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Musical performance as analytical communication

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PUZZLING EXPERIENCES

In my first year as a graduate student of music theory, I took a seminar on the relation between analysis and performance of classical music. The topic intrigued me; I had known of some writings on the subject, but I had not devoted sustained thought to the interaction of analysis and performance before. I was eager to understand the relations between two activities, each of which had already engaged me deeply.

The class meetings usually involved detailed analytical discussion of a piece, along with comments on the implications of the analysis for various performance decisions. The analyses covered a range of topics, but voice-leading, phrase structure, meter, and rhythm came up frequently. After the analytical discussion, there would be performance of some or all of the piece, typically by the teacher but sometimes by students. (Parts of the piece might be performed during the analytical discussion, also, but the most significant performances came after we reached analytical conclusions and derived some consequences for performance.) Performances led to further conversation, evaluating their success in responding to the analytical discussion.

I found the class exciting. Often, the performances seemed magically illuminating, and it was hard to doubt that analytical awareness contributed decisively to their clarity and intelligence. I praised the course highly to one of my undergraduate teachers, telling him that after such a course one simply did not hear music the same way.

A few months after the course ended, the teacher gave a solo piano recital. I had not heard him perform except in the classroom, and I was eager to hear him play a whole program in public. I did not

know what to expect. But I thought that the recital, at best, would offer a prolonged experience of the remarkable lucidity that had characterized many performances during the seminar.

Instead I found the concert bewildering. Many details of performance choice took me by surprise and, to my consternation, I was unable to integrate them into a comprehensive understanding of the music. For some of the pieces on the program, I already had analytical ideas and performance habits of my own; the differences between the way I had played or imagined the music, and what I heard in the concert, made it difficult to take in the performance. But even when I was not fighting off preconceptions, I still found that the performances fell far short of the lucid exposition that I thought I might hear. The difference between the impact of performances in the classroom and this public performance was striking.

How was I to understand this disappointing experience? Perhaps the performances at the recital were just not very good. But this was the same pianist whose performances in class had seemed so articulate. Perhaps the performances were fine, and I was just a bit slow at getting their point. But I had not been slow to understand the performances in the classroom.

Another member of the audience, greeting the performer afterward, said that he wanted to talk later about one of the pieces on the program, to hear the pianist's ideas about it. I was surprised to overhear this remark, and wondered if it had been tactless. If one heard the performance, and still needed to talk to the performer about his ideas, did that imply that the performance was a failure? Would a good performance not communicate the performer's ideas adequately, all by itself?

The conjunction of an apparently successful seminar on analysis and performance with my unsuccessful attempt to recover analytical insights from a performance was thought-provoking. What was going on in the classroom when we were discussing analysis and performance? During the course, I thought I knew what I was learning; now I was less sure.

THE STANDARD CONCEPTION

The ideas I encountered in my first course on analysis and performance were not idiosyncratic; the conception of the relation between performance and analysis that guided that course pervades published writings on the subject. It is common enough that I shall

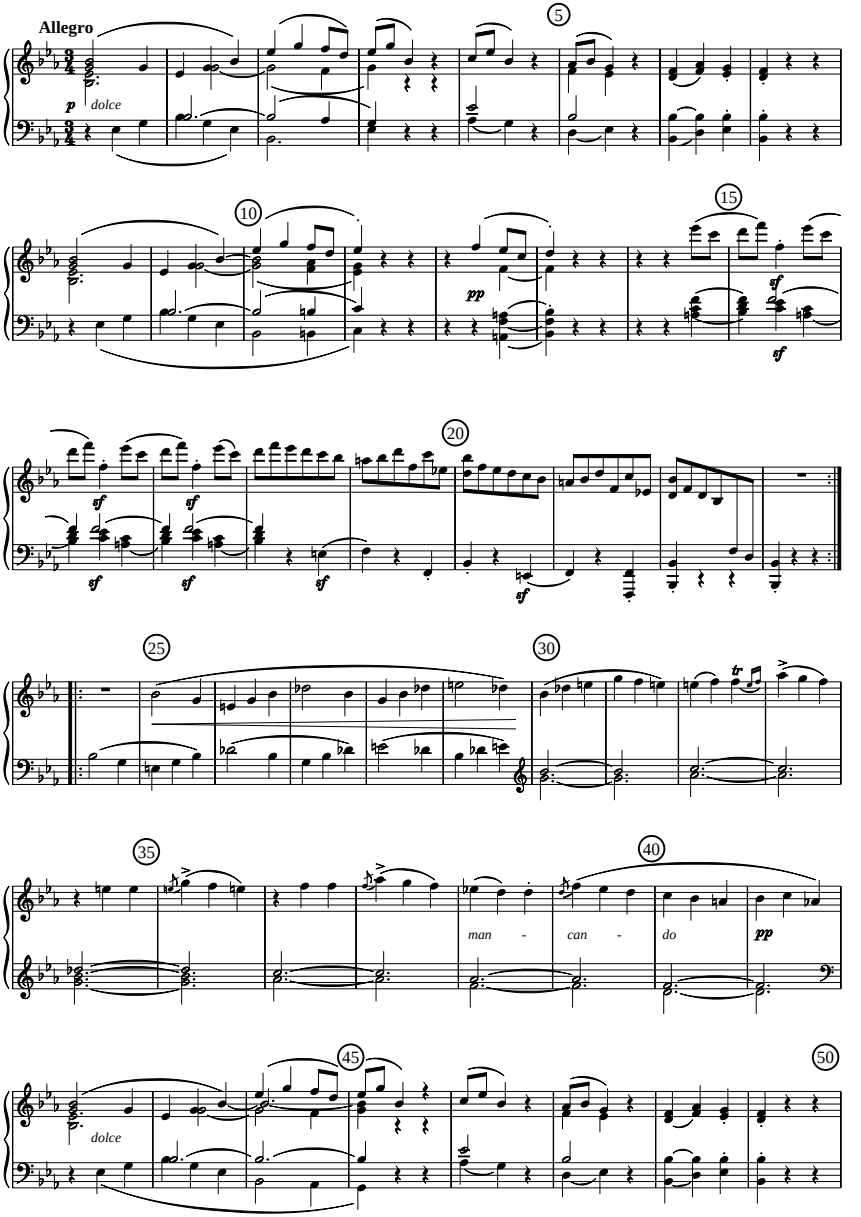
refer to it as ''the standard conception'' of this relationship. Charles Burkhart's essay on ''Schenker's Theory of Levels and Musical Performance'' can provide a clear illustration.[1]

