

# PLAYING WITH HISTORY

*The Historical Approach to Musical Performance*

JOHN BUTT

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### The Historical Approach to Musical Performance

Why do we feel the need to perform music in a historically informed style? Is this need related to wider cultural concerns? In the most ambitious study of the topic to date, John Butt sums up recent debates on the nature of the early music movement and historically informed performance, calling upon a seemingly inexhaustible fund of ideas gleaned from historical musicology, analytic philosophy, literary theory, historiography, and theories of modernism and postmodernism. He develops the critical views of both supporters and detractors of the movement, while claiming ultimately that it has more intellectual and artistic potential than its detractors may have assumed. He also asks whether the phenomenon of historically informed performance reflects changes in the culture of western music and how it, in turn, may have influenced that culture, particularly in regard to such issues as the status of the composer, the work, intentionality and notation.

This is a challenging book from an acclaimed scholar-performer, which will be of absorbing interest to all those concerned or engaged with our musical and cultural heritage.

Cover graphic by Andrew Jones utilising the First Music from Henry Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*, partly autograph and partly copied by FQ2, Royal Academy of Music, London, MS 3, fol. 3v

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## *Preface*

We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life.  
Nietzsche<sup>1</sup>

History has one great strength over the things a Waldzell tutor feels to be worthy of his interest: it deals with reality. Abstractions are fine, but I think people also have to breathe air and eat bread.

Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps every work of scholarship and criticism contains a trace of autobiography, and this could hardly be truer of the present case. Much of my career has been taken up with both performance and scholarship and thus inevitably with the constant mediation between them. Moreover, much of the performance and much of the scholarship has related directly to the issue of 'historically informed performance' (henceforth HIP) and the debates about this concept have become particularly vigorous during the very course of my career.

When I began a dissertation on performance practice issues in Bach during the early 1980s at the University of Cambridge, the order of things seemed quite clear in the context of that faculty. Composition stood at the top of the hierarchy and performance (which had barely a place in the curriculum) at the bottom; scholarship in performance stood marginally above performance itself so long as it involved rigorous, scientific and historical methods. I could claw my way a rung or two higher by working on a Great Composer and by tying in some of the results with musical analysis (the most respected discipline below composition proper). What seemed obvious to me was that historical performance was fundamentally anathema to the modernist regime; it was something to be seen – more often than not – as a rather bemusing throwback to nineteenth-century antiquarianism. If HIP did share anything with modernism it was in its counter-cultural credentials, its distance from a supposedly conservative mainstream. Particularly fascinating was the fact that a huge

industry connected to the revival of early music and HIP was blossoming just down the road in London. Yet this represented the activities of surprisingly small groups of people who seemed to have enjoyed virtually no consistent or institutional training in history or historical performance. The movement was dominated by a handful of scholar-performers directing versatile vocalists and instrumentalists who learned the historical styles and techniques more or less 'on the job'.

Moving to California in 1989, many of my impressions and assumptions were completely overturned. Here many universities and conservatories did, in fact, teach historical performance on a far more institutionalised basis than in Britain, yet the professional success of the movement was considerably slimmer; indeed many of the best American artists had moved abroad. Instrument building could be of an extraordinarily high standard and there was much public enthusiasm for early music and HIP, particularly as a counter-cultural movement. Most inspiring of all was the critical work of new colleagues such as Joseph Kerman and Richard Taruskin, both of whom had been connected with the movement in one way or another and both of whom looked critically at common assumptions regarding both historical performance and historical research *per se*. They called into even greater question the concept of the academic composer at the head of the musical food chain. Most striking – and jarring, given my own experiences – was Taruskin's association of HIP with modernism. Had I not just moved from an environment in which modernism had seemed the very antithesis of HIP, in which members of the early music movement often placed themselves in direct opposition to the culture of progress and the relentless advance of 'technique'? Another issue was Taruskin's belief that research into performance practice is categorically distinct from performance and that good scholarship does not necessarily result in good performance. Yet I felt that my development as a performer had definitely benefited from my research as a graduate student (and beyond); indeed it would be impossible for me to perform the way I do now without the benefit of that experience. But, taking his view on board, it was clear that the relationship was not direct – with each new discovery neatly paralleling a new way of performing – but that the very action of historical thinking, 'playing with history' as it were, informed my entire attitude towards performance.

This experience of crossing cultures, crossing disciplines of performance and scholarship and, increasingly, experiencing the critical turn in musicology itself, has led directly to the questions formulated in this book. Given the diversity of impressions and opinions, what actually

is Historically Informed Performance? Or rather, what conceptions of western music does it seem to confirm, alter or develop? How, in turn, might it reflect changes in our cultural conceptions of music? Why has it happened on such a scale during the last few decades and how does it fit into contemporary culture? Here there is no room for a comprehensive history of the movement or advice on how to 'do' historical performance – there is plenty of that elsewhere – rather I write from a position of bafflement in the face of the cross-currents I have experienced, and by examining my own motives and preferences. It clearly follows from the ongoing debate about HIP, as the first chapter shows, and could hardly have been written without the precedents set by previous writers. I endeavour to adopt and develop the critical stances of such writings although, perhaps inevitably, my ultimate goal is to provide a defence for the movement; it has been debunked enough already. Much of what I write is done in the – perhaps erroneous – belief that HIP is an essential part of contemporary culture and that, however great its shortcomings, it contributes to the continued survival and flourishing of western music.

The study begins with a review of important stages in the HIP debate as a way of drawing out threads and topics that inform the remainder of the study. The debate is traced from the seminal work of Adorno in 1950 through to important articles by Laurence Dreyfus and Robert Morgan in the 1980s. A large part of the discussion is dedicated to the books by Richard Taruskin and Peter Kivy: Taruskin's study represents a fascinating critique of the movement from within the increasingly rich and polyglot discipline of critical musicology while Kivy's represents the supremely abstract discourse of analytical philosophy. The two could hardly be more different although some of their resulting opinions are strikingly similar. They perhaps represent the two poles of the discourse on HIP, the one rich in its rhetorical flair and diverse cultural perspectives, the other seemingly logical and precise. Such is the success and sheer force of Taruskin's writing (published as a whole in 1995) that many within musicology and music criticism in general have perceived that the debate over HIP is effectively closed, that there is nothing more to say, and, indeed, that the movement as a whole is running out of steam (like modernism itself).<sup>3</sup> I attempt here to show that Taruskin's work – far from closing the debate – is really the work that has most made future debate possible and has entirely reformulated the issues concerned with the discussion of HIP.

The next three chapters examine how HIP relates to three important parameters in our traditional conception of western music: the work, the composer and the intermediary role of notation. How does HIP relate to the view of musical works as somehow universal and portable from one historical context to another? Does it actually effect a change in our preconceptions of works? I suggest that HIP gained much of its prestige by capitalising on existing attitudes to the integrity of musical works, yet – in its admission of history and the concept of contingency – it has actually served to loosen the concept of the essential musical work. The relation of HIP to the concept of a composer and his intentions has endured particular critical approbation within the early music debate. Chapter 3 puts the question in a new way: instead of inquiring into the composer's intentions in order to discern a correct performance, this study suggests that HIP can actually enable us to form a different concept of the composer and his intentions, namely, how his encounter with the media and practices of performance fed into the very act of composition in the first place. In other words, performance might be a useful parameter in understanding how a piece of music came to be created and notated. Performance could then be seen as much a part of the past, as of the future, of a newly finished piece. As chapter 2 also suggests, the boundary between work and performance thus becomes much looser when the issue of historical performance is raised. The last chapter in this sequence examines the idea of notation as a recipe for performance, one we commonly presume to have developed progressively over the years. Consideration of HIP allows us to reformulate this function of notation by suggesting many other ways in which notation may relate (or not) to performance, the composer and the 'work', however these are to be understood. This study thus consolidates some of the points about work and author formulated in the previous two chapters.

Having discussed what I consider to be the significance of HIP in refining or developing our conceptions of music, the final part of the book attempts to place the movement within the wider cultural context. Chapter 5 examines HIP from the perspective of modernism and post-modernism. Clearly there is hardly the room here to define either of these concepts in any way that can begin to be adequate. I try to isolate those aspects that might relate most closely to musical performance and history, in the belief that HIP has to fit somewhere within the debate on modernity, that there is no such thing as a purely isolated cultural phenomenon and that even the most naive antiquarianism must relate – if only by negation – to larger cultural movements over the last century or so.

The final chapter takes a closer look at a particular phenomenon related to the modernism/postmodernism debate, namely the culture of 'Heritage' and preservationism that has so characterised the final decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps the coincidence of this with the overwhelming commercial success of HIP is too obvious to have deserved much comment in the recent debates. Or, more likely, Heritage has generally been considered an amateurish and populist form of history and thus not serious enough to be part of the academic discourse on musical performance. But the connection between the two seems unmistakable and the Heritage industry must surely provide much of the context in which it has become fashionable to invest considerable financial resources in performances 'on original instruments' just as one does in 'period' furnishings, houses and drama.

I cannot claim to be able to explain all that happens, or might happen, within the world of HIP. Rather I try to present a more theoretical conception of HIP by standing back from the immediate day-to-day concerns of the movement. In this way I hope at least to show how the movement has more intellectual and artistic potential than its detractors might have assumed. I make liberal use of various philosophical and cultural forms of 'theory', but in a relatively practical, ad hoc, way that, I suppose, betrays both my English empirical disposition and my untutored status in so many of the disciplines I co-opt. But, hopefully, the combination of approaches and the peculiarities of my experience will shed some new light on what Lydia Goehr describes as HIP's potential to help '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>4</sup>

*Joining the historical performance debate*

HINDEMITH AND ADORNO, AND SOME PRELIMINARY  
ANTINOMIES OF HIP

Some of the parameters of the debate over historical performance were set many years before the movement became a truly public phenomenon in the late 1960s. For instance, the commemoration of the year of Bach's death in 1950 occasioned diverse opinions on the way his music should be performed: the prominent composer and performer, Paul Hindemith, advocated the wholesale restoration of the instruments and performing practices of Bach's own age:

We can be sure that Bach was thoroughly content with the means of expression at hand in voices and instruments, and if we want to perform his music according to his intentions we ought to restore the conditions of performance of that time.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the fundamental assumption that a composer fits effortlessly and contentedly into the culture of his own age, that what he got coincided with what he wanted, and that a restoration of contemporary performing conventions will thus coincide with the composer's intentions. Given that Hindemith himself was one of the major composers of the age, the suggestion that we might wish to follow the composer's intentions must have carried some considerable force in 1950. Both Hindemith's historicist attitude and his productions of early music were of tremendous influence on Nikolaus Harnoncourt who, perhaps more than anyone over the next twenty years, made the case for HIP.<sup>2</sup> He was recording with early instruments by the early 1960s and his countless essays from this pioneering period did much to popularise the virtues of associating earlier music with its original performance practice. More importantly, he was perhaps the first to stress that music and its performance before the nineteenth century involved a different

aesthetic attitude, one stressing the speech-like and rhetorical aspects of music. Each musical style and period before 1800 had a different ethos that brought with it different conceptions of performance, and it is thus wrong to think of changes in performance and instrument construction in terms of a necessary 'progress'.<sup>3</sup> Both in his rejection of the status quo and his early alliance with Hindemith, Harnoncourt's case is symptomatic of the association of HIP with a particular strand of modernism. Indeed Harnoncourt was one of the first to suggest that his historical reconstructions represented a 'modern' adventure and not simply a direct return to the past.<sup>4</sup> Behind much of his work as a performer and writer lies the sense that we have been in a prolonged state of cultural decline, one that HIP – by re-introducing us to conceptions of music more varied than our bland present – may rectify. In this pessimistic diagnosis of the present Harnoncourt comes remarkably close to Theodor W. Adorno, although his remedy is radically different.

Adorno in 1951 poured scorn on historical reconstruction: only the 'progressive' modern performance resources (indeed the modern arrangements by Schoenberg and Webern) could reveal the full import of Bach's music which stood head and shoulders above the pitiful concerns of its own age. Speaking at a time when the early music movement was still in its infancy, but when western Germany was undergoing an enormous process of rebuilding and restoration, he suggests that:

the neo-religious Bach is impoverished, reduced and stripped of the specific musical content which was the basis of his prestige. He suffers the very fate which his fervent protectors are least willing to admit: he is changed into a neutralized cultural monument, in which aesthetic success mingles obscurely with a truth that has lost its intrinsic substance. They have made him into a composer for organ festivals in well-preserved Baroque towns, into ideology.<sup>5</sup>

Adorno's specific comments about the levelling proclivities of 'historical' performance and the inadequacy of the older forms of performance sound very much like the types of criticism that became familiar over the next decades from musicologists such as Paul Henry Lang and musicians such as Pinchas Zukerman:<sup>6</sup>

Mechanically squeaking *continuo*-instruments and wretched school choirs contribute not to sacred sobriety but to malicious failure; and the thought that the shrill and rasping Baroque organs are capable of capturing the long waves of the lapidary, large fugues is pure superstition. Bach's music is separated from the general level of his age by an astronomical distance. Its eloquence returns only

when it is liberated from the sphere of resentment and obscurantism, the triumph of the subjectless over subjectivism. They say Bach, mean Telemann and are secretly in agreement with the regression of musical consciousness which even without them remains a constant threat under the pressures of the culture industry. (Adorno, 'Bach Defended', p. 145)

Whatever we might think of Adorno's views today, he does raise some important questions that proponents of HIP frequently miss. He sees the fledgling movement to restore older instruments and performance practices as part of a wider cultural malaise in the wake of the de-personalising forces of industrialism and late capitalism. Instead of setting up a form of resistance to contemporary society, as was done by the increasing isolation, introspection and complexity of the Second Viennese School (Adorno's ever-pessimistic hope for the future of musical culture) the culture of restoration resorts to a facile objectivity that does not even notice the subjective challenge posed by great modern art. As mass culture becomes ever more superficial it substitutes the fetish for historical detail for a profundity of which it is not even any longer aware. Adorno is clearly representative of a form of musical modernism that sees the avant-garde as absolutely crucial in somehow revealing the truth of our desperate condition. Pessimistic though his tone may be, he evidently still believes in a form of progress, that music culture and composition must move forward, however bleak the prospects ahead. Perhaps this is more a sense of irreversibility than of progress as such.<sup>7</sup> But, whether this is progress or irreversibility there is clearly a fundamental antipathy between the modernism, as represented by the Second Viennese School and Adorno, and any culture of restoration, such as HIP. Hindemith and Adorno not only represent the two poles of opinion about HIP, they also show how the movement, in its post-war form, sits both within and without the culture of modernism.

