13 Musical performance

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Chapter preview

Music exists in performance. It may seem obvious to say this, but it is not. To say that music exists in performance is to focus on a particular way of thinking about what music is: i.e., that it is a *practice*. Viewing music as a performing art emphasizes the experiential dimensions of music, and its immediacy. Experiencing music in performance highlights music as an interactive process. People respond to musical performances emotionally, bodily, and critically. They may dance to music, fall into trance, or feel a sense of community. This chapter asks questions such as "What are the meanings of musical performances?" and "What are their ritual, social, or political significances?" Music is performed in a wide variety of contexts including concert settings, family celebrations, healing ceremonies, rituals, and competitions. Musical performance features in the realms of everyday experience, from singing lullabies to listening to music while you shop. Yet there is also something special about performance: it is often understood as standing apart from everyday life and it involves presentation to an "audience." Performers may display virtuosic musical skills or they may take on important social roles, for example, commenting on socio-political trends or mediating between supernatural and natural forces. This chapter explores musical performances from a global perspective, addressing questions about the nature, function, and processes of performance, as well as about the social roles and training of performers. Through ethnographic case studies, the chapter considers the ways in which musical performances take place in a network of aesthetic demands and social relationships.

Key issues

- What is musical performance?
- Viewing performance as experience, process, and embodied practice.
- Viewing performance as a mode of interaction.
- Who performs?
- Learning musical performance.

- The contexts and functions of musical performance.
- The social and political dimensions of musical performance.

What is musical performance?

Musical performance has recently come to the forefront of many branches of academic study, but it is viewed and analyzed in different ways. An influential perspective in traditional musicology has been to view performance as the reproduction or realization of scores. From this perspective the performer's task is to communicate the work from its notated state. Understood this way, the best that an individual performer can do is to interpret a score, thereby yielding and communicating insights into the work. At worst, the performer has been seen as offering merely an imperfect attempt toward a perfect rendition of the work. Musicology has recently broken away from this focus on musical texts, and in doing so has further developed an interest in the performer and moved closer toward ethnomusicological modes of perceiving performance as a process rather than as a product. "Music" depends on a performer bringing it "to life" and performances are never exactly the same as previous ones. Some musical traditions are entirely dependent on oral transmission, and in such cases the idea that music exists in performance seems obvious. Even in musical traditions that are also notated, performers listen to other performances, as well as studying scores, such that one can think about performances as oral texts. This allows notation, as Stanley Boorman (1999) has noted, to become a performance opportunity, to become imbued with the additional interpretative qualities that arise in performance, and performers are thus recognized as being integrally involved in the creative process. Recording technologies also play a critical role in helping performers to interpret and re-interpret familiar works.

While performers shape their interpretations in relation to recent performance traditions, the study of older recordings, often available in archives and library sound collections, can provide startling alternative presentations. These include the recorded examples of performances by composer-performers. Examples such as the recordings of Debussy and Schoenberg reveal the extent to which composer-performers depart from their own scores. Even when performers have depended on various kinds of texts (on treatises about performance practice as well as notated scores), aiming to produce "historically informed performances," as in the case of the early-music movement, their interpretations have been understood as being as much a response to modern-day aesthetics as to the results of insights into past performance practices. For Richard Taruskin (1995), understanding historically informed performance as a modern phenomenon is not a criticism of the current practice of "authenticity" (as it has often been perceived by other

commentators). Rather, it is a way of bridging the creative and the recreative, the text and the performance.

Musical performance as experience, process, and embodied practice

Ethnomusicologists have long been attentive to performance, in part because their insistence on spending time observing musical traditions in context has led them to focus on the performance event as a way of finding out about many of the world's musical traditions (see chapter 6). Such a focus has led to greater understandings of the place of musical performance in social, ritual, and political life. While some ethnomusicologists and musicologists have been concerned with demonstrating a strong connection between music and society (i.e., music reflects social processes or holds social meanings and vice versa), others have argued that music and society help to form each other. In other words, musical performances do not merely reflect social life. Musical performances shape it.

