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Musical Performance in the Twentieth Century: an Overview

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Nineteenth-century legacies

For the purpose of considering musical performance, at least, it is now useful to conceive of the 'long' twentieth century, since the cultural, technological and economic forces that shaped performance in the that century have their roots in practices that arose in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This is particularly true of the impact of sound recording technology, which so profoundly changed the nature of performance in nearly all genres and contexts throughout the century. Undoubtedly, for present purposes, Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877 marks the beginning of the long twentieth century. It is still perhaps a little too early, and we are at this point too close to it, to be sure where it might be seen to end, although some speculation is offered below.

The impact of recording technology is thus a recurring theme in this chapter, but there are other overarching trends also worthy of note. Closely intertwined with the development of the new technology was the rise of those culture industries that sought to exploit it. Sound recording allowed musical performances to be commodified, and thus packaged, distributed and sold around the world in large quantities. Record companies soon realised there were substantial profits to be made if the right market could be found for the right artist. Successful sales ensured that both the companies themselves and a small number of high-profile performers became increasingly wealthy as the century progressed. But many performers benefited financially to some degree from the income generated by sales of recordings, particularly those in the West where the larger and more successful record companies were usually based.

This dissemination of commodified musical performance was made easier by increasingly efficient methods of transportation. A performer's reputation could be established by the success of a given recording long before they might be heard live in a particular area. But the speed of travel also meant that performers could relatively easily follow their recordings around the globe. Initially by boat, rail and road, and most especially in the second half of the century by air, performers travelled faster, further and more often

than ever before. Although the travelling virtuoso was already a common figure in the nineteenth century, far greater numbers of performers exploited the ability to travel easily in the twentieth century. Successful performers with national reputations might become international icons; star performers, who in the early decades might rely on one agent to deal with their relatively local affairs, or even handle the bookings themselves, would eventually identify different agents to cover various territories around the world. Agents themselves became increasingly powerful multinational operations, retaining a roster of performers from a variety of countries whom they sought to place via their connections with record companies, orchestras, opera houses and concert promoters. While this was true of many different musicians and ensembles, of none was it more true than orchestral conductors. Figures such as Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977), Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-1954), Otto Klemperer (1885-1973) and, perhaps above all, Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989), became international icons who wielded exceptional power in the worlds of symphonic and operatic music. Karajan, for example, at one point held four chief conductor appointments simultaneously in different cities around the world.¹ Ultimately some of these names became brands, able to command high fees for individual appearances, musical directorships, and especially recording contracts. The capacity of a particular conductor to sell a recording on the strength of his brand alone became a powerful marketing tool for the record companies, and an important component of the overall economic jigsaw that supported Western art music production around the globe. In the latter part of the century something similar would be true for superstar rock and pop musicians.

As both conductors and the record companies became increasingly powerful, so the musicians whose work they directed and profited from looked to retain some semblance of independence and control. Protective associations and unionisation became more common: the Amalgamated Musicians' Union was formed in England in 1893 and the American Federation of Musicians in 1896, to give just two examples.² Such organisations sought to look after the interests of their members and protect their work as musical performers, through trade agreements, negotiated contracts, and so forth. The creation of self-governing orchestras arose for similar reasons of self preservation and independence. When Sir Henry Wood

¹ Norman Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, London, Simon and Schuster, 1991, p. 133.

² For a detailed overview of unionisation of British musicians around the turn of the century see Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History*, London, Clarendon Press, 1985, p. 142-56..

demanded in 1904 that the musicians of his Queen's Hall Orchestra should no longer employ substitutes (a common practice at the time that ensured musicians could take the most lucrative work on offer to them) the musicians refused and left his orchestra in order to run their own: The London Symphony Orchestra. The co-operative model they established (an executive team drawn from the members of the orchestra with professional management overseeing day-to-day affairs, but the musicians themselves deciding who should conduct them) formed the basis for many orchestras established during the century, notably the Vienna Philharmonic. Elsewhere, state and city patronage provided alternative means of support. Orchestras such as the BBC Symphony in London or the Berlin Symphony were heavily supported by those corporations or civic authorities who established them. These organisations often provided greater stability and better pay for the musicians, but also left them at the whim of changing political landscapes or corporate priorities.

Unionisation and protection came to be seen as particularly necessary in relation to film and studio work, so that performers might somehow share in the profits being made by the record companies through mass reproduction of performances and international sales. Written contracts became essential, and these would stipulate the number of hours to be worked, rates of pay, limits of exploitation of the musical material and so forth. Slowly but surely the music profession mutated into the music business.

Another characteristic of the century was the increasing plurality of musical styles and genres that developed, particularly in Europe and America but also elsewhere. These offered greater employment opportunities for performers as well as a greater diversity of music and performance events to choose from for listeners and concert goers. In the early part of the century these different genres remained relatively distinct. For many Europeans and Americans Western art music was seen as the pre-eminent 'serious' or 'legitimate' tradition, with other traditions frequently construed as somehow subservient or secondary to it; the development of hot music and jazz in the 1920s, for example, provoked particularly furious responses from those who saw it as musically worthless. But as the century wore on these comfortable distinctions broke down, and in the latter part of the century the mainstays of the Western art music tradition found themselves competing with a broad range of other festivals, venues and artists for audiences and financial support. As Nicholas Kenyon points out in Chapter XX, opera houses and orchestras, particularly in Western Europe and the USA, were no longer construed as having some inalienable right to exist, but were

expected to justify their existence in a variety of ways, perhaps by demonstrating their commitment to commissioning new works, or by expanding audiences and engaging in educational outreach activities.

Although the symphony orchestra had something of a golden age in Europe and the USA between perhaps 1900 and 1950, it declined in popularity somewhat thereafter, notwithstanding that standards of orchestral playing increased constantly over time. Internationally renowned orchestras such as the Berlin or Vienna Philharmonics managed consistently to combine popularity and artistic excellence with longevity, but other European and American orchestras sometimes struggled to raise enough funding to stay solvent. Elsewhere, however, and particularly in east Asia, symphony orchestras flourished, with numerous new orchestras being established (the Central Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing in 1951, the Taipei City Symphony Orchestra in Taiwan in 1969, etc).³ Underpinned by growing urbanisation, an expanding middle class and a growing interest in Western art music, the symphony orchestra appeared in such contexts as emblematic of certain aspects of western culture. This increasing popularity of orchestral music led to rising local demand for performers able to work in these orchestras. While many Asian musicians initially trained in the conservatoires of Europe and America, local music conservatoires also rapidly expanded, often largely copying the systems of musical training developed in Europe. These globalised cultural ties were frequently further reinforced through the widespread legitimisation of such training with systems of certificates and awards long common in western Europe. This widespread preoccupation with rewarding achievement in musical performance by bestowing paper qualifications was very much a legacy of nineteenth-century European attitudes towards musical training and performance.

