

CHAPTER TWO

TEXT CRITICISM AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES

The place of expression in musical performance is inextricably bound to expression's textual status. Before we examine the problem of text and expression, we need to inquire about the status of both terms. In what follows, I will first trace the history of textual criticism – since the Renaissance the most prominent branch of the discipline of philology, the study of the historical meanings of languages – from its origins in the ancient world to the present, paying increasing attention to its application in musicology. The exploration of the contexts of Otto Jahn's Mozart scholarship has already laid some of the groundwork for this inquiry, for Jahn was both a member of an influential generation of German philologists and a founder of the discipline of musicology.

My discussion of text, however, will not stop there. Discussions of performance as a concept have recently enjoyed a higher profile in musicology. This has led to the asking of some difficult questions, not least the one about the location of the “musical work.” Is the “work” to be found on the page of the “Urtext” edition? In the author's autograph? What if a “work” has two faces? Or is the “work” the sum-total of all of the performances that the work has ever seen? It will not be possible do more than sketch these problems; nonetheless, the survey that follows here is meant both to provide both a firmer basis for the discussions of text and performance in the succeeding chapters and a summary of the relations

between these two important concepts. When Wolfgang Plath claimed that there is no especially “musical” way to write history, he suggested that it might not be possible to integrate the study of performance with the study of text.

The Right Text

Readers have been asking questions about the truth, and therefore the origin, of the texts they read since these texts have been written down. Even a barely adequate telling of the history of textual criticism in the West would take up many books; here I can sketch only the outline of the shadow cast by an immense problem that was the central concern of humanistic scholarship for generations: the search for the right text.

A fundamental challenge for the textual critic is the decision between two competing variants of the same text;¹ in many ways, Western approaches to text criticism can be divided into two camps based on their approach to it. The one camp relies on the critic’s ability to compare as many witnesses of a text to each other and then use knowledge gained from

¹ The paragraphs that follow here are much indebted to D.C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992), especially chapter 8 “Criticizing a Text: Textual Criticism,” 294-346. The standard work in English on music philology is James Grier, *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). A good introduction to these issues in the context of performance practice is Philip Brett, “Text, Context and the Early Music Editor” in *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 83-114.

this process, and their own knowledge of the text's context, to sort the "authorial" from the (merely) "scribal." This method of "analogy" is often called the "Alexandrian," named for the librarians at the ancient library in Alexandria who first practiced it as they sought to reconstruct the texts of the Homeric epics – which, as it turned out, never existed – by comparing the large numbers of sources they had collected and using their sense of Homer's style to correct those passages that did not agree with one another.

The other camp is skeptical of transmitted texts. Named for the Alexandrians' rivals, the "Pergamanian" school of thought depends, as D.C. Greetham has written, "upon a stoic acceptance of the inevitable corruption of all temporal, earthly phenomena" and "maintains that is impossible to create or re-create an ideal form [of authorial usage] and that the only honest recourse is to select that specific utterance or that extant document which... seems best to represent authorial intention..."² In practice, the Pergamanian method favors the use of one text, judged to be the least imperfect, as the source for an edition. Each approach has its advantages – and its disadvantages.

The Alexandrian approach aims, at least in theory, for a result close to the archetypal authorial document. There are, however, good reasons to be suspicious of these results. First, because they rely on the individual critic's subjective judgment, Alexandrian techniques are always open to challenge by other critics. My sense of Homer's (or Mozart's) "language" or "style" may differ from yours, and yet it is precisely this sense upon which I as an editor must depend. Second, Alexandrian critics, when faced

² *Ibid.*, 299-300.

with a large quantity of readings, tend to be shy of idiosyncrasy. They often chose those variants that lead to a “smoother” text, thus sacrificing the more “crooked” readings to be found in real historical witnesses.³ Finally, Alexandrian editions, which are really combinations of readings culled from many sources, are historical constructs. They may be closer to an unreachable original, but by the same token they are, in a real sense, fictions. A text of the sort an Alexandrian editor presents never really previously existed.

A Pergamanian edition, based on only one textual witness, is more modest in its goals – and therefore in its results. It is this modesty of result that can make a Pergamanian edition unsatisfactory (today an edition like this is often called a “best-text” edition, in German a “Quellenedition”).⁴ Should an editor really allow patently false readings, in the case of a musical edition, wrong notes? Particularly in scribal traditions where authors were often openly critical of scribal quality (for instance in Mozart’s Vienna) such an approach seems fraught with danger.⁵ Yet it is, perhaps, the only method with a secure historical footing.⁶ In one respect, however, that is in musical performance, a Pergamanian approach can lead to *immodest* results. As we have seen, Alexandrian editions tend to have a

³ I borrow the words “smooth” and “crooked” from Richard Taruskin. Cf. his *Text and Act* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 316-21. See also the treatment of his writings in the section “Historical Performance and Textual Criticism” later in this chapter.

⁴ Wolfgang Rehm, “Quellenforschung und Dokumentation in Verhältnis zur Editionstechnik” in *Musik. Edition. Interpretation. Gedenkschrift Gunter Henle*, ed. Martin Bente (Munich: Henle, 1980), 410-16.

⁵ For simplicity’s sake I use the word “scribal” to refer to printing and engraving as well.

⁶ Cf. Grier, 109.

smoother surface; this can lead to smoother, *less* adventurous performances. Performances from one source (a facsimile, say) can be just the opposite. I will return to this phenomenon at the end of this chapter.

As practiced in the European middle ages textual criticism tended to hew closer to the Pergamanian model, if only because of the relative scarcity of manuscripts to compare with one another in the Alexandrian manner. To this might be added an attitude towards historical documents that put a premium on acceptance of received tradition.⁷ A more “critical” attitude arose around the end of the fourteenth century, as humanist scholars, following the examples of such scholars and poets as Petrarch, began to accumulate substantial numbers of manuscript witnesses to works of ancient literature and philosophy. Here the pendulum swung in the Alexandrian direction, as scholars began to seek out those witnesses among these documents that were “telling the truth.” The arrival of the printing press (and, perhaps, a different attitude towards received truth brought about by the Protestant reformation) brought the practice of text critique north to Germany and the Low Countries. Scholars like Joseph Justus Scalinger (1484-1556), regarded by many as the “founder of modern textual criticism” applied both careful description of manuscripts and a sophisticated set of what we would today call “interpretive strategies” in their quest to sort good readings from bad ones.⁸

⁷ The origin of the term “reception history” lies in the history of legal theory; the term originally referred to the “reception” of Roman law. See Horst Rüdiger, *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur* Band I (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1961).

⁸ See Greetham, 312.

Their work generated a body of theory that in many respects performs the same tasks as the techniques of “hermeneutics” set down in early nineteenth-century Germany; that is, theory that attempts to codify how a text critic might “put himself in the mind” of the author of the text under examination.⁹ So it is no surprise that a leading contemporary German theorist of musical philology, Georg Feder, sees the origin of today’s musical philology not in the nineteenth-century efforts of musicology’s founders, but in these Renaissance text critics.¹⁰

When Renaissance critics imagined texts, however, they did so in an intellectual context where the word *history* itself had another meaning. In the late eighteenth century the shape and direction of history was the subject of intense thought and speculation (not least through the thought of proto-historicists like Herder, as I argued in chapter one).¹¹ So while the techniques of textual criticism of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and the theories that developed around them, may well be seen as predecessors of our own, the arrival of “history” as its own concept in the

⁹ In the first years of the nineteenth century Friedrich Schleiermacher separated hermeneutics from theology and law and made of it “a general theory of understanding” the goal of which is to understand a text “better than its author.” See Günter Menckenstock, “Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 8*, ed. Howard Craig (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 531-39.

