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# Music and modern power: a performer's tracing of virtuosity and systems of musical value

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

**MUSIC AND MODERN POWER:  
A PERFORMER'S TRACING OF VIRTUOSITY  
AND SYSTEMS OF MUSICAL VALUE**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

The research presented here was undertaken with the aim of providing today's musical practitioners (anyone from a scholar, performer, composer, or even listener) with a framework to begin understanding how aesthetic movements and performance practices interact with the socio-professional layout of classical music. I present what I see as a major shift from practitioner-based systems of value, as seen in Paris in the 1830s, to a practice-based system of value which came to prominence in the 20th century. This exploration covers the topics of piano literature, virtuosity, canon formation, both performance and compositional practices, as well as the rise of musical institutions in the past century. The third chapter uses the work of Michel Foucault to shed light on how the developments that occurred in classical music mirror wider societal changes. The dissertation closes with a look at how practitioners might restructure classical music's value-giving systems so that they might regain their agency and ability to shape and participate in their field's development.

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## *Introduction*

This dissertation addresses itself to those interested in enacting change, in nearly any sense, within the world of classical music. The following work represents my analysis of the powers and systems that control the thoughts and actions of both individuals and populations within the field. It hopes to provide those who wish to address these forces with an understanding of their workings. Far from presenting a comprehensive and exhaustive account, I have chosen to focus on those issues that have succeeded in masking their machinations and therefore are most dangerous to the unsuspecting lover of music.

For a group of people who are always biting their nails when they think of the future of the art, classical musicians sure spend a lot of time looking at the past. This Janus-like disposition results in several contradictions within the community. We, as performers, are pitted between the stability of tradition and the near constant reevaluation of that same tradition. Today, scholars, audiences, composers, and performers alike are expected to applaud events like the New England Conservatory's 2020 presentation of Beethoven's complete piano works while keeping up with the seismic and poignant arguments of Philip Ewell, who, among other things, maintains Beethoven was an "above average composer."<sup>1</sup> In an economic sense, the past half century has seen an increase in audiences' appetite for specialty areas such as early or experimental music while

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Ewell, "Beethoven was an above average composer - let's leave it at that," Music Theory's White Racial Frame, February 22, 2021, <https://musictheoryswhiteracialframe.wordpress.com/>

musicians witness the steadily declining financial stability of orchestras and organizing bodies at large. Depending on which source one gets their news from, the constitution of where classical music finds itself today will take on a very different pallor.

Perhaps no contradiction feels greater than building a career in the performing arts during a global pandemic lockdown. Prior to pandemic restrictions, some performers poured the weight of their existential legitimacy into questions such as, “does my concert program follow the suggestions outlined by the Institute for Composer Diversity?” While questions such as this have not lost any of their import, they have been temporarily eclipsed by the extinguishing of nearly all public concert life. This externally imposed hiatus from colleagues and the public presents a unique opportunity for classical music practitioners to reflect on what it is that we provide.<sup>2</sup> On a personal level, the isolation of 2020 has given me a chance to rekindle my *enjoyment* of music rather than seeing it as a professional obligation. Especially in the early days of the pandemic when uncertainty was at its highest, it was immensely refreshing to read pieces without thinking of how much work I needed to do before the upcoming first rehearsal. Another unexpected boon of lockdown was that its extreme privacy created a safe space for me to experiment with my interests in jazz and composition. As a performer who had been stripped of the public and other moorings, I was able to start from zero and pose the basic question, “what does it mean to make music?”

This was a startlingly new frame of mind for me as a classical musician. If there is

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<sup>2</sup> One could argue that recordings still factor heavily in the dissemination of classical music. Since, however, this dissertation focuses on the tradition of *performing music*, recordings play a limited role in such an exploration.

one thing that characterizes the classical musician it is that we learn the language and perform music of a pre-existing and sprawling historical tradition. We, as a community of audience members, composers, performers, take its “meaning” for granted. For me, I remember this indoctrination beginning at a young age when I would sit in my elementary music class staring at a poster of the “Great Composers.” I didn’t know much about the music itself, but before I even heard the pieces, I knew they were “great.” The classical repertoire tends to carry a museum-like sense of significance so that before one hears a Haydn quartet for the first time, one is already primed to revere it as part of the historical institution of western music. This existential grounding has been called the canon and it has been called a resplendent cultural heritage. Some discerning commentators however have identified it as one of the field’s greatest afflictions. Whatever one sees it as, this shared cross is borne communally and reinforced by universities, concert series, festivals, conferences, and various other congregational bodies. Any evaluation of myself as a performer before the pandemic was necessarily measured not only against my personal tastes but the communally held beliefs of other practitioners and audiences. Despite software developers’ best efforts to provide online congregational platforms, COVID-19 has temporarily erased many of the vehicles that make the canon a participatory entity and it has given the performer of that canon a radically new frame. All of a sudden, the venerated museum-like arrangement of my Universal, Henle, Bärenreiter, and Weiner Urtext editions on my shelf became nothing more than a pile of books sitting next to my dirty laundry.

These reflections coupled with my foray into improvisation and composition

provided a more humble connection to composers as creators rather than prophetic orators. History makes us see composers as people that *did something* but in fact these individuals were only ever people that were *trying to do something*. Put in another way, this would be similar to appreciating a map for its implied functional purposes rather than simply for its material constitution. Reading a musical composition as a personal attempt rather than a culturally anointed deed is a perspective that I believe would not occur to me if I were not divorced from the communal aspects of listening and performing. Within the halls of a music school for instance, it is impossible to imagine seriously suggesting that Beethoven's 9th symphony is a bit too long. Since COVID has banned us from places where this idea is inadmissible, new sorts of questions have started to gain more traction than they otherwise would have. With my newly fashioned interpretive trowel, the classical repertoire revealed itself to me in such new ways that it prompted me reevaluate my role as a performer of classical music. This provides the starting point of this dissertation: sifting through my thoughts and experiences as an emergent performer (pianist) of western art music and processing them through today's unique existential quandaries.

The first step in this process which began in March 2020 was to change my dialectic approach to a work. What are the basic questions I ask of a work? If I know of Chopin today, it is because he wrote some of the most widely loved music for the piano. The canonical view, indeed the view I subscribed to pre-COVID, takes his work as scripture. Yet if I take another view, if I approach Chopin as a fellow keyboardist instead of an indestructible piano icon, I can imagine the "not quite" aspect of a work. With this

in mind I can ask, “what idea did Chopin have that made him want to write his Op. 23 *Ballade*?” Using this quasi-Platonic disposition, I can attempt to divine the “not quite” aspect of the text itself vis-à-vis Chopin’s mindset when he began composing. From here, I can infer about why a second *Ballade* follows the first, and so on.

Some musicologists are very keen on this approach. It is a well-trodden trope to talk about Beethoven’s piano sonatas as the sketch books for his larger and more daring musical ideas. Fauré’s nocturnes and Scriabin’s piano sonatas are similarly talked about as fluid arcs that paint the wide range of a composer’s aesthetic. However, one must be careful in limiting their use of this approach and avoid going so far as to defend the now outdated model of a Great Composer striding inexorably towards the self-transcendence of their Late Period. Nonetheless I would encourage performers always to consider the notation from the composer’s perspective rather than as an objective set of instructions certified by whichever scholar worked on the *Urtext* edition they are using. In an effort to counteract the narrative of western music that sees Great Composers creating masterpieces, a branch of scholarship has emerged which focuses on reception history as a way of sociologically accounting for the “greatness” of these individuals and their works. I would argue for a mediating position which does not see someone like Chopin as a Great Composer but still does count him as an individual with his own agency, ambitions, and concerns regarding the creation of high-quality music. Instead of relating to Chopin as a fore-bearer, I wish to see him as a peer — someone who is squarely situated between professional, aesthetic, and social struggles similar to those that musicians face today. Reception history offers invaluable insights into the hermeneutics

of music but it cannot account for Chopin's inner drive as a creator. The desire, zeal, and possibility of failure which are inherent in any musical intention are snuffed out by a perspective that ignores the pregnant frame of mind just before the tip of the composer's pen fell on the page.<sup>3</sup>

My second step was to mold this fluid view of a work to a performer's agency on stage rather than the musicologist's computer keyboard. For performers, the work is sometimes treated as a fixed object whose prescribed requirements must be met, in the manner described above. The "Urtext regime", as one of my former teachers calls it, consecrates the text first as immutable and second as correct. This is well and good as far as positivist research goes but for a performer who wishes to commune with a composer's intentions, one finds themselves in a bleak situation where intentions, as implied by musical notation, are dressed as facts.

The work of a musicologist allows them to simultaneously entertain multiple possibilities so long as they are circumscribed by the appropriate evidence. This can range from trying to date a 15th century motet to defining the scope of the relationship between Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann. While a musicologist can allow themselves calculated ambiguity, a performer is burdened to choose only *one* of the

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<sup>3</sup> One example that comes easily to mind is the flexibility with which performers treat rests. After the *forte* entrance of the soloist in Beethoven's 3rd piano concerto, one can imagine a great variety of acceptable lengths of silence, compressed or stretched, before the ensuing *piano* G major chord. The silence, or space separating musical phrases, is almost always proportionally felt rather than measured metronomically. This sort of interpretive decision naturally must include consideration of what Beethoven *meant* rather than what he *wrote*. Why limit this train of thought to rests?

possible endings of Chopin's Op. 38 in any given performance.<sup>4</sup> The steps involved in the task of molding ambiguity and potentiality to a performer's unforgiving and definite medium can be very difficult. I will suggest that it can all begin with reorienting our view of history as something that is lived forwards with potential rather than something that can be retroactively taken as immutable fact. Despite the ensuing complications, the way forward can be as simple as replacing the question "what did composers write?" with "what were composers trying to do?". Instead of asking "what does the map look like?" one could ask "where does the map lead?". If one adopts this change to the opening question in approaching a work, interpretation and performance become an active rather than a passive act.

One of the purposes of this dissertation will be to formalize the reorienting of a performer's interpretive disposition so that they might be better equipped to address the ambiguity and potentiality latent within the practice of performing classical music. Before performers take this opportunity however, they must first be given license. In a practice that is dominated by homogenizing forces, I will highlight some differing systems of value-giving practices in the past two hundred years of the performance and composition of classical music in order to show how these practices go against the perception of western art music as a homogenized canon. I will examine figures as

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<sup>4</sup> Enrobing centuries of music in a unifying chalky azure, the sturdy pages of Henle editions betray the ambiguity of their contents. The Henle edition of the Chopin second *Ballade* is but one of many examples of the contradiction between the outwardly stable perception of the canon and its internal fluidity. Should a performer turn to the annotations of Chopin's Op. 38, one would find that between various different corrections and recompositions, there are five to six possible versions of the piece's last two bars.

disparate as Franz Liszt, Anton Reicha, Sigismund Thalberg, and the circle of Johannes Brahms in order to show the overlap and interplay of individual agency within communal practices. Ultimately these examinations will provide relevant details in the development of a trend which saw compositional ideals replace the agency of the performer (with the body as the central symbol for this agency) as aesthetic vehicle. Following the discussion of practicing musicians, I will outline certain trends in cultural criticism starting in the mid 20th century which, despite their illuminating insights, continue to obscure the contemporary performer's agency as an individual. It will be argued that these factors combine to create a culture where the increasing decentralization of ideals (decentralized through their extrication from the body and individual) results a power system that sublimates and suppresses the agency of the individual practitioner.

The first chapter is primarily dedicated to Paris in the 1830s–50s. It will discuss the golden age of the virtuoso soloist although it will do so in a largely extra-music capacity. Rather than examining musical style as such, it will consider how practitioners mobilized their musicianship within an environment which was embroiled in widespread social upheaval.<sup>5</sup> This period saw not only a rapid change in how performers earned their livelihood, it was also a period of widespread socio-economic change as Europe began restructuring its monarchical and aristocratic societal models. This new ground for competition on both the creative and consumptive sides of music was accompanied by the emergence of a new brand of music criticism and journalism that was explicitly

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<sup>5</sup> Here, the term “practitioner” may encompass an individual's capacities as performer, composer, teacher, and even pamphleteer.

agenda-based. In this period, pianistic practitioners fought to establish their own legitimacy on more than simply instrumental grounds. They fought in socio-economic terms by aligning themselves with different patrons or political circles. They sought the long-term validation of their aesthetic brand through their compositions and published polemics. It will be argued that it is precisely because of the social and professional volatility of the time (both within and beyond music), that the individual agency of the practitioner acquired a symbolic value as a mercurial beacon within the turmoil. It will be shown here that the concurrent yet diverse audiences and aesthetic ideas allowed performers the flexibility to craft their own identity and become a unique of socio-aesthetic symbol in their own right.

The second chapter largely concerns the ways in which the second half of the 19th century built on the trends of the preceding half century. To better understand the different pianisms of this period (or any period for that matter), virtuosity must be understood in a separate way from its early 19th century origins. Zarko Cvejjic describes how the pianistic virtuosity of someone like Heinrich Herz spawned a reactive counter movement in compositional aesthetics which saw compositional rigor and structure as the antidote to instrumental virtuosity's perceived excesses.<sup>6</sup> I will claim that this counter movement itself, with Robert and Clara Schumann at the helm, became a new brand of virtuosity which directly opposed itself to the instrumental model. This compositional virtuosity (as evidenced by the Schumanns, Brahms, and eventually Schoenberg) was

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<sup>6</sup> Zarko Cvejjic, "The Virtuoso Under Subjection: How German Idealism Shaped The Critical Reception of Instrumental Virtuosity in Europe, c. 1815–1850," PhD. diss. (Cornell University, 2011).

accompanied by the emergence of various different work concepts as composers decided whether to anchor their evaluative models either in the past traditions or potential future languages of music. The composition-based view of music *did* have proponents in the realm of performance such as the legacy of Clara Schumann which prizes interiority over the more kinetic Lisztian models of pianistic virtuosity. As will be discussed, these both of these models can be understood as virtuosic in the same way. Countless authors have submitted their own definitions for the term “virtuosity” and its relatives “virtuosic” and “virtuoso”. In their own context, each of them holds value. For the purpose of this dissertation, the working definition of “virtuosic” to be used will be **any implementation of a practice which brings the agency of the individual practitioner to the fore**. As will be seen, this concept of virtuosity will consider both compositional as well as different types of instrumental virtuosity under the same umbrella.

The Foucauldian concepts of *savoir* and *savoir-pouvoir* will underly each of these explorations. For Foucault, “the study of human beings took a decisive turn at the end of the eighteenth century when human beings came to be interpreted as knowing subjects, and, at the same time, objects of their own knowledge.”<sup>7</sup> Alexander Stefaniak’s description of a Clara Schumann composition clearly resonates with Foucault’s idea: Clara’s Op. 20 exhibits her desire to “simulate or reflect the persona of a conscious subject who articulates the passage of time and positions him- or herself in relation to

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<sup>7</sup> Hubert Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault, beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), xix.

past, present, and future.”<sup>8</sup> This reciprocal nature of practitioners of western music as “knowing subject” as the “object of their own knowledge” will be used to inform the exploration of pianistic and musical practices throughout the nineteenth century.

The third chapter will depart from the study of practitioners of western music and instead provide a wider context for the trends established in the previous two chapters. Foucault’s work on the panopticon and systems of modern power figure very centrally in this analysis. In the context of Foucault and the formations of discourses and various *savoirs*, it becomes unavoidable to consider the wider role of the concretization of the western canon. This chapter will depart from individuals and discuss how the canon and other discourses/ideologies within classical music are essential elements in the formation and maintenance of institutional bodies such as secondary music schools, competitions, and the wider network of professional opportunities. By contrasting the conclusions of this chapter from the research shown in first chapter, it will be shown that the aesthetic and discursive practices of classical music in the past two centuries have resulted in a decentralized system of value-giving which is ultimately a detriment to anyone pursuing classical music professional or as an amateur.

The epilogue will provide a present-day contextualization of the previous chapters. It will examine how the topics raised affect practitioners on an individual level. It will explore the boundaries between an individual’s personal interest in music and the various professional pressures they experience as they try to build a career. Ultimately,

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Stefaniak, "Clara Schumann’s Interiorities and the Cutting Edge of Popular Pianism." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 3 (2017), 753.

with the work of philosopher Robbie Kubala, a new system of value-giving will be proposed to circumvent the avenues currently available to classical music practitioners. There is a growing awareness among my colleagues that the practice of classical music is undergoing radical changes and I believe that the recontextualization undertaken in this dissertation might help to reframe what some perceive as the practice's deterioration. Deterioration however, implies the previous presence of stability and this dissertation wishes to challenge the notion of western art as a stable tradition. This dissertation will paint the present as the continuation of a long history of incessant and reactive change.

Throughout these chapters, the ultimate effort will be to trace the evolving dialectic between performers, the works they play, and their communities. Within each era, it should be expected that exceptions can be found for each trend discussed. By no means does this dissertation intend to be a comprehensive study of piano playing or music making in western art music. Given today's rampant musical cross pollination as well as the ubiquity of the piano in many contemporary genres, any attempt at a comprehensive study seems to miss the mark from the very outset. It is the luxury of anyone engaged in playing the piano to be able to take inspiration from a vast number of heritages and practices. In fact, I believe that evaluations of the state of today's musical practices can greatly benefit from shifting their focus away from wider socio-cultural themes and instead consider the perspective of the individual performer as such. In the age of the internet and globally available information, it becomes impossible to untangle social and aesthetic currents in the ways one might be able to do when studying Florentine art in the 15th century for instance. Moreover, the incessant attention given to

cultural movements, genres, and aesthetic debates since the rise of the French and German polemic arenas of the early 19th century has diminished the agency of individual performers and stripped them of their power to make decisions on their own terms. Classical listeners since then are wont to interpret a certain performer's choices as an affiliation with a certain school or methodology rather than a calculated individual decision. This is a simple and divisive way of listening that should be reevaluated.

