



Aaron, Pietro (b. Florence, ?1480; d. after 1545) Italian theorist and composer.

One of the most prolific writers on music of the early sixteenth century, Aaron dealt with issues directly relating to musical performance in the final sections of his *Toscanello in musica* (Venice, 1523). The last chapter of Book 2 provides a practical guide to meantone TEMPERAMENT. It divides the octave into three major thirds, each regarded as the product of four perfect fifths, and recommends that each fifth should be made 'a little short' (*un poco scarsa*) so that the resulting major third is pure (5:4). The next section (the 'Supplement', which closes the treatise) offers a lengthy discussion of the use of accidentals in musical notation. The author argues that the signs of 'b rotondo' (flat) and 'diesis' (sharp) should be notated consistently and precisely, so that singers can perform their parts following the composers' intentions.

FURTHER READING

- M. Bent, 'Accidentals, counterpoint, and notation in Aaron's *Aggiunta* to the *Toscanello*', *JM*, 12 (1994), 306–44.
- P. Bergquist, 'The theoretical writings of Pietro Aaron', PhD dissertation, Columbia University (1964).
- B. J. Blackburn, E. E. Lowsinky and C. Miller (eds.), *A Correspondence of Renaissance Musicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 74–100, *passim*.

STEFANO MENGOLZI

Abel, Carl Friedrich (b. Cöthen, 22 December 1723; d. London, 20 June 1787) Composer, concert organiser, VIOL player and pupil of J. S. BACH.

His father was a colleague of Bach at Cöthen, and in the 1740s Abel was connected with members of the Bach family in Leipzig and Dresden. The Seven Years' War forced Abel to leave Dresden and during the 1758–9 season he arrived in London (probably visiting Mannheim and Paris en route) where he immediately started arranging concerts. Fresh from Italy, J. C. BACH arrived in London in 1762 and the pair collaborated on their first concert on 29 February 1764. Between January 1765 and May 1781 they ran their famous Bach/Abel series, the first regular subscription concerts in London, which consisted of ten to fifteen concerts annually. Here they performed their latest concertos, symphonies and chamber music and those of other members of the avant-garde; Abel delighted audiences with solos on the viol. In mid-1775 they built a new concert hall, the Hanover Square Rooms, furnished with paintings by their friend Thomas Gainsborough. Competition from the Pantheon concerts from 1774 helped to lead to the series' decline.

ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC (TWENTIETH CENTURY)

FURTHER READING

- P. Holman, *Life After Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010).
 S. McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

LUCY ROBINSON

Academy of Ancient Music (Eighteenth Century) London's Academy of Ancient Music, founded in 1726, played a pioneering role in the preservation and performance of earlier music, and thus in the development of the very concept of a historical canon of classical works. The Academy of Vocal Musick (as it was first known) was essentially a private club revolving round the main London choral foundations and dedicated to the enjoyment of 'Grave ancient vocell Musick' from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – sacred music and madrigals by Palestrina, Victoria and Marenzio, by Tallis, Byrd and MORLEY. With the change of name in 1731 and the addition of extra instrumentalists, the repertoire expanded to Purcell theatre music and (in 1732) a groundbreaking performance of Handel's *Esther*. Meanwhile the ever-expanding library was formalised and an educational arm formed under the leadership of Johann Christoph Pepusch.

While the term 'ancient' clearly reflected an antiquarian interest in older music, it also came to signify an ideological advocacy of the serious values of dignified contrapuntal music – pointedly reflected in the writings of JOHN HAWKINS, author of an account of the Academy printed in 1770. As a bulwark against the supposed triviality of modern *galant* idioms, the Academy translated a passionate commitment towards older values into both performance and composition. Thus as well as absorbing the music of Handel and his English contemporaries into the repertoire, it encouraged the composition of glees in madrigalian style and larger choral works by Benjamin Cooke and others. Yet gradually the original mission was diluted as the Academy came to resemble a public concert series for the wealthier bourgeoisie, and it entered a period of decline until a final season in 1802. Something of the Academy's spirit, however, lived on in the quite distinct, and decidedly aristocratic, CONCERT OF ANCIENT MUSIC which survived until 1848.