¹⁰ Georg Feder, *Musikphilologie: Eine Einführung in die musikalische Textkritik, Hermeneutik und Editionstechnik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987), 19-21.

¹¹ I follow Reinhart Koselleck’s writings on the history of the word “history.” See his article, “Geschichte” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland Bd. IV*, eds. Otto Brunner Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Kotta, 1972), 678-717. I will return to the connection between “historical thinking” and the status of musical texts more than once in this dissertation.

middle and late eighteenth century gave these techniques an entirely new use. In the eighteenth century, as Reinhart Koselleck has observed, *historia universalis* splintered into any number of independent “histories.”¹² As we have seen in the previous chapter, the emergence of historicism – including the idea that every human action was conditioned by its own history – put human history in all of its diversity at the center of the European intellectual imagination, separating it from “natural history” and even “divine history.” Textual criticism did not remain unaffected. Indeed, the realization that the Bible itself was a historical document, in the making since the first Renaissance text critics began hunting down forgeries, and that the search for its “real” text was a doomed to failure, led to a fundamental rethinking of philological practice.

This rethinking seems at first to create a paradox. The new philologists, students of the history of language (for by now this is what text critics considered themselves to be), were committed both to an essentially interpretive enterprise – that of the restoration of the past in all of its detail – and to growing standards of technical precision. The familiar problems of the Alexandrian approach left too much of the critic’s judgment in the process; this was especially dangerous with canonical religious texts, which were now, in a sense, “historicized” – made “relative” – and thus open to the same methods of critical inquiry as any other texts. As a response to this challenge, a new generation of critics attempted to develop editorial methods that placed the critic’s work on as “objective” a footing as possible.

¹² *Ibid.*, 678-95.

The most prominent new theory was proposed by the philologist Karl Lachmann. The technique he created, filiation, is designed to distinguish between two readings that seem equally plausible. Yet only one of these “good readings” could have descended from authorial original. Instead of yielding to the necessity of choosing between the two, Lachmann proposed an ingenious solution: examination of the sources that contain these readings for other signs of their authenticity, or rather lack of it. These signs are scribal errors. For while any “good” readings might slip into the chain of a text’s transmission at any point, the appearance of certain kinds of errors, namely errors that are not obvious to the scribe (slips of the pen that nevertheless make sense) can be localized, allowing for the drawing of a “family tree” or stemma. If two sources contain the same such errors (“conjunctive” errors), and one of the sources reports at least one of its own (a “seperative” error), then a relation can be inferred between them. The source with the “seperative” error must be a “descendant” of the one without; the two occupy the same branch of the tree.¹³

This is philology with “limited, but achievable, editorial aims.”¹⁴ It went a long way towards establishing the “scientific” credentials of the “historical-critical” method.¹⁵ When practiced according to its strict principles it can produce striking results, at the cost of not being able to say

¹³ For further explications of this theory see Grier, chapter three “Musical Sources and Stemmatic Filiation” 62-95 and Paul Maas, *Textual Criticism* (trans. Barbara Flower), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958. As I will argue in chapter three, stemmatic filiation has little application in Mozart studies, where so many autographs survive.

¹⁴ Greetham, 323.

¹⁵ See chapter one, above.

anything about the actual “Ur-text,” which after all, is not supposed to be a copy and therefore is unreachable using stemmatic techniques.¹⁶ Yet in the end it failed to solve the “problem” of the editor’s subjective critical perspective. And as Lachmann’s own work demonstrated, not even he was able to resist the temptations of critical intervention, when he thought the editorial task demanded it. When editing the *Nibelungenlied*, for instance, Lachmann *did* seek an “Ur-text,” abandoning any pretense of stemmatic objectivity.¹⁷

It was at exactly this moment in the history of text criticism that musical philology emerged as a key technique of the new discipline of musicology. Some of its founders, like Otto Jahn, were classical philologists by profession. Like Lachmann, however, they found themselves trapped in the dialectic between historical idealism and empirical critique. The models for the first complete works editions were not the careful, sober editions of the classics – like Lachmann’s Lucretius edition – but rather the “monument” editions of the German vernacular, like Lachmann’s thoroughly subjective *Nibelungenlied*. The direct descendents of the monuments editions are today’s complete editions; the problems their editors faced are the problems we face today.

Abstract tools like stemmatics made text criticism more technical and ushered a new division between “editing” and “interpretation” that

¹⁶ See below for discussion of the term “Urtext” in musicology.

¹⁷ Greetham, 321.

some observers maintain still holds true today.¹⁸ As Greetham observes, “a conservative devotion to technical procedure over enlightened conjecture” began to affect a division in German nineteenth-century criticism between “lower” (technical, dealing with actual materials) and “higher” (interpretative) criticism.¹⁹ One still encounters this division, for instance in Georg Feder’s guide to *Musikphilologie*.²⁰ We have already seen one way in which this division played out in German academia. *Geistesgeschichte* as theorized by Wilhelm Dilthey aimed to pass over lower criticism and concentrate only on interpretation, now a separate discipline. The result, in musical scholarship, was that an observer like Wolfgang Plath could plausibly accuse a Dilthey-influenced Mozart scholarship of having “neglected the fundamentals” of historical research. By the turn of twentieth century, as McGann argues, textual criticism faced a choice between two unappetizing alternatives: on the one hand “dry-as-dust” textual criticism, and on the other a “retreat” into the “prison house” of language.²¹ I will consider the first here, and return to the second later in this chapter.

An adequate survey of post-Lachmannian editorial techniques would take up far more space than is available here. In broad summary, however, it would seem fair to say that the old conflict between “Alexandrian” and “Pergamian” approaches was not overcome. Joseph Bédier, one of

¹⁸ This theme appears often in the writings of Jerome McGann. For a short summary see his “A Note on the Current State of Humanities Scholarship,” *Critical Inquiry* 30/2 (2004), 409-413.

¹⁹ Greetham, 323.

²⁰ See Feder, 56-82.

²¹ Jerome McGann, “A Note on the Current State of Humanities Scholarship,” 410.

Lachmann's most vocal critics, took issue with the fact that most Lachmannian stemmata included only two branches, and were thus unable to account for multiple copies of the same exemplar and the resultant possibility of all sorts of cross-pollination between branches, whether by "conflation" (two exemplars) or by "contamination" (the use of remembered readings from one exemplar while copying from another).²² Bédier's alternative was the old "best-text" procedure, with the difference, perhaps, that he was less pessimistic about it than the original Pergamanians; a medievalist, he counted on his critical skills to pick the best text from a selection of many candidates. As an editor, he then favored the exclusive use of the readings from this witness to establish a "best" text.

