Toward a Unity of Performance and Musicology

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A review of the relationship of musicology and performance is certainly timely. I shall devote this article to (1) an examination of this relationship in the light of my own experience and observation of Bach studies and performance, (2) a brief analysis of the nature of each activity, and (3) a few remarks on the interaction of the two disciplines.

The development of musicology has changed the face of the performing art. Since musicology has become widely established, most performers have become aware of the irrefutable fact that, when performing music of a previous period, they must be cognizant of history. Two major problems impede the performer, however. One is the time lag which occurs between the publication of musicological material and its absorption by those involved in performance—concert artists, teachers, and students. The second problem is a communication gap between the domains of musicology and performance. This hiatus is due in part to valid causes arising from the nature of each area. The ideal situation, in my opinion, would be total interaction between the two worlds. The following points may be regarded by some as a counsel of perfection, designed for rare individuals. Nonetheless, they may serve as a statement of desirable goals for the application of performance standards toward the expansion of mutual understanding between performing artists and musicologists. Although a rapprochement has been effected successfully in some cases, a more constant and enduring interchange is required, for the gap is still too wide and too prevalent.

The above-mentioned time lag occurs for a variety of reasons related to the traditional psychological and practical education of the performer. Teachers and students concentrate on learning repertoire and on developing technique and musicianship pertaining to performance. Whereas many performers, teachers, and students select editions with care and take advantage of the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* and books on performance practices, many still work from outdated editions. Information reaches teachers and their students slowly unless they undertake independent studies. Reliance solely on hearsay about Bach style is currently more widespread than one likes to think.

Outside the domain of musicologist-performer relations stands what may be called, for lack of a better term, the musicological "deviant." This type of musician is an extreme example of the time lag in communication. He believes in absolute musical taste and avoids all studies in earlier performance practices by saying, in effect, "My musical gifts are generally approved, and my education is sound. In the final analysis, my personal taste may therefore be the final judge in my performance style." The musicological deviant also believes that historical studies endanger his spontaneity by an overlay of consciousness which may destroy the artistic element of his performance.

These impediments plague the performance world and prevent fluid,

productive communication. On the positive side, the requirements of historical knowledge for more enlightened performance are being met increasingly by specialized courses and workshops in universities and conservatories. I should like to suggest, from my own performing and teaching experience, several steps which may contribute toward the elimination of these barriers to achieving a historically informed performance art.

The primary need for the performer or performing student is a change in educational orientation and in work habits. The inclusion of more reading in a performer's education would contribute not only to a reserve of historical knowledge but also to increasing reflection and judgment in performance style. In addition to the obvious requirement of reading the classic works and outstanding new publications, specific helpful steps toward expansion are: (1) The reading of research reports in current musicological journals. Most performers miss these and are therefore deprived not only of recent information but also of their implied directions. (2) Systematic study of variants in manuscripts and early editions. The performer is thus provided with a deeper insight into the problems of manuscripts, editions, structural nuances, and the art of embellishment, as well as errors, omissions, or inclusions of copyists. (3) Study and communication with scholars who are working on manuscript sources. Alertness to new ideas and methods in research is eminently valuable.

These recommendations constitute a departure from the traditional approach to a performer's education and development. They call for the cultivation of new habits in the student and teacher and may appear arduous, but they would bring about significant expansion of the performing musician's horizons. The notion has existed for a long time that a performer must spend virtually all or most of his time developing repertoire and a professional level of skills in technique and musicianship. Concentration on a single instrument has also been regarded as axiomatic in the development of a concert performer. Certainly both of these notions are valid. Every concert performer must undergo a certain period of single-minded work and concentration which the goal of great performance demands. However, a performer's education need not be continually one-sided. Breadth of study does not necessarily deprive one of depth in work and accomplishment.