As well as observing and documenting performances, learning to perform has been one of the central methods of ethnomusicology since the 1960s. Beginning with the experiences of learning music and of being present in "the field" (the musical context under study), ethnomusicologists have reflected on the ways that the writings they produce as a result of their research represent an attempt to translate experience into text. Taking as their starting point the idea that knowledge about music is grounded in the experience of music, several ethnographic texts from the late 1990s on have started to turn the focus increasingly back onto the scholar, who is also an actor within the musical context under study – a realization that broadens the concept of "performance." This trend is in part a response to a theoretical debate of the 1980s dealing with uncovering the motivations and assumptions of researchers that underlie ethnographic texts (the so-called "crisis of representation"). Consideration of the researcher as being a part of the tradition he or she is studying has posed a challenge to the scholar's traditionally objective and authoritative perspective. The researcher becomes one voice among many possible ones. This trend has also been a response to critical thinking about what happens after the fieldwork experience, how knowledge generated in the field features in subsequent research and teaching projects, and how the field experience impacts on the scholar's life experience. Fieldwork itself has begun to be understood as performance, a way of interpreting experience, a way not only of increasing cultural and musical understanding but also of integrating scholarship and life.

Learning to play in a new musical tradition has also shifted academic attention to the "body," to the ways in which people fit into different kinds

of grooves and to an emphasis on self-awareness. Musical performance is thus seen as being an "embodied practice," that is, a way of training the body to behave in particular, musically appropriate ways. Scholars interested in understanding the psychology of musical performance have similarly studied the physical and mental skills required, exploring biology in relation to performance abilities and issues such as coordination, timing, gesture, human movement, and the physiological effects of performance anxiety (see chapter 4).

Musical performance as a mode of interaction

Theoretical trends exploring the processes, experiences, and embodied aspects of musical practices present us with richer conceptions of "performance." Simply playing or practicing music, however, is not usually considered to be a musical performance. What marks out a performance from a rehearsal? For the folklorist Richard Bauman (1992) there is a distinction between casual renditions and creative performances because the latter often involve some kind of judgment. The performer expects to present something to an audience and the performance context is marked in some way. For example, if you attend a performance of Brahms's Symphony No. 1 given by the London Symphony Orchestra, you might go to a specific performance space such as the Barbican Centre. You might expect to see the musicians observing a particular dress code, and the audience obeying a kind of etiquette by clapping. For the Temiar of the Malaysian rainforest, singing/trance-dancing ceremonies are distinguished from other ritual singing sessions by the presence of flowers and by the times in which songs are performed. The singing/trance-dancing ceremonies are held at night and take place within a covered structure. To perform these at other times and in open spaces would be to risk illness.

Performers prepare for performances. They have rehearsed the actions that they present in performance, practiced them over and over again, and made conscious efforts to learn them. The performance studies theorist Richard Schechner (2002) calls this "restored behaviour," a concept that can be applied to the analysis of human action in everyday life as well as in marked performance contexts. Performers can reflect on restored behavior in performance: "me behaving as I have practiced," becoming aware of multiple selves – "me" and the "performing me" – and reaching heightened psychological states. But if performances are made of restored behaviors they are nevertheless unique. No two performances will be exactly the same. This is also applicable to recorded performances because not every

aspect of a musical event can be replicated. This way of understanding performance emphasizes the interactivity of performance rather than the materials being performed.

Thus what might mark out the uniqueness of the LSO's performance of Brahms's Symphony No. 1 mentioned above is not just the presentation of the work itself but also all the details in the production and reception of the performance, which vary from one performance to another. Such a perspective points to musical performances occurring in webs of social relationships between performers and audiences. To look at the musical performance is thus to be attentive to the listener as well as to the performer. Sometimes music is performed for non-human audiences. Musical performance is often an inherent part of spiritual beliefs and is a way of communicating with deities (for example the Sufi tradition of *qawwali*) or of maintaining human environments and their cosmological significances (as in the cases of traditional music of Australian Aboriginal peoples and of the Saami: see case study in Box 13.1). The interactive aspects of musical performance are also clear in the relation of music to other performing arts such as theater, dance, and film and through technological mediations: performances through radio, TV, internet, recordings, etc.