Increasing musical plurality not only provided more employment opportunities for performers, it also necessitated competence in a greater range of musical styles. While many performers continued to remain specialists in Western art music, devoting themselves to the long and intense period of training necessary for success, others chose to diversify, particularly in those urban contexts that increasingly offered differentiated types of music-making. In turn-of-the-century America musicians were already adept at moving from circus and vaudeville groups into the professional military-style bands run by Sousa and others, and the best of these musicians might be found in opera houses or orchestras also. In the second

³ See Stephen Cottrell, 'The Future of the Orchestra', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, Colin Lawson (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 260-62.

half of the century this flexibility applied to a broader range of Western musicians, who became skilled at moving not only between the various styles of Western art music itself, both historical and contemporary, but also between the demands of the recording studio, the film score session, the theatre pit and more.

Although a number of musicians continued to be tied to orchestras in the symphony hall or opera house (and even here would often take part in other engagements beyond), a large number of performers worked independently, building on nineteenth-century traditions of freelancing; the 'portfolio' musician became commonplace, skilled in a range of performance styles, maintaining a wide range of professional connections, and engaging in teaching and other educational work.

Professional music-making, particularly in the orchestras and opera houses, remained a largely masculine occupation for much of the century. Again, nineteenth-century preconceptions about the inappropriateness of certain instruments for women, and/or the undesirability of seeing female participation on the public musical stage, took a considerable time to wane. Conductors, particularly, were almost exclusively male, albeit with a few female conductors such as Marin Alsop (b.1956) or Sian Edwards (b.1959) establishing themselves in the latter part of the century. Orchestral players were also largely male, and orchestral music making often somewhat chauvinistic as a result. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, for example, was notoriously proud of its all-male tradition, until it too was obliged to accept female players in 1997 in the face of changing social legislation (although very few were actually appointed to the orchestra). Vienna apart, however, in the latter years of the century the gender imbalance began to be redressed, with women forming much larger proportions of orchestras in general.

Some of these themes will resurface in the following pages. But this mixture of increasing globalisation, supported by sophisticated transport and communication links and combined with rapid advances in the technology of sound recording, provide the broader context within which the lives and work of musicians changed over the course of the twentieth century.

The impact of recording on musical performance

Edison speculated as early as 1878 that his phonograph could be used to reproduce music, but such recordings appear not to have been made until 1887, by the pianist Josef Hofmann in New York.⁴ The potential of the new machine to record musical sound was quickly exploited, however, and by the 1890s numerous wax cylinders were being produced and sold to a rapidly expanding market. Initially these were of light music and dances popular at the time, but by the early twentieth century core Western art music repertoire had become an increasingly significant part of record company catalogues.

The implications for both performers and audiences of this new technology were profound. For the first time in history a listener did not need to be physically present at a performance to hear how it sounded. Previously one could know something of a performance taking place elsewhere only by hearing about it, reading written descriptions of it, or through the examination of performance materials, instruments, or similar. Now one could simply listen to the performance itself. Any given performance became fixed and immutable; it could be disseminated widely, repeatedly listened to and thus repeatedly enjoyed.⁵ This kind of repeated listening allowed closer analysis of a performance, which could then be used as a model or stimulus for other performances. Notwithstanding the centrality of the sophisticated notation system underpinning Western art music, oral/aural tradition had always been part of the tradition, not least in the instructions and demonstrations that occurred during teaching. But the advent of recording technology greatly expanded the importance of the aural tradition. Now one could hear the phrasing of great singers such as Nellie Melba (1861-1931) or Enrico Caruso (1873-1921), or the interpretations of conductors such as Bruno Walter (1876-1962), regardless of whether one could hear them perform live or not.

Equally significantly, the contexts in which the work of performers were heard inevitably changed. Whereas musical performance had usually been an essentially public event (in the sense that an audience was always present, whether in the private salon or the concert hall) sound recording allowed the musical transaction between performer and listener to become often a private event. Performers might construct their performances in the recording studio – and later the editing suite – with no audience except a few engineers; then a performance would be sold by an intermediary before perhaps being privately consumed

⁴ Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 1.

⁵ Exactly a century after Edison's invention the Canadian composer R Murray Schafer would refer to this mediated splitting of sound from its original context as 'schizophonia'. See R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1977, p. 90..

in the drawing room at home or elsewhere. The advent of the personal stereo in the 1980s provided perhaps the ultimate in private consumption of musical performance since, like the mp3 player that followed, it allowed a musical performance to be listened to anywhere, at any time, under almost any circumstances.

This is all so familiar to us now that it is difficult to conceive the impact of recording technology on those pioneer performers using it for the first time. The German pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow (1830-94), for example, is said nearly to have fainted in Edison's laboratory when he heard himself performing a Chopin mazurka he had just recorded.⁶ In contrast, Adelina Patti (1843-1919) threw kisses into the recording trumpet, so enraptured was she at hearing her own recording of 'Voi che sapete' from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*.⁷

Recordings not only allowed performers to hear themselves in something akin to the manner in which their audiences heard them, they could also use the new technology for pedagogic and autodidactic purposes. As early as 1909 a mixture of instructional books and recordings was published as 'The Hermann Klein Phono-Vocal Method' by the Columbia Graphophone Company, intended as a learning aid for singers.⁸ This was probably the first in a long line of pedagogic materials, which would go on to include later enterprises such as 'Music Minus One', in which the accompaniments to various concerti would be recorded without the solo line, allowing the aspiring concerto soloist to add this in the privacy of their own home. Recordings of accompaniments to instrumental and vocal exams fulfilled a similar purpose. In other traditions, particularly jazz, the autodidactic nature of the learning process came to rely heavily on recordings. For example, when Charlie Parker (1920-55) and Dizzy Gillespie (1917-93) evolved the jazz style known as 'bebop' in the 1940s, the extremely fast tempos, the speed of the harmonic rhythm and the densely chromatic melodic lines all made it difficult for neophyte jazz players to learn at speed. The opportunity to listen repeatedly to a solo – and, if necessary, to reduce the playing speed of the gramophone – was an essential element in the largely aural tradition through which this latest improvisational language could be learned.⁹

⁶ Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, p. 1.

⁷ Ibid., p. 142.

⁸ Ibid., p. 220.

⁹ See for example Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004, p. 72-84.

The technology underpinning recorded sound evolved considerably over the course of the twentieth century. Each new development brought different challenges for the performers whose work it sought to capture, but would also often create welcome extra employment for performers, as record companies sought to re-record their catalogues using the latest technology.

