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A Look Forward

From *PPR* to *PPO*: New Directions, New Challenges

Roland Jackson

With the present issue *PPR* (having completed 10 years) will conclude its term as a print journal. It will presently assume a new format and become an electronic journal under the rubric *PPO*, *Performance Practice Online*, freely accessible on the internet. The goals will remain similar, although the focus will be changed.

A transition at this time seems propitious. The net, with its steadily-increasing capabilities of sound (and video) transmission offers distinct advantages for the consideration of performance practice. The timbre of a Renaissance harpsichord, the distinctiveness of a baroque trill, the upsurge of a Lisztian rubato, all become more immediate and compelling through sound than through mere verbal description.

The print phase of performance practice study has in a sense run its course. The arguments have been made, the positions taken, the bibliographical sources compiled. The time may now be at hand to listen and reflect, to consider first-hand the sounds themselves and their manners of execution.

PPO, with this in view, will shift its emphasis to the audible, while minimizing the verbal. Typically, a contribution to *PPO* might assume the following form.

- 1) a brief sound clip (preferably 15 to 20 seconds in length)¹
- 2) the music to match it
- 3) a short description of the clip's significance for historical practice
- 4) the relevant primary and secondary sources

The contribution will in this way be focused upon a single aspect of performance (a timbre, an ornament, a tempo change, etc.), accompanied by a short explanation concerning its relevance for performance practice. Ideally, each item will be directed toward a specific genre, a certain composer, or a specific musical work.

The possibilities for sound excerpts are multifold. Ordinarily, each excerpt will illuminate and make palpable some current aspect of the field. The advantage of short excerpts is two-fold:

- 1) they will narrow the viewer's attention to a single aspect of historical performance
- 2) they will facilitate transfer over the net²

In the following pages a number of novel ideas, most of them recent, are brought to the reader's attention. Each conveys some fresh insight that lends itself aptly to future illustration through sound. The ideas presented range widely through various categories of historical practice. They are, of course, simply representative, and numerous others might have been proposed as well.

¹ Interested contributors are invited to submit sound excerpts (on cassette) to *Performance Practice Online*, 1422 Knoll Park Ln., Fallbrook, CA, 92028.

² Current streaming technology allows brief excerpts to be reassembled without undue delay.

Voices and Instruments (Media)

Suggestions:

Bach's choir

Mozart's piano

Brahms's piano

Mozart's basset clarinet

Wagner's singers

It has lately been proposed, most notably by Joshua Rifkin, that Bach's choirs were likely comprised of solo singers, one voice to a part.³ This unprecedented idea, initially encountered skepticism, but has recently been gathering support from other scholars, among them Andrew Parrott.⁴ The evidence resides primarily in the preserved part books, which reveal that Bach's principal solo choir (the concertists) was only occasionally reinforced by a separate group of solo singers (the ripienists), each group singing from different books. The parts, taken individually, by adult males and choir boys, convey as a whole a transparent texture eminently suited to Bach's complex, and often interweaving lines.

Viennese pianos of the late 18th century, distinguished by their rapid decay in sound, are remarkably well suited to bringing out the short motivic patterns and other nuances of Mozart's keyboard style, as Malcolm Bilson and others have shown.⁵ Moreover, the clearly differentiated registers of these pianos allow Mozart's soprano-range melodies to stand out markedly against lower accompanying chords (as in the opening of the Sonata K310).

³ Among Rifkin's recent writings on this subject, for example, is "Bach's Choir: Some Red Herrings," *Journal of Musicological Research* 14 (1995), 223.

⁴ Andrew Parrott, "Bach's Choir: a 'Brief yet highly necessary Reappraisal'," *Early Music* 24 (1996), 551.

⁵ See among other writings, Malcolm Bilson, "Execution and Expression in the Sonata in E-flat, K282," *Early Music* 20 (1992), 237.

Brahms continued to favor Viennese-type pianos such as the Bösendorfer and Streicher—indeed, he kept a Streicher in his Vienna apartment. Camilla Cai has drawn attention to the clear differences between registers on the Streicher and especially to the warmth and resonance of its middle range, where Brahms often situated his piano lines (with thumbs prominent), accompanying them with figures above and below.⁶

Mozart seems to have been drawn to the distinctive tone color of the basset clarinet, especially as performed by his friend Anton Stadler, not only for the Quintet, Concerto, and certain arias, but probably for other of his post-1788 orchestral works as well. As Robert Adelson has recently shown, the singularly veiled tone quality of the basset clarinet is heard to excellent advantage against the frequently reduced strings of Mozart's orchestra.⁷

Unfortunately, we are unable to know first-hand what Wagner's singers sounded like, although their manner of performance, as David Breckbill has recently made clear, was vividly declamatory and flexible in its phrasing.⁸ A number of vocal artists who came into contact with Wagner have been preserved on early-20th-century disks. However, as José Bowen has indicated most were by then past their prime and probably only inadequately conveyed the qualities of singing that marked Wagner's productions of a quarter century earlier.⁹

⁶ Camilla Cai, "Brahms's Pianos and the Performance of His Late Piano Works," *Performance Practice Review*, 2 (1989), 58.

