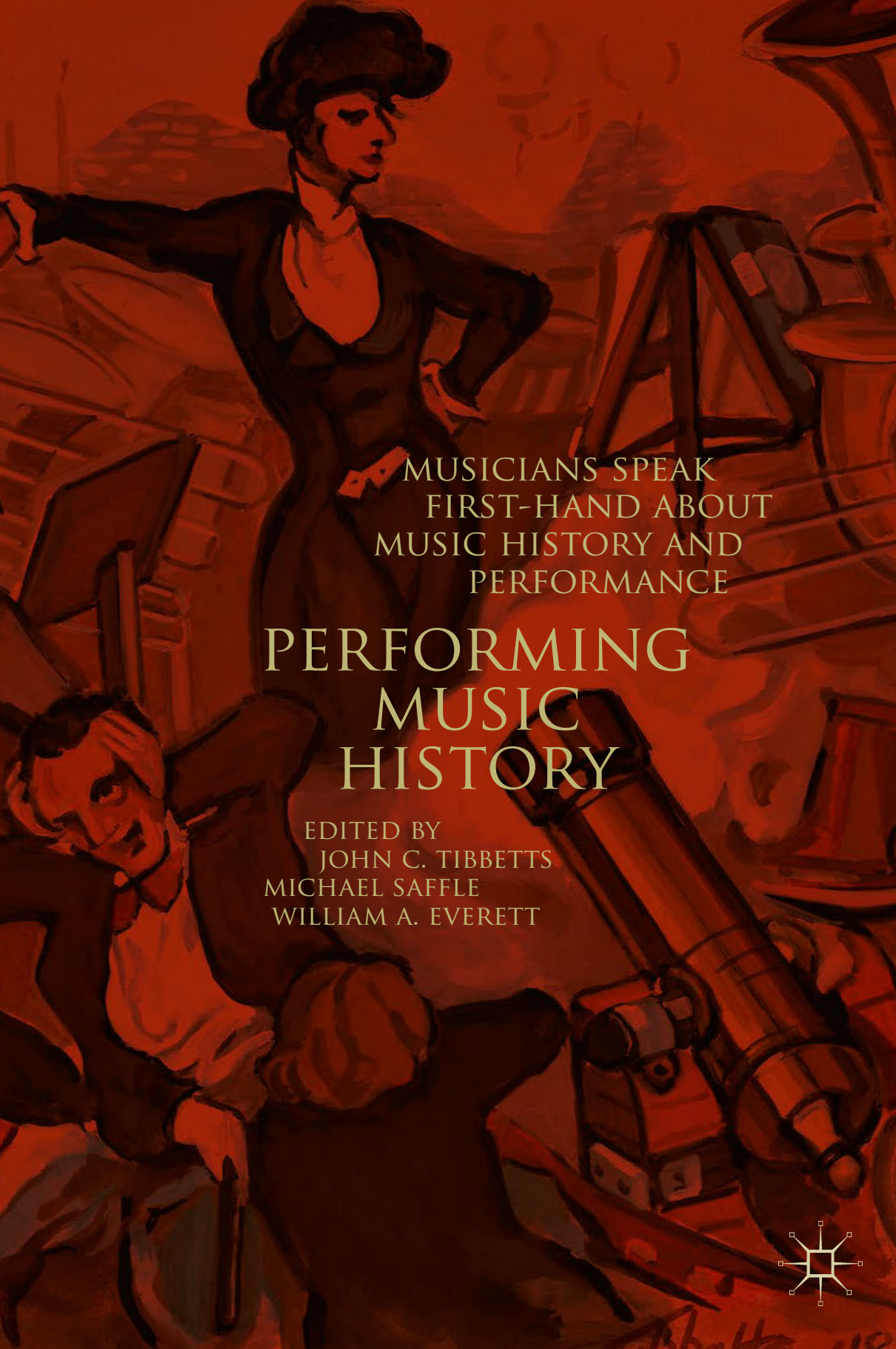




MUSICIANS SPEAK
FIRST-HAND ABOUT
MUSIC HISTORY AND
PERFORMANCE

PERFORMING MUSIC HISTORY

EDITED BY
JOHN C. TIBBETTS
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Performing Music History



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Performing Music History

Musicians Speak First-Hand about Music
History and Performance

Forewords by Emanuel Ax and Lawrence Kramer

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Epigraph

I drink to those artists whom nothing can debase or dishearten, the true, the valiant, and the strong. Let us band together and be patient, energetic, and proud. Let us prove to the peoples distracted by so many grave concerns that if we are the last born of civilization's children and have only for a moment enjoyed its deepest affection, we were worthy of it. Possibly they will then understand how much art would suffer if we were to perish.

Hector Berlioz, *Evenings with the Orchestra*

Foreword I

Speaking of Musicians

We musicians love to talk about our work. Not content with mere music performance, we often enjoy opportunities to comment on what we are up and what we know about the history of the music we play.

