that ‘if [Bache] had only been spared to complete the natural number of his days, the course of the renaissance might have been altogether different, or at least it might well have begun a good many years before it actually did’,<sup>5</sup> and in 1907, Ernest Walker described Bache’s ‘technical musicianship’ as ‘decidedly above the

---

<sup>1</sup> Winner of the British Music Society Essay Competition, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> David Brock, “A Note on F. E. Bache 1833-58”, *Musical Times* 124, no. 1689 (1983), 673, 675.

<sup>3</sup> George Grove, s.v. “Bache, Francis Edward”, in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians 1450-1889 in Four Volumes*, ed. George Grove, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1879), 120.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Beringer, *Fifty Years’ Experience of Pianoforte Teaching and Playing* (London: Bosworth, 1907), 11.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Fuller Maitland, *English Music in the XIXth Century* (London: Richards, 1902), 119.

average of his time'.<sup>6</sup> More recently, in 1982, Nicholas Temperley wrote that his 'early death deprived Victorian music of one of its most promising talents'.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst Bache's biography is allocated 125 pages in his sister Constance's book *Brother Musicians* (London: Macmillan 1901), a mere four pages of text cover the first sixteen years of his life (1833 – 1849), before he moved to London to study with William Sterndale Bennett. In this essay, using the scrapbook of letters and writings compiled by his mother Emily (held at the British Library in London) to expand the available biographical information and contextualise his compositional activity, I explore the first part of his life, until his departure for Leipzig in 1853, and examine his earliest published composition, the Three Impromptus of 1851, within the context of contemporary compositions for piano.<sup>8</sup>

Born in Birmingham on 14 September 1833, Bache grew up as the eldest son of a Unitarian Minister, Samuel, and his wife Emily, née Higginson.<sup>9</sup> The Higginson family came from Derby, where Emily's father was also a Unitarian Minister, and Emily and her siblings attended Sunday School at the chapel on Friar Gate, where they met the children of the architect and civil engineer William Strutt, including Edward (first Baron Belper, raised 1856) and Frances, with whom Emily shared a life-long correspondence. 'Fanny', as she was known, became an 'aunt' to Francis Edward, and the family occasionally visited the Strutts in Derby. It was there, at the age of six, that Bache first encountered an organ and, according to his mother, 'the first time his fingers felt the keys they moved as if he had been accustomed to it'.<sup>10</sup>

This was not, of course, Bache's first encounter with a keyboard instrument. As was becoming usual for middle-class families in England at the time, the Bache family had a piano at their home in Birmingham.<sup>11</sup> In notes in her scrapbook, Emily wrote that 'at six to eight months old [he] would lie on the floor while I played on the

---

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Walker, *A History of Music in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 282.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Temperley, s.v. "Bache Family", in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1980), 879.

<sup>8</sup> 'Bache Album: Album concerning Francis Edward Bache, composed by Bache's mother Emily', held at the British Library, Add MS 54193.

<sup>9</sup> The 1841 census gives Samuel's profession as 'Protestant Dissenting Minister', and shows the family living on Frederick Street, Birmingham. By the 1851 census, the family has moved to Hagley Road, Edgbaston, where Rev. Bache ran a school.

<sup>10</sup> Emily Bache, Add MS 54193.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), 181.

piano, delighted to listen for the hour together', and that by the time Bache was one he would respond to the word 'music' or 'play' by going to the piano. Within a year, he was able to ask his mother to play various choruses by Handel; at two he was pretending to tune the piano 'in a way so very like real tuning, with dominant and subdominant', and by three he was asking for Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony to be played every day after breakfast. A year later, he was able to play all the major and minor scales, with his eyes shut, and enjoyed playing harmonic progressions of the 'pretty chords', as he called them. The 'discord of the seventh' was introduced first, and others followed, 'always resolving ... correctly by his own ear; suspensions,

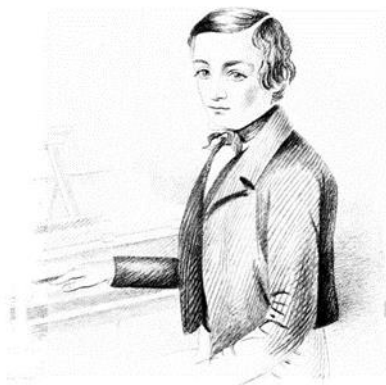


Fig. 1: Francis Edward Bache as a boy, from a pencil sketch by his aunt Miss Higginson.

