

Introduction

Theoretical and Critical Contexts in Nineteenth-century Performance Practice

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Arguably the most compelling change within musicology during the first decade of the twenty-first century has been the ‘performative turn’¹ that brought to the fore the primacy of the meanings and insights that emerge from the study of the performative dimension of music. The ontological priority of the tangible musical score, which formed the bedrock of musicological research during the twentieth century, has recently been shaken by the coming to prominence of the ephemeral act of music-making – the musical performance. The move away from a text-based ideology and an overriding pre-occupation with the score ‘towards an understanding of music as performance’² has been facilitated by recent digital technologies that allowed researchers to scrutinize in detail the century-old legacy of recorded performances, and thereby to validate recordings as primary musicological source materials. Taking into account actual performances and performance interpretations in reaching an understanding of ‘the music’, or regarding the differences between performances as relevant for the emergent meanings of a piece of music are no longer considered odd – and unsound – methodological choices. While explorations about older performance styles is not new (consider the history of the authentic performance movement going back to the work of Arnold Dolmetsch during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), it is only recently that it became possible to obtain rich data from recorded performances by professional musicians and thereby document with precision and in great detail how performance styles have changed since the beginning of audio recordings: the work carried at the AHRC-funded *Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music* – CHARM – has been instrumental in this respect³. Hypotheses regarding the reasons and causes of the changes in performance styles are now based on wide-ranging evidence gathered from recorded performances, and we are only beginning to grasp the complex

¹ See Nicholas Cook, ‘Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance’, *Music Theory Online* 7/2 (2001), <http://www.societymusictheory.org/mto/>; Nicholas Cook, ‘Music as Performance’, in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, eds. M. Clayton, T. Herbert and R. Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2003): 204–14.

² Nicholas Cook and Eric Clarke, ‘Introduction: What is Empirical Musicology?’, in *Empirical Musicology: Aims, Methods, Prospect*, eds. Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 10.

³ See the CHARM website (<http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/index.html>) for information about the research outputs.

connections between the wider cultural practices and music performance styles of a given era. It is hard, if not impossible, to imagine an alternative to the view that performance practices are born and nurtured in specific cultural, historical and social milieux, that they are indissolubly linked not only to the music pedagogical and music theoretical but also to the philosophical, aesthetic and political ideologies and discourses of their times.

There is, however, a need to investigate in detail the complex relationships between the performance practices and cultural-philosophical ideologies and discourses of those historical periods that preceded the age of recording. The nineteenth century presents fascinating case study materials in this connection, not only because of its close proximity to the recording era but also because it is the first age when discourses on musical performance proliferated so as to pervade all departments of musical thinking. The newly acquired autonomy of musical performance as an aesthetic category during the nineteenth century motivated the emergence of philosophical, critical and music theoretical discourses that explored and interpreted the act of music making from multiple perspectives. Consequently, while evidence regarding nineteenth-century performance practices in the form of acoustical recordings is very limited, there is an enormous wealth of written sources that reveal the theoretical, critical, philosophical and aesthetic contexts within which these practices took shape and thrived.

This special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* is about the music theoretical, pedagogical, aesthetic, cultural and critical ideologies and discourses within which performance practices of the nineteenth century were embedded. The four articles in this issue throw new light onto such issues as the relationship between music notation and performance, the role of the ideology of performance in compositional practice, the influence of aesthetic theories and cultural values on performance practice, the complex relationship between the musical work, the score and musical performance, and the impact of the listener on performance.

In the first essay, titled "'Phrasing – The Very Life of Music': Performing the music and nineteenth-century performance theory", Mine Doğantan-Dack considers the relationship between the performer, composer and score from a new perspective, by presenting a thread in nineteenth-century musical thought that has been neglected in musicological research. She argues that Goehr's widely-debated account of the score as the locus of the musical work during the nineteenth century is incomplete, if not false. By scrutinising the concept of 'the music' in performance discourses of this era, she reclaims the concept of 'phrasing' as a specifically nineteenth-century notion that emerged at a specific historical moment, where the aesthetic, music theoretical, performance pedagogical, and the newly-emerging music psychological discourses of the century came together. The essay includes a discussion of the role the emerging concept of phrasing played in the performance theories of Mathis Lussy, Tobias Matthay and Stewart Macpherson. Doğantan-Dack argues that performance pedagogical practices during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries display unbroken continuity with those of the nineteenth-century and with their theoretical and aesthetic underpinnings. She further proposes that the way in which the performer's discourse shaped nineteenth-century musical thought can be regarded as a model for integrating this discourse within contemporary music performance studies.

David Milsom, in his essay 'Practice and Principle: Perspectives upon the German "Classical School" of Violin Playing in the Late Nineteenth Century' expounds in detail how aesthetic principles and performance theory were

embedded in and also emerged from Joseph Joachim's practice. As a historical case study that presents strong arguments for the primacy of the artistic practice itself in establishment of theory, the essay also has repercussions for present-day debates about the relationship between musical practices and theory. Milsom also removes misconceptions about nineteenth-century performance practice as ill disciplined and excessively mannered, and argues, based on the evidence of early recordings and nineteenth-century performance treatises, that romantic violin performance practice was principled and had strong theoretical roots. Detailed examination of early recordings by Joachim, and by his students Klingler and Soldat-Roeger further contributes to the thriving literature on changing performance styles in the age of recording. Regarding historically-informed performance practice, Milsom argues that such an approach to performance requires the appraisal of the full theory – the aesthetic, pedagogical and critical discourses – behind it, rather than a selective approach that leaves out the controversial elements.

In her essay titled "'The Most Interesting Genre of Music': Performance, Sociability and Meaning in the Classical String Quartet 1800–1830", Mary Hunter puts forward the hypothesis that during the nineteenth century the genre of the string quartet was completely bound up with its performance, and that it was fundamentally understood as to-be-performed. She explains how the ideologies of performance that were articulated in critical discourses about the string quartet were shaped by wider aesthetic and social considerations. The essay also proposes the model of 'brotherly embrace' for understanding the social dimension of nineteenth-century string quartet practice, as distinct from the commonly accepted model of 'conversation', and at the same time points out the inherent tensions between this new model and the ideology of 'the genius in performance'. In the second part of her essay, Hunter presents an original reading of the slow movement of Beethoven's op. 59 no. 2 string quartet where the compositional features are interpreted as having arisen from the aesthetics of string quartet performance as represented in related discourses of the period.

The final essay in this special issue, Peter Johnson's "'Labyrinthine pathways and bright rings of light': Hoffmann's aesthetics of music in performance", focuses on E.T.A. Hoffmann's aesthetics of performance and listening, as revealed in the essay on Beethoven's piano trios. Johnson's essay brings new insights about Hoffmann's music critical writings by arguing that he had a theory and aesthetics of performance in mind even if he did not formally propose one. This theory of performance is based on wonderment, magic, imagination and understanding, and is in fact a reflection of the complex aesthetics of Hoffmann's own time. Johnson also puts forward the hypothesis that the finest performances, in accordance with Hoffmann's aesthetics, are to be evaluated by reference not only to the composer but also to the listener. In the final section of his essay, Johnson discusses the relevance of Hoffmann's aesthetics to a recording of Beethoven's last string quartet, op. 135, by the Busch Quartet. This further highlights the complexity of the relationship between what is in the score, what the composer may have meant by what he put down in the score, and how the performers interpret the score.