

The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction

COLIN LAWSON

Goldsmiths College, University of London

and

ROBIN STOWELL

Cardiff University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1999

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in 10.25/14 Adobe Minion in QuarkXPress™ [SE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Lawson, Colin (Colin James)

The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction / Colin Lawson & Robin Stowell.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 62193 3 (hardback) – ISBN 0 521 62738 9 (paperback)

1. Performance practice (Music) – 18th century. 2. Performance practice (Music) – 19th century. I. Stowell, Robin. II. Title.

ML457.L39 1999

781.4'3'09–dc21 98–42731 CIP

ISBN 0 521 62193 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 62738 9 paperback

Contents

List of figures ix

Preface xi

1 Music as history 1

Introduction 1

The nature and development of historical awareness 3

Influential reworkings of Bach and Handel 4

Historical considerations 6

The pioneers: individuals and institutions 8

The role of musical expression 9

Arguments pro and con 11

Post-war philosophies 12

Period Mozart and beyond 13

The current scene 15

2 The application of primary sources 17

Surviving instruments 18

Iconographical sources 19

Historical archives 21

Literary sources 21

Practical treatises – uses and limitations 22

Practical treatises – a summary 25

Theoretical treatises 27

The importance of communication 28

The role of editions 33

Musical taste 39

3 Changes in musical style 42

National idioms 42

Articulation 47

	Melodic inflection	53
	Accentuation	55
	Tempo	58
	Rhythmic alteration	64
	Ornamentation	67
	Extempore embellishment	70
	Improvisation	75
	Continuo accompaniment	79
4	Conditions and practices	83
	Introduction	83
	Pitch	84
	Temperament	87
	Vocal practices	89
	Venues and programmes	92
	Orchestral constitution and placement	93
	Direction	97
	Nineteenth-century changes	98
5	Case studies in ensemble music	99
	J. S. Bach: <i>St Matthew Passion</i> BWV 244	99
	W. A. Mozart: Serenade for 13 instruments K361	109
	Berlioz: <i>Episode de la vie d'un Artiste, Symphonie Fantastique en cinq parties</i> Op. 14	124
	Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D major Op. 73	137
6	The continuing debate	151
	Introduction	151
	The social position of historical music	151
	A snapshot from 1983	153
	Authenticity and Early Music	154
	The 1990s	156
	The future?	160
	<i>Notes</i>	161
	<i>Select bibliography</i>	199
	<i>Index</i>	209

Figures

4.1	Seating plan, Turin Theatre Orchestra, <i>c.</i> 1790	<i>page</i> 95
4.2	Seating plan, Salomon's concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms, London, 1791–4 (reconstruction by Simon McVeigh)	96
5.1	Seating plan at the Société des Concerts, Paris, <i>c.</i> 1828	134
5.2	Seating plan at the Société des Concerts, Paris, 1840	135
5.3	Henschel's seating plan approved by Brahms	141

1 Music as history

Introduction

‘In order to do justice to the piece which he is about to perform, the player must first acquaint himself with the conditions under which it originated. For a work by Bach or Tartini demands a different style of delivery from one by Mendelssohn or Spohr. The space of a century that divides the two first mentioned from the last two means in the historical development of our art not only a great difference in regard to form, but even a greater with respect to musical expression.’¹

This far-sighted advice appeared at the very beginning of the twentieth century in Joseph Joachim’s *Violinschule*, written in collaboration with his pupil Andreas Moser. Inevitably, Joachim’s historical approach to Bach or Tartini must have been very different from today’s and certainly did not involve a change of violin or bow. But one of the remarkable achievements of the following 100 years has been the probing investigation of musical styles of various eras, with stimulating and often surprising results. Tradition and intuition have been increasingly complemented by an unprecedented realisation of the practical value of primary sources.