Early recordings were made via an acoustic process: that is, the recording horn simply captured the sound waves and transferred them directly onto wax cylinders and discs. Performances were represented rather badly, however. The recordings had a small dynamic range and limited frequency response, meaning that much of the rich frequency spectrum that characterises many instruments was lost. This acoustic process was very inefficient: performers needed to be as close to the recording horn as possible, and some often ended up leaning right into the middle of the horn itself, leading one accompanist to observe that it was rather difficult to communicate with the singer if all he could see were his buttocks.¹⁰

Large ensembles – such as a full orchestra – were very difficult to accommodate, and works were often re-orchestrated for smaller or different forces than those heard in the concert hall. Orchestral layouts often changed quite markedly from the concert hall, and performers might experience a certain amount of discomfort as they endeavoured to crowd around the recording horn, lending a rather disconcerting aspect to the recording process for the seasoned orchestral player. Timothy Day describes the extent to which orchestral performance practice needed to be rethought in the studio context:

Nearest to the recording horn would be the strings, the cello sometimes mounted on a moveable platform, with flutes, oboes and clarinets almost poking their instruments into the string players' necks; bassoons often sat opposite the violins and beneath the recording horn; the French horns would be further away with their backs turned so that the bells of their instruments were directed towards the horn, using mirrors to see the conductor, with the other brass instruments ranged as convenient further back ... if a woodwind instrument had a solo he had to stand up and lean forward or even scurry round and make obeisance to the horn at a distance of a couple of inches.¹¹

Some instruments recorded better than others. The voice generally recorded quite well, and the preponderance of vocal recordings in early catalogues attests to this, as well as reflecting the popularity of vocal performances in live concerts of the time. The piano has always been difficult to record properly, and

¹⁰ Gerald Moore, *Am I too Loud? Memoirs of an accompanist*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1962, p. 60.

¹¹ Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, p. 11-12.

early recorded piano timbres are poor indeed. Wind and brass instruments recorded reasonably well, but string instruments less so, since their relative lack of power made them difficult to capture under the acoustic process. Thus some violinists were obliged to learn to play the Stroh violin, in which the soundbox of the instrument was replaced by a diaphragm and a small metal horn, allowing the amplified violin sound to be directed more precisely towards the recording horn. But the Stroh instrument produced an inferior tone to the standard violin, a fact that doubtless deflated those violinists who had devoted many hours of practice to developing a good tone on their wooden instrument.

A further major drawback of early cylinders and discs was the very limited amount of music they could contain. Only between two and five minutes worth could be recorded, depending on the size of the disc. This too affected performance practice, because in order to make a piece fit onto one side performers were required either to make significant cuts to a piece (with or without the composer's consent), or to play considerably faster than normal. For example, Josef Hofmann's recording of Chopin's Scherzo no.1 in B minor lasts 4'30" on his 1923 recording, but 8'06" on a piano roll released only three years later;¹² this suggests that he was playing nearly twice as fast in the recording studio as in the concert hall. These constraints on recording time, with longer movements necessarily segmented among multiple sides, lasted until the middle of the century. Moreover, such changes were not only confined to the Western art music tradition. Indian musicians, for example, had similarly to curtail their normal practice in order that their traditionally lengthy performances might fit within the limits imposed by the gramophone.¹³

In 1925 a system of electrical amplification was introduced, building on developments in radio technology, which circumvented some of the problems of the acoustic process. Now complete orchestras could be recorded in their normal disposition, with the electrically-enhanced signals from microphones providing a more faithful reproduction of the original sound. This was the major benefit for art music practice, together with claims (not altogether verified by the recorded evidence) that the contexts of recordings – the acoustic ambience – could now be more easily heard. Electrical amplification in live performance remained largely eschewed, however, with orchestras and soloists keen to retain the acoustic balance conceived by

¹² Ibid., p. 7.

¹³ Gerry Farrell, 'The Early Days of the Gramophone Industry in India: Historical, Social and Musical Perspectives', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 2/ (1993), p. 49-51.

the composer in the score. But for popular music practice the effects were more dramatic. Singers particularly benefited from microphone technology. No longer constrained by either the quasi-operatic vocal technique of light classical music or the over-enunciated projection needed for the rowdy music hall, they exploited a range of different vocal timbres. 'Crooning', a more intimate and conversational form of popular music singing that required less breath passing the vocal cords and a mixture of chest and head voice in the lower registers, became widespread in the 1930s and '40s. Singers such as Bing Crosby (1903-77), Dean Martin (1917-95) and Frank Sinatra (1915-98) enjoyed extensive commercial success with this style, as well undoubtedly enjoying the portrayal of masculine sexuality that this new singing style frequently connoted.¹⁴

After the Second World War two particular developments again impacted on the work of performers in the studio. The use of vinyl rather than shellac as the material from which discs were made allowed finer grooves to be cut into the disc. This meant more groove length on one side of a disc and a slower rate of rotation on the turntable: 33 1/3 rpm as against the earlier 78 rpm. Consequently, more music could be recorded without interruption; over twenty minutes could be accommodated on one side of a new 'Long Playing' (LP) disc rather than the previous five minutes or so, making the listening experience considerably more satisfying. The implication for performers in the studio, however, was that rather than having to play for five minutes without making any errors which might nullify the recording, they would now need to produce near-perfect performances for the full twenty minutes. For a live performance art, wherein occasional slips were accepted as perfectly understandable, this was barely conceivable and would have created significant pressures on the studio performers involved. Fortunately the second technological development, the use of magnetic tape, mitigated this problem.

Although magnetic tape had been used to hold film soundtracks in the 1930s, it was not until the Germans developed it during the war that it became of sufficient quality to use in recording studios. It had many advantages, of which the most significant from the recording artist's perspective was that it could be edited. Previously a performer would record several performances in one session, and the producer would select the preferred version to be pressed and released, discarding the other 'takes' (recorded segments). Now mistakes from a particular take could be extracted, and the same section from a different take spliced

¹⁴ For an extensive reading of the gendered aspects of crooning, see Allison McCracken, "'God's Gift to Us Girls': Crooning, Gender, and the Re-Creation of American Popular Song, 1928-1933", *American Music*, 17/4 (1999).

in; with care, the join was imperceptible. This had profound implications for musical performance. A musician's recording was no longer a replica – more or less – of a performance in the concert hall, it became a synthetic concoction, piecing together the best passages of numerous takes done over several hours or perhaps days. It was not even necessary to play a piece in its entirety in the studio, it could be recorded section by section, even bar by bar if the complexity of the music demanded. The Czech conductor Jindrich Rohan (1919-1982) observed in 1977 that he only ever recorded in sections, and that he would expect a symphony recording to have '80, 100, or even 120 stops and retakes',¹⁵ while the pianist Susan Tomes notes that a typical producer's comment might be something like 'what I need is: bar 32 without a split note from the piano, bars 34-36 with good octaves between the strings, bar 38 without a page-turn noise, and a really good attack from all of you at the same moment in bar 42.'¹⁶ In theory, and occasionally in practice, a performer could be made to appear capable of much greater feats of musical performance in the recording studio than they could actually achieve on stage. Even so-called 'live' recordings could have obvious errors exchanged from 'patches' taken from a recording of a rehearsal, or, occasionally, specially re-recorded in the same hall after the audience had left.

In one sense this was a distinct advantage for performers, since a single error no longer carried the same consequences as previously and could easily be corrected. But the development of editing within the studio environment also had a profound effect on live musical performance. Detailed editing allowed the creation of flawless performances on record, and audiences attending concerts began to anticipate hearing similarly flawless performances recreated live. Listeners came to expect the same level of infallibility from performers on the concert stage as they had become used to from the fabricated performances heard at home, and these expectations inevitably drove up concert performance standards.

For much of the century the record companies exerted considerable control over the work of performers. But the introduction of cassette tapes in 1963 marked the first step in redressing the balance of power between the two groups. Cassettes were relatively low cost, and low-fi in sound quality, but they were more robust than vinyl discs, they could be easily and cheaply duplicated, and usefully re-recorded and recycled. In time, low-cost equipment became available that meant musicians could more easily record and

¹⁵ Cited in Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, p. 27.

