

Abstract

Alan Rawsthorne: The Neglected Chopin Critic

In this article, I examine the English composer Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971) as an important and influential critic of the ballades of Chopin. His 1966 article on the ballades demonstrates his crucial role in establishing some important terminologies regarding this genre's reception, and thus deserves to be given more attention.¹ I argue that Rawsthorne's analysis succeeds in responding to the analysis of first half of the twentieth-century, and consequently picks up the baton and sets down terminologies that were utilised by other scholars over the next 50 years of writings about Chopin's ballades.

First, broader trends in the reception of Chopin's ballades that precede Rawsthorne's writing will be considered; this will include writings from the late-nineteenth-century through to Donald Tovey's 1944 analysis. I will, then, provide a summary of Rawsthorne's analysis which acts as a link between two different traditions of the analysis of Chopin's music in general, and the ballades in particular. This will help us to understand the extent of Rawsthorne's influence on the writings that followed his analysis, such as the analyses of Jim Samson, Charles Rosen, Karol Berger, Eleanor Bailie, Michael Klein and Jonathan Bellman. It appears surprising that Rawsthorne's article, which is unknown to many, is cited in many famous essays such as those of Jim Samson, Karol Berger and Eleanor Bailie.

¹ Alan Rawsthorne, 'Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos', in Alan Walker (ed.) *Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and Musician* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966).