

EDITORIAL



Most of our modern Western institutions and precepts – democracy, individualism, subjectivity, secularism, science, the nation state and the modern apparatus of war – began to germinate in the ‘long’ eighteenth century. In musical life too these were formative years. The emergence of the canon, with the associated idea of the musical ‘work’, was one such development. The rise of the virtuoso and the transformation of audiences from unwieldy and fitfully attentive to enthralled, disciplined and devout, two more. And with these developments, music’s role as a medium of social differentiation was both enhanced and qualitatively revised.

Of course statements such as these may seem overblown, especially since, within scholarly circles today, it is customary to define ‘history’ as the by-product of discourse and perceptual habits. Far from being ‘another country’, the past is posited as a product of our making; it is performed, and when we endeavour to ‘read’ past meanings, we inevitably tell as much as we are told. (Two recent relevant studies are Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Joël-Marie Fauquet and Antoine Hennoin, *La grandeur de Bach* (Paris: Fayard, 2000).)

At the same time, though, if history is about us, our values, fears and aspirations, it is, or rather was, also about how others (past social actors) made sense of themselves in the face of obdurate realities – the state of the weather, for example, birth and death, the production and reception of documents, and technological artefacts. We have, in other words, a dual relation to history. To address this dual relation, we may ask of history two related questions: (a) how past actors came to concoct their own, often contentious, webs of significance involving practices, people and things (what we can call their life-worlds); and (b) how our study of history provides a touchstone for making sense of what we do today. This two-part question can be posed both as a communicative challenge and as a perspective on historical research. It also implies an ethnographic approach to history, an attempt to understand the meaning-making activities of past individuals, activities that are in turn understood as the meaning-making activities of historians, writing in the present.

For eighteenth-century musical studies (at least for me) such a project raises the question of how music served as a dynamic medium within specific life-worlds. Past inhabitants may be understood as actors or performers of social scripts, categories and scenes in daily life. Within this perspective, musical action, or ‘musicking’ (see Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998)), is social action too; it is about doing things (creating meanings or social relations) with music.

What, then, of past musical performances: how might they be read, and what, if anything, did they help to write? As an example, consider concerto performance in Vienna, 1780–1810, in particular the ways in which musical performance was embodied. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, *all* music was, of necessity, produced and consumed live. It was material and dramaturgical practice, nearly always visible and visually significant, a symbolic medium within which meanings could be ‘seen’. (On this theoretical perspective see my *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially chapter 3.) In the case of the concerto, the genre *par excellence* devoted to the contrast of solo and tutti, and a medium for the display of technique, these conditions would have been intensified.

To ask about performance in this sense, then, is to ask about how mostly tacit, non-verbal, musical materials and practices may have afforded new discursive codes and concepts. This is by no means to suggest that music is an empty space onto which meanings are projected. To the contrary, music may be seen to play an active role in making meaning, and these issues have been addressed from a range of vantage points and using a number of scholarly strategies. Consider, for example, the distribution of repertory and of the chosen instrument, the physical practices associated with these distributions and the connections made by social actors between these distributions and music-occupational roles. In relation to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Vienna, I have suggested elsewhere (in company with others) that it is no coincidence that there are few female wind players, indeed, no female oboists mentioned either in Schönfeld’s 1796



Jahrbuch (see Katharine Talbot's translation in Elaine Sisman, ed., *Haydn and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 289–321), or in Mary Sue Morrow's concert calendar compiled for Vienna between 1760 and 1810 (*Concert Life in Haydn's Vienna* (New York: Pendragon, 1989), 237–412). The oboe then was a 'manly' instrument, more or less indecent for female appropriation (the flute less so), while the keyboard was, by contrast, a bastion of feminine musical activity. These customs were part of a wider occupational segregation of instrumental performance that was both class- and gender-based, and this horizontal segregation was in turn linked to and further elaborated by codes and registers of musical reception, for example, as scholars of opera have described, to 'manly' and 'womanly' musical materials (Gretchen Wheelock, 'Schwarze Gredel and the Engendered Minor Mode in Mozart's Operas', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Roth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 201–221, and Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), chapter 5). 'Difference', in other words, extramusically conceived, was structured from within music. And, to the extent that this was the case, it is possible to trace forms of expressive/occupational segregation as they were established and transformed, and to consider the extent to which musical changes instigated music-occupational and wider social changes.

For me, exploring these concerns has involved questions about the musical body and its connection to material and corporeal realms outside music. How, for example, do the technical practices or styles required by musical works conscript musically performing bodies? What kind of body does a performer become, need, or contrive to become, in order to be effective?

Consider the matter of Beethoven, his keyboard works (in particular concertos) and, as it were, his bodies. As early as 1796 Beethoven's contemporaries spoke about things new and different in Beethoven's keyboard works. Musical observers, including Beethoven himself, who called for piano-technological change from the mid-1790s onward, considered that the demands these works made upon the pianistic performing body were also new. Beethoven's music, in other words, helped reinscribe the performing body, at the practical, tacit level, in terms of its display and in terms of the discourses with which it was conjoined. This redefinition was brought into sharpest relief within the concerto genre, when the pianistic performing body featured as solo figure against the collective ground of orchestral accompaniment.

What kinds of demands, then, did the 'new things' in Beethoven's music make of the performer, and with what sort of social (and possibly gendered) implications? What kind of body-at-the-keyboard did Beethoven's music configure? And how was this body bound up with the 'new' rhetorical strategies of Beethoven's music, as reflected in contemporary critical discourse?