There are so many sides to talking about music and music history. There's the music, which is endless. There's each musician's approach. And there are the traditions surrounding those performers we heard as kids. It's not so different from any other subject you're interested in. I happen to be a huge fan of sports. I watch football games and I watch tennis matches, my two favorite sports. And I welcome any chance to hear a great quarterback talk about what's happening on the field. That's instructive on many levels, and I can appreciate what's going on all the more.

It's true we have already lots of books filled with memoirs, essays, and conversations with musicians. Some of my favorites include books about cellist Gregor Piatogorsky, pianists Claudio Arrau and Glenn Gould (the latter one of my very favorite books), and, more recently, scholar artists like Charles Rosen and Alfred Brendel. I particularly enjoy André Previn's memoirs about Hollywood. They're wonderful and we couldn't do without them. But there's something especially wonderful about hearing the *performer's actual voice* in all its inflections and timbres and intonations—something as nuanced in its own way as the touch on the keyboard. So many of us are so accustomed to performance that it's wonderful to have opportunities like this to talk about this crazy profession of ours. I hope that if people enjoy our work, they won't mind listening to us talk about it and maybe learn something more about it—and us—in the process. You may find, moreover, that informal conversations like these can go off in freer, more unexpected directions than what you would find on the written page.

A few years ago I had a wonderful experience sitting down with my colleagues and friends at the Library of Congress to talk about piano performance and traditions. The late Eugene Istomin presided over our group, which included Charles



Fig. 1 Emanuel Ax

Rosen, Leon Fleisher, and Yefim Bronfman. These conversations, which are now available on video through the Library of Congress Website, were a rare opportunity for all of us to get together and just let the topics carry us where they will.¹ And at this writing I'm planning a series for the CBC about ten selected piano

¹For more information about this and other issues, see "For additional investigation" at the end of the present volume.

concertos, talking about them as well as playing them. It's the world we live in. Pianists like us are seen and heard in so many different ways via so many different media. We find ourselves talking from the stage, too, which didn't use to be very acceptable. I find myself speaking more and more during recitals. It makes me relax and makes me feel that I'm communicating more with individuals. I'm even happy if they respond to me. Why not? All this sort of thing should be part of the awareness and training of young pianists today as they enter the profession.

But ultimately there's always the music. The music. On some level you enjoy it without referring to words at all. It's a mistake to feel that you need education before you listen. The best education is to just listen. And maybe then there will be a time when you will want to know about it. That's the way I am with sports. To me it's the exact same analogy. I knew nothing about football when I arrived in this country. And after a time I became fascinated by it. And now I'm to the point where I understand the referees' signs. I'm up to date on all of that. It's very exciting. It makes me a kind of participant in a sense. Now, maybe the readers of *Performing Music History* can also join in on the fun.

As for me, I'd love to be a coach for the New York Giants!

New York, USA,

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Emanuel Ax began his studies in Warsaw, where his family settled when he was seven years old, then at The Juilliard School in New York City. Today he is a member of Juilliard's piano faculty. Ax has twice won Grammeys, on both occasions (1995 and 2004) for his recordings of the piano sonatas of Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809). In 2007 he became a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Foreword II

Score, Performance, History

Any performing musician is also a historian. No matter what genre or tradition a singer or instrumentalist embraces, there is a genre, there is a tradition, to contend with. [Friedrich] Nietzsche [1844–1900] once said that the best way to honor one's teacher is to break with the teaching. He might have added that it takes considerable learning to do that. For some musicians, the past stretches back years or decades or perhaps a century. For others, in particular for classical musicians like those whose words compose most of this volume, it may stretch back many centuries. Classical musicians serve competing imperatives. Their performances must speak to the present day and at the same time speak for the past, sometimes the distant past. To link the past and the present, the performers need reliable materials to work with and a credible sense of how what they play may have sounded under different historical circumstances. Only then can they know what to do with the peculiar form of writing from which they must make music: the score.

The rise of interest over the past half century in historically informed performances and in scores stripped of editorial barnacles has unquestionably broadened our auditory horizons but it has not been without controversy. The search for “authenticity” inspired some musicians and exasperated others. A classic case in point is an essay that Richard Taruskin published in the journal *Early Music* in 1984. At the time, the aim of fully recapturing the auditory past had caught the imagination of many performers intent on reviving early music. Taruskin vigorously opposed the “purism” and “positivism” that he believed had ensued, reminding those involved that the auditory past can never be recaptured, only reconstructed. The reconstruction is necessarily imperfect and depends on latter-day choices and attitudes:

Everyone by now agrees (if only for the sake of argument) that we will never really know “what was.” But that is not what we want to find out, anyway. We want to find out what



Fig. 2 Lawrence Kramer

was, or rather, *is* good for the music—and for ourselves. And of course by that I mean ourselves in the actual here and now, not some projection of ourselves into an imaginary past.²

Although present-day attitudes have become more nuanced than those Taruskin was denouncing, the reminder is still resonant, especially when we realize that

²Richard Taruskin, “The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivistic Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing,” *Early Music* 12 (1984): 3–12, at 10.

the demand for creative reconstruction, well informed but independent minded, applies not just to early music but to *all* fully scored music, from the most canonical repertoire pieces to the newest compositions and those still in the making. The most accurate notes and the fullest historical knowledge are only the beginning, and sometimes barely that.

