



maintaining the status quo. This would be a real loss, I think, since a Godless version of Chua's arguments would be empty indeed.

In some respects, *Beethoven and Freedom* is a timely reminder of the moral ambiguity of our discipline's post-critical moment. It demonstrates that full-throated enthusiasms, no less than dark conspiracy theories, are not the property of any particular disciplinary position or political agenda. There could be every reason to bring love – so frequently the silent 'constitutive outside' of our scholarly projects – back into the interior of our scholarship. And, to be sure, the love of Beethoven pervades every paragraph of Chua's new book. But my instinct is that we best cherish and protect the music that we love by acknowledging how inscrutable and un-claimable it remains – in part by bearing in mind the simple yet profound fact that this music once meant, and will mean, a great many things to a great many people other than ourselves. 'Beethoven is music's freedom fighter', declares Chua (25). Maybe *Beethoven and Freedom* knows the object of its love too well.

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MASSIMILIANO GUIDO, ED.

STUDIES IN HISTORICAL IMPROVISATION: FROM CANTARE SUPER LIBRUM TO PARTIMENTI

London: Routledge, 2017

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Edited by Massimiliano Guido, Senior Researcher at the Musicology and Cultural Heritage Department of the Università di Pavia, this volume assembles papers presented at the conference *Con la mente e con le mani*, which took place in Venice in 2013. It connected the efforts of two research projects, one initiated by the Istituto per la Musica of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, the other funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the topic 'Improvisation in Classical Music Education: Rethinking our Future by Learning our Past'. Though not all papers dealt with the eighteenth century explicitly, I have provided an overview of all of the essays in this book, since the art of improvisation in that period is to a large extent based on the composition techniques of the preceding centuries.

The first part of the book, 'Music and the Art of Memory', opens with a *tour d'horizon* of the current reception and discussion of improvisatory practices in music history from counterpoint singing in medieval times to jazz, invoking the findings of cognitive psychology and ethnomusicology. Who better to serve as our tour guide than the widely read Thomas Christensen? In his introductory essay, Christensen points to the fact that improvisation has 'never before . . . been more actively studied in both musical scholarship and practice covering so many differing historical periods, genres and styles' (9). He shows how 'the improvisatory moment' (also the title of his chapter) will fundamentally change the teaching of music history and the pedagogies of music theory. These latter focus nowadays more on written exercises than on practical skills, and generally follow an abstract curriculum detached from sixteenth-century counterpoint (species counterpoint à la Fux), and concentrating too much on the 'Bach' chorale, a single (minor) compositional technique out of the multitude of musical styles in eighteenth-century Europe.

Relying on his detailed knowledge of the literature, Christensen points out that one common feature to all improvisational activities in music is the use of (procedural) memory: the store of all the elements and characteristics of the 'language' (in other words, the style) in which an improviser is speaking. In the following chapter, Stefano Lorenzetti utilizes the tools of traditional rhetoric to understand the processes that undergird knowledge of such stylistic commonplaces. But his article goes far beyond the 'productive misunderstanding' of a musical rhetoric as outlined in Janina Klassen's 'Musica poetica und musikalische Figurenlehre – ein produktives Missverständnis' (*Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung* (2001),



73–83). Rather, he succeeds in dissecting the strategies of rhetorical topics and mnemonic techniques that lie behind the teaching of improvised counterpoint in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Massimiliano Guido's reflections on 'Climbing the Stairs of the Memory Palace' (chapter 3) complement Lorenzetti's rhetorical approach. Analysing traditional courses of instruction in keyboard improvisation, Guido convincingly explains the crux of memory-based learning in the twenty-first century: it is the unlimited access to a 'wireless knowledge, which aims to provide the largest amount of information without really fixating it in our internal system' (45). It is one of the major contributions of *Studies in Historical Improvisation* to current research that it draws attention to the important role of memory in any kind of improvisation, invoking both historical (rhetoric-based) and contemporary (cognitive) approaches.

The book's second section concerns the improvisation of vocal music. Philippe Canguilhem tries to outline future steps 'Towards a Stylistic History of *Cantare super Librum*' (chapter 4). After an informative introduction on the history of (improvised) counterpoint singing, he lays the foundation for further investigation by presenting a methodology that singles out works from the liturgical repertoire which could serve as models for the reconstruction of improvisatory praxis in counterpoint singing. His 'workshop-report' closes with an attempt to do the same. But his analysis of a few 'written-down improvisations' for four and five voices (unfortunately the reader has to complain here of some disorder in the music examples) does not convince – yet. In addition, to prove stylistic differences between different chapels and regions, further investigation is needed – and it can be expected that the author will do this himself in the near future.

Giuseppe Fiorentino's 'Contrapunto and *Fabordón*: Practices of Extempore Polyphony in Renaissance Spain' (chapter 5) draws a fascinating picture of learned Spanish *contrapunto* singing. By extracting different sources Fiorentino shows that improvising a simple or florid counterpoint over Gregorian chant was a natural part of the education of young choirboys throughout the Spanish *capillas musicales*. By quoting Juan de Lucena (writing in 1463) and Pablo Nassarre (1723/1724), Fiorentino is able to demonstrate that adding voices to a given line was practised for a period of almost three hundred years, in the artful style of educated *contrapunto* as well as in the artless style of the untaught *fabordon*, which meant singing 'by ear' in parallel thirds, fourths and sixths.