FURTHER READING

- C. Hogwood, "'Gropers into Antique Musick' or 'A very ancient and respectable Society'? Historical views of the Academy of Ancient Music", in C. Eisen (ed.), *Coll' astuzia, Col giudizio: Essays in Honor of Neal Zaslaw* (Ann Arbor, MI: Steglein, 2009), 127–82.

SIMON McVEIGH

Academy of Ancient Music (Twentieth Century) English ensemble.

The Academy of Ancient Music (AAM) was founded in 1973 by CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD. Flexible through chamber formations or as a small orchestra, AAM's repertoire ranges from Locke and Purcell through the high Baroque to MOZART and BEETHOVEN. The keyboard player Richard Egarr succeeded Hogwood as music director in September 2006. Guest directors have included Giuliano Carmignola, Stephen Cleobury, Edward Gardiner, Paul Goodwin,

Bernard Labadie, Stephen Layton and MASAAKI SUZUKI. In addition to its regular series of concerts in Cambridge and London, the ensemble tours internationally, and has performed live on every continent except Antarctica. AAM has been an Associate Ensemble at London's Barbican Centre as well as Orchestra-in-Residence at the University of Cambridge.

The ensemble's current discography embraces chamber, symphonic and operatic repertoire and its recordings have enjoyed industry recognition from Gramophone, Edison, Brit and MIDEM awards. AAM enjoyed a particularly fruitful association with Decca's L'Oiseau Lyre label and 'emerged from the studio to become one of the most prolific early music groups on records' (H. Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), 123). Its first recording, of overtures by Thomas Arne, was released in 1974. Four years later it began its pioneering set of the complete Mozart symphonies, which was completed in 1985. This was followed in 1989 by the Beethoven symphonies. Although incomplete, a project to record all the HAYDN symphonies for Decca under Hogwood's baton stands as a legacy to both Hogwood's development as a conductor as well as AAM's developing fluency. In the opinion of some aficionados, the Decca recordings of eighteen of Mozart's piano concertos with ROBERT LEVIN (released 1994–2001) represent the historical performance movement at its absolute zenith. In 2009 a performance of *Messiah*, from King's College Chapel, Cambridge, was broadcast internationally in real-time to cinemas in over 250 cities. Since 2013 the ensemble has recorded for AAM Records, utilising new technologies in the wider dissemination of its music making.

INGRID E. PEARSON

Accademia Monteverdiana Vocal and instrumental ensemble.

Of variable constitution and wide-ranging early music repertory, the Accademia Monteverdiana (AM) was founded in 1961 by the English musicologist, violinist and conductor Denis Stevens (1922–2004), who was its artistic director and president. Yehudi Menuhin was its vice-president, and NADIA BOULANGER and IGOR STRAVINSKY were among its trustees.

Inspired by recordings by Boulanger's ensemble of some of MONTEVERDI's madrigals, Stevens intended the AM to encompass research, performance and publication and thereby encourage public appreciation and understanding of early music, especially of Monteverdi's *oeuvre*. The AM grew out of the Ambrosian Singers, co-founded in 1951 by Stevens and tenor John McCarthy (1919–2009), because of the perceived need to establish an ensemble of appropriate touring proportions to give concert performances of largely Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music. Consisting basically of five singers and a harpsichordist, its complement varied according to programming, performance circumstances and locale (in a 1974 BBC Promenade Concert in Westminster Cathedral, for example, the ensemble comprised about 100 performers).

