

COLONIALISM, CAPITALISM, AND THE INVENTION OF EARLY MUSIC

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Say the words ‘early music’, ‘Alte Musik’, ‘musique ancienne’, ‘musica antica’, or their equivalents in other languages to most people, and if the expression has any resonance at all, it will almost certainly conjure up a sound-world, however nebulous. Even if the person you are speaking with doesn’t necessarily make a connection between ‘early music’ and classical art music more generally, the phrase might at least prompt vague associations with ‘pastness’, however rooted: the soundtracks to tv costume drama or history documentaries, for example. For more engaged music enthusiasts and serendipitous radio listeners alike, ‘early music’ may well evoke a hint of exoticism, or at least a more or less quantifiable difference from the traditional sounds of mainstream Western classical music performance; And for those with the whitest hair, it might recall a distant whiff of countercultural insurgency, earnest amateurism, and hand-rolled crumhorns. But unless you happen to be addressing a middle-aged musicologist trained in a once dominant but now less fashionable branch of the European academic tradition, it is extremely unlikely they will think first of historiographical periodisation, archival sources, critical editing, modal analysis, or even particular musical works.

And yet the distinct sonic field of performance that ‘early music’ signifies has been from the beginning of the twentieth century until today closely and inseparably interwoven with the institutional discipline of musicology in a way that perhaps no other area of music is. This long and complex quasi-familial relationship between music history and – for want of a better word – ‘practice’, capable (as in most families) of being simultaneously harmoniously symbiotic and discordantly antagonistic has, against all the odds, been one of the more remarkable success stories of the increasingly tenuous maintenance of canonicity of both ‘Western classical music’ and the way it is performed. Ironically perhaps, thanks to the status it has attained over the past 50 years or so, which has today made it a full member of the established musical order, for its principal participant community – dedicated listeners, professional performers and scholars – that catch-all phrase, ‘early music’ may now actually be something of an embarrassment. What was still in the mid-twentieth century a thinly populated backwater, occupied by a tiny number of enthusiasts working largely in isolation from one another and the musical mainstream, has today become a sophisticated sector of the music industry, made up of several quite separate and confidently independent

subdivisions – different historical epochs, genres and spheres of activity, each with their own specialist operatives, technical languages, and production systems.

The huge growth in early music's sonic productivity and output over at least the past five decades has been matched by an equivalent cascade of scholarship, much of it more or less directly concerning matters relevant to reconstruction of historical repertoire, but also paying a significant amount of attention to the writing of its own story and locating it within the broader history of post-enlightenment music. As a professional performer in the field during all those fifty years, and as a musicologist for the past thirty, I have long looked forward to being in a position to lift my head above the noisy traffic of the hectic early music metropolis and take a wider look. In this essay I share a few preliminary thoughts about how early music's apparent success has been achieved and sustained, by considering some of its strategies and structures against the bigger historical and political forces that have characterised the times and societies in which the phenomenon became what it is now. This is primarily an exercise in comparative, rather than causal history, but I also want to emphasise that 'early music', like all cultural production, cannot insulate itself from being deeply embroiled in the ideological spaces in which it operates. I hope such an approach might be useful to the broader debate about the urgent challenges currently facing music and music education in general, as they come to terms with current political and cultural upheavals.

Early Music: a colonising project

For its consumers, 'early music' is effectively a kind of brand identity that competes with others for their attention within a crowded music market. For early music's producers – performers, concert promoters, media companies, broadcasters, marketers, publishers, teaching institutions and other supporting industries – the usefulness of the term has been (at least in the last 50 years or so) primarily its strong recognition factor, but also its elasticity and swift adaptability to changing needs – all key features of successful consumer branding in general. As Italian Wikipedia succinctly puts it:

Early music, however, is not a historical-musical category, since it covers an unspecified span of centuries, and a vast and heterogeneous output.

[La 'musica antica', tuttavia, non è una categoria storico-musicale, dato che copre un arco di secoli non ben definito, e una produzione molto vasta ed eterogenea.]

The effect of this is that the 'field' of early music's potential interests is more or less unlimited both within, but also overlaid upon, music's traditional spheres of activity – a *terra nullius*, ripe for colonisation by anyone ready to stick a flag into the ground, with all the possibilities for creating surplus value from mining its raw materials that this might yield.

