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Reflections on Performance Practice

Invoking a Past or Imposing a Present? Two Views of Performance Practice

Roland Jackson

There's nothing wrong with skepticism, of course. And performance practice has left a good deal to be skeptical about since its main ascendancy in academia and mass culture from about mid-century. The most skeptical voice of late has been that of Richard Taruskin, who in a series of essays and reviews written mainly over the past fifteen years, has challenged the very premises of performance practice. Now that these writings have come out in a single volume, *Text and Act* (Oxford University Press),¹ the full impact of his criticism bears down upon us. Indeed, at the very outset of the volume he declares that, "Those who persist in taking the claims of Early Music or 'historical' performance at face value now do so under an onus. . . . The claims cannot be merely asserted; they must be defended." (8)²

How does one account for the zealousness of Taruskin's attack? After all, performance practice has had a respected place in academic,

¹ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

² Page numbers in Taruskin's essays are placed in parentheses throughout.

and lately in performing circles as well. But as one reads (and re-reads) Taruskin's (pithy and provocative) essays one becomes aware of a distinctive point of view, very different from the one taken by performance practice. A recurrent theme, in fact, runs through the volume and may be considered its underlying focus, namely that the present is our known reality and the past only what we imagine it to be, which makes the past unreliable and therefore subject to doubt. On a deeper level, this position might be labeled as "presentism," an approach increasingly in vogue these days, and one that represents a reaction or kind of counterpoise to the historical approach that was prominent in intellectual thought around the middle of the century.

What is historicism? Essentially, the conviction that history is a discoverable reality and that its creations, especially in the field of art, possess an enduring quality. As the historicist Suzanne Langer expressed it (around mid-century), art works are symbols of human feelings, preserved through time, awaiting rediscovery by those who are open and responsive to their meaning.³ Presentists, on the other hand, find significance instead in modern-day responses and in the process by which art has come down to us over time. Looked at in this way, art works may be seen as continually undergoing change, depending on how they have been and are perceived. In music it is the performers who are the principal harbingers of this change, for they have kept musical works alive and meaningful to their contemporaries. Popular and ethnic music are exemplars. Today's classical scene (as Taruskin tends to reassert) has, on the other hand, grown increasingly stodgy, failing essentially in the imagination and insight required to bring vitality into the inherited works of the past.

In music, Taruskin's volume constitutes an important presentist statement, spirited and wide-ranging, albeit hardly systematic (consisting, as it does, of twenty separate "think-pieces" written over time). In it the discussion circulates around a number of key issues which may be taken as central foci: (1) the import of recent music history; (2) the status of musical editions; (3) spontaneity as the

³ Suzanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: a Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953) 401.

essence of performance; (4) the autonomous work (the composer's intention)—fictive or real?; and (5) the recent turn to expressivity in historical performance. These ideas will provide a basis for the following discussion, each serving as a foil that will elicit responses and counter-proposals from the historicist or performance practice side.

1. The Import of Recent Musical History

From a presentist vantage point the sum total of history comes down to us (and only has meaning) in the present. Every age interprets the past in its own way and after its own likeness. And since history is perceived only in terms of a present, every era imposes its own approach and outlook onto the past.

So it is with performance practice—historical performance, early music—which in Taruskin's view has been simply another way of looking at the past, reflecting, in effect, the feelings and attitudes of the time which engendered it, i.e. the mid-20th century. In this sense it is not really historical at all, as it purports to be, but has instead been shaped by and owes much to a mid-20th-century *Zeitgeist*, one overseen and dominated, according to Taruskin, by Igor Stravinsky. Taruskin perceives, in fact, a direct link between Stravinsky's musical ideal and the ideal cultivated by performance practice. Both were preoccupied with precision and regularity, both were opposed to the heaviness and (supposed) exaggeration of late-Romantic music (as this spilled over into the early 20th century), and both cultivated in their stead a lightness, emotional aloofness, and mechanical straightforwardness. Moreover, Stravinsky's well-known dictum, "my music should be transmitted and not interpreted," seemed as if ready-made for performance practice.

