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Book Review of
Dorottya Fabian. *A musicology of performance: Theory and method based on Bach's* solos for violin. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2015. 354 pp. ISBN 9781783741526.

Right at the beginning of the book, Fabian acknowledges that writing about music (and by implication music performance) is like dancing to architecture[1]. The listening experience hardly lends itself to be captured in words. However, rather than intending this as a caution or an excuse, Fabian takes it as a starting point and aims to develop a 'framework that enables engagement with [music performance, a] richly complex phenomenon so that "talking about music" may be regarded less like "dancing to architecture", less of "a stupid thing to want to do".' (p. 2). The final chapter clarifies the shift that Fabian proposes: Understanding performance in its rich complexity requires a holistic approach as opposed to a primarily analytical approach, and music performance requires an experiential knowing (or the German '*kennen'*, p. 292) rather than a factual knowing (or the German 'wissen', p. 292)[2]. Indeed, many of the insights displayed in the book seem to have been established through hundreds of hours of dedicated listening. This listening is complemented by the measurement of various aspects of the performances, transcriptions and score analyses, and by the inclusion of biographical information of the various violinists, quotes from interviews with and documentaries about the performers, and quotes from recording reviews. Consequently, Fabian writes from a perspective that is informed through experience as well as verbal discourse. The elements are taken together to form a holistic description of trends and individual diversities in 44 performances (recorded between 1980 and 2010) of Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. These provide the material from which the musicology of performance is extrapolated.

In Chapter 1 (Dancing to Architecture?), Fabian outlines some of the problems associated with music performance research. Analytical approaches have the disadvantage of focussing on particular performance aspects from which (misleadingly) general conclusions are often drawn. In addition to this problem, there has been an over-emphasis of research on relatively early recorded performances (from the first half of the 20th Century). Fabian challenges a few conceptions which have arisen in the literature regarding trends in the performance of classical music. These include the idea that 'the recording industry has fostered a de-personalisation of musical expression, […] that performances have become much less individual' (p. 8), and also 'less communicative because they are less detailed' (p. 9). Misconceptions further relate to the meaning and intentions of historically informed performance (HIP), an issue that is elaborated in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2 (Theoretical Matters), the framework for the research is laid out consisting of two main pillars: 1) Definition and distinction of HIP from mainstream performance (MSP), and 2) Music performance as a complex system. In discussing HIP with respect to MSP, Fabian challenges Taruskin's (1988) argument that both performing styles show modernist ideals, in striving for an objective performance in which the music speaks for itself, and where the personal and the subjective is put

[1] Elvis Costello, citation taken from *Quote Investigator: Exploring the Origins of Quotations* (cited in Fabian (2015, p. 1)
[2] Fabian quotes McGilchrist (2009, p. 96) in this context.

aside. This understanding of HIP emphasises the search for an 'authentic performance', and corroborates the interpretation by pointing at several early HIP recordings. However, the HIP movement has strayed far from this and a style has developed that is 'oriented towards creating musical gestures [that] make the music "speak" as a good orator would using the conventions and classical art of rhetoric'. (p. 30). Indeed, the possibility of 'authentic performance', of recreating the past has been rejected, giving way to a more postmodern aesthetic, 'defined as "incredulity towards scientific knowledge" and "elevation of the decorative" (p. 35), which can be observed in 'the increasing number of recordings that dare to "interpret" rather than just "dispassionately transmit" pieces' (p. 35).

As well as investigating characteristics of performances by HIP and MSP violinists in detail, and putting certain claims regarding performance trends into perspective, the main contribution of the book is to examine performance as a complex system. Fabian cites Cilliers (1998) to explain her proposal:

> Instead of looking for a simple discourse that can unify all forms of knowledge, we have to cope with a multiplicity of discourses, many different language games – all of which are determined locally, not legitimated externally. (Cilliers, 1998, p. 114, as cited in Fabian, 2015, p. 52).

She also cites Cilliers (1998, pp. 3-4, 7, cited in Fabian, 2015, p. 60) when summarising the main characteristics of complex systems, which include a large number of elements that interact dynamically (in multiple directions), in a rich manner. These interactions are non-linear, and often loop (feedback into themselves). Complex systems are open systems, have a history and need an influx of energy to 'operate under conditions far from equilibrium' (Cilliers, 1998, pp. 3-4, 7, cited in Fabian, 2015, p. 60). Non-fixed clusters of elements may arise and develop. An important aim of the book is then to explore to what degree music performance indeed parallels these characteristics of complex systems. The outcome of this exploration is summarised in the final chapter (as discussed below).

