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Performance Practice versus Performance Analysis: Why Should Performers Study Performance?*

José A. Bowen

Most of us know what performance practice means: it is the subdiscipline of musicology that studies performance, specifically how performance was practiced. That, however, is precisely what more recent studies of a quite different nature (the label performance analysis will have to do for the moment) have been doing. What's the difference?

The most obvious difference is that performance practice research has been concentrated on early repertoire for which there are no contemporary recordings. The documents available for reconstructing what 18th century and earlier performances sounded like are limited to pieces of paper and other physical artifacts (like instruments).

* My thanks to Nicholas Cook and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson for their comments on the draft version of these remarks.

When studying 19th-century repertoire a few have looked at recordings as evidence,¹ but most scholars have been skeptical of the value of recordings in trying to determine what Rossini sopranos sounded like.² Not simply skeptical of the accuracy of early recordings made under less than ideal conditions, scholars also doubt the possibility of reflecting backwards in time based upon these low fidelity traces of late-career performances. If we had only the Lotte Lenya of the post-war recordings, how could we ever imagine that she would sound so different in her Berlin recordings of the 1930s? If twenty years can make such a difference in the sound and performance style of an individual artist, it is hopeless to extrapolate back generations.³ That said, written sources (like memoirs, reviews, and instruction manuals) are equally (if differently) flawed, and it would be foolish to ignore recordings where they can be useful in researching 19th-century performance practice. The recent interest in performance, though, has been spurred by the importance and interest of what *is* well documented on records and that is 20th-century performance practice.

With one hundred years of recorded sound now available, many musicologists and theorists have begun to add sound and film recordings to the list of available documents for study. Some of this

¹ An excellent example is David Breckbill's "Wagner on Record" Re-evaluating Singing in the Early Years," in *Wagner in Performance*, ed. Barry Millington and Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 153-67.

² Performers too have been skeptical. While research into 18th-century treatises continues to change the way even the most conventional orchestras play Bach and Haydn, the reissue of Elgar's performances of his own music has hardly resulted in any significant re-evaluation of the performance practice for these works. Similarly, the reissue of the 1903 Grieg piano recordings have not been taken as evidence that we need to return to restore Grieg's performance practice ("no modern recording takes even 10 percent of Grieg's liberty with tempo and note values," Will Crutchfield, "Yes, Grieg Did Make Records." *New York Times*, 31 Jan., 1993).

³ For further on this point see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "What We Are Doing with Early Music Is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree that the Word Loses Most of Its Intended Meaning," *Early Music*, 12 (1984), 13-15.

research is, of course, simply performance practice research with new sources. Numerous books and articles simply use recordings as part of the evidence for understanding performance practices in this century.⁴ A different group of musicologists has begun to study recordings for what they have to tell us about musical works rather than performance; an entirely different goal. Some of *this* research, then, is simply traditional musicology with new sources. The recordings of Bartók and Debussy, for example, are being used (along with written documents) in the preparation of the new complete editions just as manuscripts were used in the old ones.⁵ Not surprisingly, a large number of these studies investigate only the composer's performance.⁶ The implication here is clear; the composer's performance is privileged in some way and this performance adds to our information *about the work* in a way which another less authoritative performance would not. Recorded performances by composers become performance evidence in the same way as metronome marks or other directions or annotations on the score. The irony

⁴ Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Judy Lochhead, "Performance Practice in the Indeterminate Works of John Cage," *Performance Practice Review* 7 (1994), 233-41; Paul Banks, "Aspects of Mahler's Fifth Symphony: Performance Practice and Interpretation," *Musical Times* (May 1986), 258-65; Millington and Spencer, *Wagner*; Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (eds.), *Performance Practice: Music after 1600* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁵ László Somfai, "How To Handle 'Oral Tradition-like' Phenomena in a Critical Edition: Methods in Transcribing the Composer's Recordings for the Bartók Edition" (Budapest: O. J., 198X); *Oeuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy Série I*, Vol. 5, "Preludes," ed. Roy Howat with Claude Helffer (Paris: Durand-Costallat, 1985).