Within my decade of time in various American music schools, I have felt that musical study has tended to aim more towards the endless acquisition of knowledge rather understanding what to do once one acquires knowledge. I will acknowledge, however, that the current social issues at the forefront of the American public debate have engendered a widespread effort among musical institutions and individuals to reevaluate the practice of classical music. It will be shown that the history of the practice of western music is filled individuals that manipulate and mobilize different repertoires to ends that reach far beyond the limits of the stage. If these chapters should have one result, I hope that they will encourage fellow performers to grab works with their own two hands and, by embracing the wildly colorful and evidently multifaceted history of piano performance, have the courage the cultivate their own identity against the threat of externally induced homogeneity.

**I*****Parisian polemics***

The pantheon of Europe's great nineteenth-century artists exhibits those who combined vision with exceptional ability in their field and thereby casts them as the muses's chosen avatars. The nineteenth century came off the heels of the Enlightenment's infatuation with classical ideals and artists were sometimes be seen as "in service of art" in a similar way to how the actions of characters in a Greek myth act out the wishes of the gods. Rudolf Weyr's monument to Brahms in Vienna shows that this conception of the artist carried on until at least 1908. This quasi-religious anointment of artists naturally hides the more earthly, day-to-day facts of these individuals' lives. When contemporary practitioners of western art music consider their own practices, they of course are inundated with such quotidian concerns as making rent, booking the next concert, impressing a certain colleague, or securing a publication contract. In short, artists of the past are often primarily remembered for what they made whereas similar evaluations of ourselves consider our work as the result of various personal and external forces.

The present chapter will attempt to demystify early nineteenth-century Paris's music scene through an examination of the personal and external factors that contributed to the production of music. This is not to suggest that the biography of a musician should categorically supersede an interpretation of their work. Rather, in looking at their works,

one should suspect that musicians of the past, just as we do today, have a multitude of less noble reasons to produce their work than “the service of art.” Appreciating the interplay of aesthetic ideals and quotidian practicality can enlighten our understanding of these individuals and bring their work in closer proximity to the concerns facing today’s musical practices. In approaching this divide between the ideal and the mundane, I will begin with money. Currency, in more than one sense of the term, is no doubt the opposite of the timelessness that great works of art supposedly invoke. Money in a very concrete way belongs to the individual as profit or debt whereas art invokes some intangible and communal expression. The artists and critics of the early nineteenth century certainly endorsed this view and wished to banish any sort of pecuniary consideration from the lofty realm of artistic expression. Furthermore, to situate the musical practitioner in a context which better reveals the external forces at play, the chapter will begin by briefly examining the practice of the written word as well as the world of music. As the chapter progresses, other dichotomies such as the individual/communal, ideal/mundane, pragmatic/virtuous will be explored in order to establish the artist not as someone who is divinely gifted, but rather one who cunningly navigates between and positions themselves within these various poles

*Anti-Commercial Sentiment in Language and Music*

In the realm of text and language, the nineteenth century pitted journalism and poetry on opposite ends of the commercial/artistic moral spectrum. Journalism was seen as the libidinous and mundane corruption of the written word while poetry was the vector through which the human spirit could reach its most noble expression. In ideal, these two poles could never touch, yet in reality, such quintessential nineteenth century artistic prophets as Hector Berlioz and Heinrich Heine had rather extensive careers in the press. Writing as concert reviewers and correspondents respectively, these men were hired more to express their personal views on a given subject rather than to report “the news that’s fit to print.”<sup>9</sup> In the early days of Romanticism, the press openly embraced its polemic and idiosyncratic capacities. While the colorful nature of journalistic writing contributed to a rise in publications’ readerships, its combative and sometimes debased attitude engendered some detracting views. Honoré de Balzac’s personified these attitudes in *Illusions perdues*, published between 1837 and 1843, which depicts the moral deterioration of a man who travels to the big city to fulfill his aspirations as a poet but becomes corrupted by a career as a journalist. While the press then and now are vastly

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<sup>9</sup> “When stylistic digression is made to stand as the center and point of departure of Heine’s narrative, the text announces its origin in idiosyncratic aberration. This focus on communication by style opens the space for individual expression.” Susan Bernstein, *Virtuosity of the Nineteenth Century: Performing Music and Language in Heine, Liszt, and Baudelaire*, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1998), 32. Note: Bernstein’s use of “virtuoso” diverges from the use I employ throughout this dissertation in that she seems to limit it to the musician’s technical proficiency on their instrument.

different entities, increasing similarities have emerged in recent years.<sup>10</sup>

This mutable and day-to-day outlook exhibited in journalism was put in contrast to the perceived purity and stability of artistic worth.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, it is not so much the text itself but its source that manifests the divide between the two genres of writing.<sup>12</sup> There is a stability of authorial voice in poetry that is seen as more noble than the shiftiness exhibited in the authorial voice of the journalistic profession.<sup>13</sup> In the narrow view to which Balzac appealed, the poet is motivated by such humanist constants as beauty, the muses, or truth, and the journalist is motivated by ambition or money. This plays on the division of an individual psyche between the calling of the Christian constancy of “the good” and an individual’s multifarious capacity to sin (or in more secular terms, the conflict between the id and the super-ego). Susan Bernstein writes, the “still connectedness and domestic comfort on native ground that Heine attributes to lyric

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<sup>10</sup> The rise of internet in the past 30 years as well as the more recent phenomenon of “fake news” present shifts in journalism that recall early nineteenth-century journalistic tendencies. In recent times, the veracity of supposedly objective statements has become increasingly fluid and this echoes the journalistic practice of someone like Heine as described by Susan Bernstein. Without a doubt, the polemic element of journalism has seen a violent resurgence since 2016. In light of the fact that journalistic and musical practices of early nineteenth century Paris are similar to the American journalistic practices of today, the exploration of how individuals navigated the chaos of their polemic landscape acquires distinct relevance to current issues that reach beyond musical concerns.

<sup>11</sup> In discussing Balzac’s *Illusions perdues*, Susan Bernstein writes, Balzac’s character’s “initial poetic ideals are deflated and absorbed into an economically and materially determined world.” Bernstein, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Bernstein, 31.

<sup>13</sup> This view holds true today as Dr. Jill Biden asked poet Amanda Gorman to compose a poem for President Biden’s inauguration. This can be seen as part of an effort to counter the previous administration’s attacks on the stability and sincerity of the authorial voice. President Trump’s inauguration did not feature a poet.

poetry contrasts sharply with the geographical wandering and constant exposure to foreign control associated with journalistic writing.”<sup>14</sup> Balzac’s story makes a similar contrast as the poetic dreams Lucien Chardon, the protagonist of *Illusions perdues*, originate from his time with his family (stable and native) while his journalistic endeavors are concurrent with his involvement with prostitutes (fleeting and monetized).

If I have taken this slight divergence into the realm of the written word, it is because the division between an individual’s virtuous and occupational enterprises are more sharply delineated in the various agencies of a writer than they are for the agencies of a musician. Rather than making cross-media comparisons, I rather wish to highlight this period’s propensity to see artistic and pecuniary realms as inherently antithetical. If a musical critic of that time wished to attack a performer on grounds of commercialization, the word “virtuoso” would be used in a similar way to how journalism was attacked.<sup>15</sup> As Bernstein describes, poetry evoked a stable native ground for the authorial voice while Heine’s journalism “irritates the philological habit of seeking unity in the authorial subject, ‘the work,’ and in a unified historical world and period.”<sup>16</sup> This moral/aesthetic dichotomy is also reflected in Zarko Cvejic’s description of the “autonomy of music” and

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<sup>14</sup> Bernstein, 31.

<sup>15</sup> “Who or what is the virtuoso, and why does the figure of the virtuoso come consistently to stand in this pivotal position between reference and digression? The virtuoso’s relationship to the technical level of the instrument is like the narrator’s strange relationship to the referential function of the linguistic instrument in Heine’s prose: his manipulations similarly exploit the instrument in causing it to disappear.” Bernstein, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Bernstein, 24.

virtuosity during the same period.<sup>17</sup> These distinctions point to the fact that this period was very concerned with the question of where information or meaning originate. As Europe was in the process of undermining its monarchies (highly centralized and incontrovertible sources of societal power), questions regarding the provenance of power and truth gained increasing relevance. Does meaning originate in some sort of fundamental sincerity which appeals to ideals such as truth and beauty or is it more malleable? If a person is seen to convey the “truth,” can they duplicitously manipulate their agency and identity while still conveying this “truth”? This, for instance, was one of the fundamental questions of Diderot’s *Paradoxe sur le comédien* which was written in the 1770s but only published and received with great interest in 1830.

Whereas Balzac paints a black-and-white portrait where the commercialized vocation of journalism is diametrically opposed to the calling of the poet, it is much less clear to make the same distinct division in music. Compared to language, the absence of a literally referential agent such as the word in music no doubt accounts for this gray area. Because of this, musicians have often been afforded the benefit of the doubt and spared from unilateral attacks on commercial grounds, despite some of the negative reception described by Cvejjic. For instance, Bach’s cantatas were professional obligations, yet they are incontestably seen as “works”. In more recent times, one can point to Prokofiev’s film

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<sup>17</sup> “Again, at stake was the aesthetic autonomy of music: as the reviews discussed above show, its critics regarded program music as less than autonomous, on account of its reliance on an extra-musical program for its *raison d’être* and guiding principle; by contrast, truly autonomous music could only refer to itself and follow its own, strictly musical principles of formal construction. And since virtuosity was so intimately linked with program music, this was a critique not only of program music, but also of virtuosity itself. In other words, both program music and via it virtuosity seemed incompatible with aesthetically autonomous music.” Cvejjic, 192.

music as an example of more commercial work yet his music to Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* is often heard in the museum-like setting of concert halls, divorced from the screen. When Moscheles and Fétis asked Chopin to compose his *Trois nouvelles études* for their *Méthode des méthodes de piano* (1839), they were after the commercial import of the popular Pole's name rather than his artistic virtue alone. In thinking of these pieces however, no one accuses Chopin of prostituting himself by writing comparatively light études for the big wigs of the Parisian musical press. With those whom posterity has preserved, musicians are often seen through the rose-tinted glasses of a perceived artistic *je ne sais quoi* that renders their financial gains as mere corollaries after the fact.<sup>18</sup> This slipperiness of genre in music, compared to poetry vs. journalism, lubricated the arguments of various critics and composers so much so that arguments over the direction music could and should take reached fiery levels of *ad hominem* polemics by the 1830's.

### *The Character of the Musical Press, and Pianism as 'savoir'*

The passing of time has lessened the sting of today's accusations that various historical composers and performers were appealing to cheap tricks for simple gains. Taken in the context of their own era however, the slipperiness of genre in music (as opposed to the clear difference between poetry and journalism) gave the musical press all the more fodder for its polemics. Although he was not writing from Paris, the following

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<sup>18</sup> Swafford chronicles how this was not only how Brahms was seen but how he *lived*. Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 304, 312, 616.

excerpt from an 1835 article by Robert Schumann plainly states the tone of the discourse, “an age dominated by the custom of exchanging compliments is nearing its end. ... Whoever will not dare attack what is bad in a thing can only half defend what is good.”<sup>19</sup> A veritable consort of music journals sprang up at the beginning of the nineteenth century which birthed a raucous counterpoint between them over “what is bad in a thing” and “what is good.” Notably in Paris, the piano capital of Europe at the time, several of these publications were devoted to the piano.<sup>20</sup>

The mission of the relatively newly formed Paris Conservatory legitimized these publications’ debates over nature of piano playing. The Conservatory provided the readership as well as subjects for writers to laud or criticize. Through this intense reciprocal relationship, pianism became a practice that took on moral and ethical significance. Traditions of piano emerged so that a pianist could now be considered as a practitioner or embodiment of a certain school of pianism. Along with the Conservatory, the sovereignty of the piano as king in the city was supported by the establishment of the legendary piano manufacturers Pleyel and Érard as well as a coterie of newly erected halls, ascendantly bourgeois patrons, and amateur enthusiasts throughout Paris.

In 1827, François-Joseph Fétis, a counter-point professor at the Conservatory, founded the first French-language music journal, the *Revue musicale*, with a “primarily

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Schumann, *Schumann on Music: A Selection from the Writings*. trans. and ed. Harry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications 1988), 28.

<sup>20</sup> For detailed reviews of the prominent publications devoted to the piano in Paris, see Shaena B. Weitz, "Propaganda and Reception in Nineteenth-Century Music Criticism: Maurice Schlesinger, Henri Herz, and the Gazette Musicale," *19th Century Music* 43, no. 1 (2019): 38–60 as well as Weitz, "Le Pianiste: Parisian Music Journalism and the Politics of the Piano, 1833–35," Ph.D. diss. (City University of New York, 2016).

didactic” aim.<sup>21</sup> This inaugurated a period of unprecedented adoration of the piano in the 1830s and 40s, and this adoration, which was nearly always imbued with moral import, in turn lead to intense dispute over the direction pianism should take as one of the hot topics of musical thought. James Davies hints nationalistic undertones when he writes that the pedagogue and virtuoso Kalkbrenner “was the standard-bearer for a veritable pianistic code disseminated across Europe and beyond, on a commercial scale comparable to the rolling-out of Napoleon’s Civil Code.”<sup>22</sup> Just as the Civil Code standardized civil practices of the citizen, the efforts of Kalkbrenner and his colleagues sought to standardize, in a distinctly French manner, the practices of leading pianists. All of these factors combined so that so that the institutional bodies involved formed the crucible which shaped not only pianists but pianism itself into a sort of *savoir* in the Foucauldian sense.<sup>23</sup> The self-consciousness with which music developed on an individual and institutional level perfectly embodied Foucault’s notion that the knowing practitioner at once becomes subject of their own knowledge. Pianists not only exerted their agency as such, they allowed themselves to be shaped into practitioners of the wider sociological thought world of pianism.

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<sup>21</sup> Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue Et Gazette Musicale De Paris, 1834–80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34.

<sup>22</sup> James Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley: U of California, 2014. Web.), 102.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault describes a *savoir* as “the process through which the subject finds himself modified by what he knows, or rather by the labour performed in order to know. It is what permits the modification of the subject and the construction of the object.” Michel Foucault and Duccio Trombadori, *Remarks on Marx : Conversations with Duccio Trombadori. Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series.* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 69–70.

The intensity of the discourse that ensued matched the stakes. Shaena B. Weitz has written in detail about such publications as *La gazette musicale*, *Le pianiste*, *Le ménestral*, and *La France musicale* and highlights the dangers in taking the authority of these sources too seriously given “the knotted threads of corrupt behaviors that went into producing [them].”<sup>24</sup> Factions formed between these sources and as with other instances of cult-like behavior, the individual tastes of writers often had to be adjusted for the sake of pushing the appropriate agenda. For some writers, a schism grew between their taste and their musical ideology; Ellis observes that with Fétis, there were “tensions between what his theories allowed and what his musical taste sanctioned.”<sup>25</sup> For other some writers, an internal schism appeared between their taste and their social context. On the dilettante critic Henry Chorley, Dana Gooley writes, “Chorley genuinely enjoyed Liszt’s playing, but he could not give himself over to Liszt entirely because he associated him with the French Romantics, for whom he had a distaste typical of his social class.”<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the conflict Gooley illustrates in Chorley points to one of the main extra-musical roles of the musical press: identifying those in attendance.<sup>27</sup> Attending concert performances provided fertile soil for the cross pollination of classes in the early nineteenth century since “many concerts of classical music had strikingly low prices

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<sup>24</sup> Such was the power of the press as propaganda machine that even when the *Gazette* began to lose money, Maurice Schlesinger opted to keep it running as it boosted the music publication side of his operation. Shaena B Weitz. "Propaganda and Reception," 41, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Ellis, 44.

<sup>26</sup> Dana A. Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004), 32.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

considering the relatively high status of their audiences.”<sup>28</sup> Concerts in both halls and salons were a place for the socially ascendent to gain territory as well as for the upper classes, particularly women, to manifest their power and influence in novel ways.<sup>29</sup>

Venues such as the Théâtre de Italiens were famous for their association with nobility and pro-Restoration politics. Sigismund Thalberg, whose distinctly vocalized playing style was especially appreciated by aristocrats, was the first pianist to perform at the venue and it would be a while before other pianists graced that stage. If a radical new voice wished to challenge someone like Thalberg directly, it would need to be done in the more socially mixed company of a salon, such as the one of Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso.<sup>30</sup>

One of the main points of contention in these debates concerned questions of whether music could be molded into a representative art. Formalist critics would complain about emerging popular genres like opera fantasies and improvisations while radicals decried the stodginess of formalists. Taking center stage was the virtuoso and his (almost always his) virtuosity. Depending on whom one asked, the virtuoso was either a champion or a charlatan. It was not only critics such as Chorley and Fétis who reacted in self-contradicting ways to the simultaneous meteoric success and lambasting of the piano virtuosi. Musicians themselves would seemingly betray their own efforts in an attempt to

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<sup>28</sup> William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848*. 2nd ed., (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> James Deaville, “The Politics of Liszt’s Virtuosity.” in *Liszt and the Birth of Modern Europe*. ed. Michael Saffle and Rossana Dalmonte. (Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2003), 127.

<sup>30</sup> Such was the far-reaching social import of virtuoso concerts that Deaville posits that salons such as Belgiojoso’s could have acted as “an outlet for the social restlessness, the stirrings for change among upper middle-class women, which anticipated the women’s movements of the later nineteenth century.” Deaville, 128.

cover all their bases within the chaos of the aesthetic polemics. Rather paradoxically for the composer of the Op. 3 *Studien nach Capricen von Paganini* and the Op. 7 *Toccata*, Robert Schumann wrote that the mission of his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* was to “oppose the trends of the more recent past, proceeding from mere virtuosity, and finally, to prepare the way for, and hasten, the acceptance of a new poetic era.”<sup>31</sup> Conversely, Thalberg, one of Paris’s virtuosic *eminences grises*, was putting out sonatas and concertos to legitimize himself as a composer rather than a mere keyboard wizard.