Historically, colonisers have always needed a set of quasi-legal justifications both for appropriating, and then subjugating their newly occupied territories to a rationally uniform systematic order that will form the basis for governing and policing both their external borders and the behaviour of their inhabitants. Likewise, the ‘occupiers’ of this ‘vast and heterogeneous’ musical-historical construct needed something far more concrete than the ill-defined, massively underdetermined, and – before the 1960s – only sporadically used concept, ‘early music’. Indeed, as recently as 1994, even that most authoritative depository of definitions, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (MGG)*, found itself tied in knots even trying to get the term under semantic control:

At present [1994], there are increasing discussions about the temporal determination of the term early music as well as about whether it should be spelled ‘early music’ or ‘Early Music’ [*literally*: ‘Old’ Music]. The capitalized version is to be understood in relation to the spelling of [the term] ‘New [i.e., Contemporary] Music’.

[Gegenwärtig] tauchen verstärkt Diskussionen über die zeitliche Determination des Begriffes *Alte Musik* sowie über die Schreibweise *alte Musik* oder *Alte Musik* auf. Dabei ist die Großschreibung auf die Schreibweise *Neue Musik* bezugnehmend zu verstehen.]¹

Amusing though this *Problematik* might be (especially to a non-German), it highlights the fact that to provide even a veneer of ‘legality’ to enable this potentially hugely profitable landgrab, it would need the cover of a suitably flexible, but more robust regulatory apparatus.

That accolade goes, of course, to the construction that sits under the heading ‘performance practice’ or ‘Aufführungspraxis’, a term and an epistemology framed and forged within the academy but eventually assimilated into the wider world of performance and the narratives it has created about itself. This is reflected not least in ‘Aufführungspraxis’ and ‘Performance Practice’ acquiring their own entries in the most recent editions of *MGG* and *New Grove* that rival in length the respective articles ‘Musikwissenschaft’ and ‘Musicology’ in these two august music encyclopaedias.

The term ‘Aufführungspraxis’ was first coined by German musicologists, beginning with Max Seifert in 1906.² The first two scholarly monographs on the subject were both published in 1931: *Aufführungspraxis der Musik*, a copiously illustrated history of the subject from ancient Babylon to the Hollywood talkies by Robert Haas, Head of the music collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna; the other was by Arnold Schering, Bach scholar, Professor of Musicology in Berlin, and later president of the Deutsche Musikgesellschaft under the Nazi regime. His title narrowed the field to *Aufführungspraxis alter Musik*, and it is

¹ *MGG* ‘Aufführungspraxis’, Dieter Gutknecht, ‘A. III: Zeitliche Begrenzung der Alten Musik’.

² Max Seifert, ‘Die Verzierungen der Sologesänge in Händel’s *Messias*’, *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 8 (1906/07): 581–615, at 582.

this 'sub-set' which quickly became dominant: 'performance practice of *early* (or 'old') music', that soon metamorphosed into the more encompassing phrase 'historische Aufführungspaxis' ('*historical* performance practice'), which later spawned rather more problematic marketing slogan versions such as 'period performance' and 'historically informed performance', terms which (you may be pleased to know) I do not intend to do battle with here. Nor do I plan here even to begin to trace the complex debates that have raged around creating a satisfactory historiography for musical performance in general. What I do wish to emphasise, however, is the determination of the academy from early on in the development of this new 'colonialist legitimisation' to impose a particular definition and a resultant structure on the discipline of 'historical performance practice', ensuring that the epistemology of 'early music' would remain firmly under its intellectual control. To see how this works, it may be simplest to reproduce the thumbnail definition of *Aufführungspraxis* (that includes a nod to its inherent limitations, as outlined by Martin Elste in 1985), cited in Dieter Gutknecht's article in *MGG* (sadly unrevised since 1994):

Historical performance practice describes a mode of performance with the instruments and performance style of the time in which the music was created. If historical performance practice sees itself as 'knowledge [...] about the sound events of bygone epochs' and their tonal realization today, so does historicizing performance practice as its more precise definition: one tries to reconstruct something historical without being able to achieve it.