(*Brother Musicians*, frontispiece)

single and double, he delighted in; also going the round of all the keys'. A particularly interesting anecdote is Bache's 'dislike to [sic] the key of C, and all music written in that key', which was 'for a long time unconquerable'.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, only one of his published compositions for piano, *La Belle Capricieuse*, issued in 1852, is in the key of C major.

Although Emily listed in her scrapbook the music that Bache had learned to play on the piano at various stages of his childhood (including Henri Herz's *Little Exercises for Daily Practice* and exercises by John Freckleton Burrowes and Johann Baptist Cramer,

arrangements of Mozart overtures, and the duet version of Beethoven's Second Symphony), his formal musical education began with violin lessons from Alfred Mellon (1820 – 1867), who was engaged to teach Bache in 1841.<sup>13</sup> After Mellon

<sup>12</sup> Emily Bache, Add MS 54193.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

moved to London in 1844 Bache continued his violin studies, probably with Charles Guynemer, and he was an uncredited member of the orchestra at the Birmingham Triennial Festival performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, given under the baton of the composer in September 1846.<sup>14</sup> Whilst one can assume that James Stimpson (1820 – 1886), the organist at Birmingham Town Hall who definitely taught Bache the organ and composition in the 1840s, also taught him the piano, the only reference to piano lessons is in a note Emily made in August 1847: 'during the winter ... a few lessons on the piano ... from Herr Lutz'.<sup>15</sup> (Wilhelm) Meyer Lutz (1829 – 1903) was a German-born composer and conductor, who settled in Birmingham as Director of Music at St Chad's Church (later Birmingham Catholic Cathedral) in 1848, but had previously visited England in 1846, and may well have met the Bache family then.<sup>16</sup> The plan had been for Bache to study with Mendelssohn, but following the German's death in 1847, it was determined that Bache would instead move to London to continue his studies with William Sterndale Bennett. After arriving there in 1849, he began to find work as a performer, appearing as organist, violinist and pianist, and while details of some events are sketchy, it is apparent that he was building a reputation both in the capital and further afield as a talented musician.

From a story published in *The Etude* in 1906, we know that Bache made himself known as an organist quite quickly.<sup>17</sup> In early 1850, he and his friend Eustace Button went to St Luke's Church, Old Street, to hear Henry Smart play. Bache went to the organ loft to await Smart's arrival, but when the vergier came up to say that a high city functionary was on the point of entering, and that the organ must be played, he got on to the seat and began to improvise a voluntary. Mr Smart, whose cab had been delayed, arrived shortly thereafter, sat down beside Bache, and seamlessly took over the improvisation. This anecdote suggests that the sixteen-year-old Bache knew Smart, and had probably already played for him. Perhaps he was even taking organ lessons from the older man: there is certainly no mention of

---

<sup>14</sup> Emily Bache, quoted in Frederick Edwards, *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'* (London: Novello, 1896), 90.

<sup>15</sup> Emily Bache, writing dated 'August 1847', Add MS 54193.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Banfield, s.v. "Meyer Lutz", *Grove Music Online*, accessed 14 June 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.17228>.

<sup>17</sup> *The Etude* 24, no. 6 (1906), 395.

another organ teacher in any letters home to his parents. In October 1850, Bache took a position as organist of All Saints' Church Gordon Square.<sup>18</sup> The church was consecrated in 1842, closed as a place of worship in 1909, was bought by University College London and the building has since been demolished. Emily wrote that his position was 'honorably obtained by means of high testimonials, well deserved', but she added that the position required 'his attendance for three services on the Sunday, one week evening and one practising with the choir, and occasionally it proved almost too laborious for him'.<sup>19</sup>