The musicians who speak for themselves in these pages take up varying positions on the question of authenticity, which is a perennial one. That is part of what makes what they have to say absorbing. But all of the classical musicians, and some others, too, all in their individual ways, wrestle with the equally perennial question that shapes the everyday life of classical music. What do you do with the score?

The score has had a hard time of it in recent years. Written music, music imbued with a cultural preference for literacy, plays a dark role in Taruskin's massive *Oxford History of Western Music*.³ Scores have become suspect as sources of unwarranted or excessive authority, as incarnations of an oppressive reverence for the finished musical work (which does not exist), as symbols of the lost cultural supremacy of classical music, as editorial versions masquerading as original texts, and as carriers of an imperfect notation that has to be overcome as often as it is followed if one is to produce a compelling musical performance. Nicholas Cook, whose book *Beyond the Score* goes deeply into these questions, has proposed regarding the score not as a fixed template for the music it supposedly inscribes but as a script in the dramatic or cinematic sense, a guideline to be modified in production and performance.⁴

The trouble with these views, which certainly have some validity to them, is that they do not seem to reflect the day-to-day activity of music-making by classical performers and composers. In my experience, anyway, the performers do not treat their scores as objects of reverence but as tools of the trade that can and should be marked up, cut, pasted, and scribbled on at need. This is especially true when the score involved is not a full score but a performance part. At the same time, as a composer I labor hard over my scores (which music notation software happily makes easy), but I have never expected them to be "followed" in some literal way that I would be hard put to define. What I most want from a performance is to hear, not what I have done in the score, but what the performers can do *with* it. I want to learn something, to hear something new or unexpected.

Besides, both performers and composers have surely always assumed that the notes on the page are approximations at best. Whoever supposed that playing the notes is playing the music? The rare exceptions prove the rule. I have even been told (by the performer involved) of one "complexist" composer who became upset when a soloist actually managed to execute all the multilayered rhythmic

³Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 5 vols. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 260.

and metric relationships in his score, which he then vowed to rewrite so that such “fidelity” would be (even more) impossible.

Nonetheless, fidelity of *some* sort remains the norm in classical music performance. It is not easy to answer the question “fidelity to what?” but whatever the answer, a performance generally preserves the object of this fidelity more strictly than a film or play production preserves the letter of its script. A score is not a lead sheet. There is no reason to abandon the script metaphor, but it does need to be made one among others. Because music cannot simply “exist” like a statue or a painting, or even like a text, we need multiple metaphors for its mode of existence. Or rather for its modes of existence, because a classical composition does not exist in the same way as a popular song or folk song or jazz improvisation—the list goes on. So the question before us is limited to musical compositions: fully scored “works” (whether we believe in the reality of works or not).

In this context it may be helpful to compare the performance of a score to a translation, in the special sense of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), whose counter-intuitive remark in his 1923 essay “The Task of the Translator” states that translations of classic texts are not addressed to readers unable to read the original language. Translation, Benjamin explains, is a medium of the life of the original, a life that he insists is to be understood non-metaphorically. “The life of the original,” he writes, “attains in [translation] to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering.” This life, moreover, is not self-contained, but purposive: “In translation the original rises into a higher and purer linguistic air, as it were.... It points the way to ... the predestined, previously inaccessible realm of reconciliation and fulfillment of languages.”⁵ This realm, which Benjamin admits is not “total,” can be understood as an idealized, utopian representation of the process of continuous translation that takes place *within* languages as well as between them. The impulse behind this utopianism is the positive side of modernist doubt about the stability of language; the same impulse played a substantial role in the flowering of poststructuralist theory in the later twentieth century. But neither idealism nor skepticism is anything more than a symptom. Translation, and in this it remains a model for the performance of the score, does not make the original intelligible but, instead, gives the prior intelligibility of the original an extended life by changing the terms on which the original survives. In a sense, that means that after a certain point there is no original, but saying so is a little too glib. The translation, the performance, the reading preserves the original in the past tense, something that “is” only by approximation and detour.

What implications does this model of translation have for performing fully scored music? It would certainly require that the study of a score include consideration of the different possibilities of getting from one point to another, the availability of alternative routes through the maze of notation. Doing so does not require, although it may obviously include, consulting the history of

⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 75.

performances, because each actual performance must find its own way among multiple possible routes. Historical information settles very little; at its best, it bequeaths the performer a set of choices. Possibility is the *sine qua non* of musical performance, even if what may be done is always influenced in some way by what has been done. We would not hear a period-instrument performance of a Haydn symphony as we now do if the era of big symphonic performances had never taken place. What we hear in such a performance, however, is not what Haydn's audiences would have heard, even if the sounds could somehow be made identical. Too much technology, too much history, too much change in the auditory environment has intervened. It may well take musical anachronisms to be responsive to the conception we divine in a score. To realize that conception—which, it cannot be overstated, is as much the performer's as it is the score's—it is first necessary to search out the places where the score seems to plead for interpretation, where it demands that the performer make a choice.