In Chapter 3 (Violinists, Violin Schools and Emerging Trends), the investigation of the 44 recordings of Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo starts (as the title suggests) with an introduction to the violinists and associated violin schools, and with an analysis of performance characteristics and their presence in recordings of violinists associated with HIP or MSP. The violinists represent four generations of performers, despite the relatively brief time-span of the examined recordings (1980-2010). These generations are to a degree reflected in performance styles, which is an overarching (non-linear) trend interacting with the clustering of performers according to whether or not they perform on period instruments and identify themselves as HIP. The discussion of violin schools provides insight into ways in which MSP practices have been maintained and HIP practices developed. Famous violin pedagogues such as Galamian and DeLay working at leading conservatoires (Juilliard School of Music, and Curtis Institute of Music) were instrumental in fostering the MSP aesthetics related to the production of 'a beautifully controlled, even, well-projected, warm sound' (p. 93), although Fabian clarifies that this was for Galamanian more dogmatically so than for DeLay, who showed a more open-ended pedagogy. The establishment of HIP teaching at conservatoires developed only gradually, starting on

the continent, in the Netherlands in particular. As Fabian argued in Chapter 1, the influence of HIP was not and is not necessarily established academically, but rather through practice. Indeed, she refers to several MSP violinists who have taken experiences with period ensembles as an inspiration to include HIP elements in their playing of Baroque repertoire.

An impressive overview of performance characteristics per recording as assessed by the author is given in Table 3.3. Each recording always includes multiple movements, and often the full set of sonatas and partitas. Each movement of each recording was given a rating per performance feature, and scores were averaged across movements. These analyses were done aurally by the author, which inevitably introduces subjectivity in measurements. Features include phrasing, articulation and accentuation, bowing, ornamentation, rubato etc. Each of these features was evaluated as more or less MSP (on a scale from 0-10) or more or less HIP (on a scale from 0-10). Table 3.1 clarifies the definition of stylistic features as defined by Fabian, and in line with research by Ornoy (2007-2008). For example, a high score on MSP phrasing indicates a performance that is melodically oriented, while a high score on HIP phrasing is related to a performance that follows the bass line (harmony), and is more metrical and motivic. Table 3.3 shows that the majority of performances by younger violinists display more HIP and fewer MSP characteristics, while older violinists seem to fall more evenly into the two camps. Analyses of recordings in different years by the same violinists (Kremer and Mullova) show some striking changes in performing style. These changes in individual performances are examined in more detail in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 (Analysis of Performance Features) presents a comparison of characteristics across performers focusing on one particular feature at a time, including tempo, vibrato, ornamentation, rhythm, bowing, articulation and phrasing. The presentation of comparisons is by necessity selective, given the large number of movements, violinists, and recordings, the exception being the analysis of tempo for which trends are summarised over the whole set of recordings. This particular analysis examines trends over time in tempo within recordings from MSP violinists and HIP violinists. No single trend is found. Instead some movements speed up over time, while others slow down, or show no consistent trend. HIP and MSP recordings may or may not share the same trend for a particular movement. Further analysis does show a more general distinction between tempo choices in HIP and MSP, as they tend to differ in the degree of contrast between the tempi of movements. This contrast is often stronger in MSP recordings than HIP.

The chapter further distils differences between HIP and MSP styles, including differences in the frequency and kind of vibrato use, differences in phrasing and bowing, differences in articulation of multiple stops, among others. It is noteworthy that the addition of rich embellishments happens only occasionally in particular movements, and HIP inspired MSP violinists seem to do this more so than HIP violinists (p. 154).

Two questions receive further attention. The first relates to whether ornamentation is pre-planned or improvised, and whether the performance context (recording studio or concert performance) influences the choice to ornament. Fabian argues that ‘ornamentation should always sound as if improvised.’ (p. 169), and gives an example

of a performance where this seems indeed the case (i.e., it sounds improvisatory through its seemingly unsystematic nature). This aesthetic preference also relates to the rhythmic delivery of melodic passages in which Bach has included written out embellishments. Fabian refers to contemporary music treatises that demand performers to employ ornamentation according to 'good taste'. In Bach, this good taste not only refers to the addition of ornamentation (at places where they are not clearly written out), but also to the delivery of the ornaments when written.

