

EDITORIAL



The passing of pioneering figures – musicians Christopher Hogwood, Frans Brüggen, Gustav Leonhardt and Bruce Haynes, as well as harpsichord builder Martin Skowronek and flute maker and recording engineer Andreas Glatt – all in the short space of the past couple of years might suggest that early music has reached its end, or at least entered a new phase. As we look back over the past forty-five years since the term ‘early music’ was trademarked in England by Early Music Shop founder Richard Wood, we may well ask if the movement’s function and goals remain the same. Early music, which initially rode on the tailcoats of counterculture and actively disparaged the mainstream, has reached a high level of professionalism, and more than anything has become institutionalized. It now forms part of music training in conservatories around the world, as early-instrument orchestras proliferate and opera companies are increasingly turning to pre-romantic opera. For some, the professionalization of early music is an indication of its far-reaching impact, but to others the price paid is only too evident.

The means of early music have certainly changed. Have they also affected the end? We may no longer dare to speak of ‘authenticity’, but are we still wedded to the notion of ‘historical correctness’ rather than creating music that moves our audiences? The label ‘historically informed performance’ (HIP) – or, as Bruce Haynes recoined it, ‘historically *inspired* performance’ – is certainly less loaded, but is it simply a politically correct cover-up that has allowed early music to become just as codified as ‘mainstream’ performance? Is it still meaningful to speak of a rivalry between ‘early’ and ‘modern’ camps? Have we reached a level of comfort with HIP that has dampened our curiosity to delve deeper into the meaning of past music traditions and shut down ongoing dialogue between scholars and performers? And does early music still serve a clear social function? These are some of the questions that have occupied my thoughts while working on two book projects: a biography of Friedrich von Huene, an influential builder of historical woodwind instruments, and a companion volume to Bruce Haynes’s *The End of Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) based on writings left unfinished at Haynes’s death.

It was not so long ago that early music ended at 1750. In the late 1970s, Hogwood took the radical step of applying HIP to Mozart symphonies; soon after, interest shifted away from medieval and renaissance music as the frontier advanced to Beethoven and Berlioz, and before too long the boundaries between ‘early’ and ‘modern’ became permanently blurred. Now that HIP has been applied to virtually all music up to the present day (even to works that are documented in authoritative audio recordings), early music has lost its chronological basis and become a set of principles, a frame of mind. As much as the expansionist conquests of the late 1980s and 1990s into later repertoire were revelatory, they were also experimental, and it has taken some time for newer insights to be put into more widespread implementation. The eighteenth century remains the intersection of what we think of as ‘early’ and ‘modern’. Symphony orchestras continue to programme music back to Mozart and Haydn, while early music is identified most stongly with late baroque and classical repertoire.

As the discipline of historical performance practice reached maturity in the 1960s and 1970s, it fostered healthy dialogue between musicologists and performers. The pioneers actively engaged in research and practical application; now early music can be learned in a way that is hardly different from modern practice. In the worst situations, HIP has become reduced to rules – playing by numbers. Rules are only of use when they provide a framework for creative play. Improvisation, for instance, remains undervalued and underpractised. Most early-music specialists are still too uptight to loosen their attention from the notes on the page. This encompasses not only added notes, graces, divisions and the like, but also the myriad of



details that make sense of the music: the inflections that give character to a gesture, or make a phrase out of a sequence of notes.

Early music has been predominantly research-led performance, but recently we have seen a trend of scholars learning from performers. The analysis of performance – such as Richard Taruskin’s detailed critique of Roger Norrington’s Beethoven (‘Resisting the Ninth’, in *Text & Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 235–261), Neal Peres da Costa’s study of early twentieth-century piano technique (*Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)) and Gaëtan Naulleau’s astute observations on Leonhardt’s Bach cantata recordings (‘Gustav Leonhardt’s Bach Cantata Recordings: Project, Reception and Style’, *Early Music* 42/1 (2014), 37–54) – yields valuable insights, particularly regarding how specific strands of the HIP movement have evolved and where we position ourselves in that evolution.

Of the essays published over twenty-five years ago in *Authenticity and Early Music* (ed. Nicholas Kenyon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)), Taruskin’s ‘The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past’, together with his later writings in *Text & Act*, generated the most heated discussion. As Tim Wilson has argued in *The Art of Re-Enchantment: Making Early Music in the Modern Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Taruskin’s central challenge was that early music, by placing the burden of proof on documentary evidence and text-based interpretation, conformed to the modernist notion of the musical work as preserved in the composer’s notation, rather than in the act of performance. Taruskin raised the ire of early music practitioners, but remarkably few have come to terms with his implications and accepted that embedded in the essence of all pre-nineteenth-century music is the need for the performer to act collaboratively with the composer. It is easy to forget that prior to the nineteenth century, European musical practice was as much an oral as a literate tradition, and extempore interpretative decisions were just as crucial to the result as an accurate reading of the text.