[Historische Aufführungspraxis oder Musikpraxis bezeichnen eine Aufführungsweise mit den Instrumenten und im Vortragsstil der Zeit, in der die Musik entstanden ist. Versteht sich die historische Aufführungspraxis als »Wissen [...] über das Klanggeschehen vergangener Epochen« und deren klangliche Realisation heute, so die historisierende Aufführungspraxis als deren präzisere Definition: Man versucht, Historisches zu rekonstruieren, ohne es erreichen zu können].³

Meanwhile, in the year following the publication of the two seminal books by Haas and Schering, Paul Sacher, Ina Lohr and August Wenzinger issued their manifesto for the foundation of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, which would promote 'the study and practical exploration of all questions related to the revival of earlier [musical] works, with the goal of establishing a lively interchange between musicology and performance'.⁴ The Schola Cantorum opened the next year (1933), thereby cementing both the institutionalisation and professionalisation of, and creating the foundational legitimacy for what had hitherto been a

³ Dieter Gutknecht, 'Aufführungspraxis', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1994/online 2016); quotation from Martin Elste, 'Konstanz und Wandel interpretator: Topoi der historisierenden Aufführungspraxis', in *Studien zur Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation der Musik des 18. Jh.* (Blankenburg/Michaelstein: Kultur- und Forschungsstätte Michaelstein, 1985), pp. 31–7.

⁴ 'In enger Zusammenarbeit von Vertretern der Wissenschaft und von praktischen Musikern sollen alle Fragen, welche bei der Wiederaufführung älterer Werke in Betracht kommen, geprüft und erprobt werden.' *Gründungsprogramm der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis* (November, 1932), p. 2.

marginal cottage-industry, largely the preserve of amateurs, and perhaps most importantly, effectively setting in stone the symbiotic relationship between the performance of 'early' music and the discipline of musicology.

Although the Schola was (and remains) primarily a training school for performers, it was from the start based on the idea that musicians should learn for themselves the necessary musicological skills to be able 'to initiate interaction between critical scientific research and music-making'.⁵ This 'interchange' between scholarship and performance, whose most complete personification is the 'scholar-performer' (a guise pioneered, in fact, more than fifty years before by Arnold Dolmetsch) contributed to one of the key differentiating features of the early music project compared to the performance traditions of musical works from 'later' eras, and it became one of early music's principal brand markers, as *MGG* declared with a hint of breathless excitement unusual for this otherwise rigorously sober work:

Nowhere is the relationship between theoretical musicology and practical music practice as close as in the field of historical performance practice. Theory and practice not only meet in coproduction but even come together in the same person.

[Nirgends ist der Bezug zwischen theoretischer Musikwissenschaft und praktischer Musikausübung so eng wie im Bereich der historischen Aufführungspraxis. Theorie und Praxis begegnen sich nicht nur in Koproduktion, sie begegnen einander sogar in Personalunion.]⁶

By the end of the second world war, the theoretical apparatus of historical performance practice had also entrenched itself as a sub-discipline within academic musicology, even if it had yet to achieve much penetration of professional early music performance. This really only began to happen in earnest in the 1950s and 1960s with such pioneering figures as Gustav Leonhardt and Nicholas Harnoncourt, who succeeded in engaging substantial new audiences for what felt like both something fresh and exciting, but which curated its own 'scientific' legitimacy with care.⁷ Meanwhile, leading German musicologists forced into exile in the 1930s and 1940s took with them traditions such as the institutional (and distinctly amateur) *Collegium Musicum*, as well as the idea that performance of old music always begins with the making of scholarly editions, and they found fertile ground, above all in the

⁵ 'die Vermittlung anzubahnen zwischen der kritisch wissenschaftlichen Forschung und der Musikpflege', *ibid.*

⁶ *MGG*: 'Musikwissenschaft', Heinz von Loesch, A. II: 'Musikwissenschaft nach 1945, 3. Historische Musikwissenschaft'.

⁷ This is, of course, something of an over-simplification of the 'history of historical performance', which goes back to the mid nineteenth century, or even before. However, it is fair to say that the emergence of a formal linkage between scientific musicology and the professional performance of early music only really took firm roots in the early 1960s. For overviews, see Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988) and Richard Wistreich, 'Performance Practice Scholarship', in Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Historical Performance in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 476–82.

principal American universities (resulting, as it turned out, in a long delay in the development of a professional early music performance scene in the US compared to Europe).

Such landmarks as the founding of the British journal *Early Music* in 1973, and later its equivalents in Germany, France, the US and elsewhere launched the formal and more public marriage of scholars and the mass of early music makers – professionals and amateurs – that had had its origins more than half a century earlier, and it cemented the apparently triumphant achievement of early music's 'colonial settlement'.