As I hope to show in the following chapters, Adorno was surprisingly accurate in diagnosing a move away from a culture of progress and ever-renewing modernity towards one based more on restoration and recycling. Much that was profound or challenging may well have been lost in the process. But, given what I perceive to be crucial shifts in cultural consciousness, it is impossible for us to know what we have lost. Indeed to resort to Adorno's particular brand of modernism would itself be a sterile form of resurrectionism, since we have passed the historical moment from which he was talking and cannot authentically restore his ideals. The various forms of historical restoration, of which HIP is an obvious component, are, I believe, an 'authentic' expression of our



contemporary cultural condition bringing new experiences and insights into our world. Most importantly, this lies largely in the realisation that the culture of inexorable technological progress is itself an historically conditioned phenomenon, that conserving what we already have or might already have lost is now at least as essential as forging new paths into the future unknown.

Adorno's later writing reveals what perhaps lay behind his strident antipathy in 1951. In his typographical sketch opening his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, those associated with HIP (at least as it stood in 1962) are christened 'resentment listeners'.<sup>8</sup> This category comes at the very bottom of the ranking of those constituting the culture of classical music, just above the 'jazz listener'. What is immediately striking is how Adorno relates the early music culture to totalitarian politics: the resentment listener normally sympathises with orders and collectives, together with the political consequences (p. 10); all expression and individuality is to be expunged, 'the gypsies are to croak now as they did before, in concentration camps' (p. 11). This culture yearns for the pre-individual state (witnessed by its penchant for Baroque music, which Adorno considers – apart from Bach – as a form of levelling mediocrity)<sup>9</sup> while it cannot escape its own post-individual state. Its process is 'formally comparable to the fascist manipulation that invested the compulsory collective of the atomized with the insignia of a precapitalist, nature-grown "people's community"' (p. 12).

Indeed, during the 1930s in Germany both the ecological movements and the popular youth movements in early music had been strongly infiltrated by the Nazis (see p. 210 below), so it is easy to understand Adorno's personal position. Yet Hindemith too had been a refugee from the same regime and he – together with several others in the same circumstances – did much to cultivate the early music culture of American campuses. Here there was no inkling of the political associations that had arisen in Germany and, more often than not, the American culture of HIP acquired liberal connotations. This would seem to suggest that a culture dedicated to restoring practices from a past age does not, by definition at least, seek to restore the political circumstances of that age. The notion of a 'lost innocence' can serve a number of political ideologies – sometimes fanatically – but we should refrain from prejudging all forms of restoration as inescapably reactionary.

So far then, we have the modernist–antimodernist identity of HIP, together with the reactionary–liberal dichotomy, both of which suggest that the culture of HIP is not so simply explained as it might first appear.

These two issues form major threads throughout the present book and receive a more thorough examination in the last two chapters.

THE HIP CULTURE OF THE 1980S – THE DIAGNOSES  
OF LAURENCE DREYFUS AND ROBERT MORGAN

Laurence Dreyfus, building on some of the implications of Adorno's view, gives the most perceptive critique of HIP from the vantage point of the early 1980s, thus a full decade after it had become a major component of public musical culture. He also introduces several themes that become central to the debate as it accelerated over the next fifteen years. From the outset, he poses a question that is crucial to the present book (one that has perhaps received less attention than it ought in the meantime) namely, why the historically 'correct' performance of music should become such a particular issue in the late twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, we learn that it is wrong to view it purely as a 'thing' since it is definable only as a social practice, the tacit assumptions and activities of a range of people.<sup>11</sup> And, as is taken up in the last chapter of this book, it is not just a matter of looking at the people producing the instruments, texts and performances but also at the consumers and audiences without whom the HIP movement could never have been a commercial concern in the first place.

The commonplace assumption that HIP resulted from 'progress' in musicology is simply inadequate, particularly since there has been an increasing rift between HIP and post-war musicology (Dreyfus, 'Early Music', p. 311). As Joseph Kerman observed around the same time, musicology has many things to do other than provide material for performers: history and criticism are the disciplines he mentions specifically in 1985,<sup>12</sup> but, by the end of the century, this list would have expanded almost beyond recognition to cover the whole gamut of cultural and critical studies. A recent and seemingly comprehensive study of the entire field of musicology (1999) contains no chapter on HIP as such and remarks that it is 'Modernist, and – as an intellectual concept, perhaps – exhausted . . . it proved impossible to find an author who could feel that there was something useful that could be said beyond a summary of conclusions of arguments current in the 1980s.'<sup>13</sup> Performance is more important as an element of musicology than ever, but now more as a feature of the ontology and receptive traditions of works, institutions or performing communities, or as a counterpart of analysis. Nevertheless, Kerman's assumption that most outsiders would normally associate

musicology with the music they hear at concerts and particularly with the unearthing of older repertoires, probably still holds true.

As Dreyfus argues, musicologists have taken particular relish in debunking the claims of HIP's often spotty and inadequate scholarship. But he also shows how this criticism often covertly defends the supposed monumental and unified institution of western music against the revolutionary force of HIP. He outlines the fundamental opposition that early music is supposed to make to the 'self-aggrandising individualism prevalent in Mainstream musical praxis' (p. 299), something that was to become far less the case in the later 1980s and 1990s, as HIP threw up more and more of its own self-aggrandising figures. Instead of reaching some sort of spiritual understanding with the composer, HIP in its orthodox mode of the early 1980s dealt mainly with empirical evidence, thus substituting objectivism for subjectivism, relativism for critical appreciation, precisely as Adorno had complained: 'Objectivity is not left over once the subject is subtracted' (Dreyfus, 'Early Music', p. 300). It is thus easy to brand the movement as profoundly puritanical, relishing its very denial of the subjective and emotional.

Yet even from Dreyfus's 1983 standpoint it was evident that the best performers (he names Gustav Leonhardt) used their history in startlingly imaginative ways. What was so beneficial about HIP was the fact that the best performers had to rethink their entire interpretative strategy, thus challenging the assumed 'natural' expressivity of the mainstream. In a deeply prophetic statement, Dreyfus notes that successful HIP does not (indeed, I might add, cannot) return us to the past 'but reconstructs the musical object in the here and now, enabling a new and hitherto silenced subject to speak' (p. 304). This realisation of the *present* significance of HIP had already been acknowledged by some of the more perceptive writers of the 1950s,<sup>14</sup> and also became a central point of Taruskin's critique around the same time as Dreyfus. It relates to one of Taruskin's more surprising claims, that HIP is a symptom of late twentieth-century modernism.

While it is already clear that there is a fundamental antipathy between Adorno's modernism – which requires the constant taunting of a progressive avant-garde – and early music, Dreyfus notes their reciprocal negation of a comfortable present. Just as modernism purposely engages in defamiliarisation, HIP renders strange favourite masterpieces inherited from the past and, in consequence, often experiences exactly the same sort of sharp criticism from the conservative mainstream. Almost unintentionally, HIP performers become branded as dangerous,

counter-cultural figures. By overthrowing accepted models of musical taste, HIP threatens many of the supposed certainties of civilised society. Indeed critics both of the avant-garde and of HIP analyse the phenomena as though they were pathological disorders.

Yet early music performers are also counter-cultural in another, more conscious, way, which Dreyfus relates to the denial of envy. The practice of HIP (at least as Dreyfus saw it in 1983) builds purposely on the equality of its members, under no conductor, all sharing a number of performing functions, avoiding virtuosity, enjoying a cross-over between the professional and amateur world and thus experiencing a closer relationship with a like-minded audience and producing historically integrated – rather than sensational – programmes. He might well have added that many involved in the movement during the seminal decades of the 1960s and 70s were, in fact, counter-cultural in other ways, seeing in HIP a way of redeeming music from its elitist and hierarchical connotations. In an interesting – and perhaps underplayed – footnote, Dreyfus adds that much of the recent improvement in HIP standards resulted from an influx of conservatory-trained musicians, themselves eager to escape the rat-race of the mainstream.

It is worth outlining some of the interesting contradictions between the 'purist', non-hierarchical conception of HIP that Dreyfus so graphically formulates and the original historical practices with which it is assumed to correspond. First, it may well be that many forms of performance before the nineteenth century did not use a conductor in the modern sense. Yet most had a director (often the composer) who clearly had a status and will that dominated the other performers. Secondly, while performers were extremely versatile, they were often far more rigidly ranked than even a modern orchestra would require. Such ranking usually mirrored a broader social ranking and much of the music was written to confirm or exploit the hierarchical nature of society in general. Far from eschewing virtuosity, many forms of music making from the mid-sixteenth century onwards were extremely virtuosic, the technical agility required of singers in Baroque opera far exceeding that which became the norm by the twentieth century. And if velocity was not a feature of the performance practice there was often some element that sharply distinguished it from the amateur ethos outlined by Dreyfus: e.g. improvisation in Baroque and Classical keyboard performance, memorisation of an enormous corpus of liturgical music in the Middle Ages. Thus the stereotypical HIP milieu that Dreyfus describes tends to use an imagined utopian past as a way of criticising and 'improving' the present. The modern conventions of

safe, objectivist scholarship help sift out the diversity and messy realities of history and present the past as a potent social practice with a political relevance in reforming the present condition.

While Dreyfus attempts to explain how HIP happened by relating it to a form of discontent with – even protest against – an assumed norm, he does not fully address the issue of why it should have happened precisely when it did, why it became such a tremendous commercial success in the 1970s and 80s. Robert P. Morgan considers this wider cultural issue in his contribution to a valuable collection of essays, edited by Nicholas Kenyon in 1988.<sup>15</sup> He links the sudden widespread concern for historical accuracy with the contemporary situation in musical culture as a whole, characterised as it is ‘by an extraordinary degree of insecurity, uncertainty, and self-doubt – in a word, by anxiety’ (Morgan, ‘Tradition’, p. 57). He outlines a fundamental change in our conception of musical culture, from one based on unbroken linear tradition, which is not consciously aware of the great difference between that which has survived from the past and the present, to one in which the past has become an enormous ‘field of instantaneous possibilities’. One has complete access to a wide range of historical data, thus obscuring ‘the very distinction between past and present’ (pp. 59–60). Morgan goes on to observe a similar diversity in compositional style and the increasing multi-culturalism in the music scene. But this is possible ‘precisely because, and only because, we have no well-defined sense of the musical present’ (p. 66). On the assumption that the availability of all cultures is basically no culture at all, Morgan suggests that our greed for diverse cultures grows so far that we are even keen to assimilate the older versions of our own culture. The quest for historical ‘authenticity’ thus reflects the very absence of a culture we can still call our own. Adorno would surely have concurred with this, and also – for different reasons – Nikolaus Harnoncourt, who suggests that the historical approach to performance ‘is a symptom of the loss of a truly living contemporary music’.<sup>16</sup> HIP is thus to him a sort of last-ditch rescue attempt of western musical culture. As Hermann Hesse put it in the words of Joseph Knecht’s friend Plinio, in *The Glass Bead Game*, ‘our resigned sterility proves the worthlessness of our whole culture and our intellectual attitudes. We analyse the laws and techniques of all the styles and periods of music . . . but produce no new music ourselves.’<sup>17</sup>

Morgan suggests that while tradition flourished we were quite happy to adapt and arrange earlier music for our own purposes, but now everything must be restored since ‘we have no clear idea of what “up to date” means’ (p. 68). Just as many contemporary composers borrow multiple

languages from others, the historicist performer recovers old musical languages as if they were fossils, and the resulting performance automatically lacks ‘the immediate, unreflected, and “natural” delivery of a native speaker’ (p. 70). A similar nostalgic spirit informs house restoration and furniture, and some even seek to restore the songs and shows of the 1930s to their ‘original’ performance style (pp. 75–8). In sum, music history, like history in general is over, and with no purposes of our own we can no longer interpret the past, only passively reconstruct it within the culture of the museum. This ‘cultural identity crisis’ Morgan sees as having roots as far back as the seventeenth century, part of a long process of the divided self and the increasing loss of individual identity (pp. 78–81).

Morgan’s pessimistic diagnosis has much in common with Roger Scruton’s, as I discuss below, and also shares with Taruskin a concern for the loss of tradition that HIP seemingly implies. The ‘end of history’ hypothesis is convincing and his suggestion that HIP belongs within a larger culture of nostalgia that restores other artefacts becomes the subject of chapter 6 below. But where I differ is in rejecting the sense of pessimism he seems to present. Indeed, his very tone suggests a nostalgia for a past order that is precisely of a piece with the culture of restoration itself. While the HIP scholar/performer typically wishes to return performance to a lost Eden, Morgan, in turn, laments the loss of an age in which stylistic difference was unnoticed owing to the strength of one’s own tradition. Both these facets of the past are, of course, equally unrecoverable.