⁶ Xiao-Li Ding, "Rachmaninoff Plays Rachmaninoff" (Boston University, D.M.A. Dissertation, 1991); Marilyn M. Garst, "How Bartók Performed His Own Compositions," *Tempo* 155/12 (1985), 15-21; Sofia Mosheovich, "Tempo in Shostakovich's Performances of His Own Works," *South African Journal of Musicology* 7 (1987), 1-11.

here is that just as Beethoven's multiple and varied metronome marks do nothing to determine an authoritative standard tempo for his works, Stravinsky's multiple and varied accounts of his own works on record are equally unhelpful in establishing a single standard for performance. Surely we value single performances and single sets of metronome marks by composers too highly.

While performance analysis also uses recorded performances as source documents, it is a wider study than what I described so far. Performance analysis includes the study of how the music sounds, but it also considers performance attitudes, gesture, social context, and audience response. Ethnomusicologists have been doing this for some generations, but musicologists have become increasingly interested in the context surrounding both the production of the score and that of the sound. While many musicologists have written about the sociology of music and performance in the era before recordings, performance analysis usually involves the direct study of recorded performances.⁷

A growing body of work, for example, has investigated not only how the general style of performance has changed in the 20th century, but how style has changed in particular repertoires and for particular pieces.⁸ This study of 20th-century performance style somewhat

⁷ Live performance isn't off limits, it is just that a verifiable "record" of the performance allows for more complete study. Ethnomusicologists never venture into the field without their tape recorders.

⁸ Nicholas Cook, "Structure and Performance Timing in Bach's C Major Prelude (WTC1): an Empirical Study," *Music Analysis* 6 (1987), 257-72; Jeffrey Hollander, "The Changing Interpretive Paradigm for the Chopin Berceuse, Op. 57: a Comparative Performance Study" (Paper, National Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Minneapolis, 1994); Joachim Braun, "Beethoven's Fourth Symphony: Comparative Analysis of Recorded Performances," *Israel Studies in Musicology* (I, 1978), 54-71; Barbara Oakley Allen, "A Comparison and Critique of the Recorded Performances of Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments" (D.M.A. Paper: Stanford University, 1980); José A. Bowen, "Connecting Performance, Interpretation and Meaning: When Is Beethoven's Fifth Heroic? (Paper,

mirrors the traditional musicological study of compositional style—a model which is perhaps more sophisticated than we imagine. Given three songs, one by Mozart, one by Debussy, and one by Billy Strayhorn and nothing else, is it possible to determine which aspects of each are conventional and which are exceptional? No, it is impossible without further information to determine which qualities are common to all songs of the period, region, or school, and which are unique to the composer. In other words, in order to discover what makes a particular Billy Strayhorn song (or his style) unique, we need to understand (1) about the general stylistic conventions of the era and region and (2) about the idiosyncrasies which manifest themselves in his other songs. Few theorists or musicologists would stake too much on a single Schumann song before investigating songs by other early Romantic composers and other songs by Schumann. While this point is clearly understood in musicological studies, where there is an enormous accumulated body of information about period, geographical and institutional style, it is altogether too easy to mistake a performance characteristic for a unique interpretive feature when it is, in fact, a general style trait of an unfamiliar style (or vice-versa). This is less of a problem in most performance practice research since the object is to understand the performance of all of the music in the particular genre or style under investigation.

The problem, however, is compounded in the study of the history of recorded performance. A researcher with only a few recordings from the 1950s will be unable to tell if the new performance traits observed reflect (1) the style of the individual performers or an institutional style of the ensemble, (2) the style of the period or a national style, (3) an unusual series of recording sessions, (4) a change in the performance tradition of the particular piece, or (5) a unique and unprecedented innovation or insight made by the performer. This is particularly problematic for the earliest recordings, where often only a single recording exists: the 1913 recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 by Artur Nikisch is surely characteristic of his personal conducting style and his particular view of the Fifth Symphony as well as (in some ways) of the style of the day and specific traditions

National Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Minneapolis, 1994, and a session of the Royal Musical Association held at King's College, London, 1994); Matthew Dirst, "Tradition and Authenticity in a Bach Chorale Prelude," *American Organist*, 25, 3 (1991).

in the performance of Beethoven's Fifth. Sorting out the difference between period, geographic, and national styles, work-specific performing tradition and individual innovations becomes a great deal easier when there are multiple recordings for each geography, orchestra, conductor, period, hall, and performance condition.⁹

As the body of work in performance history builds, this will become easier. For the present, however, performance studies will need to be both horizontal and vertical. In other words, they will need to consider how each recording relates to others of its day (the horizontal view) and how it relates to recordings made before and after it (the vertical view). Further, this vertical, or historical, view is complicated by the need to consider the different types of performance traits. I divide performance traits into three categories.