I report the following facts not from a wish to write about myself but simply to indicate that a versatile education, including multiple instruments, techniques, sonorities, and historical studies, is not antithetical to the solid performing foundation required for a concert career. When I was a student at the Juilliard Graduate School, the obligatory studies were confined to one weekly private lesson and one weekly class in theory. Few students besides myself chose to take all of the elective courses. No course, however, was offered in historical studies, and no harpsichord or clavichord was to be found in the school. Its curriculum is very different today.

Fortunately, I was introduced to musicological studies before I had reached my fourteenth year by a teacher who was both a performer and a

student of history, Jan Chiapusso, author of *Bach's World,* published in 1968 by the Indiana University Press. The habit was formed early, therefore, of pursuing these studies as an integral part of my work in Bach performance. And I have retained it to this day. My instrumental studies since that time included not only the piano and organ but also the harpsichord and clavichord. The latter two were taught to me by the Chicago harpsichordists Phil Manuel and Gavin Williamson. I grew, therefore, developing the techniques and absorbing the sonorities of all four keyboard instruments. I also studied the methods of the 19th-century transcribers and, in addition, made comparative studies in registration and phrasing on the harpsichord and dynamics and phrasing on the piano. The amalgamation of multiple instruments and historical studies made it possible for me to perform all-Bach recitals at the ages of fifteen and sixteen, previous to my studies at the Juilliard Graduate School. By sixteen, when I entered the School, my method of study was too strongly established to be narrowed down to a "unifocal" direction.

There were additional powerful influences regarding instruments and sonorities. Because Mr. Chiapusso was born in Java, he also taught me about the gamelan orchestra. Earlier, at the age of ten, I had been taken to hear a concert of electronic instruments at Orchestra Hall in Chicago presented by Theremin, a friend of my previous teacher. The impression was overpowering Six years later, within one week after entering Juilliard, I was studying his instruments with him. Few people know that my first appearance in New York took place at Carnegie Hall at the age of seventeen, when I played a Theremin electronic instrument under his direction. Despite an intense involvement with contemporary music and instruments, my pursuit of general musicological studies and specialized research expanded with my continuing and deepening interest in Bach performance. Work with historical sources, as well as comparative studies of manuscripts, editions, and instruments of all periods, has continued throughout my life. Already in 1953, when I recorded the forty-eight preludes and fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* for Decca, I had studied every variant of each manuscript and early edition listed in Bischoff and the Bach-Gesellschaft notes on the "Forty-Eight" and produced a comprehensive edition in the selection not only of textual variants but also of ornaments. My years of studying sources on ornamentation, Bach's harmony, etc., had enabled me to cope with such a task. A unidirectional type of music education would not have equipped me to work in this way toward a performing goal.

I perform works in public only after a careful consideration of many factors. These include the historical research of others (as well as my own), the study of manuscript and edition variants, the examination of musical structures and their relation to historical performance practices, and instrumental factors. After analysis and musical identification of all these aspects, conclusions about the interpretation begin to emerge. As it is enumerated above, this may appear to be an overintellectualized process; but in practice

it is not, because this process is both gradual and composite. The student years consist of the comparatively simple task of amassing information, repertoire, and technical skills. Only after this stage has been passed can the real work truly begin for the thinking, creative person. And this work so combines intuition and the gathering of information that it becomes in itself an integrated and spontaneous process.

The conceptual orientation of the 20th century deals with multiple components on all levels and in many different fields, both aesthetic and scientific. Rooted in the opening years of our century, its manifestations are now everywhere apparent. James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* are the first examples which come to mind. Schoenberg's abandonment of a key center is another illustration of withdrawal from a "unifocal" direction. The music of Boulez, Stockhausen, Messiaen, and others experimenting with multiple rhythmic motives, multiple sonorities employed motivically, multiple orchestras and conductors are all indicative of a style of thought and expression totally different from the unidirectional forms of the preceding century.

Although the contemporary manner of multiplicity in concepts and applied forms is unique to our time, it bears an underlying relationship to the equipment of a musician previous to 1750 and encourages the emergence of well-rounded musicians not unlike those of the 17th and 18th centuries. Artists of multiple achievement are increasing in number today. Combinations of composer, performer, and teacher, of conductor and soloist, of soloist and chamber music player are now encountered at the highest levels of the performing art.