From compositions, new styles, performer biographies, concerts, venues, and pedagogy, journalists covered it all. The press was the social media of its day, rife with fake news, sensationalist polemic content, unverified opinions dressed as facts, and buried within the pile, some slivers of factuality and mundane documentation of events. In the early days, the press was at its most vibrant and self-contradictory as the poles of readership and socio-aesthetic alignment had yet to solidify. Inevitably, things began to consolidate as the *Revue musicale* merged with the *Gazette musicale de Paris* in 1835 and other journals began to go out of print. In their heyday of the 1830s to 50s however, the press served as one of the main stages for the era’s interrogation of itself. If pianism took on the nature of a Foucauldian *savoir* in this period, the press was most outward manifestation of that transformation.

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<sup>31</sup> Schumann, Pleasants, 28

*Virtuoso Pianists: Pawns or Grandmasters?*

One can see that the press helped to depict a kaleidoscopic arena of concert life in the first half of the nineteenth century that pulled together the intermingling of social classes, pedagogical ideology, aesthetic ideology, advertisement for economic enterprises, and the nascent presence of nationalistic sentiment in the arts. As the previous Robert Schumann passages make clear, commentators were consciously mapping out the future of music, and this future, as evidenced by the attitude of the press, had implications beyond the realm of music. Each of these social and aesthetic topics covered were in such flux that the Europe was well primed to have its attention grabbed by individuals seeking to make their mark. In recalling Foucault's idea that humans became the subject of their own knowledge towards the end of the eighteenth century, the practicing virtuoso became the focal point the discourse surrounding musical knowledge. If the virtuoso is a practitioner who brings their agency to the fore of their practice, one understands why these individuals became the symbols of both the good and the bad in their practice. In this way, the virtuoso became a synecdoche for far-reaching ideological concepts in the music criticism of the time.

Polemicists can make use of an individual in two ways. First, they can write of them as an eagle leading the vanguard of whichever ideology they are writing about. This is literally what Robert Schumann did with Brahms in his article *Neue Bahnen*. In another sense, a polemicist can paint an individual as a detractor in order to sing the praises of a communally held ideology. For instance, Thalberg's rivals were written off as too

incoherent in style and thus would never be able to form a “school of piano” based on their practice. Thalberg, on the other hand, *did* evidence such soundness of concept and was praised for it.<sup>32</sup> In both of these methods, one sees how the virtuoso can be mobilized by a polemicist wishing to cultivate a communally held belief system. When this happens with regular consistency and a large enough volume of sources (as in the case of the Parisian musical press at the time), the polemicist nature of the press as a wider entity eventually makes good on its promise to create far reaching patterns of thought. Eventually these patterns of thought congealed so that, as outlined by Weber, repertoires and genres were delineated with much clearer divisions and the virtuoso receded from center stage.<sup>33</sup> The “work” supplanted the virtuoso and became the seat of discourse. This new terrain is the subject of the next chapter and it will be seen that the agency of the virtuoso pianist gave way to different kinds of virtuosity.

In the molten state before mid-century, however, virtuoso pianists were often the *point d'appui* behind or against which fledgling ideologies would rally. The canny pianists of the day knew this and embraced it. They were well aware of “how firmly musical idealism avoided over-riding commitment to... social class” and that because of this, pianists cultivated specific repertoires in order to appeal to specific classes.<sup>34</sup> They

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<sup>32</sup> Gooley, 58.

<sup>33</sup> “After mid-century much stricter boundaries began to be drawn between repertoires, as a result of which virtuoso numbers, opera fantasies especially, moved into informal ‘promenade’ concerts, and orchestral series put on much less such virtuosity, little vocal music, and almost no opera save Mozart.” Weber, xxvi.

<sup>34</sup> Weber, xxi.

knew that performing opera fantasies on melodies by Rossini rather than other composers would appeal more to aristocrats. They knew that playing Berlioz and Beethoven symphonic transcriptions would appeal more the Romantics.<sup>35</sup> They knew that their appearance in musical journals and the press at large could have greater effect than whatever impact they might have made in the hall itself. The question here is to what degree piano virtuosi were simply pawns in the wider machinations of polemic discourse and to what extent these very same individuals were clever enough to “play the game” and conquer Europe by pulling together the disparate yet intermingling social and ideological trends of the time. In order to address this question, I will turn to Antoine Hennion and his concept of “loving music.”

If the nineteenth century overplayed the trope of the Great Man by deifying Beethoven, for instance, modernist thought of the twentieth century compensates by depicting history and culture as broad and allegedly observable trends. Northrop Frye wrote *Anatomy of Criticism* which sought to codify literary criticism purely in terms of the works themselves while excluding socio-historical factors. Schenker, who also worshiped Beethoven, diagrammed the *Ursatz* which gave a blueprint for musical rhetoric. Foucault published *Les mots et les choses* which is a self described archaeology of human sciences. In the twenty-first century, sociologists like Hennion argue that a middle ground can be found by focusing on the *experiential* aspects of music rather than their abstracted historicized contexts. Hennion writes, “it is necessary, above all, to extract the social analysis of taste from the falsely objective perspective which makes it no more than the

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<sup>35</sup> Gooley, 36.

measure of differential consumption according to predefined criteria.”<sup>36</sup> From here, we can revisit the schisms in Chorley and Fétis described by Ellis and Gooley with sympathy rather than smirking at the former pair’s squirming between personal taste and ideological alliance. No doubt a student of the modernists however, Hennion goes on to write, “the research of musical taste...[is] a rich and inventive practice that...recomposes music and its practitioners *in situ*, according to the needs and with the various mediums, resources, devices, and ceremonials available.”<sup>37</sup>

Nearly two hundred years after the Parisian polemicists, Hennion takes a much more sympathetic view of those who “use music.” He describes music lovers, including performers, composers, critics, and audiences, as those who “use music” as “practitioners of a love of music.”<sup>38</sup> He adds that “there are no grounds for claiming that some forms [of consumption] are merely passive.”<sup>39</sup> It is in this sense of “using music,” and not as an accusation of self-service, that this dissertation will proceed. Whereas Hennion and other sociologists focus primarily on the experiential side of *listening* to music, the present aim is to examine how performers use the textual and performative capacities of music as an experiential tool in the socio-culturally kaleidoscopic arena of the practice, as Hennion puts it, of loving music.

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<sup>36</sup> Antoine Hennion, "Music Lovers: Taste as Performance," in *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 5 (2001): 2.

<sup>37</sup> Hennion, 2–3.

<sup>38</sup> This is a convenient formulation as it marries the communal aspects of a "practice" with the personally experiential component of "loving". In this sense, "love" will be used more for its experiential connotations rather than its strictly amorous definition.

<sup>39</sup> Hennion, 1.

To broach this topic, I will examine certain aspects of an individual who has remained ensnared by the polemics of virtuosity with remarkable constancy ever since he first burst onto the scene as a boy in the early 1820s: Ferencz Liszt, or as he became known outside of Hungary, Franz Liszt.

*Liszt's embodiment of diverse personas*

The story of Liszt is the story of an individual who flung himself headlong into the conscious manipulation of the various potentialities of music from the experiential and spiritual to the political and polemic. Whereas many musicians are thought of as existing within the flow of wider stylistic and cultural currents, certain aspects of Liszt can be considered as starting points of such currents. Not only did Liszt's musical output (through titles such as *Années de pèlerinage* or *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*) tend to aim beyond pianistic and even musical realms, the man himself “absorbed a great deal from his non-musical environment — social styles, literary currents, political movements, ethical fashions — and worked these elements into his person.”<sup>40</sup> Indeed, it is for the excesses of his personas as musician and many other roles that Liszt was both praised and ostracized. If Liszt had limited his ambitions and actions to more strictly musical practices as Chopin did, he would perhaps have remained more impervious to allegations of using music as a tool for mere self-aggrandizement. As he was, however, Liszt actively and deliberately exposed himself to the press and all the implications previously

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<sup>40</sup> Gooley, 1–2.

described came in tow. In light of this, any exploration that seeks to uncover Liszt's approach to the music he played must be understood alongside of Liszt's wider world view.

As one of the quintessential examples of an *homme de son temps*, Liszt has received a great amount of secondary scholarship. Liszt worked so tirelessly in both establishing and controlling his narrative among people of influence and the public at large that there is also a considerable amount of primary source material from his life. This has led to a wide range of types of studies detailing Liszt's roles as a performer, composer, cultural phenomenon, nationalist, and general symbol for his time period. The present intention, however, is not necessarily to present any new 'facts' in Liszt scholarship. Instead, certain aspects of Liszt's life will be pulled together in an attempt to create a portrait of Liszt's relation to the music he performed. To what ends did Liszt, in Hennion's sense, use his pieces in performance? In what ways did the social, political, and aesthetic aspects of the music Liszt composed, as well as the same components of his performances, intermingle?

This line of understanding, which sees Liszt as someone always transcending the limits of his persona, has been at the root of much of Liszt scholarship. When Gooley writes, "Franz Liszt remains the quintessential virtuoso because he was constantly and insistently mobilizing, destabilizing, and reconstituting borders," he is not speaking in purely pianistic terms.<sup>41</sup> The following excerpts from Liszt's biography and reception will shed light on how his approach to the practice of loving music diverged from those

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<sup>41</sup> Gooley, 1.

around him while at the same time helped to establish a legacy that has been startlingly difficult to embody for contemporary performers.

### *Liszt and his Body*

First, I would like to restate the present understanding of “virtuosic” as any implementation of a practice which brings the agency of the individual practitioner to the fore as such. If agency is the question, the body presents itself as the most straightforward place to begin before getting too conceptual. Since the work of scholars such as Susan McClary, conversations about the body and gender roles in music have taken on a new dimension. Commentators after her such as James Deaville are beholden to McClary’s legacy in discussing the politics of virtuosity as “the exercise of power in the concert hall, with domination or liberation among [its] potential effects.”<sup>42</sup> These commentators, however, focus primarily on music in its social context and from the point of view of the listener; they focus on the hermeneutic side of the issue. I would like to focus on the intentions of the individual as a practitioner of music. Here, I would prefer to ask “what are an individual’s aims in enacting their virtuosity?” rather than “what are the socio-political implications of that virtuosity?”.

To begin, I will return to Bernstein’s association between what she described as the disembodiment of journalistic authorial voice and the disembodiment of instrumental virtuosity. In describing Liszt, she writes, the “rejection of Liszt is based on the dread of

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<sup>42</sup> Deaville, 120.

his personal incoherence and the spectacle of instability.”<sup>43</sup> The visual component of the term “spectacle” should not go unnoticed. This echoes Bernstein’s previously cited excerpt in which she writes, “Heine irritates the philological habit of seeking unity in an authorial subject, ‘the work,’ and in a unified historical world and period.”<sup>44</sup> In both of Bernstein’s subjects, the practitioner’s idea or message transcends the stable unity of the practitioner’s corporeal bindings, whether those bindings are the body of the performer or the authorial voice of the writer. Heine had no problem appropriating the opinions of others as his own or putting his own opinions in the *parole* of others. Similarly, Liszt displayed erratic physical convulsions and facial expressions while playing that contributed to an overall incoherence which was “not a threat to, but rather the very condition of, the subjective impact of his playing.”<sup>45</sup> Both of these men manipulated the corporeal elements of their practice to subvert the inherent unifying and cohesive qualities the body usually offers.

This use of the body was distinctly in line with the Romantic theme of abandon and diametrically opposed to the aesthetic of someone like Thalberg. Alexander Stefaniak, despite the incongruity of his performances, describes Liszt’s playing as “serious” or “elevated” virtuosity which appeals to the notion of the Romantic sublime and type of divine chaos.<sup>46</sup> Thalberg was representative of a very different aesthetic. If

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<sup>43</sup> Bernstein, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Bernstein, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Gooley, 48.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander Stefaniak, “Robert Schumann, Serious Virtuosity, and the Rhetoric of the Sublime,” *The Journal of Musicology* 33, no. 4 (2016): 433–82.

the piano was the king of instrumental music in Paris, the French capital was also the primary capital of opera at the time. Foreign opera composers such as Meyerbeer, Cherubini, Rossini, and others flocked to the city and cultivated a rich soil for the adoration of the human voice. Thalberg knew this and equally knew that associating his pianistic identity with the operatic voice would endear him to the elite and aristocratic circles of Paris.

Pianists like Thalberg and Kalkbrenner used their bodies as a way of exhibiting the rational mind's dominion over the imperfection of the body. Kalkbrenner's famous promotion of the Chiroplast clearly shows that he saw the body as something which should be subjugated and controlled. Thalberg similarly employed a severe posture and deliberately refrained from changing his facial expressions to fit the music. As Gooley describes it, "by visibly holding back the emotions, [Thalberg] preserved himself as the sovereign subject, and gave inspiration a location *within* the body... something internal to be resisted or conquered."<sup>47</sup>

Thalberg's Op. 70 *L'art du chant appliqué au piano* shows not only his explicit self-association with the voice but the pedagogic undertones of such a title evidence his efforts to create a "school" after his own style of playing. This points to a key distinction that must be made: Thalberg and Kalkbrenner's pianism was concerned with subjugating *the* body whereas Liszt's pianism was concerned with transcending *his* body. There were explicit personally experiential components to Liszt's pianism. In his performances, Liszt would appear to be so involved in the music-making that he would appear to lose control of

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<sup>47</sup> Gooley, 49. Emphasis original.

himself on stage and used his music to invite the audience to participate through transitory proximity to his own experience.<sup>48</sup> Everything from his compositions and improvisations to his interpretations of other composers followed this rule.

In light of this, I would also like to add a caveat of nuance to the view put forward by Lydia Goehr and Ludim Pedroza that Liszt's solo recitals and calls for the establishment of musical institutions in this period were the early proving ground for the museum-like treatment of works.<sup>49</sup> Yes, Liszt was presenting works "as the creative product of the composer's interaction with the ideal-divine," but his comportment as a performer sees him treating such works with a bravado that is contrary to museum-like reverence suggested by Goehr.<sup>50</sup> If a curator would place a mason's ancient trowel in a sealed glass container for display, Liszt would break the glass and use the trowel in the edification of his own Babylonian gardens.

Kalkbrenner, however, crafted his pianism into a pedagogical ideal. For him, "every display of feeling would ideally be an echo of universal emotions present and real to each auditor, not merely evidence of some singularly dark or inscrutable artistic personality. ... Freed from 'expression,' the pianist would shine with moral

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<sup>48</sup> Stefaniak describes Schumann's support of this type of virtuosity before eventually distancing himself from Liszt: "Schumann extended the mantle of sublimity to Liszt in his reviews of the virtuoso's 1840 Leipzig and Dresden concerts, drawing upon and contributing to Liszt's image as the ultimate sublime virtuoso." Stefaniak, 438.

<sup>49</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works an Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 205–6.

<sup>50</sup> Ludim Pedroza, "Music as Communitas: Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, and the Musical Work," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 29, no. 4 (2010): 309.

excellence.”<sup>51</sup> This view resulted both in the replicability of Kalkbrenner and Thalberg’s style as well as providing the moral grounds for its continuation. Crucially, Liszt’s pianism of the 1830’s was diametrically opposed to these qualities. The implications of this will be discussed further in the section *Liszt and his legacy*. What I would like to make clear here is that Kalkbrenner and Thalberg in some ways protected themselves from the full gale of anti-virtuosic polemics precisely because of their subjugation of the body. Liszt, however, was constantly in the line of fire since no matter the repertoire or occasion, he would relentlessly center his body as the conduit for his own agency as an individual practitioner. Both Liszt and Thalberg, though they used their bodies to different effect, centered it as one of the mediums of their musical expression. In this way, the body of the virtuoso took on powerful and diverse symbolic potentials for the mobilization of his or her pianisms. Just as the press made use of various virtuosos as synecdoches towards the formation of pianisms as *savoirs*, the virtuoso centered their body as the symbolic representation of his or her agency within a *savoir*.

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<sup>51</sup> Davies, 106.

*Liszt, Saint-Simonism, and Beyond*

Early in his career, one of the “ethical fashions” mentioned by Giani that Liszt flirted with in the passage cited earlier was the newly formed socio-political movement of Saint-Simonists. Although Giani is doubtful of the depth of Liszt’s commitment to the Saint-Simonian mission, it is still worthwhile to consider which aspects of the socio-economic ideology would have appealed to the young Liszt.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, as an artist who at that time was centering his physicality as part of his expression, it is illuminating to consider why he was interested in a movement that saw the physical laborer and engineer as central to cultural advancement.

Grounded in the thought of Claude Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon, this movement was an early iteration of the industrial workers’ movements that would continue to gain hard fought power throughout nineteenth century. Saint-Simonists saw the remnants of France’s feudal legacy as an impediment to the nation’s ability to compete with the industrialization happening in other countries, notably Britain. The struggle of the physical laborer against inherited aristocratic power mirrored the physically active gyrations of Liszt the pianist that drew admiration from the Romantics and distaste from the dilettantes. Instead of the Tricolore of the revolution, the Saint-Simonists flew a black flag with the slogan “live working or die fighting” as they sought

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<sup>52</sup> Maurizio Giani, “Once more ‘Music and the Social Conscience’: Reconsidering Liszt’s ‘Lyon’,” *Liszt and the birth of modern Europe: music as mirror of religious, political, cultural, and aesthetic transformations. Franz Liszt Studies Series* no. 9 (Hillsdale New York: Pendragon Press, 2003), 95–114.

to carve a strong identity for the worker in the emerging landscape of the industrial revolution. This slogan could not make it any clearer that their physical and bodily agency was central to their mission. Although they of course were grounded in their own religious doctrine, the vehicle of their emancipation was their physical agency. Liszt attended lectures organized by the Saint-Simonists and absorbed the views of figures like Émile Barrault which made a lasting impression on him.<sup>53</sup> The movement however, had strong authoritarian leanings that disturbed commentators such as the Romantic writers Théophile Gautier, Stendhal, and, during his middle period, Liszt himself.<sup>54</sup>

The Saint-Simonists' zealous centering of the worker's role in the budding industrial world echoes Liszt's zealous desire to situate the musician at center stage in the developing artistic landscape of the nineteenth century. Both camps supplied their base with pamphlets and articles to this effect. Liszt contributed *On the Religious Music of the Future* while later on, Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin, one of the founders of Saint-Simonism, wrote an unpublished volume titled *Le Livre nouveau* which was intended to

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<sup>53</sup> In a letter from 1837, several years after his initial exposure to the Saint-Simonists, Liszt writes, "Will my life be tainted by this idle uselessness that weighs me down? Will the hour of devotion and virile action not come? Am I condemned without remission to this mountebank's and salon entertainer's trade?" In the context of early nineteenth-century France, "virile action" must be understood as an explicitly revolutionary and creative ambition in a social and class-based context. Letter quoted from Alexander Main, "Liszt's 'Lyon': Music and the Social Conscience," *19th Century Music* 6 (1981): 238.