The AM presented its inaugural concert in the City of Bath Festival (1961), featuring violinists Menuhin and Robert Masters, keyboard player Kinloch Anderson and the core vocal quintet, and including spoken introductions by Stevens. Later that year, AM performed Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* in

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Westminster Abbey, using Stevens's edition. Recordings and radio broadcasts followed, along with concert tours throughout Europe and in the USA and performances (1967) in BBC Promenade Concerts and prestigious festivals such as those in Salzburg and Lucerne. Recordings embraced repertory ranging from Medieval carols, conductus, motets, masses and plainsong to works by Gesualdo, Grandi, Monteverdi, Albicastro, Vivaldi and other composers, including BEETHOVEN.

Although they played an invaluable role in bringing this repertory to public awareness, Stevens and the AM never resorted to experimentation with original instruments or period playing techniques, resisting many of the musicological propositions and organological revivals that burgeoned during the 1970s and 1980s.

FURTHER READING

D. Stevens, *Monteverdi in Venice* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001).

ROBIN STOWELL

Accent According to Cooper (1565) and Thomas (1587), an accent or a tune is 'the rysynge or fallynge of the voice' (G. Strahle, *An Early Music Dictionary* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–3). The accentuation of sixteenth-century vocal music is shaped by its inherent rhythms and language; the mensural system itself seems not to embody notions of accentuation, though that particular issue has proved controversial. In 1706 Kersey-Phillips defined accentuation as follows: 'Accent in Musick is a Modulation, or warbling of the Voice, to express the Passions, either Naturally or Artificially' (Strahle, 1). Terms used for metrical accentuation in the eighteenth century include *thesis* versus *arsis*, strong versus weak and finally *accented* versus *unaccented*. In H. C. Koch's *Kompositionslehre* (Leipzig, 1787, ii, § 51), an emphasis by means of duration rather than dynamic amounts in aesthetic terms to a stress accent. Such agogic accentuation is essential for interpretation not just on the ORGAN and HARPSICHORD. *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon* (Leipzig and Vienna, 1902–8, art. 'accent') made the following claim:

In music, one understands by the term accent the emphasis upon individual notes through greater strength of sound and (minimal) elongation of the sound. Regular bearers of accents are the main points of the themes, which are articulated in our notation through the barline as well as (in compound time signatures) through the break in the beaming of the quavers, semiquavers etc. However, the accentuation of these is not achieved abruptly or jerkily, but rather through the culmination of a *crescendo* approaching the upbeat; if, because of a so-called feminine ending, the motive extends beyond the barline, then the *diminuendo* is the obvious solution. These fundamental accentuations arising from the arrangement of the bars are in contrast to the accentuation of individual notes for melodic reasons (melodic climax) or harmonic reasons (dissonances, modulating notes), as well as the individual stronger emphasis of the opening notes of motives.

Meyer's contemporary HUGO RIEMANN declared in general terms: 'Just as with striking melodic intervals, so every striking chord, complex dissonance or far-

reaching harmonic step demands accentuation ... a gentle lingering (agogic accent) is generally suitable to illustrate dissonances' (*Handbuch des Klavierspiels* (Berlin: Max Hesses, 1905), 92).

In 1722 MATTHESON labelled strong beats of the bar such as the first and fourth quavers in 6/8 'accents', as distinct from 'emphases'. LEOPOLD MOZART (1756, § 9) similarly defines an 'accent ... an expression, stress or emphasis', which occurs 'mostly ... on the ... *nota buona*', that is, a stress on the strong beats of the bar. Realising the hierarchy of the bar involved due emphasis on the so-called *note buone*, the notes of natural rhythmic stress – particularly the first note of each bar, but also other notes, depending on the TEMPO. This concept, already well developed by the end of the sixteenth century, was restated in many TREATISES of the eighteenth century. J. A. P. Schulz (*Article I. Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (Leipzig, 1794)) was probably one of the first to stress that those who constantly strongly mark the first beat of the bar destroy the whole piece. Similarly, KOCH (1802, 49–52) warned that the 'grammatical accents' relating to beaming and barring 'in performance, especially ... of passages of similar notes in lively motion, must not be as pronounced as the rhetorical or pathetic accent ... but rather must be so finely nuanced as to be barely perceptible, otherwise a tasteless, limping style of performance results which has the same effect as when one, for example, scans the verse while reading a poem aloud'. He observes that the vivid presentation of a melody within a piece of music depends largely upon the correct rendition of the rhetorical and pathetic accents, while adding that the effect of the stress on these notes is better sensed than described. Generations later, rhetorical, pathetic, melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, thematic, quantitative and extreme accents were distinguished from one another in A. F. Christiani's *Verständnis im Klavierspiel* (Leipzig, 1886). However, this type of terminology has never really become established. Furthermore, it has not always been remembered that meaningful, musical accentuation is applied not only to individual notes, but also to figurations.