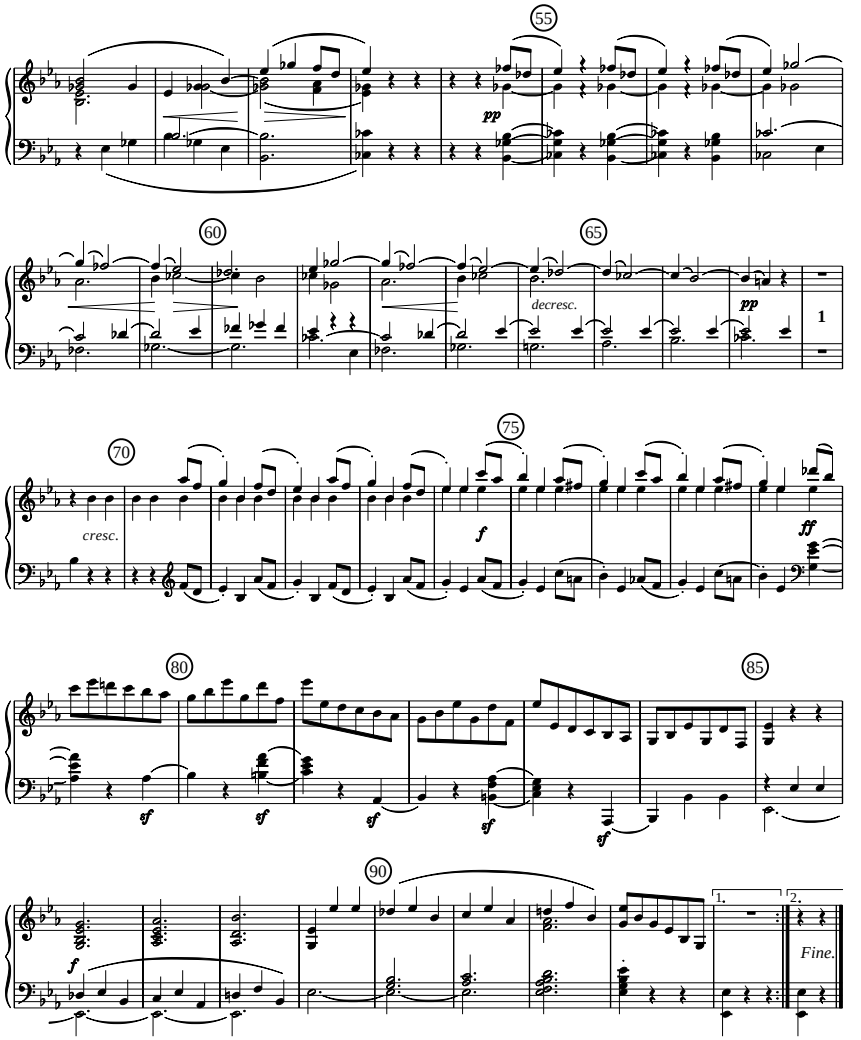
Burkhart notes that ''Schenker saw his theory as revealing the music's 'content'.'' By revealing this content, the theory ''provided the performer with valuable objective information applicable to performance, thereby decreasing the performer's need to rely on guesswork and personal fancy (96).'' Burkhart considers several examples in light of this attitude. His discussion of a moment in the third movement of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 7, will show the approach. (Example 1 gives a score of the movement.)

Burkhart observes that there are no legato slurs in the melody at mm. 61 and 62; the performer must decide how to relate the successive melodic notes at these points. Then, in order to address this necessary decision, Burkhart provides an analytical observation. He suggests that mm. 58 – 68 present an enlarged form of the motive that first appears in m. 4: e♭ – g – ♭♭ expands and alters to become the e♭ – g♭ – a of the later passage. Burkhart continues by indicating the implications for performance: ''Now the 'hard' advice that this analysis gives to the performer must surely be to 'bring out' this enlarged motive somehow. There are various ways to do this, but a very direct one would be to lift the right hand before striking the e♭ in bar 62. Slurring into the e♭ can easily obscure the motivic relationship (102).'' Having made an analytical observation, Burkhart moves to performance instructions by assuming that the performer should somehow ''bring out'' the same features as the analytical claim.

This reasoning reflects a general position that Burkhart shares with other well-known writers on analysis and performance. I can summarize the general position in three claims. (1) Analysis discovers facts about musical works. (2) Performance is a means of communicating facts about musical works. (3) The facts that performers ''bring out'' are, at least in a range of important cases, the same as the facts that analysts discover.

Since Burkhart's essay concerns Schenker's views on analysis and performance, one might assume that this general position is distinctively Schenkerian. William Rothstein summarizes Schenker's views in very similar terms: ''To [Schenker's] way of thinking, performance is the means of making audible that which is already objectively there in the work . . . [But the performer should not] assume that the structure of the work will express itself adequately without his help.





Example 1

Rather, he must seek those means that will communicate the structure and the affect of the work as clearly as possible."[2] For Schenker, something is true of the work, and the performer's task is to find a means of communicating it.

But the position I have summarized is shared by writers who differ on many other theoretical matters, and who differ from Schenker in other important areas of theory. It dominates a well-known non-Schenkerian book on the topic, Edward T. Cone's *Musical Form and*

Musical Performance.[3] In the book, Cone asks how one can ''achieve valid and effective musical performance (12),'' and answers: ''by discovering and making clear the rhythmic life of the composition (31).'' Or, as he puts it in another formulation, ''valid performance depends primarily on the perception and communication of the rhythmic life of a composition (38).'' Both formulations emphasize a cognitive component (perception or discovery) and a communicative component. Analysis, on Cone's view, should uncover facts about the rhythmic life of the piece, and the performance should communicate these facts.

The conception of performance as a kind of discourse about the piece leads Cone to write about performance in linguistic metaphors. He writes that ''the more complex ... the composition, the more relationships its performance must be prepared to explain (33–34),'' as though a performer, like an analyst, explains the relationships in the piece. With reference to a piece by Mozart, he writes of a ''kind of performance'' that ''emphasizes the fact that the melodic descent to the tonic is, in such a position, only a local detail (44),'' as though a performer, like an analyst, issues factual statements about the hierarchical relations of events.

Similarly, Peter Westergaard devotes a chapter of his textbook on tonal theory to ''some of the means the performer can use to make the structure of a passage clear to his listener.''[4] Westergaard summarizes the performer's tasks: ''It is up to the performer to use not only any means specified by the composer, but also whatever other means he needs to make the sense of the passage clear to his listener. In other words, he must not only understand the sense of the passage, but be able to decide which means are best suited to project that sense.'' Westergaard's formulation brings out with particular clarity the basic dualism that underlies this view of performance, the distinction between the ''what'' and the ''how'' of a performer's communicative act. One thing, the sense of a passage, is communicated by means of something else, the details of the particular performance.

