

*Historical performance and 'truth to the work':  
history and the subversion of Platonism*

I have often heard it stated by scholars and others interested in performance on early instruments that they would rather hear a great artist on the wrong instrument than a mediocre player on the right one. I am no longer willing to accept that statement. Perhaps it is wrong to put the instrument before the artist, but I have begun to feel that it must be done . . . There is simply no way that the greatest, most sensitive artist can ever come close to a true Mozartean sense with [modern instruments].

Malcolm Bilson, 1980<sup>1</sup>

Many involved with performance on historical instruments may now find Bilson's remarks extreme; the rhetoric of historicist performance has become progressively milder since the early 1980s. Yet something of Bilson's sense is probably still harboured by any of us who choose the old instruments over modern ones; why, after all, make this choice if one does not believe that there is some positive advantage? Bilson's famous remark may thus still represent a *reductio*, however much *ad absurdum*, of the historicist enterprise. Moreover, the same type of thinking is evident in reconstructionist approaches to other arts, such as the Globe Theatre project. Andrew Gurr implies that Shakespeare's plays as we have hitherto known them are somehow incomplete without the precise reconstruction of the 'original instrument', the theatre for which the dramatist wrote his plays:

We lose or distort much of what is valuable in his plays so long as we remain ignorant of the precise shape of that playhouse, and of how Shakespeare expected his plays to be performed there . . . A play in performance is a dynamic event, the product of a huge complex of details, from the penetrating quality of an actor's voice to the hardness of the bench a spectator may be sitting on or the state of the weather. We need to know these details, the precise shape of the stage and the auditorium, the quality of the light, the effects on sound and vision of an open-air arena and a crowded auditorium, the interplay between

actors performing on a platform in an open yard and the packed mass of thousands of spectators, many of them standing, all in broad daylight. None of these effects, each of which influences the others, can be gauged without a full-scale reconstruction. Shakespeare's works were composed in full knowledge of the intricate and dynamic interplay through which his plays were to be performed at the original Globe. We owe it to ourselves to attempt some reconstruction of the more tangible features of that interplay.<sup>2</sup>

The attention to the 'ensemble' of details contributing to the phenomenological impact of what we often regard as a written text is certainly stimulating, but two crucial questions immediately arise. First, there is the obvious issue of whether we can ever be sure that we have actually reconstructed all the original details. Secondly, and more crucially, both Gurr and Bilson seem to assume a consistency of listenership, that an ideal human subject will somehow respond identically to the same sensual stimuli regardless of age, period or social background.<sup>3</sup> Thus there is a profound sense in which this 'strong' concept of restoration is *anti*-historical, assuming as it does that there are essences in artistic production and reception that are entirely unaffected by the passing of time or place. This attitude could be termed 'modified autonomy' – the retention of the concept of the timeless artwork, but embellished with as many details as possible from the circumstances of its production. And these details are relevant to the degree that they proceed from the work outwards and not so much from the outside world – inwards – to the work.

This chapter first examines the nature and implications of this essentialist approach, since I suggest that HIP has gained much of its prestige through its appeal to a pre-existing concept of *Werktreue* ('truth to the work'). Yet, as I hope to show, the very concern with history destabilises the notion of consistent essences. HIP, quite against the intentions of its more 'hard-line' advocates, has – like a Trojan Horse – actually served to loosen the hold of the work concept and to change profoundly the culture of music and performance.

So what conception of music, musical works and composers underlies Bilson's statement? And what part does performance play in this equation? First, it is clear that the performer has duties and responsibilities to composer and work. This is, in itself, an unremarkable stance, common to many accepted performing ethics concerned with the concept of *Werktreue*. What is more contentious is the view that the instrument is privileged above the performer; it is to have a status equal to that customarily accorded to the musical text. To the degree that a performer

feels duty-bound to use a score that conforms to an authentic version of the work (whatever the difficulties this may entail), he should also use the 'authentic' instrument that the composer had in mind. The tenor of Bilson's argument (and indeed of many writings on historical performance) presumably stretches to the next level of regulation, in which performance style and interpretation are also to be governed by the historically correct norms. Indeed, he suggests in a later interview that Mozart's slurs and other performance markings are sometimes more crucial than the notes, if the performer wishes to follow Mozart's intentions (note, though, the milder imperative implied by the reference to the contemporary performer's wishes). In all, Bilson develops an interesting viewpoint that extends the customary respect for the literal accuracy of the score with an equally strong belief in aspects of the broader context that, he believes, bring out the essence of what the composer sought to express.<sup>4</sup> This sort of shift of emphasis, which retains the moral fervour of a pre-existing system of beliefs, is typical of HIP in general.

Much of this presupposes that the works concerned have an identity – a correct form of being – that the performer is morally bound to realise in sound; it is not enough to provide a recognisable performance or even one that is in some respect interesting. There is a sense that the listener (and presumably also the performer – both kinaesthetically and as a critical listener of his own performance) is deprived of some experiential truth if exposed to the 'wrong' sort of performance. Perhaps this truth has something to do with a composer's mind and personality, with a particular historical style or with the essence of a single work. But most writers on HIP adopt an ethical tone in this regard without offering any explanation of the basis of the imperative.

This ethical tone undoubtedly borrows something from the traditional Germanic conception of 'the work' as that which we are duty-bound to interpret. Ludwig Finscher articulates a typical post-Adorno view of HIP in 1967 when he suggests that there is a dichotomy between the *work* as something we wish to interpret and the 'work' as the objectification of an historical moment. He proposes that an interpretation on modern instruments might sometimes allow us to get closer to a 'true' interpretation of the work than the original ones and that the surest guide to that interpretation is through analysis and contemplation of the 'work itself' in its notated form.<sup>5</sup> The 'hard-line' HIP view seems to conflate Finscher's two notions of work by concretising the historical moment as the essential work. Philosophical justification for this position comes,

not from within the Germanic tradition but from the Anglo-American brand of 'analytical philosophy'. Might this express in logical terms that which the HIP hard-liner intuitively?

A performing musician's concept of music should not necessarily be as coherent as that which a philosopher might demand. Aesthetic theory comes, more often than not, after the event and will usually trail a more broadly based ideology concerning the status of music.<sup>6</sup> It is quite striking that there is very little interaction between the writings of philosophers concerned with HIP in music and those by musicians and musicologists. But recent philosophical writers do perceive a need to account for historical performance and those who favour it do seem to be in broad agreement with Bilson's statement.

*Werktreue* in historical performance finds its most fully developed theoretical home in one of the most traditional formulations of the musical work, Platonism. Platonism has long been a feature of music theory, particularly when theory has veered towards the abstract, mathematical and formal, or even towards the unheard and ideal. In many ways 'pure' Platonism would seem to privilege musical works in the abstract over their realisation in sound (as in Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian urn', where 'Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter'). Thus the unattainable ideal in music is analogous to a belief in divine aesthetic and moral order.<sup>7</sup> In short, Platonism, with its uncreated, eternal repository of musical masterworks, affords music a metaphysical status similar to religion, a point not lost to aestheticians of the nineteenth century onwards.

At first glance, things do not look promising for historicist performance in a Platonist world. Platonism stresses that the best music transcends its time and context, that no performance can match the ideal and that history is merely a local phenomenon. Jerrold Levinson suggests that pure Platonism is particularly well served by Schenker's theory of musical analysis which tends to take the universal essence of each piece as a starting point and sees good performance in terms of its secondary role as the successful realisation of the musical structure.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, composers from the nineteenth century onwards seem to have been all the more concerned with the specifics of performance practice, the choice of instruments and performance directives. Here the related concept of original genius might also be significant, with composers trying to make each work as individuated and exhaustively defined as possible. But this trend might also reflect much more mundane matters: e.g. the

developments in copyright law and the opportunities afforded by the very mechanical reproduction of music (see chapter 4, below).

Peter Kivy gives the most thorough account of the obvious sort of musical Platonism that privileges the pure sound structure over the performance means. Works are universals while performances are merely particulars or instances. If instrumentation (and presumably performing style) are ever essential to the realisation of the work, they are only temporarily so, during the few years after composition; after this instruments and performers might well have 'improved'.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, one of the 'purest' Platonists, Nicholas Wolterstorff, surprisingly maintains that the original instrumental directives are essential to the composition (at least in the last 200 years) as are any interpretative directives expressed by the composer.<sup>10</sup> However, it is only with the considerable modifications of Platonism offered by Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson that HIP receives its most thorough justification.

Davies notes that an interest in the performer's role is a concomitant of an interest in the composer's achievement *per se*.<sup>11</sup> For him, the sounds heard and intended by the composer should be as crucial to the identity of the work as the notes themselves:

A highly authentic performance is likely to be one in which instruments contemporary to the period of composition . . . are used in its performance, in which the score is interpreted in the light of stylistic practices and performance conventions of the time when the work was composed, in which ensembles of the same size and disposition as accord with the composer's specification are employed, and so forth.<sup>12</sup>

Davies associates 'authenticity' specifically with the sounds specified by the composer in their most ideal form, and believes any factors that are not directly associated with the sounding of the music (e.g. social circumstances of the composer and performance) to be irrelevant. Most binding of all are the composer's determinative intentions, although, as Wolterstorff also stresses, the non-determinative intentions might be subject to variation. Whenever the composer's intentions are not determined, or improvisation is essential to the music, the authorial element will play less of a role in determining authenticity; now general issues of contemporary style will come more to the fore. There is a certain circularity to Davies's scheme, since 'only those intentions which conventionally are accepted as determinative are relevant to judgments of authenticity' (Davies, 'Authenticity in Musical Performance',

p. 42). Thus authenticity is defined in accordance with determinative intentions and vice versa. I shall address the general problem of intentionality, and specifically the supposed hierarchy of determinative and non-determinative intentions in the next chapter.

Here it suffices to note that Davies gives a value to authenticity in performance that can be assessed independently of valuations of the musical work itself; indeed:

A performance is better for a higher degree of authenticity (other things being equal) *whatever* the merits of the composition itself. A performance praiseworthy for its authenticity may make evident that the composer wrote a work with little musical interest or merit. It is the creative skill required of the performer in faithfully interpreting the composer's score which is valued in praising the authenticity of performances of that score. (Davies, 'Authenticity in Musical Performance', p. 47)

Although he admits the performer's originality and creativity in generating the necessary authenticity, this theory seems to be largely a matter of bibliographic housekeeping, similar to the fundamentals of producing a good edition.<sup>13</sup> The correct sound involved in 'authenticity' seems to relate directly to the *identity* of the work; the more correctly the notes are realised in accord with the specifications of the score and the sounds implied, the more it seemingly exists in performance. In this way Davies comes close to Nelson Goodman's notorious nominalist conception of music, in which works are defined as a class of performances that reproduce exactly the notes of the score.<sup>14</sup> Although this leads to certain absurdities, such as that a performance lasting ten years can count as an instance of the work, while a performance with a single wrong note does not, it does have a certain use as a *regulative* concept for the performer (i.e. the performer usually *intends* to get all the notes right).<sup>15</sup> Davies, in effect, adds those elements he supposes to confer 'authenticity' in performance to Goodman's call for correct notes. In all, his theory is to some degree successful in describing the intentions of many concerned with HIP, although it is still difficult to see where the moral imperative lies. Nor does it explain why works are both readily identified and enjoyed when performed 'inauthentically'.