Other critics tried to move in the opposite direction, towards the use of even more technical tools. These included all manner of analyses, including the construction of a "positive critical apparatus" where all variant readings were arranged in chart-like listings in groups of threes. If any two agree in their difference from the third, then the third "could not have been the intermediary between the other two."²³ Another solution to the challenge of horizontal conflation and contamination was proposed by W.W. Greg, who devised an imposing mathematical system for determining which variants had descended from which.²⁴ As Greetham writes, "[Greg's work] is unfortunately symptomatic of a type of textual

²² See Greetham, 324, for a complete discussion.

²³ *Ibid.*, 328. As Greetham points out, this is really a kind of statistical analysis.

²⁴ For a very simplified account see Greetham 327-328. Note the similarity with Arthur Mendel and Carl Hempel's thinking, which I discuss above in chapter one.

criticism which is more enamored of the system it constructs than of the results it might create.”²⁵

Greg returned to methodological debates with the “copy-text” method, which he proposed as a solution to questions raised by multiple versions of Shakespearian texts. The “copy-text” method distinguishes between readings of “accidental” elements (like punctuation) and “substantial” elements (such as different words). “Accidental” readings in disseminated sources, like first editions and manuscript copies, are to be treated with suspicion, since it not likely that they are the result of authorial intervention. “Substantial” readings, however, weigh far more in the “copy-text” system, since they are more likely the result of active editorial intervention. The advantage of “copy-text” is that it brings system to the otherwise highly unsystematic technique of Alexandrian textual criticism. The editor’s judgment, however, remains central. Where is the dividing line between “substantial” and “accidental”? How can we know that a “substantial” variant originates from the author? What is the authority of a variant that emerges directly from a work’s immediate reception? In other words, can the audience write the work?

Many more recent theories of textual criticism are concerned with this last question. The move towards a more “social” conception of texts, that is a conception of them that allows for texts to have been constructed by both authors and readers, can be traced in part to the “Annales” school of historiography. The French *Annales* historians, who took their name from the journal in which they often published their research, wrote history

²⁵ Greetham, 328.

“from the bottom up.”²⁶ “Social” textual criticism follows an analogous strategy. The content of a text is not determined exclusively by its author. History is not necessarily the story of those who “made” it but also the story of those who lived it. The analogy with text criticism is that the meaning of a text depends on those who interpret it.²⁷

Theories of Reception

“Reception theory” approaches texts from a similar perspective. Originally made famous by the members of the “Constance School” of literary criticism (most prominently Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser), it eventually gained considerable influence in musicology.²⁸ In Jauss’s

²⁶ See P. Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The “Annales” School 1929-1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) and Lutz Raphael, *Die Erben von Bloch und Febvre: Annales-Geschichtsschreibung und nouvelle histoire in Frankreich 1945-1980* (Stuttgart: Klett-Kotta, 1994).

²⁷ A plea for such a “historical” criticism that draws more on Bakhtin than theories of the *Annales* school is Jerome J. McGann, “Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism” in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 15-66.

²⁸ For an introduction in German see Klaus Kropfinger, “Rezeptionsforschung” in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart Sachteil Bd. 8*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), 200-24. For a further information, including an essay by Jauss, see Hermann Danuser and Friedhelm Krummacher, eds., *Rezeptionsästhetik und Rezeptionsgeschichte in der Musikwissenschaft* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1991). See also Jim Samson’s article “Reception” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Second Edition vol. 20*, eds. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 908-11. A study outside of musicology with wide-ranging implications for textual criticism is Stanley Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

words, reception theory demands that the history of literature and art be considered “a process of aesthetic communication, in which the three instances of author, work, and recipient are equal participants.”²⁹ Jauss’s insight builds on the philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer, in whose writings the present-day historian and the historical actor each have their own “horizon of expectations.”³⁰ In Jauss’s *Rezeptionsästhetik*, the two horizons “fuse,” allowing for a compromise between the archaic interest of the historian and real aesthetic presence of the historical work of art.

Notated music provides a unique field for reception theory because it can be received both as instruction for performance and as sounding object; that is it has (at least) two autonomous categories of receivers, listeners *and* performers. In what follows here, however, I will pass over *listening* as reception and focus more on *performance* as reception. The latter kind of reception raises a question that has been hovering over these pages: the question of the identity of the musical “work.” Instead of summarizing the literature on this topic, which is enormous,³¹ I will concentrate here on one (productive) debate carried out in the 1960s between Klaus Harro Hilzinger and Carl Dahlhaus.

Hilzinger writes from the point of view of a literary scholar searching in musical editorial practice for solutions to the problems facing

²⁹ Quoted in Kropfinger, 202.

³⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

³¹ See the discussion of Lydia Goehr’s writings on the work concept below.

the editor of the literary text.³² He sees the practice of editing music as an example of how one might move beyond the “dialectic of historicism and positivism” by practicing a “new hermeneutics” in the spirit of *Rezeptionstheorie* that accepts the “historicity” of the work of art, while at the same time admitting that the work of art is “actualized” by “today’s critical interest.” One goal of this new hermeneutics is the avoidance of the old Alexandrian problem. As he argues, the notion that the editor is the “executor of the author’s will” leads often to “a falsification of historical reality.”

The practice of the musical editor, as Hilzinger sees it, has always included an extra level of interpretation, since the goal of a musical edition is not the “writing intention” (*Schreib-Intention*) of the author, but the “sound intention” (*Klang-Intention*) (page 200).³³ In earlier music this forces the editor to transcribe, since bringing an early notation to sound directly is beyond all but the most specialized. In later music transcription becomes less and less necessary, but the special qualities of music (multiply-authorized performances and text, as in the case of Schubert and Chopin, for example) require special editions with multiple readings (page 209).

None of this sounds very controversial, especially when one considers that the musicological authorities he cites, among others Walter

³² Klaus Harro Hilzinger, “Über kritische Edition literarischer und musikalischer Texte,” *Euphorion* 68 (1974), 198-210. Further page references will be made in the text.

³³ For more on this distinction see Georg Feder and Hubert Unverricht, “Urtext und Urtextausgaben,” *Die Musikforschung* (1959), 432-54.

Dürr and Georg Feder, hardly suggest radical solutions to these problems.³⁴ Yet Dahlhaus's response to Hilzinger is surprisingly sharp in tone.³⁵ Reception theory, writes Dahlhaus, seeks "to put philology before a tribunal," charging it with adherence to an "outdated metaphysics" (page 233). These charges are without foundation, Dahlhaus argues, since textual criticism (what he calls "philology") is first of all a practice whose goal has always been the establishment of "the right text" and not a historical philosophy that reflects on the weaknesses of the term "text" itself (page 237). Furthermore, the charge is ideologically motivated: making the term "Urtext" historically relative is a symptom of "the recently spreading mistrust of the category of the autonomous, closed-within-itself work, a mistrust that has much to do with the experience of the newest music and a tendency towards sociology" (page 241). Dahlhaus senses a slippery slope. Should the very identity of the musical work – the text the composer left behind – become only the first link in a chain that leads from a musical work's composition through all of its performances, then the work's "aesthetic presence" which is at once historical (it was composed for a

³⁴ For example the decision to present the versions of Schubert songs embellished by Johann Michael Vogel and (supposedly) authorized by Schubert. See Franz Schubert, "Lieder Bd. 1 Teile a und b" in *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, ed. Walter Dürr (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1970). For a skeptical take on the Vogl revisions see Richard Kramer, *Distant Cycles: Schubert and the Conceiving of Song* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 49-52.