The field of Bach performance is particularly fascinating in that it requires one to be competent both as a historian and as a performing artist. To this generally recognized double requirement I believe it necessary to add the element of study in 20th-century perceptions and practices in both the creative and performing arts. This study is indispensable to an enlightened awareness of the past because it provides greater objectivity, which, born of self-knowledge, can be used to assess our own judgments about a past era. The concentration of energies on studies of a period different from one's own risks the dangers of noninvestigation of oneself and one's own time. Inevitably we bring ourselves into the interpretation and evaluation of all data. From the early decades of our century, Niels Bohr, the great physicist, stressed the reciprocal interaction between the observer and the material observed; he showed that the viewer plays a major part in the analysis and understanding of the observed material. Our forms of thought and response are usually so deeply rooted in the contemporary cultural unconscious as to be automatically unnoticed. Objectivity can be achieved only by recognized separation of the self from the object. In attempting to identify with the art and thought of another period, particularly where all tradition has been lost, sharpened perception of our own contemporary formulations sheds light on how these influence our present habits, as well as our interpretation of past

practices. The degree of clarity gained thereby may be applied, for example, to the entire approach to performing embellishments and may even be narrowed down to the specific performance of a trillo or an appoggiatura. The selection of auxiliary notes, off- and on-beat rhythms in embellishments, and their style of performance rests not only in the gathering of data. These, as well as many other aspects of authentic Bach style which are based on source material, bounce off our own unconscious, culturally-conditioned responses. If we are unaware of underlying habits of contemporary musical expectations, the risk of influence from this source upon actual performance is great, no matter how much historical data is stored up in our conscious equipment. The stress of a public concert may destroy all well-intentioned study and practice. I have witnessed instances in which countless hours of work did not suffice to avoid a total reversion to old unstylistic habits under the stress of performance, because roots formed by studies in both historical and contemporary perceptions had not been established.

Some formulations of the 20th century tend to hamper an identification of underlying sympathy with certain 17th- and 18th-century practices. Our attitudes in performance education require the most precise visual accuracy known in music history. However, the training of a performer to observe unswerving accuracy to the score is not conducive to "reading" the freer sections of Bach scores correctly. Nor does the frame of mind which this educated habit produces promote ease in responding to the fundamental element of individual freedom inherent in the nature of cadenzas, arpeggios, and embellishments in general. The psychology of embellishment itself is upsetting to the average musician accustomed to contemporary precision. We know that the musical orientation of composers before 1750 called for performance practices often fundamentally opposed to the strict observance of what the eye saw in the score. As one goes back in the history of Western music, interpretive directions virtually vanish and even musical notation is often reduced to a skeletal outline. At this point the uninformed performer is at a total loss. If he adheres to the original, unedited page, he is in danger of performing a mere harmonic outline or, in fact, almost nothing at all. The second movement of the third *Brandenburg Concerto*, which shows only two chords, the dominant and the tonic, is an illustration. On several occasions I have heard these two chords played alone and unadorned and read in the program notes that the decision to do so was made in order to be true to the score. The third movement of the *Capriccio on the Departure of His Beloved Brother*, with its figured bass and little else, is another example. If these two movements are read as they appear in approved unedited scores, they are actually misread. I remember a rehearsal in 1940 when I was performing the Bach *Clavier Concerto in F minor*. The conductor turned to me with a perplexed face when I proceeded into a cadenza from the fermata on the dominant in the last movement. On its completion he said to me, "What are you doing?" When I explained that I was playing the cadenza indicated by the fermata and harmonic situation, his response was, "But it is not written into the

score." By now, it is tedious to hear this kind of remark about Bach scores. The question which accompanies it is, "If Bach wanted this in the music, why did he not write it out?" These questions, which are still being asked and in some cases employed as a protesting apparatus, exemplify the enormous time lag that historical information endures before it reaches performers and teachers.