Again, Wallace Berry explains the contribution of analysis to performance: ''The musical experience is richest when functional elements of shape, continuity, vitality, and direction have been sharply discerned in analysis, and construed as a basis for the intellectual awareness which must underlie truly illuminating interpretation.'' Berry continues with an encapsulation of his view: ''In that sense, a good performance is a portrayal, a critical discourse on the conceived meaning of a work ...''[5] And again, Nicholas Cook

writes warmly that, for Furtwängler, ''tempo modification was the primary means for creating what are, in effect, analyses in sound.''[6]

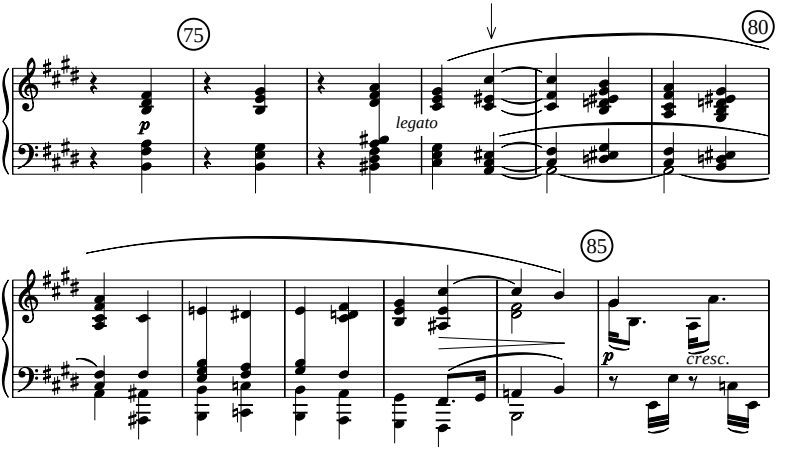
The position these writers share is that the performer is like an analyst, except that the performer conveys analytical information by performing rather than by talking or writing. Performance decisions translate analytical insights into a kind of sonic code, and presumably listeners who understand the code can recover the analytical points.

Performance as analytical communication: this conception has the pleasantly paradoxical quality of many good metaphors. But it also might shape evaluations of theory and performance in certain ways. If performance amounts to a form of analytical discourse then performers, like analysts and other scholars, would appear to be in the highly respectable business of cognitive communication. This idea might enhance the intellectual prestige of performers, at least in circles where scholarly pursuits are more prestigious than practice or craft. Alternatively, in a setting such as a conservatory, where performers have high status and the role of theorists may seem obscure, the standard conception might enhance the musical prestige of theory teachers. It guarantees the relevance of required courses in theory and analysis, in a remarkably direct way; the standard conception gives an answer to the student or performance instructor who asks about the value of theory and analysis.

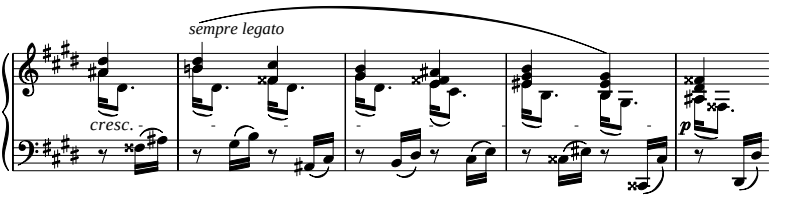
Practical problems with the standard conception

But it is not easy to work out the details of this conception in a plausible way. To see some of the problems, we can return to Burkhart's performance suggestion about Beethoven's Op. 7. It is worth lingering over this example because it is typical of much writing about performance and analysis, no better or worse than many other examples one could find.

In particular, if there is any problem with Burkhart's performance advice, the problem does not arise from the analytical point, which is attractive: it is pleasing to hear mm. 58 – 68 as a slow, smooth, filled-in version of the abrupt, jumpy motive from m. 4. In fact, one can take the point further. Much of the movement can be heard as a series of responses to the first four-measure phrase, which juxtaposes the smooth, gentle motion of mm. 1 – 3 with the somewhat inappropriate-sounding figure that ends the phrase; mm. 58 – 68, then, can be heard as an extreme attempt to modify the character of the motive.



Example 2a



Example 2b

But, in general, it is not obvious that motivic relations require that a performer somehow ''bring them out,'' and sometimes it seems that special emphasis on a motivic connection would be a mistake. Donald F. Tovey provides a nice illustration of this point in his performance notes on the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 109.[7] Example 2a shows a passage near the end of the movement. At m. 78, marked with an arrow, a long phrase begins; the phrase includes material from an earlier phrase, shown in Ex. 2b, but the long phrase in mm. 78 – 85 begins before the citation and continues after it. Beethoven's slur begins with the g♯ in m. 78; that is, the slur does not reflect the beginning of the motivic material. Tovey instructs the performer: ''Begin your legato on the first of the bar as Beethoven tells you, neither joining it to the previous chords nor separating it from the c♯ which initiates an allusion to [the] figure ... of bars 21 – 25.'' And Tovey continues, somewhat testily: ''The joints of melodies and of other living things are not served up at table.'' Tovey implies, correctly I think, that an articulation,

intended to "bring out" the motivic relation, would be unattractively didactic.

Perhaps the passage from Op. 109 is different from the passage Burkhart discusses; the motivic connection in Op. 109 is pretty hard to miss, after all, and it might be that Burkhart's point needs a little more help to come across. (And there does not seem to be any serious musical cost to following Burkhart's performance advice!) But once I have understood Burkhart's point, I have little difficulty in hearing the motivic relation he identifies. I hear the melody as oscillating between eb and gb in mm. 58 – 62, then filling in a span from gb down to a in mm. 62 – 68. And I regard the oscillation between two pitches as a variant of a simple skip, and the stepwise descent as an elaboration of a skip between the notes that form its beginning and end. Thinking of the passage that way, I hear a resemblance to the opening quite readily, and I can do this without any special assistance from a performer. That is, contrary to Burkhart's suggestion, I do not find that a performer who slurs across the whole eleven measures will prevent me from enjoying the motivic aspect of the passage.