While Morgan is quite correct to suggest that the access to such a wide range of historical data effaces the distinction between past and present, this was surely also the case with ‘tradition’ as he describes it. Within tradition one used whatever was deemed canonical from the past entirely for presentist purposes and consigned everything else to oblivion. Both modes – restoration and tradition – thus evidence different ways of ‘misusing’ the past. Perhaps it would be truer to say that restoration movements such as HIP themselves represent the culmination of a long tradition, one stretching back to the Renaissance. It was that era which first became conscious of the past ‘as a foreign country’, one that was admired as a corrective to the present condition.<sup>18</sup> By the end of the twentieth century the collection of ‘differences’ had become so great that it was no longer possible to be certain of *any* similarity between past and present; we had better preserve everything it is still possible to know or collect, ‘just in case’. Moreover, as Daniel Leech-Wilkinson argues, it was only in the twentieth century that there were enough people with

the education, resources and money to make so much early music marketable, and recording technology has revolutionised the way music is used and the amount that is available.<sup>19</sup> Thus the interest in past music and practices, far from signifying a failure in the present condition, might actually reflect the luxurious possibilities opened up by modernity.

The view that HIP style will automatically lack the unmediated, unreflective delivery of a 'natural' speaker is, of course, the crucially contentious point. Dreyfus had already explored the notion that HIP could encourage imaginative performers to use history to discover new possibilities, new possible worlds of musical expression. And, by the late 1980s it was quite clear that HIP could engender its own traditions, albeit 'invented'. Given that (as Morgan stresses) constant change and adaptation is essential to tradition, and that the same is happening within the invented traditions of HIP, it is difficult to distinguish qualitatively between a tradition that is newly invented and one that appears to be continuous, without making claims for some mystical thread that validates the latter. It takes barely a single cycle of a generation to render any form of delivery seem unmediated, unreflective or even 'natural'.

Finally, there is the history of decline that Morgan outlines for the human subject, traumatically descending into the virtual loss of individual identity by the end of the twentieth century. This is surely back-to-front in suggesting that there used to be a strong sense of individual identity that began to disintegrate in the seventeenth century. It was, rather, in that century that Descartes first made it possible to conceive of human subjectivity in the modern sense, it was in the next that the concept of individual genius arose, and so forth. Thus the trauma that Morgan identifies in the present in fact represents the decline of a relatively recent and historically conditioned conception of humanity. Indeed, Arthur C. Danto views the 'end of art' (which is essentially coterminous with Morgan's end of history) in a much more positive light since it opens up new possibilities of cultural experience rather than necessarily evidencing a terrible decline.<sup>20</sup>

Morgan's final claim that HIP places older music in a museum (together with all the stuffy, nearly-dead connotations that may apply) is ironic, if we are to believe Lydia Goehr's later assertion that the entire bourgeois culture of western music as it arose at the turn of the nineteenth century is essentially a museum culture.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Peter Kivy, in his defence of the 'mainstream' practice of music against HIP's emphasis on original context (see p. 36 below) suggests that the 'museum' of the concert hall is still the best place for the masterworks of the western

canon. If both Goehr and Kivy are right then, HIP does not represent the internment of music in the museum but rather the transfer of music from one type of museum to another, perhaps to something akin to the 'living museum' which tries to show old artefacts in action within a convincing context (see chapter 6, p. 180 below).

Morgan's pessimism concerning HIP as the museum of a dead tradition turns to violent polemic with Roger Scruton, writing a decade later in 1997. To him the efforts of *Musica Antiqua Cologne* or *Concentus Musicus* have frequently come:

to cocoon the past in a wad of phoney scholarship, to elevate musicology over music, and to confine Bach and his contemporaries to an acoustic time-warp. The tired feeling which so many 'authentic' performances induce can be compared to the atmosphere of a modern museum.<sup>22</sup>

He uses the analogy of the painting, 'gaped at by weary multitudes' in a museum, as opposed to its proper place 'on the wall of a private house, where it can bestow joy and dignity on the life surrounding it'. This alludes to a political point, clearly evident elsewhere in his writing, that mass culture reflects the sorry decline of a sense of aristocracy within a developed bourgeois culture. Indeed, taste itself derives from 'the demands of privilege'. Following Nietzsche, democratic man is 'cultureless', failing 'to strive towards the inequality which is the mark of the truly human'; departing from Nietzsche, Scruton also relates culture to a necessary religious form which leads to 'a conception of the sanctity of places and times, persons and offices, customs and rites' (p. 505).

But surely HIP, particularly when it relates to specific royal customs and spectacles, such as have been reconstructed by *Les Arts Florissants* (such titles being 'twee extravagances' according to Scruton, *Aesthetics of Music*, p. 448) can enliven the experiential context of past music. On the other hand, many have criticised the concept of historical reconstruction, and the belief in the value of 'ensembles' (at its most politically charged, being the case of a painting, placed in the context of a country house, with the correct furnishings, and occupied by some descendant of its original owner) as perpetrating a political system of inequality that would seem so essential to Scruton. His direct reversal of this notion, namely that a museum culture, as evidenced by HIP, is the enervating corollary of a levelling democracy, helps substantiate the point I drew from Adorno's reflex action of disgust towards restoration culture: that the opening up of historical context implied by the very venture of HIP (and anything else connected with the culture of 'Heritage' and restoration)

does not automatically bring with it, or enforce, the original political connotations.

RICHARD TARUSKIN AND THE PUBLIC EXPANSION  
OF THE EARLY MUSIC DEBATE

During the 1980s and nineties the field of 'performance practice criticism' became dominated by the powerful writing of Richard Taruskin, which culminated in the publication of his collected essays in *Text and Act* in 1995.<sup>23</sup> There have been several other fine writers on the subject – those, for instance, who appear along with Taruskin in a 1984 issue of *Early Music*, and in a volume by Oxford University Press in 1988<sup>24</sup> – but Taruskin's voice has been the loudest, the most influential and by far the most thought-provoking. His strengths as a scholar come not only from his own past experience as a significant performer of early music, but also from the sheer breadth of his scholarly expertise and critical range.

Taruskin's central argument (most comprehensively stated in his fourth essay) can be condensed into a diagnosis, a judgement and an axiom: his diagnosis is that very little historical performance is, or can be, truly historical – much has to be invented; that the actual styles of historical performance we hear accord most strikingly with modern taste; and that the movement as a whole has all the symptoms of twentieth-century modernism, as epitomised by the objectivist, authoritarian Stravinsky in his neo-classical phase. Taruskin's concern with Stravinsky obscures the fact that very similar aesthetics of performance were promoted by Schoenberg and his students.<sup>25</sup> But this modification would only further support his judgement that historical performance practice, far from being intrinsically wrong, is, rather, a true and even 'authentic' representation of modernist thinking (needless to say, he would prefer it to move in what he sees as the 'postmodernist', 'postauthoritarian' direction). And the axiom on which much of his work hinges is that the methods we use to base and judge scholarship are not those on which we base artistic performance. Each may inform the other, but one cannot be reduced to the other. Thus the inclusion of a couple of essays addressing the question of editing help to consolidate one of Taruskin's central points, encapsulated in the title: performance, of any kind, should be an act and not reduced to the status of a text. Performance is significant for its human component and not for its objective veracity. Taruskin's view perhaps helps us understand the increasing rift, also outlined by Dreyfus and Kerman,

between mainstream musicology and the 'musicology' of those exclusively concerned with preparing their historicist performances. This distinction comes close to that posed by David Lowenthal, between 'History' and 'Heritage', the former concerned with understanding the past on its own terms, the latter more on ours. While I maintain that this distinction is fallacious, given that all forms of historical representation rely on fabrication and an inescapable presentist perspective, it does outline two essential poles in historical practice. Lowenthal's view that 'personal immediacy is a heritage hallmark' relates nicely to Taruskin's conception of the essential musical performance. By this token, HIP performers err when they consider their practice to be 'History' when it is really one of 'Heritage', that should consequently demand imaginative – rather than objective – recreation of the past.<sup>26</sup>

The relation between modernism and HIP was suggested in another way by Dreyfus, namely that the 'shock value' of HIP renditions of favourite classics drew much the same response as the more avowedly counter-cultural expressions of the avant-garde in the early years of the twentieth century. Taruskin relates HIP more to the chic modernism of Stravinsky, and not so much for its shock value but more for the actual style of its performance. Thus, if both Dreyfus and Taruskin are right, HIP is doubly unaware of its modernist credentials, its jarring effect for cultural conservatives on the one hand and its motoric aesthetic on the other. Taruskin's claim that many of the conventions of HIP performances were modern inventions had been brilliantly demonstrated empirically by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's study of 1984 showing that various groups covering the entire historical range of HIP adopted similar mannerisms.<sup>27</sup> This observation might well relate to a wider phenomenon in late twentieth-century culture, with the increasing concern for 'minority heritage', the acceleration of ethnic, regional and cultural differences, the very public exchange and dissemination of these differences, all of which bring a new form of conformity, which, ironically, reflects the increasing standardisation of western culture.<sup>28</sup>

Taruskin's central arguments are supported by several other opinions: the 'seductive simplicities of determinism and utopianism have got to be resisted . . . and . . . the endlessly renegotiated social contract, dowdy patchwork though it be, is the only cause worth defending' (p. 192). This ties in with Taruskin's concern for the audience – an opinion that interestingly seems to grow in the later essays, as he becomes further removed from his own performing career – a move from a production oriented system to a 'proper' reassertion of consumer values (p. 47). This

development is also shadowed by Taruskin's growing distaste for the concept of *Werktreue*, something he sees as central to modernist performance (whether 'historical' or 'mainstream') and one that 'inflicts a truly stifling regimen by radically hardening and patrolling what had formerly been a fluid, easily crossed boundary between the performing and composing roles' (p. 10).

His reservations about the work-concept – the idea of individual, fully formed and authoritarian pieces of music – ties in with his distrust of the composer as an authoritarian figure. So much of historical performance, runs Taruskin's argument, is bogged down with questions of the composer's intentions, and, what is worse, those of a most mundane and provincial kind, when in fact we can never know intentions or even 'know we know them' if we happen to find them, and, furthermore, composers are often wrong or change their minds (p. 97). In his view, our need to gain the composer's approval 'bespeaks a failure of nerve, not to say an infantile dependency' (p. 98). This argument is bolstered with an impressive array of cases where composers change their minds, did not expect their intentions to be followed, or were simply working in an environment (especially opera) where adaptations and cuts were a matter of daily routine.

So if authority comes neither from the work nor exclusively from the composer, where are we to turn? To ourselves, would seem to be the short answer from the Socratic Taruskin: 'Authenticity . . . is knowing what you mean and whence comes that knowledge. And more than that, even, authenticity is knowing what you are, and acting in accordance with that knowledge' (p. 67). In fleshing out this concept, Taruskin tends to draw on two theories in modern thought: the history of *reception* as a major carrier of meaning and *tradition* as an alternative to authority. According to reception theory '[c]hange of context adds as much meaning as it may take away' (p. 267); the meaning, for us, of *Don Giovanni* has been 'mediated by all that has been thought and said about it since opening night, and is therefore incomparably richer than it was in 1787'. Reconstruction of original meaning (and here Taruskin clearly includes reconstruction of original performance practice) 'should add its valuable mite to the pile' but cannot substitute for the pile itself. Taruskin's conception of tradition also follows from this: tradition is 'cumulative, multiply authored, open, accommodating, above all *messy*, and therefore human' (p. 192). For the performer this means less fetishisation of documents and instrumental hardware, more listening to one another, reaction and competition. HIP is productive only when it spawns its own 'viable oral tradition' (p. 194).

Many, at this stage, might well be led to agree with the popular mythology that Taruskin is fundamentally opposed to the whole enterprise of historical performance. Furthermore, the temporal progression of the essays suggests that Taruskin has progressively distanced himself from it (only the earlier writings refer periodically to 'our movement'). But, as his introduction and postscripts to the essays often aver, he believes himself to be continually misrepresented as a crusty opponent to the movement when all he intends to show is its shortcomings. As Bernard Sherman reminds us, Taruskin has termed HIP 'the least moribund aspect of our classical music life' and recognised that it at least offers the opportunity to question 'knee-jerk habits' in performance.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps part of the problem is that his praise for the movement and his recommendations for its direction are argued far less strongly than his pointed criticisms, are often couched in ambivalent terms and are consequently less easy to summarise. Moreover, there are intimations that the movement has great critical and creative potential but, as a whole, has failed in some wider objective to revolutionise performance:

A movement that might, in the name of history, have shown the way back to a truly creative performance practice has only furthered the stifling of creativity in the name of normative controls. (p. 13)

Taruskin's relation to HIP parallels, in many ways, Nietzsche's attitude to history in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche, like Taruskin, has often been accused of trying to dispense with history altogether when, in fact, his purpose was to destroy the belief that history led to a single, indisputable truth (i.e. 'History' in the objectivist sense as understood by Lowenthal). Instead, history should reveal as many perspectives on the past as there are individuals studying it; it should open up new possibilities rather than close down our perspectives. In short, it should promote life and individual development in the present, thus, in Taruskin's terms, leading to newer and better forms of musical performance (i.e. as 'Heritage' in Lowenthal's formulation).<sup>30</sup>