The perceptive musical mind has indeed emerged as a necessary adjunct to mere technique and artistry. According to one of his pupils, the great pioneer Arnold Dolmetsch once characteristically remarked that he wanted his students to learn principles rather than pieces, so that they could do their own thinking.² A similar approach resurfaces in Gustav Leonhardt’s recent observation: ‘When one is a student one does things consciously, but when one is more experienced one does not play intellectually any more. One doesn’t *think*; one *has thought* . . . things are done automatically, depending on what you intend to say.’³ Other commentators have pointed to the importance of a certain attitude of mind rather than adherence to a set of techniques applied to an arbitrarily delimited body of early music. The real issue is a comprehensive theory of performance covering music from the earliest times we care about up to the present.⁴

In today's musical climate historical performance in theory and practice has truly come to form part of mainstream musical life. Period instruments are routinely encountered in the concert hall and are virtually obligatory in substantial areas of the repertory, notably in music before 1750. Throughout the world there has developed a huge interest in acquiring instrumental techniques of the past. Naturally, this involves not merely searching out relevant equipment, but also investigating earlier styles of performance. Meanwhile, the entire thrust of such endeavours has been subject to stimulating discussion and argument. But it cannot be denied that artistic life today makes demands which are decidedly unhistorical; for example, the microphone introduces a set of parameters which would have been unthinkable in previous generations. Furthermore, air travel has brought such changes that we do not have the option to turn back the clock.

The original expectations of composers in terms of sound and musical style ('performance practice') have become a lively subject for debate, widely reflected within a range of musical journals. In this area scholars and performers are mutually dependent, drawing upon archival, literary, iconographical, analytical and purely philological studies. The score itself is an imprecise mechanism, which by its very nature offers even the most dutiful performer a rich variety of possibilities.⁵ There has always been much detail which a composer did not trouble to write in his scores; he simply knew that certain conventions would be observed. Some of these are no longer current, whereas others have undergone significant changes of meaning. Those elements of style which a composer found it unnecessary to notate will always remain for us a foreign language, but eventually we may be able to converse freely within it as musicians, and so bring a greater range of expression to our interpretations, rather than merely pursuing some kind of unattainable 'authenticity'.

Using the resources for which a particular repertory was intended may well make the music sound more expressive and can make more sense of what the composer actually wrote, re-creating something of its initial impact on the listener. But even if we could witness performances of large-scale works by Bach, Beethoven or Brahms, we should not necessarily want to adopt all their features, since to some extent our own taste would almost certainly continue to influence our interpretation. There will always be circumstances in musical history which we may well not want to emulate; on

the other hand, the different approaches to articulation and phrasing which obtained in earlier periods are in themselves a reminder that performing styles have changed out of all recognition.

The roots of the historical performance movement were already well in place at the very beginning of the twentieth century.⁶ A valuable survey of changing musical attitudes is Harry Haskell's *The Early Music Revival* (London, 1988), an account of the multifarious activities of musicologists, editors, publishers, makers, collectors, curators, dealers, librarians, performers, teachers and record producers. Significantly, even after historical awareness in Baroque and earlier repertoires had become an established principle, it continued to be widely believed that there was no benefit in performing Classical or Romantic music on period instruments. In 1955 H. C. Robbins Landon could routinely remark in his otherwise far-sighted book on Haydn's symphonies that 'no-one will want to perform Haydn's music with natural trumpets and ancient woodwind when our modern counterparts are in most cases superior in every way', a viewpoint which held sway for some considerable time.⁷ Even in 1980 the article 'performing practice' in *The New Grove* claimed that in contrast to music written before 1750 'there has been no severance of contact with post-Baroque music as a whole, nor with the instruments used in performing it'. Subsequent musical revelations have proved this argument untenable, as period interpretations of Mozart and Beethoven have been followed by a traversal through the nineteenth century and even beyond. In the event, performance practice from Brahms's time has proved to be fraught with ambiguities, which are in some ways as challenging as those relating to earlier periods. These very problems seem to nourish historical enquiry, as witnessed by recording and concert schedules worldwide and the increasing opportunities at conservatoires for principal study of period instruments.