But perhaps Burkhart is not primarily concerned with a listener who has already understood the analytical point. Rather, the advice to the performer may be designed to help a listener discover the motivic relation. By breaking before the e♭ in m. 62, a pianist will draw attention to the note, and it is true that this might help a listener recognize the motive. A fresh start in m. 62 creates a slightly shorter version of the motive, which can be heard as extending between mm. 62 – 68. Thus, a listener would have to identify only a seven-measure expansion of the original figure. Having recognized the motive, a listener could retrospectively identify mm. 58 – 61 as a preliminary attempt to state the motive, a sort of false start, and thus could recognize the complete eleven-measure form of the figure.

Even so, it is not clear whether most listeners would be led by such an articulation to an identification of the motivic recurrence. In fact, a listener could easily understand an articulation between mm. 61 – 62 in some completely different way. For instance, a listener might hear the break before m. 62 as undermining the sense of a cadential resolution from m. 61 into m. 62; thus, the listener would hear two incomplete gestures, mm. 58 – 61 followed by mm. 62 – 68. Hearing the music that way, one might or might not also notice a motivic relation to m. 4.

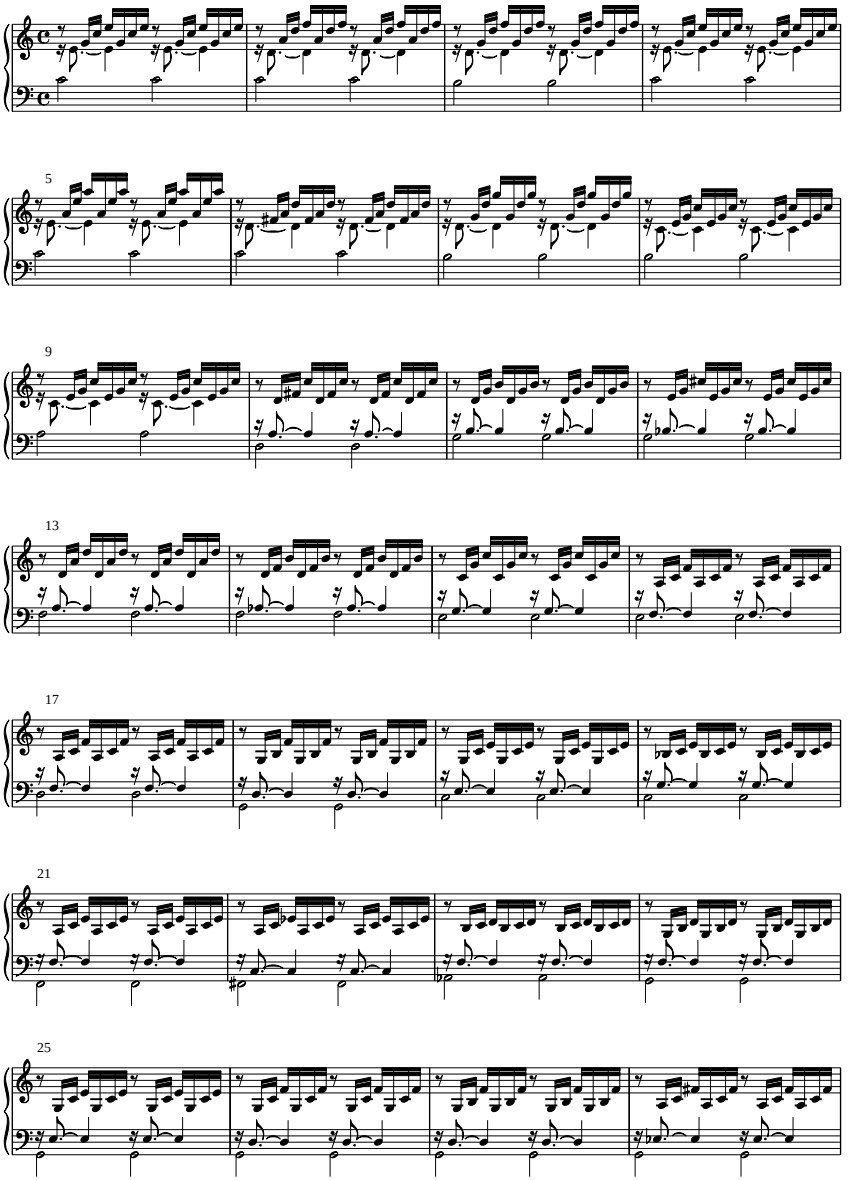
So it seems that Burkhart's performance inflection is not needed

by a listener who already understands the motivic relation, and might not succeed in communicating the motivic point to someone who has not already noticed it. As a mode of analytical communication, an articulation before m. 62 seems inefficient and unreliable! The problem in Burkhart's performance advice come from the fact that he does not consider the position of a listener. Burkhart moves directly from analysis to performance advice without asking how a listener might construe the resulting performance.[8]

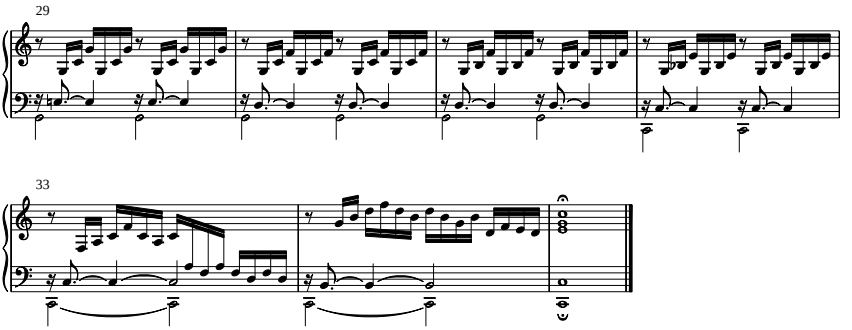
Here is another example of a possible analysis-based performance decision, this time dealing with large-scale form. Example 3 gives a score of the first Prelude from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier; Example 4 summarizes aspects of Schenker's attractive analysis of the piece.[9] On Schenker's account, the first large section of the piece elaborates the opening sonority, transferring it down an octave. A dominant divides this span but, as the upper part makes clear, this dominant is internal to a long tonic prolongation. Thus, for over half its length, the piece is relatively static in its basic pitch structure. Then, the piece approaches a dominant, with the second scale degree in the soprano, by way of remarkable chromaticism. Only at the end of the piece, in the next-to-last measure, does the upper line recover its original register, in order to lead the line from the second degree down to the final tonic.