⁷ Robert Adelson, "Reading between the (Ledger) Lines: Performing Mozart's Music for the Basset Clarinet," *Performance Practice Review* 10 (1997), this issue.

⁸ David Breckbill, "Wagner on Record," *Wagner in Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 153.

⁹ José A. Bowen, "Performance Practice versus Performance Analysis," *Performance Practice Review* 9 (1996), 16.

Improvisation and Ornamentation (Unnotated Aspects)

Suggestions:

- embellished chansons (15th c.)*
- improvising instruments (15th c.)*
- musica ficta (15th c.)*
- inequality (17th c.)*
- melodic rubato (18th c.)*
- thorough bass (17th c.)*
- ornamental vibrato (18th-19th c.)*
- portamento (18th-19th c.)*

Many compositions have come down to us in incomplete form, having been embellished or elaborated upon in various ways (melodically, contrapuntally, etc.) when first performed. How are they now to be brought back to their original form? In two ways particularly: through contemporaneously written-out versions, and through the realized examples of musical theorists.

Certain chansons of the 15th century appeared in differing manuscript versions, some more elaborate than others. As David Fallows has recently shown,¹⁰ the more decorative can be taken as models, for they contain in written-out form ornamental patterns of the type contemporary singers may have drawn upon improvisatorily as they sang.

Yet another form of improvisation was evidenced in the spontaneous adding of contrapuntal lines to a given melody by 15th-century instrumentalists (not unlike modern jazz performances). Keith Polk feels that the shawm band (shawm, bombarde, and slide trumpet), which Tinctoris made reference to, very likely engaged in this kind of extemporizing.¹¹

¹⁰ David Fallows, "15th-Century Chansons in Various Embellished Forms," *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* 14 (1992), 59.

¹¹ Keith Polk, "Approaches to Instrumental Performance Practice," *German Instrumental Music of the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 103.

From such "added notes" we move to "altered notes," a form of improvisation in which the notes were themselves altered. Such alterations were of two kinds: chromatic (as in *musica ficta*) or rhythmic (as in inequality). Each of these types of "altered" notes were apparently introduced to add elegance or expressivity to the music as written.

In late-medieval *ficta* practice puzzling questions have surrounded the conflicts that sometimes occurred between the accidentals in different voice parts, especially in a group of compositions, c. 1400, known as the "partial signature" pieces. Kevin Moll (in the present issue of *PPR*) proposes a possible clarification of these pieces (at least for those in three parts), taking as a basis Marchettus's precise rule concerning melodic movement in the upper voice.¹² Moll's realization of a segment of a Liebert Credo offers an exemplar, and as such may be taken as a model by early music singing groups. It reveals a succession, which in its rich interplay of accidentals between the voices provides a glimpse into the expressive potentialities of early 15th-century *ficta* practice.

Rhythmically "altered notes" represent yet another facet of improvisatory practice known particularly through examples from the late-Renaissance and baroque periods. What we now refer to as "inequality" formed a special sub-category; its detailed description by French theorists, and presumably by none elsewhere, has led Neumann to conclude that it was confined to France. Similarly the procedure we have called "overdotting" was apparently first mentioned by Quantz in 1752, and for this reason was held by Neumann to be a post-baroque phenomenon. Stephen Hefling has lately challenged these two opinions, citing new evidence showing that inequality very likely spread beyond France, and that overdotting was probably known well before 1752.¹³ In particular Hefling points to the pro-

¹² Kevin N. Moll, "Realizing Partial Signatures around 1400: a Test Case (Liebert's Credo)," *Performance Practice Review* 10 (1997), this issue.

¹³ Stephen Hefling, *Rhythmic Alterations in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Music: Notes Inégales and Overdotting* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993).

minence of French style in Dresden while Quantz was residing there, i.e. during the 1720s and 30s. This makes it more likely that German composers, including Bach and Handel, could have been affected by inequality and overdotting, at least in certain of their works.

