LECTURE – Royal College of Music, Tuesday January 14th, 2014
'Beyond Werktreue: Ideologies of New Music Performance and Performers'.
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Lecture given at Royal College of Music, Tuesday January 14th, 2014, and Oxford Composers' Forum, Magdalen College, Monday November 3rd, 2014.

Abstract: New music culture continues to be dominated by the figure of the composer and the 'work', in line with aesthetic and ideological developments which were consolidated by the mid-nineteenth century. New music festivals are frequently publicised primarily in terms of the composers featured, and whilst there has been a small amount of more critical thought concerning the nature of the role of performers in the process and ideologies of performance, I argue that in a broader sense a conception of performance as Werktreue, basically realising either the text or the conception of a work, is more tacitly accepted than other creative or critical approaches. Starting from a consideration of the role of notation, I offer an alternative model in terms of the score as a means for channeling performers' creative faculties, and question the whole viability of the work-concept even in the context of the most detailed contemporary scores. I offer a critical reading of some work in the field of performance studies, and argue for a revised view of performance, not least in light of the disjunction between mainstream performance (dominated by scores by dead composers) and contemporary performance which has also been a feature of concert life since the mid-nineteenth century.

Representations of Composers and Performers

I want to start this lecture by showing a few visual illustrations from recent contemporary music festivals. First of all, here is one of the posters on show throughout last year's Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, which had big lists of handwritten names of composers.

Now, let us look at the cover of the CD from the *Donaueschinger Musiktage* from 2012.

NEOS
Fundación BBVA

Donaueschinger Musiktage 2012

Bång – Bedrossian – Furrer – Gadenstätter – Gander
Herrmann – Katzer – Kreidler – Pasovsky – Prins – Schedl – Smolka

SWR

Once again, the names provided are those of composers. This pattern can be found all other Donaueschingen documentation CDs, incidentally.

A press release for the 2012 Aldeburgh Festival has, after an introductory paragraph, one long paragraph centered around the work of Oliver Knussen (which, to be fair, does also mention his conducting, after his compositions), then another around the work of Helmut Lachenmann. When it comes to early music, however, the first names to be mentioned are the performers – Philippe Herreweghe and Collegium Vocale Gent, Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir, Jordi Savall and Hespérion XXI, in the first case subsequently mentioning Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responsories*, in the other cases just listing the periods and regions from which their repertoire comes. The remainder of the press release roughly highlights composers and performers in equal measure.

There are a few exceptions: here is one, from a part of the Festival Présences for Radio France, in Aix-en-Provence, January 2013. This is from the website:

Concerts / Musique

Festival Présences de Radio France

Aix-en-Provence

Du 23 au 27 janvier

-

4 soirées de concerts (gratuits pour les moins de 26 ans)

Le Festival Présences de Radio France s'installe à Aix-en-Provence et met à l'honneur les compositeurs de la Méditerranée. Quatre soirées de concerts avec l'Orchestre philharmonique, le Choeur et la Maîtrise de Radio France, l'ensemble Musicatreize, l'Egyptian Contemporary Music Ensemble, l'Ensemble orchestral contemporain et 2e2m. Des oeuvres d'Henri Tomasi (Retour à Tipasa, d'après L'été de Camus), Zad Multaka, Ahmed Essyad, Ibrahim Maalouf…

Mercredi 23 janvier, 20 h 30 : Mythes et religions de la Méditerranée
Jeudi 24 janvier, 20 h 30 : Camus, le méditerranéen
Vendredi 25 janvier, 20 h 30 : L'Orient de Maalouf et El Malek
Samedi 26 janvier, 14 h 30 : Voix interdites
Samedi 26 janvier, 16 h : Le Caire Alexandrie
Samedi 26 janvier, 18 h : La Mémoire de l'inconnu
Samedi 26 janvier, 20 h 30 : In Memoriam
Dimanche 27 janvier, 14 h 30 : Mario Brunello, violoncelle
Dimanche 27 janvier, 16 h : Mediterraneo
Dimanche 27 janvier, 18 h 30 : Voix de la Méditerranée

For once the names of the musicians come before those of the composers

Let me also look at some recently published or soon-to-be-published books on contemporary music, from the Cambridge University Press *Music Since 1900* series. These would include:

Jonathan Goldman, *The Musical Language of Pierre Boulez: Writings and Compositions* (2011)
Heather Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction* (2012)
David Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre* (2012)
Pieter C. van der Toorn and John McGinness, *Stravinsky and the Russian Period: Sound and Legacy of a Musical Idiom* (2012)
Graham Griffiths, *Stravinsky's Piano: Genesis of a Musical Language* (2013)
Bean Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism in Fascist Italy* (2013)
Alistair Williams, *Music in Germany since 1968* (2013)
Martin Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt: Nono, Stockhausen, Cage, and Boulez* (2013)
Martin Iddon, *John Cage and David Tudor: Correspondence on Interpretation and Performance* (2013)
Beate Kutschke and Barley Norton (eds), *Music and Protest in 1968* (2013)
Jack Boss, *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (2014)
Thomas Schuttenheim, *The Orchestral Music of Michael Tippett: Creative Development and the Compositional Process* (2014)
Marilyn Nonken, *The Spectral Piano: From Liszt, Scriabin, and Debussy to the Digital Age* (2014)

With the exception of Kutschke/Norton and perhaps Iddon on Cage/Tudor (with the composer named before the performer), all of these books are focused upon individual composers or groups of composers. Williams' study is just said to be about 'music', but in reality it is basically a study of Helmut Lachenmann and Wolfgang Rihm, framed by shorter sections on some other composers. Consideration of performance is limited to just a little over a page (pp. 23-24)[1] which lists the Arditti Quartet, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Recherche and Musikfabrik, with a few painfully banal remarks as 'The ensemble values individual preparation highly, so that all the players

[1] There is also a short paragraph quoting Aloys Kontarsky and Vinko Globokar's issues with Stockhausen's *Aus den sieben Tagen* (p. 67).

can be fully aware of one another in rehearsal instead of remaining immersed in the score'. We learn that the Ardittis 'add much to the music that is not present in the notation' without any consideration of what it means for something to be 'present in the notation' nor of any wider issues of performance aesthetics. There is not really any creative or critical role for performance other than realising a score and perhaps adding some type of 'musicality'[2]. Furthermore, he omits any serious consideration of many performers whose activities have played a central role in the life of new music in Germany during the period in question: not only are no soloists discussed, but nor does he mention the two central vocal groups from Stuttgart, the *Schola Cantorum*, founded by Clytus Gottwald in 1960 and running through until 1990, and the *Neue Vokalsolisten*, founded by Manfred Schreier in 1984 and an unmistakeable presence to the present day German radio orchestras are dealt with in a single sentence (p. 18), portrayed at best as a facilitator for composers, at worst as an obstacle. However, I would argue that, say, the *Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin* (formerly the *RIAS—Symphonie-Orchester*), the *hr-Sinfonieorchester* in Frankfurt, the *SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg*[3], or the *Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks* (to name just four) have distinct styles, conventions and working approaches, have commissioned and performed distinct repertory (and often stood in strong contrast to philharmonic orchestras in the same cities, whose choices of new music demonstrate quite different aesthetic priorities), and might have shaped the work of composers as much as vice versa. The role of the orchestras is one of various factors which differentiate the options available to German (and some other) composers more so than those who receive their primary commissions from other countries; witnessed by the fact that the mature Lachenmann (from *temA* (1968) onwards) has to date only written three major works for medium-size ensemble

[2] In fairness, a number of writings by performers on new music go little beyond this two-dimensional model; examples can be found in Rolf Schulte, 'An advocate for the piece', in Marilyn Nonken (ed), *Performers on Performing*, in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 21 Part 1 (2002), pp. 49-60; Geoffrey Morris, 'The modern guitar in Australia', ibid. pp. 13-22; Mieko Kanno, 'Prescriptive Notation: Limits and Challenges', in Barrie Webb (ed), *Contemporary Performance*, in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 28 Part 2 (2007), pp. 231-254; or Christopher Redgate, 'Re-inventing the Oboe', ibid. pp. 179-188. In all of these (and other) examples, the model of performance consists in largest measure of 'playing the score', then with an odd nod in the direction of bringing some nebulous ideas of 'musicality', 'phrasing', 'tone' to bear upon the process; never considering how many assumptions about all these factors might be necessary in order to find a way of *reading* the score in the first place so as to be able to use it as the basis for sonic production.

[3] Williams does mention at one point that this orchestra 'has a good track record for playing new music' (p. 105) but not more.

(*Mouvement (-vor der Erstarrung)*, *Zwei Gefühle* and *Concertini*), but seventeen orchestral works.

Return to my examples: the point I am trying to get across should hopefully be clear: that the idea of contemporary music or 'new music' is for the most part taken to indicate contemporary *composition* – and beyond that, I would say contemporary *works*. You might not think a Lang Lang recital, or a new recording of Brahms Symphonies by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, or for that matter a concert of newly discovered 14th century French chansons, constituted 'new music', but all of them would be entirely contemporary, and arguably at least some of them would constitute some type of musical production palpably different from that which has come before. Putting aside feelings specifically about Lang Lang for a moment, I would argue that the phenomenon of a wide range of performances of scores from the European art music tradition by East Asian performers – a phenomenon which has really come into its own in the period since 1945 – is every bit as much of a contemporary phenomenon as the music of Pierre Boulez or John Cage or György Ligeti or Michael Nyman.

Now, I am not just saying this as some disgruntled performer moaning about having to take second place in the new music food chain; I bring it to your attention because I wish to consider how such conceptions might have wider implications, not least in terms of how music is performed.

The Move to a 'Dead' Repertoire and *Werktreue*

William Weber, in his monumental study of concert programming, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (2008), has traced a process whereby, at least in cities such as London, Paris, Leipzig and Vienna, the balance of programming moved from an majority of works by living composers in the 1780s to a majority of dead ones in the 1870s. This was not necessarily any process of natural musical evolution; Weber makes a strong case for its relationship to the growth of multiple forms of nationalism (earlier in parts of the German-speaking lands, later in France) and the concomitant need to construct the idea of musical traditions as a statement of national identity – such events as the Bach

revival at the hands of Mendelssohn, consolidating the idea of a canonical German tradition with origins in Bach, were very important in this respect, as was the revival of early music in mid-to-late nineteenth-century France (unthinkable earlier in the century, when such music was associated with the hated *ancien regime*) as part of a process of defining a French musical identity most distinct from that which had become dominant from the German Confederation.