³⁵ Carl Dahlhaus, "Philologie und Rezeptionsgeschichte: Bemerkungen zur Theorie der Edition" in *Werke Bd. I: Historik*, (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2001), 233-46. Further citations will be made in the text. For an overview in English on Dahlhaus's thought see James Hepokoski, "The Dahlhaus Project and Its Extra-Musicological Sources," *Nineteenth Century Music* 14/3 (1991), 221-46. Dahlhaus' thought on the musical work is set forth in his *Foundations of Music History* trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

specific time and place) and unhistorical (historical musical works, removed from this context, are part of a present, real musical life), is in danger of being extinguished (page 244).

The Hilzinger-Dahlhaus debate is now itself history; it remains important, however, because it seems that Dahlhaus's energetic defense of the work concept has accomplished what he himself probably intended. Many musicologists who specialize in textual criticism, particularly those who produce critical editions, feel insulated from the large numbers of music scholars who, for any number of reasons, find textual criticism old-fashioned, "dry-as-dust" and ideological.³⁶ The reception scholar Klaus Kropfing, for instance, one of the few who has pursued the issues raised by the Hilzinger/Dahlhaus debate with persistence, sounds somewhat resigned when he compares Beethoven's ideal of the work concept and his acceptance of (reception-driven) alterations of his texts with the difference between "earthly and heavenly love."³⁷

³⁶ In this regard see Feder's emphatic rejection of reception theory: "Die Vorstellung von Varianten in musikalischer Kritik und Hermeneutik" in *Musikalische Hermeneutik im Entwurf: Thesen und Diskussionen*, eds. Gernot Gruber, and Siegfried Mauser (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1994), 205-32.

³⁷ Klaus Kropfing, "Von der Werkstatt zur Aufführung. Was bedeuten Beethovens Skizzen für die Werkinterpretation?" in *Über Musik im Bilde* eds. Bodo Bischoff, Andreas Eichhorn, Thomas Gerlich, and Ulrich Siebert (Cologne: Verlag Christoph Dohr, 1995), 231-40, here 239.

Historical Performance and Textual Criticism

Starting in the 1950s, the movement that would later come to be known as historical performance practice began to take shape.³⁸ Much of its early products had a powerfully “historicist” feel (the “back-to-history” work of Arnold Dolmetsch, for example);³⁹ after the war, such performing activities came to be complimented by an increasing interest in textual issues.⁴⁰ Critical response to “authentic” performance, as it soon came to be called, was mixed, particularly in Germany. An early and prominent skeptic was Theodor W. Adorno, whose critique of historical performance in the early 1950s, summed up in an essay entitled “Bach Defended against his Devotees,” was to have a long and profound echo.⁴¹

Academic musicology in Great Britain and the United States, never, as in Germany, completely separated from performance, took ever greater interest in practical issues of “historical” performance; the proliferation of specialized ensembles for medieval and renaissance music on American college and university campuses was just one very visible aspect of this

³⁸ For a history of historical performance see Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988).

³⁹ Playing Mozart’s piano in the early 1940s, for instance, was not so much a matter of scientific reconstruction of the past as it was a matter of “feeling” the past in a Diltheyian sense. See Rudolf Steglich, “Studien an Mozarts Hammerflügel,” *Neues Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1 (1941), 181-210.

⁴⁰ For instance as reflected by the increased interest in “Urtext” editions. See Georg Feder, and Hubert Unverricht, “Urtext und Urtextausgaben,” *Die Musikforschung* (1959), 432-54.

⁴¹ Theodor W. Adorno, “Bach Defended against his Devotees” in *Prisms* trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 133-46.

development.⁴² By the late 1970s, as historical performance practice began to take an ever more prominent role in so-called “mainstream” classical music, several North American universities had established working relationships with historical performers that offered excellent opportunities for cooperation between teaching, research, and performance.⁴³

In these cooperative endeavors it seemed that each kind of specialist had a role to play.⁴⁴ The scholars were to provide the performers with “correct” texts, instruct them about the appropriate instruments to use, and inform them about historical practices. The performers were to then realize that which had been worked out “around the seminar table.” It was in many ways a union of the utopian impulses inherent in both historicism and positivism. Expressed in music, the *feeling* of “how it really was” – the historicist’s dream – seemed more real. And the positivist enterprise of “scientific” textual criticism had found an ideal “application:” it is therefore no surprise that a leading figure in American university-based performance practice was Arthur Mendel, whose positivist historiographical theories we encountered in chapter one.

⁴² See Gwynn S. McPeck, “Musicology in the United States: A Survey of Recent Trends” in *Studies in Musicology: Essays in the History, Style, and Bibliography of Music in Memory of Glen Haydon*, ed. James W. Pruett (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 273-74.

⁴³ For example Neal Zaslaw’s cooperation with Christopher Hogwood, Jaap Schroeder, and the Academy of Ancient Music that lead to both a complete recording of the complete Mozart symphonies and Zaslaw’s book *Mozart's Symphonies: Context, Performance Practice, Reception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁴⁴ For a survey of the academic status quo in historically informed performance in the late 1980s see the essays in *Performance Practice: Music After 1600* eds. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989). Cf. as well John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7-14.

Exactly this utopian quality, however, offered skeptics an attractive target; in English-speaking musicology one of the earliest critical voices was that of Laurence Dreyfus. Drawing on Adorno's critique (the title of his essay – "Early Music Defended against its Devotees" – is a play on Adorno's title) Dreyfus aimed to expose "authenticity," then a buzzword of historical performers, as an ideological mirage. A key section of his argument is worth citing at length:

...as a regulative ideal, authenticity expresses a supposed opposition to the self-aggrandizing individualism prevalent in Mainstream musical praxis. In the typical version of this widespread myth, the individual Mainstream artist harnesses the musical text to his own will, thereby glorifying self-expression at the expense of the composer's intentions. A musician humbled by authenticity, on the other hand, acts willingly in the service of the composer, thereby committing himself to "truth," or, at the very least, accuracy. But there's the rub. For if we peer behind the uplifting language, we find that one attains authenticity by following the textbook rules for "scientific method." Early Music, in other words, does not preach some emphatic leap into the past in an act of imaginative *Verstehen*. What it has in mind is a strictly empirical program to verify historical practices, which, when all is said and done, are magically transformed into the composer's intentions.⁴⁵

Dreyfus charges that the historical performance movement had, in effect, carried the neo-positivist program we encountered in chapter one into the conservatory classroom, the recording studio, and onto concert stage.

⁴⁵ Laurence Dreyfus, "Early Music Defended against its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century" in *The Musical Quarterly* 59/3 (Summer 1983), 297-310, here 299.