Bache's background as a violinist, almost certainly coupled with his personal relationship with Alfred Mellon, meant that he was able to get involved with orchestral playing in the capital. On 10 November 1849 he wrote to his parents: 'tomorrow evening we have *Solomon* at Exeter Hall, with 700 performers and Costa as conductor – I play in it as being a member of the Sacred Harmonic Society'.<sup>20</sup> A year later, his unpublished overture *Jessie Gray* was performed at a production of the play of the same name at the Adelphi Theatre,<sup>21</sup> and later we read that he secured a position playing in the orchestra at the Haymarket Theatre: on 14 February 1852, he wrote to his parents that 'the three last nights I have been playing at the Haymarket, and am getting quite experienced in the orchestra'.<sup>22</sup> On 20 February 1853, in a letter to his cousin Russell Martineau (with whom he shared lodgings during his years in London) he noted that during 1852 he 'played frequently in the operas of the Haymarket, thereby increasing my knowledge of the stage, and becoming used to play to a conductor, which is the most useful step towards becoming a conductor myself'.<sup>23</sup>

As far as his pianistic development once in London is concerned, it is likely that Bache took lessons on the instrument, along with his composition lessons, from Bennett. No other teacher is mentioned in correspondence from this period

---

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Temperley, s.v. "Bache Family", *Grove Music Online*, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01697>.

<sup>19</sup> Emily Bache, writing dated simply '1850', Add MS 54193.

<sup>20</sup> F. E. Bache, letter to parents, 10 November 1849, Add MS 54193.

<sup>21</sup> Note on the front cover of the manuscript of *Jessie Gray* (RAM library MS1029): 'first performed at the Adelphi Theatre, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1850'.

<sup>22</sup> F. E. Bache, in a letter to his parents, Add MS 54193.

<sup>23</sup> Constance Bache, *Brother Musicians* (London: Methuen, 1901), 14.

between son and parents, and writing in her scrapbook Emily Bache noted that her son was as ‘earnest as possible in the pursuit of his musical studies ... finding in Mr Bennett a master after his own heart,’ adding that, when Bache came home for Christmas in 1849, she was ‘struck with what had been accomplished in his playing, so faithful and true was the style and having lost none of his fertility of imagination he had already gained a degree of finish and fidelity which promised everything’.<sup>24</sup> In a letter to his parents dated 3 March 1850, Bache himself wrote, in the context of a recent lesson with Bennett, that ‘I have lately had a concerto of Hummel’s to learn – it is in E major – I have now Mendelssohn’s Grand Rondo in B minor, with Orchestral accompaniment’.<sup>25</sup>

In the three years after his arrival in London, before Bache left England to study in Leipzig, there are only four recorded mentions of him performing as a pianist. On 21 January 1851, he performed as the accompanist for the violinist John Carrodus (1836 – 1895) at a concert in Keighley.<sup>26</sup> The programme included ‘a Rondo and slow movement of Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto in E minor, and [...] a solo by Sivori’.<sup>27</sup> On 7 April 1852, he performed two of his own works for solo piano as part of a ‘miscellaneous’ concert presented by the violinist J. Kelly at the Music Hall in Store Street, London. The only fault of his *Rêve d’Amour* was, according to the correspondent for *The Musical World*, ‘its brevity’, and his *Galop*, ‘displaying as much showiness and difficulty as will render it interesting to amateurs’, was ‘loudly re-demanded’.<sup>28</sup> The author of the article stated in conclusion that ‘we can see nothing to prevent Mr Bache from very soon becoming one of our popular pianoforte writers’.<sup>29</sup>

On 15 June 1852, Bache presented the first movement of his Piano Concerto in E major (1851) at the Hanover Square Rooms, in a concert organised by Alfred Mellon, Robert Pratten and Georg Hausmann, with the orchestra conducted by

---

<sup>24</sup> Emily Bache, Add MS 54193. Underlining original.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> F. E. Bache, in a letter to ‘a friend’, quoted in *Brother Musicians*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Despite searching the local newspapers of the time, both online and in person at the Calderdale Local Studies room in Halifax, I have so far been unable to find any more information about this concert.