Box 13.1 Case study

Interactivity: The traditional song genre of the Saami (once known as nomadic pastoralists in the north of Europe) is the *joik*. To *joik* is to sing something rather than to sing *about* something and people have *joiks* in the same way that they have names. Given that a performer *joiks* someone or something it is impossible t think about *joik* in relation to subject and object; the *joik*er can be considered an integral part of the *joik*. *Joik* are performed for animals and land as well as people. These concepts point to a complex set of relationships between music, personhood, and environment. *Joiking* has been associated with shamanism and under Churc guidelines it was a forbidden performance practice as recently as the 1970s. *Joik* song texts often explicitly de with themes of "Saaminess," commenting on nature, environmental issues, and the supernatural. In capturir Saami sonic environments, modern *joik* recordings include bird song and reindeer sounds. While these modern recordings are held up as representations of distinctive Saami identity they are also located in a network of musical exchanges, collaborations, and global markets. Contemporary *joik* is produced and disseminated through mass media systems and shape by technological advances, and institutional, state, anc commercial bodies have recently supported some Saa musicians. The *joik* singer Wimme, for example, has produced several recordings in which he engages with heavy metal.

Approaches from performance studies as well as from ethnomusicology present us with broad views of musical performance as symbolic and social action. The paradox in this broad view of performance is that even if everyday life is a performance, musical performances are nevertheless often marked out as being "special," as having communicative and transformative properties. And *what* is being performed is vital to a proper appreciation of the performance event. While academic discourses conceptualize and discuss musical performances in various ways – from an emphasis on performance as the realization of a text (the composition) to performance as social action, patterns of behavior, or embodied practices – they are a fundamental aspect of human experience.

Who performs?

In some musical contexts, like karaoke, anyone can be a performer. Yet even though performance is part of everyday experience, there are several factors shaping who takes on the role of performer. One factor is gender. How many renowned female conductors spring to mind? The gendered dimensions of performance are similarly apparent in the worlds of popular and rock music. Few women, for example, find success as electric guitarists. In north Indian classical music, women are more likely to be vocalists than instrumentalists. In Albanian Prespa wedding celebrations, men and women sing in separate groups using different vocal techniques. Women sing softly; men sing loudly. Another factor determining who performs is that in some traditions being a musician is a hereditary occupation, such as the *klezmorim* (professional folk instrumentalists amongst the eastern European Ashkenazi Jews) who performed at events like weddings. For the Venda of South Africa, people who are born into certain families or social groups and demonstrate exceptional musical abilities often become key performers in important rituals such as those featured in the practices of possession cults. Although amongst the Venda everyone demonstrates musical capabilities and participates in musical life, an outstanding musical performer is often considered to be one who is able to get in touch with spiritual forces.

ase study

s of performers: Calypso is a song genre in particular with the Caribbean islands of d Tobago. The song texts play an important role aesthetics and they are often satirical, critical, and multi-referential. Texts were subject to nsorship during the 1930s but during this period ns became important figures in promoting causes against the censure of colonial Calypsonians are political commentators tors as well as entertainers. Calypso virtuosi e during performance and demonstrate their erity, sometimes through the exchange of Mighty Sparrow is perhaps the most well-psonian. In his 1956 award-winning calypso Dinah"), he commented on the American from Trinidad and some of the socio-economic ces of the American presence. His 1961 calypso the Caribbean Federation and the political rds postcolonial states:

tion boil down to simply this,
eat dog and survival of the fittest,
ody fighting for independence, singularly,
d for instance, but we go get it don't bothe
find we should all be together ...

The idea that musicianship and being a medium are interconnected is apparent in a range of performance traditions. For the Temiar of the Malaysian rainforest, the performer receives compositions or learns songs from a spirit guide, who might be the soul of the flower that he or she tends. These songs are received through dreams and might be performed in healing ceremonies. The performer in this example is also a composer, medium, and healer, holding social and ritual as well as musical roles. Performers may be composers and improvisers as well as interpreters, or they may hold additional social roles that require a range of extra-musical skills, being articulators of political or social discourses (see case study in Box 13.2), mediators, mediums, healers, educators, and entertainers. Performers may hold ritual, cosmological, and environmental knowledge (such as Australian Aborigines) or be the narrators of historical knowledge (like the griots of West Africa).

