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Ingrid E. Pearson
*Royal College of Music, London*

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# By Word of Mouth: Historical Performance Comes of Age

**Ingrid E. Pearson**

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## Orality and literacy: the work of Walter Ong

In 1982 Walter Ong published *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, in which he explored the differences between oral and literate cultures.[1] The work, having been reprinted some seventeen times, still provokes us into questioning the very notion of our existence, one which is irrevocably shaped by an overwhelmingly literate society. After entering the Jesuit order at the age of 23, Ong undertook studies in philosophy, theology, and English at Saint Louis University, in Missouri, USA. He received the MA in 1941 for research into poetic rhythm in the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, as well as licentiate degrees in sacred theology and philosophy. In 1955 Ong was awarded a PhD by Harvard University for his study of the sixteenth-century French humanist, logician, and educational reformer Petrus Ramus. Ong then returned to Saint Louis, where he taught until his retirement. At the time of his death in 2003, at the age of 90, Ong held three emeritus professorships at his alma mater.

Walter Ong's fertile intellect and life experiences pervade his scholarship. In fact, until Ong's research little attention was given to how primary orality, that is, cultures untouched by literacy, actually contrasts literacy. Of particular interest to me, a musician working across both practice and theory, primarily in the arena of historical performance, is Ong's identification and definition of some of the features of orally-based thought and expression. For citizens of the Western world in the early twenty-first century, it is extremely difficult to imagine life without writing and notation, but it is certainly worth trying for the ways in which it encourages us to question the way in which literacy shapes our lives.

## 'Unripe fruit': historical performance in the late-twentieth century

In 1991, nine years after the first edition of Ong's monograph, the journal *Early Music* published remarks by the British musicologist Clive Brown which followed hot-on-the-heels of the release of three recorded cycles of the complete Beethoven symphonies.[2] *The Hanover Band* was the first ensemble to start and finish its cycle, recording for Nimbus between 1982 and 1988.[3] Founded by cellist Caroline Brown in 1980, *The Hanover Band* was founded primarily to explore music from the so-called Hanoverian period. These Beethoven recordings involved influential practitioners of historical performance such as Monica Huggett and Roy Goodman. In 1983, Christopher Hogwood and *The Academy of Ancient Music* began a Beethoven symphony cycle for

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[1] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982/2/2002).

[2] Clive Brown, "Historical Performance, Metronome Marks and Tempo in Beethoven's Symphonies," *Early Music* 19, no. 2 (1991): 247-258.

[3] These were recorded for Nimbus Records. At the time of writing these are still available as a boxed set.

L'Oiseau Lyre, a project which was completed in 1989.[4] Hogwood began *The Academy of Ancient Music* in 1973, initially recording music by Abel, Stamitz, and Mozart before embarking on the cycle of Beethoven symphonies. A third British orchestra, *The London Classical Players*, under the direction of Roger Norrington, recorded the Beethoven symphonies from 1987 until 1989 for EMI.[5] Norrington's orchestra had been formed in 1978, and many players were also members of Brown's and Hogwood's ensembles. Norrington's Beethoven symphonies were also recorded for television in 1989 and I remember watching these while an undergraduate in Australia, eager to catch sight of the clarinettists and their instruments! The discrepancies in texts used by these three orchestras, as well as the differences in instruments and approach to performance practices adopted by each, were lamented by Clive Brown when he wrote:

> There is serious concern that where a search to rediscover the sounds and styles of 19th century music conflicts with the exigencies of the recording studio and the need to obtain a neat and tidy, easily assimilable product, it is the latter that are regarded as paramount.[6]

While this criticism could be levelled at all recordings, Brown continued:

> Although the use of period instruments alone has some revealing consequences (for instance, Schumann's orchestration has been, to a great extent rehabilitated by The London Classical Players' recent recordings of his 3rd and 4th symphonies), there is infinitely more to historically sensitive performance than merely employing the right equipment, and the public is in danger of being offered attractively packaged but unripe fruit.[7]