Musicology and early music in the marketplace

The June 1919 edition of the first volume of the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, published by the newly formed *Deutsche Musikgesellschaft*, included a short Festschrift addressed to a father figure of modern German musicology, Hugo Riemann 'on his 70th birthday on 18 July 1919'. Unfortunately, Riemann died a week short of this milestone so the three essays, already in print, became an unintended memorial by his colleagues and students. Following a short introduction by the journal's editor, Alfred Einstein, the first essay was by Riemann's young graduate, Wilibald Gurlitt, newly appointed to his first university position at Freiburg following four years of military service and imprisonment. Surprisingly perhaps, considering Riemann's reputation rested primarily on his work on music theory and the philosophy of musical perception, it was entitled 'Hugo Riemann und die Musikgeschichte'. Despite Gurlitt's rather grand manifesto style, it emphasizes music history's need to balance obligatory Rankean rigour with softer, civilised values, perhaps as a response to the horrors of the war:

Everything that stands in the way of a progressive expansion and cultivation of the field of music-historical research cannot be repudiated severely enough; because it is the high office of history to want to foster all-round understanding and universal appreciation, receptivity, love, and compassion for every kind [of music]; to look to answer not whether the actions seem justified, but what the facts are; to evaluate, not pre-judge; to observe, not assess; to justify, not judge.

[Alles, was einer fortschreitenden Erweiterung und Kultivierung des musikgeschichtlichen Forschungsfeldes entgegensteht, kann nicht schroff genug zurückgewiesen werden; denn es ist das hohe Amt der Geschichte, allseitiges Verstehen und weltweiteres Begreifen, Empfänglichkeit, Liebe und Mitgefühl für jede Art Wollen zu pflegen; eine Antwort zu suchen nicht auf die *questio juris*, sondern die *questio facti*; zu urteilen, nicht zu beurteilen; einzusehen, nicht zu werten; zu rechtfertigen, nicht zu richten.]⁸

The second essay addressed more familiar Riemann territory – his analyses of Beethoven's late piano sonatas – whereas the final piece returned to the theme of Riemann the historian,

⁸ Wilibald Gurlitt, 'Hugo Riemann und die Musikgeschichte': 1. Teil: Voraussetzungen', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 1/10 (1918–19): 571.

but now as ‘musician-historian’, re-founder of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum and early music editing coal-face worker. ‘Hugo Riemann als Wiedererwecker älterer Musik’ by Gurlitt’s fellow Riemann student, Rudolf Steglich, continued the subtle realignment of the great man’s legacy, emphasizing his long commitment to making the dry, philological work of musicology relevant to contemporary musical life:

Since the beginning of the 1890s, he [has] turned [his attention] more and more to music history, and this urges him to direct his entire efforts to the revival of worthy older music.

[Seit Beginn der neunziger Jahre wendet er sich mehr und mehr der Musikgeschichte zu, und diese drängt ihn, der Richtung seines ganzen Strebens nach, zur Wiederbelebung der wertvollen älteren Musik.]⁹

Steglich emphasised Riemann’s quasi-Messianic role in bringing back to life through modern performance the music of the 13th to the 18th centuries that he and his fellow musicologists had been so assiduously editing over preceding decades, specifically by picking out and publishing user-friendly editions for amateur choirs of suitably ‘easy’ part songs in modern notation, complete with expression marks and German translations of foreign texts.¹⁰ Early seventeenth-century dance music, meanwhile, was published in arrangements for typical *Hausmusik* instruments and was intended to ‘convey a colourful overall picture of the down-to-earth, playful music-making in those days’.¹¹

This carefully crafted tribute in the first issue of the new journal not only re-wrote, or at least heavily re-balanced Hugo Riemann’s own story, but was also an attempt to re-invent German musicology to suit a different age. As Pamela Potter has argued, a strategic relaunch of musicology’s image and its realignment to the social priorities of the post-war political reality in the new Weimar Republic was suddenly urgently necessary in order above all to bolster the *raison d’être* for the apparently endless and hugely state-subsidized production of the various *Denkmäler der Tonkunst* series and *Gesamtausgaben* that had sustained the discipline in universities for more than half a century.¹²

⁹ Rudolf Steglich, ‘Hugo Riemann als Wiedererwecker älterer Musik’, *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1/10 (1918–19): 604.