(1) Styles

Any number of important aspects of the performance may be caused by a variety of separate styles (all of which work together to create the general style of performance). Some styles may be characteristic of a particular period, geography, repertoire, or genre. Further, some institutions or instruments might have styles. Similarly some teachers would certainly leave a style in their wake. Artists themselves can also have unique styles which they apply to all of their performances.

(2) Traditions

The style aspects are those elements of the music which are always the same across the given dimension (period, institution, or artist), but often exceptional features occur through the history of a specific work. In the first movement of the

⁹ A further difficulty for this type of research is that neither the typical discography nor music library is set up to accommodate it. There are a few discographies for performers and organizations but virtually none for works. Further, what self-respecting librarian is going to collect all three sets of the Karajan recordings of Beethoven for you when the library needs single copies of Weber or Rossini operas? But without enormous numbers of recordings (and often even with them) it is impossible to sort out whether or not that particular performance trait is characteristic of all of Karajan's performances or just his performances of that composer or piece, or simply of his recordings in that era or with that orchestra.

Brahms First Symphony, for example, every conductor slows down a little for the second theme; this is a common feature of 20th-century performance styles for many repertoires. As analyses of the movement vary (i.e. it is not clear where the "second theme" starts) there are different traditions for slowing down in different places. Further, it is also traditional to continue slowing down after measure 140, despite the fact that there are no performance directions in the score to do so. The "traditional" return to tempo is performed at measure 157. However, there is an alternate performance practice (or oral tradition) of placing the *a tempo* at measure 159.¹⁰ This return to tempo in measure 157 or 159 is clearly a performance practice, but it is not a style. Such traditions of performance are specifically tied to individual works.

(3) Innovation and Individual Choice

After subtracting all of that, we finally get to what most critics think they are talking about: the individual interpretation. (In fact, a large percentage of performance decisions are determined by the two previous categories.) Again there is a distinction here between the general choices that artists regularly make and which constitute a consistent style (the Heifetz sound), and the individual choices that they make in specific pieces (the uses to which Heifetz might put that sound in a specific measure). While there are stylistic innovations (like Heifetz's violin sound) the innovations of interpretation refer exclusively to specific devices and places in specific compositions. A return to tempo in measure 161 of the first movement of the Brahms First Symphony would be a clear individual innovation and a unique characteristic of that performance.¹¹

It is difficult to identify the unique aspects of a performance and sometimes it is impossible to separate out the three categories. Without additional external evidence we cannot tell *why*, for instance, Klemperer chose to follow Furtwängler in moving the Brahms *a tempo* to measure 157. (Did he make a decision based

¹⁰ I discuss this further in an article currently under preparation entitled "Rubato and the Second Theme: a Performance History."

¹¹ The uniqueness of these traits is literal; any performance practice which doesn't appear in an earlier performance is unique (until somebody else does it . . .).

upon multiple options or was it the only tradition he knew?) However, not all features are likely to occur in each category. The use of portamento, for example, is usually a characteristic of style and not of tradition. An artist either uses portamento or doesn't; it would be quite interesting to find a performer who used it in only one piece or repertoire but not in others. It is a feature of general style which is certain to be some combination of period, geographic, institutional, and other styles.

At this level then, the new performance "analysis" can be seen to be a close cousin to the more traditional performance practice research. Both are closely tied to the musicological values of understanding historically changing musical styles and both deal with a variety of physical, sounding, and written evidence which we are forced to evaluate on a consistently uneven playing-field. While different knowledge and techniques are involved in refurbishing an 18th-century harpsichord and setting the speed on an Edison cylinder, both are attempts by the researcher to learn about historical performance practice. Indeed, in some types of performance research (i.e. "Rachmaninoff Plays Rachmaninoff") the two fields seem hardly distinguishable. The tremendous number of individual recorded performances, however, creates extended opportunities for research into not only the general styles of periods and geographies (as is possible in a limited way with traditional performance practice research) but into specific performance traditions and individual interpretations (which are nearly impossible to investigate without recordings.)