Now if we ask what ''hard advice'' this analysis yields for performance, on the assumption that the performance will somehow communicate ''the same facts'' as the analysis, the advice is presumably to perform the opening span rather placidly and, in particular, to make the arrival at its intermediate dominant relatively unemphatic. The approach to the subsequent lower-register dominant should give greater weight to that moment; of course there are various ways that this might be accomplished, and the chromaticism and fuller sonority will contribute to the effect. In approaching the final cadence, a performer might want to focus the gesture on the high d's (they will receive some emphasis from their metrical position in any case). And a performer influenced by Schenker might avoid excessive emphasis on the chord four measures before the end, the deceptive resolution of the V, in order to save the sense of resolution for the final chord.

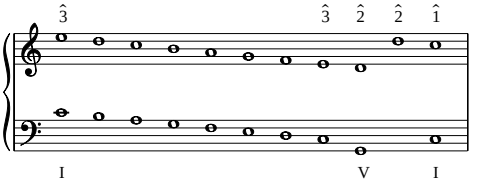
If there is any theorist whose ideas contrast with those of Schenker, it is Walter Piston, and as it happens Piston published an analysis of the same Prelude.[10] As one might anticipate, Piston indicates the harmony of each measure with roman numerals. He also supplies



Example 3



Example 3, continued



Example 4

formal comments in a series of footnotes to the score. At the early cadence to a tonicized G, he identifies ''the first sign of cadential formula strong enough to mark the end of a phrase.'' A few measures later, when the piece reaches the C major triad in the lower octave, he writes that ''The cadence here is the exact parallel to the one at the eleventh measure, and marks the end of the second phrase. The main body of the piece is now finished, the remainder being a coda.'' The contrast with Schenker is stark. Where Schenker finds a prolongation of the opening chord, preceding the most significant structural activity, Piston finds ''the main body of the piece''; where Schenker finds the essential motion toward closure, Piston finds a coda.

Drawing on these analyses, one can imagine an encounter between two musicians. One has been trained in Schenkerian analysis, the other has been trained in accord with Piston's views; call the two musicians ''Sam'' and ''Pat.'' Suppose that Sam wants to expose Pat to Schenker's views, using this Prelude as an example. Sam might produce Schenker's graphs, or present the analysis verbally. But perhaps Sam will try, instead, to communicate the analysis by playing the piece. What will happen?

Pat will be able to describe the performance without abandoning Piston's analysis. The piece can be heard, in Piston's terms, as including a complete structure, formed by a pair of relatively simple

phrases, followed by a remarkably eventful passage that is, in a sense, structurally gratuitous. What is wrong with that? Why not praise the bold imagination of a composer who can take off, in such a splendid way, after the main action of a piece is complete? Anything a performer does to place the weight of the piece near the end can be heard as an enhancement of this beautifully elaborated coda.

Once again, performance turns out to be a rather feeble means for communicating beliefs about musical structure. They are only two examples, but, more generally, I do not think that theorists know very much about the extent to which performance details can actually communicate analytical information.

Listening, according to the standard conception

What would a listener need to do in order to infer analytical claims from performance details? Recall the basic dualism that I mentioned before. In order to interpret a performance as an analytical communication, a listener must ascribe two things to the performer: a set of analytical beliefs, and a set of beliefs about the meanings of performance decisions. Thus, the interpretation of a performance in terms of analytical claims is like the solution of an equation with two variables. Confronted with an equation like $x + y = 10$, different combinations of numbers can satisfy the two variables, and one cannot give a definite value for one variable unless a value for the other variable is settled. Analogously, given a performance detail of some sort, one can suggest different explanations of the performance, since the explanations involve two interacting factors. This is not just a matter of abstract principle, but describes a completely realistic possibility of multiple interpretation. Thus, in the case of the Bach Prelude, one might ascribe to the performer a belief that intensification of performance tends to signal structural weight, and therefore also ascribe an analytical claim that the main structural activity of the Prelude occurs near the end. But it is also possible to ascribe to the performer a belief that intensification tends to signal something beautiful and unexpected, along with an analytical claim that the end of the Prelude is an elaborate, structurally unnecessary coda. Likewise, one can interpret Burkhart's suggested phrasing as demarcating a melodically significant unit, and ascribe to the performer a motivic claim, but one can instead ascribe a belief that the phrasing prevents a feeling of cadence, along with an analytical belief that the phrase reaches an interrupted cadence and begins over again.

Some philosophers have made similar points about the interpretation of assertions.[11] In order to interpret an assertion, one must ascribe beliefs to a speaker and meanings to a speaker's words. The ascriptions of beliefs and of meanings are relative to each other; what I take someone to believe, on the basis of an assertion, is relative to the meanings I attribute to the words used; and what I take the words to mean is relative to the beliefs that I attribute.

In fact, the interpretation of performance, as it has usually been construed by music theorists, is virtually an instance of the interpretation of assertions. This is not surprising: the whole point of the metaphor of performance as analytical communication is to liken playing a piece to making statements about a piece. Ascribing beliefs about structure is just an instance of ascribing beliefs. And construing performance details as ways of communicating about structure is like assigning meanings to words: according to the standard conception, performance nuance, like speech, uses sounds as a code to communicate beliefs. So perhaps further attention to the interpretation of assertions, as described by philosophers, will help us in thinking about musical performance.

Interpretation eventually yields an interlocking account of meanings and beliefs, and therefore the same utterances might be explained by different combinations of meanings and beliefs. But it is possible to limit the possibilities if either meanings or beliefs can be given some degree of stability. (Then, completing the interpretation is like solving the equation $x + 2 = 10$ rather than $x + y = 10$.)

Roughly speaking, one could take either meanings or beliefs as the main starting-point in moving toward an interpretation of utterances. Typically, in interpreting an assertion, I find that the speaker is using familiar words; so I can ascribe beliefs, including complex or mistaken beliefs, on the basis of the words spoken. But in more unusual circumstances, I might not be able to start from a knowledge of meanings. Suppose I encounter a completely unfamiliar language (suppose, for instance, that I am an anthropologist encountering people with a previously unknown language). I would have to begin somehow to associate meanings with words, without relying on previous knowledge of the correlations. I would do so by trying to guess the meanings of particular utterances; this requires that I assume that the utterances are mostly appropriate to the circumstances in which they occur, and try to guess what beliefs the speaker is expressing. Then I can start trying to understand the sounds as words that communicate those beliefs.[12]