¹⁶ Susan Tomes, *Beyond The Notes*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2004, p. 146.

promote themselves. While this initially had little impact on Western art music performance, because of the generally higher levels of sound quality anticipated by performers and listeners, it had significant consequences in many non-Western contexts, where ‘cassette cultures’ evolved: large-scale but low-cost recordings of local music for the local market, made by local musicians and distributed (often) by local companies.¹⁷ In many areas where music reproduction technology was previously unavailable or simply too expensive, cassettes transformed the relationship between performers and audiences in much the same way as had the gramophone elsewhere half a century earlier.

The rise of digital technology in the early 1980s again revolutionised both the listening and recording experience. The introduction of small PVC Compact Discs, coated with protective aluminium inscribed with digitally-encoded information that was simply read off by the CD player, proved to be enormously successful and once again encouraged the record companies to re-record, or transfer, their back catalogues. The discs were extremely robust, with no deterioration in the sound regardless of the number of times they were played, and able to carry 70 minutes or more of music without the need to change the disc. They soon became the medium of choice for many listeners, who enjoyed the crispness and clarity of the sound they produced. But the transparency of the digital sound again provided challenges to the musicians making the recordings, since it meant that any extraneous noise in the recording studio would now be heard as obtrusive. A poorly oiled valve or key, or the too-hurriedly turned page from an inside desk violinist, while ordinarily unnoticed in the context of a live performance, would now be picked up by highly sensitive microphones and be clearly distinguishable against the otherwise perfectly silent background. This exacerbated the problem of audience expectations prior to live performance, therefore, since listeners were now attending concerts not only anticipating near-flawless standards of execution but also perfectly quiet contexts for listening, unimpeded by non-essential sounds.

So prevalent was recording technology in the later twentieth century that it had in some contexts inverted the previous relationship between live performance and recorded sound. Early recordings sought, however imperfectly, to capture performances as heard in the concert hall, and then replicate them. For much of the century recordings tended to follow performances; indeed, recordings *of* live performances

¹⁷ See for example Peter Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

became a niche marketing tool, as well as implicitly suggesting that performances manufactured in the studio were somehow deficient, or at least different, from those heard live. But in certain music making of the latter part of the century the studio work was undertaken prior to the performance, thus inverting the relationship between the two. This was particularly the case in popular music. Many albums by popular artists from the mid 1960s onwards were developed in highly sophisticated studio environments, using a range of production techniques which then required careful reconstruction in the contexts of live performance; sometimes mixtures of live and pre-recorded sounds would be employed to effect this.

Such technology impacted on Western art music practice also. *Musique Concrète* arose in the late 1940s, building on composers' new-found capacities to manipulate sound objects in a studio environment; the early classics of the genre, such as Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955-6) or Berio's *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958), exploited contemporary studio technology to the full. Live performance could only follow once the work had been finished in the studio, and in these concerts there might be only one performer, the sound diffusionist controlling the distribution of the piece in the concert hall around a sophisticated network of speakers and amplifiers. Later works would combine this new technology with live performers. Edgard Varèse's *Desert* (1954) for winds, piano, percussion and tape, provides an early example; several of Steve Reich's works (for example, *Different Trains* [1988] for string quartet) mix live performers with pre-recorded and multi-tracked tapes. In such cases the sound engineers, and later others such as video artists, would become seen as part of the ensemble of performers, playing important roles in the final shape and sound of the performance.

For most of the twentieth century the majority of professional musicians spent at least some of their time in the recording studio. For some musicians it became the focus of their work, and this was particularly true for those performers servicing the demands of the film music industry in Hollywood, London, Mumbai or elsewhere. Some artists virtually abandoned the stresses of live performance in preference to the studio. Undoubtedly the most famous example of this was the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould (1932-82), who gave his last public performance in 1964. He then spent the next eighteen years making only recordings and never again performed live, citing a variety of ideological and musical objections to concert performance

such as, for example, that it led the performer to create 'certain musical distortions in the musical structure in order to overcome acoustic problems like poor instruments, or poor placement of instruments'.¹⁸

Towards the end of the century the diminishing costs of recording technology meant that performers were able to take more control over their recorded work, and in some ways the recording of musical performance became increasingly democratised. Smaller 'cottage industries' evolved, creating local record companies that concentrated on specific composers or repertoire that was uneconomic for the larger companies to consider, and thus catered for more fragmented specialist markets. Ultimately it became possible, for those sufficiently inclined and technologically proficient, to produce a CD of a performance using basic recording equipment and a home computer, without recourse to a conventional studio of any kind. These could be used to promote specialist interests, or as promotional tools, and might be sold at concerts or, in the last years of the century, via the internet. This benefited not only performers working within the Western art music tradition but also musicians in other traditions, who could again produce discs aimed at their local market as well as, in some cases, finding international niches for their work. The general reduction in the cost of electronic music equipment led to a rapid growth in popular music making. Synthesisers and samplers connected to the home computer became common in bedroom-cum-studios around the world, allowing large numbers of people to create their own music and disseminate it to others, sometimes without ever having to perform live in front of an audience. Ultimately, the rise in music technology that had underpinned and influenced so much musical performance throughout the twentieth century had also made possible the production of music that required no 'performer' at all.

Changing performance aesthetics

Although we are used to conceiving Western art music as a history of composition, through close study of composers' scores and other literature, the rich historical legacy that we now have of recorded music performed over the course of the twentieth century allows us to understand something of the history of

¹⁸ Elizabeth Angilette, *Philosopher at the Keyboard: Glenn Gould*, New Jersey, Scarecrow Press, 1992, p. 95.

music as a history of performance. Certainly, what recordings do reveal to us is the significant change in performance aesthetics from the late 1800s up to the present day. They also demonstrate how much higher, in general, were performance standards by the end of the twentieth century from those at the beginning, while simultaneously illustrating a decreasing amount of interpretive diversity. Indeed, so different are recordings of orchestras and ensembles in the early twentieth century that, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, we must acknowledge that we are engaging with very different performance cultures.

This is particularly true in relation to the precision of ensemble performance. Early orchestral recordings often demonstrate what we now hear as a lack of precision, with different sections of the orchestra perhaps slightly at variance with each other, articulation details rather haphazard, certain passages hurried and scrappy, and tuning, particularly amongst the woodwind section, often less accurate than in most performances in the latter part of the century. To some extent this may be attributable to the often under-rehearsed nature of these early orchestral performances. For the first three decades of the century at least, and frequently later, orchestral concerts and recordings would be done on very little rehearsal, perhaps one run-through if time allowed; and because deputies were often employed by musicians who had acquired alternative and more lucrative engagements, a conductor might well be confronted with many different faces in a performance than those who had attended the relevant rehearsal. In this respect recordings may demonstrate some of the better performances given at the time, since the recording itself would usually have been made immediately following whatever (minimal) rehearsal time might have been allocated for it, and the personnel would almost certainly have remained the same. That such performances still sound to modern ears as rather 'exotic', arguably even slipshod, is a measure of how much crisper and tighter orchestral performance became over the century, and how much latitude was considered acceptable in earlier ensembles when compared to our own times.

