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## MUSICOLOGY AND PERFORMANCE

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Over the past 100 years musicology and performance have had an uncomfortable relationship. Until recently musicologists tended to assume that they were uniquely qualified to tell performers how music should go: Historians knew which instruments were used, how performers were supposed to do their ornaments and so on; theorists knew which notes were the important ones, the ones performers should "do something" to point up. What exactly performers were to do was a matter for them, mere craft, not something scholars need concern themselves with. More recently musicology has begun to fancy itself as performative, and in many ways it is, but not in any that brings us closer to understanding what happens when a performer (literally) makes music, nor of how the ways in which a performer shapes it tell listeners, and commentators if they listen, how the music works. Joel Lester has argued effectively that we might learn something important about musical pieces from studying performances.<sup>1</sup> And one could go further and suggest we could learn still more from asking the right questions of listeners, for it is a fact never to be forgotten that music makes profound sense to people who have never read a word of musicology. How it sounds and how it feels are the keys to understanding what it is and how it works. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that we can expect over the next few years to learn a lot more, by studying performances closely, about the ways in which performers make music work.

At the same time we should do well to start to think about the extent to which how music sounds in performance has always influenced what scholars have written about it. I do not just mean the sounds of external performances. It is easy enough to show that when scholars talk about music as music (for example, discussing details of a score as opposed to, say, ideas about music's cultural context) they are also (often only) referring to a performance imagined in their minds. That performance, if it imagines sound realistically, must be shaped to a significant extent by the styles of performance dominant in the scholar's memory, which usually means styles current in their day. (One takes Jonathan Dunsby's point, of course, that such a performance may not be a very good one artistically, but it would have to be uselessly incompetent to escape its historical

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Lester, "Performance and analysis: Interaction and interpretation", *The practice of performance: Studies in musical interpretation*, ed. by John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 197–216.

performance-stylistic context.<sup>2</sup>) This means that performance style 100 years ago will have led scholars to make different kinds of points about scores, and about the meaning of music in general, than recent performances lead scholars to make today. So there is a relationship between period performance style and commentary that deserves our attention, for performance shapes academic commentary much more profoundly than academics might previously have liked to believe. But how does the stylistic relationship between performing and writing about music work? What sorts of connections can be made between them, and at what level? Is it just that by happening in the same period they inevitably share some low-level features of that period's way of being communicative? Or is there some level at which thinking about music, whether in concepts or in sound, has common features that change in parallel over time? If there is a close relationship, where do innovations typically arise first, in the playing or in the writing?

I must admit that when I planned the paper from which this article developed I thought it was going to be relatively easy to sort out this relationship for the two case studies discussed here, Schubert songs and modernist orchestral music, because I had a very clear impression of what the answers were going to be, for those repertoires if for nothing else. But actually it is not so easy in practice. Impressions like that develop over many years from an accumulation of small details, and the accumulation tends to survive and develop in the memory while passing observations that seem irrelevant (in other words, that might be contradictory) get left aside. Such impressions can be very hard to demonstrate with a few killer pieces of evidence, which is the sort of demonstration conference papers and articles prefer. But at least for modernist orchestral music I can draw on my own memories of earlier performances. I was a music student in London in the early 1970s, and I seem to recall quite vividly the sound of the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Boulez, the London Sinfonietta under Elgar Howarth, the Fires of London under Peter Maxwell Davies and so on, playing new and recent works on the South Bank and at the Round House. It is not the sound I hear today. It was distinctly reassuring to be able to refer back to Timothy Day's discussion of changing Webern performance which suggested a development along exactly the lines I recalled, from fragmented discontinuous sounds towards more shapely and linear realizations of those exceptionally spare scores.<sup>3</sup> Even so, it came as a huge relief to find as I worked that when one makes a side-by-side comparison of Boulez recordings from the 1970s and the 1990s just as Day did for Webern recordings from the 1950s and 1970s, there is indeed a very noticeable difference in approach, and it is the difference I had constructed for myself. Moreover there is some parallel to be seen in the way people wrote about the music then and later, albeit following changes in performance style after some delay. Why there should have been a delay we must also consider.

The Schubert situation is somewhat different. The differences in performance style between the 1920s, 1950s, and today are very obvious and well documented and hardly need more demonstration. But the question of how writing about the music has changed in parallel is more tricky. It is obvious that it has—Richard Capell and Lawrence Kramer do not on the whole see Schubert song from the same points of view—but it is not

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Day, *A century of recorded music: Listening to musical history* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000) 178–85.

obvious how that change has parallels in performance. This is a question to which we shall return when we have looked at some examples.