Parallel with this process, certain other strains of thought come into being during the nineteenth-century and beyond into the twentieth, which broadly maintain that the ultimate source of authority lies with the composer, who creates a musical 'work'; something which exists as an abstract ideal, independently of specific realisations in performance. In its strongest form, this conception says that the task of the performer(s) is not to add anything extraneous to the work, but somehow to illuminate aspects of this idealised conception to the best of their ability. There are various established schools of thought on how this might be done, involving different attitudes towards the role and status of the text. One view (which I would label 'literalist'[4]) maintains that the performer (or multiple performers) should try to execute the text as 'exactly' as possible, and that will provide most of what is necessary. Another (which I call 'scholarly') says that such execution must also be informed by intense investigation of the exact notational conventions employed and all other information pertaining to the composer's intentions (gleaned from known verbal remarks or writings on the matter, or more general information about their performance preferences in general). Another (which I call 'analytic/aesthetic') would say that the performer must penetrate those aspects of the music which lie beneath the surface and might be accessed by analysis, deeper knowledge of the composer's aesthetic, philosophical and other concerns, and so on. Yet another (which I call 'mainstream') holds that on top of the 'exact' approach, the task of the performer is to make the work sound 'musical' or 'like a real piece of music'; a quality usually presented in a vague and nebulous fashion, but which upon interrogation, is said to consist of making 'musical' aspects of phrasing, rhythm, voicing, continuity of line,

[4] All these terms are imperfect approximations for attitudes which can be more nuanced than in the archetypal form I present them here.

and other such things. How exactly this is to be done is rarely specified in any more detailed fashion[5]. I will return to this presently.

Each of these positions concur to varying degrees with the concept which came to fruition in music and theatre in the mid- to late-19th century (though its origins were earlier) of *Werktreue*, literally 'faithfulness to the work'. This was especially associated with performers such as Joseph Joachim or Clara Schumann[6]. The pianist Alfred Brendel has suggested[7] that the term *Texttreue* might be more appropriate for what I term 'literalist', and perhaps also 'scholarly' approaches, but this touches more on a question of where and how the 'work' is to be found (as in a letter from Liszt to Richard Pohl in the 1850s insisting upon the primacy of the 'spirit' rather than 'letter' of the text[8]). Neither concept really brings into question the nature or even existence of such a 'work', let alone the performer's relationship to it. What all such positions more or less accept is a subservient role for the performer in the face of both 'work' and compositional intent, and mostly that the 'work' exists as an abstract ideal. This 'work-concept' has been extensively analysed and critiqued by a succession of musicologists[9], but to the best of my knowledge very little of this debate has filtered

[5] This is true of many of the essays in the two rather weak collections of essays on contemporary performance, Marilyn Nonken (ed), *Performers on Performing*, in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 21 Part 1 (2002), and Barrie Webb (ed), *Contemporary Performance*, in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 28 Part 2 (2007).

[6] See Angelika App, 'Die „Werktreue" bei Clara Schumann', in Peter Ackermann and Herbert Schneider (eds), *Clara Schumann: Komponistin, Interpretin, Unternehmerin, Ikone* (Hildesheim, Zürch & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1999), pp. 9-18. On Joachim's aesthetics of performance, the most comprehensive guide is Beatrix Borchard, *Stimme und Geige. Amalie und Joseph Joachim* (Vienna, Cologne & Weimar: Böhlau, 2005); but see also Karen Leistra-Jones, 'Staging Authenticity: Joachim, Brahms and the Politics of *Werktreue* Performance', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Summer 2013), pp. 397-436.

[7] Alfred Brendel, *Musical Thoughts and Afterthoughts* (London: Robson Books, 1998), p. 26.

[8] Liszt to Richard Pohl, November 5, 1853, in La Mara (ed), *Letters of Franz Liszt. Volume 1: From Paris to Rome: Years of Travel as Virtuoso*, translated Constance Bache (London: H. Greyel & Co, 1894), pp. 175-176. This dichotomy is taken up further by Richard Taruskin, in essays in his *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 75-76, 99-100.

[9] Especially Lydia Goehr in her important 1992 book *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and a succession of subsequent writings informed by this – see for example Harry White, ''If It's Baroque, Don't Fix It': Reflections on Lydia Goehr's 'Work-Concept' and the Historical Integrity of Musical Composition', in *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. 69, Fasc. 1 (Jan. – Jun. 1997), pp. 94-104, Jim Samson, 'The Practice of Early-Nineteenth-Century Pianism', in Michael Talbot (ed), *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*(Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 110-127, Reinhard Strohm, 'Looking Back at Ourselves: The Problem with the Musical Work Concept', in Talbot, *The Musical Work*, pp. 128-152, Stephen Davies, *Musical Works & Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 91-98, and Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 127-136. Julian Hellaby, *Reading Musical Interpretation: Case Studies in Solo Piano Performance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 4-11 deals with some of the same types of attitudes to performance which I outline here, whilst some of the most important work on the relationship between analysis and performance, in

through to those regularly involved with the production of new music. The 'mainstream' approach perhaps allows for a little creative input on the part of the performer, usually in the form of decoration, but mostly this consists of the appropriation the text in terms of various mainstream stylistic conventions, such as might commonly be applied to standard repertoire.

There is a wide literature, historical and contemporary, of writing by performers on performing the wide repertoire of 'classical' music, some of it in the form of treatises (far too numerous to list), some in the form of interviews[10] and, much more rarely, detailed analytical and/or scholarly work by performers[11]. When it comes to contemporary 'classical' music, the literature is much narrower, consisting for the most part of interviews, pragmatic works on specific techniques[12], and a very small amount of more widely drawn intellectual investigation[13]. Clearly, if one believes in

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a series of essays by Nicholas Cook, draws upon the critique of the work-concept: see for example Nicholas Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis' (hereafter simply 'Analysing Performance'), in Cook and Mark Everist (eds), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 239-261, and the longer and partially overlapping essay 'Words about Music or Analysis versus Performance', in Peter Dejans (ed), *Theory into Practice: Composition, Performance and the Listening Experience* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), pp. 9-52.

[10] Two very different examples of this would be Elyse Mach, *Great Contemporary Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover, 1991) or Bernard Sherman, *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

[11] Amongst the best examples of this would be various books by Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech*, translated Mary O'Neill (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1988), *The Musical Dialogue: Thoughts on Monteverdi, Bach and Mozart*, translated Mary O'Neill (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997) and *Musik als Klangrede: Wege zu eine neuen Musikverständnis. Essays und Vorträge* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), or those of Charles Rosen; of all his books, those to deal most directly with performance are his *Piano Notes: The Hidden World of the Pianist* (London: Penguin, 2004) and *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). There are a number of cases of instrumentalists also pursuing careers as academic scholars – for example Peter Hill, John Rink, Kenneth Hamilton or Siegfried Mauser (my apologies for the fact that these are all pianists, but this category is dominated by performers on that instrument) - some of whose work (especially that of Rink and Hamilton) is continuously engaged with performance, but who also pursue other distinct musicological paths.

[12] Especially for woodwind: for example Bruno Bartolozzi, *New Sounds for Woodwind*, translated Reginald Smith Brindle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), Carin Levine, *The Techniques of Flute Playing/Die Spieltechnik der Flöte* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2002), Robert Dick, *The Other Flute: A Performance Manual of Contemporary Techniques*, second edition (New York: Multiple Breath Music Company, 1989), Peter Veale, *The Techniques of Oboe Playing: A Compendium with Additional Remarks on the Whole Oboe Family/ Die Spieltechnik der Oboe : Ein Kompendium mit Anmerkungen zur gesamten Oboenfamilie* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998) and Philip Rehlfeldt, *New Directions for Clarinet*, revised edition (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003); also Patricia and Allen Strange, *The Contemporary Violin: Extended Performance Techniques* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001) and Herbert Henck, *Experimentelle Pianistik* (Mainz: Schott: 1994).

[13] Notable examples are the two books on Stockhausen by Herbert Henck: *Karlheinz Stockhausens Klavierstück IX: Eine analytische Betrachtung* (Bonn & Bad Godesberg: Verlag für Systematische Musikwissenschaft, 1978), and *Karlheinz Stockhausen's Klavierstück X: A Contribution Toward Understanding Serial Technique*, translated Deborah Richards (Cologne: Neuland Musikverlag, 1980).

the value of theoretical work undertaken by performers, there remains much to do; two issues of *Contemporary Music Review*, edited by Marilyn Nonken and Barrie Webb respectively[14], are amongst those which have sought to supplement the relatively meagre existing literature. To those reasonably familiar with the more intense theoretical and practical discourse that has accompanied performance of 'older' music and especially 'historically-informed performance'[15] (see below for more on both of these), let alone wider thinking on performance as a form of social practice[16], the essays in these two volumes are for the most part unfortunately rather narrow in their focus and ideological assumptions.

Nonken's volume consists for the most part of interviews with mostly American performers of new music. Their attitudes towards the role of performance generally fall into two categories: that of the self-effacing exponent of the *Werktreue* aesthetic, or that which seeks to appropriate new music within familiar or highly generalised categories of 'expressiveness' or 'musicality'. Nonken herself writes that 'Perhaps the greatest players share a talent for losing themselves in their instruments, so that the listener becomes aware of only the music itself, not the technician who negotiates the basic realization of the notated symbol'[17], whereas Ursula Oppens talks about 'Being expressive of what's there'[18]. Rolf Schulte, on the other hand, does deal with

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Most of the written work of Pierre Boulez is concerned with composition rather than performance; one exception would be volume *Boulez on Conducting*, translated Richard Stokes (London: Faber & Faber, 2003), but this is in the form of interviews, as is Jean Vermeil, *Conversations with Boulez: Thoughts on Conducting*, translated Camille Naish (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1996).

[14] Marilyn Nonken (ed), *Performers on Performing*, in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 21 Part 1 (2002), and Barrie Webb (ed), *Contemporary Performance*, in *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 28 Part 2 (2007).

[15] The most significant book-length theoretical contributions to date on the latter field, to my mind, can be found in the aforementioned works of Harnoncourt, and Nicholas Kenyon (ed), *Authenticity and Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Good summaries of the theoretical debate at the times of writing can be found in Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988) and Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[16] Key texts on this area would include John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1974), Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performance and Listening* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998) and Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[17] Marilyn Nonken, 'Introduction: Vessels', in Nonken , *Performers on Performing*, p. 1.

[18] Ursula Oppens, 'Being expressive of what's there', in Nonken, *Performers on Performing*, p. 68. To be fair to Oppens, she is one player who does talk a reasonable amount about improvisation in this interview, but it seems like this still constitutes essentially the 'icing on the cake' with respect to what is otherwise a fundamentally reproductive attitude towards performance.

'freedom and imagination' in the performance of new music and the problems of new music being 'played too straight', preferring a 'rhapsodic' approach; yet when it comes to his suggestions, these are cast in general terms such as playing with 'romantic abandon', making music 'sound improvisational', playing 'freely', and wanting new music to sound 'polished and expressive, rather than gritty'[19]. Similarly, Geoffrey Morris talks about having been taught to focus his attention 'on the basic issues of musicianship: tone, articulation and phrasing'[20], whilst Fred Sherry argues that 'The performer should consider himself a magician' whose 'tricks should always exceed the audience's expectations' and 'should not be discernible to the audience'[21]. In terms of what might bring about this 'magic', however, he is no more specific than saying that some of its aspects 'include dynamics, tone color, vibrato, rhythmic inflections, and rubato'[22]. None of these figures engage seriously with what these terms might actually mean in specific musical contexts, how they might impact upon listeners; nor do their discourses entail the possibility of developing creative performance possibilities that lie outside of such reified categories.