Notions of musicality also determine who performs. "Talented" individuals are often selected through audition processes as being suitable recipients for further training and professional performance opportunities. This principle applies to popular music training through public media spectacles such as *Fame Academy* and *The X-Factor* as well as to entry into conservatoires, orchestral trials, and concerto performance engagements.

Box 13.3

Some factors determining who performs:
- Gender
- Inheritance
- Social and/or ritual status
- The ascription of talent

Learning musical performance

Musical performance is learned in diverse ways, from the non-systematized approaches of learning in everyday environments to the special skills that are acquired through formal training systems such as the conservatoire in the Western art-music tradition. In the former context, learning tends to be a social activity. Bulgarian *gaida* (bagpipe) players, for instance, learn tunes from older players through a combination of aural, visual, and tactile information, establishing networks to gain access to the social and public contexts in which *gaida* skills can be practiced, such as village fairs, evening dance parties, and weddings. The Western art music context, by contrast, is characterized by hours of practice (often undertaken as a solitary activity), formal assessments of ability through examinations and auditions, and development of methods to attain high levels of performance achievement (see case study in Box 13.4). Sufficient skill is usually required before participating in orchestral or chamber music contexts.

Box 13.4 Case study

"Zoning In: Motivating the Musical Mind" was a proje undertaken at the Royal College of Music in London (1999–2002) to help develop mental and physical skills for performance. Teaching and research metho included neurofeedback (viewing one's brain activit during performance) to achieve psychological states promote focused attention; mental skills training of the kind used in sports, such as mental rehearsal an imagery; exercise and lifestyle training, involving aer exercises to improve cardiovascular efficiency; and Alexander Technique training to develop somatic (i. bodily) awareness.

The systematic training of professional performers in the Western art music tradition was shaped by the development of conservatoires from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. Pedagogic practice at institutions in cities such as Venice, Paris, Vienna, London, and Moscow has exerted considerable influence on performance practice and on shaping standard instrumental repertoires.

A demand for method books was met by teacher-performers such as Kreutzer (violin) and Czerny (piano). Shifting aesthetics around the mid-nineteenth century also influenced performance teaching. Performers were increasingly regarded as recreators or interpreters of works, who should adhere to the demands of the text, rather than co-creators, a trend that intensified during the twentieth century. If you have taken instrumental lessons in the Western art musical tradition you may well be familiar with the injunctions to "just play the notes," "follow the score," or "play what is on the page."

Yet performance practice is consistently subject to change. Current historical, global, aesthetic, and analytic research insights have paralleled the increasingly diverse range of performance skills that are encompassed by contemporary conservatoire training systems, informing and challenging performers to adopt new perspectives. Thus many conservatoires offer training not only in Western art music but also in jazz (for example the Royal Academy of Music in London), and in popular and folk music (the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki – see case study in Box 13.5). Some conservatoires hold collections of instruments from around the world (for example, the Royal College of Music in London has a gamelan). Higher education music programs at universities have also increasingly promoted these broader perspectives, and the teaching of performance can include various "world music ensembles" (see Fig. 13.1) as well as orchestras and choirs. The practice of some of today's leading performers exemplifies these trends. While Yehudi Menuhin explored north Indian classical music earlier in the twentieth century, famously collaborating with the sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, musicians today continue to develop these global exchanges. The violinist Itzhak Perlman, for example, has experimented with *klezmer*, and the cellist Yo-Yo Ma has explored musical traditions along the Silk Route (through Central Asia) and of the Kalahari people (South Africa).

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Academy, established in 1882, began music teaching in 1975, setting up a for folk music in 1983. Overturning models ing as rural, village-based, and informal aural folk music program at this conservatoire recreating and reinterpreting tradition. With raining (including conservatoire-model l lessons, lectures, examinations, and the ed sources), performances in the world t and the production of recordings, these ns are seen as "professionals," marking out e as being "new folk music." They interact e influenced by musicians trained in ical traditions, including other folk styles, n art and popular music.