So what constitutes good historical performance for Taruskin? One thing that seems clear is that many performances need to be 'more historical', particularly if the historical evidence implies creative departures from the text, something he demands particularly for the performance of Mozart piano concertos (p. 167). He seeks a return to a conception of classical music that began to die out two centuries ago, something that would bring the music closer to the values of pop music than 'classical' (p. 170). Another useful comparison, which unfortunately he uses only in one

chapter (essay 15), is that between 'crooked' and 'straight' performance. Straight performance is fine 'if what you want out of music is something to sit back and relax to' while the crooked performers are the 'real artists', such as *Musica Antiqua Cologne*, whose 'responses are conditioned not by generic demands that can be easily classified... but by highly specific, unclassifiable, personal and intensely subjective imaginings' (p. 317). In short, historically informed performance is all very well provided the 'literalism' (i.e. following of some documentary evidence) is 'inspired',<sup>31</sup> such as in the case of Roger Norrington's strict adherence to Beethoven's metronome markings. Taruskin also praises Christopher Page's Stravinskiesque approach to fifteenth-century courtly songs, which 'arose out of a fundamental rethinking of the repertory in its specific details, and on as close to its own aesthetic and historical terms as human nature and human epistemics allow, rather than from the acceptance of a standard of beauty or of audience appeal imported unreflectingly from past experience' (p. 351). Gustav Leonhardt produces joyful results in Bach performance through 'passionate and committed experiment with original instruments' (p. 148), while Nikolaus Harnoncourt refuses to succumb to the customary efforts to prettify and sanitise Bach's severe message in the sacred music (essay 14).<sup>32</sup>

Taruskin's view of 'good' history in performance seems to come quite close to Nietzsche's of 1874: history as a form of knowledge, 'known clearly and completely' has been neutralised and is in effect dead; but history that does not try to mimic science can be a service to life, something dynamic and opening up new possibilities.<sup>33</sup> Karol Berger suggests something similar by pairing art and history as forms of representation (i.e. of possible and past worlds) in contradistinction to philosophy and science (which have more to do with argument than with representation).<sup>34</sup> This wider sense of history, that Berger borrows from Aristotle, covers more than the academic discipline of history: 'Its scope includes any portrayal of the real world, present as well as past, journalistic as well as historical... History and art can be mixed, though usually one will predominate, as when a historian imaginatively reconstructs the thoughts of a historical protagonist that, strictly speaking, cannot be documented' (*A Theory of Art*, p. 61). Thus the point to which Taruskin may ultimately be most pointing is that performance should indeed be separated from history, insofar as the latter is a factual, scientific, discipline in Lowenthal's formulation, but that history in the wider sense – that which is akin to an art in suggesting a world that is not immediately present (i.e. Lowenthal's 'Heritage') – might be a useful way of

regenerating performance. Historical evidence might be worth following to the degree that it causes us to refashion ourselves and produce a performance that is fully committed.

I find two of Taruskin's points specifically problematic: his desire to 'democratise' performance by catering to the needs and wishes of the audience, and his tendency to promote postmodernism as the answer to all modernism's ills. He introduces the issue of audience satisfaction within his argument that all classical performance is under the grip of the work-concept, all joining 'the ranks of museum curators, with disastrous results – disastrous that is, for the people who pay to hear them' (p. 13). Does this imply that there is some standard by which we may test whether or not the audience has had its money's worth, whether or not it has been cheated of some profounder experience?

Things become a little clearer with the next reference, for now Taruskin identifies himself as a member of the audience (this is the non-performer Taruskin of 1994): 'My first commitment is to the mortals – that is, the audience – and to their interests, since I am one of them' (p. 18). Using the force of the oppressed masses to justify one's own position is a common tactic among politicians. This impression is strengthened on p. 47 where he states that he is 'glad to see increasing impatience with an excessively production-oriented system of values in classical music and the proper reassertion of consumer values (yes, audience response) as a stylistic regulator', surely the language of a free marketeer. But most of the evidence he cites for this shift in priority concerns changes at the production level rather than a revolution on the consumers' side: pluralism in the concert scene, the breaking down of the walls between the 'high' and the 'low' in the field of classical composition. In other words, the shift is in the direction of that which Taruskin believes the audience should want rather than unequivocal evidence of the people's will at work.

What would count as evidence in any case? If consumer values are the issue, surely the remarkable prosperity of Taruskin's *bête noir*, Christopher Hogwood, must be strong evidence; somebody must have bought all those records. Of course, the audience may have been stunningly uninspired in its choice of purchase, perhaps cruelly hoodwinked by the hype of authenticity. But if this is the case, how can Taruskin insist that the audience call the tune? If he wishes to persist in so harsh a view of Hogwood, he must, along with 'virtually all important artistic movements since Romanticism... have shared in [the] contempt for the public as arbiter of taste' (pp. 72–3). This is substantiated by his comment regarding Roger Norrington on p. 234: 'I don't know whether his work

will prove as marketable as Hogwood's. Probably not: You have to pay attention to it.' Here then there is a revulsion at the 'easy-listening' culture that seems to come with commodification, a revulsion similar to that which Adorno experienced several decades before. Moreover, Dreyfus had already suggested that there was considerable identification between performers and audience in precisely that form of HIP which was most objectivist and opposed to 'individualist' interpretation (Dreyfus, 'Early Music Defended', p. 317).

Taruskin distances himself from the dictatorship of the market with one of his 1994 postscripts: 'I have always considered it important for musicologists to put their expertise at the service of "average consumers" and alert them to the possibility that they are being hoodwinked, not only by commercial interests but by complaisant academics, biased critics, and pretentious performers' (p. 153). This is laudable enough, but it does imply that the audience is incapable of making up its own mind and needs the benevolent dictates of an inspired expert. But simply shifting the performer's responsibility from 'upwards', to the work, composer or whatever, to 'downwards', to the audience, does not solve any problems of responsibility, since the identical issues (and perhaps more) simply reappear in a new position. One is forced either to accept the judgement of the audience in commercial terms, or to dictate what the audience should enjoy (which is little different from dictating how, and in what style, the performer should play, in the name of historical fidelity, the composer's spiritual intentions, or 'the artwork').

Taruskin might also be implying another sense of 'pleasing the audience', one with which I can wholeheartedly concur. This is the idea of the performer taking on something of the audience's role, constantly monitoring the performance from a listener's perspective, and reacting to what she hears. While this is obviously a golden rule for all performance, it might take on a special significance in 'historical' performance as a very practical antidote to a surfeit of factual data. It is precisely this reflexive attitude which is so often a sure sign of quality in visual and musical arts, in which the earliest possible stages of reception are folded back into the creative act (for a further exploration of this see chapter 3, below).

Taruskin must take credit for being one of the first musicologists to introduce the term 'postmodernism' (in essay 13, of 1987); by the time we get to the 1990s, the term is bandied around by virtually anyone who wants to appear 'relevant' and up-to-date. We even get macabre disputes between scholars trying to be 'postmoderner than thou'.<sup>35</sup> The fault of this approach is to see postmodernism as the answer to all the

evils of modernism, as the way for the future, even as a happy utopia in which all differences will live side-by-side in a pluralistic flux. Taruskin, in his first reference to the term (p. 16), tries to erase the utopian element since he directly associates utopia with 'authoritarian fulfilment'. Postmodernism, then, seems to have something to do with the subversion of authority (which was, incidentally, fundamental to modernism at the outset of the twentieth century). Next he implies that postmodernism in fact has much to do with 'premodernism', since it revokes the triple nexus (which solidified only around 1800) of 'serious-classical-work'.<sup>36</sup> This is already an odd situation, for however much a postmodernist approach to music (i.e. subversive of musical works) may share with the concepts of music before 1800, the cultural context in which music is conceived, produced and used is radically different. Indeed, this point was elegantly made by Adorno: the culture of early music pretends to substitute the pre-individual state for the real, post-individual state of its 'own collectivisation'.<sup>37</sup> The pre-modern era was essentially feudal and it was, ironically, bourgeois 'freedom' that led to the work concept in the first place. So unless Taruskin is prepared to talk about music and its performance in the abstract (absolute music?), divorced from its cultural environment (and I'm sure he's not), the pre/postmodernist association is considerably impoverished.

Later he approvingly quotes a definition of the postmodern stance proffered by two legal scholars, which entails 'rejection either of applause or of dejection, which are themselves . . . the products of specific cultural moments, in favor of a somewhat more detached acceptance of the inevitability of change and our inability to place such changes as occur within any master narrative' (p. 36). This seems to me a 'genuine' definition of postmodernism,<sup>38</sup> but one that hardly accords with Taruskin's approach elsewhere: rejection of judgement? a neutral stand, above culture and ideology? a detached acceptance? This sounds like classic, objectivist HIP as outlined by Dreyfus. Furthermore, many of Taruskin's most trenchant criticisms of historical performance seem to target an archetypal postmodern stance: 'The art works of the past, even as they are purportedly restored to their pristine sonic condition, are concomitantly devalued, decanonized, not quite taken seriously, reduced to sensuous play' (p. 138). Perhaps, then, postmodernism is precisely what is wrong with 'authentic' performance. Taruskin's preference for strong, authoritative performances which creatively and virtuosically deviate from the letter of the score seem not of a piece with postmodernism insofar as the latter encapsulates decentredness and play (p. 176). It is, rather, the cult



of the composer as the ultimate authority in music that he beats with the stick of postmodernism, not the concept of authority in general. In this way he does a great service in rendering performance *per se* much more crucial in contemporary culture. Rather than seeing it as the lapdog of the composer or of objective, factual evidence from the past, it is elevated as a mode of cultural production in its own right. Performance becomes the primary mode of musical being as indeed it so often was before the advent of the work concept.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, by considering the entire issue of the history of performance and the various roles it has played in the very concept of music it may be possible to regenerate western music. HIP can, and does, obviously play a part in this, but it has to be conceived in a sense that is both far broader and more critical than the old objectivist form decreed.

Perhaps Taruskin should have been more sceptical of postmodernism as a stance or ideal (although it is certainly acceptable – indeed indispensable – as a description of the condition we happen to be in; this will be explored below in chapter 5). In its earliest forms, of the late 1960s and 1970s, postmodernism has been taken to task for its irresponsible, amoral stance. Terry Eagleton, for instance, sees postmodernism as ‘simply co-extensive with the commodification of all life in consumer capitalism . . . an aesthetic reflection of already aestheticised images’,<sup>40</sup> and Christopher Norris quite rightly condemns Jean-François Lyotard’s denial of any meaning or truth-value ‘aside from the manifold language-games that make up an ongoing cultural conversation’, since this allows Lyotard to affirm that there is no certain way of denouncing Faurisson for his assertion that the Nazi Holocaust never really happened – according to Lyotard, ‘there is *no common* ground between Faurisson and those who reject his views’.<sup>41</sup> Jürgen Habermas, who sees modernity as an unfinished project, relates postmodernism to the neoconservatives, those who attempt to diffuse ‘the explosive content of cultural modernity’, a group that ‘asserts the pure immanence of art, disputes that it has a utopian content, and points to its illusory character in order to limit the aesthetic experience to privacy.’<sup>42</sup>

Much of what Taruskin has to say, seems to me close to the spirit of Habermas’s call for the completion of the Enlightenment:

What I am after, in a word, is liberation: only when we know something about the sources of our contemporary practices and beliefs, when we know something about the reasons why we do as we do and think as we think, and when we are aware of alternatives, can we in any sense claim to be free in our choice of action and creed, and responsible for it. (p. 19; see, too, the quotation from p. 67, above)

This, together with numerous criticisms of historical performance’s reliance on documented authority and lack of self-resolve, could almost be a paraphrase of the opening of Immanuel Kant’s famous essay of 1784 ‘What is Enlightenment’.<sup>43</sup> Even that most dubious section of Kant’s essay – that advocating absolute monarchy over republicanism – strikes a chord with Taruskin’s respect for the stronger-minded conductors and for the ‘inspired literalism’ of those performers who fanatically adhere to a particular historical principle: ‘Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!’, as Kant put it.

Thus to me, all that is excellent in Taruskin’s approach – his avocation of passionate commitment, risk and vision coupled with self-awareness, a sense of choice in performance, and responsibility to both the audience and the richest and deepest possible meanings of pieces of music – could be read as a neo-Enlightenment stance. This posture is inescapably bound to a postmodern condition, to be sure, but it should not be confused with the playing of superficial surfaces of postmodernism as a conscious style, one that, at least in its earlier manifestations, placed the aesthetic in pride of place, above the ethical.

Finally, there is the question of what is ‘authentic’ to our particular age. Taruskin judges the entire HIP movement as being ‘authentic’, not for the criteria commonly proffered (i.e. historical accuracy, restoration of original), but for far more significant reasons:

Messrs. Brüggén, Norrington, and Bilson . . . have been rightly acclaimed . . . Conventional performers are properly in awe and in fear of them. Why? Because, as we are all secretly aware, what we call historical performance is the sound of now, not then. It derives its authenticity not from its historical verisimilitude, but from its being for better or worse a true mirror of late-twentieth century taste. Being the true voice of one’s time is . . . roughly forty thousand times as vital and important as being the assumed voice of history. (p. 166)

So historical performance – almost always associated with modernism by Taruskin – is authentic as the true voice of the times; yet he continually suggests that the movement go in the postmodern direction. Now he must mean either that modernism is, in fact, no longer the voice of the times, or (probably closer) that postmodernism *should* be the voice of the times; this would seem to generate an authenticity more by edict than description. Moreover, if we were to take the postmodern condition more seriously, perhaps the very concept of a ‘true voice of the times’ should be de-emphasised. Surely it is the diversity of value systems and the surprising coincidence of multiple forms of authority that distinguishes our contemporary condition from virtually all earlier eras.

Perhaps the way out of these confusions is to show that the concepts of modernism and postmodernism cannot be so cleanly divided (their precise definitions would, in any case, demand a book many times longer than Taruskin's or this one). Indeed, it might be the case that the moment that an historical performance recording (however 'modernist' the performance) first became a best-seller, western 'classical' performance entered a postmodern condition, one with a splintering of tradition and authority. Postmodernism – with its slant on, rather than opposition to, modernism – may be here whether we like it or not, and historical performance has definitely played its part. A distinction that might come in useful is that which Arthur C. Danto makes between 'modern' and 'contemporary' art. The former term applies to that which is avowedly 'modernist' in the objectivist, geometric sense used by Taruskin, while 'contemporary' refers both to the broader picture of the present art world and to that type of art which is liberated from the tyranny of the modernist narrative of progress and innovation.<sup>44</sup> This might help to overcome the confusion between 'postmodern' as a specific style of ironic mixing of genres (e.g. the classic case of the Peter Sellars production with a 'period instrument' orchestra) and the wider contemporary culture that allows a considerable diversity of authority and practice, and that does not make automatic exclusions from an ongoing canon. Although I still believe it is useful to see this wider culture as a symptom of the 'postmodern condition', Danto's concept of an ongoing, non-progressive contemporaneity is an illuminating way of understanding the direction of artistic movements within this condition.