A further difference is that a great deal of the new performance analysis has been conducted not by historically-minded performers and musicologists, but by theorists and psychologists.¹² While psycho-

¹² There is an enormous literature. A tiny sample might include Eric F. Clarke, "Imitating and Evaluating Real and Transformed Musical Performances," *Music Perception*, 10 (1993), 207-21; Manfred Clynes, *Music, Mind, and Brain: the Neuropsychology of Music Perception* (New York: Plenum Press, 1982); Bruno Repp, "A Constraint on the Expressive Timing of a Melodic Gesture: Evidence from Performance and Aesthetic Judgment," *Music Perception* 10, 2 (Winter 1992), 221-42; Alf Gabrielsson (ed.), *Action and Perception in Rhythm and Meter* (Stockholm: Publication of the Swedish Academy of Music, No. 55, 1987); Caroline Palmer and Carla van de Sande, "Units of Knowledge in Music Performance," *Journal of*

logists have for the most part been interested in what performers can do and why they do it, many theorists (and musicologists) want to tell performers what they should do. To be fair, of course, both theorists and musicologists have criticized these positions extensively.¹³ Still, the aim of most research has been to ensure that performers correct the errors of their ways; it is prescriptive rather than descriptive. The rationale for this is somewhat different in theory, musicology, and criticism. Criticism is by definition concerned with the evaluation of the aesthetic quality of a performance. Musicologists, however, have usually assumed that accuracy matters.¹⁴ While publishers and conductors (in the "bad old days" before authenticity) used to tinker with Beethoven's scoring for a variety of reasons, fidelity to the autograph score takes precedence over all other considerations today. No one today asks if it *sounds* better (or if Beethoven might have preferred) to use horns instead of bassoons in measure 303-10, the recapitulation of the second theme in the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Although even the so-called arch-objectivist Toscanini used one horn and one bassoon (a unique solution). Today we have restored the bassoons in the score, but we have lost the oral tradition of horns. Similarly we worry

Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, vol. 19, 2 (1993), 457-70.

¹³ Virtually every review of Wallace Berry's *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989) and a number of further articles have taken issue with his position that the arrow always points from analysis to performance and never the reverse. See Jonathan Dunsby, "Guest Editorial: Performance and Analysis of Music," *Music Analysis* 8 (1989), 1-2; 5-20; John Rink, "Review of Berry" *Music Analysis* 9 (1989), 319-39; Nicholas Cook, "Analysing Performance, and Performing Analysis," in *Rethinking Music*, Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in press); Joel Lester, "Interactions between Analyses and Performances," *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, John Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁴ As scholars we all agree that knowledge is a good thing, but it is easy to confuse the search for knowledge with the search for correctness. Accurate historical knowledge does not imply a correct (or even valid) aesthetic judgment.

about whether or not we have the composer's final wishes and corrections without wondering if perhaps their first impulse was their best. Historical validity has been assumed to imply aesthetic validity: Bach's or Meyerbeer's music only sounds properly given the historically appropriate performance practice.

Ironically, while this sounds like a decision to interpret the musical work as something understood through a sounding set of performances, this hasn't actually worked out to be the case. Since performance practice so often concentrates on period style (and not oral traditions associated with specific works) we (most musicologists) tend to separate discussions of performance practice from discussions of musical works. We might mention the first performance (especially if it was a disaster), but how many of us feel that we *cannot* talk about *Tristan und Isolde* or a Mozart string quartet without discussing the performance style of the first performance. When we discuss works, we usually only discuss the score. We rarely look at performance practice, much less the performance culture which surrounded the creation of a new bit of musical sound. We usually consider performance practice a separate subject from the discussion of the work and thus our very methodology tends to undercut the position we want performers to take, namely that performance practice matters.