The recording companies must take their share of the blame for this. Not only were they the primary catalysts for the early-music boom, but they also demanded that musicians prove their efficiency in the studio and produce ever faster, cleaner and racier interpretations that often suppressed distinctive ingredients of earlier performance styles like unequal temperaments, tempo fluidity, agogics and other deviations from the notation. Taruskin alerted us to the anachronism of metronomic fidelity (‘Resisting the Ninth’), but the click-track mindset has proven to be an addiction hard to kick – both in and out of the recording studio. Just as in mainstream classical performance, the artificiality of the studio has dictated the early-music aesthetic, with the result that performances need to be as much like recordings as possible. It can be hoped that the collapse of the recording industry may have a positive effect on the relationship between recorded and live music.

Early music has not been able to extricate itself from the tyranny of the conductor, and players are reluctant to move beyond the tenets of their training: play what’s on the page; add only what the conductor instructs. Too often modern rehearsal procedures suppress rather than encourage the type of spontaneous interplay that makes a performance unique. Eighteenth-century musicians rarely rehearsed as much as modern groups have come to do. This was viable because of the consistency of their working environment. They were not equipped with writing implements, and there is little evidence that parts were annotated in rehearsal. However, we may assume that musicians could correct note errors and reconcile inconsistencies almost automatically and without comment. The difference between past and present practices lies to no small degree in the role of memory. Whereas the modern musician is trained to suppress memory and rely on the text, eighteenth-century musicians needed to remember general operating principles (house style) and what had been transmitted in rehearsal, combining this with constant vigilance as to what was going on in the performance. We have also grown accustomed to a different division of labour between editor and performer. Editions with rationalized dynamics and consistent articulations certainly facilitate accurate performance when rehearsal time is limited, but they also camouflage the skills required to make the leap from notation to performance. Modern performance material encourages clean and rational playing – even when this may be far from the essence of the music. With so much material available



online, there is little excuse to avoid primary sources. Carus Verlag's diplomatic transcriptions, in which the original markings are replicated with minimal editorial intervention, are also valuable for testing historical practices. Implementing 'authentic' rehearsal techniques might seem foolhardy, but performances like the ongoing Bach cantata series by the Trinity Baroque Ensemble in New York City are demonstrating that high technical levels and committed interpretations are still possible in working conditions comparable to historic settings.

What of early music's social function? As its title implies, *Well-Tempered Woodwinds: Friedrich von Huene and the Making of Early Music in a New World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015) not only documents von Huene's efforts to bring historical woodwinds to players around the world, but also chronicles the rise of early music in the United States as a practice fostered by European émigrés. Von Huene's personal journey parallels those of others like Wanda Landowska, Erich Katz, Erwin Bodky, Emanuel Winternitz, Paul Hindemith and Alfred Mann, who, escaping war-torn Europe immediately after the Second World War, were likewise drawn to early music as a social practice that allowed them a real sense of (re)living history. This was true also in the Old World. European pioneers found in early music a way of escaping the bland and impersonal style that had been nurtured by Stravinskian neoclassicism and further reinforced by formalism and the brutalist aesthetic of the post-war era. The next generation, led by figures such as Brügggen, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and David Munrow, sought alternatives to the established way of doing things in the context of 1960s counterculture, and has left a distinctive and indelible imprint on early music.

The prevalence of early-instrument *Messiahs*, Bach Passions and revivals of Handel operas might seem like a triumph for early music, and it certainly speaks to an unprecedented level of acceptance. But it also signals the degree to which HIP has been conventionalized. Many early-music practitioners find themselves tethered to the same drudgery of ritualized performances that the pioneers were so eager to escape. In his 'Reflections of a "Pioneer"' (*Early Music* 41/1 (2013), 17–21) Trevor Pinnock speaks of the need to find creative ways to avoid the 'straitjacket' of traditional concert etiquette. Research on the social and cultural context of past music production and consumption can provide resources for developing new audiences, performances contexts and (dare I say?) relevance for early music. Perhaps it is time to take early music out of the concert hall and back into the spaces for which it was conceived. Early sacred music is regularly performed in religious services, and in more secularized pilgrimages (such as John Eliot Gardiner's Bach Cantata Pilgrimage), but the substantial corpus of chamber music, serenades, *Tafelmusik* and the like awaits reintroduction into less formal venues. Finding new performance homes for this music would not only reflect its original patronage structure and develop strategies to engage listeners in a meaningful dialogue with performers, but possibly also help circumvent limitations on arts funding and the collapse of the recording industry.