Composers have taken a rather less structured approach. In 1923 SCHOENBERG remarked that perfect symmetry is not suited to music, since it impedes any freely flowing, spiritually uplifting phrasing; for instance, through an amateurish over-emphasis on the strong beats. The barline, which should be a regulating 'servant', should not become the 'master'; over-accentuation of strong beats shows poor musicianship, but to bring out the centre of gravity of a phrase is indispensable to its intelligent and intelligible presentation. Musicians such as BUSONI strongly prioritised the melodic line over the metric downbeat; according to him, the barline was just for the eye! One composition student of ALBAN BERG (T. Adorno, *Zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion*, ed. H. Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001), 171f.) believed: 'In traditional music it is insufficient to perform independently of the barline; rather one must *simultaneously* feel the absolute and the bar emphases, in other words, bring out the conflict between the two ... for example in the second theme of the Finale of [Schumann's] Piano Concerto, one must not only emphasise the apparent 3/2 metre, but also always allow the 3/4 to be audible, so as to give some emphasis to the rest in the second bar.'

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Explicitly notated accentuation marks are rarely encountered before the Baroque since such nuance was left to the good TASTE of the musician, especially in instrumental music. ‘The staccato mark’s dual function was never clearly differentiated’; in HAYDN’s later works, ‘(v) was used occasionally as an accent sign’ (Brown, 98). *Rinforzando* was sometimes intended to signify more than punctual accentuation or emphasising; it was ‘sometimes synonymous with *crescendo*’ (Brown, 62). Carl Czerny understood ^, >, *rf*, *sf*, *fz* and even *fp* as identical signs.

Erwin Stein (60) claimed that ‘there is considerable confusion about the significance of *marcato*, >, ^, *sf*, *fp*, etc., because the practice of composers varies, even during their lifetime’. A. B. Marx had already ranked *sf* and *ff* as of lesser intensity in early and middle BEETHOVEN than in his late works. In the Septet, Op. 20, the small vertical staccato wedge does indeed indicate an accent. In Schubert, directions such as *fz*, *sfz*, *ffz*, *fp*, *sfp* and >

indicate which aspects of the melody, harmony or rhythm are to be emphasized: they clarify the structure of the musical fabric, though often they merely reflect the impetus of the composer. They cannot always be assigned unambiguously to particular instruments [of the full score] or incorporated within the flow of the music ... The accent marks (>), *fz* (*sfz*) and *fp* (*sfp*) are often used synonymously and interchangeably ... Where *ff* and *fz* occur together, the first refers to the dynamic level in general whereas the second calls for a particular accent with respect to a rhythmic figure.

(NEUE SCHUBERT-AUSGABE V. 1, PREFACE)

If the *Moment Musical*, Op. 94 No. 5 has an accent > on the first beat of virtually every bar, then there must surely be a subtle differentiation according to the degree of dissonance and tonal syntax in order to avoid the ‘accursed chopping’ which Schubert expressly ‘could not stand’ (Letter 25 July 1824, in O. E. Deutsch (ed.), *Schubert: Die Dokumente seines Lebens* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1964), 299), and which occasionally mars the playing of even great pianists. The symbol ^, which usually denotes a lesser intensity than *sf* and *rfz*, was regarded by Riemann as an indication of agogic elongation. Conversely, ‘*Sforzatos* are often exaggerated, or neglected, by performers ... and composers would do well to accept Stravinsky’s method of indicating the dynamic level: *sf* in *pp*, or *marc* in *p*’ (Stein, 62).