¹⁰ ‘Er legt den Stücken [chansons by Binchois] deutschen Text unter in der Hoffnung, sie „für uns heute wieder klingend zu machen“. Er erleichtert das Verständnis durch völlige Übertragung in die heutige Notierungsweise ... ferner durch Angabe von Zeitmass, Vortrag und metrischem Bau und durch einführende Bemerkungen zu jedem einzelnen Stück, die nicht allein auf wissenschaftlich bemerkenswerte Einzelheiten der Notierung und des Stils, sondern auch auf besondere Ausdruckswerte eingehen’. *Ibid.*, 605.

¹¹ ‘Fünfzehn Tanzstücke aus dem zweiten und dritten Jahrzehnt des 17. Jahrhunderts ... vereinen sich zu einem bunten Gesamtbilde des bodenständigen, spielfrohen Musizierens jener Tage’. *Ibid.*, 607.

¹² Pamela Potter, ‘German Musicology and Early Music Performance, 1918–1933’, *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, ed. B. Gilliam (Cambridge, 1994), 94–106.

I have often been struck by the way in which the totalizing historiographical concept of the grand *Denkmäler* projects, begun in the middle of the nineteenth century by Raymond and Hermann Härtel, followed in the next generation by Friedrich Chrysander, Philip Spitta and Otto Jahn, parallels the fundamental capitalist model of generating surplus value, which reached full steam during the same period. Classic capitalist accumulation begins with wholesale extraction of raw materials, followed by their conversion into standardised and reproducible commodities through processes of manufacture; these are then sold at a profit into a constantly stimulated consumer market. The relentless focus on a comparable extractionism from the sources of every work by the 'great' composers, and when these are exhausted, moving on to second-rung players and eventually the less obvious but almost inexhaustible seams of 'Kleinmeister', and their subsequent subjection to uniform styles of editing, scholarly apparatuses and even typesetting can perhaps draw a helpful parallel between the *Denkmäler* industry and classic capitalist production and accumulation. Its products are made ready to sit warehoused in serried rows of uniform folio volumes along the shelves of specialist libraries (where they often remain undisturbed from one decade to the next). The warehousing of all of this musical 'capital', the result of highly standardised labour processes would, it was imagined, underpin the successful sustenance of the musicology–professional practice nexus.

However, without constant stimulus from the supply side of the equation through reproduction, use and replacement – which for music editions means continuing sales of multiple copies and above all, performances – accumulation of finished goods alone fails to realise the potential return on such capitalist investment. Notwithstanding this inherent weakness in the model (exacerbated, for example, once performers start to make their own editions of music, or even worse, to read from the original notation), the *Denkmäler* probably represent musicology's own most enduring 'monument', insofar as they contributed enormously to the establishment of the classical canon and its domination of mainstream art-music performance, that is even now only beginning – at glacial speed – to crumble at the edges.

The commercial explosion of early music from the late 1960s onwards is often characterised as having been powered by a kind of 'subversive insurgency' against this dominant mainstream classical music order, and it certainly seemed that way at the time. Even though it was not until 1977 that the politically freighted formation, 'early music movement' was first used in print, many of its motley bands of devotees, apparently rejecting the alienation and Fordism of conventional classical music production, began to forge new approaches to performing and then proselytising for the music they were discovering, very often circumventing, or at least insisting on cooperation on equal terms, with the musicological and

historische Aufführungspraxis authorities. Some performers harnessed and developed the basic palaeographic and editing skills they had learned as musicology students in the academy while others taught themselves to unlock the hitherto closely regulated source materials: notation, treatises and organological evidence. For their part, few professional musicologists made the journey in the opposite direction, although there has been a trickle of notable exceptions. Most importantly, the often messy but open and experiment-oriented 'early music movement' generated an energy that seemed to catch the same propitious breeze in the late sixties and early seventies that was also driving the whirlwind of creativity in jazz, soul, gospel, experimental rock music, and so many other 'counter-cultural' musical genres, as well as the beginnings of the discovery by musicians in the global North of the riches of the music of the global South.