The nature and development of historical awareness

Performances of 'early music' have been a feature of western culture at various times and places and at least one writer has remarked that we have all surely exaggerated the extent to which musicians before the late nineteenth century performed and studied only the music of their own time.⁸ Certainly, musical histories often tend to discuss only that repertoire

contemporary to a particular time, presented as though one is tracing an imaginary journey through a one-way street which might ultimately be found to link compositions of the distant past with those of the present. But in Renaissance England, for example, sacred vocal music often stayed in the repertoires of church and cathedral choirs for more than a hundred years. Then in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, groups such as the Academy of Ancient Music and the Concert of Antient Music in London regularly performed early English church music as well as works by Purcell, Handel and Corelli. England was the first country where old musical works were performed regularly and reverentially, and where the idea of musical classics first arose. In their different ways historians John Hawkins and Charles Burney found newer (especially instrumental) works offensive to their ears and in questioning aspects of contemporary music, legitimised a canon of old works as the source of authority over musical taste.⁹ A recent account of this phenomenon investigates the political and social reasons for such developments.¹⁰ The Handel Commemoration of 1784 was the culmination, creating an extraordinary spectacle, massive in scale and splendour.

The crucial realisation gradually developed during the nineteenth century that contemporary performance styles did not necessarily suit music from earlier times. Prominent among advocates of such a viewpoint was François-Joseph Fétis, whose 'historical concerts' began at the Paris Conservatoire as early as 1832. It was this stylistic awareness which sowed the seeds of what was later to be known as authenticity, attempting to view older music in terms of its original period rather than transplanting it to the present. The widespread acceptance of so-called faithfulness to the original is much more recent and has been widely seen as symptomatic of the loss of a truly living contemporary music. At least one commentator believes that we have lost the unselfconsciousness necessary to use the present as the ultimate standard; the composer's intention has become for us the highest authority.¹¹

Influential reworkings of Bach and Handel

The updating of earlier music as a matter of course, reflecting mainstream musical culture until a generation ago, owes a great deal to Mozart's arrangements of the music of Bach and Handel. His preoccupation

with the Baroque, stimulated in the 1780s by Baron Gottfried van Swieten, subsequently had an enormous impact on later composers. Van Swieten also came into contact with Haydn and Beethoven and made them aware of their Baroque heritage.¹² One of the tangible results was Mozart's six Preludes and Fugues K404a for string trio, where four of the introductory slow movements were of his own composition and the fugues (by J. S. Bach, except for one by W. F. Bach) were subject not merely to re-instrumentation, but to interventionist treatment in terms of embellishment, melodic line, harmony and even tonality. Van Swieten's private oratorio concerts (from 1787) were initially directed by Mozart and subsequently included the premieres of Haydn's *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. A highlight was Mozart's adaptation of Handel's *Messiah* in 1789, which reflected the circumstances of his time.¹³ Mozart held Handel in high regard but in accordance with the spirit of his age felt the need for more orchestral colour, so that it was natural for him to bring the music up to date. Solo numbers were interchanged, transposed, inserted or shortened, while there were far-reaching alterations to the instrumentation. Mozart's orchestral tone-painting resembles contexts within his own operas such as *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*, and the additional wind parts in the tutti choruses make Handel's organ continuo redundant. In the arias Mozart added expression and dynamic markings. The art of high trumpet (clarino) playing had died out in the half-century since the date of composition; Mozart's pragmatic solution was to assign much of the obbligato in 'The trumpet shall sound' to the horn.

The importance of Mozart's approach through the nineteenth century is nicely captured in an article of 1879 by Ebenezer Prout, who introduces the topic thus: 'In the published scores of the older masters, especially Bach and Handel, much is to be met with which if performed exactly as printed will fail altogether to realise the intentions of the composer. This arises partly from the difference in the composition of our modern orchestras as compared with those employed a century and a half ago; partly also from the fact that it was formerly the custom to write out in many cases little more than a skeleton of the music, leaving the details to be filled in at performance from the figured bass.'¹⁴ Prout remarks that passages are regularly encountered in Bach whose effect on the modern orchestra will be altogether different from that designed by the composer; in Handel, our ears are so accustomed to a rich and sonorous instrumentation, that this music if played only with

strings and oboes, or sometimes with strings alone, would sound so thin as to be distasteful. Reflecting the taste of his own times, he concludes that additional accompaniments must be judged on their own merits, though the question is not whether but how they should be written. Not foreseeing the climate of authenticity a century later, Prout suggests that modernisations of this kind will probably be written until the end of time.