I would like to begin, because I think the examples are easier to explain, with modernist music, and with Pierre Boulez and his own *Pli selon pli* (of 1958–62, perhaps continuing), which he has recorded three times over the past 30 years. To understand the differences, though, we need to go back further, to his composing and writing in the early 1950s. To an extent *Pli selon pli* was reacting to but also developing out of a view of composition current around 1950 in which each note was a self-contained and fully calculated event, each parameter determined by a precompositional scheme. The resulting “punct-ual” or “pointillist” style was very noticeable in early performances. Pieces like Stockhausen’s *Punkte* (1952) or Boulez’s *Structures Ia* (1951) were aggregates of many individual notes of equal significance, and at first that is how they sounded.<sup>4</sup> There was a system, but what happened next was for the listener completely unpredictable in detail: There was no audible connection between notes. Listeners were left to make connections where they could, or simply enjoy each moment as it happened. It was not evident that the instrumentalists (or the conductors) had much sense of point to point connection either; they just played each note as written (or tried to—that is the other side of the coin). Nowadays, looking back from a much more linear performance style, Boulez claims that the performers just had not learnt how to do it then.<sup>5</sup> But it is not at all clear that they intended to. Those who had read about pointillist serialism (the conductors quite probably, less often the players) knew that a disconnected manner was conceptually perfectly appropriate, and there is no sign that it worried them.

It was in 1954, while writing *Le marteau sans maître*, which already began to recreate linear continuity, that Boulez began to conduct.<sup>6</sup> At the same time his writings (and those of his colleagues) increasingly attacked the apparent chaos of integral serialism, advocating working with fields now rather than points.<sup>7</sup> This criticism of the chaotic sound of earlier scores rather suggests that his change of compositional approach was prompted by hearing the pointillist works and by starting to conduct them for himself.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We get some understanding of why this was desirable from Boulez’s remark quoted by Stacey (Peter Stacey, *Boulez and the modern concept* [Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1987] 24); and from Boulez’s *Relevés d’apprenti* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966) 74: “I think that music should be collective hysteria and enchantment, violently modern.” Modernity for Boulez in the 1950s verged on the vicious—Stacey sees “something of the theatre of cruelty” about the extremes of *Structures I*—whereas by the 1980s it tended more towards the enchanting.

<sup>5</sup> See Boulez on conducting: *Conversations with Cécile Gilly*, transl. by Richard Stokes (London: Faber & Faber, 2003; first French edition, 2002) 64–66, especially on Webern. Also see “What had brought this “punctual” style about? The justified rejection of thematicism. Yet it was rather a naïve idea of “composition” to cast a simple hierarchy or organization in the role previously filled by thematic relationships. Such relationships are specific, whereas a sound hierarchy on its own is largely ineffective.” “Current investigations” (1954), *Stocktakings from an apprenticeship*, transl. by Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 16–17.

<sup>6</sup> Domaine Musicale began in early 1954 (Jean Vermeil, *Conversations with Boulez: Thoughts on conducting*, transl. by Camille Naish [Portland, Ore.: Amadeus Press, 1996; first French edition, 1989] 20.) Boulez conducted seriously (international orchestras) from 1957–58 onwards (Vermeil, *Conversations*, 23).

<sup>7</sup> “The notions of field of action and punctual encounter. A field admits the possibility of free will operating within limits wide enough not to be inhibiting; the punctual encounter, on the other hand, is the only conceivable solution at any given moment.” (“... Near and far” [1954], *Stocktakings*, 151)

<sup>8</sup> In both conducting books (Vermeil and Gilly) Boulez admits that conducting made him write more playable music, but the point he makes is about technical and ensemble difficulty, not style. (Vermeil, *Conversations*, 33) That said, increasingly fluent conducting technique is likely to lead to increasingly fluid music. And he says, “What I appreciate, after practicing the various techniques of conducting and doing it rather well, what I appreciate is that there’s always some feedback between conducting and composing. It sets up a circle which has nothing to do with virtuosity.... Virtuosity should serve the music’s content rather than conceal it.” (Vermeil, *Conversations*, 34.)

Boulez did not record *Pli selon pli* for the first time until 1969, around a decade after its composition. It is a very accomplished performance, and far from pointillist, but when one compares it to a performance from today the differences are still very marked,

**EXAMPLE 1**

Score: figs. 29–32 (pp. 22–23)  
1969 recording: 7' 28" – 8' 12"  
2001 recording: 7' 19" – 8' 01"

so that it is clear that the development between pointillist and modern performance has for him been slow but as yet undeviating. An example from the first movement, "Don," illustrates this.<sup>9</sup>

The extract is framed by long trills; and between them the orchestra is split into two and the relative timing left to the conductor. In fact Boulez plays the elements in almost the same order, but adjusts the timing. In 1969 we get individual musical gestures one by one, with spaces between them. By contrast, in the most recent recording from 2001 the events are arranged so that one gesture is rounded off by the next, and several are run together, all adding up to a much greater sense of continuity. Detailed examination using spectrograms, which show frequency, timing, and amplitude in minute detail across the whole spectrum, shows how Boulez lengthens the string tremolando passages at figs. 36 and 38 in the score; each takes about 20% longer in 2001, and it is noticeable and very relevant that these are the passages most like his more recent compositional style. After the trills (1969 from 7' 41", 2001 from 7' 34") Boulez exchanges the mandolin and ensemble chords to make better continuity, and the vibraphone notes that in the 1969 recording fade to inaudibility quite rapidly last in 2001 across the length of the first two events, creating a link from one to the next. The final groups before the closing trills (1969 from 7' 51", 2001 from 7' 41.5") are brought closer together, followed by longer trills in 2001, reflecting Boulez's increasing taste for trills so evident through his intervening compositions.