## Applying the work of Walter Ong

During the 1920s and '30s research into Homeric poetry by Milman Parry, and that of his student Albert B. Lord in the 1960s and '70s, reawakened the scholarly world to what Ong describes as the "orality of language."[8] The distinctive characteristics of Homeric poems, noted by Parry, Lord, and later scholars, were a direct result of the economy enforced by their oral methods of creation.[9] The ramifications of this research revolutionized studies of so-called epic poetry, and were also felt soon after in anthropology and literary history.[10]

Ong himself wrote "if attention to sophisticated orality-literacy contrasts is growing in some circles, it is still relatively rare in many fields where it could be helpful."[11] In considering Ong alongside the work of key twentieth- and twenty-first-century performer/scholars, musicologists, and others, this paper aims to demonstrate how Ong's characteristics of orally-based thought and expression now reside within historical performance, as well as to suggest that the current success of the historical performance movement lies in its ability to embrace both oral and literate modes.

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4 Recorded for Decca's L'Oiseau Lyre label, and still available as a boxed set.

5 While originally recorded for EMI, these are currently available on the Virgin Classics label.

6 Brown, "Historical Performance, Metronome Marks and Tempo in Beethoven's Symphonies," 248.

7 Ibid. Indeed, the perspicacious nature of Brown's remark has already caught the attention of others, for example, Colin Lawson in *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 15.

8 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 5-15.

9 Ibid., 21.

10 Ibid., 27-30.

11 Ibid., 29.

In the twenty-first century, particularly at institutions of learning such as London's Royal College of Music (RCM), fluency across both practice and theory has become the norm. The RCM's commitment to educating and training reflective practitioners is manifest in curricula for undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as activities for staff and the general public. The application of Walter Ong's work to the teaching, learning, rehearsing, and performing, both live and for the purposes of recording, of Western Art music, and through this, reflection on the nature of orality and literacy, can give us a far greater understanding of the dynamics of practice and theory.

In their provocatively-titled, co-edited monograph *The Intuitive Practitioner: On the Value of Not Always Knowing What One is Doing*, Terry Atkinson and Guy Claxton explore the relationship between what they term "articulate/rational/explicit" modes of knowledge and their acquisition versus "inarticulate/intuitive/implicit ways."[12] These contrasting modes perfectly embody the characteristics of literacy and orality, and consequently, of theory and practice.

Textuality's relentless domination of the scholarly mind is mirrored by the often seemingly-relentless domination by musicology of research into music, and the relentless domination of written outputs. For musicians working across theory and practice this can be quite daunting, with relatively few models available in which practitioners reflect on their work in theory. Much written discourse about performance remains shaped and therefore often ultimately controlled by non-practitioners. A musician's resistance to reflect on their practice may be indicative of their primary location within the immanence of the act of performance, acknowledging the role of their "tacit knowledge."[13]

**What is orality and how does it differ from literacy?**

According to Ong, orality and literacy impact considerably on how knowledge is gained and stored.[14] Both oral and literate cultures employ analytic thought. A literate mind's "abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths" is utterly reliant on literacy's tools, namely writing and reading.[15] Oral thought, however, is shaped by ways in which learning occurs: through imitation, repetition, and participation, as well as combination and recombination.[16] The concept of "study" contrasts markedly between oral and literate cultures.[17]

Ong identifies and defines characteristics of orally-based thought and expression. Relating these to our experiences as performing musicians is particularly revelatory in helping to arrive at a greater understanding of our practice. For example, orally-based thought and expression acknowledges the evanescence of sound.[18] Oral thought needs repetition for preservation and

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12 Terry Atkinson and Guy Claxton, eds., *The Intuitive Practitioner: On the Value of Not Always Knowing What One is Doing* (Buckingham: Open UP, 2000), 1.

13 Henk Borgdorff has made valuable contributions to scholarship in this field including "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research," in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* by eds. Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (London: Routledge, 2010), 44-63.

14 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 8.

15 Ibid., 9.

16 Ibid.

17 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 9.