Levinson concurs with much that Davies has to say, but formulates his attitude to historicist performance within a much more extensive general theory of the ontology of musical works. First, he modifies the pure Platonist approach by drawing in the creativity of the composer as part of the essence of music. One consequence of this definition

which seems initially to conflict with common intuition, is that two composers coincidentally producing exactly the same notated piece of music actually provide two distinct works:

The reason for this is that certain attributes of musical works are dependent on more than the sound structures contained. In particular, the aesthetic and artistic attributes of a piece of music are partly a function of, and must be gauged with reference to, the total musico-historical context in which the composer is situated while composing his piece. Since the musico-historical contexts of composing individuals are invariably different, then even if their works are identical in sound structure, they will differ widely in aesthetic and artistic attributes. (Levinson, *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, pp. 68–9)

This line of reasoning obviously shares something with Jorge Luis Borges' satirical 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote', where the fictional author seeks to produce an exact verbal analogue of Don Quixote, but due to the entirely different circumstances of production and historical context, claims at the same time to produce a work entirely distinct from Cervantes'. Levinson's semiotic turn is also instructive: the same verbal sound – even sometimes with the same spelling – can signify entirely different concepts according to the language or to the context within any particular language. Thus the same musical sound structure can bear an entirely different significance according to its historical and creative contexts. But this comes dangerously close to accepting musical works as arbitrary signifiers that have meaning only in relation to their position in history and having none of the intrinsic identity that Platonism would surely demand.

If we provisionally accept Levinson's appeal to history as essential to musical works, two factors have come into play: the creativity of the composer (his background, assumptions and experience etc.), and the time at which he wrote (in terms of the position of a piece both in the course of his career and in the basic musical languages of his era). In Levinson's words, the musical work becomes 'a sort of universal brought down to earth' (p. 216). In the light of these two factors, it is not difficult (although not obligatory) to claim also that the Platonist sound-structure is also directly connected with the original performing medium. According to Levinson, it is simply not enough to claim, as Davies does, that the sound determined and expected by the composer should be reproduced. The way the sound is produced is crucial since it affects the attitude and experience of the performer and, with a little background knowledge, that of the listener too:

Part of the expressive character of a piece of music *as heard* derives from our sense of how it is *being made* in performance, and our correlation of that with its sonic aspect – its sound – narrowly speaking . . . Not only the qualitative nature of the sounds but also their specified means of production enter into the equation that yields the resultant aesthetic complexion of a piece of music in the tradition with which we are concerned. (p. 395)

In this respect Levinson distances himself from Kivy, who regards all sound-producing elements as secondary to the basic sound structure, and also from Randall Dipert, who ranks compositional intention from the lowest level, of sound production, through the actual sound intended, to the highest level of expressive intent.<sup>16</sup> According to Dipert's view, if the correct sound were to be produced more efficiently by some other means, the lowest level would no longer be significant; furthermore, if the composer's expressive intentions can be better produced for a later historical audience with other means or sounds, both lower levels should be dropped. Dipert's concern for the ulterior intention (although even this is not to have automatic priority over other conditions) does have the advantage of allowing a more vital, critical factor into the argument (in contradistinction to the objective concern for identity conditions that pervade the Platonists' arguments). However, there is an obvious problem in assuming that a composer's expressive or 'spiritual' intention will necessarily survive its historical context (for more on the ranking of intentions, see chapter 3, below).

Levinson draws some support from Kendall Walton, who stresses the importance of the listener's beliefs concerning how the music is being produced, and how this affects the expressive content derived from the piece.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, by this account, it might be possible to deceive the listener with synthesised sound and miming performers but this, for Levinson, is not performance in good faith. This argument is certainly compelling: a certain speed on one instrument is not so impressive on another, virtuosity plays a part in Handel's oboe concertos which is lost on a modern oboe that can play the part more easily. Moreover, this line of reasoning could be extended to show how crucial it is to preserve this instrumental factor in those cases where such virtuosity is about the only aesthetic advantage of the piece concerned. A performance which negates this or any other performance skill (as is the case with certain études) necessarily removes virtually everything that is valuable about the piece. However, Levinson obviously goes too far when he essentially dismisses entire traditions of performance, interpretation and insight. He comes

close to Bilson when he suggests that, even if a modern clarinettist can produce exactly the original sound Mozart would have expected in his Thirty-ninth Symphony,

such a performance would not be expressively equivalent to *any* performance achievable on those older, and different, instruments. What expressiveness it would have is hard to say, bastardy being no simpler to deal with in the aesthetic realm than in the social one. (p. 407)

Obviously, Levinson, like Davies, allows that performance elements not determined by the composer are open to a wide degree of variation. While the work as notated is normally a singular entity, there are an infinite number of possible performances. He also allows certain deviations from 'correctness' if these take account of elements of modern practice in a conscientious and insightful fashion. But here the cool detachment of his modified Platonism must, by necessity, break down into personal preference: for instance he can allow for Glenn Gould's interpretations of Bach, but not for the gratuitous ones of Wendy Carlos which appeal only to the '*dull, lazy, unpracticed* listener' (p. 384). He also allows some departures from historically authentic performance if these bring across qualities that the unpractised (but presumably not dull or lazy) listener would otherwise miss.

On the whole though, much of Levinson's attitude to both musical works and their performance is characterised by his quotation of 'Leibniz's law': if two things differ in any respects then they are simply not identical (p. 222). This thus takes into account those aspects which are not immediately (or perhaps ever) perceptible. Actually Levinson's Platonism has much in common with Leibniz's famous dictum that the predicate is necessarily contained within any particular subject; it is part of the definition of Julius Caesar that he should be slain by Brutus, just as it is part of the definition of Mozart's clarinet concerto that it uses a particular instrument (although, ironically, the choice of instrument for this concerto is a particularly contentious case). Of course, to be truly Leibnizian, rather than Platonist, Levinson would have to view the entire history of performance and reception as essential to the work (as perhaps he should), but his insistence that apparent accidentals of the creative context are of a piece with the most durable and recognisable aspects of the composition (the 'recognitional core' to use Levinson's expression) is a typically Leibnizian viewpoint.

Levinson's theory of 'authentic' performance is, I think, particularly important in that it actually defines what lies behind many assumptions

made by 'hard-line' advocates of historicist performance (most overtly exemplified by Bilson's comments, above). Composers, repertoires and specific musical works have an essence that is both universal and historically conditioned, and the use of the correct historical instrument will facilitate a performance that is definitive for the music concerned. Interpretative and creative aspects of performance can be allowed only after the correct 'performing definition' has been attained.

However, it is still difficult to see how this can or should be binding as a conception of music; much can be taken only as a matter of faith and force of opinion. Questions concerning the status of instrumental specifications 'ask too much of a practice that is indeterminate and complex', to quote Lydia Goehr. As she also notes, whether we believe or not in the essentiality of instrumentation depends on our conception of what a work actually is.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, while it is clear that knowledge about the creative context of the piece is going to affect the conceptions of both performers and listeners alike, it is perfectly possible to have a profound appreciation of the music without this background.<sup>19</sup>

Goehr calls into question the entire tradition in which philosophers such as Levinson play a major role, suggesting that the very structure of arguments in analytic philosophy, concerned as they are with the conditions of identity, are incompatible with the objects they purport to define:

the lurking danger remains that the theories will probably become forever divorced from the phenomena and practices they purportedly seek to explain, as well as from any non-philosophical interest we have in those phenomena. The problem with the search for identity conditions resides just at this point, then, in the incompatibility between the theoretical demands of identity conditions and the phenomena to be accounted for. (Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum*, p. 86)

Not only does theoretical abstraction have little point if it is entirely divorced from musical practice, or if it is not clear as to what aspect of musical practice it refers, but the musical practice itself cannot be understood without an awareness of the complexities of history. Ontological arbitration alone cannot answer definitively questions relating to works, transcriptions, versions and performance (p. 60).

In Goehr's account, no analytic theory adequately accounts for the historical boundary of the music that it concerns; here she is perhaps rather unfair to Levinson who repeatedly stresses that his theory is to be applied only to music since 1750. Nevertheless, he does not show how the work-concept is itself dependent on an historical viewpoint. According

to Goehr it is an 'open concept', allowing for the subtraction or addition of defining characteristics provided that its continuity is assured and that it is consistently recognisable over its period of operation. Open concepts are thus '“signposts” facilitating language use' (p. 93). The work concept is also a 'regulative' concept, one that defines certain normative and interrelating practices that are implied when we talk of musical works (pp. 102–3).

Goehr seeks to show how the many strands constituting the work concept came together around 1800, so that it is to be basically associated with Romantic aesthetics of music. While many of these strands are present before that date (thus certain pieces and composers show a superficial affinity with pieces and composers from the period in which the work concept was operative), in the strictest sense works do not exist before 1800, only pieces of music. In some ways, Goehr's study is less satisfactory in dealing with the status of music before 1800 than in defining the work concept and its operation after this date. She tends to homogenise the considerable history of western music up to the end of the eighteenth century and give short shrift to earlier swings towards and away from a work concept. Indeed, the move towards the profiled composer and the perfection of individual works (as was happening in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, if not before) is precisely that character which Reinhard Strohm considers essential for the European tradition.<sup>20</sup> It would thus be false to suggest that the western tendency to abstract art from its context and function, treating it as if it were a world in itself, is just a nineteenth-century invention.<sup>21</sup> What is unique to this later conception – Goehr's 'work concept' – are the specific social, aesthetic and analytic practices attached to music, ones that resonate with earlier 'work concepts' but which do not necessarily constitute a more refined, perfected version of a consistent concept. As Goehr later writes, the fact that the origins of the work concept can often individually be traced back to earlier periods does not mean that the fully fledged concept emerged then; indeed, they become origins only in retrospect after the concept becomes operative.<sup>22</sup> One essential distinction may lie in Karol Berger's suggestion that a clearer division of labour between composer and performer developed in post-Beethovenian music.<sup>23</sup> Goehr's study is extremely successful in showing how modern analytic theories of music are all beholden to the work concept, in the guise in which it arose at the end of the eighteenth century, and thus tend to apply only to values and repertoires of the nineteenth century and a little beyond. In all, Goehr's study would suggest that the very notion of defining HIP



in terms of the intrinsic essence of musical works is doomed to failure on theoretical grounds, however much, and however usefully, it might define certain beliefs today concerning the relation between pieces of music and its original performing context.