At the inevitable risk of arbitrariness, I will turn to a single example, [Franz Peter] Schubert [1797–1828]'s famous song *Der Erlkönig* to illustrate the forking path between the score and its audible translation. The example will not be comprehensive. It will concentrate on just a few revealing details to exemplify the larger question of what it takes to translate printed marks into living music. But it should help to show what the musicians whose words compose this volume confront when they thoughtfully and tirelessly seek to do right by the music they love: the fact that, no matter how hard one tries to recover authentic, original performance materials, no matter how much one learns about context and performance practice, even the most successful recovery is a gathering of question marks.

The last few measures of Schubert's *Erlkönig* ask a great deal of both the singer and the pianist. The ballad by [Johann Wolfgang von] Goethe [1749–1832] that the song recounts describes a desperate night ride on which a father fails to save the life of his feverish son, who repeatedly hears the ghostly *Erlkönig* (roughly: elf king) lure him with promises of happiness. The poem's narrative divides among four voices, those of the father, the son, the *Erlkönig*, and a narrator. Schubert's setting is celebrated for the precision with which it discriminates among both the voices and their accompaniments: frantic for the boy, blandly reassuring for the father, seductive for the *Erlkönig*, frantic again for the narrator, who is also the boy's advocate.

This last detail marks a sharp difference between the poem and the song. In keeping with the conventions of the poetic ballad, Goethe's narrator is a neutral reporter. His language (or hers; the narrator has no gender identity, a point we will come back to) is plain almost to the point of indifference, especially in its delivery of the final line: *In seinem Armen das Kind war todt* [in his arms the child was dead]. Schubert demurs. He makes the narrator empathetic throughout, and, in the enunciation of the final line, tragic. The score spells out the tragic tone unambiguously. It instructs the line to be sung in recitative, marking the utterance off from the rest of the song and inviting the voice to use the inflections of expressive speech; it shadows the word "*Kind*" with an isolated diminished-seventh chord on

the piano; it introduces a pregnant pause before the concluding *war todt*; and it ends with an abrupt *forte* cadence on the heels of the *pianissimo* recitative, which may or may not rise to *piano* after the pause.

But what does the score at this point *not* tell us? What does it leave us to think about all the more inquiringly *because* it does not tell us? The answers to these questions are particularly suggestive because Schubert wrote three versions of the song prior to the one he eventually published, and each version scores the closing measures differently. We can accordingly say with some confidence that the question of just what to “say” by the scoring of this passage was a problem that gave its composer some trouble. Of course it would be standard scholarly procedure, or would have been once, to examine the sequence of scores as a record of Schubert’s efforts to bring the music to its definitive form. But we should at least consider the possibility that such linear narratives idealize too much and fix too much. The four scores may be more tellingly thought of as defining a field of possibilities that is oriented but not exhausted by the final version. The successive versions show the score in use as an instrument of discovery. The considerations that seem to have led to the writing and rewriting of this passage do not disappear with the end product. They leave traces through which the end product may appear more fully.

In the first three versions, the word *Kind* coincides with the piano’s diminished-seventh chord. The rest before *war todt* is measured in the first and third versions, but prolonged by a fermata in the second. The final version is very different. It shifts the diminished seventh off the beat, so that the chord cuts across the enunciation of *Kind*, and it restores the fermata to the rest before *war* while also introducing the soft/loud split (not found in the earlier versions) between the recitative and the cadence. This scoring throws harmony, tempo, rhythm, and dynamics all off center in a few harsh strokes.

Even for performers with no knowledge of the earlier versions, the close of the published score is unusually heavy in its interpretive demands: how long to hold the fermatas; how speech-like to make the recitative, and with what inflections; how strongly to raise the voice (if at all) in response to a shift in the accompaniment from *pianissimo* to *piano*; how heavily to attack the cadential chords. The score is unambiguous in its notation, but it is unambiguous to excess. It exposes its own inability to say just how this conclusion should be delivered. It indicates by its surplus of notation that the score cannot merely be read or followed or realized. The score must be felt.

Schubert’s revisions, in effect if not in intention, work toward an ending that the score can only fail to inscribe. The music needs that failure so as to release the meaning that only the performers can provide, which is just what the score instructs them to do. In particular, the performers must decide whether the voice should pass with restraint between the two halves of its final phrase or, in response to the rise from *pianissimo* to *piano* introduced by the diminished-seventh chord, should heighten its intensity and allow a tone of anguish or protest to creep in. In the first case the piano’s closing chords would contradict the voice and accuse it of understating the tragedy. In the second case the piano would supplement

with outrage the voice's expression of pity. Schubert adds a visual nuance to this dilemma, which neither answer solves, by rescoring the first measure of recitative so that the opening phrase appears over empty space in the piano part—a void.