This distinction between two starting-points in interpretation brings out a startling fact about discussions of analysis and performance. Such discussions tend to imply that interpreting a performance is like interpreting an utterance in a familiar language. The performer's nuances, like the speaker's words, should be familiar, intelligible signals for the listeners, who will then be able to infer the performer's analytical beliefs. That would seem to be the point of the analogy with analytical discourse. But the actual presentation of discussions of analysis and performance, in seminars and also in professional discourse, tends to move in the opposite direction! That is, fairly early in the exposition, one typically encounters an analysis, and the theorist moves subsequently to a discussion of the performer's possible responses to the analysis. In a live presentation, the discussion often culminates in a performance. (As I mentioned before, this succession of events was characteristic of the course I took on performance and analysis.) Such presentations are supposed to demonstrate the ways that performers can convey analytical information. But what they actually show is that a group of musicians who adopt a shared analytical understanding of a passage can then understand and enjoy a performance that responds to that analysis. Interpreting a performance, in such a context, is not like assuming an understanding of words and inferring beliefs; it is more like assuming shared beliefs and inferring meanings of words. For such an activity, it therefore becomes irrelevant whether the performance decisions conform to a code that would permit reliable communication outside the immediate context of the performance. With a shared understanding of the analysis in place, listeners can enjoy the performer's responses to analytical points without wondering what the performance would sound like to an outsider, that is, without asking whether the performance, by itself, can communicate the analysis. Indeed, it would be possible to enjoy a performer's responses to a shared analytical perspective even if the responses are quite idiosyncratic.

Now I can return to my opening anecdote, and the question to which it led: what was going on in the classroom when we were discussing analysis and performance? We thought we were in a sort of laboratory situation, where our discussions and experimental performances would show us something about the nature of performance in less academic settings. But our experimental procedure was lamentable. We thought we were exploring the ways that performance can communicate analysis. But we always began by

informing the experimental subjects – ourselves – of the analysis that we would then claim to infer from the performance. No wonder these experiments were poor at predicting my subsequent experience of the teacher's recital.

This description might suggest that the course was a failure. And in terms of its stated aim, the objective scholarly study of the nature of musical performance, it certainly was. But we were doing something valuable, even if we did not understand what it was. Like any good analysis seminar, we created a small ''interpretive community'' in which the contingencies of our ongoing conversation created a heightened awareness of certain aspects of music and a sense of the salience of shared reference points, the analyses that we had moved through together. Hearing performances in the context of our analytical discussions, and talking about our reactions to those performances, were ways of further developing and confirming our mutual understanding. Someone who walked in on one of our performances, without having our common history, would not have heard it the way that we did, but that does not really take away from the experiences that we shared. It is ironic that, as we created a collective understanding together, forging an intimate community that allowed us to develop complex, private musical pleasures, our self-conception did not allow us to recognize and value the experiences for what they were.

I have not yet given an adequate account of what those experiences were: in particular, one might begin to question whether the performances in class were – redundantly – communicating the same analytical facts that we had already expressed verbally. Perhaps our pleasures in the classroom came from hearing a ''translation'' of analytical talk into performance nuance; but perhaps our pleasures came from something else! I have left this issue open, for the present, by adopting a vague locution in which performances ''respond to'' analytical points.

WHAT ABOUT CARNEGIE HALL?

We need to ask, now, what relevance analysis might have in the preparation of performances that will take place in less intimate settings. My redescription of the analysis and performance seminar might provide a basis for extrapolation to the more public context of professional music theory. What is going on in the lecture hall, at a conference of the Society for Music Theory, when a speaker presents

an analysis and comments on its implications for performance? In that community, with its widely shared knowledge of certain analytical approaches, an analytical exposition can establish a shared understanding of a passage of music, and then everyone present can enjoy a performance that (as I am putting it) ''responds somehow'' to the analysis.

But how should one move further, to performance outside academic settings? In a public concert, a performer normally cannot establish, in advance, a detailed analytical understanding of the music to be played. Nor do performers normally display any desire to do this![13] To achieve something like the communication we had in the classroom, without actually giving the audience an analysis lecture, a performer would need to identify the analytical beliefs that the performer and audience are likely to share. These might include analytical beliefs about a familiar composition, and also theoretical beliefs that would lead to particular analyses in the presence of a less-familiar composition. Then the performer could choose performance details that will make sense in relation to the anticipated way of understanding the piece. So, rather than using analysis to discover facts about the piece, and using performance to convey those facts to the audience, a performer could use analysis in the construction of a hypothetical listener whom the performance can address. However, this account, an attempt to extrapolate from the seminar room to the concert hall, is beginning to seem like fantasy. What are the ''analytical beliefs'' and ''theoretical beliefs'' that have been attributed, in this attempt, to concert audiences? Who are the members of the audience supposed to be? It seems strange to attribute explicitly formulated analytical and theoretical beliefs to most members of concert audiences; certainly, most music-lovers do not talk about music in the same analytical vocabulary as many academic music scholars. Perhaps the response could be that ordinary listeners hold their theoretical and analytical beliefs implicitly, without a capacity to formulate them explicitly; but this begins to seem mysterious, and suspiciously convenient for someone who wants to believe that academic analysis is directly relevant to most people's musical experience.

In one aspect of music, it does seem that academic language matches the perceptions of ordinary listeners. Analysts often describe boundaries between musical sections, or the segmentation of music into spans, or grouping, and no doubt listeners typically recognize such aspects of music. And listeners can express them-

selves about many aspects of segmentation or grouping, even though they may not do so in technical or academic language: most music-lovers think of a piece as having different ''parts'' (favorite parts, dreary parts, short parts, long parts, quiet parts, slow parts . . .) and can describe, in various ways, beginnings and ends of parts.[14]

This shared conceptualization gives special plausibility to the idea of non-verbal communication about the parts of musical compositions. So, not surprisingly, some of the most plausible accounts of performance as analytical communication focus on this aspect of music. Westergaard's account of performance is one example. He addresses decisions that skillful performers make intuitively, and deals with relatively small-scale issues such as the articulation of metrical and phrase boundaries. Cook, in an essay on Furtwängler's interpretation of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, provides another, more ambitious example.[15] Cook suggests that Furtwängler's rhythmic manipulations define sections and climaxes in much the same way as Schenker's analytical monograph on the piece; since other performances do not match Schenker's account in this way, Cook argues that Schenker's ideas influenced Furtwängler's performances.

To fill out an account of performance for these cases, one could say something like this. Performers and listeners share a general theory that extended passages of music typically divide into shorter spans. Under the influence of this theory, audiences listen for boundaries of spans and, relatedly, for internal events such as climaxes that contribute to the identity of individual spans. Knowing that listeners possess this general theory, a performer will adopt specific analytical beliefs about the segmentation of a piece into spans, and perform in such a way that the listeners understand the performer's segmentation of the music. Sometimes the performer will simply confirm boundaries that are already unambiguous; but very often the performer will reach decisions about the placement of boundaries that are ambiguous in the composer's score, especially in deciding whether, or how, to hierarchize different articulations (for instance, decisions about grouping three phrases as [A + B] + C or A + [B + C]). In both cases, it seems possible to describe the performer as communicating about articulations, asserting, in effect, ''Here is where one thing ends and another begins.''