Of course, it was primarily the quality and revelations of the music itself together with refreshing styles of performance that quickly began to draw large and enthusiastic audiences to 'early music', including many who would otherwise be more drawn to avant-garde or folk music than to mainstream classical concert music. But it is important to note that much of this public exposure could happen only thanks to the propitious and entrepreneurial conditions in the main European centres – in other words, the same music industry that ran the market. Aware that it needed to refresh its products to satisfy a new generation of music consumers, it was happy to appropriate the talent and ride the energy across all of these 'counter-cultural' musical scenes. For early music, this took the form of both supportive state-subsidised radio stations (notably the BBC, WDR Köln, and France Musique) and a confident commercial recording industry ready to take risks with both A(rtists) & R(epertoire). Interestingly, this process of commercialisation never really happened for 'classical' contemporary music (*MGG's 'Neue Musik'*) that with a few exceptions, either failed to exploit, or rejected the opportunities for popularisation available at the time.

For example, many of early music's newer practitioners managed to project an attractive confidence in their apparent independence from the established order by using contextual ambience (for example, by performing in 'historic' venues) and projecting a more relaxed image on stage (for example, taking a leaf out of the book of folk musicians and talking to the audience between pieces). These two 'action' publicity photos taken around the same time in the late sixties perhaps capture something of this 'image transition'. They show, respectively, the distinctly serious and respectable looking 'Studio der frühen Musik' doing their best to emulate the standard norms of presentation of a conventional string quartet (note the white tie and tails of the male instrumentalists, and the satin gloves and pearls worn by the singer, Andrea von Ramm) contrasted with David Munrow's 'Early Music

Consort of London' who, for all the shot is staged and the performers are wearing suits and neckties, look as though they may at least be having fun.¹³



¹³ Photographs reproduced in Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*.



However, the long-haired character in the Early Music Consort photo nearest to the camera playing a drum is none other than Christopher Hogwood. With his Academy of Ancient Music, founded in 1973, Hogwood pioneered the extension of the mid twentieth-century recording industry's adaptation of the 'proto-Capitalist' *Denkmäler* idea to early music, with his complete recordings on 'historical instruments' of the Mozart symphonies and piano concertos, Beethoven symphonies and piano concertos, all 106 Haydn symphonies (unfinished at his death in 2014), and dozens more individual volumes and collections ranging from Purcell and Vivaldi to Handel and Bach, a strategy soon emulated by other early music directors and would-be superstar conductors. As in classic capitalism it was technology, first in the form of digital recording and then the coming of the CD in 1982, which hugely enhanced the project of adding the 're-recording' of much of the standard orchestral and choral repertoire to all the other first-time recordings of old music, thereby not only sustaining, but effectively turbo-charging the commercial success of the 'early music' phenomenon.

Meanwhile, any music which failed to pass the test of canonicity (and thus marketability) set by the increasingly hard-nosed A&R decision-makers at the major labels was excluded from this bonanza (effectively ruling out almost any music from before 1600 as well as dozens of 'unknown' figures of the Baroque era), although some smaller independents or 'specialist

spin-offs run by the majors¹⁴ saw a potential market for such exotica and were prepared to take the necessary commercial risks. Nevertheless, the 'early music movement' effectively split apart from the early 1980s onwards, as major labels maintained their tried and tested business model of star directors and composer with names that had immediate consumer recognition, while virtually the whole of medieval and Renaissance music had largely to create its own production structures. On the positive side, during its glory days (roughly the final two decades of the twentieth century) the mainstream recording industry provided almost more reasonably well-paid work for professional orchestral players and choirs in several European centres than they could sustain, as they worked their way through the well-known canons of later-17th, 18th and early 19th century music, with some of the most mainstream repertoire (for example, complete Beethoven symphonies cycles) receiving multiple 'period' recordings. Meanwhile (with some notable exceptions) practitioners of medieval and early Renaissance music in particular, worked largely outside of this industrial production system. This had the effect on one hand of insulating them from some of the extreme aspects of the Fordist systems employed in the 'recorded *Denkmäler*' boom (principally erosion of paid rehearsal – and consequently experimentation – time) but on the other, of marginalising the very music that had been championed a century earlier by Riemann and his colleagues.

Ensembles and individuals determined to stick to music from before 1700 tended mostly to try to emulate the models of the mainstream recording industry and festival circuits in the ways they presented their products, a strategy that might allow a small number of musicians to pursue professional careers (especially those who could also find teaching posts in conservatoires), while leaving most others to dip in and out when time and incomes allowed. Nevertheless, one thing that remains common to both 'strands' of professional (and, to a certain extent, amateur) early music practice is their fundamental acceptance of the logic of the *Aufführungspraxis* model, more or less as set out in the *Grundungsprogramm der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis*. While there is occasional questioning of established normative processes (if rehearsal time allows), especially as new information emerges or fresh interpretations of evidence are aired, and muttered discussions continue among an infinitesimally small group of scholars chipping away within the pages of equally little-read journals, the reality is that with very few (but mostly noble) exceptions, the counter-cultural idealism and energy that fired the early music performance movement as it geared up in the 60s and 70s no longer drives debate or, more importantly, musical performances.

