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Historically Uninformed Views of Historically Informed Performance

Abstract. This paper argues that contemporary analytic philosophy of music has characterised historically informed performance practice as compliance-focused, impersonal, and work-centred. The first part of the paper gathers evidence in support of this claim from the works of Julian Dodd, Peter Kivy, James O. Young, and Stephen Davies. In the second part of the paper, I reject this received view. Evidence from actual performance practice, as well as from the practitioner's reflection on their activity, belies the received view outlined in the first part of the paper. I conclude by drawing three methodological lessons from the oversights I attempt to rectify.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the way in which contemporary analytic philosophy of music has characterised historically informed performance practice.¹

I argue that contemporary analytic philosophy of music has characterised historically informed performance as compliance-focused, impersonal, and work-centred. The first part of the paper gathers evidence in support of this claim. Similar views are found even in authors whose theoretical views are actually sympathetic to the aims of historically informed performance.

In the second part of the paper, I reject this received view. As far as I can see, much of the evidence we have from actual performance practice, as well as from the practitioner's reflection on their activity, belies the three-pronged view I outline in the first part of the paper.

I should stress that, in amending the received view of historically informed performance, I have given priority to the evidence based on musical practice, as opposed to the practitioners' description of it. That is, I do not question that performers involved in historically informed performance would at times provide descriptions of their aims and practices that fit the received view. The goal of this paper is to show that their actual musical practice belies those descriptions. Even with this caveat in place, I shall show that various reflective performers in the historically informed tradition have explicitly rejected the received view.

In rejecting the received view of historically informed performance, I also hope to shed light on related oversights in philosophical discussion of early music performance. Perhaps the most relevant of these is the little attention paid by contemporary philosophers of music to the improvisatory practices that have characterised the early music movement since its inception. Focus on these practices would itself be a significant step in dispelling the three-pronged view that is found in the literature: improvisation is by nature interpretation-focused, rather than compliance-focused, it requires creativity from the performer, and it is obviously centred on reconstructing musical practices, rather than musical works.

Finally, a subsidiary aim of this paper is to bring to the philosopher's attention some relatively recent musicological scholarship in the field of early music performance. It is certainly true that some of the philosophical inaccuracies regarding historically informed performance have been shared by musicologists. However, musicological reflections on historically informed performance have also progressively rejected the characterisation described in the first part of this contribution.

I conclude with some methodological remarks. Particularly, I believe that there are three lessons to be learned from the oversights and inaccuracies I attempt to rectify in this paper.

I. The Received View

The ambitious goal of this first part is to summarise in three features the characterisation of historically informed performance one finds in analytic philosophy of music from the 1980s onwards. I claim that analytic philosophy of music has characterised historically informed performance as (1) *compliance-focused*, as opposed to interpretation-focused; (2) *impersonal and objective*, as opposed to personal and creative, and (3) *work-centred*, as opposed to practice-centred. I examine these features in turn.

1. Historically informed performance is compliance-focused (as opposed to interpretation-focused)

This characterisation of historically informed performance is found in various authors, but perhaps the most instructive place to start is a recent paper by Julian Dodd. In this contribution, Dodd distinguishes two sorts of authenticity in performance, compliance authenticity and interpretive authenticity.

By compliance authenticity Dodd means *score* compliance or, more generally, compliance with work-determinative instructions. This, Dodd observes, is not the only way in which performers may offer an authentic rendition of a piece. A performer may render a piece in such a way as to present its musical content

convincingly or insightfully, and two equally compliant performances may do so in different degrees. The difference in these performances would be one of *interpretive* authenticity, which is the sort of authenticity that is achieved when a performance “displays a deep or profound understanding” (2012, 5) of its topic work. Now, on some occasions it may happen that “the two forms of authenticity cannot be jointly maximized” (2012, 2), that is, a performer’s total compliance with the score would interfere with one’s achievement of a maximally insightful performance. In these cases, Dodd argues, interpretive concerns may override the need for perfect compliance, and scored indications are disregarded by performers in order to achieve a more insightful and perceptive presentation of the piece in question.

Dodd offers three examples of the trade-off he describes. I briefly present one as a way of illustrating his view, and discuss a second one later. The pianist Alfred Brendel disregarded Beethoven’s explicit metronome marks in performing his *Hammerklavier Sonata*, because Beethoven’s prescribed tempo would not be even approachable without loss of clarity and dynamics, especially in the piece’s first movement. Dodd describes Brendel’s choice in terms of a trade-off between compliance and interpretive authenticity: an explicit instruction is disregarded in favour of a choice that allows the performer to best present the piece’s character.