Also evident from early orchestral recordings is a much greater variety of both individual and collective instrumental timbres. Over the course of the century ideas about musical sound moved from those that celebrated and even promoted timbral variety as a positive trait, to those which valued homogeneity, balance and timbral blend above all else. National differences became to a significant degree subsumed within global ideas about how orchestras should sound. For example, up to the early 1930s, one can hear

distinct differences between English flute players, performing usually on wooden flutes with a broad tone and little or no vibrato, and their French counterparts, using metal instruments and with a noticeable confident vibrato. English reed instruments often *sounded* reedy, with a rather thin tone, and were again played largely without vibrato, whereas woodwind players in Vienna or Berlin cultivated a darker sound, albeit again largely heard without vibrato. Vibrato in general was much less widely employed in the early years of the century than was to become the case later. Most wind players avoided it, and although it was a little more common among string players and singers, it assumed greater importance as an expressive gesture only from the 1930s onwards. Brass sections also became more homogenous and less easily identifiable. The brass playing of Russian orchestras up to the 1960s and '70s, particularly the Leningrad (now St Petersburg) Philharmonic, was easily identified: it was vibrant, 'blaring', with noticeable vibrato. By the 1990s the Russians too were losing this distinctiveness and emulating a more universal, homogenous and less brash orchestral sound. While it would be an oversimplification to say that every orchestra by the end of the century sounded more or less the same, it was certainly the case that it was more difficult to tell them apart than it had been at the beginning of the century.

How did such homogenisation come about? In part, as always, because of the widespread dissemination of recordings, and through them the increased influence of the most internationally significant orchestras – in Vienna, Berlin, New York, London, etc. But concepts of orchestral sound travelled also with those internationally peripatetic and powerful conductors whose job it was to shape orchestras, and who would take their ideas with them from one music directorship to another. Norman Lebrecht asserts that players in one chamber orchestra who found themselves unexpectedly working with Georg Solti for a few weeks found that 'not only did their timbre alter instantly, but...they retained the Solti sound in their playing for two months afterwards'.¹⁹ The increasingly international conservatoire and music education system also played a part; musicians from different areas of the globe would find themselves immersed in the performance aesthetics prevalent in a given educational setting, and then take them back to their home country or elsewhere. Performers would also take their individual sounds and musical ideas with them as they sought employment among different orchestras in an increasingly globalised job market.

¹⁹ Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth*, p. 8.

High-profile soloists were particularly influential in changing attitudes towards performance style. The French flautist Marcel Moyse (1889-1984) established a brighter, more intense French flute sound in which vibrato played a significant role; the Russian/American violinist Jascha Heifetz (1901-87) is often credited with initiating a modern school of violin playing, his similarly intense style being accompanied by a rapid vibrato and emotionally-charged but more sparing use of portamento than that heard previously; The Spanish cellist Pablo Casals (1876-1973) almost singly-handedly established the cello as a solo instrument in the early twentieth century, his warm phrasing and free, lyrical style reflective of his technically freer approach to the instrument; Casals's compatriot Andres Segovia (1893-1987) similarly transformed the profile of the Spanish Guitar as a concert instrument. Lack of space precludes here a more exhaustive list of those individuals whose performances had a disproportionately significant effect on the development of their instrument or voice, but in all cases their work achieved greater impact because of the widespread dissemination and popularity of the recordings they made, in addition to their concert and teaching work.

This trend towards internationalised sound ideals was further reinforced through the widespread adoption of particular types of instruments, and the increasing global success of a smaller number of manufacturers. This was particularly true of the wind and brass sections that most obviously affect orchestral colour. German bassoons based on Heckel's nineteenth-century innovations, offering a darker but more homogenous timbre, became more widely used than the lighter-sounding French bassoon; the French-style Boehm clarinet largely superseded local variants such as the wide-bore clarinets previously beloved of many English players (although German and Austrian players have usually retained a preference for their own Oehler systems); technological innovations in both the drawing of brass instruments and valve manufacture again led to more homogenous and less differentiated brass instrument sounds. In the last three decades of the century new manufacturers, particularly from east Asia, began to develop highly successful instruments that were also widely disseminated. Part of the success of such instruments lay in their smoothness and clarity, again reducing those idiosyncrasies of earlier instruments that had in part contributed to timbral variety.

Musical performance in the Western art music tradition changed noticeably in other ways, particularly in relation to musical flexibility and shape. The trend in the latter half of the century towards complete musical synchronisation and exactitude, with highly polished ensembles and orchestras apparently working in unanimity, was not a characteristic of performances in the early decades of the century, nor, necessarily, an aspiration of the performers. Many musicians were untroubled at deviating from the vertical alignment of the instruments as implied by the score, particularly in the relation between soloist and accompaniment. The music educationalist Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), who accompanied the great Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), later recalled Ysaÿe's instructions to him:

In rubato melodic passages, he instructed me not to follow him meticulously in the accelerandos and ritenutos, if my part consisted of no more than a simple accompaniment. 'It is I alone', he would say, 'who can let myself follow the emotion suggested by the melody; you accompany me in strict time, because an accompaniment should always be in time. You represent order, and your duty is to counterbalance my fantasy. Do not worry, we shall always find each other, because when I accelerate for a few notes, I afterwards re-establish the equilibrium by slowing down the following notes, or by pausing for a moment on one of them' ... In the train he would try to make up violin passages based on the dynamic accents and cadences of the wheels, and to execute 'rubato' passages, returning to the original beat each time we passed in front of a telegraph pole.²⁰

The striking visual metaphor Dalcroze offers neatly captures the greater degree of musical flexibility allowed to performers between those points at which they should then re-engage. In its increasing rationalisation and preoccupation with smoothness and exactitude Western art music performance has in the twenty-first century to a considerable degree lost this level of interpretative freedom. It remains an integral part of other traditions, however: in jazz, where performers may move away from the underlying rhythmic and harmonic cycle in their improvisations, before re-establishing their engagement at the beginning of the next cycle; and similarly in Indian music, where the first beat of the rhythmic cycle (*ta*) is often used by musicians and audience alike to demonstrate their shared understanding of the rhythmic alignment, notwithstanding the complexity of what may have occurred in between.

The greater musical flexibility of earlier performance styles is demonstrated in other ways, for example through greater elasticity in phrasing. Portamento, the sliding between notes that is available to

²⁰ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, 'Eugène Ysaÿe: Quelques notes et souvenirs', *Revue Musicale*, 188/ (1939)., cited Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 110.

string players by allowing their fingers to glide along the instrument rather than move cleanly between positions, is far more evident in recordings in the first two decades of the century than it is later. Comparing performances by Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) or Arnold Rosé (1863-1946) with those by Jascha Heifetz, for example, is to hear two very different schools of violin playing. The first pair make a cooler, more restrained sound with comparatively little use of vibrato and much portamento, whereas Heifetz played with slightly less portamento but a richer, fuller violin sound that made much more use of vibrato as an expressive device.