PETER KIVY AND THE DEBATE WITHIN  
ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY

1995 was an extraordinary year in the course of the 'early music debate', for not only did it see the publication of Richard Taruskin's long-awaited *Text and Act* but also of Peter Kivy's *Authenticities*.<sup>45</sup> It is striking how close some of the tastes and opinions of these two authors come: both lament the cramping of personal freedom and style in performance resulting from the application of historical musicology, and both focus on the tendency to reduce the art of performance to an element of the musical text, with all its connotations of accurate readings and blind fidelity to an assumed 'original'. On the other hand, their style and presentation could hardly be more diverse: Taruskin's approach is not particularly systematic but critically incisive and often rhetorically lethal. Kivy's takes the cool

rational method of analytical philosophy, starting from the supposed certainty of dictionary definitions and arriving at its conclusions through the steady tread of rational reasoning and hypothetical tests. However, just like Taruskin, many of the results are in fact the result of strong opinion, (sometimes) prejudice, and a passionate belief in a certain cultural system.

Taruskin had spent at least a decade before 1995 trying to abolish the concept of 'authenticity' in relation to performance. Moreover, his efforts seem, remarkably, to have been almost universally successful (indeed, my frequent use of scare-quotes for this term is a direct result of the Taruskin heritage).<sup>46</sup> Even by the early 1990s most writers, performers and promoters were already substituting it with terms such as 'period' performance or – the most flexible, but perhaps the least specific – 'historically informed performance' (HIP).<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, whose career in HIP is among the longest and most distinguished, has always distanced himself from the term 'authenticity', considering any claims of correctness and genuineness in historical performance to be simply fraudulent.<sup>48</sup> Thus one may wonder whether Kivy's engagement with 'Authenticities' was already outdated in 1995. But his first three authenticities – (1) authenticity as the composer's intentions for performance; (2) authenticity as the original sound of the music; (3) authenticity as the original practice of the performers – could all be renamed 'restorations' or 'ideal aims' without crucially altering their implications, and these do indeed correspond to three of the main topics of interest in the study of historical performance. It may well be that Kivy retains the word as a way of profiling his fourth and clearly preferred form of authenticity, 'The Other Authenticity', namely, the personal authenticity of the performer (in the sense of being original, unique, inspired etc.). This thus coincides directly with Dreyfus's imaginative 'advanced guard' in HIP and Taruskin's preferred manner of personally committed performance.

This does seem to be a legitimate use of the word, since it is dealing with genuine and irreplaceable entities (although the concept of sincerity and uniqueness in performance is perhaps rather more problematic than Kivy might imply). In a sense then, he has recovered the most *authentic* use of the word 'authentic' but, by the same token, the other three surely need to be seen as completely different categories. By pretending that the four authenticities are of equal conceptual status, Kivy creates false dichotomies between them: namely, that you cannot have authenticity of intention, sound or practice, together with 'The Other Authenticity' – that they are mutually exclusive.

Kivy notes the participation of philosophers in medical, business and environmental debates and their contribution to issues ranging from nuclear war to abortion. The philosopher thus arrives at the door of historical performance in the guise of the mandatory quality controller: 'a thorough philosophical critique seems to be in order, of the whole apparatus that has, to some extent haphazardly, been put together to support the practice of historical authenticity in musical performance' (xi). Philosophy will thus expose a field that has hitherto been characterised by piously inarticulate gibbering. But philosophical methods of this kind will only give a foolproof result if the parameters are absolutely stable: e.g. that the musical work is always and without exception one thing and performance another; that the composer and performer are consistent and mutually distinguishable entities. Kivy does indeed allow and demonstrate considerable flexibility in these definitions during the course of the book, but my overall impression is that philosophical analysis is there to give rhetorical support for the recently beleaguered Germanic conception of musical art, as passive aesthetic contemplation.<sup>49</sup> In this sense, then, his agenda is considerably different from Taruskin's, who would not want anything less than passive contemplation in the Germanic tradition.

Kivy's philosophical facility does have much to teach us, particularly when we might hold a view precisely because we believe it to be logically necessary. His examination of the issue of intention is particularly pertinent in this regard and is one of the most thorough to date (this will be discussed in detail in chapter 3, below). He also shows that the traditional 'restoration' argument for historical performance – that, just as the art restorer tries to return to us the physical object as it first came out of Rembrandt's studio, 'the goal of the historically authentic performance is to give us . . . the physical object as it issued from Bach's "studio"' (p. 191) – is flawed by the fact that the two arts are distinct in logical and ontological terms. Painting is, in Nelson Goodman's terminology, an autographic art, relying on the concept of a single, unique original, while performed music is allographic, infinitely repeatable. The work-performance relation of music is in no manner equivalent to the original-reproduction (or original-fake) relation in painting. Indeed, as Kivy shows us throughout the book, the tendency to reduce both the musical work and its performance to the status of a single object, whether analogous to an allographic text or an autographic painting, sounds the death-knell for the entire concept of performance: 'The "logic" of music as a performing art . . . is a logic in which the gap between "text"

and performance is not merely a necessary evil but at the same time a *desired, intended and logically required* ontological fact' (p. 272). This is thus a more formal way of describing Taruskin's distinction between 'text' and 'act'.

Moreover, even if the concept of restoring paintings at least reasonably presupposes the possibility of an ideal original, 'the physical restoration of paintings is neither an obvious desideratum nor even as transparent a concept as it might at first appear' (p. 193). Using arguments taken from David Carrier, Kivy shows that there is an obvious problem in restoring a painting to its original appearance since this involves actually changing that which the artist has made, which itself has changed through the natural ageing process of time. Furthermore, even the perfect restoration of the original colours would not have the same effect on the modern viewer as it did originally on account of changes in perception and cultural context. One is faced with the almost contradictory aims of restoring either a physical object or the perceptual, intentional object whose very definition depends on a viewer with specific expectations.

This relates to one of Kivy's strongest observations about HIP. If we somehow achieve the same actual sound that was achieved in an historic performance ('sonic authenticity') this has to be distinguished from what the original audience actually heard, or rather, consciously experienced ('sensible authenticity'). Kivy was by no means the first to realise the distinction between an acoustical phenomenon and the musical phenomenon perceived by the listener, but his discussion is perhaps the most far-reaching.<sup>50</sup> It is at least theoretically possible that – with our changes in culture and listening practice – we might have to change the original sound to achieve the original effect (though how could this theoretical possibility consistently be realised in practice, one might ask?). This leads to one of Kivy's most interesting conclusions about HIP: despite its capacity to foster historical awareness and to rejuvenate 'even the most overworked warhorses in the concert repertory', all these attractions are profoundly 'inauthentic' in terms of what the original audience experienced (p. 232).

Related to this is the notion that the accumulated experience of western music culture means that earlier 'surprises' no longer have their intended effect. The Matthew Passion must have originally had an effect as overwhelming as the Berlioz Requiem (p. 53), while the opening of Beethoven's first symphony is now entirely unsurprising in the wake of later harmonic developments (pp. 54–5). Similarly, an HIP performance of the Matthew Passion sounds 'subdued' and 'chamber music-like' while

the original audience heard something new and striking (p. 197). Roger Scruton uses exactly the same argument: we compare works with those that came both before and after, 'To us the "Goldberg" Variations anticipate the Diabelli Variations – that is how they sound, and one reason why we wish to play them on the piano.'<sup>51</sup>

Both philosophers are surely right to suggest that we can make trans-historical comparisons and judgements. But to suggest that a later norm automatically negates an earlier surprise is ultimately to suggest that we cannot appreciate the historical difference between Bach, Beethoven and Berlioz. Having heard the free atonality of the twentieth century we would presumably have no appreciation of Bach's expressive use of dissonance. If this is to be used as an argument to modernise the instruments it would surely apply equally strongly to the notated music: we'd have to use twentieth-century harmonies to recapture the original opening of Beethoven's first symphony, just as we'd have to use a large symphony orchestra to recapture the aural effect of the Matthew Passion. What seems to be more the case is that we very easily develop a relativity of hearing: we really can hear the revolutionary in Beethoven, the pathos of Bach. Just as humans can learn to express themselves in more than one language they can pick up the essentials of any particular historical style (or – to put it rather more accurately – the received view of the essentials) remarkably quickly; we can actually hear unusual, surprising elements within a style *in spite of* our knowledge of later music. It follows then, that we could (and do) become accustomed to hearing Bach on the harpsichord, Beethoven on the fortepiano. This is not to suggest that we *must* hear Bach on the harpsichord – perhaps the accordion would work just as well with repeated hearings – but that the later norm of Beethoven's piano does not automatically render earlier sounds obsolete for us. Indeed, it may well be a specific feature of our age that we are able to appreciate stylistic and linguistic differences better than ever before (see chapter 2, p. 66 below).

Kivy introduces a related issue, namely that the original audiences always heard 'ahistorically', that the uniformity of modern 'mainstream' performance is both ahistorical and transparent (i.e. unnoticed), and that mainstream performance is thus in a sense more 'authentic' than HIP (Kivy, *Authenticities*, pp. 70–4). This is debatable, not because mainstream performance is to be condemned *a priori* as inauthentic but because each stage of the argument lies on premises that are historically vague. Original audiences might have had a much narrower historical awareness than we do, but eighteenth-century audiences could distinguish between

music that was up-to-date or out of fashion, and, in the nineteenth century (in which the notion of disinterested, aesthetic listening first became a possibility) the historicity of the music was almost more important than it was to become in the twentieth. It does 'mainstream' performance no service to suggest that it is, or was, uniform. On the other side of the coin, it is by no means certain that HIP still sounds novel to those who have experienced it constantly for several decades (this, of course, somewhat weakens Kivy's – and indeed Dreyfus's – point about the rejuvenating advantages of HIP). And, most importantly, how can we reclaim the virginity of the supposedly transparent, mainstream performance having eaten the forbidden fruit of historical performance? Indeed, there is a sense in which 'mainstream' performance of the hotspots of HIP (the baroque repertory in particular) might now sound more historical (in the sense of sounding as if from a period other than our own) than the (by now) default idioms of HIP.

Kivy's critique of the 'composer knows best' ideology is particularly acute: it may well be that performers often understand how to realise a composition better than a composer. His model of the composer as maker and the performer as marketer is a useful starting point that can be modified to account for composers who were specifically virtuoso performers or for those who expected considerable performer initiative in the realisation of their notations. This relates to Kivy's point that performing carries with it a certain element of the composer's art, that 'performing is a species of composing' (p. 260). The only crucial omission I perceive in this theory is the reciprocal view that composing must also be a certain species of performing. Indeed it is the very development of HIP that jogs us into realising that past composers did not make the same assumptions about performance as we do, that their very different ideologies and styles of performance were not the transparent media for their 'higher' thoughts but often constituted their way of composing and thinking musically in the first place (see chapter 3, below).

Kivy suggests that if we are to commit ourselves to historical performance practice as an end in itself, 'then music as aesthetically appreciated object must be construed as being something beyond mere sound, even if sound is widely construed as intentional object of musical perception. For practice . . . can thus be an end in itself only if it is an unheard but otherwise perceived part of the total musical experience' (p. 89). This strikes me as a very important consequence of the strong adherence to HIP (i.e. as necessary, above and beyond the actual musical sound

achieved), one that challenges the notion of the essence of music lying in sound alone. Moreover, HIP has often made a virtue out of sounds that are not specifically 'musical' but come as a consequence of the instruments and techniques used. For instance, Martin Elste notes the contribution of Nikolaus Harnoncourt in rendering the sound more earth-bound and corporeal, as if speaking directly from the material of the instruments; moreover, he has also made silence (through articulation between the notes) an essential part of the musical experience.<sup>52</sup>

These attitudes are worth exploring for what they reveal about changing conceptions about how music should be created and presented in our cultural practice. Perhaps the interest in the historical context and the 'effort' of production acts as a counterweight to the increasing disembodiment resulting from mechanical reproduction. Perhaps it reflects a growing interest in composition and performance as specifically human and social activities, thus counteracting the idea of the performer as merely the means to a formally independent, abstract end. Perhaps we are even learning something from popular culture where the trappings of presentation are virtually as significant as 'the music itself'.

Kivy's response is more to shore up the status quo: while music before what he describes as 'the great divide' (i.e. the birth of the concert hall, the 'sonic museum' in which music is heard without distraction or contamination from other arts) is to a certain degree 'a mixed-media art' (p. 94), the concert tradition cuts the visual and social aspect of the art 'to the bone, abstractly stylised . . . into one standard practice' (p. 101). Thus, if I correctly understand what really lies behind this, HIP and its threat to pure sound is counteracted by transferring all music, ancient and modern, to the concert hall where the predictable etiquette and conventions of presentation somehow sublimate all the ritualistic and social resonances of the past. A non-sounding (visual) element is retained as essential to the best experience of the work, but in a strictly controlled environment that does not let a diversity of historical production and performance context run its evil course, ever thickening to dissolve the work out of existence. In other words, here there is a tacit recognition that HIP really does represent a counter-cultural threat, in the sense formulated earlier by Dreyfus.