There is another very clear example during the final (variable order) section. Again the 2001 performance is faster and more streamlined, and Boulez used the options

**EXAMPLE 2**

Score: letter B, p. 29 to after  
letter C, p. 34  
1969: 11' 40" – 12' 29"  
1981: 12' 50" – 13' 42"  
2001: 12' 23" – 13' 11"

offered in the score to overlap some elements that had previously been separate. To fill out the picture I recommend comparing both with the intervening 1981 recording, whose treatment of this passage does indeed sound stylistically in between those of the first and third recordings, emphasizing that this has been a process of gradual but consistent change in Boulez's musical tastes.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the most telling example in "Don" of the way in which Boulez's own compositional interests interact with his performance style comes at the end of the movement, which has been rescored in order to provide some tuned percussion that will sound on after the last chord—originally they were damped some

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Boulez, *Don* (Universal Edition, UE 13614 LW, 1967), figs. 29–32 (pp. 22–23). 1969 recording: Boulez conducts Boulez, BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Boulez, a 2-LP set, CBS Diamond Cut, DC 40173 (recorded 1969, issued 1970), disc 1, side 1, band 1. 2001 recording: Boulez, *Pli selon Pli*, Ensemble Intercontemporain, conducted by Pierre Boulez, CD, Deutsche Grammophon 471 344-2 (recorded January–February 2001, issued 2002), track 1. In order to ensure comparability between LP and CD issues, timings are counted from the start of the first sound. Timings on CD displays will therefore be slightly later. I regret that for copyright reasons it is necessary with all these examples to refer readers to the score and recordings rather than provide them.

<sup>10</sup> Score: first order of sections from letter B, p. 29 to after letter C, p. 34. 1981 recording: BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Boulez; *Pierre Boulez conducts Pierre Boulez Pli selon Pli*, 2-LP set, Erato NUM 75050 (recorded November 1981, issued 1983), disc 1, side 1, band 1.

bars before the wind instruments finished the piece. This is a different Boulez, after he has discovered the sounds of the 4X in *Répons*.<sup>11</sup>

It seems likely that reproduction quality also plays a role in our different responses to these recordings. Digital recording and reproduction between them allow more of the quieter instruments to sound audibly through the remainder. But it is clear from spectrograms that in this case that is not the only factor by any means, and may not be a very important one. Boulez is changing the balance, including changing the percussion mallets and overlapping layers of the score, because it makes better musical sense to him now than it did then. We need, therefore, to understand these changes in the round. They involve not just a general change in performance style, though that too; not just a gradual increase in comfort for performers who become with experience more able to cope with scores of this complexity; but also changes that are absolutely crucial to Boulez as a composer, transforming a focus on points in the early 1950s into one on lines and elaborated harmony increasingly since the late 1970s, mingled with a tendency ever more towards tremolos and cascades of bright sounds which tie together continuity with precision. It is not so much that Boulez becomes a melodist, then; more that he develops an increasing fascination with sound, as opposed to notes. Of course he is also notoriously prone to rewriting earlier scores to bring them up to date. But that has happened only in small ways in "Don"; much more of what we can hear in these examples is the product of a changed performance style than of recomposition. And this is crucially important. Features of his compositional style are effectively expressed in a manner of performance so that the meaning of a score changes over time. That performance changes scores could not be clearer.

Can we provide some context for these changes that relates them to more general trends? It is much easier to do this for earlier periods—say comparing the 1930s and 1950s—since in this Boulez case one side of the comparison concerns a current style, of which we can be only dimly aware simply because we are living through it. You have to be able to stand outside and look back in order to see clearly what has happened. It is especially difficult here because we are comparing a performance style developed in line with an ideology (of which pointillism and analysis of serial structures are two symptoms), and at a time when performers were struggling to play the notes at all, with one that seems fully merged with our current general style. If forced to describe the latter, one might mention pinpoint accuracy coupled with vivid sound and a taste for the striking gesture, factors in which "historically informed" performance and digital sound have been especially influential. Apply these characterizations to a selection of recent performances and recordings and perhaps you may see what I mean. But you will agree that this is pretty unsatisfactory as a description of current style. Even so, relating current Boulez to general style is still not as tricky as making the link for 1970s performances, which seem so divorced from contemporary recordings of mainstream orchestral music (think Klemperer or Boult). It is a little easier if we take music that verges on modernism, Stravinsky for example, where a lushness and linearity has unmistakably crept back in since the composer's death. Or Schoenberg.

<sup>11</sup> Compare also the vibraphone chords in the three versions of fig. 12: The 2001 performance (4' 44"; cf. 1969 5' 02"; 1981 5' 19" could only have happened after *Répons* and the 4X, especially since often (though not at the end here) the 2001 performance uses softer mallets than the 1969.