Levinson's 'modified Platonism' is also problematic epistemologically: given that there is no certainty as to whether we have ever created the actual sound of original performances, we having nothing other than historical conjecture as a means of determining what the correct sound should be. The concept of Platonic forms of perfection is at least plausible in cases where we have several authentic examples to compare and experience, such as cars and lumps of cheese, but in the case of HIP we have only one conjecture to pit against another. Furthermore, were we to hit upon exactly the 'right' historical performance of a piece of music we would never be able to know it as such; it would not conveniently leap out at us leaving all the other attempts in the dust. In short, the 'modified' Platonist historical performance is by necessity both impossible to achieve and impossible to recognise and therefore it is difficult to know what practical purpose it could possibly serve. So where does this leave the actual practice of HIP, to the extent that it rests on certain theoretical assumptions that do not hold up under scrutiny?

Before suggesting ways in which HIP might actually be beneficial to our practice, particularly in regard to how we define and use musical works, one specific objection to HIP needs to be addressed. Intuitively it might seem that instruments have an obvious and immediate effect on both the sound of the music and the performer's attitude. However, Richard Taruskin, in attending particularly to the implications for tempo in 'traditional' and 'historical' performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, observes that the old instruments, by themselves, do not create faster tempi, and indeed that Furtwängler's supposed slower approach often produces tempi faster than Norrington's with period instruments. In exasperation, he implores:

So please, let there be no more uninformed, deterministic talk about period instruments and their magical power to make a performance all by themselves. Such talk is evasive and simplistic at best, destructive of all judgement and values at worst.<sup>24</sup>

Even more devastating for the case for 'instrumental essentialism' are the changes in HIP sonorities which many have observed during the 1990s (see p. 41 above). While this does not exactly represent a return to the sound of 'mainstream' performance, it at least shows that the sound

produced on early instruments is partly a matter of choice. Another issue to take into account here is the fact that by the 1990s there were more capable players on the 'period' instruments, players who had had more time to master the techniques required to make the instruments sound well (a process that would inevitably take a long time in the case of a reinvented tradition).

At the very least then, if instruments are to have any crucial normative value, as Bilson suggests, they can only have this if coupled with the 'right' kind of player and performance. Yet if players seem to have discovered the art of alchemy and can (within reason) make any instrument sound as they choose, the value of instruments seems to fall well below that of players. Does this then take us back to the square one of Kivy's strict Platonism, for which the sound structure, or Levinson's 'core', is the only important factor of the work, while everything else is a matter of contingent, historical interpretation?

The answer to all these issues is perhaps to take the argument outside the question of definitions and beyond moral absolutes that require us to opt for the 'instruments' on the one side, the 'players' on the other, or to ground the ontology of musical works in performance on the one hand or timeless Platonic forms on the other. For a start, instruments *do* make *some* difference, whether for a player more used to another type or for one who has a number of instrumental choices to hand. But this usually has little to do with actual historical accuracy, since it is clearly impossible to duplicate the kinaesthetic experiences and aesthetic attitudes of the original players for any particular repertory. What is significant is the fact that the instruments do alert the player to historical difference. Different versions of a particular instrument or family will force the player to rethink his techniques and interpretative capability, and thus the repertory will have to be seen in a new light.

In this respect, Adorno had it back to front when he suggested that historical performance undermined the essential distance with which we must relate to the past.<sup>25</sup> Rather than leading us to impersonate the practices of a past age as if they were our own, HIP more often leads us to appreciate a difference that we would not otherwise have noticed. To take a leaf out of Levinson's book, even if the historicist performer eventually produces exactly the same sound and style that he would have achieved with 'modern' instruments, the fact that he has had to go through technical hoops to achieve this will mean there is a difference in his experience of what he produces, something which may make him consider the issues involved in more detail.

Indeed many historicist performers have realised that novelty – rather than a return to original and ‘better’ practice – is one of the main things they have to offer.<sup>26</sup> In certain cases of music that was specifically progressive for its time, the use of hitherto unfamiliar instruments and performance practices might reproduce something of the sense of shock and surprise that the first performances engendered. Ironically then, the supposed introduction of an old practice will create a new experience in keeping with the composer’s ulterior intentions, even though the original audience would have experienced the novelty in quite a different manner. Randall Dipert usefully makes a similar point when he observes how shocking the new clarinet must have sounded in certain works by Gluck.<sup>27</sup> However, he does not make the inference that the reintroduction of an *old* clarinet today might have a similar effect.

Evidently, the time will come – indeed it has come for certain instruments, such as the harpsichord – when ‘old’ instruments will no longer sound ‘new’. However, the net result is a much greater variety of performing styles and sounds. Our ability to appreciate a plurality of styles is perhaps one of the greatest advantages of our present condition,<sup>28</sup> something which seems to negate those views which claim we are unable to appreciate earlier stylistic nuances. Young, for instance, evoking Wittgenstein’s famous example of a picture that appears as a duck to some, as a rabbit to others, insists that the historical progress of western music is such that we can no longer appreciate that thirds in Mediaeval music are dissonant, or the significance of dissonance in tonal repertoires, because we are used to atonal music.<sup>29</sup> This runs totally in the face of our ability to make stylistic distinctions, to hear the shock of dissonance in one style as the norm in another; there is evidently something equivalent here to our ability to understand more than one verbal language (see p. 28 above).

Young extends his argument to include musical connotation and symbolism: we don’t hear trumpet flourishes as trumpets of the Sun King, we don’t hear passages for oboe or flute as being rustic,

Of course, we can and do learn that period listeners heard certain sounds as rustic or regal. But it is one thing to know that others heard them thus and quite another to hear them so ourselves.

However, while we must allow that we can never duplicate the experiences of earlier listeners, Young misses an important point concerning the way listeners react to style and symbolism. All these conventions needed to be learned by the first listeners just as they are by those of

the present – period listeners were not born with conceptions of the Sun King or the rustic muse. In both the original and modern instances, the symbolism is learned in the same way as any language or convention. While we could never relate to this in the same way as the original artists, we at least have a privilege of a plurality that was unavailable to them.

So far then, the value of instruments and performing styles would seem to lie in specifically contemporary needs rather than in considerations of eternal musical truth or essence. Does this imply that there is no means of proving whether or not an historical performance is better than a mainstream one? Here again, the conflict should not be one of absolutes. To affirm that historical performances are, by nature, better runs in the face of contemporary practice and evaluation within the world of performance. On the other hand, to affirm that the choice of instruments (and performing styles) is of no importance is to come near to returning to the ‘pure’ Platonist view of works as fixed eternal entities, unaffected by the contingencies of performance.

One particularly insidious consequence of the latter type of thinking is that entire repertoires of music can be devalued. Most music of the French Baroque, for instance, entirely fails when performed in the standard ‘mainstream’ fashion. We cannot know whether any historically based performances today approach the originals, we can only observe the more-or-less uncontroversial fact that those that attempt to do so are immeasurably more successful in rendering the music valuable than those that do not. It may indeed be the case here that the performance practice is linked particularly strongly to the identity and quality of the music. But what may be even more crucial is the fact that the performers concerned have given exhaustive attention to the repertory at hand. Their greater absorption of both style and performance practices may give their performance an intensity and level of commitment that prevailing ‘mainstream’ traditions could simply not achieve. Stan Godlovitch suggests that HIP should aim for a ‘thick’ reading of ‘authenticity’, one that makes no brash claims or rouses no pretentious expectations. The culture simply cultivates more practical knowledge of the past, arousing curiosity and giving the opportunity to develop new skills.<sup>30</sup> In all, this seems to parallel Nietzsche’s contention that history is useful insofar as it serves the purposes of life.

It might seem reasonable, then, to admit that there can really be no hard-and-fast rule regarding the relation between instrument, player and music; every piece and every repertory should perhaps be considered on



a case-by-case basis. Sometimes the music and performance exist in a symbiotic relationship, in that the music simply doesn't make sense without something approaching the original performance medium (perhaps because it was the *performance*, rather than the abstract 'sound structure', that crucially identified the music in the first place). At other times the relationship might be far less important.

While one has a perfect right to 'prefer' what one takes to be the original sound, and one has a right to argue that this can present the music in a better light, this does not mean that the music is thus eternally defined by its original sound, given that the definition of musical works themselves is also a matter of contingent, human practice. Adorno suggests that there is little point in reconstructing the instrumental sound of the Baroque since the concept of the 'clearly authentic composition' was not yet established.<sup>31</sup> By this he means that composers used whatever was to hand, in a world of anarchic, pluralistic instrument building; Bach was more content to specify no instrumentation in his late contrapuntal works as if to show the inadequacy of the instrumentarium of the day. Moreover, the very principle of the thorough-bass and the freedom it implied shows that nothing was fixed in sound. Yet it is clear that Adorno is speaking of instrumentation in the nineteenth-century sense – as something structurally necessary: the instruments of the Baroque were indeed not so central to the identity of the music as the valve-horn or clarinet family became in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, insofar as HIP performers might share this same attitude – transferring nineteenth-century concepts of instrumental specificity to earlier repertoires – Adorno's critique is absolutely correct. But what he refused to countenance was the notion of the definition of music as lying as much in its performance as in its abstract 'workhood'. In other words, the variability suggested by thorough-bass practice is not so much evidence of a weak approximation to the fully rationalised, determined work, rather it reflects an alternative mode of musical being. HIP, as a concept, thus enables us to break away from the modernist imperative to condemn Baroque music either to abstract workhood (i.e. the 'best' music) or to the dumping-ground of inferior music, barely worth entombing in the archives. The instrumentation and performance is crucial – not in revealing something structurally essential about the music – but in suggesting to us how the surviving music emerged from a variable practice of performance which, in turn, conditioned the way the music was notated in the first place. We should perhaps follow Shai Burstyn in conceiving of works with a 'softer' ontological nature than is traditionally implied by

the work concept.<sup>32</sup> Not only does HIP suggest that some earlier music is better understood in terms of *event* than abstract *work* (a point that Goehr strongly stresses) but it helps us focus on the role performance plays in defining all works. Even pieces which are strongly associated with the ahistorical, work-based view of music history are profoundly influenced by their performance history and, if José A. Bowen is correct, the 'study of the performance tradition of a musical work is the study of the musical work'.<sup>33</sup>

A knowledge of the historical context and the parameters of the original performance is sometimes the best means we have of realising a specific character or style in music that seems 'unfinished' or that does not seem to stand 'structurally' on its own. HIP thus actually produces (however contentiously) a stylistic identity that later works would have by virtue of their more individuated sound structures. This again suggests that we should not rely on an *a priori* separation of work and performance. The fact that a style of performance can completely transform the affect or another aspect of a work cannot simply be dismissed as misinterpretation of a stable original, especially if performance (whether assumed to be variable or fixed from one occasion to another) played an important role in the way the music came to be written in the first place.