I think communication about internal boundaries is the most plausible example of performance as analytical communication in the context of public performance; I think, too, that one might feel

some disappointment at this conclusion. On the one hand, claims about segmentation are not the only kind of analytical claim; nor, despite their importance, are they the central subject of analytical thought. It remains obscure whether other kinds of analytical insight can be communicated to audiences through performance. On the other hand, decisions about segmentation are not the only kind of performance decision; nor, despite their importance, are they uniquely central in the decisions that performers typically make. It remains obscure whether the many other choices that shape a performance can be understood as analytical communication. Unless a much wider range of examples can be given, the concerns of analysis and performance seem basically to diverge rather than to coincide.

But further, even in this favorable case, there is distortion in describing a performer's articulations as analytical communication. The description implies that the performer is, in effect, referring to a certain moment in the music and asserting that it is a boundary between spans. This suggests a certain gap or distance between the performer and the music. But this suggestion of a gap is strange. The performer is not somehow apart from the music, pointing to it; the performer is playing the music, making it, bringing it into being.

Perhaps, though, my references to ''the music'' are too vague. Of course, in the standard conception the performer is not supposed to communicate about ''the music,'' in just any construal of the term, but specifically about the composition, the musical work. The performer, and the performance, are supposed to stand apart from the composition in such a way as to provide a commentary on it. However, two important considerations undermine the clarity of this separation between the performance and the composition, as two distinct objects of an audience's attention.

First, the score must be the object that establishes the identity of the composition, as understood in the standard conception of performance and analysis. But apart from some professional musicians, music students, and other specialists, almost nobody studies scores. Normally, most members of a concert audience know a composition only from performances. I suggest that such ordinary listeners, not the specialists, provide an appropriate norm if one wants to think about mainstream public performances of classical music. Such listeners may be interested in comparing different performances, intensely interested, but the notion of a separate composition, a possible object of analytical commentary, is probably

abstract and indefinite for such listeners. And it seems reckless to assume that a classroom of analysis students, looking at a score and talking about it, gives a useful model for understanding the experience of a listener who ''knows a piece'' from hearing several different performances of it.

And second, the notion of a performer set apart from a composition, commenting on it, exaggerates the difference between the activities of composers and performers. The similarities are more illuminating. A composer creates a composition by specifying features such as pitches, rhythms, timbres, and dynamic levels. The composer does this only up to a certain degree of specificity, as embodied in the score (along with some set of standard interpretations of the notation). The performer continues the process, eventually granting full specificity to the pitches, rhythms, timbres, and dynamic levels of the piece. A performer does this in two stages, first in the decisions that constitute planning a performance or arriving at an interpretation, and second in the actual performance that brings the sounds to full determinacy.[16]

The similarity of composition and performance shows why someone who ''knows a piece'' from performances is not likely to identify ''the composition'' in the same way as someone who has studied the score: while a score records the composer's decisions as distinct from the performer's, in an actual performance the composer's decisions blend with those of the performer, and often there is no way to tell, from listening, where the composer's creativity leaves off and that of the performer begins.[17] And the similarity of composition and performance shows why the image of a performer standing apart from a composition, commenting on it, seems so inaccurate.

PERFORMANCE AS COMPOSITION

These last points suggest that the analogy between performance and analysis may be less helpful than an analogy between performance and composition. One could think of a performer, then, as a kind of composer, a partner in an act of collaborative composition. Performers are not fundamentally similar to analysts; rather, the activities of performers, like the activities of composers, invite description and interpretation by musical scholars.

This suggests further redescription of what we were doing in the class I took on performance and analysis. We shared analyses, and then we enjoyed listening to performances that the analyses had

shaped. Rather than saying that we understood the performances as, somehow, saying the same things that we had already said in our analytical discussion, it seems more accurate to say that we heard the performances as creative responses to the analysis. More precisely, our conversation had established a shared description of some aspects of the composer's contribution to a collaborative enterprise, and this made it very engaging to hear a performer bringing the collaborative effort to full determinacy.

It is possible, also, to redescribe the activity of a performer who ''brings out'' an articulation between sections in a piece, or who resolves, or chooses not to resolve, an articulative ambiguity. Suppose, as seems inevitable, that ordinary listeners' ''theory of articulation'' applies, not primarily to the data found in scores, but to the sounds experienced in performances. Then a composer's score will determine some of the information that listeners need in order to identify sectional articulations, but aspects of a performance not determined by the score will also be pertinent to the identification of musical boundaries. A performer who ''brings out'' an articulation may be described as collaborating with the composer in the creation of an unambiguous boundary. Performers create boundaries in the performed sound; or sometimes they may refrain from creating boundaries, creating sounds that the listeners' ''theory'' will not interpret as an unambiguous articulation.

COMPOSITION AS PERFORMANCE

The conception of ''performance as composition'' seems more promising than that of ''performance as analytical communication,'' but the two analogies share a problematic aspect: they describe, and implicitly praise, performance by likening it to another activity, a more prestigious activity (in some circles), and thereby they reinforce the prestige of that other activity, suggesting that performance has no independent, distinct identity or value. My final move, then, will be to suggest a reversal of the last analogy.[18] Rather than regarding performers as composers, one might regard composition as an activity that has as its goal the production of performances, and thus as, itself, an odd kind of musical performance. Composers are performers who go only part-way toward the creation of a performance; or, one could say, they are performers who create classes of performances, leaving it to their collaborators to bring the instances to full determinacy.[19] Perhaps such a conception would begin to

give performance the centrality, in our theorizing, that it already holds in our musical practices, our musical pleasures.

Performances, on this conception, not scores or works, would be the basic goal of musical creativity, formed in collaboration by composers and performers, contemplated, pondered, and enjoyed by audiences.

I believe this conception gives a good account of the activity of performers, but that is not to say that it records the existing self-perception of performers. On the contrary, performers sometimes offer a self-description that resembles the standard conception that I have criticized. While recognizing this fact, one need not simply accept such self-descriptions: in fact, there might be good, practical reasons for performers to hold misleading conceptions of their own activity.