Theorists are at least a bit more honest about the subservience of performance to the analysis of the work. When an analysis of a musical work is compared to a variety of performances they are usually all found lacking. In the event a performance is judged to be of a high standard, it is inevitably because it somehow reflects the paper analysis in some way.¹⁵ While most performance practice research is both generally drawn from and applicable to genres, composers, or

¹⁵ Eugene Narmour, "On the Relationship of Analytical Theory to Performance and Interpretation," in *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1988), 317-40; Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989); Janet Schmalfeldt, "On the Relation of Analysis to Performance: Beethoven's Bagatelles Op. 126, nos. 2 and 5," *Journal of Music Theory* 29 (1985), 1-31; Christopher Wintle, "Analysis and Performance: Webern's Concerto Op. 24/ii," *Music Analysis* 1 (1982), 73-99.

periods, prescriptions from theorists often derive from their analysis of an individual work. Since the one often has nothing to do with the other, these prescriptions may deal with entirely different aspects of performance. To use the terms above, performance practice deals with the stylistic qualities, while the theoretical analysis deals with the correct performance traditions. These are rarely compatible.

Performance practice scholars should be quite happy. While performers used to argue against most of the advances of musicology (like the harpsichord) on aesthetic grounds (i.e. they didn't like the sound), the effect of musicology on concert life has never been greater than it is today. While it used to be routine to hear a nice (but not too long) bit of baroque music at the beginning of most orchestral concerts, Bach, Vivaldi, and Telemann have been banished from the repertoire of virtually every major "traditional" orchestra. We let Handel in once a year, for *Messiah*, but those of us who enjoy Mozart with large string sections are limited to old Otto Klemperer and Bruno Walter records. This isn't to say that performance practice research hasn't enriched our musical lives; it undoubtedly has. However, it has also taken the moral and aesthetic position that performers have an obligation to heed the finding of this research.

Still, educating performers and audiences seems a worthwhile mission. Similarly, I can understand why some might think the world would be a better place if "standards" were higher or if more performers knew more (historical information?) about the repertoire they performed. However, it seems pointless to label popular musicians with the ubiquitous "intuitive" epithet or to insult them because their interpretations don't correspond to our idea of correctness. Would we really want a world without Horowitz?¹⁶ The point is that both performance analysis and performance practice have until now often attempted (and in some cases succeeded) to limit the possibilities for performers.

¹⁶ Michael Steinberg's extended attack on the pianist in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980) ends with "Horowitz illustrates that an astounding instrumental gift carries no guarantee about musical understanding."

Until recently, when performers examined either type of research, they needed to accept this premise. As both disciplines have relaxed this view and allowed performers more of their traditional license, more performers have been drawn to examine this research. Still, the central question remains. Why *should* performers study either performance practice or performance analysis?

* * *

Having answered the question somewhat implicitly in the negative (I do not think that performers should study performance research to learn the correct way to play) I shall now answer in the positive both why performers should study performance and what researchers might do to meet performers half way.

Assuming for the moment what seems to be an underlying assumption of most performance practice research, that the performance conditions (I would include the broadest cultural conditions) are essential for understanding the music, then the reasons why we should all study them are obvious. I would claim, however, that too much performance practice research is hampered precisely because it is not fundamentally interested in performance practice, but instead is focused on the text.¹⁷ I refer specifically here to the emphasis on editions and guides to ornamentation, which far outnumber studies on contemporary aesthetics and what was considered beautiful playing. This emphasis reflects our belief in *Werktreue* (fidelity to the work), a concept which didn't arise until the 19th century. When we hear of Berlioz's anger at Rossini for being resigned to a singer's changing his notes, we always side with Berlioz.

It would not appear, however, that all composers show themselves openly indignant at being corrected by their interpre-

¹⁷ The argument that all of musicology has been perhaps too strongly concerned with musical works and more specifically music texts (not the same thing) continues unabated and need not concern us here. See, for example, José A. Bowen, "The History of Remembered Innovation: Tradition and Its Role in the Relationship between Musical Works and Their Performances," *Journal of Musicology* 11, 2 (Spring 1993) and Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

ters. Rossini, for instance, seemed quite pleased to hear of the changes, embroideries, and of the thousand villainies which singers introduced into his airs. "My music is not yet finished," said this terrible banterer, one day: "they are still working at it." "It will only be when nothing of mine is left that it will have acquired its full value."

At the last rehearsal of a new opera:

"This passage does not suit me," said a singer naïvely,

"I shall have to change it."