Rhythmic alteration of a less clearly defined type is present in what Tosi described as *rubare il tempo*, a slight contracting or lengthening of note values, perhaps to so subtle a degree that Tosi himself declined to provide examples of it. Sandra Rosenblum in a recent study has singled out a number of passages in 18th-century works that seem to represent attempts by composers to set down in notation something like this form of improvisation;¹⁴ examples such as these might well serve as guidelines for the modern executant. One instance among others occurs in Mozart's Rondo K511, in which the theme, in one of its many reappearances, is variegated by the slight delaying of certain of its notes, a procedure that very likely affords a precious insight into Mozart's own highly expressive manner of playing.

As the harpsichordist Thérèse de Goede-Klinkhamer has made evident in a new study, early baroque thoroughbass realizations have too often been colored or obscured by more recent, 19th-century, harmonic procedures.¹⁵ She opens the possibility of a fresh approach that takes its basis from the examples of contemporary theorists, which show in detail the chord forms and voice leadings appropriate to a given style, and often, by extension, to a given composer.

The ornamental vibrato (17th through 19th centuries), as Greta Moens-Haenen has shown, was generally quite narrow, and never more than a half step in width; moreover, it was reserved for particu-

¹⁴ Sandra P. Rosenblum, "The Uses of *Rubato* in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries," *Performance Practice Review* 7 (1994), 33.

¹⁵ Thérèse de Goede-Klinkhamer, *Del suonare sopra il basso: concerning the Realization of Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Unfigured Basses*, *Performance Practice Review* 10 (1997), 80.

lar moments in a composition.¹⁶ In these respects it is the diametric opposite of the conspicuously wide and constantly applied vibrato characteristic of 20th century performance.¹⁷ Early music performers who seek to return to the momentary vibrato typical of baroque (and presumably also of Classical and Romantic) music, can derive instruction from the occasional indications of vibrato (*flatté*, etc.) that appear in certain baroque and later scores. The challenge is to extend such instances into music wherein no indications occur.

When hearing early 20th-century recordings we cannot help but be struck by the frequent presence of portamentos, the expressive "carrying" of tones from one note to another. Elgar's recorded versions of his own works allow us to formulate where and in what manner this device might appear. The 19th-century background, however, is more obscure, although Deborah Kauffman, in a recent study focusing on the aria,¹⁸ has pointed to a number of written-out examples by vocal pedagogues such as Garaudé and García which graphically illustrate how the portamento was executed by leading singers of their time.

Tempo and Tempo Fluctuations (Speed)

Suggestions:

proportions (15th c.)

modified proportions (17th c.)

pendulum markings

Mozart's tempi

Wagner's tempo fluctuations

rubato (late 19th c.)

¹⁶ Greta Moens-Haenen, *Das Vibrato in der Musik des Barock*, Graz, 1988.

¹⁷ See particularly Fred Gable, "Some Observations concerning Baroque and Modern Vibrato," *Performance Practice Review* 5 (1992), 90.

¹⁸ Deborah Kauffman, "Portamento in Romantic Opera," *Performance Practice Review* 5 (1992), 139.

The meaning of proportion signs, such as \emptyset , especially prior to Tinctoris (1470), has caused some bewilderment among scholars. Margaret Bent, however, has now placed the problem in an entirely new light by showing that the slashed circle often may not have had a tempo implication at all—" [nothing]/O/ \emptyset ", for instance, could designate three sections in the very same tempo.¹⁹ This is a useful cautioning to those who have been interpreting the \emptyset as an indication to speed up, sometimes even to twice the preceding pace.

Roger Bowers has lately proposed to set right the successive speeds in Monteverdi, suggesting that they be firmly based on proportional notation, something that the editions have until now not fully observed.²⁰ Taking this as a starting point (i.e. a clear sense of the proportional relations), executants might now go on to introduce other early baroque subtleties and gradations—tempo words and other speed modifications (such as reflecting the sentiments expressed in the texts), since these were indeed coming to the fore during Monteverdi's lifetime.

The experimenting with pendulums in France in the late 17th century represent an attempt toward greater exactitude. Nonetheless, the markings, by L'Affilard and others, which include a number of dances by Lully, have been suspect in that they seem often to be overly rapid. Rebecca Harris-Warrick now suggests that the markings can be tested, namely by measuring their appropriateness in respect to actual dancing.²¹ Her conclusion is that the seemingly quick tempi are feasible, since the narrow confines in 17th-century halls would have required the dancers to take small steps, which presumably could have been taken quickly.

¹⁹ Margaret Bent, "The Early Use of the Sign \emptyset ," *Early Music* 23 (1996), 199.