18 Ibid., 32.

transmission, which literacy would regard as redundant and unwieldy.[19] "Sparsely linear or analytic thought and speech" are by-products of "the technology of writing."[20] According to Ong, "oral cultures encourage fluency, fulsomeness, volubility."[21]

This wealth, in turn, means that orally-based thought and expression is, by nature, conservative or traditionalist.[22] The energy necessarily invested in repetition houses knowledge with a small number of respected persons - its conservators.[23] Writing, and printing, of course, are differently conservative but essentially have a democratizing affect on knowledge.[24] Nonetheless it is important to note that in oral tradition "there will be as many minor variants of a myth as there are repetitions of it, and the number of repetitions can be increased indefinitely."[25] Similarly, knowledge in oral cultures consists entirely of what one can recall, which is done via mnemonics and formulae.[26] Sustained oral thought is tied to communication, in other words, to transmission.[27]

Orally-based thought and expression employs the situational rather than the abstract, with minimal use of operational frames of reference.[28] Oral cultures draw upon practice, that is, categorization according to use.[29] Such cultures do not deal in formally logical reasoning processes, definitions or even comprehensive descriptions, given the expectation of a shared awareness, or articulated self-analysis, as all of these are by-products of text-formed thought.[30]

A proximity to the world of human experience characterizes orally-based thought and expression. Oral cultures conceive of and verbalize all knowledge by close reference to practice, that is, through personal knowledge derived from participation or observation. Few facts known to oral cultures are not rooted in the everyday. Learning takes place through observation and imitation, with little recourse to verbal explanation. This learning is empathetic and participatory. Oral cultures draw upon a close communal identification with the known rather than using objective distance.

**Historical performance in the twentieth century**

Thurston Dart was born in 1921, and as such was amongst a new breed of musicians who functioned as both performers and scholars. He studied at the RCM in the late 1930s. According to Joseph Kerman, Dart methodically divided his life into five-year periods devoted alternatively to

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19 Ibid., 39-40.
20 Ibid., 40.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 41-42.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 42.
26 Ibid., 33-36.
27 Ibid., 34.
28 Ibid., 49.
29 Ibid., 49, 51.
30 Ibid., 55.

playing and researching.[31] Earlier research of mine, in which I apply Ong's work to practice-based research in music, suggests that those of us engaged across practice and theory are in fact travelling along a continuum between states of oral- and states of literate-being.[32] In performance we are more oral and when we reflect on practice in theory, we are more literate. Crucially, we need both modes to function holistically.

Dart's career was comfortably located in the wake of the emergence of the discipline of historical performance during the second half of the nineteenth century. The publication of critical editions of music of the past, under the auspices of various *Gesellschaften*, provided fertile groundwork for performer/scholars like Dart. It is likely that his clear compartmentalization of practice and theory enabled Dart to function most effectively as performer and scholar.

Another key figure and younger English contemporary of Dart's was Robert Donington (1907-1990). Established as a performer/scholar in the United States by the early 1960s, Donington first published his comprehensive tome *The Interpretation of Early Music* in 1963, issuing a revised version in 1974.[33] A chapter entitled "Prospects for Authenticity" in Donington's 1974 version revisits his two "large assumptions" for what he termed "authenticity."[34] The first of Donington's assumptions is that "we can best serve early music by matching our modern interpretation as closely as possible to what we know of the original interpretation," and this he labelled "the doctrine of historical authenticity."[35] He continued:

> This is in better standing today than ever before, and much better than a dozen years ago. The doctrine of historical authenticity is now unquestionably respectable, though not universal. The great conservatories of music, for example, where the finest of our young musicians receive their professional training, have not yet given to this doctrine the weight of their unreserved support, though they would probably subscribe to it as a general principle, and in many cases are implementing it in some areas, for example in teaching harpsichord as well as piano.[36]

Donington's second assumption "that compromise is largely unavoidable" had become less tenable in the mid 1970s than it had been in the previous decade.[37] The ability of wind and brass instrument makers faithfully to reproduce historic instruments was amongst the most noticeable reasons for this change. Amongst notable collaborations, to result in instruments used during the formative years of the historical performance movement, that of Cambridge-based maker Daniel Bangham and the late Professor Sir Nicholas Shackleton stands out.[38] Bangham's workshop dates from 1983 and his clarinets and basset horns continue to be heard on the concert platform as well on recordings for major labels including Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI, Hyperion, and Nimbus. Notwithstanding, the fruit of such successful collaborations and the physical and philosophical

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31 Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), 186.