Clearly, this article implies a quite different approach to the ideal of realising the composer's intentions than that of today. Prout notes that Bach in particular employed a number of instruments which had fallen into disuse, such as the viola d'amore, the viola da gamba, the oboe d'amore, the oboe da caccia and several others. He then proceeds to recommend substitution as far as possible with their modern equivalents. This was indeed Mendelssohn's procedure in his celebrated 1829 revival of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Mendelssohn claimed to have presented Bach's works exactly as they were written, but he was no purist, approaching Bach's music as a practical musician eager to bring it to life for his contemporaries.

Mendelssohn brought Bach's music into the public domain once and for all, inspiring performances in several German cities in the 1830s and 1840s and soon throughout Europe. He introduced cuts which reduced the work's performing time by a third; there were rescoring and reassignment of solo parts, together with tempo and dynamic markings that placed a premium on dramatic contrasts and the highly charged emotionalism characteristic of his own time.

Historical considerations

Mendelssohn was influenced in his own music by Baroque composers, as is evident from *Elijah* and from his keyboard preludes and fugues. For Brahms, earlier music offered an even more fruitful creative impetus. Michael Musgrave has noted that in his first choral appointment at Detmold (1857–9) Brahms performed two cantatas from the new *Bach-Gesellschaft* edition, as well as Handel's *Messiah*.¹⁵ Later, he was to explore in performance the then obscure worlds of Schütz and Gabrieli. Brahms contributed to Chrysander's Couperin edition and wrote continuo realisations for the Italian duets and trios of Chrysander's Handel edition. Such an establishment of texts from preferred sources in an era of Collected Editions (includ-

ing Mozart) was soon to make possible the concepts of *Werktreue* (faithfulness to the text), performance practice and authenticity itself.¹⁶ Meanwhile, Brahms made manuscript copies from rare printed editions of old music and gradually assembled for his own library some important treasures, such as the autograph of Mozart's late G minor Symphony.¹⁷ The creative influence of old music is evident throughout Brahms's own work, which shows enormous historical awareness. His friend Joachim directed a Bach festival at Eisenach in 1884, where he performed the B minor Mass using a modern replica of an oboe d'amore and a so-called 'Bach trumpet', prompting the *Monthly Musical Record* to observe that 'the deficiencies in Bach's music, as we commonly hear it, are due, in fact, not to the author, but to the imperfection, in several remarkable respects, of our vaunted modern orchestra'.¹⁸ This project illustrates a growing realisation that in earlier music the modern instruments commonly used for contemporary repertory would simply not do. But how did Joachim's Baroque performances actually sound? In his own words, 'we must certainly admit the view that the compositions of Tartini and of even older musicians will well bear a treatment in the matter of expression which, while in no way spoiling the uniformity of their style, will correspond more to the sentiment of the present day, than if performed with a timid anxiety to be literally correct. For the violin which we now play existed then as an already perfected instrument, on which all the later victories of technique could have been carried out, had anyone known how to do so.'¹⁹ If Joachim appears here to be a touch patronising by today's standards, it is nevertheless important to remember that the degree of expression appropriate to 'early music' was to remain a matter for debate for years to come.

Discussion as to whether musical instruments had improved or merely changed was rife during the great technological developments of the nineteenth century. For example, Wagner was in no doubt that in Beethoven's symphonies valved trumpets and horns should be used rather than their natural precursors; he re-wrote their parts to remove any supposed limitations. On the other hand, Berlioz described the use of valves for stopped notes in Beethoven as a dangerous abuse; this is of special significance because he also enthuses about modern developments, such as Adolphe Sax's improvements to the clarinet and the newly devised Boehm flute.²⁰ At a similar period Gleich claimed that the use of valves in Weber and