While Dodd’s claim regarding the relation between these two kinds of authenticity has faced criticism, it is not my aim here to settle this issue. In fact, I concur with Dodd’s claim that recent work in philosophy of music has manifested a tendency to

construe authenticity as compliance with work-determinative instructions more or less explicitly encoded in the score, and that this is too restrictive and monolithic a notion of authenticity.² I will return to this issue later in the paper.

I will therefore assume for the sake of the argument that Dodd's account of the two authenticities is correct, and focus on his characterisation of historically informed performance.

As one might guess, my qualms concern the way in which Dodd describes historically informed performance of music from the standpoint of his authenticity framework. According to Dodd, that the compromise between compliance and interpretation should be welcome is "manifest in *mainstream* performance practice." (2012, 9, emphasis added) However, things are different when it comes to the historically informed performance movement, whose theoretical underpinnings are "a strong commitment to score compliance authenticity", along with the view that one should perform a work by following the conventions and practices familiar to the work's composer. (2012, 2) On several occasions, Dodd assumes that musicians concerned with historically informed performance will not be tempted by interpretive authenticity, if this has to be cashed out in terms of a compromise in compliance.

Dodd considers the concept of interpretive authenticity as a criticism of historical authenticity additional to those already found in authors such as James O. Young and Peter Kivy. Historically informed performance values score-compliance

authenticity, whereas the concept of interpretive authenticity requires us to trade-off compliance for insight and persuasiveness in performance. (2012, 11-12)

It should be observed that the concept of interpretive authenticity developed by Dodd was already adumbrated by Kivy. In defending the idea that an authentic performance is such only if the performer exhibits what he termed “personal authenticity”, Kivy observed that

[...] what bestows upon the performer the status of artist, and on the performance the status of art, is the real, full-blooded possibility of the performer finding a better or at least *different* way of performing the music from the way the composer has explicitly envisioned and explicitly instructed.

(Kivy 1995, 142)

But to understand Kivy’s claims we need first an understanding of his account of personal authenticity. The following section summarises his view of the matter, along with his claim that historically informed performance dismisses personal authenticity in favour of sonic authenticity and faithfulness to the composer’s intentions.

2. Historically informed performance is impersonal (as opposed to personal)

Analytic philosophy of music has characterised historically informed performance as concerned with an objective approach, which disregards the subjectivity of the performer. This view is already detectable in Dodd's dichotomy between interpretive and compliance authenticity. According to him, historically informed performance makes the safest performance choices, that is, those that can be backed by evidence explicitly or implicitly found in the work's score. Interpretive authenticity is a license that is more commonly taken by mainstream performers, or at least so it would seem from Dodd's description.

It is Kivy, however, who has championed the view that historically informed performance relinquishes personal authenticity in favour of a pursuit of objectivity. Performance is essentially a creative practice, as the performer of a musical work needs to make continuous artistic choices in producing a performance of a given piece. The diversity and character of these choices are what constitute the trademark style of various performers, their individual mark.

Now, Kivy describes the historically informed performance movement as being mainly concerned with the production of sonically authentic performances, that is, performances that sound like past performances of the same work. This, Kivy submits, is "completely at cross-purposes" with the pursuit of a personally authentic performance, because

[...] the former is a project in archeological reconstruction in which the personality of the agent must be submerged so as not to leave a mark of its own on the reconstructed object, because that would amount to an adulteration of the reconstruction; whereas the point of the personally authentic performance precisely is to leave the ineffable mark of personal style and (one hopes) personal originality [...].

(Kivy 1995, 139)

A few years later, Roger Scruton revived Kivy's critique by approvingly quoting him, and adding that the movement for historically informed performance is an expression of the "museum culture": "When a culture dies it is ceremonially buried in a museum." (1999, 447) And so has Bach's music been yanked from its place in our homes and prematurely buried in the musical museum, "arranged behind the glass of authenticity." (1999, 448)

Philosophers of music haven't been the only ones to worry that historically informed performance might be a label behind which to hide lack of personal commitment in one's performance choices, and in general an objectivist approach that is contrary to the spirit of music performance typical of any live musical tradition. Kivy's book *Authenticities* appeared in the same year as Richard Taruskin's influential *Text and Act*, in which historically informed performance is repeatedly accused of a positivistic, objectivist mentality, according to which the performer wilfully erases

her contribution to the music in the name of faithfulness to the composer's intentions. (Taruskin 1995) In 1984, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson had already complained that historically informed practice construes the performer as a transmitter of the composer's intentions, as opposed to an interpreter.³ (Leech-Wilkinson 1984, 14)