32 "Practice and theory, orality and literacy: knowledge, memory and performance," in *Performa '11 – Actas e Livro de Resumos dos Encontros de Investigação em Performance*, eds. Rosário Pestana and Sara Carvalho (Universidade de Aveiro, 2011).

33 Robert Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music* (London: Faber, 1963).

34 Ibid., 37-43. At this juncture, I must confess that the obsolescence of the term 'authenticity' is a great relief to me and probably also to readers of *Performance Practice Review*!

35 Ibid., 37.

36 Ibid.

37 Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, 39.

38 Shackleton bequeathed his collection to the University of Edinburgh, see www.music.ed.ac.uk/euchmi/ucis.html.

differences between copies and original instruments have yet to be the focus of scholarly reflection, having thus far received surprisingly little critical attention. Can we reconcile the "bias" inherent in surviving instruments while still attempting to "gain a better feeling for what classical music actually sounded like when it was first heard in favourable circumstances."[39]

Donington had been a pupil of Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940), which Donington himself described as an "apprenticeship."[40] Such a mode of transmission seems natural given that Dolmetsch was largely self-taught as a performer on historical instruments.[41] Learning via the master-apprentice model clearly mirrors the modes of learning that occur in primarily oral cultures. In embracing a literate approach as well, Dolmetsch referred his apprentice to the second edition of Thomas Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*, which dates from 1608.[42] It is curious to note, however, that Morley's written explanation of the elements of music takes the form of a conversation between a master and his two pupils, Philomathes and Polymathes, moving the work closer to orality, on our orality-literacy continuum.

Nikolaus Harnoncourt, another contemporary of Thurston Dart, was born in 1929. Beginning his career as a cellist in the *Vienna Symphony Orchestra*, Harnoncourt founded *Concentus Musicus Wien* in 1953. The ensemble recorded Handel's *Water Music* in 1978.[43] In the *Allegro*, third movement of the Suite in F major HWV348, we cannot help but notice the particularly "unripe" horn playing, even when we bear in mind that this is a studio recording.[44]

**Link to Music Example 1**

From the beginning of the 1980s critiques of the historical performance movement became more vociferous. In hindsight, some thirty years later, many seem perfectly legitimate. The speed of debate at the time is exemplified in the changes to *The New Grove Dictionary* entry entitled "Performing Practice." Howard Mayer Brown,[45] writing in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1980 made the following claim for music composed after 1750, under the subheading "Continuity of tradition":

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39 Nicholas Shackleton, "The Development of the Clarinet," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 16, 17.

40 Donington, 39.

41 Nonetheless, Dolmetsch's instrument-making skills had been developed from an early age in the family workshop, see Margaret Campbell, "Dolmetsch, (Eugène) Arnold," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford UP, 2001), 7:433-435.

42 Thomas Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*, 2nd ed. (1608), ed. R.A. Harman as *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (London: J.M. Dent, 1952/R1963).

43 Georg Friedrich Händel, *Water Musick*, Concentus Musicus Wien, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Teldec 8.42368242833-2 CD, 1978, 1989.

44 Scholars, particularly those concerned with recorded music, often inappropriately use the terms 'performance' and 'recording' interchangeably, as if the two were identical entities. Academic discourse on music must reflect a greater awareness of the differences between these two manifestations of a musical score. In its reference to recorded examples, this article acknowledges that, as studio-enhanced aural documents, they may embody a technically more ideal performance than the arena of live concert performance.

45 In 1972 Brown replaced Thurston Dart as the King Edward Professor of Music, King's College, University of London, see Ellen T. Harris, "Brown, Howard Mayer," in *The New Grove Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford UP, 2001), 4:441-444.