The modern emphasis upon precise visual accuracy leads at times to extremes which are tragi-comic. In a recent engagement with a major symphony orchestra, I was conducting, among other works, a concerto. When I noted in rehearsal that the continual *crescendi* and *diminuendi* in the soloist's performance were not suited to Bach and to the concerto's structure, the response was that the performance was based exactly on the printed score. True enough, but the printed score referred to was an edition in typically 19th-century style. Although many musicians are better informed, the total naïveté of this musician's response is an example of the innocence which exists even among some outstanding performers. Problems in Bach interpretation are not solved by following printed scores, particularly those produced by 19th-century editors. Indeed, most interpretive editions have created our greatest problems. In addition, independence from continual reference to editors' realizations of figured bass or embellishments seems to me the ideal goal. Besides studying the forms of embellishment performance practice per se, a further effort toward independence should include enlarging one's ability to analyze and reconstruct the compositional styles of the 17th and 18th centuries. This kind of skill contributes a fundamental knowledge which can be employed in specific applications of principles of embellishments, choice of variants, realization of figured bass, etc.

Another area of study essential to the performer who aims to fulfill the composer's intentions is the study of manuscripts. The modern increase in reference to a manuscript score is admirable and of significant value to the performer. However, it imparts to the reader the sense of having reached a safe, final harbor, and the assumption that a manuscript "tells all" sometimes creates a dangerous illusion and produces its own headaches. With the continual refinement of methods for studying the authenticity of manuscripts, correspondingly complex determinants are employed in establishing the reliability of a total manuscript or details within an approved one. So specialized an area of research is hardly the task of the performer and music teacher, but they would be aided in their goal if study of the variants were included in their reference to manuscript scores. They would then become realistically aware of the complexities involved in manuscript identifications and choices.

Distance, physical and psychological, is the second major problem referred to earlier in the relationship between performer and musicologist. Physical distance produces a problem in communication between the two disciplines; it affects music conservatories, private teachers who have not ventured into universities, and musicological and performing departments respectively attached to different universities. However, it is diminishing at a fairly rapid

pace, when compared with the gaps of thirty years ago. The psychological distance between musicologist and performer reaches deeper and cannot be overlooked or rationalized. The psychological framework of a musicologist and that of a performer developing as an artist are different. Many well-known musicologists can and do perform in public. However, the act of great performance depends not only upon the amalgam of techniques, musicianship, and musicological equipment but also, in the final analysis, on the gift for communication and identification with the composer's vision.

The *raison d'être* of performance lies not only in the presentation of a musical work but also in artistic communication, conscious or unconscious. Communication occurs inevitably when human beings are involved. However, there are no lines of demarcation between communication and art, for at the highest level these project a composite form. One does not employ art in order to communicate. Above and beyond the realm of musical talent and the amassing of technical and historical knowledge, the arts of composer and performer merge on some mutually sympathetic level into an integral unity which communicates through its very self. This phenomenon must not be confused with a capacity to reach audiences, which in some cases is exhibitionism. Technically expert, some performers are endowed with enough of this quality to sustain a successful performing career. Communication in art has meaning for me on quite another level. When it is achieved, listeners respond in terms of experiencing, rather than in mere pleasurable listening, and they return this feeling to the performer in such a way that a cyclic process is established which creates a unit involving composer-performer-listener. The achievement of this trinity is beyond analysis or conscious study. My experiences in this state are beyond explanation. One may choose to be a performer, but one does not choose to be an artist. Art chooses.