3. Historically informed performance is work-oriented - as opposed to practice-oriented

That the received view of historically informed performance construes this tradition as work-oriented should come as no surprise, given the first two features I discussed. The first assumes that historically informed performance values score compliance over musically sensible performance choices. The second aspect of the received view stresses the performer's surrender of personal authenticity in deference to the composer's authority, an authority which ultimately derives from the composer's role in the production of musical works.

The first view I shall discuss in this section is that of James O. Young. Much like Kivy and Dodd, Young is sceptical of the theoretical underpinnings of historically informed performance. According to him, the problem with the movement is its insistence on the claim to authenticity. Young's strategy is to review various concepts of authenticity and dismiss them as either unattainable or undesirable. This leads him to progressively refine the concept of authentic performance to that of a performance which "by means of authentic instruments, causes air to vibrate as it would have vibrated at the time of its composition, under ideal conditions." (1988,

235) He then rejects this view too as unattainable, and more importantly, as missing the point. For the goal of performance is to realise “artistic goals” (1988, 236), and these cannot be defined in terms of physical parameters such as air vibration, as these are neither necessary nor sufficient for the attainment of given artistic goals.

Young’s view has been criticised on various grounds, but it’s not my goal here to review these objections.⁴ What is important is the rather striking conclusion that Young draws from his analysis of the concept of authenticity.

It is now possible to see why the quest for an authentic performance was misguided. The problem is that the concept of authentic performance suggests that there is an ideal performance of every composition. That is, there is a suggestion here that there is a single best interpretation of any piece and this is its authentic performance.

(Young 1988, 236)

There are various problems with this conclusion.

I will concede that there could be more than one equally successful performance of a given piece. That is, some form of interpretive pluralism is a *desideratum* of any view of authenticity in performance. If this is true for every performance tradition, it will

also be true for the performance of early music, be it in the historically informed manner or not.

In fact, the very evidence we may gather from early music sources points to a tradition allowing for multiple, equally successful, yet sensibly different performances of a piece. For instance, Franciscus Bossinensis, in his first book of *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati*, collects the vocal score and lute tablature for various *frottole*, which should be followed by a *recercare* for solo lute. In most cases, Bossinensis does not pair a particular *recercare* to each *frottola*, but rather gives the performer the instruction to choose one from a subset of the 27 total. One way to interpret these instruction is to say that Bossinensis is giving indications for multiple, equally successful performances of these pieces, and this would be in line with many other similar examples in the repertoire.

It follows from this that the concept of authenticity isolated by Young would be in glaring contrast with the evidence we have from the historical sources, and hence it would be unlikely to be the one underscoring the activity of period performers. In fact, a prominent figure in the movement such as Nikolaus Harnoncourt rejects interpretive monism explicitly, writing that it may perhaps be true of some 19th or 20th century music that every work “has one single ideal rendition and that consequently a rendition is better the more closely it approximates this ideal.” (1989, 28), but that this is an exceptional case.

Moreover, concerns of performance authenticity emerge when early music practitioners engage with music that was evidently devised for multiple, differing performances. This is the large repertoire of music improvised over a set harmonic progression or melodic line, which constitutes an important part of the Renaissance and Baroque musical tradition. I return to this issue in the second part of the paper, where I present the evidence against this third feature of the received view.

But of course Young would not be moved by these considerations. For he is saying that his concept of authenticity is the only viable one, or rather, it is as good as historical authenticity can get. And if historical sources and modern-day historically informed performers agree in their rejection of interpretive monism, then they will also have to reject the concept of authentic performance Young has distilled.

However, it is still unclear how the concept of authenticity isolated by Young would lead to the idea that there is a single ideal performance for every composition. Defining authentic performance in terms of physical parameters that would have obtained in the past under ideal conditions is not enough to isolate a single set of physical parameters. Bach's *Art of the Fugue* was composed for unspecified instruments, and no doubt these circumstances, along with Young's own definition of authenticity, point to a set of authentic performances, as opposed to a single one.

So even if it were true that Young's concept of authenticity is the one that underscores historically informed performance practice, it would not follow from this that such a practice is committed to an interpretative monism in performance.