> The study of performing practice in music since 1750 is fundamentally different from the study of earlier performing practice for a number of reasons. One of the most important is that there is no 'lost tradition' separating the modern performer from the music of Haydn, Mozart and their successors…[46]

Brown continues:

> … there has been no severance of contact with post-Baroque music as a whole, nor with the instruments used in performing it.[47]

An article by Laurence Dreyfus, published in 1983, soundly criticized the "strictly empirical program" adopted by historical performers, one which was misguidedly intended to be "magically transformed into the composer's intentions."[48] What Dreyfus terms "objectivism" is surely evidence of an overt and naïve reliance on documentary source materials at the expense of an approach embracing orality. Documentary sources must remain subject to constant reinterpretation. The co-existence of radically different contemporary performed and/or recorded manifestations of the same music serves to remind us of the primary role of the interpreter/practitioner above any accorded to documentary evidence. This prioritization is absolutely crucial when we consider the paucity of surviving documentary sources.

In 1984, with the publication of *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* and in the hands of Robert Winter, this was relabelled "Apparent continuity of tradition," proclaiming:

> But on closer examination neither the assumption of an unbroken performing history nor the corollary of an unbroken performing tradition stands up.[49]

According to Joseph Kerman, the following year, in 1985, historical performance was the field of musicology "just possibly in the greatest turmoil of all."[50] He acknowledged that the key figures were "historically minded performers," and continues "All of them dabble in musicology (just as many musicologists dabble in historical performance) and some of them do a good deal better than that."[51] Kerman's report seems to be suggesting that to come of age, historical performance had to be liberated from musicology, a discipline relentlessly dominated by text.

In their two-volume set dealing with performance practice in music before and after 1600, Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie further updated and enlarged the *Grove* material. They viewed Historical Performance as having:

> … scarcely yet established itself as a discipline within musicology, partly because relatively few academic scholars have engaged themselves directly with such questions, partly because the co-operation between scholars, performers and instrument makers necessary to debate meaningfully central issues is often difficult to organize, and partly because many scholars still mistrust studies that do not deal with the analysis and criticism of the great works by the great composers, or with

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46 Howard Mayer Brown, "Performing practice," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie (London: Oxford UP, 1980), 14:388.

47 Ibid.

48 Laurence Dreyfus, "Early Music defended against its devotees: a theory of historical performance in the twentieth century," *The Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1983): 299.

49 Robert Winter, "Apparent continuity of tradition," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, ed. S. Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1985), 3:53.

50 Kerman, *Musicology*, 229.

51 Ibid., 185.

> philological or social issues that seem to them more central to our main concerns with the great issues of history.[52]

At face value these remarks are indicative of textual dominance and an inequality between practice and theory, such an articulation of the struggle could only pre-empt its eventual resolution. That a figure as influential as William Glock requested a book investigating historical performance, as well as conferences held at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio during the 1986/87 academic year, represented a great step forward for this debate.[53] The resultant volume, edited by Nicholas Kenyon in 1988, was entitled *Authenticity and Early Music*, a hugely influential and valuable contribution to the debate.[54] Kenyon was right to question the relationship between performance and scholarship in historical performance thus:

> How can the scholar reconcile the need for an open verdict with the performer's need to make a practical decision; for the performer, what happens at the moment when the cautious conclusions of musicological enquiry have to be turned into action?[55]

This is a particularly salient example of a clash between theoretical and practical approaches, and also a clear disjunction between literate and oral states of being. Only a year earlier, in the first historical survey of the historical performance movement, Harry Haskell remarked that "experience has taught us that musicology does not have answers to all or perhaps even most of the questions the historical performance movement has raised."[56] Haskell's comment clearly highlights a need for more practical and fewer text-based approaches. The clarinettist/scholar Colin Lawson took this a step further in his 1999 co-edited volume with Robin Stowell entitled *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* when he acknowledged the need to balance "practical expediency" and "historical accuracy."[57]