²⁰ See, for example, Roger Bowers, "Proportional Notation in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*," *Music and letters* 76 (1995), 149.

²¹ Rebecca Harris-Warrick, "Markings for French Baroque Dances," *Historical Performance* 6 (1993) 9.

Mozart's tempos have been looked at by Jean-Pierre Marty, perhaps in greater depth than those of any other composer.²² His procedure rests on a categorizing of Mozart's works in respect to their time signatures, tempo words, and what he calls the "privileged" note value. By playing off these three factors he is able to arrive at an approximate tempo marking for each of the kinds of piece Mozart composed. Marty's suggestions deserve our attention, since they offer a carefully thought-out scheme upon which to proceed and experiment.

Christopher Fifield has lately taken a deeper look at Wagner's performing rationale, particularly his attempt to assign a particular tempo to each successive theme.²³ Wagner offered a model in the thematic ideas in the Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, each of which required a somewhat different speed. As a conductor Wagner stood at the head of an illustrious succession of directors, who like him were prone to vacillate in their tempi between extremes of quickness and slowness. Early-century recordings by Wagner's followers, such as Felix Weingartner—once an associate of Felix Mottl, who in turn had been a disciple of Wagner—probably preserve something of Wagner's original manner.

The later 19th century was a time of extreme emotionalism, judging from contemporary reports of audience reaction (some instances of which are mentioned in Edward Kravitt's recent book on the *Lied*).²⁴ Frequent deviations from the tempo, as in the momentary effect known as rubato became a favored means for the overt projecting of feelings. Rubato changes were for the most part not indicated, but hints of their nature may be taken from certain "written-in" exam-

²² Jean-Pierre Marty, *The Tempo Indications of Mozart* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

²³ Christopher Fifield, "Conducting Wagner: the Search for *Melos*," *Wagner in Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

²⁴ Edward F. Kravitt, "Expressive Aesthetics in Performance," *The Lied: Mirror of Late Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

ples, such as Wolf's implying of ritards by inserting lengthier note values before cadences, or Mahler's suggesting of instability by changing his metronomic indications every few measures. Early-20th-century recordings likewise provide clues: Scriabin (preserved on player-piano rolls) and Grieg (on cylinder recordings), for instance, introduced changes of pace in nearly every measure. Today's performers, severely challenged in their attempts to return to a late-19th-century manner of performing, and especially to enter into its extremely emotional character, might take such written-out rubatos and recorded fluctuations as models.

Pitch and Tuning (Intonation)

Suggestions:

English vocal pitch (15th c.)

transposed pitch (late 16th c.)

tempérament ordinaire (late 17th-c.)

Neo-Pythagorean tuning (early 20th c.)

Although pitch is generally regarded as having been imprecise during the later Middle Ages, Roger Bowers has recently proposed an association between pitches and specific voice types. Taking, as one instance, English vocal polyphony (1380-1450), where the written notes cover a two 8ve range from c-c", Bowers conjectures that the two lower parts, both roughly in the same range, c-f", may be intimately linked to the tenor or contratenor voice, while the upper part, written g-c", may be fitted to a high male (non-falsetto) alto.²⁵ His conclusion is that this kind of music should be performed by modern equivalents of these voice types, and at approximately the pitches written.

A number of late-Renaissance and early-baroque works have come down to us in higher than normal ranges, i.e. approximately c-a", by

²⁵ Roger Bowers, "Chorus or Quartet? 'High Pitch' or 'Low'? Just How Was Sacred Polyphony Performed in Pre-Reformation England?" *Musical Times* 138 (1997), 5.

virtue of the *chiavette* clefs. Disagreement has centered upon whether these extreme ranges should be performed as written or transposed downward. Andrew Parrott, focusing specifically on certain movements in Monteverdi's *Vespers* (the Mass, *Lauda Sion*, and the two Magnificats), has brought strong evidence in favor of downward transposition, bringing into question the high pitch sometimes used in recent recordings of these movements.²⁶ Central to his evidence is Praetorius's remark in *Syntagma musicum* (written a short time after the *Vespers*), that soprano voices, even those of castrati and falsettists, rarely exceeded e" or f". This means that the artificially high registers of modern sopranos, and by extension of the voice parts below them, might to good advantage be transposed into the more richly sonorous quality of the normal vocal ranges.