Stravinsky's neo-classicism, to be sure, had come into prominence somewhat earlier (in the 1920s) prior to performance practice's main ascendancy (in the 1950s). But the parallels seemed so striking that Taruskin felt prompted to construct his center-piece essay (No. 4 in

the collection) around this Stravinsky analogy, suggestively entitling it "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past."⁴ In it we read, significantly, that "all truly modern musical performance (and of course that includes the authenticistic variety) treats the music performed as if it were composed—or at least performed—by Stravinsky." (114) Not only historical, but mainstream performance was affected at the time by the Stravinsky hegemony, exhibiting a tendency toward correctness and motoric precision, while at the same time displaying a reluctance to take interpretative chances. These qualities have (to Taruskin's chagrin) come to characterize generally our concert life throughout the latter part of the century.

Taruskin supports his thesis primarily on the basis of recordings, comparing several versions of the Brandenburg Concerto no. 5 made between 1935 and 1985.⁵ In them he discerns an unmistakable trend, leading from a heavier, slower, and more overtly-emotional approach (1930s–1950s) to one that is lighter, quicker, and more generally ebullient (1960s–1980s). Also undergoing change were the instruments chosen, these becoming increasingly "historical." Interestingly, however, Taruskin looks upon this latter tendency (the fascination with early instruments) as but another reflection of the time, betraying primarily its urge for novelty,⁶—a tendency brazenly exploited by the recording industry. (34)

⁴ Originally published in *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 137-210. In this essay Taruskin builds his ideas especially on T.E. Hulme, who died in 1917, but foresaw the emergence (during the 1920s and following) of an abstract, unemotional art-style, which he designated "geometrical." In music Stravinsky, of course, was to epitomize this new manner.

⁵ The recordings (successively) were directed by Busch (1935), Furtwängler (1950), Reiner (1950), Stokowsky (1961), Maier (c1965), Leonhardt (1976), Pinnock (1982), Harnoncourt (1982), and Hogwood (1985).

⁶ In other repertoires, for example, there was the instrumental recoloring (now largely discredited) of the Renaissance and Middle Ages, followed by the recasting in fresh instrumental guises of later music seemingly grown overly familiar (e.g. Beethoven's symphonies).

A slightly earlier study along similar lines, by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, had set apart recordings (of Purcell *et al.*) of the 1940s with others of the 1960s. The latter, under the spell of historical performance, displayed a "remarkable uniformity" and were, in effect, but "a reflection of current taste"⁷—thoughts that clearly anticipate Taruskin's, except that he ascribed "current taste" to a Stravinskian model and "remarkable uniformity" to the notion of a "homogeneous past" (i.e. that historical practice has tended to treat past eras too uniformly).⁸

* * *

Taruskin's writings have daunted a number of cherished beliefs, but they have also left a number of lingering questions. Is historical performance a "chimera"? Is it a reflection of our own time? Is the interest in early instruments ascribable to a fascination with the unfamiliar?

Historicists would propose responses differing from Taruskin's: that the past is indeed real and tangible and that performance research has not only reinvented but has revitalized the sounds of the past. The experiences of the last half century seem to support this view. Composers from medieval times to the present have come to be heard very differently and their music has at the same time taken on a freshness and credibility hitherto not imagined. The changes have been substantial, as may be indicated by citing but a few examples.

The latest all-vocal renditions of chansons (Machaut, Dufay) have led to our rehearing them more nearly as did their contemporaries, i.e. as an interplay of distinctive vocal registers (rather than as a rainbow of instrumental colors). Baroque bows, producing innate diminuendos, have afforded surprising insights into the nature of early violin melody (Corelli). The singing of higher notes more softly, as advocated by some 18th-century singing masters, has transformed our perception of baroque vocal contours (Handel). And Viennese pianos, with their rapid decay of tones, have enabled us to

⁷ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "What We Are Doing with Early Music Is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree that the Word Loses Most of Its Intended Meaning," *Early Music* 12 (1984), 13-16 (cited by Taruskin, 105).

⁸ Taruskin (80) refers to E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s use of the concept.

rehear classic-period phrases as less sustained than on later pianos, thus making their discrete motivic designs more apparent (Beethoven).

These and a myriad of similar insights have unlocked for us many of the secrets of past styles, bringing as well an increased sensitivity to the nature of early textures, melodies, and motives. Such research, too, has moved toward ever greater specificity, toward the distinguishing of particular repertoires and composers, and even individual compositions. Far from being uniform or homogeneous, each past era has emerged as remarkably diverse.