Webb's volume is of a somewhat different nature, made up of articles rather than interviews, by just four British performers (including Webb himself), three of them (Webb, Christopher Redgate and Mieko Kanno) particularly associated with the performance of 'complex' music. Webb, Redgate and Philip Thomas each consider the performance of the Berio *Sequenzas* for their instruments (trombone, oboe and piano respectively), whilst other articles deal with wider issues of contemporary performance. Several of these are purely factual and pragmatic: Webb's 'Partners in Creation', whilst beginning promisingly by implying a critique of the notion that 'the performer is a kind of second-class musician, simply reproducing the wishes of the composer creator'[23], turns out mostly to be a catalogue of particular instrumental techniques devised or implemented by a variety of trombonists (including the author), and the possibilities thus afforded to composers. This is of course an important issue, indeed one often overlooked in histories of contemporary music, but the article eschews any serious consideration of the creative role played by the performer *after*

[19] Rolf Schulte, 'An advocate for the piece', in Nonken, *Performers on Performing*, quotes from pp. 54-55.
[20] Geoffrey Morris, 'The modern guitar in Australia', in Nonken, *Performers on Performing*, p. 17.
[21] Fred Sherry, 'Never standing still', in Nonken, *Performers on Performing*, p. 88.
[22] Ibid. p. 92.
[23] Barrie Webb, 'Partners in Creation', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, p. 255.

the work has been committed to paper. Redgate's 'Re-inventing the Oboe' takes a similar cataloguing approach towards extended techniques and their execution, making as much of their 'otherness' as might a more traditionally-minded individual antipathetic towards their use. The issue of why composers have decided to employ the instrument in unusual ways is framed (very briefly) in terms of a rather dated historical teleology: 'The potential of the instrument has also developed in other was as composers have continued to push performers technically and physically. This re-invention of the instrument, while being quite radical, has the potential for further development'[24]. Interpretative issues are dealt with only very briefly in Redgate's articles on Berio's *Sequenza VII* and his brother Roger Redgate's *Ausgangspunkte*; in the latter he talks merely about how important it is to 'know the kind of style a composer is using', suggesting that there might be a multiplicity of such styles within the realms of 'complex' music, and concluding no more than:

> As with any other music one should consider the phrasing, choice of colour, tempo, dynamic range and so on. Many of the complex composers give a great deal of instruction at every level of direction; however, there is still a great deal to be done by the interpreter.[25]

Three articles in the volume exhibit some more original theoretical consideration of performance. Philip Thomas's writing on performance of indeterminate scores of the New York School includes subtle consideration of the role of performers such as David Tudor in developing a performance practice for such works, and different attitudes to the role of the performer amongst the different composers of this school[26].

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[24] Christopher Redgate, 'Re-inventing the Oboe', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, p. 180. Throughout each of Redgate's articles, one encounters a relatively unquestioned espousal of all those musical qualities that might be said to tick the check-boxes of a 'complexity' aesthetic: use of extreme registers, high levels of virtuosity (in terms of difficulty of execution rather than flamboyance of display), quarter-tones, extended techniques, complex rhythms and so on, whilst studiously avoiding the question of why these should be seen as particularly desirable in themselves, and (perhaps more to the point) whether (and if so, how) they or other musical aspects might occupy a foregrounded position in a performance.

[25] Christopher Redgate, 'A discussion of Practices used in learning complex music with specific Reference to Roger Redgate's *Ausgangspunkte*', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, p. 147. In his article on Berio, Redgate makes brief mention of how 'the colours, character and moods of the piece' should be 'considered in conjunction with the overall journey', but in terms of what constitutes this 'journey' he merely alludes to the 'stillness sometimes implied by the context' (as a reason for avoiding vibrato on multiphonics) and his own decision that 'the 'climax' of the work' is 'the high G6 in bar 123'. See Redgate, 'Performing Sequenza VII', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, p. 227.

[26] Philip Thomas, 'Determining the Indeterminate', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, pp. 129-140. Thomas draws upon the research into Tudor's realisations found in John Holzaepfel, 'Cage and Tudor', in David Nicholls (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Mieko Kanno develops a notational dichotomy between 'descriptive notation', that which 'informs us of the *sound* of a musical work' and 'prescriptive notation', that which 'informs us of the *method* of producing this sound'[27]. She defines the work of the performer in terms of three stages, (a) 'learning pitch and rhythm', (b) 'coordinating it with the body', and (c) 'making it 'musical' so that it doesn't sound like a direct translation from notation to sound'[28]. What a 'direct translation from notation to sound' might sound like is, however, not defined; I would argue that no such singular entity exists, and have elsewhere outlined in detail some of the major assumptions involved when simply executing a score supposedly at face value, and the extent to which these can affect how it might be perceived[29]. Ultimately this model of performance is conditioned by a dichotomy between some literalist approach to the score, and the process of making 'musical' perceived as a modification of this[30]. Only one essay in the whole collection, however, considers the possible effects of performance approaches upon listeners, and that is Webb's discussion of the performance of Berio's *Sequenza V*. After providing some interesting material on the conception of the work and in particular the inspiration of the Swiss clown Glock, Webb, whilst concentrating primarily upon pragmatic issues, does consider different interpretations of the work (such as those of Stuart Dempster and Vinko Globokar, both early advocates); he evokes the danger of an approach which invites the audience to emphasise with the performer, rather than 'distancing'

University Press, 2002), Holzaepfel, 'David Tudor and the *Solo for Piano*', in David W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch (eds), *Writing through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and James Pritchett, 'David Tudor as composer/performer in Cage's *Variations II*', in *Leonardo Music Journal: Composers Inside Electronics: Music After David Tudor, 14*, pp. 11-16. The extent to which this body of work (and Thomas's own) explores more intricately the creative interrelationships between composer and performer than much other writing I mention is most notable.

[27] Mieko Kanno, 'Prescriptive Notation', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, p. 232.

[28] Ibid. p. 233.

[29] See Ian Pace, 'Notation, Time and the Performer's Relationship to the Score in Contemporary Music', in *Unfolding Time: Studies in Temporality in Twentieth-Century Music*, edited Darla Crispin and James Cox (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), especially pp. 158-165, where I consider the first few lines of Elliott Carter's *90+* in such a manner.

[30] Compare the thoughts of Nicholas Cook on 'compensating rubato'; in response to empirical studies suggesting that this approach is not reflected in what performers actually do (on the basis of recordings), he points out that such a thing is a modification of what performers do, 'not a description, but a prescription' (using the terms in a different sense to Kanno). Cook avoids the mistake made by many of seeing particular forms of rubato as deviations from an otherwise literalistic norm, instead recognising them as nuances introduced within what may already be otherwise nuanced styles. See Nicholas Cook, 'Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis' (hereafter simply 'Analysing Performance'), in Cook and Mark Everist (eds), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 251.

or 'alienating' them[31] (though here he is speaking of the visual rather than sonic aspects of the performance).

It is no longer especially contentious to claim that there is good reason to consider a range of different stylistic approaches across a diversity of standard repertoire – which term I use to refer to a body of work ranging roughly from Bach to Bartók, with an Austro-German bias from the mid-18th century up until the late 19th. As historical performance research and its application have progressed further and further into the realms of this repertoire, at the very least there has been reason to question the all-purpose application of a very particular set of stylistic practices which were consolidated in the 1920s and 1930s – not coincidentally during a time of the growth of recordings. But I believe much of what I have described works in line with a common historical model of notation which is adhered to even by some working within the field of historical performance. By this model, one can trace a steady linear increase in notational detail from the late Middle Ages to the present, and a concomitant decrease in the performer's scope for creative freedom. By the time one reaches, say, the music of Brian Ferneyhough, by the terms of this model, all the most minute details of every parameter are etched into the score, and the performer's task is simply to try and execute these as precisely as he or she can (the furthest extension of Stravinsky's ideal of the performer as executor rather than interpreter[32], an attitude that is widely adhered to by performers of contemporary music).

Whilst not rejecting all aspects of this historical model, I believe it is nonetheless founded upon an essentially *positivistic* view of the role of notation. By this I mean the notion that the score tells the performer in essence *what* to do, around which they can elaborate (through use of varying micro-dy namics, rubato, tempo modifications, etc.) depending upon the degree of notational exactitude. The alternative model I wish to propose draws upon structuralist thinking about language[33]; instead of seeing the

[31] Barrie Webb, 'Performing Berio's *Sequenza V*', in Webb, *Contemporary Performance*, p. 209.
[32] See Igor Stravinsky, 'The Performance of Music', in *Poetics of Music: In the Form of Six Lessons*, translated Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl, with a preface by George Seferis, Cambridge, MA 1970, pp. 121-135.
[33] The literature on this subject is too vast to summarise here, but core texts are Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, edited Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger, tranaslated with introduction and notes Wade Baskin, New York, Toronto and London 1966, and Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, fourth edition, The Hague 1980. A standard overview of the development of structuralist ideas is Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist*

score in a *prescriptive* sense, telling the performer *what* to do (to which their 'interpretation' is viewed as a supplement), I would suggest that instead it delineates the range of possible performance activities by telling the performer what *not* to do.

Let me give a very simple example of this. A score indicates a group of three quavers played as a triplet. From a positivistic point of view, this would imply three notes each played for a duration of exactly one-third of a crotchet beat (that is literally *what* the score tells the player to do). Any deviation from this would represent some form of rubato. Now, in light of the fact that I believe that – both historically and to some extent in contemporary terms - a metrically regular approach to triplets may be the exception rather than the rule, I find this sort of definition inadequate. Instead, this triplet should be viewed as being defined by what it *excludes*. In the example on the slide [or hand-out?], Chopin's Impromptu in G-flat, op. 51, there are a great many ways of playing the triplets.

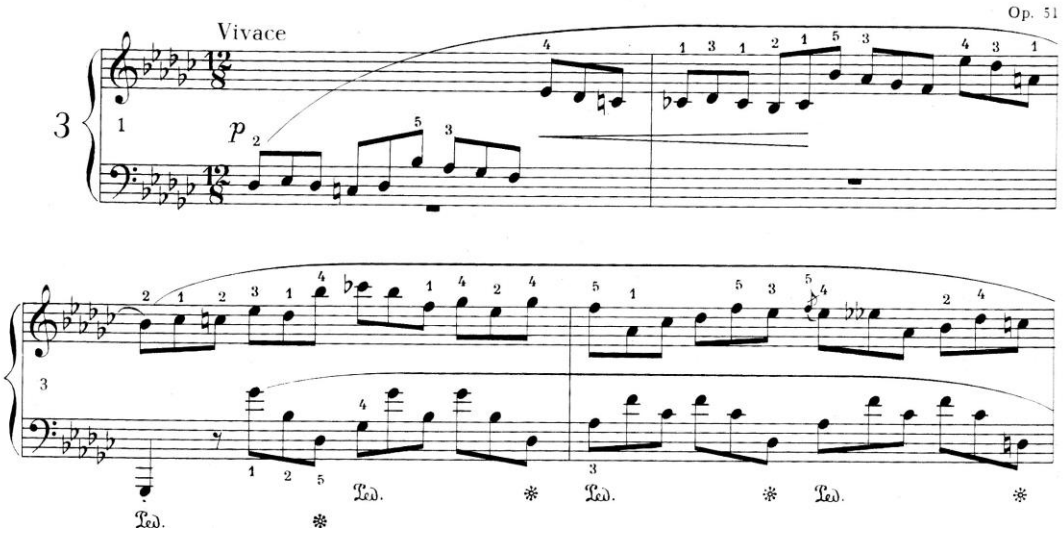


Fig. 1. Chopin Impromptu in G-flat, Op. 51.

Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature, London 1975. It is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on the difference between structuralist and post-structuralist ideas; suffice to say that the conceptions I derive from the former are also informed by knowledge of the latter.

Almost all of the melodic or accompanying figurations here are triplets, but they can be played with a variety of rhythmic inflections, reflecting other aspects of the melody, harmony and rhythm. A small tenuto can be placed at the beginning of the first and second bars, to place some stress on the strongest beat and quasi-accentuate the dominant seventh harmony provided by the C-flat at the beginning of the second bar (as an alternative to the use of a regular accent, which might make the line unnecessarily jagged and also diminish the effect of the peak of the crescendo arriving between the second and third crotchet beats), the first notes on the first and third beats in the subsequent bars could be played similarly to enable a correspondence between the melody and the two-crotchet duration groupings in the accompaniment, the more more chromatic or dissonant melodic groups (for example the last crotchet of bar 2 and first crotchet of bar 3) could be expanded somewhat for added emphasis and 'breathing space', whilst equally the more diatonic or consonant groups (for example the second and fourth crotchets of bar 3) could be slightly accelerated. At the same time, the left hand figures could be played more regularly, leading to a desynchronisation between the hands (as I do)[34]. And, perhaps most crucially, the 'basic' triplet group could be played slightly unevenly (with the first note slightly longer than the other two, or perhaps more unusually, which the first and second shorter and the third marginally longer – of course there are many subtle variations of degree by which the performer can individuate their approach in this respect). This need not be considered as a deviation, instead as one amongst many possibilities for interpreting (in the sense of 'understanding') what the notational symbol can signify. However, if the basic pattern could be heard metrically as a semiquaver-quaver-semiquaver figure (which of course itself can be played in many different ways), then I would suggest that the performer is *not* playing triplets in any meaningful sense, as opposed to the above (and other options).

So whilst in a sense it may be difficult to establish with any degree of certitude what a triplet *is*, we may be able identify what it is *not*. Similarly, there are an infinite number of different ways of playing *mezzoforte*, but a *mezzopiano*, in the sense of a dynamic slightly below a medium comfort area for the ear (let alone a *piano* or a *pianissimo*), (such as would correspond closely to other occurrences of the latter

[34] Numerous accounts of Chopin's playing and teaching emphasise his preferences in this respect: see Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher*, pp. 49-51,

symbol within the same piece or passage), would be strictly wrong, at least as the dominant dynamic for the passage marked as such. On discretely-pitched keyboard instruments, notation of pitch does indeed work in a positivistic sense (there is only one pitch that constitutes an A-flat within a particular octave, for example[35]), but on a stringed instrument, say, such a pitch could be played in various marginally different tunings, depending on the tuning system involved, whether it is a leading note and thus to be sharpened or not, for reasons of expressive intonation or other inflection relating to its harmonic function (or the tuning of other players with whom one is playing), and so on. So here an A-flat is not exactly a specific pitch, rather a range of possibilities that can be demarcated by considering what is excluded – an A natural, a G, or maybe an A-quarter-flat or three-quarters-flat as well, for example. And even on a discretely tuned instrument, the 'spelling' of a note can affect other aspects of performance, as I will later attempt to demonstrate in the case of the music of Morton Feldman.

So, if a performer thinks of notation in this way, the task becomes less one of playing something 'right' as playing it 'not wrong'. This should not be taken to imply the relativist position that all 'not wrong' solutions are equally valid, only that they are not specifically excluded by the notation[36]. Nor should it be taken as implying an autonomy of the text from considerations of historical notational and performance practice – the ways in which the score delineates the range of possibilities are

[35] However, whether this is notated as an A-flat or a G# can affect other aspects of how it is played, as I will explore later in this article in the context of the music of Morton Feldman.

[36] The composer Howard Skempton has been known to remark in private that 'A piece of music is only as good as its worst performance' (my thanks to Mark R. Taylor for relaying this remark to me), by which I presume he means that 'worst' means 'worst but not excluded by the notation'. This is a very hard-line position to take on notation and interpretation (but one that seems particularly vivid and noteworthy in the context of Skempton's own often sparsely notated work) which I would not wish wholly to subscribe to. Skempton may have also been indirectly alluding to the problems Feldman encountered with his own early works involving indeterminate notation in this respect (Feldman commented that in his early graphic scores that the 'performers sounded bad….because I was still involved with passages and continuity that allowed their presence to be felt' ('Autobiography', in Walter Zimmermann (ed), *Morton Feldman Essays*, Kerten 1985, p. 38, later published as 'Liner Notes', in B.H. Friedman (ed), *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, Cambridge, MA 2000, p.6). It is also worth noting Feldman specifically refused permission for Cornelius Cardew to mount a performance of one of the *Projections* series using instruments different to those in the score ('Unpublished Writings', in Friedman (ed), *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, pp. 206-207). This was one possibility that the score definitively excluded. Frank O'Hara's conceptualisation of how 'the performer must create the experience within the limits of the notation' in *Piece for Four Pianos* (1957), 'New Directions in Music: Morton Feldman', ibid. p. 215, corresponds very closely to the model of notation I am outlining).

themselves conditioned by such factors, but this need not deny the validity of the basic model.

This may seem a contrived way of conceptualising notation, but it is one which I believe has positive benefits in ways I hope to demonstrate in the context of contemporary music. I choose an example from Chopin deliberately because his music begs these questions as much as any from the standard piano repertoire. In reports of his playing of various mazurkas, for example, the three beats in a bar were so stylised that some believed it was written in four[37]. That might seem to reveal a weak point in my model of notation (as something in four would be strictly wrong[38]); but I believe, poetic license in such a report in mind, that most sensitive listeners would nonetheless perceive the difference between a highly stylised mazurka rhythm performed in such a manner and something that is actually being played (and, more importantly, read) as if it is in a time signature of four.

This model of rhythm is one I have found facilitates the performance of music of extreme notated rhythmic complexity, such as Brian Ferneyhough's piano piece *Opus Contra Naturam* (1999-2000), the first bar of which contains three or even four levels of nested tuplets.

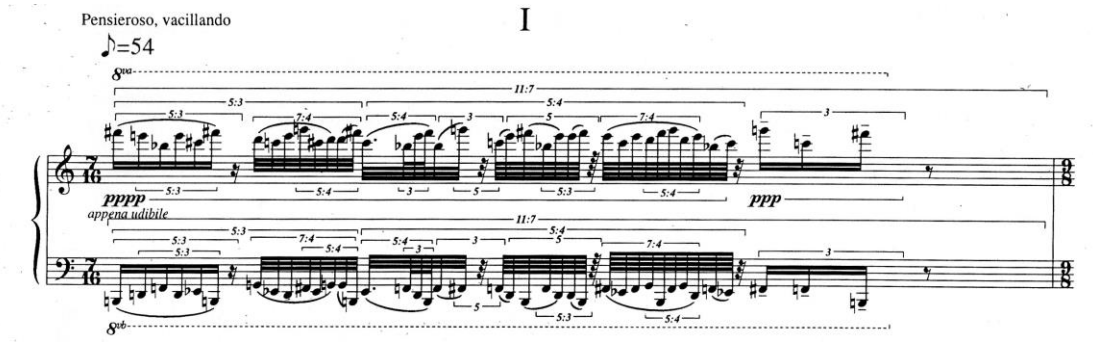


Fig. 2. Brian Ferneyhough, *Opus Contra Naturam*, opening.

[37] As remarked by Sir Charles Hallé, who said that Chopin's performances of his Mazurkas 'appeared to be written, not in 3/4, but in 4/4 time, the result of his dwelling so much longer on the first note in the bar' (ibid. p. 72).

[38] It should be borne in mind that this is a very particular idiomatic use of rhythm for which an expanded concept of what 'three in a bar' means may be required.

Instead of asking how to play these rhythms 'accurately', I ask why Ferneyhough has notated them in this manner. He has himself made clear the importance of channelling the performer away from habitual modes of interpretation[39], and I see this notation in precisely this manner. In ways which time does not permit a detailed explanation, I play this by viewing sub-tuplet groups primarily as indications to *avoid* what would otherwise be more homogenous patterns – for example in the first, the smallest 5:3 tuplet group within a large 5:3 group clearly implies that these should not be played as six even values, and the second to sixth notes should be somewhat shorter than the first. This does not deny some continued flexibility within such groups, but provides a means of playing it much more viable than attempting to calculate exact durations.

I have elsewhere written about applications of this approach to various music old and new; I'd like to look here in more detail at a piece relatively well-known to many pianists who play new music, Elliott Carter's short piece *90+* from 1994. The work seems extremely precisely notated in terms of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, and so on. But there are nonetheless a huge number of questions which the performer must answer themselves. Fig. 3 shows the opening of the piece.

[39] For Ferneyhough's most extensive thoughts on notation, see 'Interview with Philippe Albèra', in James Boros and Richard Toop (eds.), *Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings*, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 317-321.