Texts established by “scientific” means are then to be “executed” in the “correct” manner. In the model he describes, performance lies directly over the “correct” text, the “truth” of which shines directly through it without interference from the performer. Drawing on Adorno’s critique, he suggests that the historical performer converts his “desire to liquidate Romantic subjectivity, which appears as a form of promiscuity” into a musical practice where nothing counts but the historical “facts” of a work’s text and the practices first used to realize it. The habitus of the early musicians, then, is really a “rationalization for a defensive posture.”⁴⁶

Dreyfus’s argument, however, does not stop there, for he does not subscribe to Adorno’s arguments in their entirety. After outlining historical performance’s origins in rejections of musical modernity (another “defensive posture”), Dreyfus argues that Adorno failed to realize historical performance’s critical potential. Because historical performance can defamiliarize the great works of the classical canon, it can (ironically) repeat “the provocation incited by its cultural adversary: it co-opts the defiant scream of the early avant-garde and becomes itself a threat to established musical values.”⁴⁷

In the rest of the article, Dreyfus explains this “progressive” potential. One sign of this “revolutionary” quality is the resistance historical performance elicits from “mainstream” musicology. One such resistor was Frederick Neumann, a performance practice scholar whose career seemed to focus almost exclusively on debunking historical

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 308.

performers' readings of the historical record with neo-positivistic arguments.⁴⁸ Neumann's resistance, which focused on what he saw as Early Music's alleged failures of logic and sloppy empirical research, is a sign that historical performance can be more than positivist objectivism, because it has become the object of positivist objection. The better kind of historical performance "must be recognized as an evolving and necessarily incomplete paradigm rather than a set of documented index cards set atop inferences culled from Freshman logic texts."⁴⁹

What does this have to say about text? At the end of his article, Dreyfus reveals a final insight: "Early Music can be viewed as a classical hermeneutic activity, in that it attempts to ferret out meanings hidden beneath the surface."⁵⁰ In Dreyfus's final analysis this potential for critique, in combination with the restorative, reconstructive impulses of the philological enterprise, makes historical performance practice one of the only historical practices that attempts to reveal both the written past *and* enrich the sounding present.

Richard Taruskin's polemical and deeply skeptical critique of historical performance followed on Dreyfus's, and ignited what came to be known as the "authenticity debates."⁵¹ Taruskin warns constantly of the

⁴⁸ Neumann's contributions included "The Use of Baroque Treatises in Musical Performance," *Music and Letters* 48 (1967), 315-24; "Facts and Fiction about Overdotting," *The Musical Quarterly* 58 (1977), 155-85; "Once More. The 'French Overture Style,'" *Early Music* 7 (1979), 39-45; "The Overdotting Syndrome: Anatomy of a Delusion," *Musical Quarterly* 68 (1981), 305-47; and *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

⁴⁹ Dreyfus, "Early Music Defended against its Devotees," 313.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁵¹ Taruskin's interventions were later collected in *Text and Act*. See also John Butt's review "Acting up a Text: Scholarship of Performance and the Performance of

danger of falling into simple, oppositional thinking when reflecting on text and performance. “Text and act,” for instance, need by no means to be handled as opposites, for this can lead too easily to the hegemony of the first over the second; in positivist textual scholarship, Taruskin charges, “documents outrank people, no matter who.”⁵² There is much to find in names: for instance, the euphemism “historically informed performance” fails the “invidious antonym test” (its opposite would be the pejorative “historically uninformed performance”).⁵³ Such a label is really an ideological tool with which to trump “mere performers.” Further, he claims that the sound of historical performance is the sound of our time; it is a “modernist” phenomenon.

The musicologist, he argues in a colorful turn of phrase, is prone to abuse authority, appearing as “Papa Doc” before the cowed performer, and brandishing the “veritable stick of positivism” in a kind of “scientific reign of terror.”⁵⁴ Making reference to the political debates surrounding the conservative judge and legal scholar Robert Bork, whose later nomination to the United States Supreme Court and subsequent failure to win confirmation by United States Senate ignited storms of political

Scholarship,” *Early Music* 24/2 (1996), 323-32, and his discussion in *Playing with History*, 14-24. Similar diagnoses (that Early Music is more conditioned by its present than by a historical past) include Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, “What We are Doing with Early Music is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree that the Word Loses Much of its Intended Meaning,” *Early Music* 12 (1984), 13-16 and Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments – The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁵² Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 45.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

⁵⁴ Here, once again, the neo-positivism of Arthur Mendel serves as a negative example. See *Ibid.*, 42-43 and *passim*.

controversy in the years when Taruskin's essays first appeared, Taruskin urges vigilance against a "strict constructionist" musicology, that is a musicology that seeks to exclude all of a work's reception from any exploration of its meaning.⁵⁵

He is equally merciless with positivism's supposed opposite, hermeneutics. Referring to the arguments of Leo Treitler (which we will encounter ourselves below) he claims to expose a false binary opposition between "conviction" – presumably a quality of hermeneutic approaches – and "truth," the coin of positivism. That Treitler's cites historicist philosophers like R.G. Collingwood and Giambattista Vico, on whose theories Treitler builds his argument that intuition and conviction are also kinds of truth, that is for an "artistic" mode of writing history, is for Taruskin a bad sign. Vico, Taruskin reminds us, was "rehabilitated by Nietzsche ... and revered ... thence by race theorists like Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain."⁵⁶

It is a case of guilt by association; the nearness of much historicist writing to totalitarian thought makes using it without reflection gravely dangerous for scholarship. "I'll take bourgeois, democratic positivism any day," Taruskin writes, because the alternative

...is the stock-in-trade of zealots and bigots. It despises rational constraint. Its primary products are propaganda...and inspired artistry. Certainty is the artist's sine qua non and the scholar's

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 31-37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

mortal enemy. I believe we should be wary of a scholar who thinks he is an artist.⁵⁷

Note the equation of “inspired artistry” with bigotry and propaganda: this contradiction between scholarship that makes bad art and art that makes bad scholarship is at the heart of Taruskin’s thinking. To put it another way, for Taruskin, relativism is something only the artist can afford.

Taruskin’s writings are occasionally so strongly worded that they take on an *ad hominem* quality; at their best, however, they present a refreshingly undogmatic approach to making historical music come life. He prefers the excitement of “crooked performance” to dry re-creation; each realm, critical source studies and exciting performance, should be held to its own high standards. Taruskin’s challenge put the relation between textual criticism and performance at the center of the debate about historical performance practice at a time when the traditional prestige of philology was coming under attack by the proponents of the so-called new musicology. These attacks were partly motivated by distaste for the coldness of positivism (see chapter one), but some critics went further, calling the entire textual enterprise into question.

Rose Rosengard Subotnik, for instance, criticizes what she sees as the “limiting” effect of strictly textual, “positivist” scholarship:

[Positivism’s] conceptual limitations may in some ways actually counteract scholarly efforts to preserve for us the original spirit of earlier music. In positivist studies, for example, questions typically do not arise (because they cannot)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

about the inherent purposes and the results of reconstructing textual accuracy. Achieving textual accuracy is more often than not simply accepted as an end of musical scholarship, rather than envisioned as part of a larger project. But even if we assume that reconstruction of a composer's exact intent is the highest duty of musical study ... does it follow that textual accuracy is the best means to such a reconstruction?⁵⁸

Subotnik's critique follows on Taruskin's, but takes it a step further.