The question, then, arises (and it is a crucial one), what do these recent insights, so intrinsically tied to the past and to the re-experiencing of past sounds, have to do with a modern Stravinskian manner or with performing as Stravinsky did? What do they have to do with a search for novelty? These associations with our own time can only have been made, it would seem, on a surface level, that of the immediate sounds and external effects of a performance, not on the level of intrinsic meanings.

2. The Status of Musical Editions

Taruskin's view of editions is perhaps best summed up by his statement: "sometimes I wish we could somehow abolish scores without abolishing pieces—that is, return to a fully oral tradition, but with our cherished repertory intact." (190) Behind this assertion lies the conviction that editions are essentially restrictive and confining, necessary but burdensome residues of the past, the very antithesis of performer free-flight. The book's title offers the basic paradigm: "text" denotes literalness and conformity (the principal cause of the blandness of the current concert scene), while "act," on the contrary, has to do with spontaneity and with imaginatively transforming and revitalizing the inherited repertory through performer ingenuity and self-determination.

The notion of text sanctity is one that can be traced back to the 19th century, to the concept of *Werktreue*, which prescribed faithfulness to the score and to an absence of performer deviation. Musical works, as a result, became "reified" and even "sacralized," subli-

mated to the point that they were not to be tampered with by those performing them.⁹ The era from Beethoven to Wagner to Mahler can be looked upon, from this perspective, as a kind of aberration, a time when performers' volitions and inclinations were temporarily held in check. But it is the transferring of this *Werktreue* ideal onto repertories prior to 1800 (from the troubadours to Mozart), when music was more freely-conceived and performance-driven, that is regarded by Taruskin as especially questionable. For he perceives that this music has thereby become rigidified by an over-adherence to the notes (to the "texts"). Some later free-spirited and spontaneous composers as well, such as Rossini or Paganini, have been made artificially "solid and durable," even "Beethovenized," as a result of this same editorializing process. (12) A "sanitized" Rossini is rather a contradiction in terms when one considers the disorderly and hectic world of singers he inhabited.

* * *

Taruskin's questioning seems reasonable enough: scores *per se* cannot assure a vital performance. But performance practice has never really considered that they could. In reality, it has always considered the notes themselves to be simply a starting point. It is the adding of performance aspects beyond the score that has been the main interest and focus. What has seemed desirable has been a plain text as a basis, representing that which can plausibly be taken as a composer's best version (or versions). This explains the uneasiness earlier with so-called "performing" editions put into circulation by renowned singers, pianists (etc.), who passed along their own insights based on tradition and personal experience.¹⁰ For performance practice these kinds of encroachment needed to be cleared away, and a "clean slate" provided upon which the various aspects of historical practice could be superimposed.

⁹ Taruskin credits this insight to José Antonio Bowen, especially in his "Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Wagner as Conductors: the Origins of the Ideal of 'Fidelity to the Composer'," *Performance Practice Review* 6 (1993), 77-88—not in *Historical Performance* as Taruskin indicates (9). It should be said, however, that while each of the three conductors openly espoused the ideal of "fidelity," they nevertheless departed from it in a number of ways, as Bowen points out.

¹⁰ Tyros at the time, certainly, were as compliant to such editions as they were later to *Urtexte*.

Can historical performance make these "blank" scores vital and stimulating? It is becoming more and more apparent that the sources of information (the treatises, visual arts, and lately recordings as well), offer a great, and still largely untapped potential for individuality in performance, suggesting innumerable ways in which the score (the notes on the page) might be imaginatively enhanced, thereby bringing to life earlier musical compositions.

3. Spontaneity as the Essence of Performance

A central theme running through Taruskin's essays is that music is essentially something people do, an activity centering upon performing and listening. The composer provides a basis, a blueprint, a scenario, but it is the performers who breathe vitality into the musical works, turning them into something that is alive and meaningful for audiences. Ideally, in Taruskin's words, a musical performance is "cumulative, multiply authored, open, accommodating, above all *messy*, and therefore human." (192). "Cumulative" is another word for "tradition," whereby first one, then another performer adds onto what a work eventually becomes for a present-day listener. "Messy" has to do with the often happenstance circumstances of performance, whereby novel (and sometimes serendipitous) changes come about, the very antithesis of the ideal of chastely-preserved masterpieces.