The more recent arrival of HIP in interpreting music from the era of 'the work concept' (i.e. after 1800, to borrow Goehr's definition) has gone some way towards bringing the human elements of production back into play, often 'domesticating' works with mundane facts about their first performances. Following Taruskin, we might concede that this is hardly an ideal direction for performance *per se* to take. The notion that the amateur nature of the first performances of Beethoven symphonies should always be recaptured in contemporary performance is hardly going to result in performances that reveal new depths of human experience. Nevertheless, it does force us to take a stand on the relevancy of the work concept, its historical development and application, a stand that we might not otherwise have taken. Beethoven was indeed writing pieces that were soon to be seen as 'works' (and perhaps he even intended them as such) although they were still performed by players who viewed them as 'yet more pieces'. By witnessing an apparently 'amateur' performance of a Beethoven symphony we can learn how Platonism and other essentialist attitudes to pieces of music are not only historically contingent but also absolutely vital for the productive reception of certain repertoires. Thus, if we are to take the implications of HIP seriously, it should help us

recover elements of the 'work concept' for repertoires for which it might be appropriate. As Leo Treitler has suggested 'the "work" concept has a history that is at least a thread in one of the central plot-lines of western music history; it cannot sensibly be taken as a premise for that history'.<sup>34</sup> The time is surely near when something of the aesthetic tradition of the nineteenth century is itself ripe for a form of restoration.

Another way of addressing the issue of how essential original instruments and performing practices are to the identity or 'meaning' of music is to see it as a parallel to the role of etymology in linguistics. The connection with etymology seems particularly appropriate in the light of frequently heard comments such as 'But, how did this music originally [i.e. correctly] sound?', analogous to the question 'But, what did this word originally [i.e. correctly] mean?' The primacy of etymology was dealt fatal blows by Darwinism in the nineteenth century and, specifically, by Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal *Course in General Linguistics* 1906–11. This was the fountain-head for the structuralists' preference for the synchronic over the diachronic. Saussure was the first to affirm that synchronic language study (i.e. study of how a language works across the board at any one time, rather than in its historical development) was essential if one wished to understand the practice and knowledge of a specific speaker and community, for whom the history of the language is normally irrelevant.<sup>35</sup> As Derek Attridge affirms, the view that etymology reveals 'authentic meanings' rests on a contradiction that historicist performers should well note:

Although it flirts with history, it's a deeply anti-historical attitude, replacing the social and historical determination of meaning (operating upon the arbitrary sign) by a transcendent 'true' meaning. Just as some literary theorists cling to the notion of authentic meaning for a text, not because this notion is consistent with itself or with the facts of literary history, but because they assume that to give it up is to invite unbridled relativism (and perhaps even revolution), so there's a common assumption that every word must have its authentic meaning, or else meaning could not exist at all. (Attridge, 'Language as History', p. 188)

Obviously the direct association of musical works with words is problematic given that musical 'meaning' is hardly reducible to verbal meaning.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the meanings of musical works cannot be arbitrary in the same sense as individual words, since they are intentionally created by historical subjects who, in effect, create both new works and their first meanings in one act. Nevertheless, Attridge's observation of the 'ahistoricism' in the search for authentic meaning could

also be applied to the Platonist interpretation of historicist performance, in which a supposed historical situation is rendered eternally binding. 'Historically informed performance' under this definition is actually a profound misnomer. To be most thoroughly historicist (in the sense of being true to the original meaning and circumstances) one would have to acknowledge that no historical situation is exactly repeatable.

Yet many theorists, not least Saussure himself, do turn to etymology on occasions; indeed it is a temptation that few seem to avoid. It is most successfully employed when it is no longer viewed as something scientific and logical, when it has more to do with rhetoric and the poetic or creative aspect of writing. Correctness is not the issue as such, more whether we can make an imaginative, persuasive and creative use of the past to change the present. Moreover, there is no reason why we should have to make a choice between the synchronic and the diachronic; the latter – and the beliefs we may hold about it – can, and do, become an aspect of the former. History can be a very real part of our present concerns without necessarily replacing them.<sup>37</sup> One of the reasons why the issue of the historical circumstances of performance became an issue in the first place may have been the stagnation of the received traditions.

It is thus in the ability to change the present in a convincing and imaginative way that HIP may have its greatest strength. Those who (correctly) affirm that we can come to like 'the original way' of performing a piece of music, even if it's difficult initially, must come to terms with the fact we are capable of 'coming to like' many things if we believe in them for long enough. In other words, it doesn't seem to matter if our etymology is 'authentic', simply false or 'folk etymology'. It is in our wholehearted dialogue with the past – to the extent that it survives in the present – and our ability to make it into a convincing story (i.e. performance) that we make the most productive use of history.

This sense of 'feedback' between past and present is a useful way of avoiding the old diachronic/synchronic dichotomy. It may also explain what has been successful in the enterprise of HIP as well as pointing towards the manner in which it could develop. This model shares something with the semiology of music which Jean-Jacques Nattiez developed from Jean Molino in which the meaning and significance of a musical work is located in the flux between the creative background of the work (the 'poietic' process), the surviving trace and the history of its reception (the 'esthetic' process). Many of Nattiez's complex developments of this model show how our perception of the poietic process is interfolded

into our reception of a work in performance. In the case of Wagner's *Ring*:

To interpret the work's meaning we must return to Feuerbach and Schopenhauer... Wagner, occupying an esthetic position in relation to them, read them in a certain fashion; we, in turn, understand the two texts according to our own personal bias, and furthermore we can suggest an interpretation of both informed by Wagner's understanding of their works. Finally, the spectator judges Chèreau's and Boulez's work relative to his or her knowledge of Wagner and the *Ring*, and relative to the idea that he or she has formed of both... What, in effect, is a judgment about the fidelity of this or that performance? It is the juxtaposition of one interpretation (the spectator-listener's interpretation of the musical performance and *mise-en-scène*) with another interpretation (that same spectator-listener's suppositions about the true Wagner, or the essence of the *Ring*).<sup>38</sup>

The crucial significance of the level of reception in defining musical works and performances is suggested by this semiotic approach: we learn that it is basically impossible for us to conceive of music in the abstract, untouched by human awareness.

Goehr concludes her remarks concerning historical performance on a remarkably positive note:

More than any other movement currently existing within the European tradition of classical music, the early music movement is perfectly positioned to present itself not only as a 'different way of thinking about music', but also as an alternative to a performance practice governed by the work-concept. By positioning itself as a viable and dynamic alternative, even as a challenge to another practice, it is able to serve as a constant and living reminder to all musicians that the *Werktreue* ideal can be delimited in scope... It keeps our eyes open to the possibility of producing music in new ways under the regulation of new ideals. It keeps our eyes open to the inherently critical and revisable nature of our regulative concepts. Most importantly, it helps us overcome that deep-rooted desire to hold the most dangerous of beliefs, that we have at any time got our practices absolutely right.<sup>39</sup>

As Goehr herself notes, many practitioners of historicist performance are too closely wedded to the concept of *Werktreue*, something which still begs a satisfactory defence and, incidentally, can engender a practice that is both repressive and musically unimaginative. However, it is unlikely that the idea of HIP would have got off the ground without the notion of the essentiality of musical works in the first place. Ironically, it has also been significant in its own turn by enabling us to challenge this hegemony, acting as a litmus test for our own concepts of music, history and the relation of composition to performance.

This pattern of appropriating history for non-historical ends, which are themselves thereby destabilised, is captured with remarkable perceptiveness in Hermann Hesse's modernist allegory of 1943, *The Glass Bead Game*. Here, in the future state of Catalonia, early music and performance on ancient instruments become a crucial component of general education, purging tradition of excessively personal Romantic traces and helping to engender a stable, uncreative and ascetic society.<sup>40</sup> Joseph Knecht, the protagonist who rises to be Grandmaster of the esoteric Glass Bead Game, finds that it is precisely his awareness of history (presumably informed by his early training in historical instruments and performance) that causes him to see the contingency of the Order and ultimately to take the heretically individualist step of resigning. Only by returning to the wider world would he be able to work more effectively towards preventing the decline of an order complacently regarded as inviolable by its members. Only from a standpoint outside the culture would he gain the necessary insight into how it must change and develop in order to adapt itself to the relentlessness of history. Might this not then suggest some of the ways in which HIP could relate to the wider culture of western music? Can it not act in the manner of Nietzsche's critical history, ultimately preserving the culture by calling some of its most cherished concepts into question?

*Historical performance and 'truth to the composer': rehabilitating intention*

Performance malpractice ... is not permissible, nor in the remotest degree forgivable ... when tolerated or fostered by radio and television corporations, record companies, and concert-giving bodies ... If there is to be rhyme or reason in musical performances, it is essential that they should reflect, as nearly as possible, the intentions of the composer. What these intentions were, and the correct way to interpret them, are as much the province of the professional musicologist as microphone placement and tape-editing are the concern of the professional sound engineer. When proper advice and interpretation are ignored, chaos results.

Denis Stevens, 1972<sup>1</sup>

For many performers throughout the twentieth century it has been self-evident that one's foremost priority in the theory and practice of performance should be to follow the composer's intentions. Those who espouse the concept of HIP often believe that this can be achieved by finding out as precisely as possible what the composer desired and expected of his performers, an attitude that has been ubiquitous since the 1950s. Denis Stevens (above) articulates the common conception that it is the musicologist's task to discern 'the facts' and then pass these on to the obedient performer. In the same passage he asserts that this is the only responsible policy for the media promoting performance, who have a duty to provide the public with 'entertainment or instruction of the finest possible quality, born of the best possible brains'. Discerning the composer's intentions is thus evidence of an active and finely honed intellect. Anything else is, we might infer, brainless (appealing merely to the heart, perhaps?) and will encourage a slackening in the public's experience of music.