<sup>28</sup> *The Musical World* 30, no. 16 (17 April 1852): 253.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Mellon.<sup>30</sup> *The Illustrated London News* described him as a ‘young and untried composer’, who, though nervous in performance (perhaps because the room was, according to *The Morning Post*, crowded), ‘seems to be thinking for himself in his themes and treatment thereof - a very healthy indication, in these days of imitation and plagiarism’.<sup>31</sup> *The Lady’s Newspaper* reported that the work was ‘exceedingly clever as a composition and excellent as a performance’, and *The Morning Post* painted Bache as ‘a promising young artiste, who in this work gave evidence of praiseworthy ambition, and the possession of qualities which may hereafter be turned to good account’.<sup>32</sup>



Fig. 2: Francis Edward Bache at the age of 19, from a daguerreotype.  
(*Brother Musicians*, 18)

Finally, on 21 March 1853, Bache was one of several musicians, but the only pianist, playing at the fourteenth anniversary dinner of the Royal General Theatrical Fund.<sup>33</sup> The event at the London Tavern was attended by 150 gentlemen and included a speech by Charles Dickens, the Fund’s first Chairman.<sup>34</sup> Other musicians performing that evening included the flautist Robert Pratten and the soprano Louisa Pyne, and it must be assumed that Bache played for any performer who needed accompaniment.<sup>35</sup> The fact that Bache performed at such a prestigious event implies that he had a contemporary reputation as a talented musician, and that his engagement for the evening was not simply due to the fact that the ‘musical arrangements’ were ‘under the

<sup>30</sup> *The Morning Post*, 14 June 1852, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 19 June 1852, 482.

<sup>32</sup> *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 19 June 1852, 376; *The Morning Post*, 16 June 1852, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Reported in several newspapers including *The Morning Advertiser*, 22 March 1853, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* See also <https://www.trtf.com/our-history> (accessed 26 May 2021).

<sup>35</sup> *The Morning Post*, 22 March 1853, 6.

direction of Alfred Mellon'.<sup>36</sup> Mr Mellon would surely be unwilling to risk his own reputation to further the career of a little-known nineteen-year-old pianist, albeit one with whom he had links going back over a decade.

Despite Bache building a career as a performer, due to the lack of contemporary evidence it is only through his work as a composer that he can be reassessed today. His early, unpublished compositions include a *Romance* for Violin and Piano, written when he was sixteen, and a piece 'in the style of Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*', written around the same time and demonstrating his ability for pastiche, but Bache's first published work was the *Three Impromptus* for Piano, which appeared in 1851. In order to understand Bache's compositional process when writing his *Three Impromptus*, including his perception of the genre, a number of possible models for his work need to be reviewed.

Maurice Brown, in Grove Music Online, states that the term 'impromptu' was first used as the title of a composition by Jan Václav Voříšek in 1817, published in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*.<sup>37</sup> However, there is a composition by Joseph Kemp (*Allons au Brasil: Impromptu pour le pianoforte*) that the British Library dates to 1806, as well as Louis von Esch's *Impromptu Duo à Quatre Mains pour le Piano Forte*, published in 1801. Other than Kemp, the earliest published exponent of the impromptu for solo piano in England is Cipriani Potter, whose *Impromptu on the Famous Scotch Air, Auld Robin Gray* was published in 1826, followed by his *54 Preludes or Impromptus*, issued by R. Cocks and Co. in 1830, the same year as Charles Neate (1784 – 1877) published *100 Short Preludes or Impromptus*.<sup>38</sup>

Neither Potter's nor Neate's work provides a model for Bache's work: they are short pieces, improvisatory in nature, often without time signatures or formal structure, seemingly designed as exercises to assist with learning to play the instrument. However, although the implication of the word 'impromptu' is that there is a level of improvisation involved in the production of the piece, many later works of the first half of the nineteenth century using this title, including Schubert's eight

---

<sup>36</sup> *Proceedings at the Ninth Anniversary Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund*, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1853 (London: Fairbrother 1853), 31.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice Brown, s.v. "Impromptu", *Grove Music Online*, accessed 21 April 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13736>.

<sup>38</sup> All scores available at the British Library: please see references for further details.



impromptus (D 899 and D 935) and works by Adolf von Henselt and Robert Schumann, all follow strict structures (often ternary) and are lacking in improvisatory characteristics.