<sup>54</sup> Ralph Locke makes a comparison between middle aged Liszt's embarrassment with his earlier involvement in Saint Simonism and the similar way in which various individuals of the second half of the twentieth century wished to hide their political past. Presumably this could refer to, in different ways, the blacklisting of Communists in America. Ralph Locke. "Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure." *19th Century Music* 4, no. 3 (1981): 216.

be used as a substitute for Christian scripture.<sup>55</sup> Both of these writings show that their authors felt the need to provide spiritual backing to develop the legitimacy of a practice whose ultimate agent was the body.

As it was primarily based on wider socio-economic goals that prized scientists and engineers as leaders towards a powerful future, the Saint-Simonian view held that music and artists should primarily exist to embody and glorify the ideas of others. In their view, art must serve the people. To prove this, Barrault made scathing *ad hominem* attacks on the poet Byron to “demonstrate that there can be no hope for individualism, either in terms of psychological or social redemption.”<sup>56</sup> It is worth noting the similarity between the polemical tactics of Barrault (a political and social organizer) and the musical press at the time. The musical press operated with the same demeanor and intention as political activists.

While much of this rhetoric of communal empowerment resonates with Liszt’s compositions such as *Lyon* which commemorated a brutal and bloody Canut revolts, the Saint-Simonists mission ultimately saw music as too peripheral to fully capture the full commitment of such a deeply vibrant musical personality as Liszt. Nonetheless, pieces such as the little known *Historical Hungarian Portraits* from 1885, the year before his death, prove that the Saint-Simonian vision of art as a spiritual embodiment of individuals’ ideologies made a lasting impression on Liszt. The lateness of the *Historical*

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<sup>55</sup> Hugh Chilsom, “Enfantin, Barthélemy Prosper,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 9 11th ed., (Cambridge University Press) 402–403.

<sup>56</sup> Giani, 103.

*Hungarian Portraits* aside, most of Liszt's explicitly Saint-Simonian works come from his earlier period. Works like the bombastic *Lyon* combined Saint-Simonist tunes with such contemporary musical devices as augmented chords and thematic transformation. As described in the previously cited article by Locke, "Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure," the differences between Liszt and the Saint-Simonists were always too significant to produce an undying affiliation. Nonetheless, for the Liszt of impressionable youth, it is clear from his profile as performer and polemicist that the movement's body centered empowerment and mobilization of art made an impression on him.

Here we can return to Hennion's concept of "using music" and the reciprocal forces involved in Foucault's notion of the knowing subject becoming a subject of its own knowledge. It only paints half of the picture to say that Liszt wrote pieces like *Lyon* because of his concurrent interest in Saint-Simonism. What is missing is the view which considers that Liszt sought out ideologies like Saint-Simonism and later the work of Robert Lamennais as ways to distinguish himself as a musician. Yes, as Locke has shown, Liszt was genuinely interested, politically and socially, in Saint-Simonism. This does not preclude that he came across Saint-Simonism through his deeper desire to embody a model of pianism that transcended the instrument.<sup>57</sup> Expressed in simpler

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<sup>57</sup> Although he poked fun at Liszt in other parts, Heinrich Heine's open letter testifies to Liszt's success in rendering this image of himself: "It goes without saying that such a restless mind, which is torn in all directions by all the doctrines and miseries of the day, which feels the need to worry itself about all the concerns of humanity, which likes to poke its nose in all the kettles in which the good Lord cooks the future of the world — it goes without saying that Franz Liszt, in short, is no docile piano-player for peaceable burghers and good-natured sleepyheads." Heinrich Heine as translated by Locke...., *Lettres confidentielles*, no. 2, in *Revue et gazette musicale* 5, no. 5 (4 February 1838).

terms, before I find myself at the store sorting which vegetables are available, I must first have the inspiration to make a ratatouille.

This oversight then and now is largely due to Liszt's own intentions. Liszt wanted to be thought of as something more than just a pianist, yet a pianist he was; no matter how one cuts it. Although Gooley doesn't mention Saint-Simonism, he clearly situates Liszt's extra-musical ambitions within a musical context:

According to this master plan — it was nothing less than that — he would set aside the latter part of the 1830's for the purpose of establishing himself as a man of letters and as a serious composer. These transformations, as he saw it, would prepare him for a spectacular performing career far more significant than that of the usual virtuoso.<sup>58</sup>

It was precisely because Liszt understood how much his Saint-Simonist leanings affected his reception *as a musician* that, with an open letter to Heinrich Heine in the *Revue et gazette musicale*, "Liszt dissociated himself repeatedly and heftily from the movement."<sup>59</sup> This was reflected in his compositions as Weber describes an overall trend in which Liszt (and other performers) would turn away from operatic fantasies and the socio-literary subjects (two genres that once held opposite poles in the spectrum of

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<sup>58</sup> Gooley, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Locke, 211. Again, it is worth noting that the present-day commentary on socio-political of this letter was published in a musical journal, not a political journal.

Liszt's 1830's repertoire).<sup>60</sup> Indeed, when he reworked the *Albums d'un voyageur* of the 1830s into the first *Années de pèlerinage* of the 1850s, the Saint-Simonist piece *Lyon* was omitted. After 1850, Liszt turned to drastically different subjects and genres such as psalms, masses, and other sacred subjects.

When Liszt decided that the Saint-Simonist agenda was no longer suited his world view as *musician*, he did not choose to lessen the “virile” (read: masculinely creative or revolutionary) quality he mentioned in his 1837 letter. He merely reassigned the trajectory of his fundamentally transcendent ambitions for the piano. For Liszt the performer and composer, the representational potential of pianism was an inexhaustible well. As the scholars discussed have shown, Liszt used this potential to harness political, social, poetic, orchestral, religious, sexual, or narrative types of representation. Amongst all the back and forth of Liszt's political affiliations, one element stayed constant: Liszt was a practitioner of the love of music. In Hennion's sense of the word, Liszt “used” his socio-political views as implements in this practice. If virtuosity is understood as bringing one's agency in a practice to the fore as such, Liszt's virtuosity was rooted in his efforts to imbue his music making with his own agency as a political (as with Saint-Simonism), poetic (as in the tone poems), or religious (as with his *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*) pianist. Just as Liszt made his body as a conduit for his pianism as *savoir*, so he made use of extra-musical ideologies. In the Foucauldian sense, his body and various extra-musical ideologies were at once both the vehicles/agents in service of, as well as the constitutive elements, his pianism as *savoir*.

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<sup>60</sup> Weber, xxvi

*Liszt and his legacy for today's practitioners*

Both of the aspects I have raised of Liszt's life, the use of his body and his socio-political bent, might appear a bit dubious on the surface. In considering the use of his body, for instance, it is obvious that nearly two centuries of dislocation make it tricky to adhere to Robert Schumann's suggestion that Liszt should be "seen," not "heard". Having to rely exclusively on written accounts by others rather than seeing with our own eyes certainly puts some water in the wine. Nonetheless, understanding the finer points of these issues has important implications for those who perform Liszt's works and suppose to understand his legacy.

In his improvisations, Beethoven marathon concerts, chamber music soirées, piano etudes, and politically motivated compositions, Liszt proved he could do it all. Each of these iterations of Liszt's pianism is very precisely that: sparks jettisoning off the ecstatic core of one practicing a love of music. I must explicitly restate here that I do not wish to wax poetic by using "love" to engender sympathy for Liszt; branching off Hennion, "love" here is meant to highlight the fundamentally experiential intentions, psychologically and bodily, of Liszt as a practitioner. Liszt founded his own type of pianism as a *savoir* and lived it to *nth* degree. Liszt was "Liszt", knowing subject and object of his own knowledge. As Cristina Belgiojoso is said to have pronounced, "Thalberg est le premier pianiste du monde, Liszt, lui, est le seul." Said in less charming terms, Thalberg is the top-rated pianist, Liszt is utterly incomparable. It is ironic then that today, out of Liszt and Thalberg, the music heard on stages today is more likely to be by

the man whose pianism lends itself least to replication.

For all his efforts to create a legacy that could be emulated and pedagogically discerned, the *école* of Thalberg is dwarfed by the legend of Liszt. For the interpreter, instead of seeing Liszt as one who composed works, it is perhaps more appropriate to view his compositions as visions of his own pianism as *savoir*. This returns to the question posed in the introduction: it is better to ask “what was a composer *trying* to do?” rather than “what did a composer do?”. Given the factors described above, it is dangerous to interpret Liszt’s music with the same aesthetic consideration one would use in interpreting someone like Brahms, the anointed paragon of music’s autonomy. Liszt’s compositions are examples of his *use* of music. Pianists today should be aware of this while perhaps removing the disdain that Parisian writers imbued in this view. Lydia Goehr *does* cite Liszt as a fundamental actor in the nineteenth-century concretization of a historically oriented “work concept” but, as has been articulated by Ludim Pedroza, Liszt’s “work-concept” still should be understood as a means and not an end.<sup>61</sup>

Further chapters will discuss what I believe has been a trend towards homogeneity in the practice of performing music. I argue that given today’s inculcation of the canon and institutional pressures for performers to conform, we are diverting ourselves away from appreciating Liszt’s fundamental message as a pianist and artist. The stability of constructs like the canon are diametrically opposed to the sublime chaos Liszt’s unique virtuosity can express. The neutering of his works through their conception within the

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<sup>61</sup> Ludim R. Pedroza, "Music as Communitas: Franz Liszt, Clara Schumann, and the Musical Work," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 29, no. 4 (2010), 319–320.

canonic body resulted in a period in which Liszt became a bit taboo. By the late twentieth century, even such a prominent practitioner as Alfred Brendel felt the need to publish essays in order to legitimize his intentions to rehabilitate Liszt's reputation.<sup>62</sup> It is well known in Schubert scholarship that Schubert's reception suffered for a long time because Schubert was incessantly compared, explicitly or subconsciously, to Beethovenian models of interpretation and criticism. Liszt's pianism has similarly suffered under the dominion of canonic thought that bloomed in mid-to-late twentieth century.

I will return to Antoine Hennion to shed light on why Liszt's legacy is done poor service by interpreters who ignore the fundamentally experiential and virtuosic (practitioner based) nature of Liszt:

Music cannot be reduced to the factors that might cause it and circumscribe it, and the effect it may have is just as impossible to infer, it should be seen as something transitory, not as a given but as a 'new arrival', a relatively irreducible present: it happens, it passes — despite people's efforts to pin it down and bring it into line with a more 'authentic' norm.<sup>63</sup>

In improvising embellishments in his early years, Liszt showed that even Beethoven (perhaps the most stable edifice of the canon) for him was a "transitory" experience. This means that the first step must be to reject the canon's presentation of a

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<sup>62</sup> Alfred Brendel, *Musical Thoughts & Afterthoughts* (London: Robson Books), 1976.

<sup>63</sup> Hennion, 2.

piece “as a given.” Instead, performers must jettison themselves from pianistic concerns and embrace the intended ecstasies of Liszt’s pianism. It is not a coincidence that two of the composer-pianists most closely associated with ecstasy, Scriabin and Liszt, are composers whose styles are very personally idiosyncratic. Their *pianism* is not similar through the piano itself but through their vision beyond it. The implications of this for today’s interpreters can be diverse and multifarious; in fact it should be. To be clear, I am not advocating for this type of pianism as the ultimate pianistic model. I wish instead to shine a light on the paradox between the fundamental basis of Liszt’s pianism and the way in which contemporary models of performance and criticism frame him. Liszt’s pianism is not one to be *appreciated*. It is to be *experienced* from within and without by performers themselves and audiences alike. Acknowledging this could spark others to think about similar complications regarding other practitioners of the past.

**II*****The practice of loving music before and after Brahms***

This chapter is not about Brahms. Instead, the period of western art music in which Brahms lived will be seen here as a sort of sieve. Brahms's maturity is neatly situated in the second half of the nineteenth century and, as will be shown, certain ideologies of the practice of loving music from before the period of his maturity were either eradicated or significantly altered by the time Brahms died in 1897. It will be shown that the circle of musicians who coalesced around Brahms were responsible for promulgating several of these hermeneutic practices which anticipated some of the trends found in the twentieth century.

***Terminology: the practice of loving music, pianism, and virtuosity***

First, it is worth restating and clarifying the terminology that will be used in this chapter. As the study of western art sometimes betrays a tendency of wrapping itself in the grandeur of historicization, I wish to explicitly shift away from lenses such as "Great Composer," "masterpieces," or "progress." Of course, many scholars have been undermining this outdated terminology since the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast with *these* scholars, however, I wish to take a more phenomenological view of

the subject as opposed to historical, positivist, or sociological. As I developed my own approach to my subject, I happily came across the work of David Vanderhamm, who writes that “there are many potential reasons for the relative absence of phenomenology in Anglophone historical studies of music, but I would argue that it stems from an understanding of phenomenology...as radically *presentist*.”<sup>64</sup> He goes on to say that other sorts of musicology, such as ethnomusicology, use a phenomenological approach to understand the “living present” of a work and its environment and that historical musicology can use these approaches to “accept the social and historical construction of its objects without devaluing them.”<sup>65</sup>

This turns historical inquiry into a fluid questioning whose result is not simply to understand the hermeneutic subtleties of the past. As Vanderhamm see it, “there are indeed significant differences between the experience of historical subjects and our own, but these differences result from ongoing change, not a total historical break.”<sup>66</sup> In this way, this dissertation attempts to connect primarily with that which has *not* historically changed. People *do* still perform and compose music. What is common among them? Crucially, I wish to distance the proposed approach from any appeals to the sanctity of tradition. Rather than seeing the present as a continuation of the past, why not consider the past as a retro-extension of present? Furthermore, the focus here is on an individual’s

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<sup>64</sup> David Vanderhamm, “The Social Construction of Virtuosity: Musical Labor and the Valuation of Skill in the Age of Electronic Media,” PhD diss. (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2017), 56. Emphasis original.

<sup>65</sup> Vanderhamm, 57.

<sup>66</sup> Vanderhamm, 59.

reasons to action, not the wider cultural currents in which they find themselves. In the first chapter's view of Liszt, the main focus was on Liszt's motivations as a practitioner rather than the elements of Liszt's world to which we still relate. Liszt and other individuals' reasons to action, I believe, are what provide the continuity of historical inquiry. If one examines events such as concerts, composition dates, and the births/deaths of musicians, one sees clear "historical breaks," to use Vanderhamm's wording. If one examines the pressures, inspirations, and reactions that lead practitioners to act in the ways they do, one finds fluidity and continuity. In this way, the present inquiry is an a-historical one in that it conceives of musical practice as a system of continually evolving dynamic relations between a practitioner and their practice at large. Within these dynamics, virtuosity is conceived as the vehicle through which an individual practitioner asserts their agency upon communally held practices. Distinguishing itself from the sociological approaches of authors such as DeNora and Goehr, the point of view of the individual practitioner will be prioritized over macro-social considerations. Put in another way, while the present dissertation traces large scale changes across different periods, the underlying focus will in fact be on that which *does not change*: the basic structure of how a practitioner relates to their craft (more on this in the Epilogue).

The following chapter, which operates primarily from a position of sympathy with the subject, is ultimately concerned with the implications this examination can have on present practice. In examining the ways in which others were led to act, the main focus here will ultimately be what one should ultimately do next. This will be the focus of subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, it is for this reason that I will employ the phrase

*practitioner of the love of music* as an entity at the heart of which is an individual's personal relationship to their musical actions, motives, and ambitions. This lens accounts not only for the unique relationship an individual has with their musical ambitions but also how these ambitions take their shape through their era's learned communal practices.

As the first chapter has attempted to show, there is a reciprocal relationship between a practitioner and their practice, e.g., there is an indistinguishable causal origin between Liszt the man and his pianism. In this sense, the way an individual pianist cultivates their pianism can be considered a sort of Foucauldian *savoir* in that their apprehension and formation of music as knowledge contributes to their agency as a practitioner. In this sense, a pianist's pianism is the ideological framework which substantiates one's practice of the love of music. This conceptual view necessarily takes socio-cultural context very seriously, yet once again, it is an ahistorical view in that it is centered on individual's agency within that context rather than individual biography as something that can be historically demarcated. Perhaps most significantly, questions of quality and reception are superseded by considerations of intention and motivation. In simplest terms, this mode of inquiry is tailored neither to the general public nor to scholars. It is tailored to the needs of today's practitioners, those people who burden themselves with interpreting and rendering distant yet present *savoirs* through the concrete act of performance.

Part of the work of the first chapter was to show Liszt as a progenitor of a pianism. This particular pianism was met with intense pushback and "counter pianisms." Notably, Clara Schumann began to emerge in the 1830s as the forbearer of a counter-

movement whose rivalry with Liszt's pianism would rage into the sunset of the nineteenth century. Alexander Stefaniak and April Prince, among others, have explored Clara Schumann and the ways she grappled with the shape her pianism would take. Specifically, they have considered some of the discontinuities between Schumann's reception and her person as she developed her pianism.<sup>67</sup> These studies begin to reveal how, despite being seen by many as his opposite, Clara Schumann in fact deployed her pianism in ways that are very similar to Liszt. While the contexts in which these individuals lived naturally shaped their thoughts and actions, I would like to propose that the mechanisms that operate as conduit between their world view and its practical application remain largely the same. In other words, in the case of both pianists, we can see a similar relationship between how their practice shapes their identity as well as how their view of themselves reciprocally shapes their choices in their practice.