(Ramnarine 2003).

The rigor of musical training characterizing the conservatoire is also a feature of systematized training in other traditions, such as the *gharana* in north Indian classical music, or "new folk music" in Finland. Some stylistic and technical aspects identify musicians as belonging to specific *gharanas*, which are defined in terms of social as well as musical components. A *gharana* is basically a group of musicians linked through familial relationships or discipular lineages, who share particular approaches to performance practice. For example, the musicians who share Ravi Shankar's tradition identify

Fig. 13.1 RHUL's Gamelan Puloganti, South Bank Centre, London, June 2007 (Photo: Tina K. Ramna

themselves as the Maihar Gharana and their approach to performance is eclectic (following the learning processes and achievements of Shankar's guru, Allaudin Khan). By naming his *gharana*, a north Indian musician indicates the stylistic school of which he is a member. In the learning process, the guru (teacher) is a dynamic figure in north Indian classical music, looking after the daily regimen of practice and overseeing the musical growth of a student. Most training would take place through oral repetition and musicians are expected to practice exercises and scales in developing technical skills. Such practice is sometimes called "*riaz*" (which also means "to sit") and years of *riaz* add up to "*sadhana*," which is "spiritual practice," as well as the ability to bring feeling and life into music. Many musicians use verbal syllables as rhythmic *jatis* (types) to construct the rhythmic patterns familiar to musicians and dancers. Ragas are the melodic frameworks that musicians learn, enabling them to compose, improvise and create moods (*rasa*) in performance.

With regard to preparing for performance, several studies have pointed to a correlation between time spent in practicing and skills acquired. Performers learn to perform by performing, often under the guidance

of gurus who may supervise which professional engagements are accepted in the early stages of developing a performance career. In north Indian classical music, students begin to learn performance in performance contexts by appearing on stage with their gurus, providing the drone for an ensemble performance. Preparation can include ritual observances before a performance (e.g., to ward off stage fright, or in worship). In some cases, tuning or "warming up" on stage are preparatory features of musical performances.

The contexts and functions of music

nctions of musical performance

events; entertain; educate; transmit
(musical, aesthetic, social, historical);
tween supernatural and natural worlds; heal;
ties; transform identities (e.g., through
uals); alter psychological states; establish
es; express human creativity and emotion;
; bring landscapes into being; demonstrate

Why do people organize musical performances? When is music performed? Where is it performed? In the section above we began to consider responses to these questions. Various functions of musical performance are summarized in Box 13.6.

Taking a more detailed look at the contexts and functions of musical performance, the following two case studies focus on:

1. *Music in ritual contexts*: Anthropological perspectives on performance have focused on ritual contexts (initiation rituals, religious rituals, healing rituals and so on), dealing with the transformation of persons (changing who people are) and exploring how performances are both effective and entertaining. Partly drawing on anthropological theory, but presenting more finely nuanced analyses of performances, ethnomusicologists have described musical performance as the primary medium for organizing ritual activity in diverse geographic locations. Box 13.7 looks at one of these examples, outlining musical performance in the healing rituals of the Tumbuka.
2. *Musical conventions*: Musical performances can take place in formal or informal contexts. Performances take place in formal settings such as the concert stage or the ritual space. There are also street performances given by buskers, and festive occasions involving most participants such as parties, weddings, and other celebrations. While these events involve a performer–audience interaction, the musical convention emphasizes the processes of musical transmission and features a performer–performer exchange. It is a somewhat more formally organized version of the everyday interactions that take place between performers. It involves performers "showing performing"

Box 13.7 Case study

Musical performance as healing: In many different geographical contexts, musical performance is an aspect of medical practice. In Britain, the profession of music therapist began to emerge from the mid-twentieth century, although there were turn-of-the-century antecedents, for example the Guild of St Cecilia, which was founded in 1891 to play sedative music to patients in London hospitals. Music therapy has moved from boosting morale to the clinical applications of music, assessing the physiological impact of music, theoretical work, and the training of practitioners in conservatoires such as the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, which began teaching music therapy in 1968.