Jean-Yves Haymoz's 'Discovering the Practice of Improvised Counterpoint' (chapter 6) details a task that he himself has undertaken as a theory teacher and as the leader of the ensemble *Le chant sur le livre*, covering a multitude of practical aspects. His observations and suggestions on any species of counterpoint singing can be reduced to the simple rule that there is no other way to understand this art than by doing it. When he comes to his conclusion, 'At the end of the twentieth century it was important to rediscover that the term improvisation implies practice and hard work' (91), one could add: and at the beginning of the twenty-first it would be important to notice that the result of this practice and hard work will be a kind of 'tacit knowing' (à la Michael Polanyi) which in large part cannot be described in words.

Part 3 of the volume is dedicated to improvising at the keyboard. By taking a closer look at some partimento basses from Banchieri's *Organo Suonarino* (1605), Edoardo Bellotti (chapter 7) comes to the (not too surprising) conclusion that a continuo style based on the tonal concepts and the standard four-part setting in closed position taught in the treatises of the eighteenth century must fail for this repertoire. Instead, it is the knowledge of canonic contrapuntal patterns transmitted in Spiridion's *Nova Instructio* and other sources that will help the player to execute these and other basses from seventeenth-century Italy.

The following two chapters, dealing with eighteenth-century partimenti, are especially significant for the scholar of the eighteenth century. In order to rediscover the methodology used by the Neapolitan maestri, Peter van Tour (chapter 8) closely examines the extant sources of Durante's partimenti. On the basis of his remarks, one should distinguish especially between manuscripts that originated quite close to the lifetime of Francesco Durante and later sources from the nineteenth century that follow a completely different system of classification. Giorgio Sanguinetti, surely one of the most learned initiates of the Neapolitan partimento tradition, argues for a more courageous handling of 'Incomplete Notations in Eighteenth-Century Keyboard



Music' (chapter 9). He successfully demonstrates how the strategies needed to perform Mozart's 'shorthand' piano parts convincingly can be learned through the practical examination of partimenti. Ideas such as trying to cover the range of the instrument, adding chords above a bass line or varying the bass, adding voices or 'Eingänge' (lead-ins) and enriching the sound by means of various idiomatic instrumental gestures are demonstrated with reference to a partimento by Giacomo Tritto. While Sanguinetti's (partial) realization of the piece does not convince in every respect, his basic point stands: adhering to an anachronistic work concept and an over-cautious respect for the composer should no longer be an excuse for today's performers to leave Mozart's incomplete keyboard parts untouched.

In his introductory essay, Thomas Christensen discusses the need to distinguish among different varieties of improvisation throughout music history. But he does not clearly point out that this distinction of styles will – all commonalities aside – necessarily segregate those improvisatory practices of music history from each other. If one agrees that 'improvisation was something of the ambient ecology within which many notated species of composition emerged and developed' (21), one wonders how exactly the reform of the pedagogy of music theory Christensen depicts will bring 'a diversity of styles and traditions into a close dialogue' (24). Two attempts to answer this question – both of which deal with pedagogical issues – can be found at the end of this worthwhile volume. First, Peter Schubert (chapter 10) presents pedagogical concepts and experiences derived from a workshop held at McGill's Schulich School of Music in May 2014. The goal of the workshop was to teach renaissance counterpoint to a group of students. By naming issues like embodiment, intuition, visualization, intuition, active hearing while performing and memory, Schubert (perhaps unintentionally?) provides the reader with the blueprint for a future theoretical discussion of the typically improvisatory aspects of music-making. And by doing so, he manages to establish the milestones that one could follow to bring to life the dialogue Christensen mentions.

Even if Michael Callahan's approach involves computer-based tools and imparts the completely different style of eighteenth-century partimenti (chapter 11), it is quite similar to Schubert's. Both concentrate on a certain style; and both aim to create a learning environment that adapts the difficulty of the tasks to the abilities of the students (thereby enabling them to maintain a certain flow). Both approaches also emphasize the insight that speaking any musical language fluently is a kind of 'tacit knowing' that is more profound and more rooted in humanity than any reading or writing about improvisation can be. Christensen is right when he states that teaching music theory will fundamentally change through this 'improvisatory moment'. Especially because music theory will then have to (re)discover its pedagogical destiny and therefore admit that its musicological ambitions should only be regarded as an auxiliary science.

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ROBIN A. LEAVER, ED.

THE ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH COMPANION TO JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

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The substantial tome *The Routledge Research Companion to Johann Sebastian Bach* marks a new milestone in Bach research, just as important in its way as the two other Bach anthologies that have been published in English over the last twenty years, *The Cambridge Companion to Bach*, ed. John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and *Bach*, ed. Yo Tomita (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).