The following sections will detail how various agents helped cultivate a paradigm of compositional virtuosity that was specifically meant to oppose Liszt's paradigm of virtuosity. Ultimately it will be argued that although these two paradigms were opposed in practice and ideology, **virtuosity**, conceived as the aspects of a practice which bring a practitioner's agency to the fore, was the uniting mechanism which served as the stylistic and technical conduit between **pianism**, as *savoir*, and an individual's **practice of the love of music**.<sup>68</sup> Virtuosity is the tool that an individual employs in order to manipulate

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<sup>67</sup> For a review of the different agendas implicit in Clara Schumann's programming from before 1850, see: Stefaniak, "Clara Schumann's Interiorities," 697–765.

For a discussion of the different ways Clara Schumann molded her gender to her pianism, see: April Prince, "(Re)Considering the Priestess: Clara Schumann, Historiography, and the Visual." *Women & Music (Washington, D.C.)* 21, no. 1 (2017): 107–40.

the boundaries between following two poles: the communal aspects of a practice and an individual pianist's *pianism* (or an individual's *violinism* etc.).<sup>69</sup>

***The Schumanns and the kindling of compositional virtuosity at the piano***

If Dana Gooley has established himself as a leading contemporary American scholar on Liszt as a person and cultural phenomenon, so Alexander Stefaniak has done with regards to Robert and Clara Schumann. Much of the research undertaken by these scholars overlaps in covering the compositional, performing, and political atmospheres of Germany and France in the early nineteenth century. The key difference between their two subjects, however, is that while Liszt chaotically navigated between different social, aesthetic, and political identities as a single individual, the study of the Schumanns as a pair broaches the same questions of agency with a clearer demarcation of roles. In the public view, Robert was the male critic-composer while Clara was female performing

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<sup>69</sup> In referencing the work of Bruno Latour, John Butt has also expressed the need for a mediating approach when contemplating the musical work: "The vertiginous attitude of social constructivists towards objects of art, while a stern lesson for those who underestimate the importance of human involvement at every level, is surely beginning to sound as tired as that argument of America's NRA (National Rifle Association), namely, that 'guns don't kill people, people do'." Butt goes on to write, "pieces of music – whether remembered, composed in the mind, notated or sounded – are obviously human constructions through and through, but they also acquire an element of autonomy instantaneously." The conception of virtuosity I propose operates between similar poles. In distinction from Butt's approach, I intend to employ the concept of mediation in my consideration individual practitioners rather than musical works themselves. John Butt, "What is a 'musical Work'? Reflections on the origins of the 'work concept' in western art music," in *Concepts of Music and Copyright* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015): 4, 5.

icon.<sup>70</sup> This distinction between the Liszt and the Schumanns already anticipates some of the criticisms that saw the former as wild and erratic while Clara assumed the more stable role as tragic high priestess of the piano.<sup>71</sup>

Nonetheless, during the 1830's the Schumanns and Liszt were very much peas in the same pod of Romantic-pianistic virtuosity. Despite opposing virtuosity in his 1835 critic's manifesto, Robert was very admiring of Liszt during this period and used him as an example for what Stefaniak repeatedly calls the "elevation" of virtuosity.<sup>72</sup> This brand of virtuosity opposed itself to the dilettantry of which Paris had become the home, with Thalberg as one of its talismans. In invoking the spirit of Beethoven (as seen in Robert Schumann's Op. 17), these musicians employed various pyrotechnics in their attempts to create destabilizing effects in their music that sometimes verged on the unpleasant.<sup>73</sup> Examples such as Liszt's bombastic finale to the *Réminiscences de Don Juan*, the relentlessly exhausting second movement of Robert Schumann's Op. 17 *Fantasie*, and even Schubert's *Wanderer-Fantasie* come to mind. To be sure, each of these pieces makes extreme demands on the body of the performer in both agility as well as sheer strength and stamina; they are physical as well as acoustic displays.

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<sup>70</sup> Clara was of course also a composer but, similar to Liszt, she was primarily known to the public as a pianist.

<sup>71</sup> Swafford, 129.

<sup>72</sup> Stefaniak, Alexander. "Robert Schumann, Serious Virtuosity, and the Rhetoric of the Sublime." *The Journal of Musicology* 33, no. 4 (2016): 433–82.

<sup>73</sup> "Schumann...presented bracing, inaccessible, even shocking virtuosity as serious and admirable... In many cases, writers specifically claimed that such virtuosity rejected the accessible, pleasurable qualities of more popular, "brilliant" showpieces." *Ibid.*, 440.

Chapter 1 described how Liszt intended that the crucible of performing such works, as flamboyantly demonstrated through his body, should evoke compatibly intense sensations in his audience. The Romantic sensibility likened this external manifestation of gigantic force with “spectacles of nature (volcanoes, storms...) but also extended [it] to the personal qualities of formidable, heroic men.”<sup>74</sup> This played into the Romantic concept of the sublime: external events witnessed by an audience and corroborated by their internal emotional and intellectual reactions. Stefaniak writes, the rhetoric of the sublime “reveals a concept of serious virtuosity located not in the ideology of the work concept but in the music’s visceral, immediate intensity.”<sup>75</sup> This side of reception history is distinct from the now widely familiar concept of the imaginary museum of musical works. Although each of the pieces I mentioned has since been curated to fit into such a museum, it is important to recognize that, putting their Beethovenian invocations to the side, part of the initial purpose of these pieces was geared toward the *experience* of a performance and not primarily an alignment with a canon. More overt examples of canonic orientation would come later for the Schumanns.

Indeed, the pieces by Liszt and Robert Schumann in this style share many qualities, although their difference in origin should not be overlooked. Liszt united both the composer and performer roles of these works; through his *body*, the prescriptive and performative aspects were indistinguishable. Robert Schumann on the other hand, was solely a composer at this point in his career and in this way was more exclusively

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 440.

concerned with the theoretical and prescriptive aspects of what Stefaniak calls “serious virtuosity.” It was left to Clara Schumann to decide how to embody her husband’s music.

Born in 1819, Clara Wieck was in her 20s when the discourse over pianistic virtuosity was reaching fever pitch. As a young pianist, her programming reflected the fashions of the day. Her 1837 Op. 8 *Concert Variations* on a theme from Bellini are a typical example of the touring virtuoso’s calling card. By this point she was well established as a pianist, having already received plaudits from many observers, including Chopin. Her programs from this period included what Stefaniak calls “concert vehicles”; this directly mirrors the discussion in Chapter 1 of Liszt’s “use” of music for various aims.<sup>76</sup> This term hardly evokes the chasteness of a priestess by which posterity remembers her. Three years after the publication of her Bellini variations, however, she married Robert; and this coincided with her gradual extrication from the premise of music as a vehicle.

Robert’s first twenty-three opuses (ranging from 1830–39) are all for solo piano, yet his marriage to Clara coincided with his piano-centric oeuvre shifting ever so dramatically towards lieder. The year he married Clara (1840) famously saw the publication eighteen separate opuses of vocal music. Robert’s plunge into poetry mirrored the increasing appearance of Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte* in Clara’s concert programs<sup>77</sup>. Rather than relying on Bellini, Clara Schumann’s variation sets “often refracted virtuosity through historicist frameworks rather than the conventions of

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<sup>76</sup> Alexander Stefaniak, “Clara Schumann’s Interiorities,” 702.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 753–754.

popular, opera-based variations.”<sup>78</sup> As the nineteenth century reached its mid-point, the Schumanns began aligning their virtuosity with themes of historically aesthetic relevance (Bach, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn) while drifting away from centering the performer’s body as vehicle. Liszt at this time was still publishing body-centric concert fantasies and placing embellishments on Beethoven (his textual sobriety would appear later in his career).

It is crucial here that while the Schumanns began to publicly sublimate the externalization of their virtuosity, their “serious virtuosity” still operated as a “discursively constructed quality” that was recognized by audiences.<sup>79</sup> In limiting the body’s agency, the Schumanns began employing their virtuosity more subliminally in order to cultivate an aesthetic staging of interiority. Karen Leistra-Jones’s writing explores the duplicitous nature of the practice of staging authenticity in Brahms’s circle, and this expressive rhetoric clearly has its roots in the steps taken by the Schumanns in the 1840’s.<sup>80</sup> Despite the Schumanns’ outward sublimation of it, virtuosity, as the foregrounding of a practitioner’s agency, is still at play whether it is external (Liszt’s model) or internal (Schumann’s model). This story however is not one only about the Schumanns. The kindling of compositional virtuosity, a virtuosity that exists outside the realm of the performer as agent, in the 19th century was not limited to them.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 752.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 703.

<sup>80</sup> Karen Leistra-Jones, "Staging Authenticity." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (2013): 397–436.

*Anton Reicha and the thinking of musical language*

Reicha today is especially known for his numerous woodwind quintets that still receive semi-regular attention from modern ensembles. These pieces, however, are not representative of Reicha's impact on the development of compositional virtuosity in the nineteenth century. As professor of counterpoint and composition at the Conservatoire along with his eventual naturalization as a French citizen, Reicha can be seen as an early contributor to the later debate on virtuosity in Paris in the first half of the nineteenth century.

As a contributor however, he is rather peculiar, as Alban Ramaut alludes to him “not so much a virtuoso of the keyboard but a virtuoso of writing (*écriture*).”<sup>81</sup> One should not ignore Ramaut’s use of “*écriture*” rather than the usual “*composition*” to highlight the technical aspects of prescribing music through notation. Ramaut doubles down on this concept throughout his writing by using the even more unusual term *écrivuriste*, as opposed to *écrivain*.<sup>82</sup> This rather unorthodox term could perhaps be used in reference to the twentieth-century brutalist work of Francis Palanc and its meaning could also be intended to resonate with the linguistically probing undertakings of the

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<sup>81</sup> “...qui fait moins de lui un virtuose de clavier qu’un virtuose de l’écriture...” Alban Ramaut, “Antoine Reicha et le Concept de Virtuosit ,” in *Piano Culture in 19th Century Paris*, ed. Massimiliano Sala (Lucca: Publications of the Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini, 2015), 116. All translations of French are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>82</sup> “Reicha’s relation to the piano is clearly not one of an instrumental professor, even less so that of an interpreter, but of a *write-ist*.” Ibid., 117. “...La relation de Reicha au piano n’est clairement pas celle d’un professeur d’instrument, encore moins celle d’un interpr te, mais celle d’un * crivuriste*.” Emphasis added.

mid-twentieth century OuLiPo movement (a sort of workshop of potential literature which included figures such as Raymond Queneau and Georges Perec). If this is the case, the appeals to Reicha as forward thinking are hardly overstated. Especially considering such established contemporaries as Clementi and Dussek who often composed in popular styles such as piano sonatas and concertos, it is refreshing and bemusing to look through the polymetric and tonally adventurous examples from Reicha's *36 Fugues* Op. 36 from 1804. Beethoven himself, a childhood friend of Reicha's, rejected these syntactic experiments stating that "these fugues are no longer fugues."<sup>83</sup>

Despite their present-day obscurity, these 36 fugues clearly show the work of a composer more interested in searching for the syntactic limits of the diatonic system rather than primarily appealing to conventional aesthetics. In these 36 experiments, Reicha seems to set challenges for himself that go against the conventions of the fugue and ask, is this possible? For instance, the subject of the eighteenth fugue has no contour; it is based on a single note. It opens with thirty-four repeated "a's" and subsequently closes with seventeen repeated "f's". Rather than base his fugue subject on a melody, Reicha presents rhythmic and brutally sonic elements (thirty-four unaccompanied repetitions of the same note) as his germinal motif. In another example, the twentieth fugue has the second voice entering with the subject a tritone away rather than a fifth (this fugue is also in the compound meter of  $3/8 + 2/8$ ).

These and other examples have brought some scholars to describe Reicha as a

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<sup>83</sup> "daß die Fuge keine Fuge mehr ist..." Ludwig van Beethoven to Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, Vienna, 18 December 1802, Autograph. HCB Br 58. (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus) [https://www.beethoven.de/s/catalogs?opac=hans\\_en.pl&t\\_idn=ha:b295](https://www.beethoven.de/s/catalogs?opac=hans_en.pl&t_idn=ha:b295)

cerebral thinker of music rather than creator through instrumental means.<sup>84</sup> This dislocation from the instrument naturally implies a dislocation from bodily means. In this way, Reicha situated musical meaning on the page itself as well as in the abstract systems and methods that contained it. Ramaut goes on to discuss the impact that Reicha's ideology had on the young Franz Liszt, especially in how it related to the concept of virtuosity.<sup>85</sup> When Liszt made the conscious decision to elevate his pianism by establishing himself as a composer, it was with Reicha's teachings in the back of his mind. In fact, Ramaut goes as far as to say that the arc of Liszt's entire career can be understood as the fulfillment and "application of Reicha's principles."<sup>86</sup> No doubt Ramaut here makes reference to Liszt's own stylistic and linguistic explorations late in life such as the *La lugubre gondola* (1882) and the *Bagatelle sans tonalité* (1885). To be clear, Liszt was not a "Reicha disciple" nor was Reicha universally considered a *grand-maitre* in Paris. Liszt in the 1830s at this point was still very much a body-centric artist and Reicha garnered himself an aura as a "mad inventor," but the overlap between these two individuals' lives and ideologies is a testament to the vibrancy of Parisian musical

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<sup>84</sup> "Whatever the keyboard could offer in and of itself becomes secondary, it seems, to Reicha's conviction to *think* the language and *dispense* with the instrument." Ramaut, 117. "Ce que le clavier pouvait proposer comme matériau en soi, devient secondaire semble-t-il à la détermination de Reicha qui consisté à *penser* le langage et à *dispenser* de l'instrument." Emphasis original.

See also, Andrew Noble, *The Subject in Anton Reicha's Trente Six Fugues: An Accompaniment to the Critical Edition of Anton Reicha's Trente Six Fugues Pour Le Piano-forté, Composées D'après Un Nouveau Système*. (Köln: Verlag Dohr), 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Ramaut, 119–120.

<sup>86</sup> "L'évolution de toute la carrière de Liszt peut être considérée comme une application des préceptes de Reicha..." Ramaut, 120.

life at the time.<sup>87</sup>

Crucially to this dissertation, it is important to highlight the difference between the dissemination of Reicha's ideas as limited to these fugues and those of Robert Schumann's early piano pieces. First, it must be said that Reicha's choice of the fugue as a genre already puts these pieces outside of what would have been considered genuine composition at the time while Robert Schumann was writing music as it was more commonly understood to be. In addition to this, not only did Reicha precede Robert and Clara by almost two generations, the Schumanns' shift toward compositional virtuosity made appeals to the Germanic music of J.S. Bach and Beethoven and was disseminated through journal publications and compositions. Reicha's musical ideology however was espoused through his instruction at the Conservatoire de Paris and, by Beethoven's own pronouncement, was distinctly non-Beethovenian in concept. The uniting thread between Reicha and the Schumanns's virtuosic ideology is that both wished to situate their agency as practitioners in interior, non-bodily vehicles. The utter absence of any personal relation between Reicha and the Schumanns shows that uniting instinct to sublimate the performing body (perhaps, in Robert's case, also spurred on by his physical injury) went beyond a single nationality or stylistic proclivity. Reicha's inclination to *think* music rather than physically perform it, as Ramaut puts it, echoes what Stefaniak describes as Robert and Clara's appeals to the sublime through interiorly poetic and historically self-conscious means. Despite all their differences and lack of relation, these practitioners eventually came to center their virtuosity, as manifestations of their pianism, within

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<sup>87</sup> "inventeur fou." Ibid., 121.

practices that sublimated the body.

*Mind over matter: composition's sublimation of the body*

The body is one of the clearest referents to an individual as such, and in a period that was so preoccupied with polemic *ad hominem* discourse, as described in Chapter 1, it is easy to understand how the body could attain important symbolic value within such a discourse. As Gooley demonstrates, this was an important component of both Liszt's positive *and* negative reception.<sup>88</sup> Zarko Cvejic equally notes that Chopin's "sickly" physical stature was tied by commentators in negative ways to the pathos of his music.<sup>89</sup> As the mid-century drew near, anti-body virtuosity benefited greatly from its circumventing of the body as one of the era's symbolic lightning rods for polemic agendas. The pianistic practitioners striving to peddle their pianism knew this and shifted their practice accordingly, as detailed by Stefaniak in Clara Schumann's programming choices from this period.<sup>90</sup> This being said, with the likes of Herz, Liszt, and others the first half of the nineteenth century was properly the heyday of the body-oriented

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<sup>88</sup> For an in-depth discussion of how the body contributed to themes of psychological continuity and subjectivity in the Parisian reception of Thalberg and Liszt, see Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 35–52.

<sup>89</sup> Cvejic, 174–179.

<sup>90</sup> "Just as the *Pirate Variations* fitted seamlessly into her 1830s programming practices, the "Schumann" Variations represented her mid-century style: her historicist aesthetic, her programming of Lied-style character pieces, and her championing of colleagues known for their engagement with the canonic tradition." Stefaniak, "Clara Schumann's Interiorities," 753–754.

virtuoso.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, examples such as Kalkbrenner's "chiroplast" (a contraption made to hold a pianist's hands in place while they practice) show the gray area between whether the body or the mind should be at the fore of expression in this time period.<sup>92</sup> It would not be until mid-century that the composition-based models of virtuosity would irrevocably gain the upper hand on their corporeal rivals.<sup>93</sup>

In discussing the body, one inevitably raises the question of gender, and questions like these are of paramount relevance to contemporary discourse. The concern here, however, is not about the nature of gendered characteristics of performers' bodies. Instead, I am preoccupied with certain trends in composition that aim to go beyond the body of the performer, regardless of gender. Scholars such as Prince, however, rightfully maintain that this is still a gendered move.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, it can be argued that any view which

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<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of how Henri Herz manipulated the visual/bodily aspects of his performances, see James Q Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley: U of California, 2014), 94–95.

<sup>92</sup> "Kalkbrenner was a *chef d'école*, to be sure, the early establishment figure *par excellence*. A partner in the firm of Pleyel, he developed a system of performance that at once inspired and benefitted from the firm's highly sensitive instruments... At the threshold of experience, hands wove inner and outer together, confounding expression and impression, passion and compassion, body and soul... The science of chirognomy, young in the 1840's, claimed that the character of men was mirrored in the form of their hands and fingers." *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>93</sup> Here, it should be mentioned that Hector Berlioz, who created a body of quintessentially Romantic music, was not known as a performing musician or associated with a particular instrument. It is true that his virtuosity, as seen in his orchestrations, is less transparently tied to the body. His status as a revolutionary, however, cements that this sort of expression was *de facto* at the time.