To Kivy, historical aspects of presentation can be justified only if they make an 'aesthetic difference', i.e. if they somehow become internal to the work. In this way, Kivy feels that he can halt the 'slippery slope' of the 'wig problem' (i.e. once you let one historical factor in, where do you draw the line?). Wigs don't make much of a difference in the performance

of the Brandenburg concertos but, on the other hand, blowing out candles rather than flicking off electric switches is more akin to the graceful rhythm and expressive character of Haydn's 'Farewell' Symphony finale; it could be justified as being 'part of the music'. There is certainly something attractive about this argument, although the line it draws is contingent on our interest in keeping the sonic museum – and all the listening practices that it implies – as the only licensed premises for the consumption of musical works.

There is one central problem in Kivy's study that undoubtedly colours virtually every argument: his apparently total ignorance of the actual practice of HIP during the 1980s and 1990s. He assumes virtually all the characteristics outlined by Dreyfus back in 1983 without noting Dreyfus's enthusiasm for the more inspired leaders of the movement. Kivy's objections often mirror Taruskin's without the latter's tendency to be at least as complimentary of the movement's virtues as he has been condemnatory of its vices.<sup>53</sup> We are reminded of the 'baleful effects of the authenticity movement in performance' (p. 21) as if these were common knowledge. In short, the HIP performer is one who won't deviate from the notation (pp. 32–3), and who 'mandates literal observance', of the *Urtext* (while the 'mainstream' performer may creatively depart from it). The HIP harpsichordist will play Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue 'straight' while the mainstream pianist will play it 'romantically' (p. 77). HIP inspires archaeology and sound-as-text rather than performance proper, and thus seeks 'closure' in performance (p. 272); it is a champion of the 'Kleinmeister' (echoes of Adorno, here); it is against any form of personal expression, and virtuosity is to be seen as a form of charlatanism. And in HIP the composer rules ('With the historically authentic performance you are dialing direct', p. 283 – a nice expression, were it true). While these assumptions do not affect the quality of Kivy's arguments, they are influential and indeed reappear – almost literally, if more ferociously – in the more recent work of Roger Scruton.<sup>54</sup>

Obviously it is impossible to refute all these statements in one go, and it should be acknowledged that many in the movement more-or-less hold these views. Taruskin, it should be remembered, linked objectivist performance to the high modernism of the Stravinsky and Boulez generations. Moreover, as Taruskin and others have observed, 'subservience to the composer has been fairly universal in most forms of performance in the late twentieth century, it is merely that HIP and the 'mainstream' have different emphases.<sup>55</sup> In any case, as Dreyfus had already suggested, there were plenty of performers within HIP who did

not conform to the standard caricature of objectivist performance (e.g. the fantastical Medieval reconstructions of Thomas Binkley, the 'earthy' Bach of Nikolaus Harnoncourt or the inimitable subtlety of Gustav Leonhardt).<sup>56</sup> There are plenty of younger performers who amply (perhaps too amply for some) fulfil Kivy's criteria of 'personal authenticity', e.g. those who introduce improvisation into their performances of canonical masterpieces, such as Robert Levin and Andrew Manze. Had Kivy ever tried to accompany Marion Verbruggen, as I have, I think he would agree that *any* adherence either to the rhythm or pitches of the score would have made our job far easier. Indeed – quite contrary to the entire drift of Kivy's approach – there might even be a case for suggesting that there is now generally more freedom and latitude in interpretation within HIP than there has been in virtually all 'mainstream' performance within living memory.<sup>57</sup> Far from eschewing 'personal authenticity' HIP has attracted some of the strongest personalities in conducting: John Eliot Gardiner, William Christie, and, perhaps the most spectacular figure to span both HIP and the 'mainstream', Simon Rattle. As Joseph Kerman observed, performers in the first wave of HIP, most notably Dolmetsch himself, greatly emphasised the categories of feeling, impression and spirit, and that the association of HIP with objectivism was a symptom of the wider positivistic spirit of the 1950s.<sup>58</sup> But even in the period up to c. 1980, the numerous writings of the most public voice in HIP, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, continually stress the need for the performer to be foremost a musician and not a scientist, the need for us to prioritise the aspects leading to good interpretation, and that the instruments on their own do not create the correct interpretation.<sup>59</sup> Thus the notion that HIP *by definition* is neutral and objectivist is merely a short-sighted bias.

For Scruton spontaneity and the art of improvisation simply do not exist in HIP (*The Aesthetics of Music*, pp. 454–5); indeed they cannot exist, by definition, since HIP is the puritanical art of literal restoration and can be nothing more. For him (pp. 447–50) there is a direct line from nineteenth-century historicism into musicology as a discipline, and from musicology into HIP. The rot set in when Bach was first described and historically categorised as a 'Baroque' composer, rather than as the greatest composer of a still living tradition.<sup>60</sup> In stressing that performance should likewise be part of a tradition, Scruton comes surprisingly close to Taruskin, but Scruton turns to tradition for quite different purposes. Because of the unbroken polyphonic tradition we can hear in Victoria's music 'exactly *what it was like* to believe as Victoria believed,

seeing the world in terms of the Christian drama', the very lack of scholarly enquiry, and the immanence of the musical sensation allow us access to states of mind that are otherwise no longer available to us (p. 449). It is at points like this that Scruton's discussion seems to cease to be strictly philosophical and becomes more a form of religious discourse.

I will address the issue of tradition more closely in the final chapter (see pp. 201–3 below), but here it is necessary to note that there would appear to be nothing HIP could do to redeem itself given these assumptions about its unified aim, its identity as sounding musicology, and the 'tired feeling' of the results. Just as Scruton abhors modernism's break with the past and its avowed opposition to bourgeois culture, HIP has already committed the original sin of separation and revolution: '[t]he authentic performance is a kind of tacit reprimand of the audience' (p. 450). If it were to reproduce exactly the same sounds as Klemperer or Munchinger this would not do either since this would be stained with the blood of an earlier break with tradition. Scruton follows Taruskin in believing that 'the authentic performance arises from a consciousness of the past which is available only to those who feel themselves irremediably sundered from it' (p. 450). Both are almost certainly right, as I will try and expound in chapters 5 and 6 below. But Scruton's tacit assumption that there would thus be a greater authenticity 'for those who feel themselves' inextricably linked to the past (i.e. by living tradition) is surely as much make-believe as any of the rasher historicist claims of HIP. To return to a tradition that is unquestioning and unaware of history is as impossible as becoming one of Nietzsche's cows, happily unaware of yesterday or today and somehow stirring our envy for the immediacy of its experience.<sup>61</sup>

So much for assumptions about the essence of HIP – but what exactly is the 'mainstream' with which Kivy so nostalgically compares it? First, it does not blindly follow the performance instructions prescribed by the composer, score or wider performance practice; instead it is a standardised practice that is relatively 'transparent', allowing a form of immanent, historically unconscious access to works of all periods. Kivy notes 'the tendency . . . of "mainstream" musical performance, with its uniformity of performance means and performance aesthetic, to encourage ahistorical listening' (p. 77). But paradoxically – perhaps unusually so for a thinker so systematic as Kivy – it is precisely this 'mainstream' that fosters personally authentic performance:

we are praising it for bearing the special stamp of personality that marks it out from all others as Horowitz's or Serkin's, Bernstein's or Toscanini's, Casals's or

Janigro's: we are marking it out as the unique product of a unique individual, something with an individual style of its own – 'an original'. (p. 123)

This leads to the suggestion that the interpretation of a great artist does not change every time she performs, that her performances of a particular work are 'tokens of the same type' (p. 127) – uniqueness of personality is thus presumably to be distinguished from a form of aesthetic schizophrenia. The work of a great performer has to be delimited much in the same way as the work of a composer, something that surely comes dangerously close to the sin of collapsing performance into text. In short, Kivy's ideal of performance seems to be an abstruse amalgam of a uniform wider practice, articulated by unique original performances that are uniform among themselves.

One point in this caricature of both HIP and the 'mainstream' needs further discussion. According to Kivy, the 'mainstream' violinist playing a Bach partita will add 'a good romantic dollop of vibrato' while the HIP performer will not: 'vibratoless sound has now become part of Bach's "text"' (p. 270). Another 'rule' of HIP is that a dissonant appoggiatura is to be played as 'half the value of the adjoining note' (p. 271) leaving us to assume that the 'mainstream' practice is entirely variable in this respect. But, even if we assume that these practices are indeed standard rules of 'HIP', surely there are equally standardised practices in the 'mainstream', which, as Kivy acknowledges, is characterised by a uniformity of performance aesthetic? There is nothing intrinsically wrong in replacing one set of rules by another (except for the anarchist) and, in the actual state of affairs, the 'rules' of both HIP and the 'mainstream' are far more complex than this analysis would suggest. Enough recorded evidence survives to suggest that the 'mainstream' was quite variable before mass-marketing of recordings encouraged a certain degree of standardisation. Many aspects of 'romantic' practice – not least, continuous vibrato – do not become uniform until well into the twentieth century (indeed Dreyfus points that continuous vibrato is, by its very ubiquity, 'unmarked'),<sup>62</sup> and HIP has now been round long enough for a certain number of its interpretative features to be part of a constantly evolving tradition, in which most players learn as much (in fact, definitely more) from their peers than from their own scholarship.

If my thumbnail sketch of the way performing communities work is in any way correct, it suggests that many aspects of performance that Kivy implies are 'natural' (including his frequent suggestions that the ear is often the truest arbiter of interpretation) are largely a product of the

historical situation. As Jim Samson notes, the concept of the performer as someone who develops a unique interpretation that is simultaneously subordinate to the work is a nineteenth-century development directly reflecting the increasingly fixed form of the notated text.<sup>63</sup> But the historical nature of performance conventions does not make them weaker or any less valid than if they really were 'natural' – first nature rather than second nature – and we all know how intensely any particular community will defend any values it considers intrinsic to its identity. Indeed, that which counts as 'musical' in performance subtly changes over the years and from one community to another:<sup>64</sup> many performers from the first thirty years of the twentieth century might sound to me casual, senselessly erratic and only accidentally expressive, while to their contemporaries they represented the pinnacle of musical interpretation. There would be nothing intrinsically correct about my observations, but I would defend the viability of the traditions of which I have become a part, my understanding and appreciation of dialects that have become second nature, just as much as I would expect of anyone else who belongs to a particular community. With the splintering of traditions that HIP has produced (in theory only two, but in practice many more) there is patently no way of recovering the lost innocence of 'mainstream' performance (other than by a fiat of conformity). The genie of historical thinking has been decanted into the world of performance – the recognition that things were not only once different, but that they were constantly changing; that musicians of the past had to make decisions based on a limited number of choices; that the origins of our own inherited practices were not inevitably foretold in the past and, in consequence, that our present could be different in an infinite number of ways.

The ultimate danger of HIP is thus not Kivy's fear of the restriction of freedom, but the spectre of unlimited freedom, the danger that everything we consider 'natural' can be undermined by historical thinking. One way of coping with this danger in HIP of recent decades is to take a pluralistic approach, so that one might alter equipment, style and expressive approach depending on the historical background of the music concerned. There's no way of proving whether these changes truly reflect the historical differences (in any case impossible, as Kivy would doubtlessly agree, without an equivalent historical change in the audience), but this is surely one of our ways of replacing an irrevocably lost authority of tradition with a variety of local conventions. Our musical culture stands a chance of being regenerated at the expense of rendering the concepts of the musical work and the canon less stable. Perhaps there

is a loss of intensity, but we could never know, given that recorded performances from a century ago do not strike us all as immediately and incontrovertibly 'natural'.

I would not wish to condemn Kivy's strong view of musical art but there are one or two things that disturb me about it. The first is the dichotomy he makes between the history of progress and – as Dahlhaus would have put it – the history of decline (roughly equivalent to Kivy's dichotomy between 'mainstream' and 'HIP' performance).<sup>65</sup> It is undoubtedly true that the appreciation of Beethoven has grown since the many expressions of incomprehension in his own time. But to compare the situation of the Fifth Symphony with the fact that the progenitors of fire in prehistoric times, of the French Revolution, and of Newton's mechanics could not possibly have understood the full implications of their revolutions, makes the decidedly Platonist assumption that artworks are discoveries replete with true meanings that can only be unfolded through cultural evolution. I believe it is absolutely true that musical works *can* often be appreciated better with hindsight, but also that different ages have different parameters of musical quality (the 'best' works perhaps fulfilling the largest number of these historically contingent criteria), and, most importantly, that some elements of appreciation may be lost (both from the time of origin and from intermediate periods of reception, e.g. Dahlhaus's observation that Bach's 'pointe de la perfection' came around the time of Mendelssohn's Matthew Passion performance in 1829).

Despite Kivy's awareness of the origins of the concert tradition and the fact that many aspects of musical practice before 'the great divide' were not specifically aesthetic in character, he takes aesthetic listening as the ideal for modern practice (pp. 240–1). Certainly it is true that most pieces of music from most ages do contain elements that could be described as aesthetic, and there is nothing necessarily wrong with appreciating them as such. But what is disturbing is the way the concert hall becomes a sort of Procrustean bed for virtually all 'good' western music (the 'bad' pieces perhaps work better in their original performing context, according to Kivy). Given that the finales of Bach's two-part cantatas often match, Bach obviously had a sense of aesthetic whole (one that was perhaps at cross-purposes with the original liturgical context with a sermon in the middle). Thus Kivy suggests that we can follow up 'Bach's attempt at aesthetic damage control' (p. 248) by transferring them to the sonic museum, where the thematic connections will show allow them to be 'heard as autonomous, unified musical works'. This

line of argument would be more convincing if, in fact, Bach's cantatas were a regular (and successful) element of concert hall life (ironically, it is generally only in the HIP concert world that this happens on a regular basis). Even less plausible is Kivy's argument for an Ockeghem Mass. By removing such a work from its original function in a 'multimedia' event, 'the richest aesthetic payoff . . . from the music lover's point of view, is to be had not in its original setting and choreography but in the sonic museum [which] . . . optimizes just those "viewing" conditions that make this kind of musical complexity perceivable to the fullest extent' (p. 257). Such is Kivy's commitment to the concert hall as a *social* institution with its own quasi-religious ritual, that he perhaps misses a truer consequence of the formalist-aestheticist stance: that the contemplation of this music is often best served by the type of church acoustic that gives the whole a resonant bloom unavailable in most concert halls, sung by a group that specialises in this repertory (and thus veering towards the HIP perspective), and perhaps most perfectly heard through the format of a personal CD-player.