"Yes!" replied the composer, "put something else in its place; sing the 'Marseillaise.'"¹⁸

While Berlioz is frustrated by Rossini's resignation, both Berlioz and we know that Rossini did care (although surely not as much as we care) about how his music was performed. Why do we assume our attitude is better than his? (It is certainly less historically accurate.) We try to avoid an argument by concentrating on the score; as far as real performance practice is concerned, we still mostly pick and choose. Roger Norrington has done much to introduce both audiences and mainstream orchestras to *some* of the contemporary conventions in *playing* Beethoven. Neither he nor anyone else, however, has ever suggested that we should also return to conventions and expectations of *listening* to Beethoven: talking during the performance while the lights stay bright, or assembling individual movements from different symphonies and having them performed by amateur players playing out of tune. Again, Mozart said he thought 40 violins, 10 violas, 6 celli, 10 basses, and double winds would be ideal for his late symphonies.¹⁹ Why not let him have it?

¹⁸ Hector Berlioz, *A travers chants* (Paris, 1862). Cited in "Address to the Members of the Academy of Fine Arts of the Institute," in *Mozart, Weber, and Wagner, with Various Essays on Musical Subjects*, trans. Edwin Evans (London, 1918), 97-98.

¹⁹ *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, trans. and ed. Emily Anderson, 2nd ed., ed. A Hyatt King and Monica Carolan, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1966), vol. 2, 724.

We play it safe when it comes to performance choices.²⁰ When we encounter variety in baroque texts, we usually choose to follow the letter rather than the spirit of the example. Example 1 compares the original 1700 edition with Etienne Roger's 1715 edition of Corelli's Opus V Sonatas "with ornaments added to the adagios of this work, composed by Mr. A. Corelli, and as he performs them."²¹

**Example 1. Arcangelo Corelli, Sonatas Op. 5 (p. 111)
with added ornaments.**

The image displays a musical score for Example 1, comparing the 1715 and 1700 editions of Arcangelo Corelli's Sonatas Op. 5 (p. 111). The score is presented in three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass. The 1715 edition (top) features an 'Adagio' section with a long, ornate melodic line in the Treble part, while the 1700 edition (middle) shows a simpler version of the same section. The Bass part is consistent in both editions.

²⁰ Again, partly because we embrace the work-concept of art. Jazz players routinely take more chances when they are playing in a club than when they are playing for posterity on a record.

²¹ The title of Roger's edition reads *Sonata a violino solo e violone o cimbalò di Arcangelo Corelli da Fusignano, Opera Quinta Parte prima. Nouvelle Edition où l'on a joint les agréments des Adagio de cet ouvrage, composez par M. A. Corelli, comme il les joue*. Quoted from Marc Pincherle, *Corelli: His Life, His Work*, trans. Hubert E. M. Russell (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1956), 111.



The accuracy of the supposed transcription or the authenticity of the attribution to Corelli (now widely disputed) is immaterial, if we recognize this notation *as* only a sample or example of how the work might have been performed. Like the realization of a figured bass in a modern edition, the graced edition serves both a pedagogical and a practical function: it allows a performance by the totally uninitiated to actually take place (albeit as a simple recreation of an already specified performance), and it serves as a model for future performances. Only the complete novice is expected to reproduce Corelli's performance literally; a professional performer is meant to produce a unique individual version.

Given this Corelli example, most of us would attempt to mimic the external aspects of the style rather than try to recreate the more internal aesthetic of variation, individual expression, and spontaneity. In reality, however, the dichotomy is a false one; we do not have to choose. I am not suggesting that we need to pay attention only to the spirit of variation in the example while ignoring all of the conventional rules of ornamentation which guide it. On the contrary, creative expression flows from an understanding of the period styles and conventions. 18th-century specialists, however, tend to go only half-way, learning a great deal about the theories and techniques of the creative role of the performer, but refusing to actually enter the most authentic role: that of composer/performer. Given the plethora of specialists who are well-skilled in both the theory and practice of earlier eras and our belief that performance style is essential to a musical work, there is remarkably little music-making which imitates not only the external sound but also the internal philosophy of earlier performers.

To clarify, there is much in the traditional relationship between performance practice research and performers which is good. Knowledge is good in general, and given the gap between written notation and sound, knowledge of performance practice can help us to make intelligent and yes, even authentic choices about performances. However, choice is a vital part of performance in even the most fixed works—I, for one, like variety, and I would hate to have to hear the same performance over and over again.²² Even given all of the conventions of a period and all of our knowledge of performance practice, any score is capable of an indefinite number of sounding interpretations.