The most obvious difference between Bache's set of impromptus and other similarly-named compositions of the period is that his three ternary-form pieces are enclosed within an introduction and coda (which takes its thematic material from Impromptu no. 3). Whilst some impromptus have introductions (Moscheles's opus 89; Liszt's *Impromptu Brilliant* S150), and others have explicitly stated coda sections (Schubert's opus 90, no. 2), there seems to be no other set of impromptus with both introduction and coda separately defined. In the manuscript, Bache writes 'Segue No. 1' at the end of the introduction, and then 'V.S. to Number 2' and 'V.S. to Number 3' at the end of the first and second impromptus respectively, implying that the three pieces are meant to be played as a complete set.<sup>39</sup>

William Sterndale Bennett's Three Impromptus of 1833 provide a closer model for Bache, both in number and form, as each of the works is relatively short and in ternary form (although Bennett's first impromptu has a coda section). As Bennett was Bache's composition tutor at the time that Bache wrote his Impromptus, it is almost certain that the younger man knew the compositions of the elder. However, although Bennett's first impromptu is in triple metre (3/8), the other two are in common time, whereas Bache writes all three of his impromptus in 3/4. Another model could be the works of Julius Schulhoff (1825 – 1898), a composer who performed in London in 1850 and whom Bache considered to possess 'marked originality and beauty, though in a light style'.<sup>40</sup> His 3 *Impromptus pour le piano* were published in 1846 (with each impromptu having its own title), and two of them are in ternary form, the first again with a coda. The second, whilst not ternary, uses the subdominant key relationship between sections that is seen in all three of Bache's impromptus.

Most impromptus of the period use major/relative minor relationships, although examples of the subdominant are seen in some of Heinrich Marschner's opuses 22

---

<sup>39</sup> Manuscript (MS1010) and Publisher's Proof (MS1010A) held in the library of the Royal Academy of Music, London.

<sup>40</sup> Constance Bache, 16.

and 23 (composed around 1822), and in Schubert's opus 142, no. 2 (composed in 1827). In Bache's works, however, the subdominant relationship exists between the three pieces as well as within them (the first and last impromptu are in B-flat major, with a B section in E-flat; the second is in E-flat major, with a B section in A-flat). This, added to the presence of the introduction and coda, cements the idea that the works are to be regarded as a single piece in several sections, rather than as three individual impromptus.

It is to Schubert that Bache nods in his first impromptu. Despite Bache's work being both substantially shorter than any of Schubert's and clearly divided into A and B sections by double bars and *da capos*, rather than through-composed, the B section of Bache's impromptu seems to pay direct homage to the opening theme of Schubert's opus 90, no. 2 (see Exx. 1 and 2). The section is fast, in 3/4, in E-flat major, and the right hand has a scalic figuration in triplet quavers starting on the same note and following the same general melodic shape. Numbers 1 and 2 of Schubert's opus 90 were first published in Vienna in December 1827, and it is possible that Bache (or his mother) had a copy of them at home in Birmingham, or that he played them with Meyer Lutz, his piano teacher in 1846/7.



Ex. 1: Bache, Impromptu no. 1, bb. 25 – 29, author's edition.



Ex. 2: Schubert, Impromptu opus 90, no. 2, bb. 1 – 4, transcribed from the Henle Verlag Urtext edition. Extract reproduced by permission.

Above the beginning of both the first and third impromptus, Bache writes the direction 'À la Mazurka' (see Fig. 3).

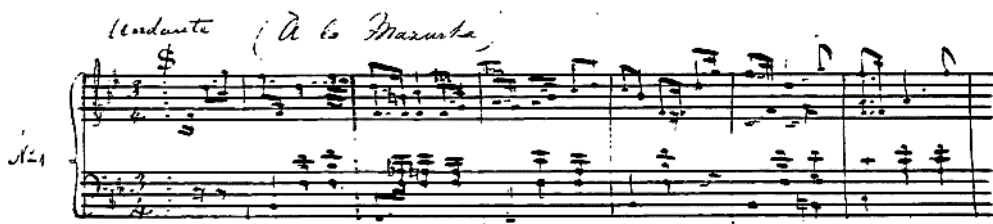


Fig. 3: Bache, Impromptu no. 1, Manuscript.