There have, of course, been considerable and highly illuminating studies of emerging discourses of romanticism, the sublime and musical heroism, some directly linked to developments in Beethoven's music and its reception (as traced, for example, by James Webster's 'The Creation, Haydn's Late Vocal Music, and the Musical Sublime', in *Haydn and his World*, 57–102, and Scott Burnham in *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)). In my view, this work on discourse prompts a complementary concern with pragmatics. How, for example, is it possible to see the verbal and poetic accounts that came to frame music production and perception as, in their turn, making reference to and being elaborated by features of embodied performing practice? A focus on practice, in this respect, also helps to illuminate the otherwise often (and inevitably) tacit role that music plays in providing object lessons about social reality, within – and outside – the musical realm. It also helps to highlight what went on beneath discourses, that is, how discourses were played out in specific circumstances and how they were lived.

Within the musical world, and despite women's continued role as concerto performers, women did not, for the most part, perform Beethoven's concertos. To the contrary, Beethoven and his music, concertos included, came to be linked to new images of agency which were in turn linked to modern notions of masculinity; Beethoven was read, in his lifetime and posthumously, as the 'most virile of musicians', as 'violent', 'powerful', 'stern' and 'unyielding', while he, his music, its performance and the discourses that surrounded it helped to instruct his audience in new and increasingly devout modes of music apprehension (Sanna Pederson, 'Beethoven and Masculinity', in *Beethoven and his World*, ed. Scott Burnham and Michael



P. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 313–331; see also Leon Plantinga's discussion of the role of the martial and the heroic in Beethoven's public keyboard works in *Beethoven's Concertos* (New York: Norton, 1999). These notions were linked in turn to understandings of the Beethovenian musical body in performance, the 'revolution', as Charles Rosen has described it, in musical sonority associated with the 'Emperor' Concerto (but presaged in, for example, in the first movement of Op. 37) and a new athleticism that we know Andreas Streicher warned against in 1796, that visceral form of pianistic strength he associated with, in his terms, 'keyboard stranglers'. How, then, were these visions realized in Beethoven's lifetime and during the heyday of his concerto performances, and how and to what extent were they nourished by that music, those performances? This set of questions points to a vital but often overlooked part of any socio-musical studies if that field is to speak to more general sociological concerns.

Between 1780 and 1810 music was by no means the only culture-producing realm undergoing change. I alluded at the start to the ways in which one can see modernity and its categories of experience developing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These categories – the individual, the professions, subjectivity, self-consciousness, aptitude, character, intelligence, race and gender – can be seen to have been elaborated across a range of discursive, material and visual domains. Within science, for example, women were being specified as the weaker and more unstable sex, with reference to newly emerging 'facts' about anatomy and physiology. (For discussions in a European context see Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Naturalizing the Family: Literature and the Bio-Medical Sciences in the Late Eighteenth Century', in *Languages of Nature: Critical Essays on Science and Literature*, ed. Jordanova (London: Free Association Books, 1986), 86–116, and my 'The Biology Lessons of Opera Buffa', in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: Gender, Nature, and Bourgeois Society on Mozart's Buffa Stage*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 146–164.) Of course, these new cultural practices bequeathed novel ways of classifying individuals and, in turn, implied new structures of action and opportunity. To explore the development of these new structures, much can be gained by an attempt to trace the mutual references between ideas, images and practices as they are transposed (by specific writer-actors) from one medium (such as science) to another (such as music). It is precisely in these passages of translation (cultural interpenetration), I believe, that it is possible to see music's social impact, how music may be understood to elaborate extramusical realms.

In my current work I have been attempting to explore these issues through a focus on music and science, looking in particular at how, in each of these practical realms, images of agency, social relations, values and facts were being asserted and enacted in ways that rewrote social scripts and social roles. The new relationship, for example, between a 'powerful' (and typically Beethovenian) musician and a listener 'held' and, indeed, 'overcome' by the music is a case in point: as a script or action cluster, and one that invoked visual and behavioural imagery, it did not emerge *ex nihilo*. To the contrary, this script had its origins in long-standing religious symbolism, and in the 'scientific' culture of then-popular mesmerism (which itself took inspiration from older notions of music's role in natural healing). Renditions of this script partook also of the pseudo-sciences of physiognomy, phrenology and craniology, understood as media for the demonstration and registration of social difference and social hierarchy, a medium in which types of social beings and their proper roles could be distinguished. Beethoven's own visage was subject during the entire nineteenth century to a good deal of virtual plastic surgery. Lavater's dictum, 'the more the chin, the more the man' seems to have been applied, in other words, to the image of the musical hero (see Richard Leppert, 'The Musician of the Imagination', in *The Musician as Entrepreneur 1700–1914*, ed. William Weber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 25–60).

These notions and their images, institutionalized later in the nineteenth century as part of the *habitus* of high musical culture, were and continue to be reproduced, renewed and sometimes challenged on the stage of daily musical activity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and in ways that have cross-fertilized with popular culture. (On gender segregation and the construction of identity difference see Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).) They are, in other words, alive and kicking two centuries on, still active in the unacknowledged underwriting of our own musical and extra-musical habits and assumptions, for example in discourse about piano competitions (see Lisa McCormick,



'Music as Social Performance', in *New Directions in the Sociology of the Arts*, ed. Ron Eyerman and Lisa McCormick (New York: Paradigm, forthcoming). For this reason, a concern with visual and sonic demonstrations in the past, understood as the work of constructing the life-worlds of the past, is a concern with learning both about and from our eighteenth-century colleagues as they and we perform social relations and realities. The past, in other words, is inevitably in the present, just as the present is registered in and enabled by our understanding of the past.

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