As Taruskin points out, "we have implicitly [come to regard] our musical institutions as museums and our performers as curators." (149). A historically-conceived *Messiah* mostly appeals to "antique curiosity," wherein historically-informed musicians parade the latest "state of knowledge" before a listener. (57) Taruskin advocates instead, a more give-and-take approach between the composer's version and what the performer might add to it, drawing attention to Prokofiev's recording of his own *Gavotta* (op. 32, no. 3) as a case in point. In it Prokofiev the performer fancifully digresses from Prokofiev the composer (as evidenced in the score) by enticingly lingering upon the opening 8th notes and then abruptly hastening the notes following. (189) This is an imaginative interplay, and offers a viable means whereby our current concert life might be rescued from sterility.

* * *

The question centers mainly upon how we think of spontaneity. Does it have to do with a performer's personal inclinations apart from any historical criteria? The essays seem to imply as much, for nowhere in them do we encounter any indication that a performer need feel obligated to any historical precedent. On the other hand, instances of sheer independence are alluded to, including Rachmaninoff's *fff* at the reprise of Chopin's funeral march, replacing the composer's own modest *p*. (180) Such a deviation, apparently passed down to Rachmaninoff by pianist Anton Rubinstein, provides an instance of performance tradition, of the "multiply authored" or "cumulative" process favored by Taruskin. Here the retaining of Chopin's original marking would not be deemed obligatory, for it is outweighed by performer spontaneity.

Are historical performances sometimes mere displays of erudition, a parading of knowledge before an audience? Such an impression may be possible for a listener disengaged from the past and past practices. Performing details, such as inequality, occasional vibrato, trills from above, etc. in this case may appear to be simply tacked on or artificial, since they are experienced as removed from their original contexts. If, on the other hand, they are heard as an intrinsic part of a style, such details contribute immeasurably to the essential character and expressiveness of earlier compositions.

Performance practice has rested on many small pieces of evidence, each bringing us a little closer to what an original performance was like. Such a collecting is gradual, and the general picture always hypothetical. But presentists apparently feel uncomfortable with this kind of fragmentariness, with a partial reconstruction of the past (the basic historical method). The present, after all, is entirely here and knowable. As Taruskin says, "only complete and certain knowledge [may be considered to be] knowledge at all." (203)¹¹ If gaps exist (in the reconstructing of a piece), they need to be filled in by creative leaps of imagination taken by a resourceful performer. (57)

¹¹ This might be rephrased as follows: only that which happens in the present can be construed as real, since only this is verifiable by palpable experience.

For the historian the question is whether such “creative leaps” are subjective and personal or whether they follow historical precedents. For (as it is important to consider) the latter do not at all preclude spontaneity, which can be and often is a part of performance practice. Take, for example, the slight adjustments of rhythm so essential to music around the turn of the (20th) century, which depended especially on a “give and take” between composer and performer. Prokofiev, in the *Gavotta* (mentioned above), certainly allowed considerable latitude to the performer, as is evidenced in his own performance—here the recording (by the composer himself) becomes an invaluable tool, for it enables us to find out exactly what a composer did or did not countenance.

4. The Autonomous Work (the Composer’s Intention): Fictive or Real?

The idea of an “autonomous” musical work, one that possesses inherent qualities that await rediscovery, prior to their being transmitted to us through a musical performance, is one that runs contrary to the presentist view, wherein a musical work’s essence and vitality rests upon an ongoing series of varying interpretations. To paraphrase Taruskin: musical historians who attempt to reconstruct past music, and its performance, as “autonomous” fail to recognize that in actuality such music is “a process or activity.” (60)

The “composer’s intention” is a concept that has become practically identical with “autonomy,” for it implies as well that some identifiable thing exists in the mind of the creator, something that endures beyond the time of composition. Taruskin questions intention (along with autonomy) on the grounds that any creation over time will inevitably be modified. “The confident identification or equation of what is intended (by the composer) with what is communicated (to the audience [of today]) . . . is a utopian assumption.” (16) *Don Giovanni* is taken as an example: “[it] is not just the opera Mozart and da Ponte knew . . . Its meaning for us is mediated by all that has been thought and said about it since opening night.” (267)