Indefinite, of course, doesn't mean infinite; choices are limited at any given time due to the constraints of our own period and other styles. When we realize a score (as when we speak our native language) we are often unaware of the conventions our period style has placed upon us. Playing music is a rather transparent process to those who practice it frequently. Intellectually, perhaps, we realize that the process is highly conditioned and operates by the use of a large number of conventions. Similarly we understand that to other people we speak with an accent, but to our ears, our style of speech or performance seems natural and it is everyone else who speaks with the accent. While performance practice research can offer us some of the stylistic conventions of early music, we have no examples and therefore we have no understanding of the difference in our accents.²³ Early recordings, however, offer us a wide range of other accents.

At first, of course, we are confronted with a wide range of foreign-sounding performance practices; they sound quaint and mannered. Our imitation of them at this stage sounds artificial and to native speakers is a cause for some hilarity. (Dick Van Dyke's cockney accent in the Disney film *Mary Poppins*, for example, is considered

²² Remember that the idea of listening to a recording of the same performance over and over again, which seems quite natural to us, would have seemed a quite unnatural way of hearing music to any pre-20th-century composer, performer, or audience.

²³ Some would argue that we have, therefore, simply used our own accent (which, of course, doesn't seem to us an accent).

quite hilarious—and bad—in Britain.) As with accents, some people adapt better than others. After years in a different country or region, accents do change, and the same can happen after immersion in a new performance style.²⁴ The first realization when we begin to study earlier performance styles, and in some ways the most important, is that our pronunciation is neither natural nor absolute. We realize that many of the “rules” which we take for granted—like “Don’t speed up when you get louder,” “Always play with a singing tone,” or even “a half note is exactly twice as long as a quarter note”—are conventions which were drilled into us at an early age. (These conventions essentially define our home “style,” and they are invisible, like the rules of grammar, to the native speaker.) Not just Furtwängler, but Weingartner, Strauss, and Toscanini, all considered speeding up the music a little as it got louder as a “natural” part of music making.²⁵ And at first hearing, tempo variations in early recordings can seem so extreme that quarter notes really do sound like half notes.²⁶ For musicians of all sorts (composers as well as conductors) in the first half of our century, this is simply how music went.

My first point is that we, again, are selective at present. Surely speeding up as we get faster is as authentic a performance practice as using the right sort of bow. Some performers, at least, have got-

²⁴ It would be interesting to study how performers adapt to different performance styles. Perhaps one of the reasons why the first historical instrument recordings were so stiff, was due to the foreignness of the style.

²⁵ See José A. Bowen, “Can a Symphony Change? Establishing Methodology for the Historical Study of Performance Styles,” in *Der Bericht der internationaler Kongreß der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung: Musik als Text* (Freiburg: Bärenreiter Verlag, in press).

²⁶ An especially interesting case is the piano roll recording of Debussy’s tenth prelude *La cathédrale engloutie* from the first book of Preludes (1909-10) made by Debussy himself. Debussy: Early Recordings by the Composer (Bellaphon CD 690-07-011). For a discussion see José A Bowen, “Finding the Music in Musico-logy: Performance History and Musical Works,” in *Rethinking Music*, vol. 2, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in press).

ten over their hesitancy over adding ornaments to Mozart, but far fewer add string portamenti to Elgar.²⁷ The second point is that learning a new language (and learning a new accent too if I am to preserve the analogy) opens doors in both directions. Even if we never fully master the new language, we inevitably understand our own better. Like learning a new language, examining other performance styles demonstrates that there are other ways of putting things together. Older recordings demonstrate especially well that there are other interpretive parameters, which have in most cases now been closed (like tempo fluctuation). Discovering that there are other ways of doing things, in other words that we ourselves have an accent, leads to the recognition that much of what we do isn't natural (and therefore fixed, but rather is simply conventional). That in itself is terribly useful information for a performer. Further, increasing the range of possibilities makes it easier to say something new, and performances are one of the ways in which we learn new things about old pieces. I would suggest, then, that we need to be less selective in what we study and imitate. It is a good thing for performers to try and imitate earlier styles; we shouldn't discourage them by insisting that some of them (like speeding up when you get louder) are simply too crass. Similarly, we should encourage the study and use of earlier styles, instruments, and techniques, not because they are necessary for correct performances, but because the knowledge of more forms of expression will make it easier to offer both new and truly authentic performances. Exposure to more variation of more parameters will create more space for new interpretations and the history of recorded performances offers a rich supply of variation. We should use recordings to open up possibilities, not to close them off. Learning a new performance style is hard enough, without being told that all the most exotic bits are off limits.