Some remarks of Josef Hofmann – a pianist with a strikingly individual style of performance – can illustrate this last possibility. In his advice to piano students, Hofmann emphasizes the importance of careful score-reading: ''Learn the Language of Music, then, I repeat, through exact reading! You will then soon fathom the musical meaning of a composition and transmit it intelligibly to your listeners.''[20] Here, once more, is a duality between perception of facts (about musical meaning, in this case) and communication of those facts. But another passage reveals the pragmatic basis of this advice. Hofmann warns against the intentional cultivation of individualistic interpretation: ''A purposed, blatant parading of the player's dear self through wilful additions of nuances, shadings, effects, and what not, is tantamount to a falsification.'' However, the alternative is not, or not simply, a self-effacing respect for the composition: ''The player should always feel convinced that he plays only what is written. To the auditor, who with his own and different intelligence follows the player's performance, the piece will appear in light of the player's individuality. The stronger this is the more it will color the performance, when unconsciously admixed (54).'' Hofmann distinguishes between the performer's self-conception and a listener's more accurate perception of the performance. The performer, acting under the influence of something like the standard conception, attempting to ''transmit'' the meaning of the music, will actually, though unconsciously, create something that reflects the performer's individual sensibility. That is, in my way of putting it, the performer will collaborate in producing an event that results from both the composer's and the performer's musical creativity.

All this suggests the possibility of a kind of critical description that I believe would correspond to the experiences of many listeners, though it is not familiar in academic discourse: the descriptions I have in mind would articulate the qualities of a particular performance event, without immediately focusing on the distinction between the contributions of composer and performer. (Perhaps, before thinking about the details of the collaborative interaction, it would be good to have a description of the result of the collaboration!)

I began with a story about the consternation that an actual performance produced in me. It is extraordinary that my semester-long course on performance and analysis proceeded with no reference to recordings; it was as though, armed with our analytical ability and our own, mostly amateurish, performance skills, we no longer needed Furtwängler, Toscanini, Schnabel, Hess, Busch, Landowska, and so on to pursue our inquiry.[21] But our independence of evidence from distinguished performers resulted entirely from our conception – standard but arrogant – of analysis as an alternative authority on performance, a source of instructions, the conception I have questioned throughout this essay. Surely the deepest motivation for reflecting on musical performance comes, not from musical analysis, but from wonder at the achievements of the most wonderful performers. The data of their creativity should provide the basis for serious reflections on performance, reflections to which the present, largely negative essay may constitute a useful prologue.[22]

NOTES

1 Charles Burkhart, ''Schenker's Theory of Levels and Musical Performance,'' in *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory* ed. David Beach (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983).
2 William Rothstein, ''Heinrich Schenker as an Interpreter of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas,'' *19th-Century Music*, vol. 8, no. 1 (summer 1984), 10.
3 New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1968.
4 Peter Westergaard, *An Introduction to Tonal Theory* (New York, W. W. Norton and Company, 1975), p. 409.
5 Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989), p. 6.
6 Nicholas Cook, ''The Conductor and the Theorist: Furtwängler, Schenker and the First Movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony,'' in *The Practice of Performance*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 120.

7 *Beethoven, Sonatas for Pianoforte*; phrasing, fingering, etc. by Harold Craxton; commentaries by Donald Francis Tovey (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 1931), vol. 3, p. 192. William Rothstein has also emphasized that performers should not always try to bring out motives; see ''Analysis and the Act of Performance,'' in Rink, ed., *The Practice of Performance*.
8 Jerrold Levinson, ''Performative vs. Critical Interpretation in Music,'' in *The Interpretation of Music* ed. Michael Krausz (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), makes similar points about the indeterminacy of performance as a means of critical communication. In general, his sharp distinction between performance and criticism is in accord with my ideas in this essay.
9 Heinrich Schenker, *Five Graphic Music Analyses* (New York, Dover Publications, 1969; originally published 1933), pp. 36–37.
10 Walter Piston, *Principles of Harmonic Analysis* (Boston, E. C. Schirmer Music Co., 1933), pp. 54–57.
11 The following account draws on the tradition of Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1960), and Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980).
12 Davidson, in a beautiful and controversial essay, has questioned the importance of fixed meanings in interpretation, suggesting that interpreters can always revise their theories about meaning in order to make more sense of their interlocutors. ''A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,'' in *Truth and Interpretation: Essays on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* ed. Ernest LePore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
13 Program notes sometimes include some technical description, but probably such program notes have little effect and, in any case, they do not typically represent the performer's ideas.
14 The same day that I wrote this paragraph, my six-year-old son complained to me about a folk song that his two-year-old sister especially likes: ''It has too many parts,'' that is, too many short verses.
15 See note 6. An unpublished essay by Joseph Dubiel, from the early 1980s, introduced me to the idea that grouping might be the meeting-place of analysis and performance.
16 Someone who thinks that a performer does not contribute to the specification of pitches may be thinking of piano performance, which is abnormal in this respect, but not of the voice or most instruments.
17 At any rate, this conception of a score determines the mainstream contemporary practice of scholarly editing. Nineteenth-century editions, though, often obscure the difference between the contributions of the composer and the editor (perhaps a distinguished performer such as Von Bulow), just as performances obscure the difference between the composer's and performer's contributions.
18 My final move in this essay, that is! Obviously the considerations to which I have led are fresh starting-points rather than conclusions.

19 See Richard Rudner, ''The Ontological Status of the Esthetic Object,'' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1950). Benjamin Boretz's remarks are pertinent here: ''Composing, as we know it, is oddly located as a speculative notational act prior, and abstractly general in its relation, to the actual musical act itself of realization in sound, performance.'' ''If I am a musical thinker . . .,'' *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 20, nos. 1–2 (fall–winter 1981, spring–summer 1982), p. 500.

20 Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing, with Piano Questions Answered* (New York, Dover Publications, 1976; first published 1920), p. 55.

21 It is possible, in fact, to consult recorded performances while still clinging to the standard conception, as Cook and also Joel Lester have done (in their contributions to Rink, ed., *The Practice of Performance*). Lester begins, attractively, by observing that actual performers and performances have been oddly absent from discussions of ''performance and analysis.'' But his main strategy for including them is to translate recorded performances into analytical claims, thereby allowing performers to enter into analytical dialogue with music theorists. The ''standard conception'' shapes and survives this strategy.

22 I have learned about musical performance from many people, over many years. Some of the most important contributions came from Suzanne G. Cusick, Joseph Dubiel, Charles Fisk, Martin Goldray, Elizabeth Hudson, and (long before the others) Alfred Mouledous; the contribution of my parents, reflective classical musicians, is indescribably deep and pervasive. I presented a first version of the present essay at the joint meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory, Austin, Texas, 1989; I revised the essay in 1997–98.