The situation is further complicated by the sex of the singer. The narrator has no identity and therefore no sex, but the singer of course has both, and the singer's sex, or rather the gender roles it invokes, cannot help but inflect the way the narrative voice sounds to a listener. (The first singer of *Erlkönig* was a woman, albeit a purely fictional one, the protagonist of a musical play entitled *Die Fischereim* [The Fisher Maid].) The song, depicting the failure of the father to safeguard his son, forms an exemplary “paternity case” or “paternity suit” in which the father-son bond as a cultural ideal is subjected to sharp scrutiny and critique. Sung by a woman, the song is both a lament and an accusation. It relentlessly exposes the father's failure—the failure of traditional paternity—to nurture, to sympathize, to question assumed certainties. In this context the cries of the boy also express the helplessness of a mother notably excluded from the dramatic situation. When the boy's voice is heard, it sounds in the register a boy would share with a woman, not in the masculine register the boy will not live to acquire.

This critique is present as a subtext when a man sings the song, but in that case the singing voice may suggest a fraternal solidarity that to some extent excuses the father's failure by rewriting it as a tragedy. For a tenor, the problem posed by the last few measures of the score may be the need to project compassion without making excuses. Or so the score communicates, if it does, by *not* telling us.

These comments are hardly the last word on their subject. Many questions remain unanswered, even unasked. How, for example, should we assess the differences between the scores of art songs and those of instrumental works, between solo works and ensemble works, between all of these and the scores of operas, or, further afield, of film scores or transcriptions of jazz recordings? Nonetheless, enough has been said perhaps to establish that the score is neither script nor scripture. It is simply inscription: a means of preserving music, because we know how to perform it, and a means of changing music, because each performance is a creative as well as a recreative act. As I have put it elsewhere: “Scores are visual maps of acoustic possibility. The performer neither humbly “follows” the score nor proudly appropriates it. The performer *imagines* the score. What makes this different from any other act of imaginative response is its medium. The performer imagines the score in sound.”⁶

As that last sentence implies, musical performance involves more than doing things with voices or instruments. It is an imaginary as much as an acoustic phenomenon. Recognizing that double character is the basis of the interviews in this volume. The underlying principle is that what performers say about their playing is no less historically revealing than the playing itself. Or, more exactly, it can become so if we listen carefully to what the performers say and are willing to

⁶Lawrence Kramer, *The Thought of Music* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2016), 176.

interpret, not just to repeat, what they tell us. The telling is part of what endows the playing with meaning. Like the act of performance itself, reflection on performance is a creative intervention, not a passive act of reporting. The value of the interviews collected in this volume is not merely anecdotal; it is historical. The interviews invite us to imagine along with the performers what they ask of the music in their care and what the music they care for asks of them.

New York, USA

Lawrence Kramer
Fordham University

Lawrence Kramer Distinguished Professor of English and Music at Fordham University, Lawrence Kramer studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Yale; since 1993 he has edited *nineteenth-century Music*, an important musicological publication. Among his books are *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History*; *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss*; *Why Classical Music Still Matters*. His trilogy of books, *Expression and Truth*, *Interpreting Music*, and *The Thought of Music*, has won the 2017 ASCAP Virgil Thomson Award. He is also a composer whose works have been performed across the USA and Europe.

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“Welcome to the Banquet!”

The name and the example of the great French composer Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), whose incendiary image adorns the cover of *Performing Music History*, frequently came to mind during the preparation of this volume of interviews.¹ The assembled musicians and composers who speak out here hold a colloquy, of a kind, not altogether dissimilar from the chorus of voices found in Berlioz’s wry and witty *Evenings with the Orchestra* (1852) and its sequel, *The Musical Madhouse* (1859).² Berlioz collected conversations, arguments, and declamations voiced among imaginary, bored pit orchestra musicians taking a break during their performances. One musician recalls an anecdote about Franz Liszt [1811–1886]: During a concert the great virtuoso impulsively stepped away from the piano and addressed his listeners: “I would make so bold as to ask whether you will kindly come and take supper with me!”³ (Fig. 1).

And so, on behalf of my colleagues, Professors Michael Saffle and William Everett, I step forward and address the Gentle Readers of this book: “*Welcome to the banquet!*”

What can be said of the musicians and composers speaking out in these pages? Berlioz might have been taking their measure, with not a little irony, when he describes the conditions and consequences of celebrity:

¹We refer to our cover illustration, J. J. Grandville’s cartoon, *Concert a mittaille* (1846).

²This loosely translates Berlioz’s original title, *Les Grotesques de la musique*. The appearance of Berlioz’s company of musicians roughly parallels other contemporaneous associations of artists, fictive and real, who speak out about their musical lives in Carl Maria von Weber’s *Harmonische Verein*, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *The Serapion Brotherhood*, and Robert Schumann’s *Davidsbund*.