*Pierrot lunaire* makes an appropriate comparison. Boulez's recordings of 1961 and 1997 show very much the same pattern of change as do the *Pli selon pli* discs,<sup>12</sup> but we can place these within a wider context, indeed as wide as we like since there are so many others than can be compared. In fact, in terms of the inexpressivity of the instrumental playing the 1961 recording is not so unlike the 1940 recording overseen by Schoenberg.<sup>13</sup> Neither has much in common with contemporary playing in mainstream repertoire, but in both cases one can reasonably argue that composers were working with performers they knew well, all aiming for a modernist approach to playing atonal music. The deep expressivity of mainstream repertoire performance was irrelevant, in fact to be spurned. A more provocative comparison is with the two versions, 1967 and 1977, with Jane Manning as vocalist, the first with the unconducted Vesuvius Ensemble, the second with the Nash Ensemble under Simon Rattle.<sup>14</sup> Both groups specialized in modern music, but both worked within a more mainstream (English) interpretative tradition, their modernism considerably less dry and more conventionally shapely. Even so we see, albeit over a much smaller distance, the same journey from relatively inexpressive to markedly more so across those ten years. To take just one song as emblematic, in no. 7 for flute and voice we hear in Boulez's 1961 recording (and also in Schoenberg's) rather straight flute tone with relatively little dynamic change or dynamic articulation, considering the markings in the score. At the opposite extreme, in Boulez's 1997 recording we find much greater dynamic fluctuation within notes and more flexible timing; it is more conventionally musical, with the desiderata of continuity and shape overseeing all the details. Between these, in terms of expressive style, come both Manning versions, the 1967 less and the 1977 somewhat more expressive in a manner that Boulez by 1997 has simply taken further (as has everybody else, of course). I think what this amounts to is a consistent pattern of change, in which modernist performers deliberately removed themselves from current style before turning back ever more enthusiastically to meet up with it again. There are all sorts of reasons one might propose for that change of direction, economic, social, even political, but it would be reasonable also to point to the way in which mainstream performance style, in gradually accommodating "historically informed" performance, was also accommodating modernism, bringing itself, by developing a style that was both clean and expressive, within the increasingly conservative modernist pale. It is at least a three-way process that allowed the avant garde, the HIPsters and the mainstream to converge towards something they could all live with.

Certainly Boulez offers a particularly good example of performance style changing in relation to other kinds of style because he rewrites his own history by rewriting his pieces (including *Pli selon pli*).<sup>15</sup> But he is simply doing explicitly something that

<sup>12</sup> 1961 recording: "Arnold Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21 / *Serenade*, op. 24", Domaine Musical Ensemble, Helga Pilarczyk (voice), directed by Pierre Boulez, 2-LP set, Everest SDBR(D) 3171, recorded 1961, first issued (on Wergo) 1962, this issue 1971. 1997 recording: "Schoenberg—*Pierrot Lunaire*", Christine Schäfer (voice), conducted by Pierre Boulez, DG 457 630-2, recorded September 1997, issued 1998.

<sup>13</sup> "Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*, Trio op. 45", Erika Stiedry-Wagner (voice), directed by Arnold Schoenberg, CBS MPK 45695, recorded September 1940, this issue 1989.

<sup>14</sup> 1967: "Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*, Chamber symphony no. 1", Vesuvius Ensemble, Jane Manning (voice), Forum 9106, recorded 1967, this issue 2005. 1977: "Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*—Webern: Concerto, op. 24", Nash Ensemble, Jane Manning (voice), conducted by Simon Rattle, Chandos CHAN 6534, recorded 1977, this issue 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Compare also Boulez's 1965 revision of *Le soleil des eaux* which introduces greater continuities in sonority (chorus, conversion of vocal part from part-speech to all song) and in melody/harmony, often assigning notes previously separate to one instrument or one chord. (Paul Griffiths, *Boulez* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978] 17). This is a long way

happens anyway all the time. Music changes as people change. Boulez is a useful case because unlike almost all performing composers he is such a superlatively competent performer that we really can, for once, take his recordings as insights into his inner ear, his composer's imagination. With most composers you dare not do that because their performing is too much shaped by the limits of their performing abilities. (One need only mention Stravinsky again to see the truth of that.)

It is easy enough to confirm the relationship between Boulez's development as an interpreter and styles of writing about music. For these purposes, popular books that attempt to explain and generalize are especially revealing, which itself gives us a clue as to the level at which these sorts of relationships operate. Style is by its very nature a generalizing phenomenon. Making relationships between small details of performances and commentaries will work on occasion, but it is likely to involve a fair amount of special pleading when there is not a simple musical point being stressed in both. At the other end of the spectrum, general stylistic features are going to be hard to relate precisely once one gets beyond musical discussions. How can we say that the vivid struck sounds of recent Boulez reflect anything specific in the communicative norms of the early 21st century? And yet it is possible, even likely, that they do. To start with, then, we are going to have to look for relationships somewhere between these extremes, within musical discussions but at a relatively generalizing level. Consequently the more popular textbooks are especially fruitful.