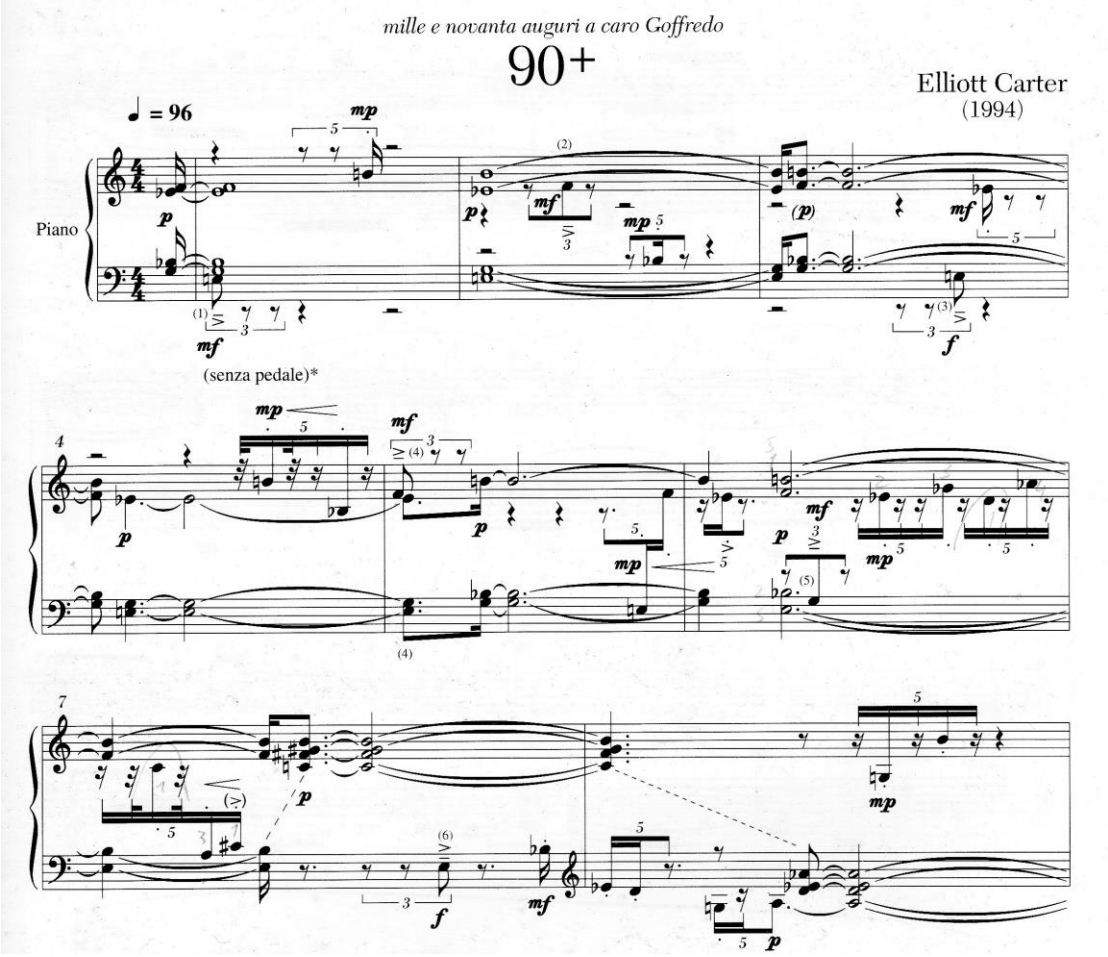


Fig. 3. Elliott Carter, *90+*

For the first two lines and a bit, there is a continuous chordal progression, each chord consisting of three or four notes from a six-note chord. Around this, in his characteristic fashion, Carter presents various types of ‘punctuation’ which first take the form of single pitches from the same six-note chord at varying dynamics and articulations. Then, with the introduction of the G-flat and D at the end of bar 6, the pitch gamut widens; furthermore, in bar 4 the hairpin dynamics indicate that the ‘punctuation’ pitches begin to form into lines. The tempo direction consists solely of a metronome mark, crotchet = 96, with no other expressive indication. As this marking will on the next page undergo a metrical modulation to crotchet = 120, one can fairly assume that at least when that modulation approaches, the original tempo is to be maintained in some fashion. But in the intervening bars, is the pulse to be kept quite strict, or is there room for some local deviation for ‘expressive’ purposes? I will

demonstrate in a moment examples of how some might wish to do this, but first let us examine other basic questions that arise from the very outset.

The opening chord consists of four pitches all marked *piano*. But how is one to voice this? If one plays all the notes literally at the same dynamic, there will be a slight imbalance as the lower notes sound stronger [*demonstrate*] – this aspect becomes more pronounced in more widely-spaced chords. Some of certain schools of playing might wish to top-voice the chord slightly [*demonstrate*]; whilst there is nothing in the score specifically to indicate this, there is nothing to forbid it either. Bearing in mind that Carter frequently works with performers trained at American music colleges, where the top-voicing approach is sometimes standard practice[40] (especially amongst those who have studied with expatriate Russian teachers or within the schools they bequeathed), he would presumably be aware of this. However, later in bar 37 Carter writes '*bring out upper line, cantando*' in a passage of a similar nature; from this we can fairly assume that this is thus to be differentiated from the opening (or else he would surely have written such an indication there as well).

If one plays the chord with a very subtle voicing so that each note is very slightly louder as one goes from bottom to top, it is possible to create an *audible* equality between the pitches [*demonstrate*], rather than a *literal* one as mentioned before. None of these possibilities are necessarily 'right' in the sense of implying others are 'wrong', but neither are any of them clearly 'wrong' according to the notation. There are other possibilities as well; one might wish to bring out the presence of an E-flat triad within the opening chord by playing the F slightly softer than the other pitches [*demonstrate*], which could make the 'contradiction' of the tonality provided by the following E-natural more pronounced, if that is what one wishes. And other distinct voicings designed to foreground certain harmonic properties of later chords are equally possible.

[40] This convention has sometimes invoked the wrath of composers, notably Debussy, who according to Marguerite Long said 'The fifth finger of virtuosi, what a pest it is!' (Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, translated Olive Senior-Ellis, London 1972, p. 13). See also note 13 for Messiaen's similar sentiments.

Peter Hill writes of how Messiaen was enthusiastic about many possibilities in this respect in the *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*[41], in which such questions are even more complicated by virtue of the presence of various dynamics within chords, which can themselves be interpreted in a variety of ways; the situation is exacerbated even further by the dynamically complex chords in the first two of Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke*[42].

So, let us now consider the dynamics and articulation of the 'punctuation'. The first note in the bass, E-natural, is indicated *mf*, with an accent and a tenuto marking. Leaving other dynamics to one side for a moment, consider how one interprets and executes this accent. It might be seen to imply that the note is slightly louder than the basic level one determines to be *mf*, or it might be read as to imply a certain sort of attack. I would play the B-flat and G with the second and third fingers, and then use a slight rotary throwing motion on the fifth to aid the approach on the E, absorbing the reaction from the key with a certain resilience in the joints and wrist [*demonstrate*]. For reasons which are beyond the scope of this article to explicate in depth, such a mode of touch, from a clear distance above the key, will produce a degree of 'key noise' (the sound of the finger striking the key), which merges to the ear with the sound produced by the hammer hitting the string, so as to give a slightly sharper-edged beginning to the note. But this is only one possibility; the E could be played from closer to the key so as to minimise the possibility of such key noise [*demonstrate*]; once again, those of certain schools of playing would frequently favour such an approach, as a note with a sharper-edged attack is often considered by them to be harsh and unacceptable (here once again I am thinking especially of Russian schools, on the basis of a variety of treatises and other information about teaching[43]). Then there is the question of how the note is to be released; I could raise the finger briskly from the key (after holding it for its full duration) with a further

[41] See Peter Hill, 'Messiaen on his own music', in Hill (ed), *The Messiaen Companion*, London 1995, pp. 275-277. Hill also points out that Messiaen 'detested the gratuitious bringing-out of the top note' (p. 275).

[42] In Ronald Stevenson's *Western Music: an introduction*, New York 1971, a book which exhibits that combination of scepticism towards modernism and neo-romantic idealisation of 'world music' that is a common feature of a certain school of British musical discourse, he argues that one of these chords, with four different dynamics in one hand, is 'simply unplayable by a human hand, whether the person attached to it is called Smith or Horowitz' (p. 188) and goes on to suggest that this was what led Stockhausen to electronics. However, numerous performers have clearly disproved Stevenson's claim

[43] Rubinstein, Lhevinne, Neuhaus, other information about Russian piano schools from studies, interviews, etc. Note that this is not always applicable – example of Horowitz.

rotary motion, causing the damper to fall rapidly and produce an abrupt end to the note [*demonstrate*]. Alternatively, I could retard the release of the finger, and thus cause the damper to hit the string more slowly and less abruptly, by the use of an upward wrist motion whilst releasing [*demonstrate*].

The right-hand B-natural is marked staccato and *mezzopiano*. Again I can use a throwing motion to play this if I so desire (personally I would do, to an extent) [*demonstrate*] or play from closer to the key followed by a quick release [*demonstrate*] (this approach would however be likely to be somewhat less abrupt than that produced by the 'bounce-back' of the throwing motion).

These are all of course minute details, but in combination can quite significantly affect the nature of the audible result and how it might be perceived. The question of attack for the punctuation (or, for that matter for the chords, for which similar questions arise), is especially important: the extent to which one differentiates the two groups of attacks (for punctuation and chords) will affect the extent to which the different layers of musical information are perceived as being stratified.

[*Demonstrate first with throwing actions and sharp releases, then with more moderate release, then closer to the keys*]

[CUT: In a very loose way, I could argue that a less-stratified approach accords more closely with many interpretative aesthetics associated with those who concentrate primarily on the standard repertoire and come from relatively traditional and well-established schools of twentieth-century teaching[44], whereas the more-stratified one might be seen as a more 'modernist' approach. These categories are however problematic, and I will return to them presently.]

Other considerations include the exact manner of using the pedal for joining chords, the relationship of pulse flexibility to a written out *accelerando*, whether to consider

[44] At least in the twentieth century; there is ample evidence to suggest quite different approaches to this were common in the nineteenth, especially in certain French, Germanic and Hungarian schools of piano playing, though this is too large a subject to investigate in the context of this article.

certain pitches as assuming a function akin to an appoggiatura, or how one gauges absolute and relative dynamics.

Carter indicates in the score that the pedal is to be used solely to join one chord to another. But this can be done in different ways, depending on the exact point at which it is released, and the manner of doing so. A quick release exactly on the attack of the new chord causes a clear progression in which the chords are connected, indeed seamlessly, but form a line in an essentially accumulative manner. A slower release, or a release very marginally after the attack, blurs the overlap somewhat, creating a sense of a particular manifestation of line as something over and above the simple sequence, even as a type of aura which further exacerbates the difference from the punctuation[45].

[*Play in both ways*]

When the punctuations start to form themselves into lines, there are various ways in which one can use small tempo modifications to heighten this feature if so desired. The end of bar 4 contains a written out *accelerando*, but a slightly quickening of the pulse *on top of this* might make the relationship sound less obviously 'metrical' or mechanistic. Similar principles could also be applied in bars 6 and 7.

[*Play in both ways*]

The passage at the end of bar 7 and beginning of bar 8 could be played as if the E-flat is an appoggiatura, thus helping to consolidate a sense of a temporary tonality of B-flat in the left hand. This can be done by playing the E-flat slightly louder than the notes on either side of it, whilst maintaining a basic dynamic of *mezzoforte*. In order to further heighten this sense of tonality, one could play the B-flat slightly later than indicated, and the D slightly earlier, so as to marginally compress the figure.]

[45] Charles Rosen points out that Moriz Rosenthal told him that this type of 'syncopated' pedalling was purely a product of the nineteenth century, though Rosen himself doubts this (Rosen, *Piano Notes*, New York 2002, p. 210).

These are just some of the various decisions for performers, even in these eight bars alone (I have not talked about, for example, how one gauges both absolute and relative dynamics, which is another big issue). If one tried to rethink these questions anew with every single note, it is unlikely that the piece could be played without spending a huge amount of time learning just a single page, hardly practical at least for performers of contemporary music, who are generally expected to continually learn and maintain a very large repertoire. Many performers will have simply established a set of conventions for themselves with respect to these micro-aspects of performance practice, which they apply across a range of distinct repertoire; this consistency can plays an important part of the construction of a type unified performing style which can become perceived as part of a unified performing 'personality', whether or not it has been self-reflexively analysed in terms of specifics. Whilst of course a performer needs to make decisions, even if temporary ones, and get on with the business playing the piece (furthermore, a spontaneous approach to such parameters in live performance can be most fruitful), I believe it is still worth their while to be aware both of the range of choices available, how many different ways there are of playing ‘what is written’, and perhaps most importantly what the result of different approaches entail in a wider context.

A reasonably competent pianist could at this stage attempt to play these three lines: if one plays the passage first adopting the above-mentioned parameters so as to stress continuity, integration between parts and lines, and organic development, then the same passage with an emphasis upon stratification of simultaneous lines, sharp delineation of characterisation, and non-integration of successive sounds, including in a temporal sense (playing the metrically defined punctuation and overall pulse more strictly, or more at least not assimilating the rhythms into more conventional-sounding patterns), one should hear almost caricatured versions of what I identified earlier as 'mainstream' and 'modernist' interpretations.