On the other hand, those who adhere to 'mainstream' values in performance often believe that the composer's intentions lie rather in the metaphysical and emotional implications of the musical work, following a sense of the composer's eternal spirituality rather than the letter of his

contingent age. This conception has a much longer pedigree than the positivist position (of which Stevens's is a virtual caricature). It has its roots in the very concept of subjectivity which arose in the seventeenth century and came to be virtually synonymous with Romanticism in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Thus, just as I have argued that HIP gained much of its early prestige by capitalising on an existing concept of *Werktreue*, Laurence Dreyfus notes that the appeal to objective historical intentions likewise relied on the pre-existing respect for composers' intentions: 'The great paradigm shift toward historical performance arrived therefore not as the imposition of a new structural metaphor for musical performance but rather as a remarkably clever annexation of traditional territory, albeit with a new appeal to authority.'<sup>3</sup>

Both traditions of this belief in the 'intentional imperative' are challenged by Richard Taruskin. To him, reliance on intentions rests on a fallacy:

We cannot know intentions, for many reasons – or rather, we cannot know we know them. Composers do not always express them. If they do express them, they may do so disingenuously. Or they may be honestly mistaken, owing to the passage of time or a not necessarily consciously experienced change of taste.<sup>4</sup>

Here he cites some striking examples, particularly the extraordinary variability of Stravinsky's own recordings of the *Rite of Spring*, so ironic for a composer who devalued performer choice and variability. Moreover, to Taruskin, a reliance on composers' intentions weakens the performer's own artistic resolve, bespeaking 'a failure of nerve, not to say an infantile dependency' (*Text and Act*, p. 98).

Peter Kivy questions Taruskin's overly sceptical attitude towards intention by suggesting he is simply 'placing on "know" the burden of *certainty*',<sup>5</sup> which would thus invalidate virtually any historical or empirical inquiry. Indeed, we work on 'justified true belief' every day of our lives. Anecdotal evidence suggesting that some composers had either few specific ideas or contradictory ones about the performance of their works does not prove that composers never had strong intentions regarding performance. Kivy urges that we critically appraise each individual case rather than being radically sceptical about intention across the board.

He suggests that the term 'intention' might cover quite a wide range of wishes and instructions that come from a composer, flirting with the idea of restricting intention proper to that which has the force of a command (p. 12). Many of the composer's expressed wishes may not be intentions in

the sense of *commands* but suggestions open to the performer's judgement (p. 31); indeed, following all forms of instruction as if they were commands may go against the spirit of the composer's higher-level intentions.

Kivy uses Randall R. Dipert's critique of compositional intention as the basis of his argument. Dipert distinguishes three levels of intention: low-level intentions include such factors as the type of instruments, fingering etc; middle-level intentions are those concerned with the intended sound (temperament, timbre, attack, pitch, and vibrato); high-level intentions – those which he privileges, though not unconditionally – relate to the effects that the composer intends to produce in the listener. Some of these latter may be specific *purposes* that a composer had in writing: to entertain, inspire or to move an audience. To these, all lower intentions are subservient. Dipert further affirms that low-level intentions are not the automatic and sole progenitor of the middle-level since, for example, a synthesiser could technically produce the correct sound and attack, thus fulfilling the composer's middle-level intentions, but not the low-level ones. Much of Dipert's conclusion provides a useful rule of thumb for the discussion of intentionality: we have no more *moral* obligation to Mozart than we have to Napoleon, we don't necessarily want to recreate a historical environment, nor can we become historical listeners; and finally, only '*generally speaking* we are likely to perform a piece of greater aesthetic merit if we follow the composer's intentions than if we do not'.<sup>6</sup>

Following Dipert, Kivy concludes that although we can never really be certain about the order of a composer's wishes and intentions, the 'mapping of high-order, aesthetic wishes and intentions is part of... an *interpretation* of the music' (Kivy, *Authenticities*, p. 45). What is particularly useful here is the admonition that following intentions cannot be a matter of blind obedience but involves *interpretation and an understanding* of the context in which they were expressed. Another important distinction is that a composer's performing intentions are not to be confused with the meanings of his text, with what he had 'to say' (pp. 153–4), a confusion which might often account for the moral fervour that Kivy perceives in the HIP movement.

Where Kivy's argument goes awry, in my opinion, is when he draws the hypothetical case of William the harness maker who, by the possibilities afforded by the eighteenth century, could not possibly have wished to become an aviator; 'But it does make sense to ask whether, were he alive today, William would want to be an aviator; and if the answer is affirmative, then that *is* what he really wants, whereas harness making is not' (pp. 34–5). One hardly need read on to guess where this is leading:

to the possibility that Bach would have wanted modern performance forces had he known about them and had they been available:

Bach's actual wishes and intentions... like anyone else's actual wishes and intentions concerning anything whatever, are determined not merely by what they implicitly or explicitly convey, relative to the circumstances in which they actually find themselves, but by what they would explicitly or implicitly convey concerning their wishes and intentions in other possible circumstances. (p. 36)

The logical clarity of this argument belies some crucial assumptions: namely, that Bach, were he alive today, would still be a composer (and not – like William – an aviator), that, if he were still a composer, he would still be concerned with the works he wrote over 250 years ago, and that, were he to be impressed by the possibilities afforded by modern instruments, he would still be writing or performing the same kind of music. Kivy's argument thus relies on an almost religious belief in the consistency of human personality and genius over the centuries, that works have a transhistorical ontology, and, most importantly, that the composer would believe this in whatever time-zone he happens to appear. It is difficult enough to assume the consistency of a composer's personality during his lifetime; indeed, when Schumann came to revise his early piano music, there is a real pathological sense in which he was a 'different' person.<sup>7</sup> I would certainly not condemn the practice of playing Bach on modern instruments, but only suggest that it is unwise to consider hypotheses regarding a composer's transhistorical intentions as any part of an argument in its favour.

Roger Scruton makes the same assumption as Kivy in terms of 'an ongoing dialogue between composer and performer, a dialogue across generations'. This metaphor makes sense *insofar as the composer can be inferred from the surviving music* (an 'implied composer' as it were), but in referring to the composer's actual persona it can only imply a timeless subjectivity. Scruton also perceptively adds our own relation to transhistorical Bach's intentions – i.e. what would he have liked *us* to use for his fugues: 'a reproduction harpsichord, or... the Steinway grand to which we are accustomed, and which is, for us, the medium through which Beethoven, Chopin, and Bartók also make their way to our ears.'<sup>8</sup>

The assumption that most people will have wishes for future generations makes sense up to the point at which Scruton states 'we are accustomed' to the piano. What he means is that *he* is accustomed to the piano, and that he has nothing to say to those of us who might now be more accustomed to the harpsichord. To force us back to the 'norm'

of the piano will no longer guarantee authenticity for us harpsichordists, any more than our forcing him to listen to the harpsichord will do for him. To wish HIP out of existence falls into the same trap as those pioneers of the movement who believed they could use historical reconstruction to escape the preconceptions of the present.

We can certainly learn from the implications of Kivy's conclusion (Kivy, p. 45): that we should understand intentions relative to the conditions pertaining today, to avoid the absurdity of executing Napoleon's design for unifying Europe by restaging the battle of Waterloo in original costumes (although this would be an eccentric choice of battles for this particular purpose, to say the least!). But is there not something equally absurd – or disturbing – about considering Napoleon's grand design as remotely relevant to the present condition of Europe? There is something crucially distinct between executing today a political plan from 1815 and playing a symphony from that year. This argument therefore doesn't really invalidate the assumption that the period instruments were part of a composer's intention for performance. Moreover, only tortuously can we avoid the fact that historic instruments are a significant part of our performing culture today, that they are part of a practice far more acceptable and effective than Napoleon's higher intentions, weaponry or costumes.

In all, we can greatly benefit from the critical attitude towards intention that is proposed by Taruskin and Kivy. But the whole concept of HIP brings up the issue of intentionality in a way that it has never been formulated before. It encourages us to rethink our customary sense of the relationship between composer, work and performer. Most importantly, it is an awareness of intention that helps us discover the human presence in composition, it can work as an antidote to the attitude of seeing musical works purely in formal terms.<sup>9</sup> As Aaron Copland put it: 'Examining a music manuscript, inevitably I sense the man behind the notes. The fascination of a composer's notation is the fascination of human personality.'<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, much of the antipathy towards authorial intention in recent years comes from a specifically formalist ideology of art. Even Taruskin – hardly a formalist in other respects – draws much of his argument from the field of American 'New Criticism': 'The intentional fallacy', as famously articulated and criticised in the 1940s by Monroe Beardsley and W. K. Wimsatt.<sup>11</sup> Many of their points are more or less accepted in literary criticism today: an intentional design, as the cause of a poem, has nothing to do with the standards by which the poem is subsequently to

be judged. Just as Taruskin distinguishes between musical performance and scholarship, they insist that the art of poetry is of a different order to that of criticism. On the other hand, certain aspects of Wimsatt and Beardsley's approach run counter to Taruskin's: theirs is uncompromisingly objectivist and positivistic; only the poem itself provides the means to its interpretation, meanings and quality. As Beardsley states in his introduction to aesthetics, we should not ask, 'What is this supposed to be?' but, rather, 'What have we got here?'<sup>12</sup> Anything external to the poem is to be considered private and 'idiosyncratic' – in other words, irrelevant to the autonomous aesthetic object. This point is shown at its most extreme when the authors compare the artwork with other objects:

Judging a poem is like judging a pudding or a machine. One demands that it work. It is only because an artifact works that we infer the intention of an artificer... Poetry succeeds because all or most of what is said or implied is relevant; what is irrelevant has been excluded, like lumps from pudding and 'bugs' from machinery. In this respect poetry differs from practical messages, which are successful if and only if we correctly infer the intention.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the authors imply that the objectifying impulse is the natural mode of human thought and perception: 'For all the objects of our manifold experience, for every unity, there is an action of the mind which cuts off roots, melts away context – or indeed we should never have objects or ideas or anything to talk about' ('The Intentional Fallacy', p. 8). In all, this intensely objectivist approach relies entirely on the integrity and totality of individual artworks. The attitude can be traced back to nineteenth-century writer-critics such as Browning, Arnold and Wilde,<sup>14</sup> but finds its first theoretical formulation in the literary theory of Eliot and Pound.<sup>15</sup> A similar formalist-objectivist attitude has been taken towards music sporadically during the last two hundred years (first clearly articulated by Hanslick), and finding its most vociferous articulation in the writings of Stravinsky (at exactly the same time as Eliot and Pound were promoting the autonomy of literary works). It is precisely this attitude which Taruskin very properly observes as a failing in HIP (which he terms both 'authenticist' and 'modernist'), in which objective facts sometimes count for more than interpretative imagination.