Preoccupation with the composite of art and communication nourishes those who are involved in music-making and leads them to create goals different from those who seek to throw light on musical cultures and performance problems through scholarship and investigation. As a result of their specialized performing orientation, some performers continue to fear conscious study of historical practices. The present generation is becoming increasingly aware, however, of their need for historical studies. Thus the fear diminishes as the sheer common sense of the situation becomes more apparent. Nonetheless, from my view as a performer and a university professor, the drawbridge still needs to be lowered permanently, and defenses, let alone attacks, from both sides have yet to cease. The musicologist's goals, orientation, and quality of life and studies are fundamentally different from those of the performing artist: each activity has aspirations and achievements native to its own spirit. They are different, but this does not imply that a closer association and exchange between the two is impractical. On the contrary, it is realistic to recognize that education in music must now embrace both.[1]

The final problem lies in constructing a bridge, effecting a permanent and

easily traversed connection, in order to integrate the knowledge of performance practices of the past with living performances today. Integration and fulfillment of past with present is most necessary when music of one period is performed on instruments of another era, as is the case, for example, when music for Baroque keyboard or string instruments is played on the piano or with modern violin technique. The problem also exists, however, when such music is performed on instruments of previous times by modern artists, who emerge inevitably from a modern education, psyche, and cultural orientation, for the older instruments represent highly developed products of a totally different conceptual and musical outlook. Historical data cannot merely be applied to, or superimposed upon, an instrument or a musical work. They must be first absorbed, then experienced within their own spirit, and at last integrated into the living quality of the structure of the music, the original nature of the instrument, and the act of performance. The area of transference of historical information to specific performance applications and integration in Bach performance is one which deserves more attention. This is an art in itself.

An area of precious quality is in fact shared by both musicologist and performer. Herein lies the humanistic value of musicological studies. Beyond the accumulation of information required by both musicologist and performer, and the extension of performing equipment gained by the latter, musicological studies provide the possibility of a deeper, psychic absorption of values and performance practices belonging to a human and aesthetic milieu other than one's own. The deeper the experience of study, the greater the possibility of entry into this other world. The performer's opportunity for this experience is afforded by his own act of living performance.

The performer's relation to a composer of the past is unique. No one can claim to fulfill Bach's intentions 222 years after his death. One wonders whether anyone except Bach himself could ever have made this claim legitimately. Besides, the creative process is so vast, so mysterious and complex, that the popular term "realizing the composer's intentions" seems oversimplified in relation to the infinity of spirit and ideas of which true creativity partakes and which it imparts. I should like to suggest the phrase "attempting to be true to the composer's thought and vision" as more descriptive of the true relationship between performer and composer.

If I were planning a program of study for young performers, I would recommend that every string player study his instrument's counterpart in the viol and gamba family and develop an equal amount of facility in both the modern and earlier instruments. Keyboard players should have an equivalent requirement, namely, a study of the organ, harpsichord, and clavichord, along with the piano. Furthermore, I would like at least one electronic keyboard instrument to be included. Diversity in instrumental study does not hinder or diffuse concentration. I have found it incalculably enriching to the imagination, not only in my own work but also in the development of my students, for the differences in sonorities and techniques are immeasurably

eloquent in their revelation of instrumental composing and performing approaches, ancient and modern. In university classes I teach in such a way that the final examination is multifaceted. It requires an essay on the manuscripts and early editions of a work selected according to each student's major subject, an analysis of the work's musical structure, an edition realizing all embellishments, phrasing, dynamics, etc., in some cases on more than one instrument, and a finished performance of the work in public. The performing students have neither found this work-plan irksome, nor have they complained about lack of time to practice their instruments.

The artist-performer must be concerned with forging the sum of all these parts into a great whole with depth of feeling and unobstructed freedom of communication. Such a marriage, though rare, is capable of producing great beauty and arrives as close to the composer's thoughts as is humanly possible. This achievement is difficult on every level: it combines the musicological labor of the scholar with the technical and musical development of the gifted performer; it demands a talent for merging the two into an artistic unity; and it is quickened into life only by the precious spiritual gift of giving oneself with reverence and love.

NOTE

[1] In order to help bridge the existing gaps, I created the International Bach Society, Inc., in 1967. The Annual International Congress includes performances, workshops, and lectures by distinguished guest musicologists on such specialized subjects as ornamentation, harpsichord construction, lute, manuscripts, etc. Performance workshops emphasizing historical studies and methods of stylistically appropriate performance applications are devoted to solo instrumental, vocal, and ensemble performance employing both Baroque and modern instruments.