Here I would like to point out here how my employment of the term 'modernist' with respect to performance differs somewhat from that of Richard Taruskin, and also a range of other writers who have picked up on and developed the oppositions he presented, one of the more recent cases being Bruce Haynes who develops an interesting but rather simplistic history of performance on this basis. Taruskin

associates 'modernist' performance with a supposedly 'literalist' approach to the text which entails rhythmic regularity and minimal rubato, clear synchronisation of parts, avoidance of any extraneous embellishment, clarity of line and articulation and sharpness of accentuation, and an attitude of self-denial on the part of the performer, much of this relating back to the ideas expressed in Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music* and also in the practice of Arturo Toscanini and to some extent Bruno Walter. Taruskin sees a progression through the twentieth century towards the dominance of this approach, with much historically-informed performance as a particular intensification of this, despite its claims to antiquity. Haynes defines it somewhat differently (and somewhat inconsistently) as something dominant in a few decades before and after the second world war, but flips between a Taruskin-like definition and also associating it with seamless legato, 'long-line' phrasing and continuous vibrato. Both writers apply the term in too blanket a fashion, I believe; they are right to locate significant shifts in performance from the 1930s onwards compared to many examples of performance evidenced on early recordings, but make too little of other significant differences between schools of performance from this point onwards.

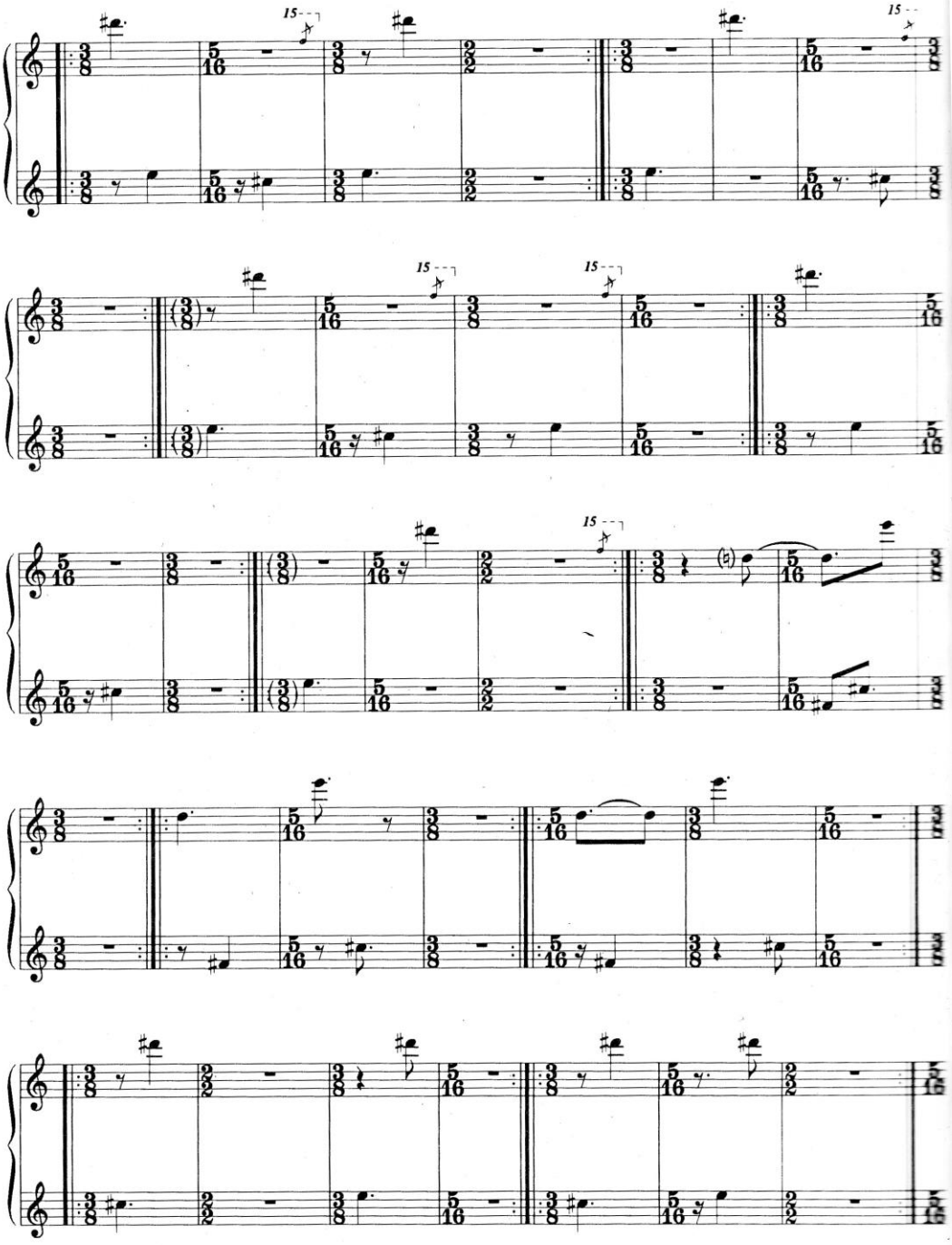
Through the course of his various writings on performance, Taruskin sets up dualistic oppositions: between 'letter' and 'spirit' of a text (a dichotomy earlier evoked by Liszt), between 'geometric' and 'vitalist' approaches, and between pre-twentieth century and 'modernist' traditions. This latter opposition in particular is that which I find most problematic. Now Taruskin rightly identifies the vast differences between the conducting of Wilhelm Furtwängler and Toscanini, the former almost twenty years younger than the latter despite the fact that both achieved legendary status in the inter-war period, whilst noting that both represent a shift from the conducting of Willem Mengelberg, Richard Strauss or Hans Pfitzner. But I would argue that Furtwängler represents a refinement and shift in emphasis from this earlier tradition, and would suggest that the tradition of Toscanini (like other traditions categorise by Taruskin as 'modernist') may have a longer lineage, at least well back into the nineteenth-century. In some ways I believe that evidence suggests that the conducting of Berlioz, Mendelssohn or Hans Richter, the violin playing of Henri Vieuxtemps, or the pianism of Liszt and some of his pupils such as Carl Tausig or Eugen d'Albert, anticipate certain aspects (different in each case) of what has come to be conceived as 'modern' style. An over-eagerness to posit a huge break between 19th and 20th century

compositional and performance history can easily lead to a minimisation of major (and often antagonistic) oppositions which existed simultaneously in either.

For reasons which are beyond the scope of this presentation to explain in detail, I would argue that in place of a common historical location of 'modernism' in music as something emerging around the last decade of the nineteenth century, and somehow unifying such extremely diverse tendencies as first the early works of Debussy, Mahler and Richard Strauss, then those of Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Bartok in the period leading up to World War One, I would posit the period immediately after this war as of primary importance. This time saw the development in Austro-German music of aesthetic tendencies already well-developed outside of Central Europe, especially in France and Russia, in ways which have roots going well back into the nineteenth century, and constituted the most sustained assault on some (not all) aspects of a Wagnerian tradition, though in a manner in many ways quite different from that of Wagner's arch-nemesis (at least in the eyes of many earlier aesthetic protagonists) Brahms. The concomitant development of the concept of *Neue Musik* from Paul Bekker, Hermann Scherchen, Hans Tiessen and others facilitated such a process, even if the focus of Bekker in particular was not necessarily towards the *Neue Sachlichkeit* which emerged in German music during this period (from some roots in pre-war Germanic architecture). More widely in Europe, the objectivism, to varying degrees, of Berlioz, Mendelssohn, or Rimsky-Korsakov, the grotesqueries of Berlioz and Liszt (and sometimes Wagner), and the historicism not only of Brahms but also of musicians associated with the *Société nationale de musique* in Third Republic France, the antipathy towards perceived Teutonic heaviness of Satie, and the prioritisation of intense dramatic pacing over the individual moment in parts of Verdi, could be combined in developed and mediated forms to bring about a radical shift of emphasis in much music. With this came a parallel intensification of certain tendencies in performance which also had many nineteenth-century roots, to produce a clearer, rhythmically-driven and regular, and sharply etched style which would in its most extreme form (as desired by Stravinsky) would be best executed by a performer whose level of self-discipline most closely approximated to that of a player in a military band (to use Stravinsky's own metaphor – it is not uncoincidental that military bands were a major influence upon both Berlioz and Rimsky-Korsakov).

But this was not the only tendency, and I would contrast this with that shift in the 1920s and 1930s towards a refined and somewhat homogenised rendition of other 19th and early 20th century styles, to produce what I would characterise as a 'mainstream' style: generally legato, with continuous use of vibrato in strings and the pedal on the piano, a tendency towards blended rather than sharply differentiated sonorities, a degree of rhythmic and metrical flexibility but not so much as would suggest major deviations from the basic metre, a continuation of hierarchical approaches to voicing and balance, avoidance of sharp discontinuities of line and texture or other things which might suggest angularity, and so on. Nonetheless, one should not be too dogmatic in the application of this category, as differing degrees of emphasis upon different attributes can be found amongst various players and groups of players of this type.

In Morton Feldman's extended piano piece *For Bunita Marcus* (1985), the 'spelling' of the notation (in the sense of the choice of accidentals) indicates a variety of things that are worth considering. The piece is entirely notated at a single dynamic (*ppp*), with a pedal indication at the beginning and otherwise just two places where he marks no pedal for identical mini-flourishes, after which the pedal is retaken. There are also no slurs or articulation markings. In terms of how exactly to play the work within the notated dynamic, in terms of subtle nuances and so on, we have only the beaming, barring, bar grouping with respect to repeats, and spelling to go on, combined with apprehension of other musical properties of the work. Most of the piece is taken up by interactions and dialogues between several categories of material, mostly consisting of just a few pitches which are permuted, rhythmically modified, shifted by the octave, or occasionally subject to pitch development. A passage roughly in the middle of the work makes much of a group of three pitches, C# an augmented octave above middle C, the E above that, the D# above that, and a high F a diminished 10th above that, always notated as a grace note. The minor third formed by the simultaneous resonance of the two lowest pitches clearly implies a C# minor tonality, the high F reinforcing this by acting somewhat in the manner of an appoggiatura. The passage in Fig. 8 starts from well within the reiteration and permutation of this pitch cell.