Beethoven was a ‘Vandalismus’.²¹ *Grove 1* merely noted that both natural and valved instruments had their advantages. Amid all the argument, some felt that the new versatility of wind instruments was indispensable, whereas others believed that something of the individuality of tone-colour was lost as a result of mechanical developments. Regret continued to be expressed that the true qualities of older instruments had been lost. As William Stone observed, ‘hardly any instrument, except the flute, has been so altered and modified . . . in its mechanism . . . as the oboe. . . . It has thus become by far the most elaborate and complicated of reed instruments, and it is a question whether a return to an older and simpler pattern, by lessening the weight of the machine, and the number of holes breaking the continuity of the bore, and by increasing the vibratory powers of the wooden tube, would not conduce to an improved quality of tone.’²² He was even more vehement with regard to the bassoon: ‘Various attempts have been made to give greater accuracy and completeness to its singularly capricious scale; but up to the present time all these seem to have diminished the flexibility of the instrument in florid passages, or to have impaired its peculiar but telling and characteristic tone.’²³ From this it seems probable that more than a century ago Stone would have approved of the return to period instruments for Baroque and Classical repertory.

The pioneers: individuals and institutions

Unsurprisingly, the beginnings of the historical performance movement were modest indeed, though from a European perspective it is significant that in 1915 (the year of publication of Dolmetsch’s book) Saint-Saëns surveyed the principal issues of style, technique and equipment in a lecture in San Francisco.²⁴ A huge number of fledgeling institutions developed throughout Europe, such as the Schola Cantorum of Paris, the Chanteurs de St Gervais of Charles Bordes, two Sociétés d’Instruments Anciens, the Deutsche Vereinigung für alte Musik and Safford Cape’s Pro Musica Antiqua of Brussels. There had already been a long tradition of early music at Basle when the gambist August Wenzinger co-founded the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in 1933. Established as a teaching and research institute for early music from the Middle Ages to Mozart, it gave a new prominence to instrumental music, though retaining a sacred and secular vocal

syllabus. Its avowed intention was that early music should become an integral part of everyday life, whilst aspiring to professional standards, rather than those of the dilettante.

Dolmetsch's special status in the history of period performance is justified by the wisdom of his book rather than the eccentricities of his career. His restoration of early instruments from the late 1880s had been motivated by his discovery and subsequent performance of the English repertory of fantasies for viols.²⁵ His great gift was indeed that he had both the imagination and the musicianship to take a work which had become a museum piece and make it speak to the people of his own time. His comments on period instruments are full of insight, arguing for example that the one-keyed flute *can* be played in tune, but that this 'requires constant watchfulness of the ear, which thus becomes more and more sensitive to faults of intonation'.²⁶ But Dolmetsch's own reconstructions apparently wanted not only to revive the past, but to improve upon it. In 1932 Donington remarked that 'the old harpsichord has certain limitations [and produces] a jangle, slight in the treble but audible in the bass. Use of the damper-raising pedal is rendered impracticable, precluding a number of effects of great musical value . . . The new instruments, which remedy these historical oversights, have proved both purer and more sustained than any previous harpsichord.'²⁷ Donington's view of these 'improvements' as sound common sense is at least as interesting as Dolmetsch's 'fidelity' to history. The relationship of copies to originals remains a contentious issue to this day. The erratic quality of Dolmetsch's performances was nicely summarised by his pupil Ralph Kirkpatrick, who observed, 'Study is problematical with a man who prides himself on never practising.'²⁸ Dolmetsch treated recordings and concerts as work in progress rather than as the finished article. In a sense, he was fortunate in having had the opportunity to implement his pioneering work at a time before the pressures of the recording industry were to place such a high premium on technical accuracy at all costs.

The role of musical expression

An important issue debated throughout the twentieth century has been the degree of expression which is appropriate in the context of 'early music'. Dolmetsch had spoken abstractedly about feeling and expression,

rejecting the idea 'that expression in music is a modern thing, and that the old music requires nothing beyond mechanical precision'.²⁹ The harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, the first early music 'personality', regarded the idea of objectivity as utopian, since no interpreter should be restricted to remaining in the shadow of the author. At the same time she was able to assert that she aspired only to serve her composers. Modern scholars have desired to lay down specific rules about interpretation. But the art of music is of course much more difficult to quantify than the craft. This point is well illustrated in Türk's *Clavierschule* of 1789, which lays out various stylistic precepts, but finally admits that some aspects of musicianship cannot be taught and that all one can do is simply to listen to the best singers.³⁰

