1 Stylistic awareness and keyboard music

It is a common assumption among musicians that certain performing styles are appropriate to particular parts of the repertory, or to the music of individual composers. It would be difficult to imagine, for example, a Baroque dance movement or a Mozart sonata being played by any modern performer in the same manner as a Liszt fantasia: there appears to be a consensus that the degree of dynamic variation, rhythmic flexibility and so on should vary according to the style of the music being played. This is true of those who use modern instruments as well as those who play on originals, or copies of historic instruments. But how and when did this stylistic awareness develop?

It was in the eighteenth century that 'old' music – the music of previous generations – came to be performed regularly in a variety of contexts. Performance of 'old' music went hand in hand with its publication and with the writing of some of the earliest histories of music. Exactly how and where this happened is described in Lawson and Stowell's book, and elsewhere.[1] Inevitably, as 'old' music was played, questions were raised about its performance.

Louis Adam was among the first writers on the performance of keyboard music to comment on historical styles in his *Méthode de piano du conservatoire* (Paris, 1804). The final chapter of Adam's *Méthode* is devoted to a discussion of the subject. His argument is not developed at length, but he nevertheless points out that Bach and Handel each had a unique style of performance, and that any pianist who plays the music of Clementi, Mozart, Dussek and Haydn in the same way will destroy the music's effect.[2] A similar, but more detailed argument is made in Czerny's keyboard tutor, Op. 500 (1839), in a chapter headed 'on the peculiar style of execution most suitable to different composers and their works'. Among Czerny's conclusions were the observation that 'in the commencement of the eighteenth century, the legato style of playing . . . had already been carried to a high degree of

perfection by *Seb. Bach*, Domenico Scarlatti, and others'. He divided pianists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries into 'principal schools', each defined by its own characteristic performance style. 'Mozart's school' was characterised by 'a distinct and considerably brilliant manner of playing, calculated rather on the Staccato than on the Legato touch; an intelligent and animated execution, The Pedal seldom used, and never obligato'. 'Beethoven's style' was different: 'characteristic and impassioned energy, alternating with all the charms of smooth and connected cantabile, is in its place here. The means of Expression is often carried to excess, particularly in regard to humourous and fanciful levity.' Other 'schools' identified by Czerny were 'Clementi's style', 'Cramer and Dussek's style', 'the modern brilliant school' of 'Hummel, Kalkbrenner and Moscheles' and the 'new style' of 'Thalberg, Chopin, Liszt and other young artists'.[3]

Czerny's research into early performance history can hardly be described as rigorous, but his reading of the sources available to him was sufficient to give him a general understanding of stylistic matters, sufficient to persuade him that early keyboard music needed its own performance style. However, like other musicians of the period (and like many pianists today), his concern for stylistic appropriateness was tempered by an urge to up-date earlier music.

Virtually all of the authors who wrote on the history of instruments and their performance in the nineteenth century did so from a perspective of a firm belief in the notion of progress. The piano was seen as an 'advance' on the harpsichord and the changes in the piano's action that took place in the period were described as 'improvements'. It would have been illogical for musicians who thought in this way to do anything other than up-date earlier music. The approach can be seen even in Czerny's detailed observations on the way in which the music of his revered master, Beethoven, was to be played. In places, Czerny advocated changes in the composer's performing directions in order to accommodate the qualities of more modern pianos. Of a passage from the slow movement of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, for example, he wrote:

> Beethoven (who publicly played this Concerto in 1803) continued the pedal during the entire theme, which on the weak-sounding pianofortes of that day, did very well, especially when the shifting

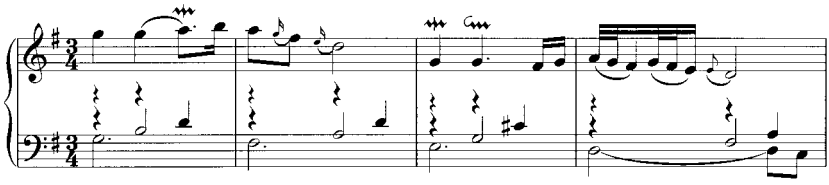
> pedal [una corda] was also employed. But now, as the instruments have acquired a much greater body of tone, we should advise the damper pedal to be employed anew, at each important change of harmony.[4]