There has been sporadic interest in writing new music for historical instruments going back at least to the early twentieth century, with Henri Casadesus's forged 'discoveries'. The 1960s saw a good deal of stimulating crossover between early music and the avant-garde, and it is refreshing to see the practice continue. This is potentially a rich field to explore. Still, it is rare to find a composer who is sufficiently familiar with the technical capabilities of old instruments to exploit them fully, and who respects them as more than inadequate substitutes for their modern counterparts.

Early music continues to play a significant role by providing an alternative vantage point for 'mainstream' assumptions. It serves as a forum for asking why certain interpretations have been standardized for even the most basic concepts, such as how long a note should be sustained and what emphasis it needs to be given. But perhaps early music's most distinctive contribution to the Western music tradition has been the emphasis it places on the relationship between music and rhetoric. The rediscovery of principles set out in writings from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries describing music as a communicative system analogous to speech has stimulated early musicians to highlight the figurative structure of music in a declamatory style through the use of articulation, timing and dynamics, with the goal of creating persuasive performances that transmit the music's affective qualities. Since the field was opened for discussion and



practical exploration by George Buelow ('Rhetoric', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980)) and Harnoncourt (*Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech: Ways to a New Understanding of Music* (Portland: Amadeus, 1988), originally published as *Musik als Klangrede: Wege zu einem neuen Musikverständnis* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1983)), scholars such as Mark Evan Bonds (*Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Rhetoric of the Oration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991)) and V. Kofi Agawu (*Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)) have interrogated the significance of the metaphor primarily as it pertains to composition. At the same time, performers have arguably lost sight of the importance of rhetoric and affective performance. In his draft of 'The Pathetic Musician: Moving an Audience in the Age of Eloquence' (revised and edited by Geoffrey Burgess, forthcoming from Oxford University Press) Bruce Haynes decried the loss of the art of rhetorical performance as early musicians, obsessed with pedantic details, create 'correct' but emotionally neutral performances. Rekindling an awareness of rhetoric meets a significant obstacle in the general unfamiliarity with declamation in modern culture (the situation is particularly apparent in monolingual societies). Yet Judy Tarling's practical guide *The Weapons of Rhetoric* (St Albans: Corda Music, 2004) and Tom Beghin's and Sander M. Goldberg's edited volume *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007) point towards fresh horizons of exploration.

The frontiers of early music have shifted in other ways. Being based on European music, early music began as a European phenomenon. England and the United States were in on the act from early on, and from the 1960s there have been waves of students from Japan, Brazil and Australia studying in England and Europe. The collapse of the Soviet bloc brought an influx of Eastern European and Russian students, and some of the latest neophytes come from Korea and China. There is also growing interest in the ethnography of early music, following Kay Kaufman Shelamay's pilot study 'Toward an Ethnomusicology of the Early Music Movement' (*Ethnomusicology* 45/2 (2001), 1–29), and the implications of the HIP of European music in non-Western countries suggest a potentially stimulating branch of colonial studies.

For some the institutionalization of early music is troubling, but we may forget that early music owes its progress to institutions like the collegium musicum and specialist conservatories. In the 1970s students gravitated to The Hague and Basel to learn a new creative way of thinking about music, leading to an exciting but uncertain career. Today students are attracted to programmes at Juilliard, the Guildhall School of Music & Drama or any number of music schools around the world as a means to join the ranks of an established network. Former early-music enthusiasts were eager to experiment with historic replica in hand, and with facsimile and treatise side-by-side on the music stand. Today's students tend to enrol for directed instruction on how to become employable, and their expectations are not so different from those seeking work in a symphony orchestra.

Historical musical practices would appear to be in advance of other performance arts. But perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they are the ones we are most conditioned towards, and consequently most willing to accept. In period drama films, the music used to be the least historically correct element. The attention lavished on the costumes, sets, etiquette and even the visual presence of period instruments was rarely matched by the soundtrack. Only since *Tous les matins du monde* (1991) has there been an effort to match the historical accuracy of film soundtracks and visuals. Ironically, in opera houses the situation reversed around the same time. We had seen Mozart by candlelight from Drottningholm and Rameau with historically appropriate staging and choreography, but eighteenth-century dance and gesture have failed to hold interest. For the past twenty-five years most productions of early opera have juxtaposed historical instruments and specialist voices in a postmodern dissonance with anachronistic decor and stage movements. Are there other ways of bringing modern audiences into the picture of early opera besides transporting the work to a (visually) familiar world? Studies such as James Johnson's *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) and the essays assembled by Jennifer Nevile in *Dance, Spectacle*,



and the Body Politick, 1250–1750 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) provide vivid indicators of future directions for early-opera staging.

The end of early music is under constant renegotiation. As long as, instead of justifying established practices, scholars and performers continue to explore new ways to make the music of the past relevant, there should be little cause for disenchantment in the state of early music.

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