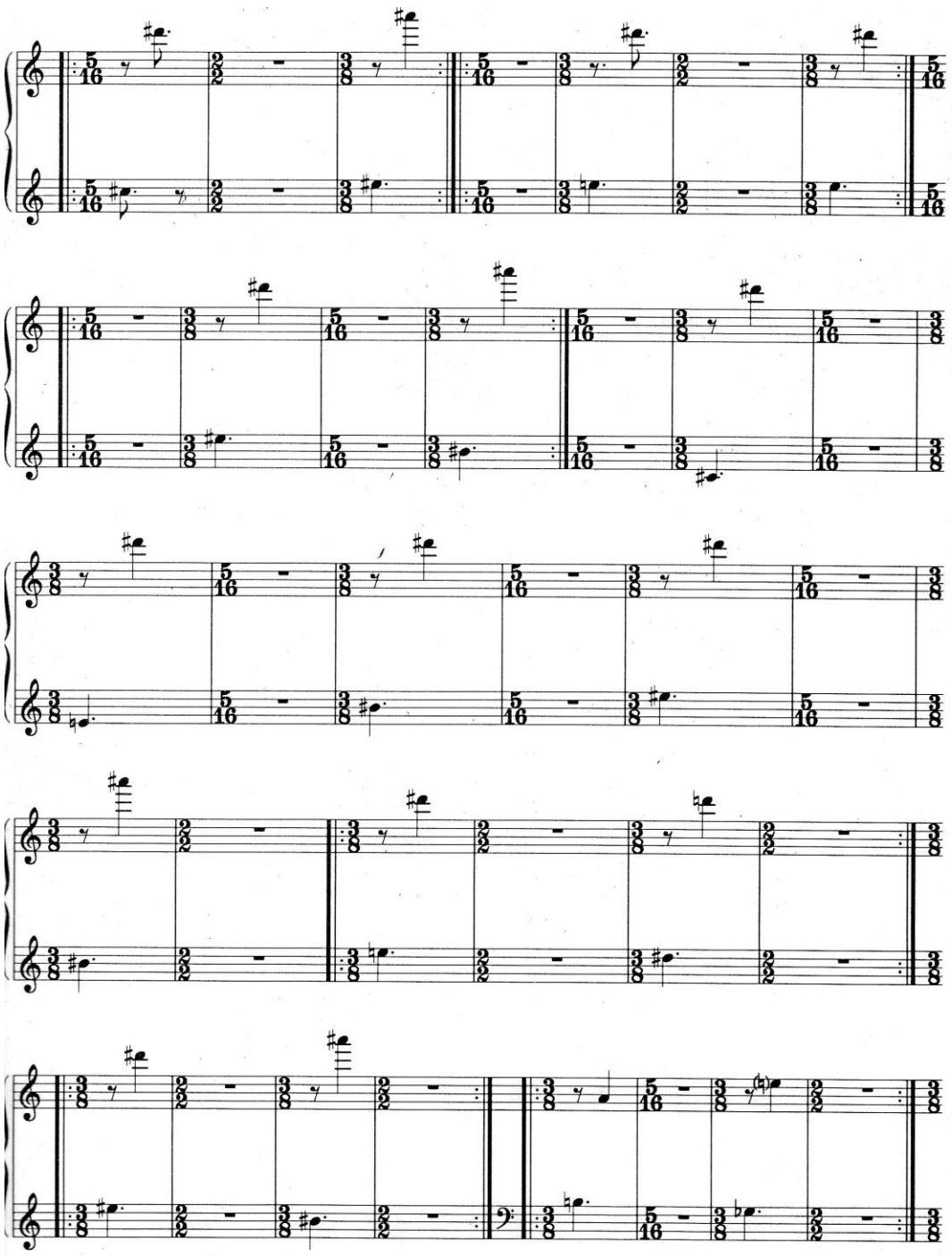


Fig. 8. Morton Feldman, *For Bunita Marcus*, pp. 36-37.

Feldman returns to another cell based upon F#, C#, D and E, which has already been extensively developed earlier in the piece, like a fading memory, before returning to the other pitch cell. But at the top of page 37, he does something remarkable, producing a moment quite unlike anything elsewhere in the piece. He sharpens the E to an E#, and lowers the high F to the A# below, thus creating a sense of modulation

into the tonic major. This is very short-lived, as Feldman flattens the E# back to an E after this has been repeated once, then makes matters more murky by flattening the C# to a B#, and reintroducing the A#, so that the combination of E# and B# can be seen to resolve chromatically onto E and C#, giving the earlier seeming modulation into the major a retrospective context.

In light of what I am describing in terms of the harmonic progress (unusual within the piece because of the use of pitch development), one should consider the notation at the top of page 37. The large 2/2 silent bar in the middle of the group blurs any perceptible temporal relationship between the two bars containing notes; with the pedal depressed, they sound almost identical in terms of pulse (making the first bar with notes in the following group between repeat signs more striking for its rhythmic contrast). As the first E# heralds a quasi-modulation, should it be stressed very slightly, as one might do with a comparable process in a more traditional work? Or just let it emerge without any such heralding? Perhaps neither of these options is preferable, on account of the particular grouping of bars. This depends upon whether one interprets the use of repeated groups as being merely a notational convenience, or whether it signifies something of greater musical consequence? I am inclined towards the latter explanation, not least for the following reasons: both of the two preceding groups of bars (as delineated by repeat signs) begin with a C# followed by a D#, a quaver apart, as does this one. As such the other pairs of notes in each group might be interpreted as an extension and enrichment of the sonority, and might be played very marginally quieter, as ‘weak bars’ compared to the ‘strong bars’ at the beginning of the groups. Then the tonic major modulation can sound quite different, growing out of such enrichments rather than necessarily heralding a major harmonic shift, and in this manner attaining a more melancholy rather than affirmative character.

The pitch cell most extensively used in the piece consists initially of A-flat below middle C, G a major seventh above, C above that, and B-flat above that, notated as two temporally staggered, arpeggiated dyads in either hand, as can be seen on page 31, second system, third bar (Fig. 9).

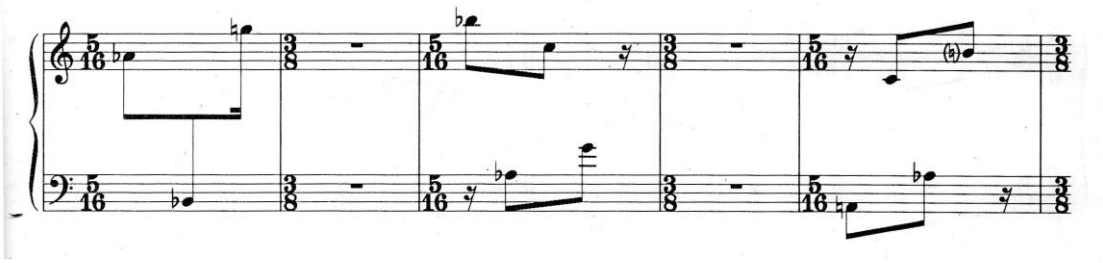
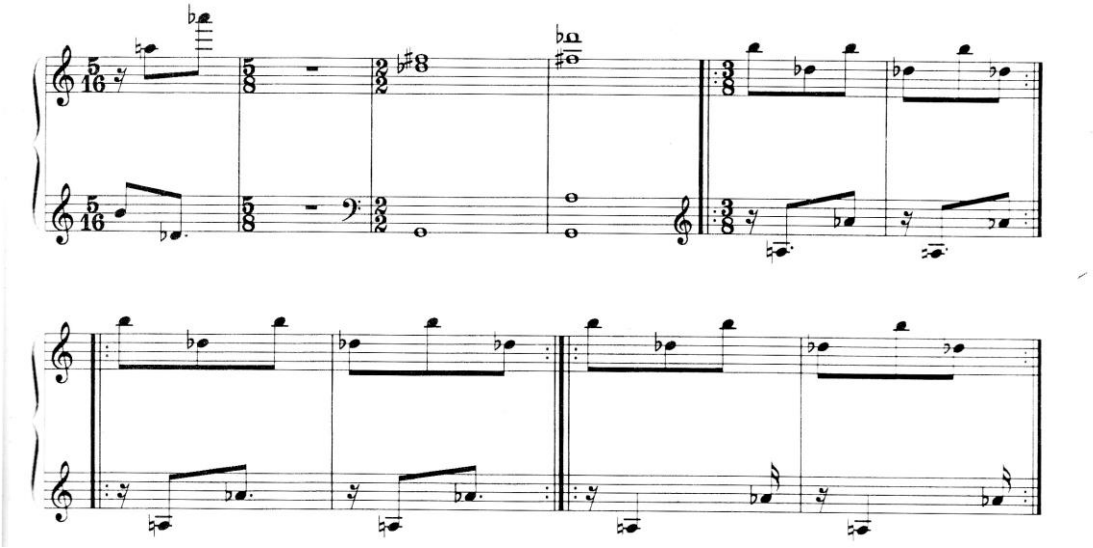


Fig. 9. Feldman, *For Bunita Marcus*, p. 31, second system.

This comes almost immediately after the second mini-flourish, which thus serves to herald the introduction of such material. Soon afterwards, all pitches are shifted up a semitone, and this becomes the basic unit. Fig. 10 gives one example of how this pitch cell is reiterated and temporally permuted.



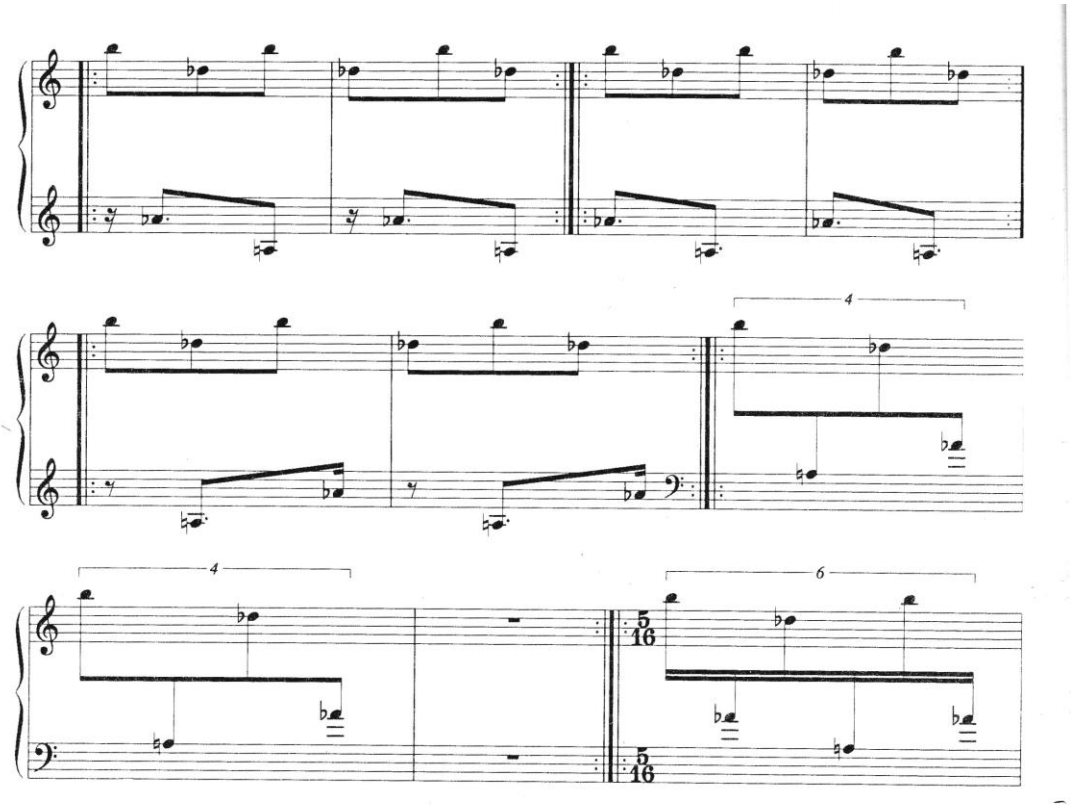


Fig. 10. Feldman, *For Bunita Marcus*, from pp. 45-46.