In 1969 H.H. Stuckenschmidt in his influential *Twentieth century music* wrote of "The overall abruptness of style [in Boulez], the pointillistic melodic writing and seemingly arbitrary rhythms" which he found "reminiscent of exotic models".<sup>16</sup> Reginald Smith Brindle in 1975, in a chapter called "The avant-garde: Pointillism", wrote of "This almost single-note texture, with widely scattered, almost disconnected sounds and uniformly subdued emotive undertones" which "came to be called the 'pointillist' style", and he emphasized what then seemed to him to be a notable characteristic of Boulez, namely that he "has shown little desire for change over twenty years ...", hence "the largely undeviating art of Boulez".<sup>17</sup> So well into the 1970s there was a strong sense that the style remained the same. But not for much longer, as we see from following Paul Griffiths. Griffiths has been commentating on this music for more than 30 years as a critic and, through the huge influence his books have had on young musicians and music students,

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from the Second Sonata (1947–48) which specifically forbade the performer to use expressive nuances. Related also are likely to be the changes of MM in the unannounced revision of *Le marteau* (compare early and more recent printings of the miniature score).

<sup>16</sup> Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, *Twentieth century music*, transl. by Richard Deveson. World University Library (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969). Boulez "emerged as a leading advocate of serial and pointillistic techniques". (214) "The chirping, knocking, porcelain-like sounds of *Le marteau*, as always in Boulez, have an aura of inspired unpredictability that is strangely at odds with the mathematical determinism of the work's serial construction." (214) "The overall abruptness of style, the pointillistic melodic writing and seemingly arbitrary rhythms are also reminiscent of exotic models." (216)

<sup>17</sup> Reginald Smith Brindle, *The new music: The avant-garde since 1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) 17. The preintegral serial works of the early 1950s "often have very sparse textures, brief phrases tracing stark, angular melodic outlines, and as often as not very subdued dynamics. This almost single-note texture, with widely scattered, almost disconnected sounds and uniformly subdued emotive undertones, came to be called the 'pointillist' style—a not inappropriate description. As works of the following period of integral serialism at first continued the same kind of sound texture, the term pointillist continued to be used almost throughout the Fifties, until music changed its character to such a degree that the term was no longer appropriate." And still several times in this 1975 book Smith Brindle takes Boulez as notable for the lack of change in his approach to composition: "Boulez has shown little desire for change over twenty years ..." (133), and "By classic [avant-garde], I mean well-established, central, mainstream, something like the largely undeviating art of Boulez" (133, n. 1).



as a teacher, which makes his testimony especially valuable.<sup>18</sup> The 1995 revision of his 1981 book, *Modern music*, is especially interesting. Discussing Stockhausen's *Kreuzspiel* Griffiths inserts a new paragraph in the revision on what the music is like to listen to,<sup>19</sup> making room for it by cutting down on the technical discussion of the serial process. *Structures* book II, hardly mentioned in 1981, gains a lyrical description of the sound of the piece: "solo breaks loosened by ... flurries of grace notes", "flashing events reflected in still pools", "a glacial succession of chords", "whirling rotation".<sup>20</sup> Commentary of this sort would have been laughed out of court in the texts of the 1970s. Then students interested in new music, a tiny but determined minority, wanted facts, above all facts about compositional processes. How every detail derived from the series was a much more pressing concern than what in metaphorical terms the music sounded like.<sup>21</sup> Griffiths' substantial rewriting of *Modern music* (now *Modern music and after*) provides the clearest example one could wish for of the way in which attitudes have changed. Throughout the revision references to compositional techniques have been replaced by comments on the resulting sound. Where once he heard structure, now Griffiths hears musical effect. By coincidence his first edition appeared in the same year as Boulez's second recording of *Pli selon pli*, the one I have mentioned only in passing and in example 2. As suggested there, we can hear already in that recording a clear trend towards a more linear style, but naturally enough it takes some time for that to filter through into books. Though writing around 1980, then, Griffiths was really telling us about the way Boulez was perceived in the 1960s and 1970s. There is no doubt, though, that the trends he reflects are characteristic of changed priorities in modernist music in general. His revision is responding to decades of performances and recordings, and to a change in the general period aesthetic away from formalism and towards perception, a change which performances show just as well as, and considerably before, academic analyses and commentaries.

I should like to try to tease out more exactly the relationship between these changes in style, because this is a rather intriguing case, containing an initial stage we find rarely elsewhere. If we sort out the chronology a little more precisely we shall see that the way composers wrote about integral serialism in the 1950s changed the direction of musical scholarship. Recall the state of musical analysis in 1950. This was just before Reti (1951) and Salzer (1952), and a few years before Keller (1957–60).<sup>22</sup> In fact the highly

<sup>18</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Modern music: The avant garde since 1945* (London: Dent, 1981), and *Modern music and after: Directions since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For example, "pointillist writing" (in Goeyvaerts, 1981, 50) is replaced by "detached notes" (1995, 31): It is a small point but shows how a word that seemed completely appropriate then now seems wrong. "Pointillist techniques" (1981, 55) becomes "points" (1995, 37), again a move from composition technique to effect. "[A]n important contribution to the smooth flow of the musical processes" becomes "a decisive contribution to the streamlined glide of process, and gives the game a tension of direction" (*ibid.*) Stockhausen of course makes a very good example, perhaps clearer (so less interesting) than Boulez, since he so explicitly talked about and composed with points in the 1950s and melody from the 1970s. And one can draw examples from page after page of the 1995 revision. The revised discussion of *Le marteau*, completely rewritten to take account of Koblyakov's analytical discoveries, ends with a lyrical paean to Boulez's play of relationships between the fixed and the flexible (1995, 84).