In his chapter for Kenyon's 1988 volume, Richard Taruskin wrote "It is the academic mind not the performer's that is trained to generalize and to seek normative procedures," certainly a characteristic of the mindset of persons from literate cultures.[58] This tension between the roles of academic and performer is further evidence of the imbalance between practice and theory in historical performance at that time. Such inequality sits at the core of a later remark by Taruskin when, in 1992, he criticized historical performance practice for the serious distortion arising from its "text-fetishism" and the "exaltation of scores over those who read or write them."[59] Reading

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52 Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie eds., *Performance Practice: Music After 1600* (London: Macmillan, 1989), x.

53 Amongst prominent positions held by Glock were that of British Broadcasting Corporation's Controller of Music and also Controller of The Proms, during which he championed both contemporary and early music, see Peter Heyworth, "Glock, Sir William," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford UP, 2001), 10:16.

54 Nicholas Kenyon ed., *Authenticity and Early Music* (London: Oxford UP, 1988). Other valuable contributions by Kenyon include his Royal Philharmonic Society lecture "Tradition isn't what it used to be," (London, 2001) and "Performance today," in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 3-34.

55 Kenyon, *Authenticity and Early Music*, 13.

56 Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), 185.

57 Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell eds., *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), xii.

58 Richard Taruskin, "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past," in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (London: Oxford UP, 1988), 145.

59 Taruskin, "Tradition and Authority," *Early Music* 20, no. 2 (1992): 319.

Taruskin's remark in the light of Ong's work reveals his acknowledgement of the application of a too literate mind-set, as opposed to one in which orality plays its rightful part. Taruskin even wondered if "we could somehow abolish scores without abolishing pieces – that is, return music to a fully oral tradition but with our cherished repertory intact."[60] Here again Taruskin exhibits an awareness of the dangers of an approach to historical performance in which literacy is prioritized over orality.

By the end of the twentieth century, the tide was changing. Expectations of the period horn had certainly developed, particularly in terms of technique, as this 1997 recording by *The King's Consort* suggests.

**Link to Music Example 2**

In 1999, Roger Norrington, himself a pioneering figure in the historical performance and recording of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century repertoire, provided something of a personal manifesto as preface to Clive Brown's *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*. Norrington exclaimed "this is the book we have been waiting for. One of the joys of the last thirty years has been the forging of links between performers and scholars."[61] That same year Lawson wrote:

> As the novelty and exhilaration of period performance wears off, it has become inevitable that some practitioners should take as their primary sources the well-read musical directors with whom they collaborate rather than Leopold Mozart or C.P.E. Bach. This has important implications when such musicians are called upon to educate the next generation of historically aware performers.[62]

Thus the concept of practitioner-as-primary source emerges, suggestive of a move towards orality as well as the relegation, to second place, of the previously more literate approach through documentary sources. Later, at the end of the same volume, Lawson wrote:

> Indeed, the whole challenge of period performance is in finding the perfect meeting point of heart and mind, instinct and knowledge…[63]

**Historical performance in the twenty-first century**

In the year 2012 it is highly unlikely, as well as undesirable, that any musician involved in the performance of music of the Western canon would be untouched by the literacy/notation tradition. Nonetheless, Ong's observations are relevant to those of us whose activities reside within the area of historical performance.

Language is fundamentally an oral undertaking, as music is fundamentally a performed activity. A musician's need to practice in order to develop skills in performance directly parallels those ways in which oral thought is fashioned. The location of orally-based knowledge in the minds of its custodians surely mirrors the position of the majority of my RCM colleagues, who are musical practitioners, first and foremost. In contrast, much musicological and some pedagogical literature is characterized by abstractly sequential, classificatory, and explanatory interrogations.

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60 Ibid., 311.

61 Roger Norrington, preface to *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*, by Clive Brown (London: Oxford UP, 1999), vii.