Before turning to the evidence against the received view, I shall discuss the characterisation of authenticity in performance defended by Stephen Davies. The reader might be surprised by the mention of Davies alongside the sceptical views of historically informed performance offered by Dodd, Kivy, and Young. In his works, Davies explicitly rejects criticisms of historically informed performance such as those presented above. For instance, he rejects the view according to which, given the changes in the way we listen to and interpret sounds, it is unhelpful to reconstruct how pieces sound in the past. (Davies 2001, 231-34) He is also critical of the idea that the composer's intentions are too flimsy a guide to ground performances of authored works, and he is very suspicious of Kivy's counterfactual view of the composer's intentions, that is, the claim that we can update performances of a work on the basis of what its composer would have intended, had she had at her disposal contemporary performance means. (Davies 2001, 222-24)

Moreover, Davies is clear in saying that authenticity in the sense he describes is fully compatible with creativity in performance. Performers may be creative and personal without violating work-determinative performance instructions. (Davies 1987, 48)

Finally, against views such as Young's, Davies develops a concept of authenticity that admits of multiple authentic interpretations of a work. (Davies 2001, 209)

The reason it is important to discuss Davies's view of authenticity in this section is that, despite the philosophical support it offers to some of the views of historically informed performers, it still explicitly characterise historically informed performance

as being a matter of work compliance, or work reconstruction, as opposed to the reconstruction of performance practice. This is because he identifies the movement's goal with authenticity in performance, and then describes authenticity uniquely in terms of work-compliance: "An ideally authentic performance is one that meets all of the composer's work-determinative indications." (Davies 2001, 221)

In fact, Davies expresses an explicit dislike for the use of expressions such as "historically informed performance" in order to avoid the problematic and ambiguous expression "authentic performance". Authenticity is an *ontological requirement*, in that a performance would need to be at least minimally authentic in order to count as an actual performance of its topic work. The label "historically informed performance" suggests that this way of performing work could be an option among many others, Davies observes. But if the informed practice that the early music movement is promoting is necessary to the correct presentation of a musical work, then the historically informed way of performing is not an interpretive option, but rather a requirement. (2001, 208)

It is of course true that a good part of the early music repertoire is constituted by authored works in the standard sense of the term, such as Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli*. And because I am avoiding ontological commitments of one sort or another, I must concede that, *if* Davies's ontological framework is correct, then surely the historically informed performance movement should be described as being partly concerned with the business of authenticity-as-work-compliance.

However, it would still be true that another, considerable part of the movement's activity would not be enlightened by such a description, that is, the extensive work that has been done in order to unearth improvisatory performance practice centred on improvised variation on un-authored harmonic and melodic templates.

It should be noted that Davies concedes that authenticity as work-compliance may not be central to some musical traditions, and authenticity as practice may be in these cases equally or more important. (Davies 1991, 36) But what he fails to trace is the connection between practice-centred traditions and the revival of past musical practices promoted by the historically informed performance movement.

To sum up, my only qualm with Davies's discussion of historically informed performance is that it describes the movement as being concerned with work-compliance, and in doing so it reinforces the mistaken view according to which historically informed performance is work-centred. As I will try to show in the second part of the paper, historically informed performers have in fact been responsible for the revival of a practice-centred tradition of music making.⁵

II. A Different Perspective

In this part of the paper I review evidence against the received view. If I am correct, historically informed musical practice does not possess any of the three features ascribed to it by the received view, and in some cases it exemplifies those features even less than “mainstream” performance practice.

1. Historically informed performance and interpretive authenticity

To dispel the idea that interpretive authenticity is foreign to historically informed performance, I examine some recent recordings in this tradition. I start with two CDs by the lutenist Hopkinson Smith, and rely on comments made by Tim Crawford in a review of these records.

In *Dowland: A Dream*, Smith takes considerable liberty when it comes to the textual sources of the pieces he performs. In the notes to the CD he says explicitly that he merged two different versions of *Fortune my foe*, taking from both the elements he found most attractive.