<sup>19</sup> Griffiths, *Modern music and after*, 33–35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>21</sup> I am speaking here only from my memory of the composer's group at the Royal College of Music in the early 1970s, but we certainly felt representative of our generation at the time.

<sup>22</sup> Rudolph Reti, *The thematic process in music* (New York: Macmillan, 1951). Felix Salzer, *Structural hearing: Tonal coherence in music* (New York: Boni, 1952). Hans Keller, see especially "Functional analysis: Its pure appreciation", *Music review* 18 (1957) 202–06; 19 (1958), 192–200; 21 (1960), 73–76, 237–39. For further reading start with Christopher Wintle's "Keller, Hans", *Grove music online*, [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com).

analytical writing of Boulez and Stockhausen and their circle in the 1950s (especially in *Die Reihe*) predate the explosion of interest in systematic musical analysis. The *Journal of music theory* was founded 1957 but did not publish its first article on atonal music until 1961; *Perspectives of new music* was founded only in 1962. It seems more than likely that the ways in which these composers wrote about integral serialism in the early 1950s, and the pieces in which they demonstrated it, had a profound influence on the rise of analysis in the U.S. and U.K. in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Many of the most influential analysts were first and foremost concerned with modern music, then diversified. David Lewin wrote on Schoenberg in the 1960s, moving out to Brahms and Wagner later; Allen Forte wrote on atonal music in the 1950s, moving into Mozart, Mahler, and Liszt in the 1980s; Edward T. Cone, who was older, moved into Stravinsky and the Second Viennese School in the 1960s and then out again later; Arnold Whittall moved into contemporary music in the 1960s and then diversified into Wagner especially from the early 1980s; and one could go on: the pattern is strikingly consistent. In parallel, Milton Babbitt composed serially from the late 1940s, but wrote as a theorist most influentially from 1960. This seems a very clear case where composers led the way in their composing, their writing about their composing, and their performances of their compositions, all making a coherent modernist whole that deeply influenced everyone else and reshaped a generation's way of thinking about how to study atonal music. What's happened since then—for composers from the mid-1970s (Stockhausen's formula pieces such as *Mantra* and *Inori*, Boulez's harmonic elaboration in *Rituel* and subsequent pieces) and for theorists from around 1980—is a move towards more attractive sounds, more humane commentary, more immediately appealing scores, and criticism grounded more in literary than in musical theory. Trends in performance style, away from objectivity towards a new expressivity, have worked towards the same end.

What we see in this example is a process whereby composers inspire a completely new, formalist way of thinking about music, which at first they mirror in their performances. But as their compositional priorities change, so does their performing. Scholarship follows composers into a formalist analytical interest in atonal music, but then with careers set in place and expectations from colleagues and students hard to shift, scholarship takes some considerable time to catch up, only gradually becoming interested in a less formalized approach to scores. What has happened in the interim, and what provides a wider context for all this, is a general move away from systems towards responses, from the mathematical towards the narrative, from structuralism to deconstruction, from autonomy to cultural construction, in composition from atonality to neotonicity, in politics from radicalism to neoconservatism. For better or for worse, it is all of a piece, a coherent consequence of changes in the way influential thinkers see the world. For scholars all this can conveniently be encapsulated in the notion of postmodernism, a word that gained intellectual currency at very much the same time (the end of the 1970s) as Boulez's style was beginning obviously to change. Although Boulez was certainly in the thick of modern intellectual life at the time (the heyday of IRCAM), it would be far-fetched to press the coincidence into service in any kind of argument about cause and effect. The point is rather that both become current because of more general changes, and it is the working of this more general level that really needs to be studied if we want to know more about the way intellectual style develops.

Let's turn to the case of Schubert song. There was little detailed writing before the late 1920s, by which time Schubert's songs had been recorded regularly for 30 years,

and performed for over 100. For Richard Capell in the first book-length commentary, published in 1928, the songs meant exactly what they seemed to mean; they told simple stories which the music illustrated.<sup>23</sup> For Capell the very best recordings (Capell lists recordings only in the first edition, incidentally) were those by Sir George Henschel, recorded in 1914. Capell says, "These records show, no doubt, how Schubert intended his songs to be sung. There is no show and no self-consciousness about this singing. The performance strikes the right balance between voice and piano,"<sup>24</sup> as well it might because Henschel accompanied himself. "Das Wandern", the first song of *Die schöne Müllerin*, provides a good example of their shared understanding of what Schubert meant.<sup>25</sup> Henschel's is a straightforward approach. The miller's boy feels precisely what he sings. There are no hidden meanings, no self-deception. Similarly, for Capell the boy is "a lovesick lad in a green valley". He says,

Schubert simply did not know what to do with the bold and the bad of the earth. But he lent his luckless young miller tones that he could not have bettered if he had wanted them for himself. And surely just such a one would he himself have been if he had fallen to such a milleress's charms; timid and rapturous, flower-plucking and star-gazing, a fount of tenderness, a gulf of despair.<sup>26</sup>

It is easy for us to laugh at this, just as we sometimes laugh at the singing of 90 years ago. But this is how it was. A poet's love was pure, generous, and honest, and it was in the same spirit that one should sing. It is at this level of social construction, I think, that we can sensibly look for connections between performing music and writing about it. In this case, given the length of the previous performance tradition, it seems reasonable to assume that the way people sang and played had a profound influence on the way they started to write about music. Both, of course, were shaped by the general communicative norms of their time.