62 Lawson and Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction*, 15.

63 Ibid., 160.

Treatises, methods, and manuals make instrumental learning more readily available, but can one really learn both the 'art' and 'craft' of performance without recourse to a living practitioner? A greater awareness of orality enables a reading of documentary source materials, which expects and even embraces contradictions and omissions, recognizing that while 'craft' might be relatively unambiguously explained and reconstructed by following written instructions, 'art' is fundamentally grounded in orality, and as such, eludes verbal and written explanation. As Daniel Türk's *Klavierschule* of 1789 reminds us "certain subtleties of expression cannot really be described; they must be *heard*."[64] Prioritization of documentary sources, with their overtly literate outcomes, mitigates against any narrowing of the chasm between musicology and performance. Scholars must be willing to accord equal significance to the ways in which documentary sources conceal details of performance practice rather than focusing on the nature of their revelations as primary codification/evidence.

Recourse to living oral traditions is more readily available to colleagues working in ethnomusicology. Traces of vanishing performance practices concerning music of the Western canon, however, continue to surprise and challenge us.[65] A recent study by Will Crutchfield draws on recorded evidence to understand something of vocal performances during the years 1875-1900.[66] His acknowledgement that "the gulf between hearing and reading can scarcely be over-emphasized" suggests a healthily oral side to his musicological work, one which acknowledges recordings as oral narratives of performance traditions.[67]

Historical performance is now more embedded in the world of experience. This suggests that the most useful knowledge about historical performance rests primarily with its practitioners because of their synthesis of theory and practice. In other words, these practitioners work fluently in oral and literate modes. They combine heard/demonstrated/enacted knowledge with knowledge that is seen/read/discussed.

**Has the historical performance movement come of age?**

During the twentieth century there was a clear demarcation between performers and scholars. Persons able to function to a high level across both practice and theory were only able to survive, that is, to fulfil their artistic intentions, by doing one at a time. In getting to grips with their historical counterparts, these players often had little of practical use to draw upon from their formal study of modern instruments and relatively few performers were prepared to put themselves through this difficult, artistically and personally transfigurative, and often confrontational process. Their results were often incredibly varied, and a multiplicity of approaches seemed to cause concern, particularly with regards to canonic repertoire. Nonetheless, there was much to be gained, in both personal and fiscal terms, by performing and recording on historical instruments or copies thereof.

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64 Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule* (Leipzig and Halle, 1789), trans. and ed. by Raymond H. Haggh as *School of Clavier Playing* (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1982), 337.

65 In 1996, during my doctoral research in the area of clarinet reed-position, I was privileged to meet Raffaele Annunziata (1920-2003) who employed the reed-above embouchure throughout his orchestral career. Now virtually extinct, the last documentary mention of this technique occurred over 90 years before in Carlo Della Giacoma's *Metodo per Clarinetto* (Todi, 1904) and Annunziata was possibly the last remaining executant of this practice.

66 Will Crutchfield, "Vocal performance in the nineteenth century," in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, eds. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 611-642.

67 Ibid., 613. His chapter provides a valuable antidote to those studies of recorded music that harness quasi-scientific methodologies and modes of presentation in order to accord notions of validity and objectivity to their observations!

And so much music had either never before been heard *on authentic instruments* or, in the case of music for recently rehabilitated instruments, never heard in living memory.

The majority of historical performers active today function in highly scholarly ways. Many travel along the theory/practice continuum with an ease and fluency impossible for previous generations. These musicians are now teaching the future generations of historical performers, drawing upon the physicality and orality of their own learning, in combination with the literacy of documentary sources. These performers have acquired skills across both practice and theory, in both the craft and art of historical performance. This is not to prioritize practical skills however, rather to suggest that the most engaging historical performances embody a critical *and* personal approach to source materials. Evidence to support my claims for the ripening of historical performance can only be heard. That this cannot be proven in a positivist sense further reinforces the spiritual intangibility so crucial to the continuing existence of art!