The widespread aversion to 'interpretation' has been widely linked with Stravinskian neo-classicism, as performers shied away, not just from virtuosity and exhibitionism, but from interventionism of any kind. This philosophy occurs in its purest form in a programme note written by Erwin Bodky for the Cambridge Society for Early Music in the 1950s: 'Early Music was a highly aristocratic art and restraint governed even the display of emotion as well as the exhibition of technical virtuosity. This deprives concerts of Early Music of the atmosphere of electricity which, when present, is one of the finest experiences of the modern concert hall. Who seeks but this may stay away from our concert series. We want to take this opportunity, however, to thank our artists for the voluntary restraint in the display of their artistic capabilities which they exercise when recreating with us the atmosphere of equanimity, tranquillity and noble entertainment which is the characteristic feature of Early Music.'³¹ Inevitably, this kind of thinking gave authenticity a bad name, making the term 'scholarly' when applied to performance synonymous with dull and unimaginative. Meanwhile, the critic Theodor Adorno wrote of 'impotent nostalgia' during the course of one of his celebrated articles.³²

Adorno was especially critical of Hindemith, who in fact showed himself well aware of the inevitable subjectivity of interpretation. What he wrote in 1952 in *A Composer's World* eloquently defines the value of an historical approach, in broad agreement with Dolmetsch: 'All the traits that made the music of the past lovable to its contemporary performers and listeners were inextricably associated with the kind of sound then known and appreciated. If we replace this sound by the sounds typical of our modern instruments

and their treatment, we are counterfeiting the musical message the original sound was supposed to transmit. Consequently, all music ought to be performed with the means of production that were in use when the composer gave it to his contemporaries. . . .³³ More significantly, he realised the limitations of such an approach: 'Our spirit of life is not identical with that of our ancestors, and therefore their music, even if restored with utter technical perfection, can never have for us precisely the same meaning it had for them. We cannot tear down the barricade that separates the present world from things and deeds past; the symbol and its prototype cannot be made to coincide absolutely.'³⁴

Arguments pro and con

Observers from traditional musical culture have consistently contributed to the debate. Some musicians, such as George Grove, first director of London's Royal College of Music, admitted that they had not yet acquired the taste for the instrumental music of 'ancient' composers such as J. S. Bach.³⁵ Dolmetsch's waywardness and reliance on hunches drew criticism from scholars such as Thurston Dart, but found a kindred spirit in the figure of Percy Grainger, who wrote of his universality and breadth of vision. Meanwhile, Landowska sparked arguments as to the merits of the harpsichord in relation to the piano. An early convert was the Bach scholar and organist Albert Schweitzer.³⁶

A prominent critic of historical performance was the conductor Leopold Stokowski, whose orchestral transcriptions of Bach demonstrate his conception of the music in pictorial terms. He contrasted the written and literal aspects of music with its importance in our imagination, emphasising its constant evolution and the never-ending growth of its expression. Stokowski's consistent belief in musical progress, in which he was a true child of the nineteenth century, continued until his death in 1974. Conversely, Arturo Toscanini believed passionately in a literal respect for the score, a position fraught with difficulty in (for example) Baroque repertory, where conventions of notation were subject to substantial change. In an article of 1932 Wilhelm Furtwängler was highly critical of the trend towards small-scale performances of Baroque music, which he regarded as inappropriate in the large concert halls of his time; furthermore, he made the

perspicacious point that modern audiences would need their listening habits and perceptions changed.³⁷ Hindemith and Furtwängler thus enjoyed some measure of agreement about the limitations of authenticity, but responded in somewhat different ways. Essentially, Furtwängler dismissed the practical relevance of historical performance, as did most other major conductors of the time. On the other hand, a number of chamber orchestras (utilising modern instruments) arose to meet the demand. More recently, Laurence Dreyfus found an unprecedented attack on the infamy of early music in the work of the French surgeon and self-proclaimed sexologist Gérard Zwang, a tirade which Dreyfus attributes to ‘a process of musical defamiliarisation which has robbed him of prized possessions’. Zwang’s 1977 book *A Contre-Bruit* speaks of worthless antiquarianism, anti-art and of ‘those old buggies which they have the effrontery to call musical instruments’.³⁸