³Hector Berlioz, *Evenings with the Orchestra*, ed. and trans Jacques Barzun (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 45.

Fig. 1 “The Concert of Gunfire” (1846), painting by John C. Tibbetts after the engraving by Granville



You have reached the summit. Frantic applause will be yours and likewise endless engagements. Authors will pay court to you; managers will no longer keep you waiting in their anterooms, and if you ever write to them, they will answer you.... Flowers and sonnets will be heaped around your feet.... You have now been promoted deity; try to remain a good fellow none the less—and don't look down on people who offer you good advice. [Berlioz, *Evenings*, 66–67]

Speaking personally, my own experiences with musicians who welcomed me to the “banquet” of their performing world has turned topsy-turvy any presuppositions I had about their status and fame. Not the “deities” Berlioz warned against, but the “good fellows” he praised, they freely engaged with my questions, no matter how amateurish the questions might be. For example, a defining moment during my career as a broadcaster and educator came during an interview in 1983 in Kansas City with pianist Emanuel Ax. He had just finished rehearsing the [Frédéric] Chopin [1809–1849] Second Piano Concerto with the Kansas City Symphony. By pre-arrangement, and on assignment from a local classical radio station, I met him on stage where, to my delight, he remained seated at the piano while literally accompanying his remarks with musical demonstrations.

That a musician of his stature would freely do this with an inexperienced journalist was astonishing (see his preface to this volume). Since then, his example has proven not the exception, but the rule, of many, many subsequent interviews granted this writer. *Performing Music History* is the proof of Berlioz's example—although, happily, each of the personages here is no figment of the imagination, but very real indeed.

Once inside these exchanges, I am now outside them. As G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) rightly observed, “The next best thing to being really inside a thing is to be really outside it.”⁴ Taken together, they provide an oral commentary on the history of music, from medieval chant to the American Song Book. Some of these musicians look back on their careers from the long view of history: Rudolf Firkušný (1912–1994) recollects his youthful tutelage and friendship with composers Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) and Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959); György Sándor reveals his personal and professional association with Béla Bartók (1881–1945); and Maureen Forrester remembers her early training under Bruno Walter in performing Gustav Mahler [1860–1911]. Others are speaking *in the moment*, reacting to their current career trajectories. At the time of our 1988 interview, dancer and singer Tommy Tune was preparing his landmark musical *Will Rogers Follies*. In 2017 Jennifer Higdon reveals her new interests in opera with *Cold Mountain*; John Kander discloses his new Broadway musical show projects, subsequent to the death of his longtime collaborator, Fred Ebb; and Steven Isserlis continues his musical collaborations with contemporary composer György Kurtág.

How I wish these pages could somehow convey the *sound* of their voices—the street-smart-smart vernacular of Jay McShann (1917–2006) on Kansas City jazz, the gentle musings of John Cage [1912–1992] on aleatoric composition, and the melodiously poised Emma Kirkby on the songs of Henry Purcell [c. 1659–1695]. And how I wish they could convey the *performances* that freely punctuate many of the interviews, such as Samuel Baron's examples on the flute of Baroque practices; Leif Ove Andsnes's piano simulations of the Norwegian hardanger fiddle; Malcom Bilson's demonstrations of the unique fortepiano sound; and McShann's boogie-woogie inflection to the jazz standard, *Moten Swing*.

Interviews, or conversations? Yes. The soul of both is sympathy. The condition of both is intimacy. Either way, some of the two-way exchanges found here encourage and relish the relative ease, give-and-take, and informality of a *conversation*. Others display the more formal interrogation of an *interview*. If pressed to the wall, I would cite as examples of the more conversational style John Cage's citation of Henry David Thoreau [1817–1862]'s sensitivity to the *sounds* of nature as a primary inspiration; George Shearing [1919–2011]'s sly blending of piano jazz with classical counterpoint; William Bolcom's and Joan Morris's irreverent quotations of ragtime song lyrics; John McGlinn [1953–2009]'s headlong urgency regarding the restoration of *Show Boat*; Carlisle Floyd's amusing anecdotes

⁴G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1925), xii.

about the staging of his seminal American opera *Susannah*; Barry Tuckwell's hair-raising accounts of the hazards of playing the horn; and Christopher Parkening's impassioned revelations of the spiritual wellsprings fueling his guitar performances.