Crawford admits that he very much doubts “whether any of the versions of these very familiar pieces are exactly as in Poulton’s edition.”⁶ (2006, 161) In any case, Crawford continues, “it would be completely against the spirit of this recording to check against that or any other text”, and concludes that “The main point is that the music’s central message, as Smith sees it, is conveyed with total conviction.” (2006, 161)

Another of Smith's records is devoted to the printed lute collection published by Pierre Attaignant in 1529. The additions and changes made to the original tablature are in this case even greater than in the Dowland record. Crawford observes that in some cases "the plain 'Attaignant' settings are all but unrecognizable", but adds that this is "more than acceptable when the result is as exciting as it is here; they really sound like folk music being performed for dancers", concluding that "this CD is never dull, and possibly brings one closer to the atmosphere of French lute-playing in the late 1530s than a pedantically correct rendition of Attaignant's printed texts." (2006, 162)

It is worth stressing the analogy between Smith's choices and one of the examples of interpretive authenticity offered by Dodd himself, namely that of Andreas Staier's recording of Mozart's *Rondo alla turca*. In this performance, Staier departs considerably from the score in order to best render the musical point of the piece, which is to "caricature the Turkish style through stylistic exaggeration." (Dodd 2012, 10) The two cases are similar in that in both the safest choice from the historical and textual point of view is disregarded in favour of one that is deemed to be more likely to produce in the contemporary listener an experience of the musical point of the piece.

I turn now to a different example. In his recording *Lute Music from Ottaviano Petrucci's Collections* (2011), the Italian lutenist Paolo Cherici performs some of the pieces with a Renaissance lute, and others with a vihuela, a Spanish instrument with

a shape reminiscent of the modern-day guitar, and effectively the Spanish version of the teardrop-shaped lute.

To be clear, Cherici does mention historical evidence supportive of his choice. First, the vihuela has the same tuning as the lute, and its presence in Italy is well documented. Some Italian lute publications of the time explicitly say that the pieces are suitable to both the lute and the *viola da mano*, which is basically the Italian equivalent of the vihuela. Second, some of the pieces he is playing may have had a Spanish origin, such as Dalza's *Calata alla Spagnola*.

The decisive consideration, however, is not historical in kind, but rather due to the piece's character. Cherici writes:

I have employed both musical and technical criteria in relegating the various compositions to one instrument, or another – often I have preferred to play the clearly rhythmical pieces on the vihuela because of its brilliance, while more moderate or expressive pieces have felt more appropriate to the lute.

(Cherici 2011, 11)

That is, the lute has been used to play pieces with a more prominent contrapuntal or lyrical character, while the dry, trebly sound of the vihuela has been deemed appropriate to pieces with a strong rhythmical component. This choice is

particularly telling, as it seems to be on historical thin ice: the lute repertoire contains many pieces with a marked rhythmical component, while dances are almost entirely absent from the vihuela repertoire. Thus, it seems correct to interpret Chericí's choice as a case in which musical considerations as to the nature of the piece in question override the historically safest choice. Once more, this is in line with the description of interpretive authenticity provided by Dodd.

2. Historically informed performance and personal authenticity.

Listeners familiar enough with the now considerable output of musicians associated with historically informed performance are likely to balk at the suggestion that performers in this tradition refuse to assert their musical individuality.

Consider the two foremost contemporary lutenists, Hopkinson Smith and Paul O'Dette. Compare their versions of a quintessential Dowland piece such as *The Earl of Essex his Galliard*. Smith's spellbinding playing is at once poised and impulsive, perhaps even capricious, whereas O'Dette renders the piece in an orderly, composed fashion, stressing the articulation pattern typical of this music. (Smith 2005; O'Dette 1996)

In a recent reflection on his activity as a performer of early music, the Dutch flute player Barthold Kuijken is adamant in stating that performers ought not to give up their individuality:

If I played only in the composer's name, without a personal commitment and avoiding any contribution of my own, I would extinguish myself, and this would not place me in a good position to provide convincing communicative power. My playing should sound as if I just invented the piece myself.

(Kuijken 2013, 106)

Kuijken explicitly uses the labels "personal authenticity" and "historical authenticity", and describes them as being both necessary and mutually supportive. Without historical awareness, personal authenticity is "limited, dry and egotistical", whereas historical authenticity without personal authenticity is "pointless, hollow, insignificant, and dead." (2013, 111)

One might think that it is unfair to challenge the impersonality charge against historically informed performance with statements found in a book such as Kuijken's, which is of very recent publication – although of course it is informed by a long career as a performing musician.

However, we can find discussions of personal authenticity in much earlier contributions, such as Will Crutchfield's essay in a well-known collection edited by Nicholas Kenyon in 1988. (Crutchfield 1988) Having described the "sheer aliveness,

interest and passion, of the best of our authentic-instrument, period-style performers”, Crutchfield writes that

The crucial challenge is to keep that aliveness in mind as the goal; though it can be approached only indirectly, it is more important than the correctness. History is its own reward, and accurate research into past performing style a wonderful pursuit. But *for performers* its value lies only in the extent to which it can participate in the quest for aliveness.