In a later article, defending his assault on the intentionality, Wimsatt stresses that the background language system (the *langue*) is more important than the personalised exemplar by the author (the *parole*).<sup>16</sup> Certainly this might be the only way in which authorial intention might be the criterion of validity in the interpretation of meaning (i.e. what something is



likely to mean given a particular background of practice). But if it is used as the sole basis of validity in performance interpretation it might well ironically play into the field of those historical performers who reduce a composer to the norms of his historical environment, those characterised by Adorno's famous complaint about the 'Telemannisation' of Bach (see chapter 1, p. 5 above). Thus things seem to have come full circle: the new critics' quest for 'objectivity' in interpretation and the concern for the wider system rather than the idiosyncrasy of the author are – if applied to performance interpretation – strikingly reminiscent of some of the very worst vices of HIP in which musical works can be diluted by an over-emphasis on contextual matters. As a whole then, it is unlikely that the 'intentional fallacy' argument can be accepted in the strongest sense (namely, that authorial intentions are irrelevant) for our purposes, although we might follow Taruskin in using its central premise that an artist's interpretation of a work after its completion is not privileged. We should be on our guard against limiting musical interpretation merely to what we think a composer allows us to do. Karol Berger suggests that an interest in intentions is a matter of courtesy, more a moral matter than one of certain knowledge. We should find out what we can about the artist and his environment and then take our interpretation beyond these.<sup>17</sup> Intention and historical context are thus the starting points of study and not our ultimate goal.

Wimsatt's resort to the traditional structuralist distinction between *langue* and *parole* points towards another strain of anti-intentionalist thought in the fields of structuralism and, particularly, post-structuralism. Perhaps the greatest difference between post-structuralism and 'New Criticism' is in its flight from metaphysics, its refusal to grant unity or integrity to any artefact. Both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault view the very concept of an author as historically conditioned, something bound up with an ideological concern with true meaning, unity and value in texts.<sup>18</sup> To paraphrase Roland Barthes, the author is merely the past of his own book; a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning but the place where a variety of non-original meanings blend and clash. Everything a writer wants to express is only a ready-formed dictionary, its words explainable only through other words. If there is any unified meaning to be discerned, this lies in the destination of a text, not at its point of origin. As Barthes famously put it: 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'.<sup>19</sup>

Something of this attitude is also evident in those philosophers who deny that human agents have the capacity for 'intrinsic' or 'original'

intention. They suggest rather that human intentionality is *derived* from other circumstances, just as the intentionality of a machine is derived from the human purpose to which it is put. As Daniel Dennett proposes, meaning and significance are only to be found in the contingent adaptation of an artefact to particular circumstances; the fact that the panda's thumb was originally a wrist-bone does not detract from the excellency of its present role as a thumb. In short, an entire component of the Darwinian revolution is often ignored in contemporary thought:

After all these years we are still just coming to terms with this unsettling implication of Darwin's destruction of the Argument from Design: there is no ultimate User's Manual in which the *real* functions, and *real* meanings, or biological artifacts are officially represented. There is no more bedrock for what we might call original functionality than there is for its cognitivist scion, original intentionality. You can't have realism about meanings without realism about functions.<sup>20</sup>

Thus for Dennett, as for Barthes, meaning and significance are to be located, albeit contingently, in the activity, function and use of the reader or interpreter. Of course, some would claim that musical performance has always privileged the reader, if the latter is defined as the performer; performers are popularly idolised above composers for their insights and unique personality.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, there are many instances in earlier music history when far more performer freedom was expected than has been allowed in 'mainstream' twentieth-century performance, instances where the performer was also the composer or played a large part in completing the process of composition (see Chapter 4, pp. 106–14 below). Here then, the transfer of the reader-orientated approach to musical performance seems to support certain attitudes in the history of performance. The composer's intentions are imaginatively ignored particularly if there is no strong sense of composer or intention to ignore in the first place.

There is a further field in which intentionality has been questioned as the sole basis of interpretation: the editing of verbal and musical texts. Editorial theorists have noted that in certain source situations the author's intention is hard to define: sometimes there might not be a single original author (e.g. Homer), at other times a writer might produce more than one valid version (e.g. Shakespeare, *King Lear*). As Philip Brett has stated:

The problem with authorial intention for the editor as historical critic, once one grants the certain degree of ethical imperative it entails, is that it is too narrow a concept to adopt as a base of operations. Almost every work has

implications beyond what its composer can consciously have intended; and often other people determine much of what transforms a composer's text or idea into what we conceive of as a work.<sup>22</sup>

Jerome McGann has also stressed that authorial intention cannot always be the sole arbiter in textual problems; indeed in some cases it may be overridden by other factors. However, he has also considerably refined our conception of where the author's intention might lie, showing that it is not a simple matter of a single act or process of intention. He perceives two codes at work in a text, the linguistic code – the basic verbal text which is the stuff of editing – and the bibliographic code – the other aspects of presentation such as the printing and layout of the page. In the normal course of events, the author will have most control over the linguistic code while the publisher will have the final say in the bibliographic code. However, there are obvious cases where the author has attempted to control both, particularly when the text involves illustrations (e.g. some of the publications of Blake and Pound).<sup>23</sup>

Much of this can be transferred to the music sphere, both with regard to making editions and to performance. The notion of a linguistic and a bibliographic code could be related to two different intentional levels, similar but not equivalent to what I will later describe as the 'active' and 'passive' levels of intention. With regard to the bibliographic code, we might ask how much control a composer had in the preparation and distribution of manuscripts. What do bibliographic matters (e.g. the layout of a score, the use of punctuation for the text) tell us about his performing intentions and expectations? We might also consider which composers took the most care and assumed the most control in the production of their scores and the conditions of their performance. None of these factors, to which an editor should be held accountable, provides a normative index of good performance. They do, however, give us some notion of the degree to which the presentation of the music on paper may relate to the various levels of the composer's intention.

Despite the challenges to the concept of authorial intention this concept has been by no means dead since it was first attacked in the 1940s. The whole debate has received enormous attention during the 1990s, some fifty years after it began.<sup>24</sup> This has generally concerned the question of meaning in literary texts and thus does not directly impinge on the issue of musical performance. But it may well evidence a general dissatisfaction with formalism and a search for alternative ways of understanding the arts. Quentin Skinner, like Kivy, attacks the position of

total scepticism (in his case, Derrida's) with the blunt observation that even dogs can tell the difference 'between an accidental and deliberate kick',<sup>25</sup> while Jerrold Levinson extends the issue of intentions to the way an audience constructs plausible intentions on the part of an author.<sup>26</sup> These 'counterfactual' intentions allow us to construct the intentionalist stance of the author through consideration of the tradition surrounding him, his oeuvre as a whole, and his general public image. This has the advantage of allowing multiple interpretability, since there are an infinite number of ways of configuring the available contextual evidence and it also allows us to overrule what is known of the author's *actual* intentions, should these be known. Clearly, there is the question of whether counterfactual intentions are really intentions at all (especially when they are, literally, anti-intentional), but Levinson's position may evidence a profound shift in scholarly attitude. First, the audience's, interpreter's or critic's role in constituting intention is paramount (thus absorbing something of the post-structuralist critique of intentionality). Secondly, it suggests that the notion of the author as an active, human figure (rather than as merely the facilitator of perfected form), who works within a particular social and cultural environment, has become a more significant element in the way we conceive of art.

Even in the field of reader-oriented criticism, where one might assume that there was the greatest resistance to authorial intention, there are nevertheless some scholars who have relied on the concept. These include those theories that rely on a communication model for literary texts, such as Roman Jakobson's concept of author and reader as being related as the sender and receiver of a message.<sup>27</sup> Wayne Booth, concerned with the rhetorical aspects of textuality, gives attention to the ethical implications of the message, discerning an 'implied author' in the text who must be constructed in the act of reading by the 'implied reader':

Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author . . . makes his reader as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement.<sup>28</sup>

Whatever the plausibility of these approaches in literary studies, the notion of sending a message or of the direct agreement between author and reader is not only too restrictive for music but also virtually impossible to prove in the absence of a codifiable linguistic equivalent for music. Nevertheless, I shall return later to the question of whether Booth's model

of an 'implied reader' could be applied to music in the guise of an 'implied performer' who can be discerned in the notation of music.

Even those writers who most loudly proclaim their independence from the author's intention, have recourse to it on occasion. Beardsley and Wimsatt suggest, rather awkwardly, that an author's notes on the interpretation of his work (such as Eliot's notes on *The Waste Land*) can be used by the critic if they are viewed as actually being part of the work.<sup>29</sup> Wimsatt also acknowledges that intentions may come into play if there is something missing, some imperfection in the work; here knowledge of intentions might act like a crutch for the lame or an extra stone for the sagging arch.<sup>30</sup> Even Richard Taruskin will refer to some aspect of a composer's intention if it suits and substantiates one of his own points: in his review of Harnoncourt's recordings of Bach's cantatas, he notes that the performers frequently capitalise on the sheer difficulty of the music, often creating an ugly effect. This ugliness actually brings out a particular message in the music that could well have been intended by the composer, a sense of the drabness and imperfection of the earthly condition which is actualised by the struggles of the singers.<sup>31</sup> In all, he is complimentary of performances which involve creative departures from the notated text and is prepared to support this with historical evidence (e.g. for Mozart) that shows this was part of a composer's wider intention. Furthermore he laments the absence of a personal voice in much recent composition and performance, noting that most pre-modern composers had no difficulty in believing that they were the principal speaker in their compositions. Thus, in this sense Taruskin turns his back on Beardsley and Wimsatt and, particularly, the objective and impersonal approach to performance, and he positively encourages an intentional stance, provided this does not mean blind fidelity to a composer.<sup>32</sup> In other words, our own critical stance is essential in the valuation of intentions and thus conditions how we might employ them for our own interpretations.

One of the most productive points to emerge out of the critique of intentionality is the sense of flexibility between an author's intentions and a reader's interpretative insights. As Theodore Redpath affirms: 'The prize term "the meaning" seems to float between the two parties, like a balloon floating above two parties of children, each of which wishes to reach and appropriate it.' While affording priority to historical meanings (just as we would take the historical meanings of individual words as a starting-point for interpretation), Redpath perceptively suggests that: 'there is no universal rule that we ought to attach the same importance in all cases to what the poet meant by his poem, in determining the meaning

of the poem: but that the degree of importance we should attach to it in any particular case is a matter for *aesthetic decision*'.<sup>33</sup>

Such an approach is particularly useful in the field of HIP. Far from reducing the artistic to the scholarly – perhaps the major conceptual flaw of many approaches to the field – this suggests that the scholarly enterprise of seeking an 'original' historical meaning should veer towards the artistic.