‘Intervals which do not ... belong to the diatonic scale’ – the notes through which one modulates – are perceptibly emphasised, to a greater or lesser extent. Intervals which are dissonant to the bass, or which prepare dissonant intervals, as well as ‘notes which noticeably stand out because of their length, high or low pitch, etc’ should be emphasised (Türk, 1789, 337). Chopin also adhered to this practice, which ‘he often repeated to his pupils’, according to Jan Kleczynski (*Chopin’s Greater Works* (London: Reeves, 1896), 23); ‘a long note should be played more strongly, just like a stressed note. Equally, a dissonance should be more pronounced’, as well as syncopations. Conversely, the end of a phrase, before a comma or a full stop, is always weak. When a melody ascends, one should *crescendo*; when it descends, *decrescendo*. Decisions must be made according to the context and aesthetic function. Chopin was called the Ariel of the PIANO in the

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nineteenth century on account of the lightness, tenderness, cleanness, elegance and grace of his playing (see M. Tomaszewski, *Chopin* (Poznań: Podsiadlik-Raniowski i Spółka, c1998), 53).

FURTHER READING

- C. Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
 E. Stein, *Form and Performance* (London: Faber, 1962).

MATTHIAS THIEMEL (TRANS. NATASHA LOGES)

Accentuation *see* ACCENT

Adam, (Jean-) Louis (Johann Ludwig) (b. Muttersholtz, 3 December 1758; d. Paris, 8 April 1848) French composer, music teacher and piano virtuoso.

Louis Adam composed primarily for the piano but also for the orchestra and the voice. He arrived in Paris in the mid-1770s and taught at the PARIS CONSERVATOIRE from 1797. With Ludwig-Wenzel Lachnith he published the *Méthode ou principe général du doigté* (Paris: Sieber, 1798, R/2001), but of greater significance was his official *Méthode de piano du Conservatoire* (Paris: Conservatoire de Musique, 1804). Adam's tutor stresses a quiet, finger-based technique and a legato approach; super-legato (in which the notes are held for longer than indicated) is also described. With one exception, he advocates upper-note trills and all his ornament explanations start on the beat. He describes a rubato in which the beat of the melody line is displaced from the accompaniment. Adam's tutor also contains an extensive and robust defence of PEDALLING. He describes the lute, moderator, sustaining and lid-swell (squares only) and *una corda* (grands only) of French pianos. Examples are included for all the pedals except the lid-swell, but he reserves his longest discussion for the sustaining pedal, his approach to which is the most modern of the period.

FURTHER READING

- J.-M. Fauquet, *Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).
 M. van Epenhuysen Rose, 'L'art de bien chanter: French pianos and their music before 1820', PhD dissertation, New York University (2006).

DAVID ROWLAND

Adam of Fulda *see* FULDA, ADAM OF

Adler, Guido (b. Eibenschütz [now Ivančice], Moravia, 1 November 1855; d. Vienna, 15 February 1941) Austrian musicologist.

Adler established himself as one of the pioneers of modern musicology with his article 'Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft', printed in the first issue (1885) of the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, which he founded with Spitta and Chrysander. As professor for musicology at the University of Vienna, he founded and acted as general editor (1894–1938) of the *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*.

FURTHER READING

- C. Rosenthal, 'Reminiscences of Guido Adler (1855–1941)', *Musica Judaica*, 8 (1985–6), 13–22.

DAVID FALLOWS

ADORNO, THEODOR W

Adlung, Jakob (b. Bindersleben, nr Erfurt, 14 January 1699; d. Erfurt, 5 July 1762)
 German organist and scholar.