¹⁴ For example, 'Archive' (Deutsche Gramophon); 'Das Alte Werk' and 'L'Oiseau Lyre' (Decca); 'Reflexe' (EMI).

Conclusions: Policing the borders

The idealised image of the dynamic 'Personalunion' of theory and practice that early music has pushed so relentlessly, not least in that dubious self-awarded badge 'historically-informed performance' which is used to carve out niche market share, comes at a cost. To be able to operate as franchisees of 'brand early music', performers have had to allow themselves to be interpellated into the regulatory order symbolised, as I suggested earlier, by the disciplining structures of the 'Aufführungspraxis' epistemology, subjecting themselves to policing by the various apparatuses of the academy and the commercial performance world. As soon as 'early music musicians' surrender themselves and become inscribed into this system, they must also acquiesce to regulation according to the shifting parameters of the prevailing ideology, either by agents such as teachers, directors, critics or promoters, or through a process of self-regulation involving the subjugation of any impulse to ask too many questions or to demonstrate too much individuality. Although this is to a certain extent true of all branches of the music profession, early music in particular likes to propagate the idea that they have freed themselves from the stultifying industrial structures of traditional classical music practice, whereas in reality they were 'always already' fully ensnared by them.

When I speak here of 'policing', I am of course invoking an idea developed from Michel Foucault's theory of 'disciplinary power' and formulated as a topology of the social order by the political philosopher, Jean Rancière. As he summarises the concept:

The *police* is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.¹⁵

If we apply this to the field of early music in the way I have been proposing in this paper, we might recognise some aspects of the operation of the 'early music' construct, where activity that fails to conform even at the most basic level with the official rules and rationale of *Aufführungspraxis* will find itself relegated by both the academy and the classical music industry to the sphere of 'noise'; or to apply this in terms of my colonialism metaphor, 'untamed' or at least, 'not-yet-civilized' domain of acceptable performances of music of the past – not yet worthy of having the 'historically informed' medal pinned onto its uniform.

To be clear (in case it is not), I am not suggesting that the early music phenomenon since the late nineteenth century is in and of itself either a product of colonialism or necessarily explicable just in terms of standard capitalistic models. However, parallels between the

¹⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (1995), trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis University Press, 1999), 29.

fortunes and strategies for survival of a distinctive 'early music' and general trends in recent phases of a post-colonial, post-liberal and now, a post-democratic, late-capitalist world order, like just about everything else in the sphere of cultural production, are remarkably clear. They include constant re-packaging of modes of presentation of the same or similar materials (early music naturally has its canons of key works, indeed a number of 'warhorses'); diluting nuance or difference to 'make familiar' what at other times it might have been considered desirable (or profitable) to 'make strange', or alternatively, affecting an elitist veneer of exclusivity and 'mystery'; all in order to maintain market share. Another survival strategy borrowed directly from late capitalism is continual downward pressure on the cost base, mainly achieved not only by the traditional method of forcing real cuts in the wages and numbers of participants in the production of early music's outputs in the face of diminishing state subsidies and fierce competition among skilled performers for employment, but also taking advantage of cheap technology and instant online distribution that makes musical content no more than a low- or even zero-cost 'honey-trap' to attract consumers, who then become the food on which parasitic data-feeders can gorge themselves.

So, to conclude. I hope there are potentially useful parallels to be drawn between features of colonialism as well as late capitalism, and the strategies and styles of presentation which have enabled the Early Music project both to carve out a space for itself in the musical environment and then to endure in what are currently particularly perilous conditions. But to end on a more positive note, it is worth also noting that Jean Rancière continues his explanation of the concept of *police* (that I invoked earlier) by counterposing to the rather dismal picture of subjugation to the order of allowable discourse, his definition of 'political activity'. It's a definition and a call to persevere that I like to think still captures the idealism of 'early music's' original insurgency. This energy and potentiality was certainly what first drew me into early music, and continues to hold me in its grip, even after all these years:

Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen and makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 30.