I first got to know this work well from a recording which I owned for maybe two years before I purchased a score. This material had always sounded like an axis of relative tonal stability, establishing the dominant key as that of A major, combining a minor seventh in the right hand with a major seventh in the left. And if I had transcribed the work from my recording, I would have notated it as A, G#, C# and B. But this is not how Feldman notates it, as you can see; the intervals he presents are an augmented sixth in the right hand and a diminished octave in the left. If this were written for strings, it would be possible to make this clear by different tunings, but no such option exists on the piano. How to try and make Feldman's particular spellings manifest in sound is a major challenge in this piece. After both performing it myself and hearing it played by others, I have come to believe that a certain unconscious tendency to think of this cell as being 'in A major' implies a certain type of voicing, in which the A and D-flat are very slightly more prominent than the B or A-flat. But this 'A major' feel can be somewhat deferred by a different approach, entailing the playing of the D-flat and A-flat at a very even dynamic so as to stress the interval of a

perfect fourth. If the D-flat is slightly more than the B, then it is less likely to imply the interval of a minor seventh. But at the same time, the barring should be taken into account, over and above what might seem a 'natural' harmonic voicing. If the beginnings of each bar are stressed very slightly, the tonality is defamiliarised even more. At the same time, the pairs of pitches in the left hand can be played with the first A very slightly louder than the A-flat, so they sound like a dyad. This would thus make the low A the strongest pitch, followed by the A-flat and D-flat (both played equally), with the B the quietest; the latter modified in line with the barring.

This is of course one of various possible solutions; whichever one chooses, it is important to bear in mind and act upon the counter-intuitive notation, working *against* the assimilation of this music into a notion of 'tradition' (in terms of particular forms of tonally-derived models of tension and release), even if this makes the music less amenable to what might be called a 'chill-out' form of listening, a manner of appropriation I fear is all too frequent in Feldman performance today (with a few notable exceptions).

Returning to Taruskin, I believe has a tendency to elide the concept of *Werktreue* with that of a literalist approach to a text. But I think this is only possible because he continues to hold to an essentially positivist view of notation – thus enabling him to contrast 'straight' and 'crooked' performances in terms of their degree of literalism. But I would argue, using my alternative model of notation, that many of the 'crooked' performances are not necessarily any less 'faithful' to the text than the 'straight' ones, they simply involve a different way of *reading* that text (as Malcolm Bilson has pointed out in other contexts). And the 19th century metaphysical conception of *Werktreue* can equally entail a commitment to the 'spirit' (however this is identified) of the 'work' which may supply much information over and above a surface reading of the text. For example, a devoted Schenkerian might identify the true 'work' in a way very different to one informed by Stravinsky's aesthetics. Nicholas Cook has rightly drawn attention to the way the language frequently used to describe performance relies upon a conception of a pre-existing work, as some sort of Platonic ideal of which any performance is almost by necessity an imperfection. Cook's way round this limiting conception is to define works as 'means of representing or conceptualizing

performances', whilst recognizing limitations to this definition, arguing that 'it would be absurd to try and understand Brendel's or Helfgott's playing without reference to *what* they play'.

Whilst respecting this model, I offer instead the idea of the 'work' as a framework delineating a potential field of practice, so that it constitutes all the possible performances of the notated text in question. This is, I believe, neither dogmatically prescriptive nor a free-for-all, but acknowledges the field of performance as playing a part of constituting the work, without wholly jettisoning the notion that the latter has some degree of independent existence. Furthermore, it can equally be applied to notated works of all types, whether Medieval and Renaissance texts in mensural notation, or graphic and text scores.

The problems with this notational model, or at least with its sole application to notation, are most apparent with music that may have been written with the assumption of different conventions of performance to those in common usage today (and such problems could also potentially exist with works of today in future times if conventions have changed in the interim period). Obvious examples of this are conventions for vibrato, pedalling, tuning, temperament, the use of *musica ficta*, ornamentation, and so on and so forth. Furthermore, a composer may have had relatively specific desires for a work which were communicated verbally to performers or others, at times when it was not common to present information of this type in the score (for example quite detailed verbal explications of the type of mood or character envisioned, using metaphors, allusions to other music or performers, and so on). Nowadays, a composer writing in full knowledge of international and stylistically diverse fields of performance would do best to attempt to indicate such things in a score if they are seen as defining[46], but this was certainly not attempted to such a degree in previous centuries, notwithstanding examples of greater specificity of verbal instructions in scores from Beethoven onwards. These various problems may be partially circumvented by an expanded notion of the musical text (or script) that encompasses other information not explicitly indicated (which is discovered through contextual enquiry); in this sense the text becomes more than simply the notation or

[46] Though even then there are limitations – would one reasonably expect every composer to indicate the use of equal temperament in their score if they do not wish the use of any other temperament system?

score, or could be said to modify that notation or at least affect how it is interpreted. So the boundaries provided by the notation may be ambiguous or hard to ascertain without wider knowledge of conventions and other relevant information; nonetheless I believe this structuralist model does constitute a significant improvement upon that which requires it to signify the work in some singular form[47]. And it should above all help to move beyond the simplistic idea that something called 'interpretation' tends to represent a *deviation* from the text. Rather, we can see musical texts (rather than 'works') as stimuli for a whole range of possible performances, frameworks for action for creative performers.

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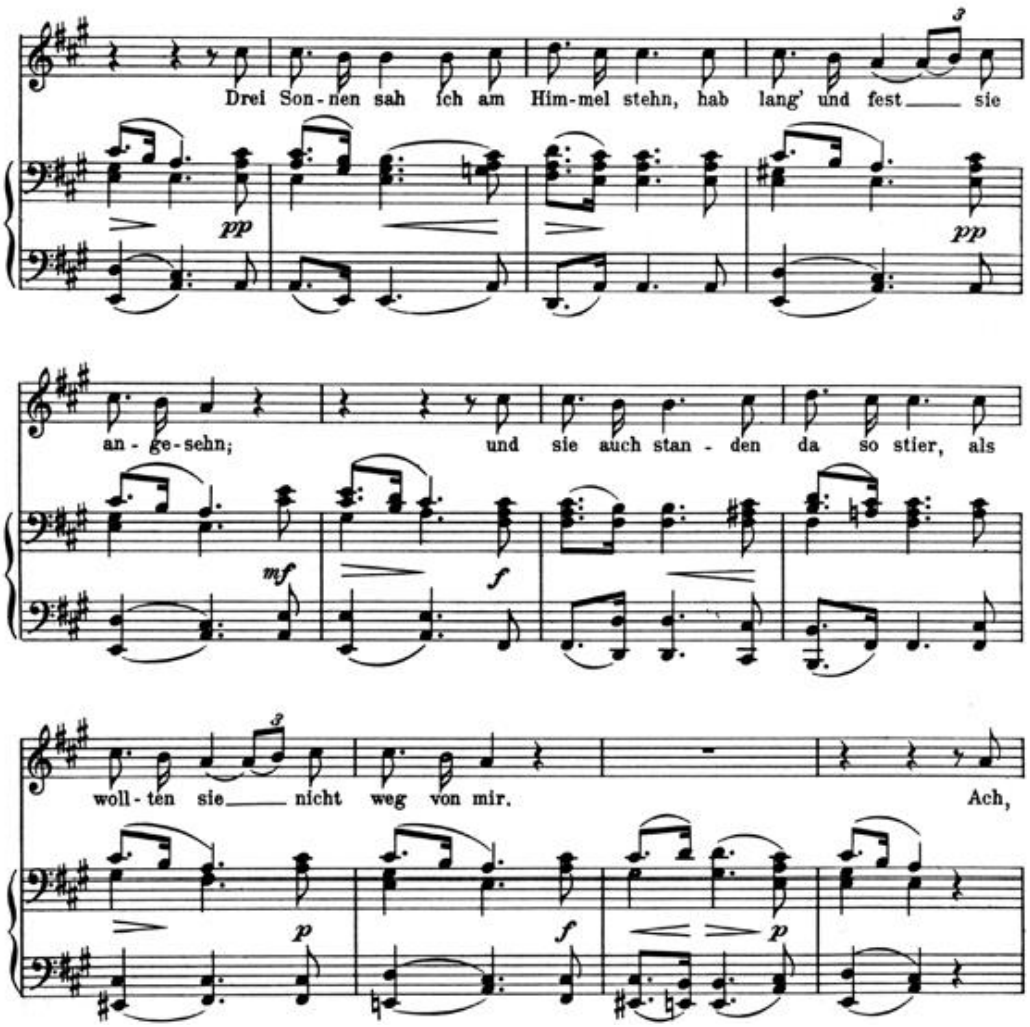
Examples of where melody is 'contradicted' by the accompaniment.

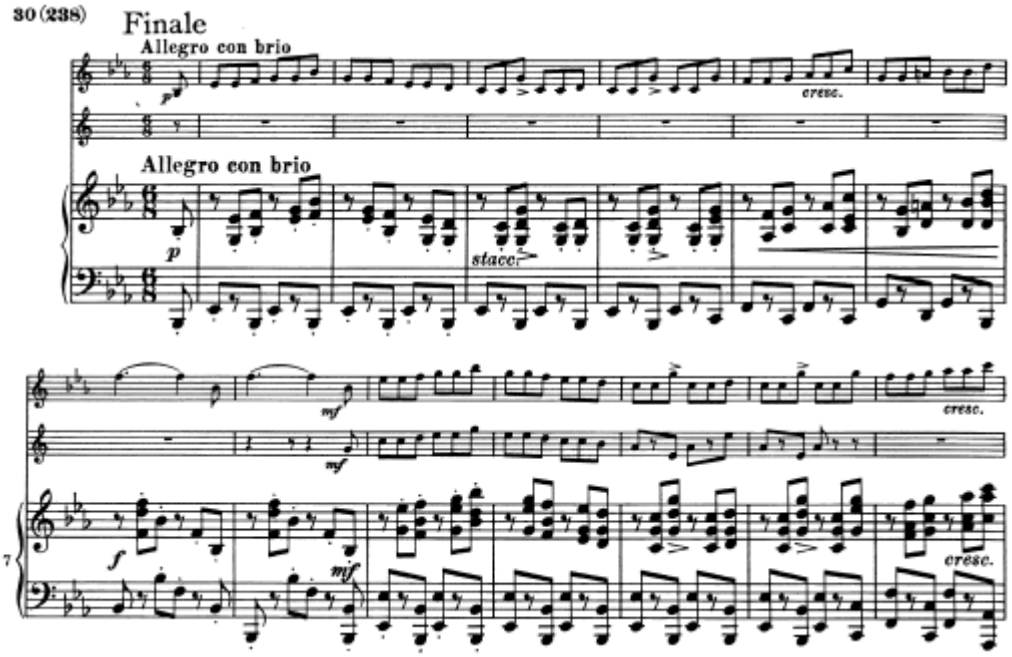
[47] Stephen Davies takes a much more flexible notion of notation than is common, but is not ultimately prepared to jettison the idea that performance constitutes an elaboration of something indicated by the score. See Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, pp. 99-150.

[Not sure about using this]

Schubert, ‘Die Nebensonnen’, from *Winterreise*



Beginning of the last movement of Brahms's Horn Trio



Puccini, from ‘Mi chiamamo Mimi’ from the first act of *La bohéme*