Where Taruskin still sees a role for "bourgeois democratic positivism"

Subotnik argues that Anglo-American musicology (which figures in her writings as an opposite to a supposedly "continentalist" musicology) has made a scholarly practice, textual criticism, into an ideology. This

ideology is designed to keep destabilizing factors, like political critique

and critical theories of language, at a safe distance from the discipline. In

other words, a musicology that sees textual criticism as a central task will

retain its precious "autonomy," which for Subotnik is, like "positivism,"

perniciously ideological.

This line of critique marks an early appearance in English-speaking musicology of poststructuralist approaches to text. If structuralist strategies, from Saussure onwards, had depended on viewing all of human activity as text,⁵⁹ poststructuralists turned the full force of their suspicion on texts and

⁵⁸ Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "On Grounding Chopin" in *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*, (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 145-146.

⁵⁹ For an overview, see Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). A classic text of structuralist anthropology is Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). Gary Tomlinson applies Geertz's theories to musicology in Gary

their creators. Texts were increasingly seen as unstable, their meanings contradictory, the very agency of their author thrown into question.⁶⁰ A text is no longer the bearer of a discrete volume of information to be interpreted; it is the “site” of discourse. Much “new musicological” writing is enriched by these approaches, while the traditional musicological quest for the “right text” and its interpretation finds less and less of a place. Indeed, in the context of the disappearing author, previously bracing debates on “authenticity” take on oddly superfluous quality. And in a climate where interest in the histories of texts seems always in danger of being undone by contingencies of text and authorship, any attempt at “historically informed performance” can feel like a hopeless quest.

Yet at the height of the debates about the new musicology, several influential voices could be heard to claim that musical performance was the model that might best restore some sense of purpose to the discipline. Leo Treitler’s review of Joseph Kerman’s *Contemplating Music* is a prominent

Tomlinson, “The Web of Culture: A Context for Musicology,” *Nineteenth Century Music* 7/3 (1984), 350-362.

⁶⁰ Of course, in the influential circles of the American “New Criticism” the author had been marginalized for some time. For the classic exposition of the so-called “intentional fallacy” see W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” in *On Literary Intention*, ed. David Newton-de Molina (Edinburgh: University Press, 1976), 1-13. On poststructuralism cf. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981). See also Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” in *Image – Music – Text* (selected and translated by Stephen Heath) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48. A famous poststructuralist text on musical performance is Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice” in *Ibid.*, 179-89. For a discussion of all of these in relation to historical performance see Butt, “Historical Performance and ‘Truth to the Composer’: Rehabilitating Intention” in *Playing with History*, 74-95.

example.⁶¹ Kerman had criticized American musicology for its reliance on “positivism” (that is the assembly of texts and the “facts” about them) and called for a return to interpretation, or what he called “criticism.” For Treitler, Kerman’s error is not that he criticized musicology on these grounds, but that he set up a false opposition between scholarship that studies the texts themselves and scholarship that aims to interpret what they mean. Like Dreyfus, he sees in historical performance, or indeed in any kind performance, the possibility of bridging the gap between two opposing poles, between “positivist,” “modernist,” and “objectivist” thinking on the one hand, and hermeneutic, expressive thinking on the other:

It is only when we restrict our activity to the first pole that there can be any pretense of a separation of subject and object. But then the reading is of a very limited sort, and it is likely to give a highly distorted image of the object, whether that image is in the form of an edition or a performance. This is a most important point. The grounds of a theory and a critique of performance practice and editorial practice are the same.⁶²

For Treitler, then, an edition (or for that matter any scholarly musical activity) is like a performance. The admission that this is so carries with it

⁶¹ Leo Treitler, “The Power of Positivist Thinking” (=Review of Kerman, *Contemplating Music*), *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42/2 (1990), 375-402.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 400.

a liberating sense of risk, and the chance to overcome “the isolation of *both* the observer and the observed in the relationship of knowing.”⁶³

Despite the role that Treitler saw for historical performance in the formation of a new approach to musicology, as the authenticity debate died down in the early 1990s, historical performance practice – permanently branded, perhaps, as reactionary by Taruskin’s polemics – played a much less prominent role in the discipline’s agenda.⁶⁴ One area that did enjoy renewed attention, however, was the question of the ontological status of the musical “work.” The major contribution to this field was Lydia Goehr’s *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.⁶⁵ Goehr’s book is as much about analytical philosophy as it is about music history; one of the main purposes of her study is to expose traditional approaches of analytical philosophers to the ontology of the musical work as ahistorical and

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 401. Treitler draws here on Michel Foucault’s “Panopticon” metaphor, in which Foucault proposed that western epistemologies since the Enlightenment had made “knowing” something into a power relationship, where the “known” is something powerless to which the “knower” applies “discipline.” See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Viking, 1975). For an extensive musicological application of Foucault’s theories see Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). The idea that analysis shares qualities of performance has been taken up recently by Jim Samson and Nicholas Cook. See Nicholas Cook, “Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis” in *Rethinking Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook, and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 239-61 and Jim Samson, “Analysis in Context” in *Ibid.*, 35-55.

⁶⁴ As John Butt observed, a major book on musicological method, Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist’s *Rethinking Music*, included no chapter on historical performance. A recent German language contribution to the literature on historical performance is Ulrich Konrad, “Alte Musik, musikalische Praxis und Musikwissenschaft: Gedanken zur Historizität der Historischen Aufführungspraxis” in *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 57/1 (2000), 91-100.

⁶⁵ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

impractical. In the historical parts of her argument she covers much of the same ground Dahlhaus did, tracing the emergence of the “work concept” around the end of eighteenth century. The difference is that for Goehr, the “work” is an ideology beholden to a certain kind of metaphysics that emerged from German idealist aesthetics. On just this point she has been challenged by Reinhard Strohm, who sees her approach as too narrow and out of touch with the complex historical realities of musical praxis.⁶⁶

John Butt’s exhaustive recent study *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* retraces much of the ground covered by Dreyfus, Taruskin and Goehr.⁶⁷ Butt seeks to carve out a space for historical performance in musicology as a whole, examining, like Dreyfus did, its usefulness as critical theory. One of his more powerful arguments is his reassessment of the conventional narrative of “progress” in the history of musical notation. For Butt, this narrative – supported by what he calls the “traditional periodization of music history” – tells the story of a musical notation that becomes increasingly “prescriptive,” from the mnemonics of the first chant manuscripts, to the emergence of the “musical work” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the absolute determination of the total-serialist composers of postwar high modernism. Butt sketches a number of alternative narratives, suggesting that the status of notation was and is in a state of continuous flux. He concludes his

⁶⁶ Reinhard Strohm, “Looking Back at Ourselves: Problems with the Work-Concept” in *The Musical Work, Reality or Invention?* ed. Michael Talbott (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000), 128-52.

⁶⁷ John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

argument by suggesting that notation may not have been, as a rule, intended by composers to be prescriptively binding at all – that notation, at least until the advent of sound recording, is “an alternative embodiment of music” and not necessarily a set of instructions for performance.⁶⁸

By challenging the status of concepts like “the musical work” and “text,” Goehr and Butt nevertheless return the reader’s attention to them. In today’s (much cooler) debates about historical performance, then, textual criticism is as much on the agenda, albeit in a very different sense, as it was during the 1950s. Yet in the meantime the concept of “performance” itself has become the subject of much academic debate, in and out of musicology. This “performative turn” is the subject of the next two sections of this chapter.