But what happens when performance style changes suddenly? The late 1940s provide an obvious example. Until the Second World War Schubert singing continued this tradition of simple and direct expression of overt emotional states. What is true of Henschel in 1914 is still true of Elisabeth Schumann or Gerhard Hüsch in the later 1930s and of Lotte Lehmann in the early war years. But a new generation, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, making their first recordings in the late 1940s, read these songs quite differently. For them Schubert is a composer of drama and inner turmoil. Listen, if you can, to Fischer-Dieskau's 1971 recording of "Am Feierabend", especially the last minute (from "allen eine gute Nacht").<sup>27</sup> Fischer-Dieskau attacks notes with explosive sforzandi, strong consonants, sometimes pitch glides, and shapes them with rapid hairpin dynamics that push forward in the sound the cacophonous harmonics around 3kHz in which his voice was so strong, while Gerald Moore stabs at the piano downbeats. The whole thing is a decidedly strong response to a text that only fantasizes about work. For a miller's boy who in his outer life seems a low-achiever it

<sup>23</sup> Richard Capell, *Schubert's songs* (London: Ernest Benn, 1928; 2nd ed., 1957; 3rd ed. rev. by Martin Cooper, London: Duckworth, 1973).

<sup>24</sup> Capell, *Schubert's songs* (1928) 282. Appendix III, "Gramophone records", was only in this edition.

<sup>25</sup> From *Schubert: Lieder on record, 1898-1952*, vol. I 1898-1939, disc 2, track 8; from HMV 7-42006, mar. Ak17387e; recorded 9 January 1914 at Hayes, engineer George Dillnutt.

<sup>26</sup> Capell, *Schubert's songs* (1928) 191.

<sup>27</sup> "Franz Schubert, Lieder" (DG 437 214-2), vol. III, disc 1 (437 236-2), track 5. Rec. Berlin December/1971.

conjuges up a strength of mind that we can only attribute to a notably vivid imagination. Fischer-Dieskau's is a performance that conjuges up an inner life at odds with outward appearance, then, distinctly unlike the Henschel/Capell approach.

It takes some years for this to filter through to writing on Schubert. Although the performance I have described was recorded in 1971, Fischer-Dieskau had been singing *Die schöne Müllerin* in a similar manner for over 20 years; yet much of the commentary on Schubert through the 1960s still emphasized Schubert's shy, naive, melodious approach to setting poems. For Lotte Lehmann, writing in 1945, "Am Feierabend" should end with passionate impatience, "the impatience," she says, "of one in love, which causes the bystander some quiet amusement," giving way in the final bars to "dreamy yearning."<sup>28</sup> By contrast, for Fischer-Dieskau in his own book in 1971 the energetic music "expresses the lad's fanatical desire for work," the return of that music at the end gives the piece "psychological depth—which clearly goes far beyond the poet's intentions," and the final bars express "not only weariness, but also a deep yearning."<sup>29</sup> In other words, everything about this music has been ratcheted up a notch, a wide notch. And from then on we begin to find commentators speaking more often about Schubert songs in terms of drama and psychological disturbance. For Graham Johnson "Am Feierabend" is characterized by "healthy physical activity combined with unhealthily suppressed feeling."<sup>30</sup> It is still some way from here to Lawrence Kramer's view of the miller boy as a masochist and "Am Feierabend" as wish-fulfilling fantasy, the miller's daughter, later in the song, "abolishing her father by reenacting his music in an emotionalized, dephallicized, ambiguous form," as Kramer says.<sup>31</sup> But could we have got there without a previous performance tradition in which psychologized readings seemed essential? Would it have occurred to anyone to have read Schubert along these lines if people had continued to sing him as a domestic composer of pleasing melodies? A sexual-psychologized interpretation would have been impossibly far-fetched in that performance context. Of course, such a naive performance style as that of the pre-War period reflected its social environment, but note how much sooner performers responded to changes in the wider world. Long before Schubert became deeply disturbed in the musicological literature, Fischer-Dieskau, guided by his wartime experience of the worst of human behavior as well as by his interest (characteristic of German intellectual life after the Second World War) in Freudian psychoanalysis, was showing us where the composer's secrets were to be found.

A third example of the priority of style change in performance over commentary is so obvious that it barely needs to be mentioned; namely, historically informed performance. The way scholars write about Baroque music (especially) has been radically influenced by the sounds and manners of HIP, a new world of performance style developed out of nothing but instruments, practice and imagination, in an extraordinary example of cultural evolution at work, by a multiplying cult of performers in the face of much early ridicule from writers. As testimony to its power, it has now, after 40 years, gained such a following as to become an essential argument in recent ontologies of music. I am

<sup>28</sup> Lotte Lehmann, *Eighteen song cycles: Studies in their interpretation* (London: Cassell, 1971) 24; republished from *More than singing: The interpretation of songs*, transl. by Frances Holden (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1945).