Taruskin’s questionings concerning intention assume various forms. First, he is uncertain when it might have come into being: was it in the sketches, the fair copy, the first performance, or in a recording

the composer sanctioned? Then, too, attention is drawn to the fact that composers often changed their minds during the process of composition. Opera (wherein numbers were freely substituted and singers' versions altered) offers a notable example—what, in this case, constituted the “work”? A further question concerns the changes composers introduced over time into their own performances, Stravinsky affording a prime example (as in the recordings he himself conducted). (210) And finally, composers have upon occasion shown themselves to be open to interpretations other than their own. Taruskin recounts Debussy and Carter anecdotes. When George Copeland played Debussy differently than had the composer, Debussy simply remarked “that Copeland must go on playing it as he, Copeland, felt it.” (54) And Carter, after inviting his cohorts to collaborate in making performance decisions, remarked that “whichever [performance I am] hearing always seems the best.” (54) It appears, therefore, that neither Stravinsky nor Debussy nor Carter had a really fixed idea as to how their music should be performed—seemingly a persuasive argument against composer intention.

* * *

It remains a question, however, whether composers' works were ever meant to adhere to an exact or rigid norm. Record notes have had a propensity to imply as much (e.g. “Beethoven's tempi are precisely followed”). And Taruskin, reacting against this kind of absolutism, has complained of “performance fundamentalists” (of tempo, of ornaments, etc.). It seems likely, though, that a composer's initial conception included some degree of variability. Such a premise is borne out, for instance, if we consider Stravinsky's comparison of several conductors performing his *Rite of Spring*.¹² In his reactions, he tends to acquiesce not only to tempi that exactly duplicate his own, but to those which lie fairly close as well. At the same time he disparages those that fall outside of this range. For instance, in versions of the “Sacrificial Dance” (marked 126), he describes one conductor (at 116) as “sluggish,” a second (at 120) as “a little slow,” a third (at 132) as “fast, but good,” and a fourth (at 138) as “unsuitably fast.” From this we conclude that a tempo between about 120 and 132 was, in his estimation, appropriate,

¹² Erica Heisler Buxbaum, “Stravinsky, Tempo, and *Le sacre*,” *Performance Practice Review* 1 (1988), 66-88.

while those beyond this (in either direction) were inadmissible. His other comparisons, with some exceptions,¹³ show a similar latitude of acceptance.

Other examples (concerning media, improvisation, etc.) might also be postulated. Bach apparently accepted that his choral lines might be sung by either two, three, or four to a part, D. Scarlatti that certain of his sonatas might be executed on either a Spanish harpsichord or a Florentine piano, and Beethoven that the cadenza of his Third Piano Concerto might be either his own or Ferdinand Ries's. But it seems likely that Bach, Scarlatti, or Beethoven would have rejected performances lying beyond these (rather narrow) parameters. Concerning Debussy and Carter we are unaware as to the nature of the discrepancies their musician friends introduced, but they were very likely of a kind that did not elicit their disapproval. As for opera, the changes of singers' versions had to do with ranges rather than musical substance, and it has sometimes been claimed that many operas were conceived not as wholes but as separate numbers (arias, choruses, etc.), each in themselves therefore autonomous.

It has seemed plausible to assume that for music, autonomy (or intention) embraced not only the notes themselves but something of their coloring as well—the medium, the general speed, and various other attributes. Composers certainly were known to have preferences, e.g. for particular organs (Bach), pianos (Beethoven), and singers, especially those who created their roles (Mozart, Verdi), or for certain ornaments (F. Couperin).

But what evidence do we have that composers had an initial conception at all? A variety of testimonial seems to support it, as for instance the following:

If we cannot in the flash of a single moment, see the composition in its absolute entirety with every pertinent detail in its proper place, we are not genuine creators. (Hindemith)¹⁴

¹³ "Evocation" (marked 144), for example, in one performance (at 132) was considered by Stravinsky to be "perfect."

The underlying idea never deserts me . . . I hear and see
the image in front of me. (Beethoven)¹⁵

My subject . . . stands almost complete and finished in my
mind. (Mozart)¹⁶

From such statements we come to sense that a composer's conception was something discrete, independent of the sketches, fair copies, or first performances. It resided in the composer's mind, and the writing down simply belonged to the process of realization.¹⁷ Nor is the conception, in this sense, something that can subsequently be modified, as a result of audience response or of the environment of a composer's time or of the times following.