After university studies at Jena, Adlung returned to his home town of Erfurt to succeed Buttstedt as organist of the Prediger Church. His two extant books, *Anleitung zur musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (Erfurt, 1758) and *Musica mechanica organoedi* (Berlin, 1768) are major sources about music in the German Baroque. *Anleitung* contains his knowledge of music history, tuning, ORGAN history, construction and registration as well as SINGING, thoroughbass, IMPROVISATION, Italian TABLATURE and composition. In *Musica mechanica* he recorded unique data concerning early eighteenth-century organs in middle Germany. It serves as an encyclopedia, with details of organ-builders, organ construction and tonal characteristics, cases, wind chambers, pipes and registers, tuning and TEMPERAMENT, methods of testing new instruments as well as giving detailed descriptions of more than eighty German organs. The editorial notes made by J. L. Albrecht and J. F. AGRICOLA reveal J. S. BACH's opinions on organ building and design.

FURTHER READING

- J. Adlung, *Musica mechanica organoedi* (1726) 2 vols. (Berlin, 1768); ed. C. Marenholz (Kassel, 1931); Trans. Q. Faulkner as *Musical Mechanics for the Organist* (Lincoln, NE: Zea E-Books, 2011).
 P. Williams, *The European Organ 1450–1850* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1966).

DAVID PONSFORD

Adorno, Theodor W. (b. Frankfurt, 11 September 1903; d. Brig, Switzerland, 6 August 1969) German philosopher and sociologist.

Adorno studied at Frankfurt University (1921–4), and became professor of philosophy there in 1949, after fifteen years of exile in the 1930s and 1940s in Britain and the USA. His most important philosophical works are *Negative Dialectics* (1966) and *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), and his most infamous book on music is *Philosophy of New Music* (1949). He was also a musician and music critic, and had studied the piano and composition at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt with Bernhard Sekles, later studying composition in Vienna in the mid-1920s with ALBAN BERG and piano with Eduard Steuermann.

Adorno wrote extensively on music, publishing many books and essays on a wide range of musical subjects, including the Second Viennese School, STRAVINSKY, BACH, BEETHOVEN, JAZZ and mass culture. His approach is always to understand the music as mediated by its historical and political context, an example of which is his critique of 'AUTHENTICITY' and the historical performance movement in his article 'Bach defended against his devotees' (1951, in *Prisms*, trans. S. and S. Weber (London: Spearman, 1967), 133–46). He worked sporadically over a period of forty years on a 'theory of musical reproduction', orientated towards the aesthetics of performance rather than directly towards musical practice. He began the project in the mid-1920s, and pursued it in the 1930s and 1940s initially as a proposed collaboration with the violinist RUDOLF KOLISCH, finally returning to it in the 1950s and 1960s. It was never completed, and remained at his death in fragmentary form as notes, drafts and outlines. These fragments were finally published in German

(*Zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion*, ed. H. Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001)) and in an English translation (as *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*, ed. H. Lonitz, trans. W. Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006)).

The fundamental idea underlying the ‘theory of reproduction’ is that performance as interpretation is a form of critique, a critical practice. An important focus is the relationship of performer to score. Adorno conceives the musical score as having three elements: 1) the *mensural* (i.e. the score as rationalised ‘sign-system’ indicating duration, pitch, barlines and so on); 2) the *neumatic* (i.e. the gestural/mimetic aspects of the score, including phrasing, directions for EXPRESSION and DYNAMICS); and 3) the *idiomatic* (i.e. directions suggesting the ‘language-like’ aspects of the music – although this is the least developed of his three basic concepts). He says that ‘the theme of the study is really the dialectic between these elements’. The question of what it means to play a piece ‘correctly’, and the conviction that a theory of musical reproduction would concern the idea of a ‘true interpretation’ (*die Idee der wahren Interpretation*) is inseparable for Adorno from what might seem to be its opposite – the idea that interpretation changes historically, as he argues do musical works and our reception of them. He sees performance both as a process of interpretation and as an autonomous form in its own right, just as he sees composition as a process and the musical work as an autonomous form. Only one short essay from the project was published during Adorno’s lifetime: ‘Zum Problem der Reproduktion’ (1925. In *Pult und Taktstock* 2, vol. 4. Republished in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19, ed. R. Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984), 440–4).