A variation on the clinical applications of musical performance is found in the example of the Tumbuka of Northern Malawi, for whom musical practice *is* medical practice. Drumming is foregrounded in the Tumbuka experience of clinical reality, highlighting the positive role of drums in several African healing systems. Disease is danced and diagnoses are drummed. The causes of illness are attributed to God (a theory of natural causation), to humans (who perform witchcraft and cause illness through human jealousies), and to spirits (in cases where huma fail to fulfil the requirements of the spirit worl Dancing prophets called *nchimi* fall into a divination trance through dancing to music, which will enable them to see what illness a patient is suffering from. They dance to "X-ray t patients." These prophets are often identified through falling ill themselves: disease thus produces a highly valued member of Tumbuk society. During treatment, patients might sing a dance and they may be positioned very closely the drummers. The *nchimi* dance *vimbuza* (a term encompassing spirits, the illnesses they cause and the treatment of dance and music) "heat" the spirits. Music becomes the transform of spiritual heat, the means by which worlds a mediated, revealed, and constituted. The kind of perceptual shifts needed to perceive both t spirit and non-spirit worlds are paralleled in th core *vimbuza* drumming pattern, which featu threeness and twoness simultaneously. For th Tumbuka, music is used as a medical practice acting as a source of energy and as a communication technology. Healing takes pla through ritual musical performances.

(Friedson 199

to other performers. Box 13.8 discusses transmission and interpretation issues in relation to a musical convention held in 1999, "Fiddles of the World."

Social and political dimensions of musical performance

Musical performances often hold a social and political significance, reinforcing, challenging, or rendering "natural" different kinds of political ideologies. These performances include carnivals (see Box 13.9), parades, and competitions. Competitions, in which competing evaluative notions of effective performance, expression, aesthetics, and interpretation come to the forefront, may determine musical career paths, identifying future virtuosi such as in the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition. They may have a more explicitly political content such as the Eurovision Song Contest, displaying national

Box 13.8 Case study

Musical conventions: A musical convention called "Fiddles of the World" took place in 1999 overlooking the Great Harbour in Nova Scotia, Canada, which the Mi'qmaq call Kjipuktuk. Ivan Hicks, a fiddler from New Brunswick, planned the event. He wanted to bring together fiddlers and fiddling styles to share experiences and exchange tunes. "Fiddles of the World" provided opportunities for reflecting on the trajectory of the fiddle as a cultural product and as a marker of identity; and on fiddle repertoires as sites of cultural and musical memory. Fiddlers wanted to learn from other fiddlers about technical approaches to the instrument and about different renditions of familiar tunes. They exchanged knowledge about aspects of musical style. Some of the fiddlers, such as a James Bay Cree fiddler, James Cheechoo, were promoted as being cultural repositories. His performances and workshops highlighted a less well-known aspect of fiddle lore relating to the ways in which native Canadian peoples adopted the violin after contact with Irish, Scottish, and English traders from the 1600s onwards. Cheechoo retains "old tunes" for square and step dances, which were accompanied by a two-sided skin drum played with two sticks until the 1940s. If Cheechoo's practice provided a moment of historical curiosity, the link between Cape Breton and Scottish fiddlers was more fully explored in this convention. Cape Breton became a stronghold of Scottish Gaelic culture in the early nineteenth century with the arrival of around thirty thousand Scots during the time of the Highland clearances. Cape Bretoners trace the origins of what is now a distinct fiddling style featuring bow and fingered ornaments to a Golden Age of fiddling in Scotland (late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries). Two key features of this style were explained by the fiddler Natalie MacMaster and relate to an emphasis on rhythmic interpretations being derived from dance and ornaments. Bowing ornaments are often a means of creating rhythmic variation and emphasis. The basic principles include adding open string drones, pushing the bow to play an accented note (a "dig"), whip-bow technique (changing the pressure to add an accent within a certain pitch) and cuts (very short bow strokes). The fiddle styles represented at this convention (Cape Breton, Scottish, Irish, Texan, Cajun, and Quebec fiddling) were seen as being broadly linked to but distinct from each other. As one source for a more "authentic" playing style, now lost but in the process of being reclaimed in other parts of the Celtic music world, the local representatives, the Cape Bretoners, provided an important model. The vigor of this style attracted other players who felt that it speaks effectively to modern-day audiences. This was in contrast to Cheechoo's practice, which was interesting because it provided another aural dimension through a historical window but which remained an example of past practice with little modern relevance. This case study thus parallels Richard Taruskin's point about the modern-day aesthetics of historically informed performance. It also highlights another key to understanding musical performance. As well as focusing on *what* is being performed (the tune or the "work") and situating musical performances within the total music event (performance as a process), we have to consider the *how* of musical performances – the stylistic and interpretative dimensions that help us to shift our attention to the performers. Just as how Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is performed might be identified as an interpretation of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Herbert von Karajan, how fiddlers play a tune identifies them as Cape Breton or Cajun performers and sets up hierarchies of "Celticness." The stylistic and technical details of playing offer a route to a proper emphasis on the "sounds of music" in analyzing the politics of performance practice.