Performance Studies I: Musicology

This new study of performance can be divided into two threads: one specific to musicology, and one influential in the wider humanistic disciplines. The relatively new sub-discipline of performance studies⁶⁹ draws on cognitive psychology and musical analysis to argue that the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

⁶⁹ Important surveys can be found in John Rink ed., *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Nicholas Cook, “Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis” in *Rethinking Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 239-261.

dimension of performance be considered an integral part of any scholarly description of music, while avoiding the imperatives (“this is how it was, so must you play it”) of historical performance. Parameters once considered secondary to the identity of the “musical work,” like dynamics and bodily gestures, now receive their own registers on the charts and graphs of traditional analysis. This approach to performance aims for an empirical quality (although some of its exponents are prepared to question this) and does not always raise questions about text and textual criticism.⁷⁰ What this kind of “performance studies” does accomplish is a refocusing of musicological practice away from strictly textual questions and towards what actually happens in a musical performance.

Some musicological performance scholars approach the question of text directly, and see musicology’s fixation on it – much as Subotnik did – as a sign of ideological blindness. José Antonio Bowen asks if it is not time to find the “music in musicology” by focusing on performance history instead of performance practice.⁷¹ Bowen argues that the history of work is the history of its performance. If the *history* of the text is the work, then at some point – after we are no longer in a position to communicate with the composer directly about the context of his notation – any informed reading of the composer’s notation becomes irrelevant. Indeed, Bowen argues that the musical text in western art music is more like lead-sheet in jazz, and he uses the techniques of philology to illustrate his point. Is not the construction of a stemma, he asks, an attempt to reconstruct an ideal

⁷⁰ See for example Nicholas Cook, *ibid.*

⁷¹ José A. Bowen, “Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works” in *Ibid.*, 424-51.

“original” lead-sheet? (As opposed to the “copy-text” method, which Bowen argues is more like a transcription of a discrete state of the work.) Indeed, the title of one of his articles (“the History of Remembered Innovation”) emphasizes the role played by “orality” in our construction of the musical work:

A musical work is a blurred concept with boundaries in different places for different people. The performance tradition, however, can define approximate boundaries. Conversely, tradition is the history of remembered innovation, and is always changing. Tradition is enforced through reproduction: notes which are no longer played are no longer part of the tune (as *portamento* is no longer part of the Brahms violin concerto).⁷²

Bowen’s approach might seem to give us a firm theoretical basis for consideration the role of tradition and innovation in performance. However, his insistence that the history of the work *is* the work seems to annihilate the very premises of critical editing as set forth at the beginning of this chapter. For if “notes which are no longer played are no longer part of the tune,” then the original context of the musical sign and our attempts to grapple with it are doomed a priori to irrelevance and failure. Dahlhaus’s slippery slope has become a reality; textual relativism carries the day.

The Chopin and Liszt scholar Jim Samson sees this problem clearly when he asks, considering the role of virtuosity in Liszt’s music, if “in the

⁷² José Antonio Bowen, “The History of Remembered Innovation: Tradition and its Role in the Relationship Between Musical Works and their performances,” *The Journal of Musicology* 11/2 (Spring 1993), 163-64.

face of so many contingencies [of performance] there is any room left for an aesthetic judgment of his music.”⁷³ His book is the study of one group of “works,” Liszt’s *Etudes d’exécution transcendante*, which grew out of earlier etudes and one of which became the symphonic poem *Mazeppa*. Such a compositional history, together with the performance-based character of the pieces themselves, confronts the more traditional closed world of the autonomous work – and leads, more often than not, to a negative critical judgment of such music. To counter this, Samson proposes a system where production and performance interact in mutual dependence, in a kind of “ecosystem” or “ecology” made up of “musical objects” (that is, performed texts), audiences and virtuosos. Samson’s approach convinces because it refuses to compromise the contingency of performance in the face of the prestige of the work concept, yet it does so without surrendering to a relativist view in which any given performance is as constitutive of musical meaning as any other.

Performance Studies II: Approaches from Outside of Musicology

Since the late 1960s, many critical approaches to culture were influenced heavily by French theories of text. As we have seen, this was not always salutary for textual criticism in its more traditional guises. Beginning in the 1980s, however, those disciplines whose objects of study

⁷³ Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

are not necessarily directly accessible as texts, like theater, film, and music, began to chafe against the restrictions of structuralist and post-structuralist “textualism.” The result was a much-touted “performative turn,” that claimed that a focus on action should replace a focus on making and reading texts.⁷⁴ Indeed, opponents of “textualism” can be quite forthright in their critique. The theater scholar Dwight Conquergood writes:

The hegemony of textualism needs to be exposed and undermined. Transcription is not a transparent or politically innocent model for conceptualizing or engaging the world. The root metaphor of the text underpins the supremacy of Western knowledge systems by erasing the vast realm of human knowledge and meaningful action that is unlettered.⁷⁵

Musical scholars working in a primarily literate tradition may be forgiven, perhaps, for neglecting the performative aspects of non-literate musics, but the charge that a purely textual approach can be one-dimensional when it comes to music is a valid one.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ For an overview see Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988). Another useful introduction is E. Kosofsky Sedgwick and A. Parker eds., *Performance and Performativity* (London: Routledge, 1996). A rare example of a similar approach in musicology is Christopher Small, *Musicking* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), for example “Prelude: Music and Musicking,” 1-19. A very recent essay is Carolyn Abbate, “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” *Critical Inquiry* 30/4 (2004), 504-36.

⁷⁵ Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research” in *The Drama Review* 46/2 (Summer 2002), 45-56, here 47.

⁷⁶ Performance theories have been closely tied to theories of gender construction. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge: 1990).

Peggy Phelan, a prominent protagonist of the performative turn, has written about the problem of writing about the elusive details of performance:

To attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself. Just as quantum physics discovered that macro-instruments cannot measure microscopic particles without transforming those particles, so too must performance critics realize that the labor to write about performance (and thus to “preserve” it) is also a labor that fundamentally alters the event...⁷⁷

Conquergood and Phelan’s insights, which can stand in for many in the discipline of performance studies outside of musicology, are important ones. In musicology, to be sure, the traditional fixation on text, which has its roots in the discipline’s self-image as a child of philology, has led to some deep contradictions. Some of these contradictions came violently to light in the controversies around historical performance, where “text” and “act,” to use Taruskin’s terms, collided head on. Yet an exclusive focus on performance and the exclusion of texts run the danger of robbing a historical discipline of all of its – admittedly fragile – connections to history. Much of the historical music of the West from before the advent of recording technology is, paradoxically, only available from textual witnesses.⁷⁸ Surprisingly, studies like the ones under discussion here make

⁷⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 148.

⁷⁸ Bowen’s studies, for example, are heavily dependant on recordings.

little reference to the similar debates about performance and text carried out by eighteenth-century philosophers, to which I will return in the next chapter. As we shall see, these philosophers were not in a position to unravel this paradox completely; “performance studies” cannot either, it seems.

Towards a Performance-based Textual Criticism?