Precisely this dynamic attitude towards intention informs the work of two contributions to the philosophy of art, Michael Baxandall's *Patterns of Intention* and Richard Wollheim's *Painting as an Art*. Their inferential approach to intention is of a completely different kind from that which is normally discussed in the literary debates and which is applied to HIP. But not only may it be of great significance in making us reconsider the concept of historical performance, it might also show how HIP could be valuable in revising our conception of notated musical works. For Baxandall 'inferential criticism' relates not to

an actual, particular psychological state or even a historical set of mental events inside the heads of [the artists] . . . One assumes purposefulness – or intent or, as it were, 'intentiveness' – in the historical actor but even more in the historical objects themselves. Intentionality in this sense is taken to be characteristic of both. Intention is the forward-leaning look of things.<sup>34</sup>

This view of intention is evidently a construct of the contemporary critic/interpreter, something to be strictly distinguished from the more traditional static view of intention which

would deny a great deal of what makes pictures worth bothering about, whether for us or for their makers. It would deny the encounter with the medium and reduce the work to a sort of conceptual or ideal art imperfectly realized. There is not just *an* intention but a numberless sequence of developing moments of intention.

The account of intention is not a narrative of what went on in the painter's mind but an analytical construct about his ends and means, as we infer them from the relation of the object to identifiable circumstances. It stands in an ostensive relation to the picture itself. (*Patterns of Intention*, pp. 63, 109)

Thus, in the field of music, we should be concerned not with specific biographical events, but should imagine pieces as the result of an infinite sequence of decisions. This helps us to temper the view of musical works as static, timeless objects and allows us to see them as something much closer to the process of performance itself. What Baxandall most

profitably gives us is the sense that we must reject the concept of a 'formal cause' in art and that the causal process is both dynamic and malleable.<sup>35</sup>

in a picture . . . it is not quite a matter of the painter first working out a finished design and then picking up the brushes in an executive role and just carrying it out. The phases interpenetrate, and one would surely wish at least to accommodate this sense of process. (*Patterns of Intention*, p. 39)

His insistence that the critical viewer take an active role in interpreting the picture is arguably even more important as a maxim for musical performance (however 'historical' one's intentions). This point is further developed by Wollheim for whom the viewer's perspective emerges as a crucial element for both original artist and subsequent interpreters. He assumes a universal human capacity of 'seeing-in', prior to that of pictorial representation. In other words, we all have the tendency to discern representations within seemingly abstract patterns in nature before attempting such representations ourselves (Wollheim also goes on to claim a similar status for 'expression' in represented images). It is precisely this capacity of 'seeing-in' that the artist mobilises as he paints. His intention to represent rests on the same psychological abilities as the viewer has in 'seeing-in'.<sup>36</sup> Wollheim goes on to discern how the spectator's ability can be improved through the cultivation of particular kinds of knowledge:

a spectator needs a lot of information about how the painting he confronts came to be made. He needs a substantial cognitive stock.

But, once we allow information in, is there any principled way in which we can decide that some information is legitimate, and some illegitimate? . . . there seems to be only one limitation that should be placed upon what information can be drafted into the spectator's cognitive stock. It relates, not to the source from which the information derives, nor to its content, but to the use to which it is put. The information must be such that by drawing upon it a spectator is enabled to experience some part of the content of the picture which otherwise he would have been likely to overlook. (*Painting as an Art*, pp. 89–91)

This approach does contain an echo of the formalism lying behind the New Critics' dismissal of intention in the first place: much of the 'correct' interpretation can be fostered by looking at 'the work itself'. But there is the important admission that knowledge of the surrounding context is potentially infinite and relevant insofar as it allows us to find something new within the picture. Baxandall's entertaining discussion of the intentionality surrounding the architect of the Forth Bridge shows that much depends on our own frame of reference. Is our concern general

history, the history of bridges, or economics? Are we interested in the general or specific conditions under which the designer worked, or in the things that, by necessity, must 'have been in the reflecting minds of the actors'? (*Patterns of Intention*, pp. 27–8).

How appropriate is the inferential approach to intentionality for music, particularly as a basis for the practice of performance? Traditional approaches to intentionality in composition and performance, such as Kivy's, tend to see the musical work as a concept or ideal provisionally realised in performance. The inferential approach rather sees the art object as resulting from an infinite sequence of intentions, a causal process that was both dynamic and malleable. Certainly, there is a great deal of sense in the notion that the composer functions not only as a composer but also as a performer and listener during the course of composition, reacting to what he plays and hears and altering and developing the composition accordingly. As Roger Sessions once usefully proposed, the practices of composition, performance and listening belong essentially to the same process, and anyone participating in any one of these activities tacitly (sometimes even actively) participates in all three.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Wollheim's view that information external to the painting is vital if it allows us to appreciate something we would not otherwise have noticed, justifies the search for historical facts relating to the performance of a piece of music. Rather than merely setting a standard of correctness these may allow us a musical experience of which we might not otherwise have conceived.

How, then, can we reformulate intentionality in music along the lines of inferential criticism so that it can be more productive for performance interpretation? Dipert's three-part categorisation of the low, medium and high levels of intention still provides a good starting point. A composer normally intends a specific means and medium of performance that result in an intended sound that, in turn, engenders the intended effect for the listener. However, in practice there are several problems both with Dipert's division of intentions and with his evaluation of their hierarchy. First, the primary *purpose* of the piece might not be one that was determined by the composer in the first place, particularly in the case of those repertoires prepared for a specific extra-musical function. Such purposes might be entirely irrelevant to a modern audience's concerns, or, if the music is still used for its original purpose (e.g. church music) the theological and liturgical presuppositions might often be entirely different. Moreover, it is both impossible and undesirable to recreate the preconceptions of an historical audience (as Dipert himself affirms). In

certain cases then, the high-level intentions (e.g. to serve God, through the liturgy) might not be specifically of the composer's own making and might not be those we most desire in contemporary performance.

It is also unclear as to how Dipert's high-level intentions fit into the realm of performance: much of the effect that a composer intends to produce in the listener (insofar as this is ascertainable), lies in the elements of the music that are not a choice in performance interpretation (e.g. harmony, melody, text-setting). In fact, it is often more in the 'lower' levels that the performer's choice and imagination can be exercised. Finally, and most importantly, consideration of the 'lower' levels quite often reveals possible 'higher' intentions that might not otherwise have been evident.

Thus Dipert is too dismissive of the low-level intentions, limiting the function of playing techniques to the ulterior purpose of the middle-level intentions, the specific sound required.<sup>38</sup> This approach tends to presuppose that musical works are discrete and static entities that merely require a particular sound to be realised. But the player may react to the medium or technique employed, something that can result in interpretative differences that are not quantifiable merely in terms of sound quality.<sup>39</sup> This might, in turn, facilitate a style of interpretation that was previously obscured, something perhaps to do with stylistic pacing, articulation and phrasing and, above all, the overall expression.

Furthermore, to come closer to the inferential approach of Baxandall and Wollheim, the instrument, playing technique or the abilities and style of the assumed performer may have played a major part in the way the music was written in the first place. Different 'low-level' intentions could thus have resulted in an entirely different piece of music. Here then, it may be more profitable to conceive of the three levels of intention in reverse order: rather than having a specific end in mind and then employing the requisite tools and personnel, the composer's ends are at least partly the result of what he discovers during the process of composition, his interaction with the medium. Thus Dipert's demonstration that Bach hypothetically would have preferred the modern piano to the clavichord since it better fulfils an assumed middle-level intention for greater dynamic expression does not necessarily follow. After all, the greater fulfilment of one middle-level intention – dynamic expression – might inhibit another intention of the same ranking: tone, articulation, voicing etc. The modern piano may have caused him to write in an entirely different way (this is not to condemn performance today on the 'wrong' instrument, but merely to point to how the medium influenced

the way the piece was written in the first place). Dipert's assertion that Beethoven is a proven master of form but not necessarily a good judge of pianos relies on a specific formalist ideology of music and is thus of no more intrinsic value than the assertion that Beethoven's remarkable dialogue with the developing styles of piano building of his day accounts for his daring and experimental approach to notated composition.

Sometimes an instrumental limitation actually contributes to the composer's creative act, such as in the case of Bach's unaccompanied works for violin and violoncello. Mendelssohn and Schumann saw fit to provide piano accompaniments for some of these works in order to make Bach's supposed intentions clearer to the listener. Some historians in recent years have even proposed developing bows (in the name of historical accuracy!) which allow for the performance of double-stops as indicated in the notation. Yet it was surely the very limitation of the medium of solo violin (even more so in the case of the solo violoncello) that provided Bach with much of his compositional incentive. The music is pregnant with textural implications: the reader/performer/listener constructs musical lines and gestures that are not necessarily notated. By being forced to write fewer notes Bach was able to imply many more.

It is also unclear as to why Dipert's assertion that 'the less conscious, informed, or deliberate the composer's indication, the less strong is our prima facie obligation to follow it' ('The Composer's Intentions', p. 212) necessarily holds. So much of the quality of a good composer must reside in his unconscious assimilation of techniques and in his intuition. Indeed, he might often alter his most conscious intentions for performance (e.g. Stravinsky's tempi in the *Rite of Spring*), while his unconscious assumption of a particular kind of instrument or playing technique may be integral to the way the music was written in the first place. This same misunderstanding pervades the considerations of intentionality by Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson, for whom the composer's 'determinative intentions' are the ones that count for 'authentic performance', as opposed to concurrent or unexpressed wishes and the social milieu of composer and work.<sup>40</sup> Their approach assumes that musical works have a timeless, essential core (something which is, at best, an historical conception), that this core brings with it certain imperatives in performance, and – what seems patently incorrect – that these imperatives are identical to, or at least directly parallel with, the composer's conscious decisions.

In short, I propose to drop the concept of a fixed hierarchy of performance intentions and instead divide intention into two non-ranked areas: 'active intention' – a composer's specific decisions concerning

such matters as instrumentation, tempo, dynamic, ornamentation, articulation etc. (all of which may, or may not be, consciously notated); and 'passive intention' – those factors over which he had little control, but which he consciously or unconsciously assumed. On the whole, the active intentions will be more conscious and the passive ones less so, but this association is by no means fixed. E. D. Hirsch suggests that the distinction between an author's conscious and unconscious intentions is not to be confused with the distinction between what an author does and does not mean. Following Husserl, the unconscious factors form the wider horizon that helps us to reconstruct the author's mental and experiential world.<sup>41</sup> The composer's 'horizon of expectations' might relate to how he expected the music to be played and perceived, but might also, in turn, have caused him to write in a particular way. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposed, our interrelations with our environment in-grain 'carnal formulae' on our bodies and each new experience becomes sedimented into our 'intentional arc', thus influencing our future actions.<sup>42</sup> Consideration of intention, even at the lowest 'passive' levels, makes us aware of the artist's actual individual embodiment and helps us experience this afresh in the surviving works.