<sup>94</sup> "...one of the most dominant historical narratives within musicology: a story that extols the instrumental, autonomous musical work and its composer and, in so doing, celebrates the serious listening experience. This understanding has, since the nineteenth century, been a way to measure musical worth and value by privileging mindful (masculine) over bodily (feminine) interactions with music." April Prince, "(Re)Considering the Priestess," 108.

claims to “go beyond” gender is implicitly deferring to the masculine norm. This point of view should be taken seriously, and Prince’s argument hints at the covertly implicit power-grabs that lurk in the seemingly benign move to create music that relies on interior rather than bodily means. The following chapter and epilogue will address how these ideological moves translate to the mobilization of power. Nonetheless, the primary focus of this chapter is on the relationship between a practitioner and the music with which they engage (either performed or composed), not the practitioner and their gendered reception. The following examples will show that there is there is an element of compositional virtuosity (what Prince describes as “mindful” and Stefaniak as “interior” or “elevated”) that does in fact go beyond interrogating the reception of masculine versus female roles; instead, this element is a move that fundamentally reorients the practitioner to their practice. For both masculine and feminine practitioners, certain ways of relating to the music they perform become inadmissible in the context of serious music making.

In order to supplant the body, early nineteenth-century musicians conceived of music as an “abstract and autonomous art (*Tonkunst*) that expresses what otherwise could not be expressed, including the freedom and autonomy (whether transcendental, primordial, actual, or utopian) of the human subject.”<sup>95</sup> In other words, the supposedly self-regulating rules of music were manipulated into becoming symbols for the capacity of an individual to express their autonomy over themselves. In this understanding, Reicha’s attempt to test the self-regulating boundaries of the fugue (as but one example)

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<sup>95</sup> Cvejić, 187.

mirror the utopian exploration of an individual's capacity for autonomy.<sup>96</sup>

Liszt also appealed to symbols invoking autonomy through his performances, which “played out an agonistic drama in which the virtuoso struggles against resisting forces and ultimately triumphs over them through an act of violent suppression.”<sup>97</sup>

However, there is a fundamental difference between the autonomy expressed by “musical rules” and Liszt establishing his autonomy over the piano. The Lisztian example celebrates the individual agency of Liszt himself while the former, through the syntax of the work, makes appeals to the *ideal* of the individual in a more abstract sense. Liszt's performances in many ways were spectator events while concepts of music's autonomy, as appreciated by tools such as Prince's “serious listening,” made appeals to communally held ideals.<sup>98</sup> For all the similarity in their appeals to autonomy, these are diametrically opposed views: “when music is subjected to [technical and instrumental] virtuosity, it is no longer autonomous.”<sup>99</sup>

In his chapter “The ‘necessity of having a plan’: Virtuosity and Formal

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<sup>96</sup> Liszt, whom compositional virtuosity ultimately came to see as a rival, was cast as the dominating antagonist to this utopian view through his portrayal as military leader in the Napoleonic mold. See Gooley's chapter “Warhorses: Liszt, Weber's *Konzerstück*, and the cult of Napoleon” in Gooley, *The Virtuoso Liszt*, 78–116.

<sup>97</sup> Gooley, 109.

<sup>98</sup> By referencing the work of Victor Turner, Pedroza, describes these communally held ideals as “utopian urges”: “In my view, these urges manifest themselves in at least two ways: at the macro-social level, in the constant scrambling of the sociopolitical status quo with the goal of approximating a concrete *communitas* order, and, at the micro-social level, in the creation of what I will call *utopian concepts*...which aim at capturing the ecstasy of the *communitas* experience, at conceptualizing an entity as metaphysical, and at providing the individual with a measure of control over its re-creation.” Pedroza, 301.

<sup>99</sup> Cvejic, 217.

Construction”, Cvejic describes the ways in which the autonomy of music through formal construction was devised as a way of undermining the “mechanical” or the “soulless” reception of bodily virtuosity.<sup>100</sup> Here one can recall the Beethovenian idea that, through various compositional mechanics, a piece does work or accomplishes something. This indeed is the line that the Schumanns, beginning in 1840s, wished to continue. Stefaniak describes Robert Schumann’s *Toccata*, a work primarily known for its Herculean demands on a pianist’s technique, as one of the early examples of Robert Schumann “the composer” claiming agency over Robert Schumann “the performer.” In his argument, Stefaniak explicitly begins with Liszt and Schumann united as exponents of what he calls the “sublime,” but by mid-century, Robert and Clara had developed nuances in their music that contrasted it to Liszt’s.<sup>101</sup> In his early compositionally virtuosic pieces, Robert Schumann’s works created an effect similar to the effect Liszt the performer had on his audiences.<sup>102</sup> If virtuosity is understood as placing one’s agency in the fore (which is still

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<sup>100</sup> Specifically, he uses the compositional endeavors of Thalberg and Liszt to make this point. Cvejic, 188–215.

<sup>101</sup>“ Three important episodes in [Robert] Schumann’s career during the 1830s and early 1840s reveal how the rhetoric of the sublime supported this project. First, Schumann extended the mantle of sublimity to Liszt in his reviews of the virtuoso’s 1840 Leipzig and Dresden concerts, drawing upon and contributing to Liszt’s image as the ultimate sublime virtuoso. Second, reviewers described the finale of Schumann’s *Concert sans orchestre* as a piece that conveyed overwhelming intensity through its style and structure. Third, reviewers hinted at allusions to Beethoven in the *Toccata* and *Etudes symphoniques*—particularly to the “Eroica ”Symphony, but also to Beethoven’s middle-period “heroic ”style more generally.” Stefaniak, “Serious Virtuosity,” 438.

<sup>102</sup> “...the finale’s formal structure contributed to the impression of overwhelming force.” Elaborating on this, Stefaniak writes, “when critics described Schumann’s own showpieces using the rhetoric of the sublime, they emphasized not a combination of stage presence and musical style but the formal and stylistic contexts in which these compositions presented pianistic display.” Stefaniak, “Serious Virtuosity,” 455.

in line with Cvejjic and other's understanding of virtuosity as more purely technical and instrumental), there is little difference between Liszt's use of his body and a composer's creation of a supposedly autonomous work.

The only difference is that a composer, in an act of puppeteering, uses the composition as a semantic curtain behind which they hide their agency as a practitioner. Susan Bernstein, in discussing Heine's writing, presents a similar distinction: "instead of *I*, we find a technical medium standing in the place of subject, a mechanical depersonalization of the authorial figure. This self-documentation of what is textually presented locates authenticity in the autonomy of the written text. The position of subject is handed over to a technical instrument."<sup>103</sup> Cvejjic's account still clearly shows contemporary reception's praise of the *composers themselves* (not the performer) when describing a piece's formal construction, thus the individual composer's agency as a practitioner, i.e., their virtuosity.<sup>104</sup> The two models then agree on the desired effect of the Romantic sublime. One model however (bodily virtuosity) sees this appeal made through the power dynamics between the instrument and the performer's physical agency. The other (compositional virtuosity) makes this appeal made through the work itself as manifestation of the composer's vision.

Typically, commentators use the poles of rationality and irrationality to distinguish between Classical and Romantic aesthetics. With the calculated chaos of his early pieces such as the *Toccata* or the *Concert sans orchestre*, Robert Schumann thereby

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<sup>103</sup> Bernstein, 34.

<sup>104</sup> Cvejjic, 188–215.

distinguishes his compositional intention both from contemporary performers and from the line of composition inherited from classicism which values the *rational control* of music.<sup>105</sup> Robert Schumann is similar to Thalberg in that both practitioners composed some of their pieces with the intention of situating the construction of the work itself as the central expressive agent. Thalberg did this in a classicist manner while Robert Schumann achieved it through the manipulation of the Romantic concept of the sublime. Similarly, although works of Robert Schumann and Liszt from this period *did* share a proclivity to appeal to the sublime and overwhelming effects of ecstatic chaos, Schumann increasingly centers these effects in compositional means while Liszt still situates these effects in bodily performance.

In this way, the Schumanns established a middle ground that combined the best of both worlds: their compositional technique created pieces which wielded the chaotic flaming sword that bodily virtuosity made popular while the composition itself replaced the body. Through this combination, the Schumanns consciously molded their practice to earn the favor of the budding *Werktreue* performance ideology, which favored historical continuity of craft, while also capturing the imagination of the Romantics who prioritized the ecstatic chaos of the sublime. In this way, their compositional virtuosity of the 1840s and 50s began the work of disposing of the body's primacy of expression.

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<sup>105</sup> “Thalberg’s sonata is in terms of its large-scale structuring as well as that of individual movements pretty conventional and not very ambitious... It is likely that Thalberg composed his sonata to showcase not only his virtuosity, but also... his proficiency in the culturally more prestigious art of abstract, original composition (as opposed to operatic and other kinds of transcriptions, so dear to piano virtuosi of the time) and at that in the most ‘respectable’, Beethovenian genre of piano music (as well as in the pre-eminently ‘Beethovenian’ key of C minor), thus partaking in the ‘classicizing’ strain of nineteenth-century music.” Cvejic, 200–201.

*1853–54: Clara Schumann and Brahms’s circle pick up the mantle*

Stefaniak points to 1853, the year Clara Schumann composed her Op. 20 *Variationen über ein Thema von Robert Schumann*, as the year which consecrated Clara’s belief that compositions could “simulate or reflect the persona of a conscious subject who articulates the passage of time and positions him- or herself in relation to past, present, and future.”<sup>106</sup> This represents a decisive step for the notion of Foucauldian pianism.<sup>107</sup> Robert would die within a year of the piece’s publication and in light of this, Clara represents a particular case in that her historicization of pieces is uniquely personal. Few others are situated such that their historical homages are also personal diary entries. Johannes Brahms and Josef Joachim are two of the few to have found themselves in a similar position.

In considering Brahms’s relation to the Schumanns, Robert’s February 1854 suicide attempt and its effects create a fascinating crux in the development of compositional virtuosity at the piano. After leaving home to tour with Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi, Brahms had virtually become adopted by the Schumann household, and it was only natural that Robert’s attempted suicide made a deep impression on his new young confidant. Swafford ties this tumultuous event to the early sketches of what would

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<sup>106</sup> Stefaniak, “Clara Schumann’s Interiorities,” 753.

<sup>107</sup> Stefaniak’s analysis of Clara Schumann’s self-examination, while temporally displaced, is in line with what Foucault sees as a major turning point for Western thought: “Foucault thinks that the study of human beings took a decisive turn at the end of the eighteenth century when human beings came to be interpreted as knowing subjects, and, at the same time, objects of their own knowledge.” Dreyfus, Rabinow, and Foucault, xix.

become the dark and stormy Op. 15 D minor piano concerto (published as a concerto after four years of revisions and various changes of genre).<sup>108</sup> To be sure, this does not make the concerto a candidate for programmatic music. Nevertheless, the indistinguishable nature of personal anecdote and compositional ideology in the genesis of the D minor Piano Concerto, as will be seen, pose a potential contradiction of terms when it comes to outwardly expressed goals of compositional virtuosity.

Similar to Clara's Op. 20, the genesis and reception history of Brahms's concerto point to a trait of compositional virtuosity that is unique to them. Just as Reicha and Robert pursued compositional virtuosity as a way to supersede the body (pursuing instead the work's autonomy), the compositional virtuosity exhibited in Clara Schumann's Op. 20 and Brahms's Op. 15 clearly still aligns these works with a more objectively historicized aesthetic, but they also exhibit significant personal import on the part of the composer. Both pieces deny the standard maneuvers of conventionally dazzling piano music, and as far as the difficulties of the pieces are apparent, they are not as gratuitous as the pianistic pyrotechnics seen in Mendelssohn or Liszt's piano concerti.

Brahms's Op. 15 represents a mammoth task for any pianist and yet it significantly diverges from what its genre usually offers: "[Brahms] knew what the public expected from concertos: virtuosic brilliance, dazzling cadenzas, not too many minor keys, not too long, not too tragic. To the degree that those were the rules, the D minor Concerto violated every one of them."<sup>109</sup> Not least through its use of Beethoven's C

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<sup>108</sup> Swafford, 109, 111, 113, 115.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

minor concerto as model for the *Rondo* finale, aligns itself more with the Schumannian aesthetic of sublime virtuosity rather than the brilliant passage work of Mendelssohn's concertos. Accordingly, the piece received its thankless reputation very literally at its Leipzig premier.<sup>110</sup> To be clear, the characteristics Swafford lists as typical are in line with the Parisian dilettante's model of technical virtuosity. The overwhelming fatigue and titanic scope of the concerto instead situates the work more with the Romantic aesthetic of the colossal sublime.

By denying the pianist's body as a vehicle of expression through his unidiomatic piano writing (at least as compared to earlier conventional examples in the genre), while still putting extreme demands upon the performer's technique, the works are example of compositional virtuosity. And yet, both works have an element of inextricable personal significance, a trait which undermines *Werktreue* performance ideology.<sup>111</sup> The dissonance of this apparent paradox could only have been legitimized by Clara Schumann and Brahms themselves as individuals. For instance, if any other individual composed a concerto inspired by Robert Schumann's final years, this could only be considered a historical inspiration. For Clara Schumann and Brahms, efforts towards placing themselves in historical contexts such as the death of Robert Schumann were uniquely both historically removed *and* personally proximal. Another paradox springs forward

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>111</sup> "The idealized *Werktreue* performer must achieve a kind of absence from himself or herself in order to take on the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of the composer or composition in question." Karen Leistra-Jones. "Virtue and Virtuosity: Brahms, the Concerto, and the Politics of Performance in the Late-Nineteenth-Century Austro-German Culture," Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 2011), 126.

regarding the *D minor concerto* in that “given its difficulty and general indifference to practicality and popularity, the music ensured that for a long time, few soloists other than Brahms and Clara would be willing to take it on.”<sup>112</sup> If body-oriented virtuosity was dismissed as calling too much attention to the performer as an individual, this particular instance of compositional virtuosity unintentionally rendered the same effect in that it was effectively owned by the work’s originators.

These sorts of factors lead Clara Schumann to mobilize her unique personal relation to the historicized narrative of her life so that she “became categorically confident in the accuracy of her interpretations, and she instilled in her students the certainty that they were pursuing a truth with long roots in an absolute and indisputable tradition.”<sup>113</sup> This mode of deriving pedagogical authority is still employed today through the practice of tracing one’s pedagogical lineage back to some nineteenth-century luminary or another. This type of contextualization pushes the view that a performer should practice self-effacement or self-denial in deference to this hermeneutic lineage.<sup>114</sup>

The distinction I would like to draw is that for Clara herself, the now widely adopted principle of self-effacement in favor of tradition or history could never fully be accomplished. Because of her ties to Robert Schumann and the polemic *ad hominem* reception practices pre-1850, any act of self-effacement is still necessarily and

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<sup>112</sup> Swafford, 170.

<sup>113</sup> Pedroza, 315.

<sup>114</sup> Shin Hwang, "Reconstructing Clara Schumann's Pedagogy: Illumination through Understanding," DMA diss. (Cornell University, 2020), 20–26.

inextricably linked to Clara's individual agency. Clara's personal relationship to what would eventually become part of the canon fundamentally prohibits her from viewing these slices of history in the objective ways that she preached. Despite advocating for historical deference, Clara herself, as one of the progenitors of compositional virtuosity as anti-body, could never fully separate her personal agenda from her practice. Instead, her students and followers were the only ones capable of sincerely conceiving of history as scrubbed from their personal involvement. Like a fork junction on railroad tracks, the initial divergence is still tied to the main track; only beyond it does the legacy come into its own.

This hermeneutic legacy is what Karen Leistra-Jones calls "staging authenticity," and she writes that an ideal performer of the *Werktreue* tradition is "one who successfully negates their own subjecthood."<sup>115</sup> This is of course diametrically opposed to the Liszt of the 1830s–40s who embraced his "subjecthood" so much that even his pianistic skills themselves were in service of his "subjecthood." Leistra-Jones compellingly argues that in actual practice, the self-effacement preached by Clara Schumann and Brahms's circle was a myth; underneath it all, the mobilization of the individual agency of the performer was still at the core of the practice.<sup>116</sup> Within the context of this dissertation, *Werktreue* performance ideology works hand-in-hand with the contemporaneously developing body

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<sup>115</sup> Leistra-Jones, 125–126.

<sup>116</sup> "Far from demanding the absence of the performer as subject, the emphasis on authenticity seemed almost preoccupied with the performer as a genuine subject who is fully present, not only with what he or she was actually feeling, thinking, and experiencing during a performance of music, but also with *who* this subject on the concert stage was." Leistra-Jones, 126.

of works known as the canon and it will be seen that neither the performance ideology or the continuity of the canon are as *sui generis* and they would have one believe.

The self-effacement recommended by *Werktreue* authenticity deceives on two levels. Firstly, the sheer fact that Clara Schumann's effacement through the historical contextualization of compositional virtuosity also involved aligning herself with some of her most intimate peers such as the Mendelssohns, Robert Schumann, and Brahms renders her incapable of living up to the self-effacing mythos of *Werktreue* ideology. Secondly, as Leistra-Jones describes, authenticity very much involves the centering of an individual's agency: authenticity is better thought of as a "performative category - that is, as an identity continually constructed through the repetition of culturally encoded performative acts."<sup>117</sup> Clara Schumann's moniker of "priestess" still rings true, though not necessarily for the sanctity of her vision but for her relentlessly consistent staging of ritual ("culturally encoded performative acts").

What is remarkable is that despite the evidence that the likes of Clara Schumann, Brahms, and Josef Joachim were relentless in centering their own agency (albeit duplicitously), their musical descendants very much picked up the mantle of self-effacement as the legitimate first step of performance practice. I do not mean to say there was malice or cynicism in their deception but they nonetheless deliberately intended for their own agency to pass as something that was outside of themselves. Far from the outward flamboyance of the first half of the nineteenth century, the body was now

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<sup>117</sup> Leistra-Jones, "Staging Authenticity," 399.

subsumed in the wider project of staging the mind as vehicle for authenticity.<sup>118</sup> These practices fundamentally shaped twentieth-century modernist performance practice.