How can an interest in problems of text and performance be informed by the theories explicated in these pages? I would like to offer a specific example from Mozart studies as a “thought-experiment.” The texts of Mozart’s Haydn Quartets (K. 387, K. 421, K. 428, K. 458, K. 464, and K. 465) survive in both autographs and Viennese first editions. The first edition departs from the autograph in many matters of musical detail, particularly dynamic and tempo markings. No documentary evidence has been found to link Mozart to these revisions.⁷⁹

The *NMA* volume of the quartets is in many ways a Gregg-Bowers style “copy-text” edition. The editor, Ludwig Finscher, accepts many, but

⁷⁹ For the background to this problem see Gertraut Haberkamp, *Die Erstdrucke der Werke von Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (Tutzing: Schneider-Verlag, 1986), xx; Ludwig Finscher’s edition of the “Haydn” quartets: W.A. Mozart, *Neue Ausgabe Sämtlicher Werke*, Serie VII/Werkgruppe 20/Abteilung 1/Band 2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter 1962), particularly his introduction, pages vii-xii. See also Wolf-Dieter Seiffert, “Mozarts Haydn Quartette: Zum Quellenwert von Autograph und Erstausgabe unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Finales aus KV 387” in *Studien zur Musikgeschichte: Eine Festschrift für Ludwig Finscher*, eds. Annagrit Laubenthal, and Kara Kusan-Windweh (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), 377-92.

not all, of the changes in the first edition; he generally favors the “substantial” readings of the first edition, like dynamic and tempo markings, while preferring the “accidental” readings of the autograph (mostly matters of articulation). His edition, however, would be too eclectic for a strict proponent of the “copy-text” theory, for he occasionally rejects “substantial” readings of the engraved edition, arguing for these on the authority of his personal judgment. The *NMA*’s editorial guidelines constrain its editors to indicate all departures from the autograph in the musical text;⁸⁰ this gives their edition of the “Haydn” quartets a two-dimensional quality. It is a “Werkedition” and not a “Quellenedition.” The Alexandrian paradox still applies. In the *NMA* edition the user encounters a text, however heavily annotated, that never existed, a mixture between the autograph and the first edition. Is another approach possible?

A proponent of the Pergamanian — “best text” — *Quellenedition* approach would suggest an edition made up entirely of the readings of engraved first edition. Such a facsimile is available and is, no doubt, the preferred text for those musicians who wish to avoid an edited text altogether.⁸¹ Yet this kind of “best text” approach can never fully escape the gravitational pull of the autograph manuscript itself, one that Mozart, who referred famously to the “Haydn Quartets” as a *lunga e laboriosa*

⁸⁰ For the *NMA*’s policies see Bernhard Appel and Joachim Veit eds., *Editionsrichtlinien Musik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), 260. For an introduction to the *NMA*’s editorial policies see Wolfgang Rehm, “Die Phantom der ‘correcten’ Ausgabe: Bruchstückhafte Bemerkungen zur Editions-geschichte der neuen Mozart-Ausgabe” in *Festschrift Christoph-Hellmut Mahling zum 65. Geburtstag* eds. Axel Beer, Kristina Pfarr, and Wolfgang Ruf (Tutzing: Schneider, 1997), 1109-19.

⁸¹ See Philip Brett, “Text, Context and the Early Music Editor,” 83-84.

fattica, “a long and an laborious work,” heavily revised.⁸² To ignore it entirely, surely, would be to risk missing a large if not absolutely dominant component of the “musical object.”⁸³ The historically-interested performer, then, is left with the choice between an Alexandrian approach based on an imaginary “Urtext” and a Pergamanian approach that risks violating the directions clearly evident in Mozart’s autograph. The construction of a “variorum” edition that gives both sources is one potential answer to this problem, but strictly speaking such an edition is not really an edition at all, since its editor refrains from making decisions about which text to prefer.

The situation becomes no less clear when the quartets are approached from a hermeneutic perspective. Which version of the text is the one to interpret? Several studies have focused detailed attention on Mozart’s compositional process as revealed in the autographs of the “Haydn Quartets.”⁸⁴ One of these, for example, attempts on a limited scale to assess the changes in the first edition and their probable origins.⁸⁵ These studies, however, remain resolutely text-critical, since they concentrate on the critical evaluation of Mozart’s revisions and presume that the work develops through time, as the composer comes closer and closer the “right reading,” to a kind of *Fassung letzter Hand*.⁸⁶ None of these authors ever

⁸² The phrase comes from Mozart’s dedication, engraved on the title page of the first edition, of the quartets to Joseph Haydn.

⁸³ The presence of the autograph makes a stemmatic approach redundant, since Lachmannian techniques are designed to reconstruct lost “archetypal” originals.

⁸⁴ For examples some of the essays in Alan Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁸⁵ Seiffert, “Mozarts Haydn Quartette.”

⁸⁶ Georg von Dadelsen, “Die ‘Fassung letzter Hand’ in der Musik,” *Acta Musicologica* 33 (1961), 1-14.

use the word reception, perhaps out of reluctance to violate the Dahlhausian boundary between “philology” and “reception history.” That Mozart himself was part of the first group doing the receiving – as a participant in private performances of after the completion of their autographs but before publication – makes the arbitrary nature of such boundaries all the clearer.

A “performance studies” approach along the lines of those pursued by Bowen breaks through this conundrum by elevating reception to a more, if not the most, important role in the constitution of the work’s identity. Laurence Dreyfus has attempted just this in an essay examining an early twentieth-century recording of K. 421, the second of the six quartets.⁸⁷ Dreyfus argues that there is more “expressive depth” in the nuanced playing of the Flonzaley Quartet in 1929 than in either the “mainstream” Alban Berg Quartet (1977) and the “historically informed” playing of the Salomon Quartet in 1985. He argues that the (in his view) superior quality of the Flonzaley’s interpretation proves that textually-dominated performance practice research does not necessarily lead to better performances, and that the most “authentic” performance may well be one at a considerable distance from the quartet’s inception. The performance he favors is the most individual – and the least editorially “correct.”

Dreyfus’s point cannot be dismissed. On the quest for the right text the subtleties of nuance as conveyed in performance often get short shrift. Yet in a sleight-of-hand, Dreyfus uses the power of a single performance in

⁸⁷ Laurence Dreyfus, “Mozart as Early Music: A Romantic Antidote,” *Early Music* 20/2 (1992), 297-308.

history to erase the quartet's identity as reflected in written historical texts. As I have argued in the first two chapters of this dissertation, the Gordian knot of text, performance, and history cannot be untied without breaking one or more of its strands. If we remove history from music, its vital identity as document of both individual and collective acts of creation disappears. If we remove text, Mozart's individual artifice is erased. If we remove performance, all that is left is a dead historical manuscript.

Dreyfus doesn't note that K. 421's first editor, and one of its first performers, was the composer himself, who added nuances to the texts of the quartet during the period that the quartets were first performed, before their mechanical reproduction and dissemination. These changes, as revealed in alterations to the autograph and in the variant readings of the first edition, are the remaining fragments of a real process of composition and performance. We will examine processes like these in the next three chapters. I will argue that by entering the problem at just this point, at the point of performance, we might have a chance to catch a fleeting glimpse of what musical expression would have meant in the late 1700s.