This is a distinction that historicists have sometimes made, but one to which presentists have not given much credence. Indeed, they have tended to merge the art work with the milieu in which it was created, regarding it as a product of its time. But as literary critic Helen Gardner, among others, has pointed out, a distinction between the art work and the environment that produced it should be taken as central to a historian's perspective.

[Historians] do not treat the works they discuss as reducible. While alert to the intellectual milieu of the works they are discussing, they see works of art as historical objects 'preserved through time in the first freshness of their nature' because they are products not of 'ways of thinking' but of men.¹⁸

¹⁴ Paul Hindemith, *A Composer's World* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1961), 70-71.

¹⁵ Cited by Gordon Epperson, *The Musical Symbol* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1967), 270.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 269. As Epperson indicates, this last statement may not have been Mozart's.

¹⁷ Suzanne Langer, *Feeling and Form*, described this process of compositional realization in a chapter entitled "The Musical Matrix," 120-32.

¹⁸ Helen Gardner, *The Business of Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 150.

“Ways of thinking,” of course, has to do with the intellectual environment, something never entirely fathomable, whereas “works of art” are artifacts that have been “preserved through time.” This is because they are in essence communications from other “men,” something to which we have intuitive access whatever their context, whatever their separation from us in time. The intrinsic message is a tangible one, one that (in music) needs to be recognized by an interpreter in order that it may be effectively transmitted to a listener.

5. The Recent Turn to Expressivity in Historical Performance

Taruskin over the past few years, in what might (incorrectly) be construed as a turn-around, has come to laud a number of early music performances—those of Bilson, Lubin, and Levin, among others. And, in apparent amazement, he has even enquired (in 1992), “why has historical performance been improving so spectacularly over the past decade?” (194) His own reply, proposed somewhat earlier (1990), is that “historical performance is the sound of now, not then. It derives its authenticity not from its historical verisimilitude, but from its being for better or worse a true mirror of late-twentieth-century taste.” (166) Thus, it is not that such performances are historical, but rather because they have delighted modern audiences that they are to be deemed estimable.

“Authenticity,” a word that had earlier been thoroughly discredited by Taruskin when applied to (supposedly) correct historical performances (90-94), has now been resurrected in respect to performances that have gained acceptance by modern audiences. And even historical accouterments—early instruments, early manners of playing, etc.—can become a part of such performances. As Taruskin said early on (1981):

Let us indeed try out everything one may learn about in every treatise, every musical document, every picture, every literary description, and the more adventurously the better. . . [but] let us accept from the scholar in us only that which genuinely excites the performer in us. (62)

Here the words “adventurously” and “excites the performer in us” are clues to the essential credo: an inspired performance, even one involving historical practices, is inevitably commendable.

* * *

Merging the historical and the presentist, however, seems something of a paradox. From a presentist view, historical performance might well be regarded as a “true mirror of late-twentieth-century taste.” For the historicist, on the other hand, such performances are intended to transport us back into a past, allowing us to experience it more fully. The question is whether the details of historical performance (the slurs, dynamics, articulative nuances, etc.) can really be appreciated if they are no longer associated with the time that initially engendered them. Transferred into a modern-day setting, without historical associations, do they not become a mere artificiality or veneer? Is a fortepiano’s sound and technique to be heard simply as the latest chic, or are they a means whereby we can enter into and sense more totally the world of Mozart?

Why, in reality, are the latest performances, by Bilson, Lubin, *et al.*, more emotionally compelling than were those of their forebears back in the 1950s or 60s? Is it not that such performances can now profit from the wealth of research that has become available over the past decades, a wealth that also includes new possibilities for spontaneity and individuality. The historical performer is now called upon to make many decisions—the extent of rubato and dynamic shadings, the positioning of portamentos and momentary vibratos, etc.—each calling for considerable discretion. Performance practice, therefore, has in recent years been assuming a dual role. It is continuing in its quest of more nearly approximating original performances, while at the same time encouraging performers to imaginatively integrate the details of historical research into their own, ever more personal, interpretations.