String portamento was not confined to soloists but can also be heard in orchestras and quartets, once more adding to the sense of multiplicity and variety that one gets from listening to early orchestral recordings, while reinforcing later differences in homogeneity and standardisation that became more normal from about the 1950s. Portamento among orchestral string sections is particularly significant, because it indicates that decisions regarding its use were being made prior to the performance (so that all performers could glide together), almost certainly by the leader of each section. Understanding how to employ portamento within the performance was part of the skill set then required for competent orchestral playing; and not just a generic portamento, since different sections and orchestras would use different types – slow, fast, heavy, light – according to the tastes prevailing at the time in a particular context.²¹

Pianists also often played rather differently in the early part of the century. Again, the rhythmic precision and exact coordination between the two hands that we now take for granted (that is, reproducing the vertical alignment implicit in the score), is in fact a relatively modern phenomenon. Earlier players quite deliberately separated the two hands at times, for expressive purposes and in order to distinguish the material in them. This rhythmic dislocation, similar to the dislocation noted above between soloist and accompaniment, was quite consciously fostered, although it is often again taken today to sound as though it is slipshod or somehow uncontrolled. But the range and stature of pianists who at times employed the technique is such that it cannot be construed as somehow accidental; Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963), Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943), and particularly Ignacy Paderewski (1860-1941) and Vladimir de

²¹ For a detailed examination of both solo and orchestral portamento, see Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 143-204.

Pachmann (1848-1933) all demonstrate differing degrees of asynchronicity in their recordings.²² Some pianists were also given to arpeggiating chords (playing the notes within a chord at slightly different times), even though there would be no indication in the score to suggest such arpeggiation; this vertical misalignment was again characteristic of performances in the early part of the century, although by the 1940s the clearer and more coordinated styles with which we are familiar today had already become the norm.²³

The inadequacies of the early acoustic recording process were such that we do not always get a good sense of a singer's tone. But it is clear that vocal production changed quite noticeably through the century (a point more fully explored in chapter 29). Early twentieth-century vocal styles tended to be rather lighter than we are used to today, still with great flexibility and, as with string players, much use of portamento. Vibrato was generally shallower and faster than later norms. Changes in vocal production, in Western art music as in other cultures, owe something to the development of instrumental forces. As instruments became more powerful and orchestras louder both on the concert stage and in the opera house, so singers necessarily developed more powerful voices to compete, with greater penetration to the sound and a wider vibrato also often employed to aid projection. Again, the crispness and clarity that became increasingly part of recorded sound also encouraged singers to develop brighter vocal timbres, with crisper attacks and more emphasis on diction and enunciation.

Modernism and postmodernism in musical performance

It was not only the increasing fidelity of sound recording that drove performance standards higher through the twentieth century, profound changes in the musical language of Western art music also presented challenges to the technical abilities of performers. The early shoots of musical modernism, for example, began to make increasingly complex demands of individuals and ensembles. In 1912 Schoenberg's melodrama for female voice and small ensemble, *Pierrot Lunaire*, had introduced the concept of

²² See Philip, *Performing Music*, p. 131.

²³ For an explicit example of this in relation to the work of Myra Hess see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'Using Recordings to Study Musical Performance', in *Aural History*, Andy Linehan (ed.), London, The British Library, 2001, p. 8-9..

'Sprechstimme', literally 'speech-song', a hybrid form of vocal production very different from the bel canto style used in the concert hall and on the operatic stage prior to that point. Only one year later Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* caused a near riot at its first performance in Paris. The piece remains challenging for professional orchestras and conductors, but the degree of difficulty it demanded of the orchestra accompanying Diaghilev's Ballet Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1913 can be judged from the extensive rehearsals set aside for it prior to its first performance. As noted above, much orchestral music-making around the turn of the century, particularly for repertoire that had been performed before, was done with almost no rehearsal whatsoever; occasionally the briefest of run-throughs might be scheduled. Stravinsky's *Rite* required no less than 17 orchestra rehearsals plus five stage rehearsals in the two weeks preceding its first performance;²⁴ such a lengthy rehearsal schedule is indicative of the new challenges the musical language of the piece presented to orchestral musicians,

The virtuoso demands already made of soloists in the late nineteenth century, especially of pianists and string players, were further expanded, and late romantic repertoire of the early twentieth century – such as Rachmaninov's piano concertos or Sibelius's violin concerto – continued to portray the soloist in a valiant, intrepid light: the quintessential 'artist as hero'. But increasing levels of individual virtuosity were demanded from composers working in a range of styles. Indeed, by the 1960s certain performers were engaging in what might be termed 'hypervirtuosity', in which their command of instrument or voice went well beyond the capacities conventionally ascribed to performers, and beyond that which had previously been considered possible. The use of extended techniques – producing sounds which lie outside the conventional parameters ordinarily associated with an instrument or voice – became important components of the performance style of certain performers. The oboist Heinz Holliger (b.1939), or the singer Cathy Berberian (1925-1983), to name only two, provide examples of performers who explored the limits of what could be achieved in performance, often in collaboration with composers who sought deliberately to expand these boundaries. Luciano Berio's *Sequenza* series of unaccompanied but highly challenging works is illustrative of this trend of composers collaborating closely with specific performers to exploit instrumental and vocal possibilities. These developments are more fully explored in chapters 29 and 30.

²⁴ Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: a Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882-1934*, London, Jonathan Cape, 2000, p. 202.

Hypervirtuosity provoked by modernist developments in musical language was not confined to Western art music. In the jazz tradition, for example, the rise of bebop in the 1940s also demanded much greater levels of individual technical and musical skills. Performers such as Parker and Gillespie changed perceptions of what was musically possible in an analogous fashion to art music practitioners. In Parker's case it was the speed and intensity of his solos that were so different from other jazz players, and his work provided a platform for later virtuosos such as John Coltrane (1926-1967) and Ornette Coleman (b.1930). Coleman's 'free jazz' style in particular, with its extensive use of glissandi, split notes and multiphonics, had something in common with similar sound worlds being imagined by Western art music composers in the 1960s. Notwithstanding their very different aesthetic roots, the sonic overlap between these two areas of avant-garde music making – the (largely) improvised jazz tradition and the (largely) notated art music tradition – would be increasingly exploited in the latter part of the century, by artists as diverse as the saxophonists Anthony Braxton (b.1945) and John Zorn (b.1953), and the pianist Cecil Taylor (b.1929), for example.