<sup>29</sup> Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Schubert: A biographical study of his songs*, transl. & ed. by Kenneth S. Whitton (London: Cassell, 1976; first German ed., 1971) 178.

<sup>30</sup> Graham Johnson, booklet to Hyperion CDJ33025, "The Hyperion Schubert edition: *Die schöne Müllerin*," 18.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, subjectivity, song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 140.

thinking especially of Stephen Davies and, to very different effect, Peter Kivy.<sup>32</sup> In both cases, their very notion of what a piece of music is depends on historical performance style. And it is curious, but deeply telling, that the necessity of this for defining music itself should never have occurred to a philosopher until it had become familiar through modern performances.

More challenging, and so more interesting, are less obvious links between playing and writing, and the levels on which we might explore them. At the moment it seems hard to imagine that we will ever get far in connecting vocabularies—phrases used in emotional speech communication and sounding gestures characteristic of a particular period's musical performance, for example—though there must be connections of some sort. Capell's "lad", recalling Shropshire Lad and all that innocence challenged by circumstances, compares well to the heart-on-sleeve emotionalism evoked by playing about with tempo, the subject swayed hither and thither by forces they cannot control; as against the inner mental life and the language of therapy evoked through Fischer-Dieskau's sudden changes in dynamic, overturning what seemed stable, a style characterized by a succession of instabilities. A more promising approach might be to compare styles of acting and styles of singing, though we need to remember that it is one of the primary purposes of music in a society—indeed possibly music's principal value for survival<sup>33</sup>—that it should express feelings that cannot safely be expressed in everyday communication. Musical performance we should expect to be more emotional than speech or (still more so) than manners. Nevertheless the difficulty of showing how period style embraces these various communicative systems should not discourage us: Music offers a particularly good way in, because, consisting as it does of ingredients that can be measured, it is possible to show how style is produced by it. Certainly, styles of emotional communication are not easy to relate. But given that many of us share a sense that somehow they are related, it seems reasonable to suppose that sooner or later it will become possible to show how, and music provides a particularly good place to start.

Now that more and more scholars are taking performance as their overt starting-point for study, the mutual influence of performance and commentary may become harder to spot, simply because the two are going to be ever more intimately mixed up in writings on music. On the plus side, the probability of influence should at least be far easier to acknowledge: How much we learn about music from performances is becoming ever more obvious. For now perhaps we can agree that performance is an important route by which a sense of how music works reaches writers on music. It comes from a general period sense of proper styles of emotional expressivity, which musical performance, along with speech and acting, is particularly good at encapsulating and transmitting. The question remains why it generally takes scholars so long to pick up the implications of changed ways in which people sing and play. Performers, after all, are subject to career constraints just like scholars. As a performer you dare not be too innovative if you want work (the counter-example of Glenn Gould is cited over and over simply because he is almost the only instance of it). And the same certainly applies in scholarship. But performance at least is not institutionalized. Small changes in approach, mutations if you want to make a genetic analogy, can be introduced unintentionally, unconsciously

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Davies, *Musical meaning and expression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical reflections on musical performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Ian Cross, "Is music the most important thing we ever did? Music, development and evolution", *Music, mind and science*, ed. by Yi Suk Won (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999) 10–39.

even, easily and frequently, and can accumulate quite rapidly, free from any framework other than that provided by the notes and past experience.<sup>34</sup> Scholarship is far more constrained by ideologies and by strategies for promotion, which weigh down upon interpretation, so that it becomes a far more complicated affair than manipulating notes in time, pitch and amplitude for expressive effect. Performance shifts all the time; scholarship has to change by revolutions or hardly at all.



It is far too soon for conclusions. These are just observations based on contrasting examples. I think there is a real subject here, but it is very early days, and it remains to be seen whether others find it appealing—and worth the risk. What I think we can say reasonably is that on the whole performance is changed by musicology less than musicology by performance. Performers make clear new aspects of music that musicology then begins to write about, ascribing them, of course, to historical or theoretical causes rather than to performers since that is where musicologists are trained to look. That is something we can change by focusing much more thoughtfully on the study of performance. Why is the influence greater in one direction than the other? Simply because music in performance encapsulates, represents, and communicates styles of emotional communication in a uniquely direct and powerful way. If musicologists communicate them too, however palely, they pick them up not just from the world around them but also from the musical performances that they, especially, are currently hearing. How these styles of communication might be defined, and how music encapsulates them so efficiently, are difficult but potentially fascinating questions to be answered by many more disciplines than just our own.

<sup>34</sup> A neo-Darwinian view of performance style change is taken in Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Recordings and histories of performance style", *The Cambridge companion to recorded music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Changing approaches to singing Schubert are discussed also in Leech-Wilkinson's "Sound and meaning in recordings of Schubert's *Die junge Nonne*", *Musicae scientiae* 11 (2007) 209–36.

# *Music's*

## INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

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