The urge to up-date and a sense that earlier music should be played in a way that exhibited some sense of stylistic awareness are both features of music editions from the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. Clementi's edition of some of Scarlatti's sonatas as *Scarlatti's chef-d'œuvre* in 1791, for example, included the addition of many dynamic markings (*p*, *f*, *fz*, *cresc.*, *dim.*, etc.) as well as terms such as 'dolce' and a few articulation markings. Nevertheless, Clementi's overall approach as an editor was one of restraint, compared with the level of dynamic and articulation markings found in his own works of the same period. For his own piano tutor, the *Introduction* of 1801, Clementi adopted an even less interventionist editorial stance. Works by Corelli, Handel, Rameau, Couperin and Scarlatti appear with few, if any, dynamic or other markings – a trend followed in numerous other piano tutors of the early nineteenth century.

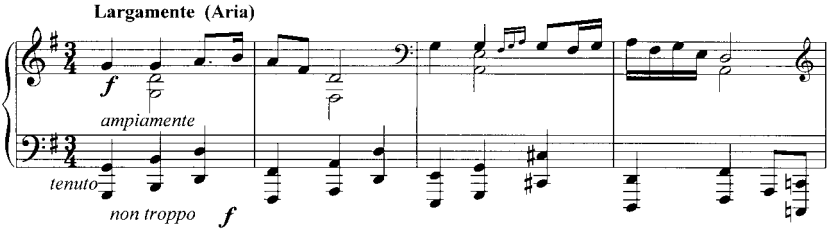
Czerny's editions of Bach's music are full of dynamic, accent, articulation and phrase markings, with occasional additional notes to fill out the texture, such as the added bass octaves in the closing few bars of the C minor fugue from Book 1 of the '48'. However, such markings should not necessarily be seen to be at variance with his comments on performance style in his tutor: Czerny was more restrained than many of his contemporaries, who showed a marked disregard for notions of stylistic awareness. The trend reached a peak towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth, a period in which some remarkable 'editions' of early keyboard works were published. These 'editions' are in reality adaptations or arrangements. The music is sometimes transposed into a new key, passages are re-written and numerous performance directions are added. Among the more extreme examples are Tausig's and von Bülow's editions of Scarlatti and Busoni's editions of Bach. Example 1.2 is Busoni's reworking of the final statement of the theme from Bach's 'Goldberg Variations' (Ex. 1.1).

While most pianists were either performing with some degree of stylistic awareness, or showing no regard at all for historical performance issues, a few musicians were beginning to investigate early keyboard practices more

Ex. 1.1 J. S. Bach, 'Goldberg Variations', Aria, bars 1–4



Ex. 1.2 Busoni's arrangement of Ex. 1.1



carefully and it is in the work of these individuals that the origins of the modern 'historical performance movement' lie.

The 1830s saw the beginning of a long line of 'historical performances'. Fétis organised what were probably the first concerts of their kind in Paris during the autumn and winter of 1832–3.[5] The programmes comprised music of many kinds – opera, vocal and instrumental – and early instruments were used, including the harpsichord. In the years 1837–8 Moscheles organised a series of concerts which were specifically designed to demonstrate the wealth of keyboard styles of the past and present. The reviewer of the first concert observed that

> one circumstance at the conclusion of the entertainment particularly struck us, and that was, the manner in which Mr. Moscheles threw himself into the various character of the music he was playing. The style in which he executed a fugue of Bach, and a florid finale of Weber or Beethoven, was so perfectly according with the genius, and we should suppose the intention of each composer, as if he had studied in this school alone.[6]

Moscheles' concern for stylistic propriety extended to the use of a harpsichord (a 1771 5½-octave instrument by Shudi[7]) in several of his concerts.

He apparently thought that Scarlatti's music was particularly idiomatic to the harpsichord, since his programmes frequently featured the composer's sonatas played on the instrument. He played Bach's preludes and fugues on the piano, however, perhaps because by that time Bach was known to have given his approval to some of Silbermann's early pianos (see Chapter 3), or perhaps simply because the preludes and fugues had been appropriated by so many pianists that they were regarded as piano music.