The effects of tuning on the music of specific composers is a theme that has been frequently explored in the writings of Mark Lindley.²⁷ As he has demonstrated, numerous works, especially from the baroque period, take on a quite different character when performed in one temperament rather than another, and composers seem often to have had a particular temperament in mind when they composed their works. Louis Couperin, for example, by adopting the French *tempérament ordinaire*, imbued certain of his keys with a distinctive quality. As Lindley suggests, Couperin's movement to the remote key of b^b can be characterized as "somewhat dark," while that to e^b is "expressively so." And Marin Marais referred to one of his pieces as "more piercing" when played in f# minor than if transposed into g minor.

A new slant on 20th-century intonation is offered by a recent writing of Douglas Leedy, who discovered that instrumentalists in certain recordings of the early century sharpened their major 3rds and 6ths,

²⁶ Andrew Parrott, "Monteverdi's *Vespers* of 1610 Revisited," *Performing Practice in Monteverdi's Music: the Historic-Philological Background* (Cremona, 1995).

²⁷ See, for example, Mark Lindley, "Some Thoughts concerning the Effects of Tuning on Selected Musical Works (from Landini to Bach)," *Performance Practice Review* 9 (1996) 114.

a "Neo-Pythagorean" tendency.²⁸ This effect is somewhat mitigated by excessive vibrato, but nonetheless creates considerable tension when combined with the equally-tempered pitches of the piano. Further study of these "exaggerated leading tones" might show whether they can be linked to particular composers.

Articulations and Dynamics (Contrast Elements)

Suggestions:

Bach's articulations

crescendos and diminuendos (17th-early 18th c.)

dynamic shadings (late 18th c.)

Bach's articulative markings have puzzled scholars due to their irregularities and discrepancies. John Butt, however, through a careful consideration of the manuscripts, has discovered "consistencies" within the seeming "inconsistencies" of Bach's markings.²⁹ When properly articulated, Bach's individual parts, e.g. a cello as opposed to a keyboard instrument, each reveal their own distinctiveness. And when played together, the different markings in each instrument greatly help in clarifying the texture.

Concerning baroque dynamics, David Boyden cautioned some time ago against applying too comprehensively the principle of "terraced" dynamics.³⁰ Most notably, the dynamic limitations of keyboard instruments should not be imposed on melodic instruments such as the violin or on the voice, each of which is capable of introducing subtle dynamic fluctuations within a tutti as well as a solo section. Boyden's evidence rests in the numerous crescendos and diminu-

²⁸ Douglas Leedy, "A Question of Intonation," *Journal of the Conductor's Guild* 8 (1987), 107.

²⁹ John Butt, *Bach Interpretation: Articulation Marks in Primary Sources of J.S. Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³⁰ David Boyden, "Dynamics in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Music," *Essays on Music in Honor of Archibald Thompson Davison* (Cambridge: Department of Music, Harvard University, 1957), 185.

dos that were mentioned and utilized by various composers: e.g. Caccini's *esclamazione*, Monteverdi's *arcata morenda*, Mazzocchi's *f p pp* (= decrescendo), and Locke's "lowder by degrees" (= crescendo).

As regards late-18th-century dynamics, the evidence suggests that a great deal was probably left unindicated.³¹ Marpurg and L. Mozart, among others, spoke of a hierarchy of stresses within the measure, each beat receiving its own degree of volume. And Türk observed that successive tones, in a phrase or a harmonic succession, were at times of such variability as to preclude their being designated by dynamic signs. Thus, the sensitive early music performer might well add dynamic shadings to Classical phrases and themes to a greater degree than is now generally accepted as admissible.

Conclusion

The preceding has suggested but a few of the possibilities scholars and performers might wish to explore. The time is favorable for compiling a compendium of performance practice in sound. Items that appear in *PPO* will each be retained online as a permanent on-going resource, a gradually expanding reference database. As entries come in, they will be alphabetically arranged and subdivided in accordance with specific topics or historical periods, i.e.:

a composer entry (e.g. Mozart) by the various aspects of performance

medium (voice, piano, orchestra)

unnotated aspects (ornaments, thorough bass)

speed (tempo, tempo fluctuation, rubato)

intonation (pitch, tuning)

contrast elements (dynamics, articulation)

³¹ Roland Jackson, "Performance Practice and Musical Expressivity," *Performance Practice Review* 8 (1995), 1.

a topical entry (e.g. trill, clarinet, rubato) by whichever historical eras may be appropriate

9th-14th c.

15th-16th c.

17th c.

early 18th c.

late 18th c.

19th c.

20th c.

The idea will be to make available to the potential user a wide range of topics that can be easily called up (a kind of *Performance Practice Encyclopedia*). Each item will be illustrated in sound, and differing interpretations (e.g. of inequality, of rubato, etc.) will ideally be available for comparison and appraisal.