(This example may prove challenging to decipher)

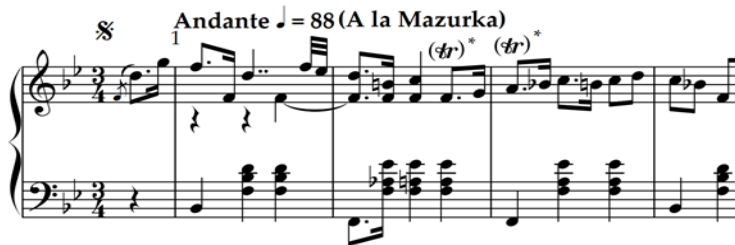
This instruction is missing from both the publisher's proof and the first edition. In a handwritten note on the front of the annotated proof (also held at the Royal Academy of Music), dated 29 September 1851 and addressed to the publisher, Bache wrote 'Dear Sir [...] I think I have corrected every error now [...] I remain yours, respectfully, Francis Edward Bache.', implying that he has decided not to keep the marking in the final edition. However, the lack of the direction in the published score can in no way be taken to mean that Bache had disassociated the composition that he had written from the style of the mazurka, and this presents another avenue for investigation into the influences that may have been at work in his compositional process, that of genre.

The mazurka has been recognised as a musical genre since the seventeenth century, was introduced to German courts in the first half of the eighteenth century, and reached the salons of Parisian high society by the end of the 1700s.<sup>41</sup> The most famous exponent of the style for solo piano, of course, is Frédéric Chopin, who wrote at least fifty examples. Chopin's works were published in England by Christian Rudolph Wessel, with two sets of Mazurkas (opuses 6 and 7) appearing in the autumn of 1833, and more following over the next decade.<sup>42</sup> It is highly likely, therefore, that Bache either came across these compositions at the family home in Birmingham, or once he was studying with Bennett in London, from 1849 onwards.

Another omission from the proof and the published text is the removal of the trills from a number of notes (see Fig. 4 and Ex. 3): the author's edition replaces the trill signs that appear in the manuscript. In some places these are replaced with grace notes, but in a few (such as the example shown, bar 2 beat 3 RH and bar 3 beat 1 RH) they are left out entirely.



Fig. 4: Bache, Impromptu no. I, Publisher's Proof, Addison Hollier, 1851.



Ex. 3: Bache, Impromptu no. I, author's edition.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Downes, s.v. "Mazurka", *Grove Music Online*, accessed 25 May 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.18193>.

<sup>42</sup> Maurice Brown, "Chopin and his English Publisher", *Music and Letters* 39, no. 4 (1958): 365.

The dotted figure with a trill on it is very common in mazurkas of the period, and they were probably removed at the same time as the words ‘À la Mazurka’ were deleted. There are several possible reasons I have considered for this. The piece is entitled ‘Impromptu’, not ‘Mazurka’, and therefore too much stylistic pointing towards the latter style could be seen as indecisive on the part of the composer. It could be a house engraving policy: Bache may not have meant a trill of multiple repetitions, and therefore the trill signs were replaced with grace notes, although that does not explain the bars in the examples above. Alternatively, it could be that multiple-repetition trills are technically quite demanding, and the publishers were aiming this work at the ‘drawing-room’ performer (a large market for sheet music in the mid nineteenth-century), and did not want to put people off.<sup>43</sup>

The opening of Impromptu no. 3 (see Ex. 4) bears more than a passing resemblance to a mazurka by Chopin (WN14 – see Ex. 5), which was composed in 1827. Note not only the identical rhythmic idea, but also the trill on the third beat of the first and third complete bars, which pattern in its entirety is not used elsewhere in Chopin’s output of mazurkas. Chopin’s WN14 was published posthumously by Fontana in 1855 (Fontana used the autograph as his source), and therefore Bache could not have seen a printed edition of it.<sup>44</sup> However, Chopin visited London in 1847 and could have brought manuscripts with him, which Bennett might have seen as a result of both he and Chopin working closely with the piano company Broadwood. Another possibility is that Bennett heard Chopin play in London, took ideas from his performances and applied them to his teaching of Bache, when the latter arrived in London the following year.

---

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, when Bache published his Four Mazurkas in 1855, there are no examples of a dotted figure with a trill on the longer note. In fact, there is not a single trill in the whole work.