Fétis' and Moscheles' interest in historical performance styles is evident in their jointly authored *Méthode des Méthodes de Piano* (Paris, 1840). The text of the *Méthode* makes it clear that the performance of keyboard repertory requires a variety of approaches, depending on the composer of any particular work, and the tutor is liberally footnoted with references to keyboard treatises from C. P. E. Bach onwards. Illustrative of the extent of the authors' concern for stylistic propriety are their views on ornamentation: readers are told that modern ornaments are not necessarily appropriate to earlier music, and they are advised to familiarise themselves with the contemporary meanings of ornament signs in the music of Couperin, Bach, Handel, Clementi, Mozart and others.[8] Here we see the beginnings of the study of performance practice based on keyboard treatises of the past, and it was not long before some attention was given to the re-publication of some of the major tutors. The first appears to have been a heavily edited version (by Gustav Schilling) of C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch*, in the 1850s. Others followed only gradually: Couperin's important *L'Art de toucher le clavecin,* for example, was not published until 1933.

The concern to understand the notation and performance conventions of early keyboard music went hand in hand with the systematic publication, from the second half of the nineteenth century, of a great deal of early keyboard music. Some of this repertory, such as Bach's '48' and selections of Scarlatti's sonatas, had been available in print from around the turn of the century. Much more of it became known through the publication of composers' complete works, beginning in Germany with Breitkopf & Härtel's edition of Bach's music, published from 1851, and followed by the complete works of Handel (from 1858), Mozart (from 1877) and others. The trend was followed elsewhere: at the end of the century, for example, the works of Rameau were published in France. Anthologies were also an important means of making early keyboard music known. One of the most significant

was Farrenc's *Le trésor des pianistes*, published in Paris in the years 1861–72, which included works by composers such as Byrd, Bull, Gibbons, Merulo, Frescobaldi and many later composers.[9]

As a greater amount of early keyboard music circulated among performers, so an interest in hearing the music performed on early instruments grew. More historical recitals were given in the middle of the century, including those organised in London by Salaman (from 1855) and Pauer (from 1861 – using the same harpsichord as Moscheles)[10] – and in Paris by Diémer (from the mid 1860s).[11] At around the same time, the foundations for some of the most important collections of historic keyboard instruments were laid. Several individuals built private collections which were later given to, or purchased by, institutions and some institutions themselves began to collect. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, collections such as those now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal College of Music, the Brussels and Paris Conservatoires, the Berlin Musikinstrumenten-Museum, the Leipzig University Musikinstrumenten-Sammlung, the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Washington Smithsonian Institution were formed.[12]

By the 1880s interest in early keyboard instruments had become widespread. In 1885, Alfred Hipkins organised an exhibition of about a hundred historic keyboard instruments with the assistance of William Dale.[13] This was followed four years later by one of the most important events in the history of the harpsichord revival – the Paris Exposition – which marked the beginnings of modern harpsichord making. Tomasini, Erard and Pleyel all exhibited new harpsichords at the 1889 Paris Exposition. These instruments were in part the fruits of restoration work previously carried out in Paris. Charles Fleury had been restoring harpsichords as early as the 1850s,[14] but more important in the harpsichord revival than Fleury was Louis Tomasini, who in 1882 restored the 1769 Taskin harpsichord used by Diémer for his historical recitals (the instrument is now in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh).[15] Following the instrument's restoration, Erard and Pleyel borrowed it for study prior to making their own. However, neither maker produced exact copies and Tomasini himself chose to base his new instrument on an eighteenth-century Parisian harpsichord by Hemsch.[16]

The three 1889 Exposition harpsichords are now in the Berlin Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung.[17] All of the instruments are highly decorated

and some features, such as the black natural and white sharp keys of the Tomasini and Erard harpsichords, suggest that these instruments resemble the eighteenth-century models used for study by their makers. However, only Tomasini's instrument is constructed on anything like eighteenth-century principles. Erard's and Pleyel's instruments have a much heavier internal structure than their 'models' and the adoption of registration pedals by Pleyel is another thoroughly modern feature.

The modernisation of harpsichord design was the predominant feature of harpsichord making between 1890 and the end of the Second World War.[18] An impressive collection of examples by French and German makers can be seen in the Berlin Staatliches Institut collection. The overriding concerns of makers in this period were the production of sufficient volume for the modern concert platform and the provision of more colouristic possibilities than were customary on earlier instruments. Hence, the construction of harpsichords was heavy, sometimes involving metal frame members, and the choice of registers was plentiful, with pedals for changing registration quickly. These were the harpsichords played by the early modern exponents of the instrument, among them Wanda Landowska, Violet Gordon Woodhouse and others.

After the Second World War a few makers began to construct harpsichords according to historical principles. Among the most important of these individuals were Hugh Gough, Frank Hubbard and William Dowd. Most makers now follow this approach.

