BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas Irvine was born to American parents in Munich in 1968 and grew up in Stony Brook, New York. Starting in 1986, he studied at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, where he received a Bachelor of Music degree in viola performance in 1991. From 1991 until 1994 he was a graduate student in viola performance at the Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington. He earned a Master of Music degree there in 1996.

In 1994 he moved to Germany and began a professional musical career. In the next five years he played the modern and historical viola in numerous German orchestras and ensembles, toured Europe and Japan, and recorded for most German state radio networks and several European record labels. He also worked as a music teacher and arts manager.

In 1999 he began graduate studies at Cornell University, where he earned a Master of Arts degree in musicology in 2002. From 2000-2002 he was a teaching assistant in the Cornell Department of Music. In the fall of the same year he returned to Germany as a fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) at the Institute of Musicology of the University of Würzburg, where he is now a visiting research fellow and adjunct lecturer. He has written for *Acta Mozartiana*, the *Mozart-Jahrbuch*, *Early Music*, and *Eighteenth Century Music*. As a violist, he continues to appear with the chamber music group “Ensemble Campanile.”
Thomas Irvine lives in Bielefeld, Germany with his wife, the cellist Nicola Heinrich, and their daughter, Hannah.
In Memory of
Thomas F. Irvine, jr. (1922-2001)
and for
Hannah Franziska Irvine (born 2003)
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PREFA

Two separate narratives make up the story I will tell in this dissertation. The first examines the role of historical consciousness in the writing of the history of musical performance; it aims to provide the historiographical reflection that I believe such a writing demands. The second describes how the contradiction between performance and textuality is itself evident – in a kind of performance – in several works of Mozart’s years in Vienna.

Chapter one begins with an episode from the recent history of Mozart research. In 1964, the young Wolfgang Plath, who had recently assumed the editorship of the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, argued in a position paper that only the scholarly techniques he called “positivism” could bring renewal to what he saw as a discipline in decline. His thesis, as we will see, was extremely controversial, and the questions he raised are of importance far beyond the limited disciplinary boundaries of Mozart scholarship. The most important of these questions – is there a “musical” way to write “music history”? – is central to my project.

In the first chapter I will use the debate about Plath’s position paper as a point of departure for my own brief survey of some of the historiographical options open to the music historian, looking both backward at the historical contexts of writing music history and forward to the scholarly quarrels of our own time. This survey will concentrate on the concept, or better group of concepts, known as “historicism,” which I will define broadly as the dual goals of giving history as much detail as possible
while also giving it meaning. “Historicism” is of central importance for
my own study, because the infinite detail of musical performance is, as I
see it, the ultimate historicist challenge.

In chapter two I will move from a specific debate – the one Plath
provoked in Mozart scholarship – to a general survey of thought on musical
notation in its performance. Here I will follow a trajectory from traditional
editorial practice to contemporary performance theory, attempting to
illuminate the opposition between the strictures of classical textual
criticism, on the one hand, and the unfettered, even messy contingency of
performance, on the other. Beneath the tension between the two lies the
tension between “absolutism” (a potential consequence, for instance, of an
“Urtext” performance) and “relativism” (the ultimate consequences of a
theory is which the historical text has little or no meaning for performance
in the present). Along the way I will examine how musicologists and other
humanist scholars use the term “performance.” At the end of chapter two I
introduce a specific problem that certain of Mozart’s texts present for
editors and performers: the differences between his autographs and
(presumably authorized) first editions. Three works whose sources
disagree in this manner, the String Quartet in G K. 387, the Fantasy for
Clavier in C Minor K. 475, and the String Quintet in D K. 593, will provide
a frame for examining problems of text, performance, and history in the
rest of the dissertation.

My two larger arguments, the historiographical and the historical,
will cross in chapter three. I begin the chapter with an examination of the
eighteenth-century musical lexicographer Heinrich Christoph Koch’s use
of the word “Ausführung” to describe both composition and performance. I will then explore how prominent writers in German, a generation before Koch, treated performance with caution. They were nervous about it, I will argue, because of the danger an overly nuanced performance presents to a model of musical communication – the so-called Affektenlehre – that depends on the “one-to-one” translation of musical meaning from the composer through performance to the audience. I then draw a contrast between such thinking and the “expressivist” theories of language, exemplified by those of Johann Gottfried Herder, that began to gain influence in the 1770s. The strands of my two arguments cross exactly here, for not only was Herder a founder of expressivist linguistics, he was also one of the first historicist thinkers. In Herder’s thought, so influential on the further development of German thinking about history, the limitless nuance of human expression and the infinite detail of the historical record spring from the same source.

In the final section of the third chapter, I will search for traces of the conflict between the unlimited nuances of performance and the demands of textuality in Mozart’s music. To do this, I will frame Mozart’s practices with those of two of his contemporaries, Luigi Boccherini and Paul Wranitzky, by following their approaches to performance as evidenced by real – that is to say, “factual” – historical traces of intervention in texts of string quartets by all three. I have chosen this frame with care, for all three were participants in what I will call – borrowing the term from recent writings on Liszt by Jim Samson – the “ecology” of making chamber music
in mid-1780s Vienna.¹ At the chapter’s end I argue that Mozart’s music reveals a sophisticated awareness of the delicate relation between texts and their performances.

The focus of chapter four is how opposing poles of Enlightenment thought, sensitivity and rationality, play out in performances, real and imagined, of Mozart’s music. The main object of my investigation will be a notated “free” fantasy, Mozart’s K. 475, in various performances. Once again the challenge is to think through, to imagine, these performances in history. The first performance, Mozart’s appearance at a Masonic benefit concert in December 1785 is a real historical event, about which we know no further details beyond that Mozart “fantasized” at the keyboard. Nonetheless, I will use the text of K. 475 to illuminate what I imagine this performance could mean in a broader aesthetic and political context. Reversing the process, I will then move from these contexts back to K. 475’s text and its perilous position between improvisatory freedom and textual fixity.

The second performance of K. 475 in chapter four takes place in a work of fiction, Wilhelm Heinse’s musical novel Hildegard von Hohenthal (1795). Here the situation is reversed: the circumstances in which the Fantasy appears are a creation of Heinse’s (rich) imagination, but the musical text discussed and performed by his characters is the “real” text of the C Minor Fantasy. Once again, understanding this performance’s context (its “ecology”) will change our understanding of its text. As I will

argue at the end of the chapter, Heinse’s characters take K. 475 to mean something quite different from what it meant in the Masonic lodge.

In chapter five I will return to the specifics of editing Mozart’s texts for performance. In a “case study” of the finale of the String Quintet in D K. 593, I will show how the two approaches made out by Wolfgang Plath, the “positive” and the “interpretive,” are bound to collide in practice. The former, if it is true to all of the available “facts,” leads to the extremely complex (in performance ultimately unusable) picture that K. 593’s surviving sources paint. The “interpretive” approach requires that order be brought to this confusion from the outside, by the critical editor. In a final juxtaposition between how we think about text and performance and how Mozart’s contemporaries did, I will claim that the two approaches are closer together than we might think.

Finally, in a short epilogue, I will bring the various strands of my argument together, sketching the consequences of my findings for further thought on text, performance, and history in our constructions of Mozart’s music and its cultural contexts.

***

All quotations in the main body of the text are in English. Primary sources, and those secondary sources not readily available to the English-speaking reader, are given in the footnotes in their original language.
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<td>Stiftung Bodmer, Geneva</td>
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<tr>
<td>D B</td>
<td>Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Musikabteilung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Wgm</td>
<td>Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Wn</td>
<td>Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musikabteilung, Vienna</td>
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<td>US R Sibley</td>
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