#### THE DEBATE AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

One point that is signally absent in the HIP debate as it stood in the watershed year of 1995 is the question of technology and its influence on the public reception of music. This might relate to the fact that only around this time did the prophecies of the dominance of new technologies become plausible – if not inevitable – but it might also suggest that many scholars had undervalued the impact of technologies that had been in place for some time. This issue becomes central to a perceptive article by John Andrew Fisher and Jason Potter in 1997.<sup>66</sup> They observe the all-pervasive influence of electronic media across the arts and, particularly, the prevalence of unhistorical combinations of music and other sounds facilitated by synthesisers. Moreover, they consider this to be an extension of a practice of technological manipulation that has a two-hundred year history (p. 171). Thus the advent of mechanical reproduction (to use Benjamin's famous formulation) might actually parallel the progressive abstraction of art and formalism itself, since both mechanical reproduction and the rise of mass audiences 'decontextualize and recontextualize, distance, and alter artworks in all sorts of ways'.

The historical view of music is progressively effaced by new listening practices that tend to regard all musics as equal, juxtapose them ahistorically, use them as background, or play only parts of works (p. 172). Thus, in the face of whatever critics or experts might suggest about the



'correct' interpretation of works, the very behaviour of the audience has wrought a profound change in the way we conceive of works; social practice wins out over scholarly edict (p. 173). The central dilemma is thus clear: 'appreciative practice seems to construct a presentational concept of the artwork; critical practice seems to construct an historical concept of the artwork' (p. 175). Not only is there a dichotomy between the elite concept of art and that of the broader public, but there is also no obvious way how the insights of the former can be communicated to those who lie outside its immediate circle.

On the other hand, there are several different theoretical approaches to art, some of which come closer to the non-contextualist practice of the public. Closest are the 'presentational theorists' who focus on the artwork as 'monument' (to adopt Foucault's expression). It is these (normally formalist) theorists who make a conceptual distinction between the work as an historical document and as an 'artwork' to be appreciated ahistorically. Then there are the 'historical reductionists' who view the artwork entirely as a document and generally refuse to acknowledge aesthetic appreciation as an abstract experience. This is the position that comes furthest from the normal practice of artists, critics and audiences, according to Fisher and Potter (p. 178). Finally, the 'historical contextualist' theorists stand somewhere between the other two, suggesting that aesthetic response is itself (or should be) informed by historical and contextual knowledge.

While the historical concept of art may still persist, public practice is tilting towards the 'idea of the work as merely a free-floating pattern of enjoyable sights and sounds'. Indeed, the authors suggest (like some recent musicologists, see p. 7 above) that HIP itself may be waning, and that its actual attraction (for both musicians and audience) has lain in its sensory attractions rather than its historical claims. The authors conclude that the historical notion of art still functions as a regulative ideal (p. 180): the new audiences still retain an idea that there is a 'possibility that historical contextual information will alter our experience'; they are – in principle – still open to historical information (p. 181). Yet the overall conclusion is that the 'more solipsistic relation between the spectator and the images or sounds experienced' as enabled by the new technology threatens ultimately to end the era of 'historically conceived artworks' (p. 182).

Is all ultimately lost for HIP, then? If it is no longer central to the cutting-edge of musicology, and audience practice is turning away from an historical appreciation of art, what possible value can it have? Fisher

and Potter might be ultimately wrong for a number of reasons. First, there is a fundamental conflation that colours their account: that between the audience practices they correctly observe and the formalist, presentational view of art. Although, at one point, they acknowledge that historical views of art 'have begun to displace the pervasive formalism of the recent past in art criticism and philosophies of art' (p. 174) the general drift of their argument is to suggest that such formalism is of a piece with the new technology-influenced audience perception of art. For them, the formalism of Bell, Beardsley and Hanslick seems to run directly into examples of the effacement of historical provenance (p. 178).

While Fisher and Potter are perceptive to see an historical connection between mechanical reproduction and the growing possibility of abstraction, they go awry in suggesting that the historical conception of art is earlier and gradually disappearing. First, historicism in art appeared at precisely the same time as formalist abstraction (i.e. the early nineteenth century). Secondly, ahistorical formalism, of the three art theories mentioned by Fisher and Potter, is precisely that which has declined most precipitously in the latest technological age they describe. Indeed, it is the historical reductionists who are often the strongest voices in cultural criticism since their aim is not 'to describe the actual concepts of artworks' (p. 179), but, on the contrary, the political conditions of artistic production and, indeed, the conceptions of power that make concepts such as that of the artwork possible in the first place.

In short, the essential point they miss is that historical issues became important in the nineteenth century *as a consequence* of technological modernisation, *as a consequence* of the growing realisation that the past was profoundly different from the present. Moreover, in recent decades, the unprecedented progress in technology and – most importantly – its availability to an enormous segment of the population, has cut off our roots from the past in a very tangible way. Historicist movements like HIP are not part of an *ancien régime* that new audience practices are eroding, they are a direct consequence of a new historicist stance in public culture. This is the heritage industry, which I examine at length in chapter 6, something that is both a reaction to precipitous progress in technology but also something which is itself enabled by these same advances. Historicism, a fanatical concern with original contexts and the search for roots of phenomena that are still present, is thus the direct result of a haemorrhage of historicity, that sense of one's historical roots and embeddedness in an historical culture. This is the condition (most

efficiently described as the 'postmodern') which I discuss at the end of chapter 5. Fisher and Potter account for the success of HIP recordings in terms of the sensual attraction: 'historical authenticity seems to take a back seat to what sells and what sounds exciting' (p. 180). They might be right about the sensual attraction, but surely it is the *claims* of historical authenticity that count (like the attraction of artefacts that might – or might not – be fakes). The 'authenticity' label sells to a public that is desperate for the 'original' in a culture of copies and virtual reality;<sup>67</sup> and a desperate person will often settle for outrageously low standards of verification. The fact that Hildegard von Bingen can be sung to electronic accompaniment or that the Hilliard Ensemble can perform Renaissance music underneath Jan Garbarek's saxophone improvisations (pp. 169, 172), does not necessarily – as Fisher and Potter seem to infer – suggest a rejection of historical thinking. It could equally well betoken the adding of 'the historical' to the patently modern. Exactly the same phenomenon is evidenced in the tendency of (post)modern directors (such as Mark Morris and Peter Sellars) to use a period-instrument orchestra with their daring and outrageous productions.<sup>68</sup> All these examples suggest the use of something purportedly 'old' as a way of grounding something that seems so new that we might otherwise feel severed from tradition, from the direct and continuous connection with the past. While this connection was taken for granted, historicist activities like HIP were merely the activities of a quaintly antiquarian minority. Fisher and Potter forgot to mention that their baby-boomers, using a variety of world musics, collaged and extracted for ambient sound on the ROM drive of their computers, were probably searching the internet for *National Trust* paint for the recycled fixtures of their neo-Georgian town-houses.

The span of time from Dreyfus's analysis of the culture of early music (1983) to Scruton's condemnation in 1997 might seem extraordinarily short; certainly it was short enough for Kivy and Scruton to discount virtually anything that had happened in practice in the meantime. Yet it has been precisely during that time that HIP has come of age. Dreyfus's perception of a 'dominant social code' and a smaller 'Advance Guard' of the more interesting figures would now have to be expanded into countless further categories that almost defy a single description.

Michelle Dulak, for instance, while acknowledging Taruskin's claim that HIP had hitherto shown every sign of twentieth-century high

modernism, observes a softening of the verbal rhetoric and a more luxuriant performing style, starting in the late 1980s:

The 'vinegar' that record reviewers once found in 'period' violin tone has turned to honey in the hands of the latest generation of players... this new sound-quality is not just a retreat toward 'mainstream' ideals, but a distinct new timbre, gentler than the 'modern' string sound, more plaintive and more resonant, more suggestive of the physical gestures of performance.<sup>69</sup>

She notes one reviewer's slight embarrassment about enjoying Anner Bylisma's second recording of the cello suites (1992), which displays a degree of expressive 'romanticism' that would be all but banned from 'mainstream' performances.<sup>70</sup> Another reviewer attributes Bylisma's style more to a 'sense of strain' that tends to detract from the spirit of the dances.<sup>71</sup> This observation might reflect just how unfamiliar certain forms of expression (whether or not labelled 'romantic') have become. Bylisma's choice of instrument is also significant: an 'original' instrument, to be sure, but as a Stradivari from the Smithsonian Institution it is not in its original state – no restorer would dare 'put back' an instrument of such value.

Dulak thus suggests that there has been a turn away from Taruskin's pejorative 'authentic performance' moving 'toward the use of a newly expanded catalogue of expressive resources, developed in the shadow of the modernist mainstream – a set of resources whose applications will surely not long be confined to "period" instruments'.<sup>72</sup> She notes that this is surely a discomfort with the 'modern' and may represent the beginnings of a postmodern performance practice (while acknowledging the ambiguity and ever-expansive category of the 'postmodern').

I have suggested that HIP has generated several of its own traditions and that much of the diversity we now hear results from performers reacting to one another; indeed, even the mainstream itself is reacting to developments within HIP.<sup>73</sup> This seems to substantiate one of the more optimistic moments in Taruskin's writings, when he discerns within HIP the growth of 'a hardy social practice... that obeys its own dictates, has its own momentum, is becoming more and more eclectic, contaminated, suggestible'.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, in the light of the very proper criticism of literalism and objectivist performance, many performers may well be developing a more critical attitude towards historical evidence, even deciding to use historical information selectively. As before, many will employ the experimental connotations of 'historical performance' as a licence to produce

something new. Dulak, in a later article (1995) goes so far as to suggest that HIP performers 'are expected merely to sound in some way different and are given such wide latitude that they can be different in nearly any way that pleases them'.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps that which twenty years before was so often believed to be a puritanical movement, thwarting our desires for individual expression, was really the covert entry of anarchy into the western performing tradition. Indeed, Dreyfus goes so far as to suggest that the most significant work produced under the umbrella of HIP is that which actually flouts 'musicological authority', thus seeming to substantiate Taruskin's call for the divorce of scholarship and performance.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps this all reflects HIP's embrace of otherness. Indeed, Kay Shelemay, in her ethnomusicological approach to the early music movement, suggests that 'this "otherness" is inevitably and sometimes dramatically inflected by a late twentieth century sensibility with difference articulated by many as a central value of the movement at large'.<sup>77</sup>

The most comprehensive attempt to account for the situation at the end of the 1990s is undoubtedly Bernard D. Sherman's volume of conversations with performers. While there is the obvious problem that what performers say may not necessarily correspond to how they play or sing, the conversations show how the performers themselves have engaged with the early music debate and how they place themselves within the various traditions that have arisen. Sherman summarises the diversifying nature of HIP (including various 'cross-over' ventures with forms of popular music, such as the Hilliard project mentioned above) and also makes the obvious point that with more familiarity with early instruments, players are able to do more with them (*Inside Early Music*, pp. 5–7). As William Christie states later in the book, 'specialisation' is a far better word for the movement than 'authenticity'. All this substantiates Taruskin's point that adopting old instruments will not on its own result in a particular, 'correct' style (see p. 14 above); both the player's competence and taste must have a considerable influence on the result.

What is immediately evident from the interviews is that, for many of these scholar-performers, pure factual scholarship is simply no longer adequate and the puritanical attitude of twenty years before can be entirely absent: 'You can't sing a footnote', states Susan Hellauer (p. 50). Kerman's perfectly common-sense assumption in 1985 that interpretation is an individual matter while '[h]istorical performing practice . . . is by its very nature normative' is clearly in need of modification.<sup>78</sup> Instead, these figures often believe – some passionately – in forms of 'authenticity'

other than normative practice and that their work on earlier repertoires actually effects a change in one's state of mind. Like many 'pre-HIP' performers, they often sense a form of spiritual or emotional connection with past performers, but one that is (re)discovered rather than directly inherited.

Some of those interviewed treat their field somewhat like ethnomusicologists trying to understand a foreign culture, a phenomenon greatly substantiated by Shelemay's recent study ('Toward an Ethnomusicology' pp. 18–21), which suggests that the connection between early music and world music is a broad cultural trend that has not sufficiently been acknowledged. While the ethnomusicological approach generally involves transferring the traditional horizontal axis of the ethnomusicologist (i.e. across various world cultures) to the vertical one of European cultural history, there are occasions when the performers seek an historic authenticity in parallel cultures of the present. Marcel Pérès, noticing that Old Roman chant contained some pieces in Greek sought out a Greek singer to try out the chant (p. 33). The fact that the singer had absolutely no experience in this field was apparently an advantage: somehow an inherent 'Greeknness' would reveal truths about the music. Alan Curtis similarly favours Italian singers for Monteverdi. Foreigners like himself can only get close to the essential sound (and, presumably, understanding) of the language, however hard they try (pp. 138–9). It would be interesting to know whether any native Italians would share Curtis's concept of (or perception of) authenticity with regard to their own music, or whether his is the fervour of the 'convert'.

Christopher Page has made a case that English choral singers, trained in the Oxbridge tradition, cultivate a level of purity and precision, but also a sense of routine, all of which may well reflect something of the original performance practice of Medieval and Renaissance singers.<sup>79</sup> Despite the obvious danger of cultural chauvinism, Page is careful to stress that this 'authentic' link comes from the repeated practices involved rather than something inherently 'English'; in this respect he is more relativistic than either Pérès or Curtis.