A further irony of all this is that while we have insisted that some performance practices (like the proper instruments, ornamentation, rhythmic structure, pitch, and tuning systems) are essential for the music to be fully understood, we have equally insisted that other (equally historically accurate) performance practices like flexibility of tempo, reorchestration, portamento, singing in the singer's language, adding octave doublings and interchanging movements) are bad and distort the music. While this is easier to ignore with earlier

²⁷ In Elgar's case, the evidence that he approved of the contemporary practice is etched into his gramophone recordings.

repertoire, if only because of the lack of examples, it is impossible to hide when we enter the age of recorded sound. All of the mountains of written evidence pale beside the recordings of Grieg and Elgar; we simply can't bring ourselves to prescribe what so clearly appears to be their bad taste.

*Like modern composers, today's performers are the first to live in an age with a plethora of styles from which to choose and it is a decidedly mixed blessing. Previous performers simply played in the only style they knew, but tailored the individual expression to their own taste. Performing (or for that matter composing) in an earlier style creates two sets of difficulties. First, the performer must choose a performance style which will provide an appropriate palette of expressive devices—portamento in some eras and not in others. This is not easily done; it takes time to acquire the right accent, especially when learning a foreign tongue. The second stage, however, is even more problematic. All too frequently modern players simply try to recreate a "style" without engaging in the expressive conventions. It is not unlike the problems of acting in a dramatic play in a language you do not speak. You can learn to pronounce the words, but your performance will be wooden if you do not learn what they mean and also *how* they mean it; i.e., you can learn a song text in Hungarian, and know what it means, but still not be able to "speak" the meaning properly. A good accent is not sufficient. Even imitating all of the nuances of a previous great performance is not enough. A direct imitation of the external sound is hollow and it misses the point. The reason for Corelli's ornaments is that they personalize the performance; another (historically accurate) performance in the same style would still be different. For music of all ages, the performance style is simply a guide to the expressive devices (that is, the space allocated for individual innovation) of the period. Without learning to speak the language, these expressive devices will be meaningless. This is equally true of Mozart and Mahler. We should not attempt to emulate the performance style without learning the conventions of expression.*

Returning to the Corelli example, we can see how utterly meaningless it would be to suggest that there is a choice between following the aesthetic of variation and imitating the external aspects of the style (i.e. between playing the "Corelli" version note for note or making up *anything* new.) We can no more begin to create our own version of the Corelli piece or to *act* in Hungarian until we first understand the conventions of the language. In both cases, learning the

grammatical rules and mimicking previous dialogues and phrases is essential. However, it is not enough. The point of learning a new language is that we can eventually speak for ourselves. When we are fluent, we can create expressions never heard before, but still understood. We begin then by discovering our own "accent" and proceeding to learn another. Once we have internalized our new information, we should begin to speak for ourselves. Learning new idioms should eventually allow us not only to use idioms but to create new ones.

As in the introduction of many Eastern musics to the West, the *sounds* of a new musical style make the initial impact, but later, as the inner working of the music are better understood, the new musical *principles* also begin to have an effect. While the sounds of early recordings convey a different accent they also convey a different system of expression. In order to fully understand another performance language, we need to understand both the stylistic possibilities and their meaning.

The final goal of performance analysis, therefore, is not simply to understand the styles and traditions of different periods and repertoires. The goal, at least as far as the performers are concerned, is to demonstrate how the conventions of style and tradition make a space for further expressive freedom. Part of the researcher's job (and I believe this to be true for both traditional performance practice and the study of recorded performance) is to convey to performers what nuances were historically available in different styles and why. The aim, then, is not to limit possibilities but to create new ones. This new research will make performers aware of other levels of expression and will enable them to master not only new accents (new sounds) but new languages (and new meanings).