and political allegiances. Musical performances often serve to foster a feeling of community, a sense that this is "our music," to the extent that musical performances play vital roles in marking identities. Folk music in European contexts, for example, has often been referred to in the articulation of national sensibilities, such that we routinely speak about "Bulgarian folk music," "Scottish folk music," or "Hungarian folk music." The intersubjective and critical aspects of musical performance are revealed when music is presented not just as aesthetic but also as political action.

Box 13.9 Case study

Musical performance as politics: The pre-Lenten Car of Trinidad and Tobago has become one of the Caribbean's major musical events. Calypsonians an costumed bands contribute to Carnival, providing a forum for some of the most intense scrutiny of and commentary on island politics. From resistance to colonial attempts to ban Carnival practices in the mid-nineteenth century to contemporary cultural po discussions about the development and financing o Carnival arts in education and ecotourism initiatives Carnival can be seen as performance that reveals a about postcolonial national politics in these island spaces.

Studying performance in higher education

As we have seen in this chapter, various approaches have been taken in exploring musical performance. These include approaches from the psychology of performance, research into historical performance practice, insights from cognate disciplines – drama studies in particular – and interdisciplinary ethnographic studies that help us to take global and comparative perspectives. Studying musical performance in higher education often involves a balance between the practical (continuing to develop instrumental or vocal skills) and the conceptual (thinking about musical performance). Higher education courses may reflect the diverse approaches that have been pursued in seeking to understand musical performance, including opportunities to read a range of literature on performance, participate in different kinds of performance projects, learn from one's peers, and practically engage with various world music traditions.

Chapter summary

- Different thinkers have approached musical performance from diverse perspectives. While some thinkers emphasize what is being performed (i.e., the "work"), others highlight performance as an

event, investigate the processes involved in producing a performance, or focus on issues of interpretation.

- Musical performance is often characterized by its evaluative and interactive dimensions (through the involvement of audiences), as well as by performance markers, behaviors, and codes that set it apart from everyday life or from rehearsal.
- Performers may be subject to selection criteria. There may be gendered, hereditary, and hierarchical dimensions to selection, just as there may be evaluations of ability in performance training.
- Musical performance is essentially an interactive aesthetic and social practice. Musical performance can be viewed as a way of knowing and being, as a method of critical and intersubjective inquiry, and as social, political, and aesthetic action.

Discussion topics

1. When does musical practice (in the sense of rehearsal) become musical performance? To what extent can practice be distinguished from performance?
2. Assess the impact of technology on musical performances.
3. Why has the analysis of social meanings and significances in musical performances been so compelling?
4. How relevant are the concepts of the "creative" and the "recreative" to understanding musical performance?
5. Compare the roles of performers and performance events in different performance contexts. What might this comparative perspective tell us about the nature of musical performance?

Further reading

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Outlines themes in the study of performance ranging from practice to psychological concepts.

Solís, Ted (2004), *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).
Explores the ethics and practices of applying what has been learned in a "field" context to the teaching of world music ensembles.

Williamon, Aaron (2004) (ed.), *Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Introduces practical research to help performers develop skills.

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