What do we make then of today's practice which in many ways still invokes the ideology of those (Clara Schumann, Brahms, Joachim, and others) who were fundamentally indisposed to live it out themselves? Well, as they say in economics, it is not the seller who determines the value but the consumer. In other words, this widespread acceptance of the myth of self-effacement in performance could not happen solely due to the initiative of the several prominent musicians who promoted it; it needed to be taken up by their followers after them. Chapter 3 will discuss how and why such an ideology would be attractive to practitioners of the early twentieth century, specifically discussing how this type of musical ideology lends itself well to the development of power mechanisms.

### *Positivism and the disembodiment of musical savoir<sup>119</sup>*

Carl Dalhaus states that "it would be absurd to draw a direct analogy between the musical modernism of the 1890s...and the political and philosophical trends of the

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<sup>118</sup> For a thorough account of Clara Schumann's manipulation of her body in visual iconography towards the staging of the mind's supremacy, see April Prince. "(Re)Considering the Priestess" 107–40.

<sup>119</sup> Before continuing on this now thoroughly German-oriented path, it is worth noting that, in switching my focus from France to Germany, I do not intend to make claims of an overarching continuity between the countries. Rather, I raise examples from these two countries/cultures to show some of the disparate origins of certain aspects of today's classical music culture.

time...”<sup>120</sup> Dalhaus writes that the divide he sees between music and culture was due to “the desire of classes made prosperous by the political and social circumstances of the age to have their own form of the bourgeois musical culture that was shaped by romantic tradition.”<sup>121</sup> Music for Dalhaus stands as the ultimate romantic art, and since the Romantic era outside of music was dwindling to its close, the persistence of the Romantic aesthetic “enabled [music] to fulfill a spiritual, cultural, and ideological function of a magnitude which can hardly be exaggerated: it stood for an alternative world.”<sup>122</sup> The notion of music serving spiritual, cultural, and ideological functions resonates with the Foucauldian notion of pianism described earlier; all these elements are enmeshed and converse with each other in the formation of a *savoir*. Although he does not specify, Dalhaus seems to be especially referring to the composition of music and, to a limited extent, some of its sociological undercurrents. He does *not* seem to be referring to performance practice or the reception of music. As previously discussed, the developments of compositional virtuosity and *Werktreue* ideology show a significant departure from certain factions of the early nineteenth-century Romantic aesthetic. Dalhaus’s preoccupation with composition as the musical idiom worth commenting on only reaffirms the success that the program of compositional virtuosity achieved. Nonetheless, this same preoccupation blinds him to the aspects of musical practice that

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<sup>120</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*. trans. Mary Whittall, California Studies in 19th Century Music; 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980),18.

<sup>121</sup> Dalhaus, 12.

<sup>122</sup> Dalhaus, 5.

very much *are* a direct reflection of their time.

After all, characters such as Hanslick were very much subjecting music to the fancies of the time.<sup>123</sup> The end of the nineteenth century also saw the collective musicological efforts such as Breitkopf & Härtel's complete editions of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, and Mozart. Guido Adler, taking a note from Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful*, called "to his readers to follow the example of the natural sciences" and "empirical and inductive modes of inquiry."<sup>124</sup> Hanslick's opposition to what Karnes describes as "metaphysical speculation" was the continuation of a reception history that was founded in the logic of compositional virtuosity. Just as Thalberg's sonata was admired for its clarity of form, Hanslick praised that which could be discerned through "empirical modes of inquiry." Needless to say, Hanslick was an outspoken critic of Liszt. The embodiment of *Werktreue* ideology in the first *Gesamtausgaben*, the maturity of the performance practice of self-effacement, and "the displacement of idealist traditions of philosophical inquiry from the center of the university curricula by the physical and biological sciences" all point to the fact that certain aspects of the practice of loving music very much were "of their time."<sup>125</sup>

How then can one reconcile Dalhaus's view that music in the back half of the

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<sup>123</sup> "Admonishing his readers to set aside their traditional concerns with speculative metaphysics and Romantic poetics, Hanslick challenged them to embrace instead the spirit of a dawning, scientific age." Kevin Karnes, "Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth Century Vienna" (Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: September, 2008), 3.

<sup>124</sup> Karnes, 8

<sup>125</sup> Karnes, 3.

nineteenth century was somehow separate from its own time with the evidence that the practice of performing and publishing music was in many ways very much in line with its time? William Weber offers a compromise: “the debate [over the language by which to define classics] was closed by the rapid spread of the international Austro-German repertory across Europe, and by the successful manipulation of romantic ideas to define its authority.”<sup>126</sup> This potent mix of nationalism and mobilization of aesthetic principles towards the power dynamics of cultural prestige are what we now refer to as canon formation. The brick and mortar of the “alternative world” that Dalhaus describes was being laid by Hanslick, Adler, and the other positivist of-their-time thinkers. In other words, this period created the contextual conditions for musical thinkers to conceive of music as something a-contextual. This mirrors the duplicity of *Werktreue* ideology’s staging of authenticity in that the positivist leanings of the late nineteenth-century era were precisely the forces that created the canon as something outside of the era itself.

Dalhaus’s description of music as an “alternative world,” Hanslick and Adler’s positivist inclinations, Heinrich Schenker beginning to formulate his body of work which would lead to the *Ursatz*, and the Brahms circles’ staged authenticity all point to a significant paradigm shift away from the early nineteenth-century expressive musical practices. These examples point to the literal disembodiment of musical *savoir* which results in music being a subject which is thought and apprehended rather than learned and externally expressed. Each of these forces result in a practice of loving music (a practice that encompasses musicological, interpretive, auditive, and compositional roles) that has

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<sup>126</sup> Weber, xix.

lost its corporeal grounding. The agenda of compositional virtuosity set by early nineteenth-century musicians had transcended itself.<sup>127</sup>

By Brahms's death in 1897, much of the late nineteenth-century proto-Modernist performance practice world had dispensed with the corporeal body of the performer, replaced it with a non-corporeal body of works, and taken the ideological machinations of compositional virtuosity far beyond their initial contexts. In referencing the work of various scholars as well as reconsidering certain biographical details, this chapter has set out to show that in each moment of this paradigm's development, the actors who pushed for the disembodiment of musical *savoir* were in fact actively betraying their own sermon, never fully abandoning their own agency. The twenty-first century is well versed in deflating the feigned objectivity of modernist thought, yet the practice of loving western art music is in many ways still ensnared by its remnants. This will be the subject of the following chapter. Specifically, it will attempt to answer the question of how an individual can meaningfully reclaim their agency within the Panopticon-esque model of *savoir-pouvoir* that continues to prevail within the practice of western art music.

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<sup>127</sup> As an aside: this trajectory is not so different from the trajectory found in the current cultural phenomenon of AI narratives which see the benefits of technology outgrowing their original paradigm and taking over their creators. For instance, in a less violent example, the AI in the film 2013 Spike Jonze film *Her* builds enough upon its own knowledge so that it eventually transcends the need for human maintenance, communicating only with itself. Compositional virtuosity, which was initially still tied to the human body in its early iterations, kept improving on its own mission so that eventually, it could be sustained without the tethers of a physical performer. If we endeavor to create something autonomous (whether a piece of music, a canon, or a robot), we should not be surprised if that same creation eventually overcomes and dispenses with the creators it was meant to serve.

**III*****The musical canon as Foucauldian modern power***

The first chapter of this dissertation described the Parisian musical scene in the first half of the nineteenth century in which virtuosos were poised to grab the limelight. They benefitted from the fact that many concerts at the time were often a potpourri of various genres and instrumentations; the appearance of a single firebrand performer like Liszt or Thalberg could, and often did, steal the show. Additionally, the different aesthetic and social factions among critics, patrons, and audiences made effective use of individual virtuosos as synecdoches for their polemic agendas. Aristocrats, for example, tended to rally behind Thalberg as the onstage embodiment of their values while Romantics tended to identify with Liszt as their torchbearer at the piano. By the middle of the century, the culture within this petri dish of performers, critics, composers, and audiences had fomented an appetite for musical ideologies that extended beyond the agency and means of individual performers on stage; the works themselves began to supersede the body of the performer.

The second chapter describes how this move can be understood as compositional virtuosity's rise to prominence. Steeping itself in the Romantic aesthetics of the sublime, this musical paradigm originated as a radical opposition to the perceived frivolous and mechanically athletic qualities of the typical touring virtuoso. As the virtuosos of the first half of the century fell from their privileged position, the ideology of compositional

virtuosity went beyond compositional practice and extended its principles to performance practice as well. The end of the nineteenth century consecrated the staging of authenticity, self-effacement, and interiority as leading performance practices. By the end of the century, compositional virtuosity and its offspring in performance practice ultimately consummated their victory over their early nineteenth-century rivals by sublimating the agency of the performing body in favor an ever-solidifying body of works that scholars would first enshrine, and later deride as the canon.<sup>128</sup>

By examining the work of sociologically oriented commentators, the present chapter will suggest how compositional virtuosity's deployment of the canon and erasure of the performing body echoes Foucault's idea that the development of certain discourses can ultimately be understood as means to power. As with other aspects of Foucault's thought, he is more concerned with how power *works* rather than what it *is*.<sup>129</sup> By examining certain trends in twentieth-century criticism, it will be shown how effective the canon can be as a discourse which allows for the mobilization of power over practitioners of music.

The present inquiry is not especially concerned with the specific events of these developments as "turning points" in the development of western thought. Rather, continuing the methodology of the previous chapters, it wishes to identify the factors that

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<sup>128</sup> This view provides an expanded view of Weber's "performing canon" as it includes not only repertoire but performance practices themselves in the process of canon formation. William Weber. "The History of Musical Canons," *Rethinking Music*, eds. Mark Everist and Nicholas Cook (Oxford University Press, 1999), 188.

<sup>129</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 130.

enabled this discourse to be adopted so seamlessly into the now global and institutional paradigms of the composition, performance, and appreciation of classical music. If classical music is to move away from this paradigm, as so many contemporary voices wish to do, it cannot be through the whitewashing of the figures and ideologies that created the panopticon-like nature of classical music today. Instead, by continuing the second chapter's argument that the dynamics which lead a practitioner to action remain relatively constant across eras, a viable alternative must be presented that fully acknowledges the efficacy of canonical ideology's machinations or else there will be insufficient motivation for practitioners to abandon such a power-oriented paradigm. Put in another way, there are enough people who directly benefit from the current structures of power (as evidenced by the simple fact of its current prominence) that it will require a thorough deconstruction of its operative forces if these people are to be compelled to abandon those structures.

### *The canon, the Panopticon, and power in classical music*

The Boston Museum of Fine Arts's Contemporary Art collection houses Josiah McElheny's *Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century Modernism* (2007). When engaging with McElheny's sculpture, one peers through a two-way mirror into a box that infinitely reflects the glass decanters, vases, and bottles it contains. This work can be seen as a commentary on capitalist consumerism and production but McElheny also adds that "the act of looking at a reflective object could be connected to the mental act of reflecting on

an idea.”<sup>130</sup> McElhney’s sculpture replicates in physical form the ideological maneuvers that create something like the canon of western classical music. Canons first begin to form when an artifact (in this case a physical object, a composition, or even an idea) is given value. That value is subsequently legitimized by its replication through certain practices and new creations as well as the identification of other artifacts which are said to share in that value.<sup>131</sup> For instance, Beethoven is not just as a man who happened to live a generation after Haydn and Mozart; he is seen as a man who took what was valuable in the work of Haydn and Mozart and developed it further. Beethoven’s own value was then legitimized by subsequent generations’ replications of *his* perceived value.<sup>132</sup>

This cycle continued to feed on itself throughout the nineteenth century. Through these cycles of repetition-as-value-giving, the narrative of western musical value reached diamond-like solidification in the mid-twentieth century. At that moment, the self-

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<sup>130</sup> Museum of Fine Arts Boston and Josiah McElhney. “Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century Modernism,” Museum of Fine Arts Boston, February 22, 2021, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/503178>

<sup>131</sup> Barbara Herrnstein Smith relates a similar process in the formation the English literary canon: “...the value of a literary work is continuously produced and reproduced by the very acts of implicit and explicit evaluation that are frequently invoked as “reflecting” its value and therefore as being evidence of it.” Barbara H. Smith, “Contingencies of Value,” in *Canons*, ed. Robert v. Hallberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 35.

<sup>132</sup> For Hennion, the past does provide inspiration so much as it provides the actual means for production: “Bach’s “early adopters” in France (Boëly, Fétis, Chopin, Alkan, Gounod, Franck, Liszt, Saint-Saëns) copied, paraphrased, transcribed - not because they were unfaithful [to Bach], but because Bach was a means for making music, not a composer of the past.” Antoine Hennion, “Music and Mediation, Toward a New Sociology of Music,” in *The Cultural Study of Music, A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton, 2, (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 255.

reflexive practices involved in canon formation not only continued to perpetuate the canon's own legitimacy, it became concrete and observable enough so that the canon itself became an object of study from the outside. Just like McElhney's sculpture in the MFA, the musical canon is a reflexive and self-contained construct that generates both its meaning and its content through its own replication. Just as with the sculpture, the canon has acquired a self-sufficient autonomy that it is able to be contemplated from outside itself, as evidenced by the growing literature which studies canon. This self-sufficiency distinguishes itself from the compositional virtuosity practiced by musicians like the Schumanns in the mid-nineteenth century. For the Schumanns, this "body of works" gained legitimacy by musicians' practices themselves. These days, it is this lineage of works which gives value to the performer; the relationship has been flipped. As will be seen further on, the canon, as differentiated from compositional virtuosity, is an ideology which sustains not only artistic practices but administrative and institutional practices. The critical literature on the canon has rightly pointed out that the canon's contents are related to other forms of power such as various forms of racism and gender roles.<sup>133</sup>

In order for a musical canon to be formed, musical practitioners first needed to isolate which of music's constitutive elements would be given value and replicated. This of course was the central issue that fueled the Parisian polemics of the early nineteenth century. To be sure, critics, audiences, composers, and performers did not deliberately

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<sup>133</sup> For a current example of insights on race in classical music, see Philip Ewell. "Music Theory's White Racial Frame." February 22, 2021. <https://musictheoryswhiteracialframe.wordpress.com/>

For a recent reconsideration of Clara Schumann's agency as a woman, see April Prince. "(Re)Considering the Priestess."

conspire together to create the canon as such. And yet, the previous chapters have shown that these groups were nonetheless extremely preoccupied with the question of where to locate value in the practice of music. They often framed the question in terms of “where is value located?” as if value was already there simply waiting to be found, but sociologists and phenomenologists have repeatedly shown that value is *given* and *allocated* through cultural practices; it is not an inherent property of objects. Meaning was *manufactured* through the replicable practices of compositional virtuosity and the staging of authenticity in performance. In other words, in the success of compositional virtuosity, meaning was allocated to the *non-embodied* aspects of musical performance. To be clear, the distinction here has nothing to do with onstage theatrics. The body here is seen as the central and immutable symbol for the individual identity. Practices that decenter the body therefore decenter the agency of the individual.

As Hennion writes, “music is everything on which it relies.”<sup>134</sup> This succinctly reframes the nineteenth century’s socio-aesthetic battles that were described in the previous two chapters. Rather than being clashes over which music was valuable or not valuable, these arguments were in fact veiled arguments over what was required in the production of valuable music (socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and economically). These arguments were centered on the product (music) but implications of these arguments actually affected the means of production; on the surface they were attacking the effect/result while covertly addressing its underlying causes. As explained in chapter one, a Romantic’s attack on Thalberg was not simply based in his piano

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<sup>134</sup> Hennion, “Music and Mediation,” 6.

playing, it was a rejection of the aristocratic milieu and all that came with it, including its obsession with Italian opera at the time.

Looking beyond this period, these practices were narrowed by the standardization of concert life (as explained by Weber in *Music and the Middle Class*) and histories were written so that future generations knew what they were meant to emulate. Although the second chapter situates the rise to power of these practices in the second half of the nineteenth century, the codification of musical value was already well underway in 1852, the year in which Franz Brendel published his history of European music which “aspired to say everything that was important, and to say it in a way that put all facts into an overriding system that gave them meaning.”<sup>135</sup> Through these mechanisms, canon formation was abetted on the practical front by performers, composers, and audiences as well as on the critical front by publications which provided similar implications to Brendel’s 1852 book. As the nineteenth century developed and the multifarious polemics

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<sup>135</sup> A brief tangent: Taruskin’s concept of the poietic fallacy and his subsequent critiques of Schoenberg’s expressive means are dependent upon the success of compositional virtuosity at the end of the nineteenth century. In what he calls the “poetic fallacy,” if a composer can explain their process/compositional plan, the work earns its legitimacy. Taruskin is frustrated that his value-giving system ignores the audience’s agency. He raises many relevant issues although his view that the composer became the “protagonist of the audience mocking poietic-fallacy” gives a needlessly emotional (and ultimately reductive) account of the power systems involved which go well beyond the composer/audience relationship. For instance, even in a sympathetic reading of Taruskin’s statement, he ignores the position of listeners who presumably are also mocking “the audience” should they find themselves to be enjoying a performance of *Pierrot Lunaire*. For all Taruskin’s insights, reducing this topic to composer ‘x’ vs. the world misconstrues how compositional virtuosity ultimately resulted in the formation of far more complex systems of power. Simply, my main disagreement with Taruskin is that he places too much culpability on musical actors themselves as well as aesthetic trends. This dissertation holds the view that the causes for the changes Taruskin observes are more institutionally administered rather than personally motivated. Richard Taruskin, “The Poietic Fallacy,” *The Musical Times* 145, no. 1886 (2004): 18, 23.

from chapter one began to subside, musical practitioners were more and more clearly aware of which elements of musical practice they were meant to replicate, consciously or subconsciously, towards the creation of historically significant meaning.