As for the more rigorous interview mode, Benjamin Bagby plucks the epic string of medieval Anglo-Saxon and Germanic oral traditions in his interpretations of *Beowulf* and the music of Boethius (c. 477–524) and Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), also known as St. Hildegard; William P. Mahrt examines the formation of medieval chant practices; Brian Newbould and Paul Badura-Skoda relate in considerable detail their Schubertian researches into historical keyboards and manuscripts; Anne-Sophie Mutter comments on the niceties of bowing, finger vibrato, and the physical postures of violin playing; Thomas Hampson reconstructs the original conception of [Robert] Schumann [1810–1856]'s song cycle *Dichterliebe*; Rosalyn Tureck devotes her long life to bringing the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) to today's audiences; Mark Markham disputes traditional considerations of just what “impressionist” music is; Russell Sherman analyzes with sober precision the proto-modernism of Franz Liszt; while Chen Yi and Zhou Long cross-pollinate their American works with the traditions and practices of their Chinese heritage.

Several musicians wear seven-league boots, as it were. Julian Bream takes Elizabethan music on tour with his Julian Bream Consort. Samuel Baron brings Bach to far flung audiences with his Bach Aria Group. Max Morath proclaims that he's “Livin' the Ragtime Life” with his one-man stage shows. And finally, the irrepressible Peter (“P.D.Q. Bach”) Schickele rope-swings his way into the hearts of audiences everywhere as he deconstructs/“decomposes” the cherished traditions of Baroque music.

Inevitably, differences of opinion abound. They reflect private reservations and differing professional viewpoints on a variety of topics, such as John Eliot Gardiner and Simon Preston on, respectively, “George Frideric Handel” (also Georg Friedrich Händel, 1785–1759) and “Freddie” Handel; Garrick Ohlsson and Charles Rosen on the validity of Schumann's coded musical texts; Claude Frank and Richard Goode on their respective traversals of the complete piano sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827); or Carl Davis and Philip Glass on the various functions of “film music.” One way or another, the participants all enjoy their opportunities to have their say.

How apt is William Hazlitt [1778–1830]'s commentary on the art of conversation: “The subjects are more at liberty to say what they think, to put the subject in different and opposite points of view ... to obviate misconception, to state difficulties on their own side of the argument, and answer them as well as they can.”⁵

The conversations and interviews span the years 1983 to the present. Some transpired on the road—backstage, in hotels, private homes, music festivals,

⁵William Hazlitt's, “On the Conversation of Authors” was first published in the *London Magazine*, September 1820.

including the Bard College summer weekends festivals; the Schumann Festivals in Düsseldorf, Germany; Liszt Conferences in Hamilton, Ontario, and Stockholm, Sweden; and the International Arts Festivals in Bergen, Norway. Many others transpired in my home base in Kansas City, Missouri, which, through world-class presenters like the Harriman-Jewell Series, the Friends of Chamber Music, The Art Institute of Kansas City, the Folly Theater Jazz Series, and the Performing Arts Series of Johnson County Community College, have brought for decades a remarkable roster of performing artists. To Tim Ackerman, Clark Morris, and the late Richard Harriman of the Jewell Series; Cynthia Siebert of the Friends; and Emily Behrman of JCCC go my special thanks for their assistance in arranging contacts and access with performers.

Excerpts from a number of these conversations were originally broadcast on KXTR, formerly the classical FM station of Kansas City, where I worked for many years as the Arts and Entertainment Editor. The encouragement and support of Mr. Robert P. Ingram and his wife, Beth Ingram, made possible remarkable opportunities for contacts and broadcast outlets. I also want to thank Steve Robinson, former Vice President of WFMT, for his continuing support in my broadcast career. None of these interviews, in their original states, has appeared in print before.

My thanks go to those members and friends of the Academy who have generously encouraged and assisted in my endeavors over many years: Professors Lawrence Kramer (who wrote the Introduction to this book) of Fordham University; Alan Walker, formerly of McMaster University, Ontario; Leon Plantinga of Yale University; Michael Beckerman of New York University; Elliott Antokoltez of the University of Texas, Austin; Rufus Hallmark of Rutgers University, Arbie Orenstein of the Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College; David Ferris of Rice University, Houston; D. Kern Holoman of the University of California, Davis; Erik Battaglia of the Conservatory of Turin; David Beveridge, formerly of New Orleans University; and Caroline Jewers, Jack Winerock, and Richard Angeletti of the University of Kansas.

I am deeply in the debt of many scholars who have passed on, including Professors Jacques Barzun of Columbia University, J. Bunker Clark and Dick Wright of the University of Kansas; and independent scholars Nancy B. Reich, Eric Sams, and Peter Ostwald. Likewise, my colleague William Everett wishes to recognize Professors Ed Williams, formerly of Pennsylvania State University and the University of Kansas; Carol Reynolds, formerly of Southern Methodist University, Dallas; and the late Herbert Turrentine, also of SMU. Michael Saffle recognizes James Deaville of Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, Cornelia Szabó-Knotik of the Universität der Musik und darstellende Kunst, Vienna; Hon-Lun Yang of Hong Kong Baptist University; and Robert Groves of the North Dakota State University, Fargo. Finally, all three editors wish to thank their respective department chairs, with Michael Saffle singling out Brian Britt, whose term ends just as this volume is going to press. And a personal thanks to thank Ms. Mary Lou Pagano—math teacher, opera singer, equestrienne—who throughout the preparation of this book has been a constant and supporting partner and muse.