Much of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revival of interest in early keyboards, their technique and their repertory centred on the harpsichord. It is only more recently that widespread interest in the clavichord and early piano has become established, although there are several instances of performances on both types of instrument at surprisingly early dates. In fact, it can be argued that there was an unbroken tradition of clavichord playing in the nineteenth century.[19] However, fresh impetus was gained in *c.* 1857 when Hoffmann of Stuttgart made a clavichord for an English amateur, Joseph Street, and a number of individuals including Hipkins and Engel showed considerable interest in the instrument.[20]

The early piano initially fared no better than the clavichord.[21] A few early performances took place, such as those presented by the fortepiano society formed around 1906 in Munich. These ventures generated little general

enthusiasm, however, and performances on early pianos generally suffered from the poor state of preservation of old instruments and invidious comparison with modern piano playing. In the second half of the twentieth century this situation changed very markedly. Owing to the performances of individuals such as Paul Badura-Skoda, Malcolm Bilson and more recently Melvyn Tan, as well as the efforts of restorers and makers of reproduction instruments such as Derek Adlam and Philip Belt, audiences are now much more appreciative of the qualities of early pianos.

2 Repertory, performance and notation

Choice and sources of repertory

A particular problem associated with the choice of keyboard repertory is the sheer quantity of music available. In each century of keyboard music history there have been several major keyboard composers, as well as dozens of minor figures who wrote works that are worthy of modern performance. More and more of this repertory is becoming available in editions and in facsimile.

It is possible to select repertory in at least two fundamentally different ways. Many of the best-known performers have made their names by specialising in the music of a composer, or period, because they have had a particular empathy with certain works, because they have had access to instruments that are suited to part of the repertory, or for some other reason. A second and much more usual approach is to choose a representative sample of music by several composers from a variety of periods. Performers who adopt this approach inevitably draw on works from the mainstream repertory – music that is most frequently recorded and heard in concerts.[1]

A choice of works from the mainstream repertory is unlikely to raise eyebrows. Realistically, most performers will have to play this repertory in order to secure some credibility. However, 'mainstream repertory' is not necessarily the same as 'the best repertory'. There are several reasons why some works, and not others, have come to the fore, and these reasons have as much to do with the historical availability of music as with its enduring quality, as the following paragraphs briefly show.

The music that was available to keyboard players before the eighteenth century included their own compositions as well as whatever repertory they could accumulate in manuscript, or purchase from the relatively small number of publications that were accessible. During the eighteenth century, especially towards its close, the music publishing industry expanded very rapidly. Not only did contemporary works appear in print, but a few selected

works by earlier composers began to be published. For example, by the end of the eighteenth century Bach's '48', some of Scarlatti's sonatas and certain of Handel's 'lessons' were readily available. However, other works such as Bach's 'French' or 'English' suites and much of Handel's and Scarlatti's music remained in manuscript and was seldom performed. Perhaps even more significantly, only a tiny proportion of keyboard music by any earlier composers was available.

By the second half of the nineteenth century keyboard players had access to a much greater body of keyboard music. The complete works of a number of composers were published along with some substantial anthologies. Despite the volume of publication, however, the process inevitably remained selective and some significant parts of the repertory were underrepresented – such as the earlier keyboard music of France, Italy, Austria and some other parts of continental Europe. Meanwhile, judgements were formed on the relative significance of works and composers. These judgements were expressed in a variety of ways; by the inclusion of works in keyboard tutors, anthologies, in historical recitals, and in the syllabuses of conservatories and other institutions. Histories of the piano and its music were also influential in shaping opinions about repertory. Early influential histories of repertory were those by Prosniz, Bie and Seiffert, all written at the end of the nineteenth century.[2]

In the twentieth century the notion of what constituted the mainstream repertory was reinforced by the recording industry. During the early decades of the century many 'core' works were recorded, such as the complete cycle of Beethoven's sonatas, but it was not until very much later that something of the real breadth of the keyboard repertory was represented in the recording catalogues.[3]

To a large extent the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century judgements about what constituted 'mainstream repertory' continue to inform the repertory choices of modern keyboard players. However, with the increasing availability of editions and recordings of hitherto little-known music it is evident that there are parts of the repertory that are unjustifiably underrepresented in modern performances. There is plenty of good keyboard music to explore outside of the confines of the 'mainstream repertory' and information about this extended repertory will be found in two main types of source.