Yet essential to much of Page's writing and music-making is a sense of 'transhistorical humanness', evidenced by the seemingly obvious fact that we do understand and respond to music of the past while the utterances of any other species remain entirely foreign (p. 76).<sup>80</sup> In contradistinction to much post-structuralist critical theory, Page believes in the continuity of substantial aspects of human nature and that the enterprise of HIP should have an ethical concern with rediscovering such continuities.

Moreover, the scholar should reject the puritanical sieve of positivism as the sole basis for performance and use one's intuition (p. 79). Presumably this is the flexing of that thread of human nature connecting us to the past – it is the intuition that finds the continuities in the fragments from the past and brings them to life. However, as Shai Burstyn remarks, the fact that past listeners had aesthetic preferences like we do does not guarantee their similarity.<sup>81</sup> But, given that we could never know – even with the greatest amount of historical knowledge imaginable – whether our aesthetic reaction were ever the same as that of the original listeners and performers, perhaps we should follow Page in using historical knowledge to build upon intuitions we already have rather than dismissing the latter entirely. Peter Jeffery employs ethnomusicology as a way of filling the obvious gaps in our historical knowledge of Gregorian Chant, since '[o]ral transmission is not a peculiar feature of some music at certain times, but rather a universal characteristic of almost all music at almost all times.'<sup>82</sup> This trust in universal human practices is fundamentally anti-historical – but it is clearly a major component in much of the thinking behind HIP and, obviously, of musicology that tends in the direction of ethnomusicology.

Page's belief in 'transhistorical humanness' is paralleled by Joshua Rifkin's view that HIP can often reveal a mode of performance that has temporarily fallen from human consciousness. He suggests that there are elements that are more or less universal (e.g. structural cohesion, detail, declamatory speaking, beautiful sounds), but that doing justice to one will often underplay another. Thus 'every era will slice it differently' and HIP basically reinvents wheels that have temporarily rolled out of sight (p. 389). Page and Rifkin thus come remarkably close to Scruton's notion of our achieving states of mind that were experienced in the past: i.e. 'what it was like to believe as Victoria believed' (see p. 32 above). Yet for Scruton this could be achieved only through '[t]he unbroken tradition of polyphonic writing' and the continuous, changing tradition of performance. Belonging to a tradition somehow connects us to feelings that are nowhere else available in our culture. For Page these feelings are latent, but, conversely, obscured by recent tradition. Historical research, exhaustive experimentation and practice in performance and transhistorical intuition re-establish the link. Page's ideology perhaps comes close to Arthur C. Danto's conception of transhistorical essence in art, always and everywhere the same but disclosed through history. Danto's essence is distinguished from that of a modernist (such

as Clement Greenberg, in Danto's case), in that it is no longer to be identified with a particular style that would imply 'that art of any other style is false'.<sup>83</sup> Even more significantly, Danto distances himself from essentialists such as T. S. Eliot who make a distinction between the aesthetic and the historical. Such a move confuses artistic and natural beauty and thus obscures the fact that both artistic perception and artistic beauty are historical through and through (Danto, p. 165).

Barbara Thornton's approach to Hildegard's music suggests that she tends towards the radical end of the Early Music Movement: rationalism has been exhausted so our era looks back towards the so-called primitive, whether African music or early music in the western tradition (Sherman, *Inside Early Music*, p. 56). Her interest in Hildegard, and the enormous enthusiasm with which the 'first' female composer is greeted also evidences a renewed interest in women and music in general. This provides an alternative story of music history, one that is presumed to reveal shades of humanity that have hitherto been unavailable. Anthony Rooley takes immersion in Renaissance as a means of capturing Ficino's Orphic frenzy; he believes his art to go beyond mere play to the actual 'being of life' (p. 152). As with the cults of the primitive and women's mystical music, Rooley's approach to HIP represents the New Age wing of the movement.

Within this increasing diversity within the 'new' HIP there are still performers who use some of the 'old' rhetoric – fundamentalists, as it were, who utter precisely the sorts of statements that Taruskin and others have rendered so unfashionable. Gustav Leonhardt affirms categorically that 'an instrument of the composer's period and country is certainly the best' and that 'it's been proved for people with a refined ear' (p. 203). Moreover, he subordinates himself to the composer to a degree that few others approach: 'I have nothing to say, I am only a player . . . [not] a real musician, which is a composer' (pp. 203–4). Robert Levin applies the antiquarian's 'thin end of the wedge' argument: he plays continuo in Mozart piano concertos because the composer called for it; if that doesn't matter, perhaps the fortepiano doesn't matter either, if the instrument doesn't matter, neither does Mozart's articulation, and so on (p. 327). True historical performance for him is thus a delicate ecology in which seemingly unimportant differences contribute to the whole, to 'the cake that Mozart baked'.

The arguments of Leonhardt and Levin are precisely those that virtually all critics of HIP, both within and without the movement, believed

led to dull, literalistic performances. Yet, most of us would agree, these two performers represent the very acme of the movement in their virtuosity, imagination and expression. Christopher Page describes his ideal performance of Medieval music as relatively inexpressive (at least in the modern sense) and devoid of rhythmic caprice (p. 82). Nevertheless, the intensity of the result has been widely praised, even by Taruskin (see p. 18 above), who could hardly share Page's ideals as they are expressed verbally. Conversely, I have described the case of one performer, whose liner notes promise a vital, rhetorical style that no one has previously accomplished, but whose performances struck me as entirely ordinary and uninflected.<sup>84</sup> In other words, it is impossible to predict how any particular ideology of HIP will influence the quality of the resulting performance; we should refrain from condemning performers before actually hearing the results of their encounter with history. As Kerman suggested '[r]eading books by the great artists is not the best way to gain understanding of their artistic secrets';<sup>85</sup> this seems to hold as true of HIP figures as it ever did of the mainstream. But, given the supposed scholarly credentials of HIP, the dislocation between artistic achievement and verbal utterance is extremely interesting as part of a cultural – rather than purely 'musical' – inquiry.

Where does all this lead? First, it is clear that the best performers are excellent because of their insights and talents as performers, not necessarily because they are good historians in the professional sense. To this extent, Taruskin's distinction of Text and Act seems to make sense. Yet it is equally clear that these performers would not have achieved what they had without some form of encounter with history and, above all, an intense belief in what they could learn from history. History, in a wider sense than historical scholarship, can thus teach us how things were different, how they could have been different; it helps us create imaginary worlds, just like those of fiction, that chime with our own while revealing crucial differences. History need no longer be merely the pessimistic one of decline followed by patchy restoration, or the optimistic one of Whiggish progress to a redeemed present. Morgan's sad patchwork of undifferentiated historical allusions can actually become lived realities if we, in the present, can believe in something more than linear progress, and can rediscover resonances in past human achievements. The professional historian must be sceptical about apparent continuities or uncanny familiarities with the past. But in live, spontaneous performance, not only can these experiences actually happen, they must.

Sherman outlines three basic types of HIP artists in the epilogue of his book: first, there are the traditionalists who firmly believe that we must perform as much as possible according to the times of the composers concerned. Secondly, there are those who reject the ideal of historical authenticity; having learned what they can about the history of performance they often decide to go in a different direction. Thirdly there are those who use 'history radically, to undermine a more basic assumption, one that the first two groups share with the mainstream' (Sherman, *Inside Early Music*, p. 393). This might include those performers who capitalise on the improvisational practices of an age in order to undermine the concept of *Werktreue*, a fidelity to the work that often ossifies a score that was merely intended as a starting point for performance. There are those who use history to rebel against the seamless perfection of modern, clean performance; the composer of any age may, after all, have anticipated a certain amount of imperfection as central to how the music was written.

These categories come surprisingly close to Nietzsche's three types of history which, it should be remembered, contained positive as well as negative qualities and all of which he considered necessary in their own particular ways. Sherman's traditionalists in HIP clearly parallel Nietzsche's category of the *antiquarian*. In this, one preserves as much as possible from the past, particularly of one's own culture and heritage. It pays equal respect to those who were less favoured in that past as to those who stood above their contemporaries; in its fibrous historical groundedness it parallels the contentment of the 'tree in its roots' (Nietzsche, 'On the Uses', p. 74). In the use of the term by Fredric Jameson, this type of history thus cultivates one's 'historicity', that sense of belonging within a densely textured cultural fabric, most of which is otherwise inaccessible (see chapter 5, pp. 158–63 below). But the details, small and large, significant and insignificant, give us a glimpse of that past, cultivating a sense of depth in our origins. As Nietzsche warns, this mode can easily suffer from a levelling of value, 'an extremely restricted field of vision' in which everything that is seen is 'much too close up and isolated'. The result can often be a 'blind rage for collecting' and an obsession with 'bibliographical minutiae' that represents the mummification of cultural life rather than its revivification (p. 75). Here Nietzsche uncannily prophesises views of culture in the late twentieth century, particularly those of Jean Baudrillard, who suggests that the collecting mania and thirst for historical detail 'comes from a headlong flight forward from the hemorrhage of objective causality'.<sup>86</sup>

Sherman's second category, which is perhaps the least typical within the context of HIP, comes closest to the 'mainstream' practice insofar as this also tends to reject the letter of historical practice. Nietzsche's *monumental* history is that of the great human achievements of the past, a chain that 'unites mankind across the millennia like a range of human mountain peaks' (p. 68). Exactly as Scruton suggests, greatness shows the 'solidarity and continuity' of all ages and underplays the *differences*, as though 'history' in all its details and diversity is really the story of mediocrity (p. 69). According to Nietzsche, this type of history deals in 'approximations and generalities, in making what is dissimilar look similar', exhibiting the *effect* at the expense of the *cause* (p. 70). This inspiring, heroic sort of history runs the risk of becoming 'quite incapable of distinguishing between a monumentalised past and a mythical fiction' and whole segments of the past are forgotten and devalued. The political danger lies in its deceit by analogy: 'with seductive similarities it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism' (p. 71). Just like the antiquarian mode, there is also the danger that monumental history will undervalue the achievements of the present: 'the dead bury the living' (p. 72).

Sherman's final category, of the HIP figure who uses history to confound an assumed convention, parallels Nietzsche's *critical* mode of history. For Nietzsche, the emphasis is on the immediate past and in exposing the historical contingency of present assumptions; '[i]t is an attempt to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate' (p. 76). In its strongest sense, critical history renders one suspicious of everything in history (thus it is almost the opposite mode to the antiquarian). But it clearly sums up the service that HIP does in opposing the normative modes of musical behaviour, showing how things were, and still could be, different.

Nietzsche's list of dangers within the critical mode involve our assuming that we can be free of the aberrations of our inherited nature and ignore the fact of our own origins; to believe ourselves to be entirely free is a characteristic of 'dangerous and endangered men and ages'. But the lesson learned is salutary: just as we learn to realise that our 'first nature was once a second nature' we should understand that 'every victorious second nature will become a first', and so on (p. 77).

While part of Nietzsche's plan is to show the *uses* of history and its necessity for the human condition, the bulk of his essay attempts to show that there was too much history for its own sake at the time he was writing,

namely the last third of the nineteenth century. This had rendered the present dowdy, uncreative, satiated with more information than it could assimilate, jaded and relativistic, and cynical about the individual's ability to make any difference in the world. This was, of course, precisely the era of the 'first wave' of early music and HIP: the time of the Caecilian movement, the Solesmes project, the Schola Cantorum in Paris and the first musings of Arnold Dolmetsch. Of course, such a historicist turn was relatively slight compared with the tremendous commodification of early music and HIP at the equivalent point in the twentieth century. There is no doubt that the Nietzsche of 1874 would have been doubly appalled by the later phenomenon. Rather like Adorno of 1951, he noted that the 'historically educated' person is a neutered being, becoming eternally subjectless and merely objective: 'the hollowed-out cultivated man at once looks beyond the work and asks about the history of the author' (Nietzsche, 'Uses and Disadvantages of History', p. 87). Much of his concern related to the nationalistic desire to promote a Wagnerian German culture, one that needed something of an unhistorical horizon in order to flourish freely. Yet Nietzsche was soon using history again, believing historical criticism to be the most potent weapon to debunk many of the central dogmas of Christianity. History was thus a powerful weapon in the process of 'disenchantment', a process that to many is absolutely central to the cultural work of modernism (see chapter 5, p. 131 below). With the collapse of the communist world in the last decades of the twentieth century, many would suggest that this process of disenchantment has run its course. Virtually all the 'grand narratives' of historical progress and destiny are seemingly undermined by an 'excess of history', limitless information and, potentially, an infinite plurality of competing systems of belief (see pp. 145–58, below).

The situation at the outset of the twenty-first century is quite different from that for which Nietzsche was writing. Perhaps the domination of history and surfeit of information are such that it is no longer possible to escape these modes, as Nietzsche thought he could in 1874. In a postmodern climate – if that is the name of what we are experiencing – the notion of 'monumental' history can no longer have claims to sovereignty over the others, although rumours of its death might be greatly exaggerated. The antiquarian mode may well be more important than before, since its gift of historicity is indeed a comfort in a world that has outwardly changed beyond recognition within the space of a couple of generations. And in a world that is inherently pluralist, the critical mode of history is surely one of the most potent means we have to question our inherited habits

and seek viable alternative 'second natures'. Just as Nietzsche warned, history can render us inactive or fatalistically relativistic. Yet, just as he hoped, it can still serve life, albeit a life of a very different nature from what he could possibly have envisioned. The remainder of this book is an attempt to explore the potentials for new life within the culture of music, and the service that HIP might do in promoting it.

## PART 2

*Historically informed performance and the implications for work, composer and notation*