Final acknowledgments go to the musicians and composers in this book. *Performing Music History* in its own modest way respectfully attempts to address their professional concerns, accurately transcribe their words, and faithfully evoke the spirit and devotion with which they serve music and us, the listeners.

And so, the discourse of this book beckons you to a “banquet” of voices and music. Tilt your ear close to these pages. You will “hear” amidst the various accents, rhetoric, and jargon the *lingua franca* of music itself.

A word to our readers: Footnotes appear sparingly throughout the pages that follow. Individual terms are footnoted only once, the first time they appear in the volume, although in a few cases the same term is footnoted twice to clarify its historical significance. With few exceptions the names of individual composers appear only in the text, although first names and dates (for those composers who have died) are often added in square brackets. So are observations about behavior during interviews: laughter, instrumental illustrations, and so on. Dates, however, are not provided for performers mentioned in passing by individual interviewees. Finally, secondary sources are not footnoted; instead, we supply a list of important titles “for additional investigation.”

John C. Tibbetts
Kansas City, Missouri, 25 August 2018



Introduction

Music from the medieval¹ and early modern periods² encompasses a dizzying array of musical styles, genres, and purposes. Much of the music that survives from these times was intended for either the church or the aristocratic court. Music was considered in many ways a cultivated art form, the domain of the religious or political elite. Nevertheless, “popular” music flourished, although we know comparatively little about it today. In the interview that follows, Benjamin Bagby examines the origins of “bardic” music, often associated with the so-called Dark Ages. That music remains obscure, but a few examples survive and can be performed today.

When it comes to discussing music and musical practices in Western Europe, a great deal of this early repertory resided in some sort of oral or aural tradition, even after musical notation began to emerge (around 800 C.E.) and the four-line staff was established (around 1000 C.E.). Sacred music was notated first, since it was the monks and clergy who were educated in this practice.

Monophonic (single line) chant traditions continued to be practiced long after notated polyphonic traditions (more than one musical line occurring simultaneously) began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We must not forget that unaccompanied chant is still sung today, as William Mahrt informs us—as do all of our authors—in his interview. The best known of the early polyphonic, chant-based works are those of Léonin (c. 1150–1201) and Perotin (died 1205 or 1225). Among the most popular later polyphonic genres was the motet, in which each

¹Approximately 300–1400 C.E. Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent dates are “Common Era” dates.

²Defined by historians as c. 1400–1789, the year of the French Revolution.

voice (usually three) sang its own melody and text. One voice typically sang a chant melody, while the other two intoned new material.

A thriving secular music scene also existed. Various noble songwriters, such as the troubadours and trouvères in France, created songs of courtly love in which a knight extols the virtues of an idealized lady. Instrumental performers crossed paths with monks, pilgrims, and other travelers, and musical exchanges were commonplace.

The transition in musical style from the medieval period into the Renaissance (to use our modern terms for these historical eras) took place over a relatively long period of time. The formidable linear complexities of late medieval music gave way to a new style rooted in complementary musical lines that emphasized vertical sonorities. Polyphonic vocal writing shifted from works in which each voice sang its own text to ones in which all the voices sang the same words at basically the same time. Four distinct parts (rather than three) became the norm as this new style strengthened its grip on the musical world. Furthermore, individual parts were no longer as interchangeable as they had been in the past. Range was now a conscious factor in creating polyphonic music. Our now-familiar names for the four parts—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass—began to be used, and textures based on shared musical material became common.

Soon, the euphonious purity of a style rooted in imitative and non-imitative polyphony became the norm and the so-called Renaissance period in music (c. 1450–c. 1600) was in full flower. Composers such as Josquin des Prez (c. 1450–1521) became international figures who gained fame for their works in both sacred and secular circles. In addition to crafting masses and motets (polyphonic settings of non-liturgical Latin sacred texts), composers also created madrigals, settings of secular poetry, which became extremely popular in Italy and England. Some English madrigals also took on new lives as lute songs when performed by solo voice and lute, rather than by a vocal ensemble.

Emma Kirkby and Julian Bream explain some of these developments, and Kirkby also discusses Renaissance and early Baroque dance. Instrumental music began to flourish as well, with ensembles performing dances, transcriptions of vocal pieces, and various original works. At the same time, Protestant musicians such as Martin Luther (1483–1546) began composing chorales: sacred hymns for congregations rather than priests to sing during church services. Later, Protestant composers wrote polyphonic motets and even masses as well as musical stories of Jesus' suffering and death called Passions. Among these late seventeenth-century composers were Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) and Dietrich Buxtehude (c. 1636–1709).

In the early 1600s, a new style emerged, and musical practitioners were quick to acknowledge and embrace this development. In 1602, for example, the singer-composer Giulio Caccini [1551–1618] entitled his latest collection of songs *Le nuove musiche* [The New Musics]. In his preface to the volume Caccini told