The efficacy of historical performance has continued to divide musical opinion, with trenchant criticism from such diverse characters as Pierre Boulez, Colin Davis and Neville Marriner counterbalanced by its espousal by such notable figures as Mark Elder, Charles Mackerras, Simon Rattle and Edo de Waart. The comparatively recent comments of virtuoso violinist Pinchas Zukerman have already acquired a certain notoriety: historical performance is ‘asinine stuff . . . a complete and absolute farce. . . nobody wants to hear that stuff. I don’t.’³⁹

Post-war philosophies

The scene after 1945 centred upon Amsterdam, The Hague, London and Vienna, rather than war-weary France and Germany. In England a new coming together of the performer and musicologist was symbolised by Thurston Dart, who none the less paid tribute to earlier developments in historical performance within his seminal book. ‘Players learned, after much hard work, how to handle these [obsolete] instruments – a very difficult task indeed, for though you can learn how to make a harpsichord by taking an old one to pieces, you cannot do the same thing with harpsichord-playing.’⁴⁰ In his ensuing perceptive discussion of sonorities and style, Dart conveys above all the feeling that much work remains to be done, taking for granted the axiom that musical instruments have changed over the years

but not necessarily improved. At the conclusion of his book he writes: 'The written text must never be regarded as a dead laboratory specimen; it is only sleeping, though both love and time will be needed to awaken it. But love and time will be wasted without a sense of tradition and of historical continuity. . .'⁴¹

A couple of decades later, debate over a kaleidoscope of general and specific issues was stimulated by the arrival in 1973 of the lavishly produced journal *Early Music*, a milestone in the proliferation of specialist magazines worldwide, which aimed to forge a link between scholarship and performance. An important practical impetus at this time was the versatile David Munrow (1942–76), who with The Early Music Consort of London brought new life to medieval and Renaissance repertory and acted as a springboard for the careers of its distinguished alumni. A quite different personality and another seminal figure was the Dutch harpsichordist Gustav Leonhardt, whose meticulous care for historical accuracy in his texts and instruments eschewed the trappings of showmanship.⁴² Uninterested in accessibility or entertainment, Leonhardt drew in his audiences with a mixture of subtlety and intensity. It is symptomatic of his approach that only with his encyclopaedic knowledge of Baroque repertory and performance practice could he afford to claim such exclusive value for the facsimile as a performing source. Overall, it is no coincidence that England and Holland have continued to preserve such distinctive stylistic approaches to their interpretation of historical evidence.

Period Mozart and beyond

In the post-war period much Baroque music was recorded on period instruments, often for record labels especially created for the purpose. In 1954 Wenzinger co-directed the Cappella Coloniensis, a period-instrument chamber orchestra formed by Westdeutscher Rundfunk to record and tour worldwide. The following year Wenzinger's performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* was a notable success; other milestones included Harnoncourt's Brandenburg Concertos for Telefunken in 1964. By 1972 Leonhardt and Harnoncourt were embarking on a monumental Bach cantata series, contemporary with the formation of English ensembles by John Eliot Gardiner, Christopher Hogwood, Roger Norrington and Trevor

Pinnock. At this time some enterprising individuals and chamber groups were venturing into the Classical and even early Romantic periods. But it was the complete cycle of Mozart Symphonies by Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music in the early 1980s which gave a particular impetus to the inclusion of Classical and Romantic repertory within the historical movement, inspiring many orchestral players to enter the field.

Meanwhile, Howard Mayer Brown noted in *The New Grove* that a performance of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 17 on the natural horn provided quite a different aural experience from one played on the modern instrument. He continued, 'To hear Beethoven's symphonies played with the same degree of authenticity . . . would be no less revealing in sound quality, but the practical difficulties of assembling and equipping such an orchestra are almost insuperable.'⁴³ But Beethoven symphonies played with historical awareness were soon to prove revelatory, notably in the hands of Norrington, whose recordings aimed 'to make him sound new; to recapture much of the exhilaration and sheer disturbance that his music certainly generated in his day'.⁴⁴ Beethoven cycles continued apace, whilst Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Wagner and Verdi were soon to prove ripe for treatment. Thus historical awareness eventually reached the era of the earliest recordings, bringing a further perspective on its aspirations and limitations.