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 M. Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).
 ‘Riddle-character, interpretation, and dialectical image: Adorno’s philosophy and the case of musical performance’, *New German Critique* (special edition: *Adorno and Music: Critical Variations*), 43/3(129) (November 2016), 139–54.

MAX PADDISON

Aesthetics

Aesthetics and the Performing Arts

The word ‘aesthetics’ derives from the Greek ‘aisthesis’ meaning ‘perception’. It is now commonly used in two broad senses to indicate: 1) any theoretical or experiential engagement with the arts in relation to their ‘art-ness’; or 2) any focus on those attributes and qualities – such as design, colour, gesture, appearance or manner of execution – that appeal to the senses and are valued for their own sake wherever they are found (e.g. in nature, ordinary objects).

The relationship between art and aesthetic perception is problematic, as is the notion of beauty that is assumed by many to be perceived through those activities. In Plato and Aristotle art is discussed in relation to craftsmanship and the imitation of nature, but almost never in conjunction with beauty (a brief exception can be found in Plato’s *De Re Publica*, Book III), and the notion of perception is analysed (notably in Aristotle’s *De Anima*) but never in

relation to art. These disjunctions open up a number of intriguing questions. Do all things done with skill and artistry necessarily lead to the creation of artworks? Is the possession of aesthetic attributes on its own sufficient to designate something as art? And is musical performance an art or a craft?

An early attempt to designate performance as a distinct type of art can be found in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (Book II, xviii, 1), dating from c60AD, where he separately discusses the arts of theory (e.g. mathematics), practice (e.g. dance or music) and production (e.g. painting). However, he leaves open the question of whether the second category is able to create an artistic product purely in its own right, or whether it merely reveals an artwork conceived under the third, 'productive', category. From at least the eighteenth century music was categorised as one of the 'fine arts', which also included painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, theatre and dance. This system separated the fine arts from the so-called 'applied arts' (decorative crafts, etc.). In doing that it contrasted the full imaginative control that originating artists had over form and content in the former, with the routinised and repetitive skills found in the latter, no matter how expertly and sensitively executed. It is a legacy of this system that the level of creativity required by musical performers, actors and dancers is sometimes called into question.

It was Alexander Baumgarten in his *Aesthetica* (1750) who established aesthetics as a distinct discipline. He argued that knowledge derived from the senses is of a special kind that can stand alongside conceptual knowledge and logical truth. His engagement with the aesthetic was transformed in Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) into a sophisticated theory of how we perceive the aesthetically beautiful through judgements of TASTE. This theory has much relevance for our experiences of art, but in Kant's writings the connection between the two is not altogether transparent. This is because his categories of art are based on a system that emphasises the senses and skills involved rather than the art objects themselves, and because his notion of aesthetic experience is not primarily concerned with art. A sunset, for example, may be aesthetically beautiful without our being able to speak of it in terms normally applied to art – it cannot in itself be well crafted, ironic, a profound commentary on the human condition, or a transformation of a genre.

Aesthetics is often associated with a rather simplistic notion of 'the beautiful', sometimes meaning little more in popular usage than the 'pleasing' or the 'pretty'. Kant himself was at pains to make a distinction between the beautiful and the awe-inspiring sublime, and later developments in art, such as Realism and Brutalism, and the gradual displacement of 'beauty' by 'truth' as an artistic paradigm meant that aesthetic properties expanded to include the disturbing, the shocking and – more recently – the camp, the cute and much else besides.

Issues of Identity and Definition

How we define something partly determines how we value it and how we ready ourselves for the types of experience we think we are likely to get from it. For the musical performer the most pressing issues come not from questions about how we might define music itself, but how we might construct a viable notion of the identity of a musical work (and the 'mode of its existence' – its 'ontology') given the variety of its performances. This question underpins