<sup>44</sup> Jan Ekier, ed., *Mazurkas, Chopin National Edition* (Warsaw: PWM, 2013), 6.



Ex. 4: Bache, Impromptu no. 3, author's edition.



Ex. 5: Chopin, Mazurka WN14, bb.I – 4,  
transcribed from the Chopin National Edition.

In a further blurring of the boundaries between the two genres, Impromptu and Mazurka, in Bache's output, the second impromptu of the set features a 'sighing' motif, shown below at Ex. 6. Bache uses a similar motif in his third Mazurka, published by Addison and Hollier in London in 1855 (see Ex. 7). The tempo indication for this mazurka is 'Allegretto scherzando', close in feeling to the 'Allegretto capriccioso' Bache wrote in the manuscript as the tempo indication for his second impromptu. As it seems that Bache recycled several ideas from this work for his later mazurka, it is strange that the second impromptu is the one piece in the set that, in manuscript, does not carry the subtitle 'À la Mazurka'.



Ex. 6: Bache, Impromptu no. 2 (1851), author's edition.



Ex. 7: Bache, Mazurka no. 3 (1855), author's edition.

In conclusion: Bache's Three Impromptus is a collection of pieces, each in ternary form but each differing in the way that that form is expounded. The outer two impromptus show clear influences both of other composers' works and of the mazurka style; the middle impromptu shows Bache setting out an idea that he would later incorporate into a mazurka of his own. It seems clear that Bache intended the pieces to be performed as a complete set but that the publisher, probably aiming the work at the drawing-room music market, wanted to be more ambiguous on this point.

It could be deduced from the discussion above that, in his Impromptus, Bache was creating works derivative of some of the most well-known composers of the day. In his book chapter 'Mendelssohnian Allusions in the Early Piano Works of William Sterndale Bennett', R. Larry Todd discussed the influence of Mendelssohn's

style on Bache's teacher Bennett.<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Temperley wrote that Bache was more than capable of imitating the work of others,<sup>46</sup> and I have had access to the manuscript of an unpublished and undated early work which Bache entitled *A Little Piece in the Style of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words*.<sup>47</sup> This work demonstrates that Bache has assimilated the general style of Mendelssohn's pieces (characterised by a three-part texture with a flowing triplet inner part carrying the harmonies), but also that he has added two touches of his own: firstly, a fanfare-like introductory motif (which is more reminiscent of Beethoven or Schubert than any Mendelssohn piano work, see Ex. 8, as well as Figs. 5 and 6); and, secondly, an explicitly stated *Coda*, which is not seen in any of Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* but which Bache uses again in his *Three Impromptus*.

*Very legato, the air to be played with expression.*



Ex. 8: Bache, *A Little Piece in the Style of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words*, author's edition.



Fig. 5: Schubert, *Impromptu*, opus 90, no. 1, G. Henle Verlag, 1976. Extract reproduced by permission.

<sup>45</sup> R. Larry Todd, "Mendelssohnian Allusions in the Early Piano Works of William Sterndale Bennett" in *The Piano in Nineteenth Century British Culture*, ed. Therese Ellsworth and Susan Wollenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 101-17.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Temperley, ed., *The London Pianoforte School 1766-1860*, vol. 16 (New York: Garland 1984-1987), xv.

<sup>47</sup> Royal Academy of Music Library, MS1018.





Fig. 6: Beethoven, Symphony no. 2, arr. Mockwitz, Breitkopf & Härtel, n.d., Primo.

As Todd noted, ‘if the many Mendelssohnian allusions in Bennett’s piano music reveal him to have been a particularly close member of the Leipzig circle, they also show him to have possessed a creative imagination’.<sup>48</sup> In Bache’s Three Impromptus, despite him using structures, harmonies, and figurations that could be seen as imitative of earlier composers, these allusions are simply a generic starting point from which Bache creates his own, original compositional style.

*Pianist Elizabeth French is a second year PhD student at Leeds University, where her research into the life and works of Francis Edward Bache (sponsored by WRoCAH) is supervised by Professor Michael Allis and Dr Bryan White. Outside academia, Elizabeth is the répétiteur for Opera North's Youth Company.*

## References

### Newspapers (1851 – 1858)

*Illustrated London News*

*Lady’s Newspaper and Pictorial Times*

*London Daily News*

*Morning Advertiser*

*Morning Post*

---

<sup>48</sup> R. Larry Todd, 117.