Thanks to economic rationalism as well as a market saturated by a variety of recorded interpretations, the rush to the recording studio has slowed to a trickle. On a more optimistic note, the large number of musicians active in historical performance, many of whom are second- and third-generation practitioners, bring with them a rich variety of approaches manifest in performance and on recording which is now more liberating than confusing. Kenyon reminds us of the considerable impact that historical performance continues to assert on mainstream renditions of Western art music.[68] Are we prepared to admit in a world overwhelmingly dominated by text that perhaps the enacted/performed/recorded embodiments of this repertoire have been more influential than any underpinning scholarship? Revisiting Brown's 1991 criticism of the multiplicity of approaches to Beethoven's symphonies by his compatriot ensembles, perhaps the plurality of recorded interpretations might now be regarded more informed than ignorant. It is fatuous to expect that performances given in Beethoven's time had any notion of textual fidelity. At last we have outgrown our reliance on the *Urtext*, and with it, any desire for homogeneity of 'text' or 'act'.

In the twenty-first-century historical performance, its processes and products are more driven by fiscal pressures than at any other time in history. Instrumental and vocal technique, historical equipment and style are at the mercy not only of the discipline imposed by the microphone but the exigencies of globalization, and there is still evidence to suggest that not all of the fruit has ripened. The current vogue for historical performance has been characterized by a standardization of various elements, which did not obtain at the appropriate historical periods. Many of the same instruments are routinely copied, denying performers and their audiences the range of timbres evident in earlier epochs. We must beware of this "aesthetic danger," and with it, the implication of "a standardization which originally did not exist."[69]

The reinvigoration of the *Fellowship of Makers and Restorers of Historic Instruments* (*FoMRHI*) is a welcome development towards such awareness.[70] Founded in 1975 in the wake of

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68 See Nicholas Kenyon "Tradition isn't what it used to be," Royal Philharmonic Society lecture (London, 2001) and "Performance today," in Lawson and Robin Stowell (2012), 3-34.

69 Colin Lawson, "Playing Historical Clarinets." in *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 137. Lawson recently posed the question "Where is the historical conscience of the orchestra?"

70 FoMRHI was founded in 1975 but temporarily suspended its activities between August 2002 and July 2008. See http://www.fomrhi.org/pages/home-page (Accessed 16 June 2012).

the enormous artistic and commercial success of historical performance, the fellowship originally fostered "the exchange of information" in the service of increasing "the standards of authenticity."[71] Current attention is given to publishing what it terms "communications" regarding "all aspects [of] the history and making of historical musical instruments."[72] These are unedited prior to publication, reflecting an approach that embraces both orality and literacy.

**Conclusion**

Historical performances of our time now have the conviction and confidence to accommodate something of the breadth and variety of the past. If scholars continue to criticize performers for a supposedly inadequate interaction with the musicological community and an apparent unwillingness to embrace novelty and innovation, Ong's work allows us to imagine ways in which these often polar-opposite musical roles become fused to facilitate a more artistically-satisfactory outcome, when we truly embrace and reconcile the practice/theory continuum. If a performer's primary role in the twenty-first century is to comprehend and manifest "the aural intentions that lie behind the notation" then we must still question the extent to which this was, in fact, "clear to the composers and performers of the time."[73] Notation/text/literacy can lead us to a greater understanding of musical 'craft' but only through manifestation/enactment/orality can 'art' be revealed. Ong's work challenges us to accord more authority to practically-mediated knowledge made manifest through informed performance across practice and theory, synthesising both 'art' and 'craft'!

*L'Arte Dell'Arco* offers clear proof of this synthesis. Recorded in 2004, here is another example from Handel's *Water Music*; the first movement, *Menuet*, from the Suite in G major HWV350.[74]

**Link to Music Example 3**

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[71] FoMRHI Quarterly, no. 1 (October 1975): 1.

[72] FoMRHI Quarterly, no. 109 (August 2008): 4.

[73] Clive Brown, "Performing 19th-century chamber music: the yawning chasm between contemporary practice and historical evidence," *Early Music* 38, no. 3 (2010): 480.

[74] Georg Friedrich Händel, *Water Music, Music for the Royal Fireworks*, L'Arte dell'Arco, Giovanni Guglielmo, CPO 7773122, SACD, 2008.

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