This development of hypervirtuosity inevitably required an exceptional technical control of instrument or voice derived from many long years of practice. In contrast, there were other developments that either lessened the technical skills required of the performer or in some cases obviated them almost entirely. A work such as Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (1968) is composed entirely of poems written by the composer, to which performers are asked to respond in something akin to a quasi-meditative state; no other instructions or notation are provided. John Cage's renowned *4'33"* (1952) was written for any instrument or combination of instruments, the instructions on the score stipulating only that no instrument should actually be played for the duration of the piece (Cage's point being that any extraneous sounds heard during the performance would constitute 'the music'). Graphic scores, in which conventional staff notation might be replaced by shapes, doodles or images of one kind or another, similarly do not necessarily require advanced performance skills for their execution. Such approaches were further reinforced by English experimentalists such as Cornelius Cardew (1936-81), founder of the Scratch Orchestra in 1969, and Gavin Bryars (b.1943), who established the Portsmouth Sinfonia the following year. Neither group required musical competence as a condition of entry; indeed the latter stipulated that members had to be either non-

musicians or, if musically competent, to play an instrument otherwise unknown to them. As Michael Nyman put it, 'rhythm in the Sinfonia is something not to be relied upon; most players get lost, are not sufficiently in control of their instruments to keep up the pace, may suddenly telescope half a dozen bars into one, or lose their place'.²⁵ Such groups were quite deliberately conceived as challenging the authoritarian, hierarchical structures underpinning Western art music performance, which conventionally assumed that meaningful performances could only be given by those who had submitted themselves to a programme of rigorous training and study over many years.

This increasing democratisation of musical performance was, unsurprisingly perhaps, most noticeable in the rapidly expanding area of popular music practice. The rising popularity and shrinking costs of instruments such as the saxophone and the electric guitar, the greater diversity of musical styles appealing to and marketed towards younger generations, and later in the century the widespread availability of music technology specifically conceived to facilitate creative work, all combined to engage increasing numbers of people in musical performance. In fact, although empirical evidence would be hard to come by, it appears likely that, in Euro-American cultures at least, more people were developing musical performance skills in some form by the end of the century than at any previous time in history.

By the 1970s not only were performers necessarily devising new ways to play new music, they were also finding new ways to play old music. The performance of 'early music' (a rather nebulous term whose meaning changed much over the latter part of the century) was particularly subject to reappraisal, in the context of what was originally known as the authenticity debate. It was felt by a small group of musical pioneers that attempting to recreate the original sounds of music from earlier periods would give greater insight into what the music might have meant for its original audiences, as well as different understandings of the performance of that music for contemporary audiences. In truth, the roots of this 'authentic performance' movement can be traced back to the early years of the century, when Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940) first began to reconstruct historical instruments. His enthusiasm was passed on to his family, and their home in Haslemere in southern England became a focus for the recreation of historical instruments and performances on them. By the late 1960s performers such as David Munrow (1942-76),

²⁵ Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 162.

Nigel North (b.1954) and Christopher Hogwood (b.1941) were bringing new ways of playing mediaeval and renaissance music to a much wider audience.

Numerous performers became specialists in this area, allying musicological detective work to performance skills in an endeavour to recreate the sounds of earlier performances. Different instruments were usually employed – for example, violins using gut strings instead of steel and played with different bows, wind instruments with different mouthpieces and key layouts – involving copies of instruments that would have been in circulation at the time of the original performance (and even, occasionally, original instruments themselves). These were usually tuned at a lower pitch than modern instruments, replicating what was taken to be the pitch levels prevailing at the time the music was first performed. Performances tended to be faster and lighter, with expressive gestures such as rubato and vibrato much more sparingly employed, if at all. Vocal timbres were similarly light and transparent; purity of vocal sound was much prized, as demonstrated in recordings by one of the most well-known singers working in this area, Emma Kirkby (b.1949). Greater consideration was given to what were taken to be ‘the composer’s intentions’ as indicated in the score, with decades of editorial intervention stripped away. Additional information could be gleaned from iconographic sources (that might show the disposition of performance forces at a given event, for example), methods and treatises (indicating how instruments were learned or voices trained), and from a variety of other sources such as newspapers, diaries, original performing parts, etc. Colin Lawson explores many of these issues in more detail in Chapter 23 of the present volume, in relation to Mozart’s late symphonies.

The notion that we might experience musical performance as original audiences experienced it was compelling. However, the description of such performances as ‘authentic’ was widely critiqued, on the grounds that, notwithstanding intensive scholarship, nobody could be sure exactly how the music sounded when it was performed; not, at least, prior to sound recording. Moreover, as Lawson also points out, even if the notes and timbres of such pieces could be recreated adequately, audiences would still be listening to the music of Bach, for example, having experienced later composers such as Mahler, Schoenberg or Stockhausen. Thus the aesthetic response to the performance could never be the same as for those who

had heard the music in their own times. For these reasons and others, the description of such performances as 'authentic' was recast to the rather less pejorative 'historically-informed'.

However, historical awareness and notions of authenticity affected the work of performers beyond the Western art music tradition. Many traditional musics around the world – most of which are not normally underpinned by systems of musical notation – experience tensions between performances that are deemed to be authentic or inauthentic in relation to that tradition. While certain performers are performing music that is still very much part of their everyday lives ('folklore') others may have less tangible connections with such performance traditions, and are reconstituting musical performances for political or economic ends, or simply out of cultural curiosity ('fakelore'). In other contexts performers may be put at the service of political agendas that endeavour to promote nationalist orthodoxy: the totalitarian regimes of Russia and eastern Europe, particularly after the Second World War, often used musical performers drawn from (or imitating) rural or 'peasant' traditions as emblematic of ideas about collective identity, in an attempt to underpin the legitimacy of one particular version of cultural history. The Russian folk singer Dimitri Pokrovsky, for example, observes that 'up until the late 1920s, there were commercial folklore ensembles that sang absolutely authentic folk music – for example, the Piatnitsky Choir. But in the 1930s, everything changed...Stalin ordered the creation of official Soviet folklore. The Piatnitsky Choir was a good institution to do it, and so they were ordered to create this folklore'.²⁶ Elsewhere, the oral/aural nature of jazz, and the importance of those individual improvisation styles that lie at the heart of the tradition, have meant that performers have a keen sense of jazz history. But dance music or 'swing', while historically closely related to the development of jazz, is now often seen by jazz players as somehow inauthentic, largely because of its distinctly commercial nature and the relative lack of musical space for individual creativity. Similarly, rock music performance styles are often taken by aficionados as being legitimate, independent and thus authentic, whereas pop music performance is seen as manufactured, commercialised, and inauthentic. Notions of 'authenticity', therefore, of the importance of stylistic authority and historical validity, became increasingly important to performers in a wide range of musical genres as the century progressed, and remain so in the early twenty-first century.

²⁶ Theodore Levin, 'Dimitri Pokrovsky and the Russian Folk Music Revival Movement', in *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, Mark Slobin (ed.), Durham, Duke University Press, 1996, p. 18.