(Crutchfield 1988, 26)

Harnoncourt also expressed the view that “It would be absolutely senseless to come to know and understand this music, to want to perform it as ‘early music,’ from the point of view of musicologists or musical archivists. We are contemporary, living musicians, not scholars of antiquity [...]” (1989, 25). Discussing the performance of Monteverdi’s music, he warns: “please do not fear vibrato, liveliness, subjectivity, hot Mediterranean air, but please be very afraid of coldness, purism, objectivity, and empty historicism.” (1989, 26) This is a far cry from Scruton’s characterisation of historically informed performance as treating musical works as objects in a museum, or cocooning them “in a wad of phoney scholarship.” (1999, 448)

I conclude this review of evidence against the second aspect of the received view with what is perhaps the strongest, most explicit rebuttal of Kivy’s view of personal

authenticity in the historically informed performance movement. In a book-length study of historical performance, the conductor John Butt expresses both conceptual and factual reservations regarding Kivy's sceptical view of historically informed performance. As my main goal is to discuss distortions in the representation of the movement, I focus on the latter aspect.

Butt is rather blunt in assessing what he considers the main issue with Kivy's *Authenticities*: the author's "apparently total ignorance of the actual practice of HIP [Historically Informed Performance] during the 1980s and 1990s." (2002, 31)

Butt observes two things. On the one hand, even if historically informed performers actually behaved as though they were entirely subservient to the composer's authority, this would be an attitude they share with most of their mainstream colleagues, at least for what concerns musical practice in the late twentieth century. On the other hand, and more importantly for our purposes, it seems simply false that performers in the historically informed tradition shy away from expressions of their musical personality.

There are plenty of young performers who amply (perhaps too amply for some) fulfil Kivy's criteria of 'personal authenticity', e.g. those who introduce improvisation into their performances of their canonical masterpieces, such as Robert Levin and Andrew Manze. Had Kivy ever tried to accompany Marion

Verbruggen, as I have, I think he would agree that *any* adherence either to the rhythm or the pitches of the score would have made our job far easier.

(Butt 2002, 32)

Despite the wealth of evidence I have just presented against that view that historically informed performance lacks personal authenticity, I must still deal with two important objections.

First, I may have overplayed the significance of the striking differences in performance one can find in the historically informed catalogue. Perhaps these differences are simply due to our epistemic position with respect to the relevant evidence: if we only knew more, performers would sound more similar than they do.

The objection is actually implicit in the way in which Kivy defended his claims as to the incompatibility between sonic and personal authenticity from a possible reply. Kivy imagines that someone might observe that, as long as our evidence is incomplete, or so long as the composer's intentions underdetermine the work's performance (or both), there will be space for the performer to fill the gaps with her own musical sensibility. But this, Kivy replies, is a merely *negative* role for personal authenticity, and this is manifestly against the way in which the activity of the performer has been conceived in the Western classical musical tradition.⁷

In fairness to Kivy, some discussion of historically informed performance invites just this objection. As an example, consider a passage from relatively recent overview of performance practice for Bach's cantatas.

Several aspects of how music was realized may have remained obscure either because the composers – or the first performers – did not make their performance practice explicit or because conclusive information is no longer available. As a consequence, certain elements of performance may have to be invented, co-opted or derived from known, related practices, introducing a second source of variation.

(Vervliet and van Looy 2010, 205)

It is from this standpoint that they are able to describe historically informed performance as “bounded by respect for historical sources, but creative nevertheless.” (2010, 211)

This comes dangerously close to Kivy's characterisation of personal authenticity in historical performance as a purely negative enterprise: the performer is allowed to express her individuality only when gaps in historical knowledge or the composer's intention allow her to do so.

However, two considerations count against this objections.

First, we know more than we used to know, yet performers do not sound markedly more similar to one another than they used to. Printed collections and manuscripts have been discovered, and widely adopted critical editions have been produced. Makers of period instruments have organised themselves around societies such as the English *Lute Society* or the *Lute Society of America*, and have shared knowledge regarding construction methods and materials. The amount of historical evidence accumulated has fuelled very differently sounding ensembles and solo performers, both at the professional and semi-professional level.