### Journals

*Athenaeum*, 1851 – 1858

*The Musical World*, 1846 onwards

### Books, Chapters and Journal Articles

Bache, Constance. *Brother Musicians*. London: Methuen, 1901.

Bache, E. Album concerning Francis Edward Bache. British Library, Ref: Add MS 54193.

Bache, F. E. Manuscript works. Royal Academy of Music Library, (MS1004 – MS1059).

Bache, Francis Edward. *Three Impromptus*. London: Addison and Hollier, 1851.

———. *Four Mazurkas*. London: Addison and Hollier, 1855.

Banfield, Stephen. "The Artist and Society". In *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, edited by Nicholas Temperley, 11-28. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.

Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Symphonien arr. für das Pianoforte zu 4 Händen*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, n.d.

Bennett, William Sterndale. *Three Impromptus Op. 12*. Leipzig: Kistner 1836.

Berger, Francesco. *Reminiscences, Impressions and Anecdotes*. London: Sampson, Low, 1913.

Beringer, Oscar. *Fifty Years' Experience of Pianoforte Teaching and Playing*. London: Bosworth, 1907.

Blanning, Tim. *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present*. London: Allen Lane, 2008.

Brock, David. "A Note on F. E. Bache 1833-58". *Musical Times* 124, no. 1689 (1983): 673, 675.

Brown, Maurice J. E. "Chopin and His English Publisher". *Music and Letters* 39, no. 4 (1958): 363-71.

Chopin, Frédéric. *Mazurkas*. Munich: G. Henle, 1975.

Czerny, Carl. *Impromptus, or Variations Brilliants Op. 36*. Paris: Richault, n.d.

Edwards, Frederick. *The History of Mendelssohn's Oratorio 'Elijah'*. London: Novello, 1896.

- Ekier, Jan, ed. *Mazurkas, Chopin National Edition*. Warsaw: PWM, 2013.
- Fuller Maitland, John A. *English Music in the XIXth Century*. London: Richards, 1902.
- Grove, George, ed. *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians in Four Volumes*. London: Macmillan, 1879.
- Kemp, Joseph. *Allons au Brasil: Impromptu pour le Piano Forte*. London: Kemp, 1806.
- Liszt, Franz. *Impromptu Brilliant S150*. Vienna: Pietro Mechetti, ca. 1841.
- Marschner, Heinrich. *Impromptus pour le Pianoforte*. 2 vols. Leipsig: Hofmeister, ca. 1822.
- Mendelssohn, Felix. *Original Compositions for the Pianoforte*. London: Novello, Ewer, ca. 1890.
- Moscheles, Ignaz. *Impromptu Op. 89*. New York: Garland, 1993.
- Neate, Charles. *A Hundred Impromptus or Short Preludes*. London: S. Chappell, 1830.
- Potter, Cipriani. *Impromptu on the Favorite Scotch Air, Auld Robin Gray*. London: Birchall, 1826.
- Proceedings at the Ninth Anniversary Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund*. London: Fairbrother, 1853.
- Schubert, Franz. *Impromptus and Moments Musicaux*. Munich: G. Henle, 1976.
- Schulhoff, Julius. *Three Impromptus*. Mainz: Schott, 1850.
- Temperley, Nicholas. "Ballroom and Drawing-Room Music". In *The Romantic Age 1800-1914*, edited by Nicholas Temperley, 109-34. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.
- Temperley, Nicholas, ed. *The London Pianoforte School 1766-1860*. 20 vols. New York: Garland, 1984-1987.
- Todd, R. Larry. "Mendelssohnian Allusions in the Early Piano Works of William Sterndale Bennett". In *The Piano in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*, edited by Therese Ellsworth and Susan Wollenberg, 101-17. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
- Von Esch, Louis. *Impromptu Duo a Quatre Mains pour le Piano Forte*. London: Broderip & Wilkinson, 1801.
- Voříšek, Jan Václav. *Impromptus Op. 7*. Prague: Státní Hudební Vydavatelství, 1964.