The second question relates to the interpretation of dotted rhythms – to what degree should these indeed be over-dotted as sometimes argued? Fabian presents a systematic analysis of the degree of dotting in three movements where dotted rhythms prevail. Depending on the context, dotted rhythms are over-dotted or under-dotted, which is the case among MSP as well as HIP violinists. It is noted, however, that the perceived degree of dotting depends on the delivery, in particular on articulation and tempo. A faster tempo and more staccato articulation enhance a sense of over-dotting, even if the ratio between note durations is proportional.

Chapter 5 (Affect and Individual Difference: Towards a Holistic Account of Performance) investigates individual differences in interpretation and expression of the music by zooming in on a selection of violinists performing particular movements. Diversity is demonstrated in this way within the MSP and HIP movements, and across multiple recordings of the same violinist. An important aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the non-linear and interactive nature of performance features. This is among others explored using the notion of moto perpetuo (a sustained rapid motion) in the Preludio of the E Major Partita. Sarlo (2015, cited in Fabian, 2015, p. 255) categorises performances of the Preludio as moto perpetuo or as 'expressive improvisatory' (forthcoming, cited in Fabian, 2015, p. 225) based on measured tempo and tempo variation, where fast and smaller tempo variation would indicate a moto perpetuo style. Fabian tests out whether a more holistic examination of performance features would lead to a different categorisation. She considers the perceptual effect of the tempo fluctuations (are they clearly audible?), whether accents interrupt the flow of the music or not, variations in dynamics, the smoothness of bowing etc. Inevitably a more complete picture arises. It becomes clear that differences in certain dimensions (e.g., homogeneity in tone) override or change the perception of other dimensions, and ultimately influence categorisation.

In the final chapter (Conclusions and Epilogue: The Complexity Model of Music Performance, Deleuze and Brain Laterality), Fabian evaluates the findings with respect to Cilliers' (1998) eight characteristics of a complex dynamic system. The book has given a convincing account of the great number of elements that 'play a role not just in how performance is acted out but also how it is heard and received' (p. 274). The interaction between these elements gives rise to a very dynamic and ever-changing performance practice as well as strongly individualised performances, in particular in the way music is phrased using various dimensions including tempo, articulation, dynamics, bowing and vibrato. The non-linearity of these interactions is apparent in small differences having a large effect and vice versa (a point also made by Clarke (1995), whose ecological perspective (Clarke, 2005) has clear parallels with Fabian's proposed framework). The other points also receive considerable support, related to loops of interactions, openness of the system, energy feeding into it, history,

and ways in which clusters arise and develop. The question is then what the implications are for research into music performance.

The case for the interaction between performance features is very convincingly made for the delivery and perception of performance. Curiously, experimental verifications of the role of interactions between features for the perception of performance have not always shown this. For example, it was found that interactions have limited relevance for the perception of emotion in music performance (Eerola, Friberg, and Bresin, 2013). It seems to be the case though that similar interpretative intentions can be realised through different expressive means (e.g., Sloboda, 1983; Timmers & Ashley, 2007). Indeed, redundancy of performance features is a central characteristic of Juslin's (1997) adaptation of Brunswick's model to account for the expression and communication of emotion through music performance. An important difference between experimental approaches and the perspective offered in 'A Musicology of Performance' is one of scale, and a sense that details matter. We would not be listening to a different performance of music and expect that the emotion conveyed would be categorically different. Indeed, to obtain such an effect, considerable global differences in multiple performance features would need to be introduced. Instead, we would listen to a performance and be taken by the fresh multi-sensory experience that it offers. This experience is hard to capture in words, although the elements can be described as well as perceptual and affective effects associated with the experience. Meaning is derived through these listening experiences in interaction with the performance context (where performance styles are conceived in certain ways).

In the context of this book, the result is a very rich and informative account of variations in performances of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo. The accounts are often descriptive and subjective, but also find considerable substantiation and support. A serious effort should be taken by music performance researchers to investigate performance in its complexity and as part of a wider dynamic system. Fabian's book serves as a leading example. Music listeners may take the book as an inspiration to make greater sense of their listening experiences as may music performers, students and teachers. Even if listeners and performers may not always agree with Fabian's hearing and assessment, the book would still serve as an excellent eye opener to the richness and power of music performance. This may help to inspire performance students to develop their own multisensory presentation of music, which is not striving towards a particular ideal, but towards a creative and inventive performance solution, that is not necessarily final. As Fabian explains, performance of this repertoire is as alive as ever, which has important implications for music related policies.

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