Additionally, where performance style has indeed become more uniform, this is often because of the influence of a particularly successful contemporary performer, whose activity as a recording artist and instructor has helped shape the playing of other players. To return to the previously mentioned Hopkinson Smith, it is often *his* way of playing that one hears in the style of those who studied with him at the *Schola Cantorum Basiliensis*.

Second, and more importantly, it should be evident from the examples offered earlier that at times the historically “safest” option is wilfully ignored in favour of choices that are regarded as more appropriate by the individual performer. This is what happened in the purported cases of interpretive authenticity I discuss above.

The second objection against my claim that historically informed performance does not relinquish personal authenticity is that the many quotations I have listed as supportive of this idea could be matched by equally numerous professions of

objectivity, loyalty to the composer, and abdications of individuality. In other words, as Butt admits right after his presentation of Kivy's claims, "it should be acknowledged that many in the movement more-or-less hold these views." (2002, 31)

To substantiate these remarks with an actual example, let us look at the way in which Nigel North, another first-rate contemporary lutenist, shares his reflections on how he tries to find the spirit of Dowland's music: "I go about trying to find this spirit much like a musical sleuth, looking for evidence", he writes. (North 2013, 301)

The rest of his article is a fascinating series of conjectures regarding Dowland's technique and style, all based on extant tablatures or historical treatises. In this framework, the space for the performer's creativity really seems to be only a negative one, and a rather narrow one at that.

My answer to these worries is grounded on the methodological principle I outlined in the introduction to the paper. Where the practitioner's reflections are in contrast with their practice, I accord priority to the practice. And while attention to actual practice also reveals at times the sort of pedantic reverence to text and composer justly dismissed by Kivy as contrary to any musical enterprise, the most successful and accomplished performers in the historically informed performance tradition are not any more guilty of these sins than their mainstream colleagues.

3. Historically informed performance and non-work performances.

Much discussion of historically informed performance has been concerned with the elucidation and criticism of ideas such as the authority of the composer's intentions and on the concept of *Werktreue* (being "true to the work").⁸ The inevitable consequence of this focus is that historically informed performance practices have been more explicitly discussed as traditions that seek to revive *authored works* according to some principles of authenticity.

But a characteristic of much early music repertoire is that it does not consist of authored works, identified by a particular score, tablature, or other kind of notation. Rather, Renaissance and Baroque ensembles often perform improvised pieces based on set chord progressions, such as the *passamezzo antico*, the *romanesca*, or the *bergamasca*. Widely known tunes such as *Susanne un jour*, *mille regrets*, or *ung gay berger*, could also be used as the basis of improvised counterpoint or diminutions.

I use the term "non-work performances" to refer to such cases. By non-work performances I simply mean performances that are based on general guidelines agreed upon by musicians who are competent in a given musical tradition. For a contemporary analogy, a blues band might play a 12-bar blues, and might do so specifying whether it will be played with a straight or shuffle rhythm, as well as other stylistic details.

Ontologically speaking, one might still want to consider such performances as instances of "thin" musical works, namely ones that only specify general indications such as chord progression, rhythm, and the like. In this paper, however, I am striving

to keep my music ontological commitments to a minimum, as none of the claims I am making depends on the acceptance of this or that ontological framework. What is important to realise is that performances of this sort, whether genuinely non-work performances or instances of thin works, are open to a wide range of equally satisfactory realisations.⁹

I have already cast doubt on Young's characterisation of authenticity as the goal of historically informed performance. The problem with his view is that there are ways of fleshing out the concept of authenticity that do not commit performers to an interpretive monism guided by the reproduction of a particular physical perturbation of a medium. In the remainder of this section, I discuss a distinction between *work-copying* and *style-copying* introduced by Bruce Haynes, and particularly his thought on where historically informed performance stands with respect to this dichotomy, as this constitutes further evidence against Young's interpretive monism.