Recordings of orchestral music up to the 1930s reveal a style of playing which has yet to be truly emulated by period performance, characterised by a tempo flexibility virtually unknown today, as well as liberally applied portamenti in the strings. That early recordings are now widely regarded as a significant part of the evidence is due not least to Robert Philip's *Early Recordings and Musical Style* (Cambridge, 1992). Recorded performances from the earlier twentieth century give a vivid sense of being projected as if to an audience, the precision and clarity of each note less important than the shape and progress of the music as a whole. Nowadays the balance has shifted significantly, so that accurate and clear performance has become the first priority and characterisation is assumed to take care of itself. If pre-war recordings resemble live performance, many of today's concerts show a palpable influence of the recording session, with clarity and control an overriding priority.

The current scene

As 'early music' has become a major part of musical life, its original pioneering spirit has all too easily been eclipsed by a new technical proficiency. In 1985 Kerman could still complain of the toleration of relaxed standards of instrumental and vocal technique, as well as of interpretation.⁴⁵ No-one can doubt that mastery of an instrument is invaluable, provided that it is nourished by a continuing stylistic awareness. As the novelty and exhilaration of period performance wears off, it has become inevitable that some practitioners should take as their primary sources the well-read musical directors with whom they collaborate rather than Leopold Mozart or C. P. E. Bach. This has important implications when such musicians are called upon to educate the next generation of historically aware performers. Meanwhile, claims to authenticity or even historical accuracy (e.g. 'the most original Beethoven yet recorded'⁴⁶) have become ever more muted.

Over the last quarter of a century historical performance has developed much of its profile in the recording studio, but this state of affairs has prompted a timely caution from at least one writer. Clive Brown warned in 1992 that the characteristics of some of the instruments and equipment employed in Beethoven cycles by The Hanover Band, Hogwood and Norrington would certainly not have been familiar to the musicians in Beethoven's Vienna, and that the situation with regard to playing techniques was even more complicated. He claimed with some justification that the commercially motivated race to push period-instrument performance ever more rapidly into the nineteenth century did not offer much hope that the musicians, even if they obtained the appropriate instruments, would have the opportunity to find or consolidate appropriate styles of playing them. He rightly notes that there is infinitely more to historically sensitive performance than merely employing the right equipment, and that the public is in danger of being offered attractively packaged but unripe fruit.⁴⁷ This criticism is a significant reflection of today's current musical climate, each performer occupying an individual position within a spectrum ranging from historical awareness to practical expediency and not always being fully aware of his own or his colleagues' stance. For the general public the phrase 'on original instruments' does literally cover a multitude of varying practices.

It is largely the ethos rather than the detailed practicalities of period performance which has been debated in the work of Harnoncourt (1982, trans.

1988), Dreyfus (1983), Kerman (1985), Kenyon (1988), Mayer Brown and Sadie (1989), Kivy (1995), Taruskin (1995) and Sherman (1997). The philosophical issues they raise will form the basis of the discussion in Chapter 6. Harnoncourt's perceptive essays relate historical awareness to the current position of music in our lives and our attitude to contemporary culture. Meanwhile, in preparing the feature entitled 'The limits of authenticity' for the February 1984 issue of *Early Music*, Nicholas Kenyon articulated for his contributors a number of pertinent questions, which will be addressed in subsequent chapters. Is the use of period instruments in re-creating the music of the past really a significant factor compared with musical understanding, cultural and social context, acoustical considerations, concert-giving situations? Can a composer expect to have any influence over how his music is performed after he has written it, and what moral obligation is there to fulfil his original intentions? Are we more likely to understand a composer's piece of music by restricting ourselves to the means he had available when he wrote it, or does such a restriction inhibit our full expression of the piece? What is the relation between a performer's and a scholar's work in this area?