In some cases active and passive intentions might run into one another, such as when Handel chose a particular singer to perform a particular role (conscious, active intention) and then that singer's abilities, technique and style caused him to write in a particular way (passive intention, both conscious and unconscious). This issue is aptly demonstrated by particular arias from *Messiah* where multiple versions of 'But who may abide' and 'Thou art gone up on high' reflect a changing cast of singers and some radical changes to the music. Here the changing passive intentions prove a significant aesthetic point, that the influence of performance considerations was more important to Handel than the creation of a timeless, unified masterwork. Passive intentions of this kind are often conscious, extremely so in the case of Benjamin Britten:

During the act of composition one is continually referring back to the conditions of performance... the acoustics and the forces available, the techniques of the instruments and the voices – such questions occupy one's attention continuously, and certainly affect the stuff of the music, and in my experience are not only a restriction, but a challenge, an inspiration... I prefer to study the conditions of performance and shape my music to them.<sup>43</sup>

But such passive intentions may equally well be unconscious. As Mattheson remarked, in the most comprehensive survey of compositional invention in the early eighteenth century, 'Ten good composers

are often not capable of creating a single good singer; but a single good singer, especially a beautiful and talented female, is easily capable of inspiring ten good composers; so that the latter sometimes do not know whence the magnificent ideas come to them.'<sup>44</sup> If Mattheson is right, the composer's unconscious passive intentions should be precisely those we should privilege if we are concerned with the intentionality latent within music of this kind.

In another sense, passive intentions could refer to active intentions that were impossible to realise. These may relate to the composer's desire for the best possible performance (even if this was not immediately available to him) or a particular style of performance practice that did not pertain to his local environment. In cases such as these, the composer's intentions, so far as they can be inferred, should surely override the actual historical conditions. Such intentions need to be seen in the context of both the actual set of choices open to the composer but also to possible sets of choices.<sup>45</sup>

In this sense, intentionality, far from being synonymous with the notion of historical fidelity, actually works against it. One would have to be an antiquarian of the most dogged type to wish mediocre performing circumstances as a norm for most of the music we choose to perform. Nevertheless, some have argued that since most earlier repertoires were designed for performance within a regularly occurring multi-media event we perhaps need to recover at least the possibility of art music functioning as a form of routine or as background music, which is, after all, one of the main uses of popular music today.<sup>46</sup>

It is against the field of 'active intentions' that much of Taruskin's scepticism is aimed. He proves, at the very least, that composers' attitudes to interpretation in performance vary as much as any performer's might over the course of a career. Thus we might be able to find a more satisfactory tempo for a Beethoven symphony, a more elegant ornament for a Couperin dance, a more ingenious bowing for a Bach violin solo, than the composers specified. Furthermore, the fact that an intention may be active, does not necessarily imply that the composer was fully conscious of it or considered it indelibly fixed. In the case of marks of articulation, phrasing, dynamics and ornamentation the composer may have had diverse reasons for including them: perhaps barely considered, almost unconscious notations or a rather carefully worked scheme; directions for the inexperienced or reminders – perhaps limitations – for the experienced; exceptions to or reinforcements of an assumed rule.

Furthermore, it seems that composers' sense of their own 'active intentions' developed relatively late in history, reaching a peak in the



mid-twentieth century (for the issue of 'progress' in the notation of performance issues, see chapter 4). But it is not always the case that earlier composers are silent on their opinions about performance, indeed they sometimes insist on obedience to their intentions.

The anecdote is probably spurious, but at least it portrays a late-Renaissance view of how Josquin the composer related to his performers:

You ass, why do you add ornamentation? If it had pleased me, I would have inserted it myself! If you wish to amend properly composed songs, make your own, but leave mine unamended.<sup>47</sup>

Whatever its veracity, this remark should not be taken literally as an injunction to respect Josquin's notation with the awe of a fundamentalist. We know that he himself was a singer and teacher of consummate artistry, that he probably trained his best singers to ornament with the hindsight of the strictest instruction in composition and that his notation represents as much his own activity in performance as in composition.

Moving forward a century or so, Frescobaldi, in the preface to his *Capricci* of 1624, affirms that:

I have wished to advise that in those things, that would not seem ruled, by the use of counterpoint, one must first seek the affetto of that passage & the purpose of the Author for the delight of the ear & the manner that it is sought in playing.<sup>48</sup>

A more direct equivalent to Wollheim's injunction to discern intention through protracted contemplation of art would be difficult to find in the sphere of music. Roger North provides a remarkably subtle notion of compositional intention, when he describes the art of 'voluntary', in which the roles of composer and performer are rolled into one: the principal purpose of 'voluntary' is to conjure up many moods; even if the composer/organist is not entirely successful in this, the fact that he has an intention 'will signifie more than if nothing at all was intended or thought on'.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the fact that there is intention is more important than the idiosyncratic details of that intention; the notion of 'intentionality' alerts us to the human and dynamic elements of the notated piece, its 'forward-leaning' quality. Moreover, this takes us beyond the positivistic, objectivist view of intention towards a sense of the subjectivity inherent in music, regardless of its age and style.

For Wollheim, certain pictures exemplified by Manet, Friedrich and Hals contain one particular element that is essential for their interpretation: an internal viewer, placed within the picture, who has access to the same field as the external viewer and who thus influences

the perspective of the entire picture and the attitude of its characters. The notion of the 'implied performer' in the notational text of certain pieces of music (equivalent to Booth's 'implied reader' in the literary text), seems to me particularly productive. The anecdote about Josquin complaining of singers ornamenting his music which is already elaborated suggests that the notation might actually reflect an historical performance on its own terms. Much of my own work has centred on the interplay between notated composition and improvised elaboration on the part of performers during the German Baroque, and has suggested that authority in performance does not go merely from composer to performer but can quite often go the other way.<sup>50</sup> In other words, as the theorist Bernhard perceptively noted in one of his treatises on composition, composers had learned a lot from the elaboration of performers; there was clearly a fluid interplay of influence between the two.

The case of J. S. Bach is particularly significant: in his once-criticised tendency to restrict the performer's freedom to ornament he has actually preserved his own particular type of performance in the very symbols of the notation. On the other hand, the various figures of ornamentation are compositionally integrated (e.g. by consistency of figure and imitation) in a manner that could not have been achieved by the improvising performer. So we may envision Bach the composer adopting the attitude of a performer and then dialectically integrating the two roles within the notation. In this sense, any performance of his music that reproduces most of the right notes is an historical performance, one which follows the very active performing intentions of the composer.

The same sort of approach could be made to composers whose music is frequently preserved in a plethora of manuscript versions. David Fuller has advocated an open but critical attitude to the several different texts preserving the music of the French harpsichordist, Chambonnières, a state of affairs he conveniently sums up with the neologism 'heterotextuality'.<sup>51</sup> Here the player must take over much of the responsibility usually demanded only of the editor, sifting through the various versions, becoming familiar with the composer's style and, above all, *not* taking the printed notes as established, immutable facts. Exactly the same reasoning could be applied to the more celebrated case of Corelli's violin sonatas, where various printed versions claim to represent the composer's original performance style; the most obvious error to make here would be to take those publishers at their word who claimed to represent the only 'authentic' version.<sup>52</sup> In cases such as these each version could be regarded as the notation of one particular performance

by the composer, something which would be completely obscured by approaching the score as an immutable *Urtext* (see chapter 4, p. 110 below).

Not every composer produces this sort of performer-in-the-notation. It is certainly most evident in the case of composers who were themselves superlative performers: Josquin, Couperin, Handel, Bach, Mozart, Schumann, Chopin and Liszt come immediately to mind. Their notation thus works as both a record of past performances and a mnemonic for the future.<sup>53</sup> As Jim Samson notes, even the detailed substance of much early nineteenth-century piano music may relate to improvisation.<sup>54</sup> Recognition of a performing persona in the notation greatly informs our own interpretative role as 'external spectators' or music critics, but the same persona may also enliven our musical experiences as performers and listeners.

It could be argued that much of what I discuss under the heading of 'intention' should be subsumed under some other title since it addresses elements found in pieces and repertoires as they survive today and it is not specifically concerned with biographical details and the precise thoughts and decisions of any particular composer. Wimsatt and Beardsley would doubtless claim that anything of value revealed by my approach is a feature immanent in the work itself and not associated with the creative context. However, I believe it is important to appreciate the latent *intentionality* in music as an art to be performed, something that can be distinguished from the more local concept of 'the composer's intentions'.<sup>55</sup> Just as our interest in art *per se* rests on our understanding that it is *intentionally* created as art (otherwise it would be of the same status as an object in nature), our interest in pieces of music should be directed towards the human subjectivity involved in their creation and, particularly, in the intentionality towards (and occasioned by) performance. The value of a composer's specific intentions for performance cannot be legislated across the board; each issue needs to be constantly evaluated on a case-by-case basis. As Redpath and Baxandall's approaches to literature and art suggested, the choice and evaluation of intentional factors should itself be an aesthetic one. This approach to intention also influences our conception of the so-called 'higher' spiritual intentions of a composer, the 'message' that he supposedly communicates through the fallible media at his disposal. For these are surely mediated within the pattern of intentions and interact with all the details of the work's actual embodiment.<sup>56</sup>

The inferential approach is obviously irrelevant if we take a strictly formalist view of music, independent and adequate in its own mode of

existence, but it surely becomes crucial if we wish to understand music as the product of human action and decisions to be taken within a relatively constrained range of choices.<sup>57</sup> As Fredric Jameson has remarked: 'restoring the clumsiness of some initial thought process means returning to the act of thinking as praxis and stripping away the reifications that sediment around that act when it has become an object'.<sup>58</sup> Studying both the historical context and the methods of performance widens the field from which aesthetic choice and evaluation can be made.

As Hesse shows us in *The Glass Bead Game*, history should not be used as a way of denying the struggle that brought countless artefacts and practices into being. It should not be a mode of preservation that returns us to countless original details if it merely treats these details as objective fact. Even if the best works 'no longer show any signs of the anguish and effort that preceded them' such works do, in fact, embody aspects of a time and conflict of which – without historical study – we would otherwise know nothing.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, historical knowledge should not simply be fixed and exhaustible, it will change and develop as our own priorities change. Our reception of any particular piece, composer or repertory will develop as we learn more about its creative context and this, in turn, will inform our evaluation of what is significant within the context. Paul Crowther suggests, following Merleau-Ponty's theory of art, that the artwork expresses the relationship between the artist and a wider shared world and is thus important for 'its implications for other lives'. Our own changing historicity will enable us to draw inexhaustible meanings and experiences out of the work: 'As the patterns and meaning of personal and collective existence take on new meaning, so will our understanding of particular works of art and their creators.'<sup>60</sup> In short, the ultimate value of studying intention for the purposes of HIP might rest not so much in telling us how a piece should or should not sound but rather in how performance, as the medium of sounding music, conditions our idea of how music relates to the world in which it first sounded and that in which it continues to sound. It can be a counterbalance to the traditional way of viewing music history as merely the history of musical works.