Haynes describes work-copying as the making of a "clone" or "reproduction" of a previously existing work, and says that work-copying "implies the existence of an original". (Haynes 2007, 142) Style-copying, on the other hand, is the creation of a work in a certain style, but without a pre-existing original – Haynes mentions Van Meegeren's infamous Vermeer forgeries as an example. According to Haynes, historically informed performance is chiefly concerned with style copying, because "[...] we as musicians do not reproduce any specific performance, but apply our

general knowledge of Period style to any piece from the given time and place.”
(2007, 142)

Philosophically speaking, this is not the clearest of distinctions, especially when applied to the musical context. One gets first the feeling that work-copying concerns the reproduction of a *work*, and so it comes as a surprise that Haynes would deny that musicians deal with work-copying because they do not seek to reproduce a specific *performance* of the work. They surely do not, but that's because the work is not identical to any specific performance of it! However, this much is evident from Haynes's reflections: he does not believe historically informed performance to be guided by the interpretive monism that Young depicts as the chimeric ideal of the movement. Rather, the goal of historically informed performance is, at least according to Haynes, to understand a period style in order to perform works from that period. Additionally, the resources required for style-copying are also the ones needed for the performances of non-works, in the way I defined them above. Rather than blind faithfulness to a musical “text”, what is required by non-works is competence in a musical style.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that contemporary analytic philosophy of music has offered an uninformed view of historically informed performance. While some of the worries evident in this received view are also found in works by musicologists and music critics, recent discussion of the topic has been ignored, and the musical practice superficially examined.

If I am right, there are three general methodological lessons that emerge from this biased characterisation of historically informed performance.

First, philosophers of music should pay due attention to the tension between the practitioner's ideologically charged descriptions of their performance commitments and the features of the performances themselves.

Second, analytic philosophy of music has disregarded aspects of historically informed performance practice that did not fit conceptual models mainly developed to make sense of work-centred traditions such as that of Western classical music from Bach onwards. I have argued that the lack of attention for improvisatory practices may be explained by the centrality accorded to work-centred traditions, and this in turn may have resulted in a skewed view of historically informed performance practices.¹⁰

Third, analytic philosophy of music would benefit from a more sustained engagement with scholarly works from musicologists and practising musicians, in which some aspects of the received view are explicitly rejected.

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1A note on terminology: I use “historically informed performance” as an umbrella term to cover the interest in historical instruments, past performance practice, and the renewed interest in Renaissance and Medieval repertoires. The philosophers, musicians, and musicologists I discuss use a variety of terms, such as “early music movement”, or “authentic performance movement”. For historical and critical introductions to historically informed performance, see Haskell (1988), Lawson and Stowell (1999), Butt (2002), and Kelly (2011).

2Dodd’s main target is Stephen Davies, whose views I discuss later. For Davies’s reply to Dodd, see Davies (2013).

3Another criticism of objectivism in early music performance is also expressed by Laurence Dreyfus, although he mentions exceptions such as Gustav Leonhardt. (Dreyfus 1983)

4See Davies (1988), Thom (1990), and Sharpe (1991).

5Some readers may wonder why I have disregarded Jerrold Levinson’s views. The reason for this is that, while he is certainly a prominent philosopher of music, he carefully avoids discussion of the historically informed performance movement. In fact, at one point he even explicitly says that his claims regarding the import of performance means for the authenticity of a performance should apply only to music “from at least C. P. E. Bach on”,

and that he intends to avoid “too deep an involvement with issues surrounding the Historical Performance Movement”. (Levinson 1990, 406) Because of this, and despite the fact that Levinson’s views invites a more benign view of historically informed performance than the ones discussed above, I believe that discussion of Levinson’s work is irrelevant to the purpose of this paper.

⁶Diana Poulton’s critical edition is the reference scholarly edition of Dowland’s solo lute music. (Poulton 1974)

⁷The argument reconstructed here is found in Kivy (1995, 139-41). On a side note, it should be noted that philosophers like Davies would reject Kivy’s view and claim that personal authenticity is *only* admissible in the gaps left by the fact that the score underdetermines its possible performances, and any other license taken by the performer is potentially questionable. This disagreement seems to be rooted in different intuitions with regard to the performer’s liberties and duties. A recent paper by John Dyck (2014) might be interpreted as evidence that both Kivy and Davies are wrong. Relying on recent musicological work, Dyck shows that composers in the Western classical tradition have held different views of the relative importance of score-compliance and the performer’s interpretation.

⁸The concept of *Werktreue* is discussed at various points in Butt (2002).

⁹Andrew Kania (2011) has suggested that the jazz tradition is by and large workless. Against this view, Dodd (2014) suggests that jazz works of music are types akin to those central to the Western classical tradition, and the differences in performance practice are amenable to differences in evaluative focus: the jazz tradition is more concerned with the performer's creativity, whereas the classical one values score compliance.

¹⁰That a work-centred bias is responsible for the dismissal of improvisation is already implicit in Alperson (1984). Gould and Keaton (2000), on the other hand, discuss improvisation as an essential contribution in the performance of *musical works*.