By the final decades of the twentieth century the plurality of available musical styles had led to a noticeably broader range of opportunities for performers than had existed at the beginning of the century. This in turn not only provided opportunities for such performers to move between these different styles, for aesthetic and/or economic reasons, it also resulted in the creation of hybrid musical genres, often as a result of increasing globalisation, and underpinned once more by the international record companies. Thus performers who had achieved distinction in one field would sometimes 'cross over' into other music, either - if travelling in the direction of popular styles - to achieve greater commercial success, or - if travelling in the direction of Western art music - for purposes of legitimisation. This arguably had its roots in the 1990 World Cup finals in Italy, when a concert featuring three of the world's most distinguished tenors, Jose Carreras (b.1946), Placido Domingo (b.1941) and Luciano Pavarotti (1935-2007), was broadcast to millions around the globe. Subsequent international record sales of the pot-pourri of popular and operatic extracts they performed were huge. The record companies realised there were significant profits to be made, and 'classical crossover' became an established genre, at least for marketing purposes. Later examples included Domingo making an album with the American folk/popular singer John Denver (1943-97); the violinist Nigel Kennedy (b.1956) recording music by the American rock group The Doors; the Berlin Philharmonic working with German rock band The Scorpions, and so on. Similarly, successful popular music artists endeavoured to demonstrate that they could be taken seriously in other genres. The jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (b.1961) recorded several albums of classical trumpet concertos; the jazz pianist Keith Jarrett (b.1945) recorded discs of keyboard music by Bach, Shostakovich and others; the singer Sting (Gordon Sumner, b.1951) recorded an album of songs based on music by the English renaissance composer John Dowland. Not all of these endeavours were highly regarded artistically (and much of the crossover work undertaken by classical artists has often been regarded in quite the opposite fashion), but the record companies have long argued that the money they make from such projects allows them to subsidise the recordings of other, less popular, repertoire.

If these kinds of crossovers were seen by some as rather opportunistic, there were examples of more successful collaborations between musicians working in very different genres. Such collaborations perhaps have a rather longer history, and would include George Gershwin's work with Paul Whiteman's jazz

band in the 1920s, Gunther Schuller's efforts to create a 'third stream' fusion between classical music and jazz in the 1950s, the violinist Yehudi Menuhin's collaborations with the Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar in the 1970s, and the cellist Yo-Yo Ma's work with his 'Silk Road' ensemble, which endeavoured to bring together musicians from America and Asia in the 1990s. Indeed, this last example is indicative of the increasing interest in traditional music and musicians from around the world in the last two decades of the century, with much closer collaborations between performers coming from very different musical backgrounds. While Western art music composers such as Henry Cowell (1897-1965) or John Cage (1912-92) had long drawn compositional inspiration from music systems used in other countries, by the last decades of the century such interactions were often being driven by performers. Perhaps because of the very different sound worlds existing in other music cultures, contemporary music specialists have often been particularly interested in engaging with musicians from elsewhere. The work of Germany's Ensemble Modern with Indian and Chinese musicians provides one of several examples.

From the 1980s the westernization of traditional musical performance, both through the use of polished studio production values and through collaborations between, say, western pop musicians and south African performers, or jazz players and Indian or flamenco musicians, had become a significant part of the work of many record companies, often subsumed under the umbrella term 'world music'. By the turn of the twenty-first century many listeners around the globe would have been more familiar with, for example, the qawwali singing of Pakistan's Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948-97) than they would with the latest prodigy appearing on the opera house stage.

Conclusion

It is perhaps too soon to provide a definitive answer as to where the long twentieth century will end. That will be for future scholars to determine. But in the first decade of the twenty-first century it is clear that the dissemination of Western art music performance is once again being profoundly changed by technological evolution. The importance of the internet, and particularly the opportunities offered by downloading and file sharing, suggest that we are on the verge of yet another chapter in the history of performance. The

twentieth century was dominated by the recording industries, through which Western art music (and more) was commodified and sold to consumers through various media: 78s, LPs, CDs, etc. With the exception of radio and television broadcasts, when musical performance was not experienced live it was at least captured within some kind of physical medium: there was something to hold, to examine, to pass on to others. But we are now seeing the decline of such media. A performance can be recorded directly onto a computer, stored in a variety of file types, uploaded to the internet, and then sold or made freely available to anybody who wishes to listen to it; the listener can in turn stream it immediately, or download it onto their computer, their mp3 player or their phone, divorced from any kind of packaging and thus with no physical evidence remaining of the performance or the performers at all. This recourse entirely to digital storage of recorded music may yet be seen to signal the end of the long twentieth century, at least in relation to musical performance.

It might be argued that this lack of a visual source for the musical sound is yet another stage in a process through which performance has become in some ways more 'dehumanized' than previously. Obviously this is true in the sense that the performer is no longer physically present when music is listened to via a recording or on the radio. But it is also true in other ways: in the aspiration of producers to remove those sounds 'peripheral' to a performance that indicate human beings are involved (page turns, key clicks etc.); in the widespread use of music (such as muzak) which is often simply composed digitally, with no physical presence needed other than that of the computer operator; even in some of the ways in which Western art music performance has itself changed – for example, the abandonment of portamento by string players so that we no longer infer the physical act of the hand sliding up or down the neck of their instrument.

But in other ways performers have become increasingly visible over the course of the twentieth century, and a number of successful individuals have become international icons whose influence has extended far beyond their musical endeavours. This is certainly true of particular popular music figures such as Joan Baez (b.1941) and Bob Dylan (b.1941), who became closely identified with the peace protests of the 1960s and early '70s, or Bob Geldof (b.1951), who organised in 1985 an international series of concerts – Live Aid – to raise awareness of famine in Africa. But it is also true of certain Western art music

performers, such as the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (1927-2007), who sped to Berlin to give a free concert in 1989, playing in front of the divisive Berlin Wall as it was brought down by popular protest; or the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim (b.1942), who formed the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in 1999, bringing together Jewish and Palestinian musicians in an attempt to achieve through musical performance some degree of rapprochement between those two otherwise antagonistic communities. In such cases the culture industries and mass media have raised the profile of these performers so that their lives and work have taken on a broader cultural and historical significance.

But commercial and artistic success are no longer pre-requisites for international recognition, since the internet has made it possible for a wide range of performances to be visible on the global stage. Video file sharing sites such as YouTube allow even the most neophyte of performers to upload their performances, however flawed they may be, and share them with whoever can spare the time to view them. This is the 'rehumanizing' of musical performance on a truly global scale. The YouTube Symphony Orchestra has also demonstrated how quickly the internet has impacted on the social organisation of musical performance. In 2009 YouTube asked performers to upload videos of themselves playing a specially commissioned piece by the Chinese composer Tan Dun. Other viewers voted on what they deemed to be the best performers, and the winners were invited to play together as an orchestra at a concert at Carnegie Hall, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas (b.1944). Millions of people around the world became interested in an event that made headline news in many countries, and such has been the demand that YouTube now has a separate channel dedicated to the ongoing work of the orchestra.²⁷ It would be difficult to find a more explicit example of the manner in which digital media has democratised musical performance.

These visual records further enhance what is perhaps the most significant aspect of the twentieth century of recorded sound, which is that it has allowed performers to remain in the public ear long after their death. Historical figures such as Anton Stadler (1753-1812), for whom Mozart wrote his clarinet concerto in 1791, or Franz Clement (1780-1842), the dedicatee of Beethoven's 1806 violin concerto, appear as footnotes in musical history through their association with these composers; we cannot hear their work, we

²⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/symphony>

can only hear of it. But performers in the twentieth century and beyond are kept alive for us and future generations through their recordings, and are thus perhaps on a more equal footing with those composers of previous centuries whose legacy similarly persists in the scores they left behind. Thus the influence of past performers on current and future practice is potentially that much greater – if we listen to what they have to play.

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