In the same way that a satellite jettisons its rockets once it is ready to enter the earth's orbit, the ideologies of compositional virtuosity and the staging of authenticity could operate fully autonomously once their progenitors passed away. The replicability of their practices beyond their originators' own lifetimes could only have been accomplished through their negation of the performing body as a vehicle for musical value.<sup>136</sup> Once they graduated beyond being a set of practices opposed to the dilettantry of the 1830s–50s, the operative autonomy of the ideologies espoused by the countless figures such as Brahms, Brendel, and the Schumanns eventually became manifest by the body of works we now call the canon. With the passing of this initial generation, the result was a decentralized power that could be wielded by anyone who, through the repetition of certain practices (not only repertoire choice), aligned themselves with the canon. Performers practice interiority and the staging of authenticity while composers practice compositional virtuosity.

In performance practice, the staying power of “interiority” in the twentieth century was perhaps most clearly evidenced by the videos created by Herbert von Karajan in which his interiority reaches such heights that he doesn't ever make eye-

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<sup>136</sup> The end of chapter one discusses one of the central problems in studying Liszt: how can we emulate a body-centric practice such as the one founded by Liszt if we find ourselves studying it almost two hundred years after Liszt's death? Non-body models solve this problem by centering their practice on the non-embodied elements of musical practice.

contact with his orchestra. Compositional virtuosity and the autonomy of a work reached their most explicit forms in total serialism. Their descendants can also be seen, however, in entirely different strains of composition such as certain graphic notations and other types of notation which certainly place the agency of the composer at the fore of the work's messages, even if this means re-calibrating the composer-performer relationship. It should be said, however, that not all examples of compositional virtuosity and performative interiority necessarily result in alignment with the western musical canon. If I sit still at the piano while performing, I do not condemn myself to be inextricably linked to Joachim's legacy. Needless to say, western culture does not own interiority or creative complexity. It *does* remain the case however that the western musical canon was built upon the repetition of compositional virtuosity as well as the staging of authenticity as increasingly valuable practices. Now that these musical practices have been established as decentralized and reflexive in how they build their value, it remains to be seen how they can be deployed as means to power.

Returning to Hennion's view that "music is everything upon which it relies," one can replace the card of "music" with that of "power" and the conceptual house of cards barely wobbles. Similarly, when DeNora elaborates on musical value, she writes that "categories of perception are located in particular times and places; what is set aside as valuable and, indeed, the structure of value and how it is allocated will also vary."<sup>137</sup> One might sense how the "structure of value" that she describes could be related to what

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<sup>137</sup> Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803* (Berkeley: U of California, 1995), 7.

Foucault might call an apparatus of power. Given these two quotes from Hennion and DeNora, one begins to see that the nature of certain musical practices can be intimately related to the ways in which power operates. This is not to say that music *is* power, but rather that power and western classical music operate through similar avenues of interaction between an individual and the world in which they find themselves. As can be surmised, this dissertation is dedicated to how music has been and continues to be mobilized as a sort of power, but hope must be preserved that they are not in fact one and the same thing. In order to visualize how the musical canon functions as a system of power, I will turn to the late eighteenth century and one of Foucault's favored examples in his archaeology of power.

Originally conceived by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century, the Panopticon is a building designed for the efficient internment and study of individuals in schools, asylums, prisons, or hospitals, etc. It is a circular structure in which there are rooms that house individuals at the exterior edges of the building and there is a central column from which a single guard or observer can monitor each individual. The Panopticon is built so that the individuals in the rooms are unable to see whether or not they are actively being observed by the guard. In this way, they can only assume that they are constantly being observed: "the architectural perfection is such that even if there is no guardian present the apparatus of power is still operative. This new power is disciplinary, continuous, and anonymous."<sup>138</sup>

I would argue that during the mid-nineteenth century's still molten stages of

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<sup>138</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 189.

canon formation, the Panopticon's guards were still visible in Josef Joachim's and Clara Schumann's personifications of the musical savoir they founded (to be fair to these two, there were many others as well). After the first generation of compositional virtuosos and stagers-of-authenticity passed however, the system of enforcement resembled the Panopticon more directly as there was no clear embodiment of these musical practices in specific individual.

The decentralization of the value-giving sources in musical practices is one of the hallmark traits of the western musical canon. The legitimacy of these decentralized practices as means to power is evidenced by such disparate examples as Wagner's "Beethoven" (1870) and Schoenberg's "Brahms the Progressive" (1947). One could say that Beethoven provides a "central" source of value, but, as has been said earlier, Beethoven's value derives from his elaborations on Mozart and Haydn. So on and so forth. Schoenberg and Wagner, two of western music's most radical individuals, show that "even the opponent of a political regime speaks the same discourse regarding the law as the regime itself. During the Classical age, criticism of the French monarchy was cast as an attack on the monarchy's abuse of the law," not on the monarch as such.<sup>139</sup> Even though Wagner and Schoenberg are in most ways highly distinct from each other, in defending their own agendas, they make parallel appeals to discourses of value and thereby power. Crucially, their essays do not directly state their *own* legitimacy as composers; each invokes a previous and agreed upon value and then claims themselves as its disciple.

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<sup>139</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 131.

On one hand, the moves made by Schoenberg and Wagner are canny examples of self-legitimization by two enterprising creators. Seen from another angle, one can say that not even Schoenberg and Wagner, who are highly regarded for their “individual” contributions to music, are exempt from needing to appeal to the decentralized origins of the canon’s power. Even these two distinguished creators could not rely on their work alone to give credence to their worth: “Anyone could operate [the Panopticon’s power] as long as he were in the correct position and anyone could be subjected to its mechanisms... Those who occupy the central position in the Panopticon are themselves thoroughly enmeshed in a localization and ordering of their behavior.”<sup>140</sup> In this way, the canon not only claims dominion over present and past musical practices, it also claims future works and practices that will necessarily come to be created within or against its image. Given the similarity between certain musical practices and the functioning of power systems, there are many obstacles that prevent individuals from claiming ownership of their own agency as practitioners. The epilogue will discuss the subject of how the canon affects an individual practitioner’s relation to their own agency as such. For the moment however, it is first necessary to continue exploring just how deeply the Panopticon-like power of the canon is entrenched in the institutional makeup of the past seventy years of western classical music.

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<sup>140</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 189.

*The canon and Foucauldian modern power*

For Foucault, “modern power is tolerable on the condition that it mask itself ... by providing a discourse, seemingly opposed to it but really a part of a larger deployment of modern power.”<sup>141</sup> As an example of non-masked power, Foucault, among other examples, cites the horrifically gruesome execution of Robert-François Damien, who was tortured to death in 1757 for attempted regicide.<sup>142</sup> Needless to say this is very overt example, but it was the negative backlash to these sorts of vivid demonstrations that pressured systems of power to disguise their control over people. The repressive hypothesis is one such discourse that masks and simultaneously augments modern power. The repressive hypothesis maintains that throughout the European history has moved from a position of openness about the human body to a position of repression and hypocrisy. As a system which sees power as fundamentally repressive, it holds that “truth is intrinsically opposed to power and therefore inevitably plays a liberating role.”<sup>143</sup> Alongside governmental bodies, the repressive hypothesis is espoused by “the universal intellectual who speaks for humanity, [and] solemnly appeals to the future which, he tells us, will surely be better.”<sup>144</sup> This view sees power as the repression of truth and the pursuit of truth as an overcoming of power. In their creation of the canon, the previously

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<sup>141</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 130.

<sup>142</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5.

<sup>143</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 127.

<sup>144</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 130.

mentioned compositional and performance practices established themselves as bearing a sort of “truth” that can be espoused by not by the “universal intellectual” but the musical practitioner who participates in these practices (the brilliant Andras Schiff, for example).

For Foucault however, power and truth are intimately related, as he sees truth not as absolute but as paradigmatic in the same way the DeNora sees Beethoven’s genius as conditionally created, not *sui generis*. In Foucault’s analysis, power develops and deploys various brands of truth, which create mechanisms of repression, submission, and discipline. He sees the repressive hypothesis as a discourse that was developed to help mask the inextricable connection between power and the manipulation of truth. As a power grab, it covers its tracks.

In musical practice, the ideologies of *Werktreue*, the autonomous work, and the staging of self-effacement all function similarly to the repressive hypothesis. They combine to create a system that sees the work’s objective autonomy as the antidote to an individual’s subjectivity. In this model of performance practice, mere interpreters can only relate from a distance to the perceived essence of a work. Chapter two, using the work of Mary Hunter and Karen Leistra-Jones, highlights the duplicitous nature of these practices and the fact that any appeals to a work’s autonomy are not legitimized by the work itself, but the development of certain outside musical practices such a thoughtfully closing one’s eyes, wearing dark colored conservative clothes, and limiting bodily movement.<sup>145</sup> To be sure, I am not recommending that performers immediately adopt

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<sup>145</sup> Mary Hunter, ““To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer”: The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 2 (2005):

opposite practices. I wish to show that rather than create a neutral relationship between the performer and the work, our concert practices establish the work as dominant and performer as subordinate. These discourses hold that the work itself communicates the musical message while the performer abdicates ownership of the message through the self-effacement of the practice of staging authenticity. Expressed in this way, the musical canon and its ensuing performance practices now bear a striking resemblance to the operational apparatuses involved in Foucault's concept of modern power. Since it is capable of functioning in a similar manner, it follows then that the institutions that were created to control musical production and the education of musical practitioners should bear some resemblance to Foucault's analysis of institutions that oversee the deployment of other types of modern power.

***Musical institutions and the deployment of modern power***

Professor of literature Robert von Hallberg writes that “the formation of canons is a measure of the strength of institutions devoted to the study of art.”<sup>146</sup> As this excerpt comes from his introduction to a series of essays on canons, he does not elaborate in detail on what “strength” might mean, but it is nonetheless clear that for Hallberg, there is a direct relationship between the functioning of an institution and the legitimacy of a

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357–98. and Karen Leistra-Jones. "Staging Authenticity," 397–436.

<sup>146</sup> Robert von Hallberg. "Introduction." In *Canons*, edited by Robert Von Hallberg. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). 1.

canon. Since the musical canon is seen in these pages as an ideology that enables the deployment of modern power systems, certain types of institution can be understood as the administrative apparatuses of that power. There are many institutions that regulate the production of music from the recording industry, part- or full-time opera companies and orchestras, festivals, and various types of venues. All of these are generally public-facing institutions and since this dissertation is primarily concerned with the practitioner's own orientation to their craft as well as their fellow practitioners, this section will focus on the institutions which instead organize musicians amongst themselves such as universities and conservatories as well as the structure of modern competitions.

In order to shed light on the fundamental nature of the modern music school or competition, I will begin by citing at length three excerpts from Dreyfus and Rabinow's distilling of Foucault:

1. "Traditionally in Western culture, political thinking was concerned with the just and good life....Political thinking was that art which, in an imperfect world, led men toward the good life, an art which imitated God's government of nature."
2. "A second type of political rationality emerged during the Renaissance and is usually associated with the name Machiavelli. The prince was given counsel on how best to hold onto his state...Practical, technical knowledge was raised above metaphysical considerations, and strategic considerations became paramount."
3. "A third development in political thought, usually referred to as the theory of *raison d'état*, differentiated itself from the other two...The tacticians of the *raison d'état* were concerned with the state as an end in itself; the state freed from a larger ethical order *and* from the fate of particular princes. Their aim, Foucault argues, was the most radical and modern of all. For them, political rationality no longer sought to achieve the good life nor merely aid the prince, but to increase the scope and power for its own sake by

bringing the bodies of the state's subjects under tighter discipline."<sup>147</sup>

The Parisian climate explored in Chapter one in many ways resembles Foucault's second type of political rationality. The tactics used by Liszt to establish and hold on to his title as one of the most significant pianists of Europe, or those through which Heine, Thalberg, Liszt, Robert Schumann, and other manipulated musical works and the authorial voice to develop and maintain the practitioner's prestige mirror the type of political thought Foucault attributed to Machiavelli.

Chapter two describes how several of these strategic techniques (compositional virtuosity, etc.) eventually won out over their rivals by sublimating the performing body as the seat of musical expression. As has been described, these techniques ultimately developed into decentralized systems of modern power which regulate the allocation of value, or non-value, onto individual practitioners. As Adorno writes, "the liquidation of the individual is the real signature of the new musical situation."<sup>148</sup> In this system, the practitioner (composer or performer) is no longer able to establish their value on their own terms or through the denigration of a rival, as Liszt and the Schumanns had done. Schoenberg and Wagner, rather than rely on their own work as potentially valuable, felt pressured to appeal to Brahms and Beethoven respectively. In this way, the layout of the musical canon as modern power most closely resembles Foucault's third system of political rationality: the *raison d'état*. Since the operative forces and dynamics of modern

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<sup>147</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 136–137.

<sup>148</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish Character in Music," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 293.

power were in flux at the turn of the twentieth century in classical music, new apparatuses were required to administrate its deployment and continue to augment its power.

The Peabody Conservatory (1857), the New England Conservatory (1867), and the Oberlin Conservatory (1865) are some of the earliest still operational musical institutions in America. As of 2015, there are 1,795 higher-education institutions with music-degree-granting programs in the country.<sup>149</sup> It is futile to determine whether more or less music is being made per-capita over the last two centuries (whatever that might mean), but it is at least clear that since the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new type of administrative vehicle has been introduced that is now a central force in regulating the practices involved in loving music. Of course, endlessly rising cost of tuition, due in part to bloated administrative ranks and salaries, is perhaps the most straightforward example which shows that higher education is an end in itself rather than a direct benefit to students. This exorbitant and continuous increase is just as outrageous as it is common knowledge; its unrelenting development is testament to the ideological “strength” of institutions that Hallberg references. There is no room in the current inquiry for a thorough review of the history of institutionalized music education in America. There are, however, certain details that can be put forward as evidence that higher-level music education is a program that directs itself towards reaffirming institutional legitimacy rather than the virtue of the student or professor.

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<sup>149</sup> College Music Society, “Facts and Figures Concerning Music and Higher Education in the United States,” Facts and Figures, February 23, 2021. <https://www.music.org/pdf/mihe/facts.pdf>

As previously mentioned, in order for modern power to be effective and lubricate the ease of its acceptance, it must mask itself. Higher education achieved this in part through the increasing codification of different degrees and the subsequent reinforcement of those degrees' value. In 1953, the Eastman School of Music was the first American conservatory to offer the degree of DMA.<sup>150</sup> The DMA is a degree that is typically pursued after the completion of an MM degree. This degree, naturally, is typically completed after a BM degree. Future DMA candidates will continue to be hired by panels that consist of increasing numbers of DMA holders as the institutional program completes itself. The DMA and its siblings, now widely offered in conservatories and universities, are further examples of mechanisms through which an institution reflexively validates itself. Through the dual process of offering the DMA and subsequently making the same degree a requirement for job applicants to faculty positions, "the individual [is] of interest exactly insofar as he could contribute to the strength of the state."<sup>151</sup>

Outside of degrees themselves, universities and conservatories cite their success by how many of their graduates have attained positions in respected institutions or received certain institutional prizes (prestigious orchestras and competitions, for instance). This sort of information is usually listed in the "about" or "by the numbers"

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<sup>150</sup> Here, I do not wish to lump all the blame on Eastman. In the post-war period, the establishment of various certifications served to help musicians secure employment as well as establish a meritocracy that could begin to offer more equal access. I raise this date only to situate it historically as a waypoint in the further institutional administration of musical practices. Howard Taubman. "A Matter of Degree." *New York Times*. October 25, 1953. <https://www.nytimes.com/1953/10/25/archives/a-matter-of-degree-eastman-school-sets-up-doctorate-for-musicians.html> (February 24, 2021)

<sup>151</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, Foucault, 139.

pages of their websites.<sup>152</sup> In this way, the school devotes itself directly towards the acknowledgment of other institutions and only indirectly to music or the students themselves. Students are encouraged to apply to the prestigious summer festivals or competitions whose posters line the building's hallways as they are pushed towards other sources of institutional recognition. This continually replicated process reinforces the legitimacy of the administrative bodies rather than directly offering the student value on their own terms. On the surface, the university that advertises festivals and competitions indirectly offers the potentially promise of musical success. In direct effect, it only provides further institutional affiliation at an astronomical financial cost to the student. It follows that the school then accepts students that it believes will be more likely to be recognized by other institutional bodies where the student is accepted by audition or awarded a prize. Although competitions, festivals, and orchestras as institutions are more directly related to the practice of performing music, only a brief scratch on the surface reveals the deployment of ideology that is ultimately mobilized towards further reflexive institutional legitimization, not the performance of music.<sup>153</sup> This method of value

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<sup>152</sup> Juilliard School, "By the Numbers," Admissions | The Juilliard School. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://www.juilliard.edu/admissions/numbers>.

Boston University, "About," Boston University School of Music. February 24, 2021. <https://www.bu.edu/cfa/aboutcfa/about-the-school-of-music/>

<sup>153</sup> For an overview on the challenges facing modern higher education orchestras that wish to program outside of the traditional performance canon, see David Tedford, "Performing the Canon or Creating Inroads: A Study of Higher Education orchestral Programming of Contemporary Music," DMA diss. (University of Iowa. 2015), 11–17.

Additionally, Henry Valoris notes that there has been a "modest increase in contemporary and non-European works performed" by major American orchestras, though the trends he presents demonstrate how significantly the repertoire choices are dominated by Romantic nineteenth-

building once again echoes McElhney's *Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century*

*Modernism*: repetition and emulation are what build value, not the original object itself.

Competitions are classical music's most dramatic example of the institutional interrogation of a population towards the growth of institutional power. Among all of its extremely qualified participants, the competition permits itself to select only a single winner who will develop the brand of the competition's title. In order to remain current, the competition is held semi-regularly, thereby disposing of its previous winner. Music, in the broadest sense possible, does not need competitions to become whatever it might; competitions, however, are explicitly reliant on music as well as the population of practitioners for their legitimacy. And yet, competitions have somehow flipped the narrative so that they are seen to serve the advancement of musical practice and its practitioners. The participant enters the competition wondering if they will make the grade of the institution's prestige and curated history; they might not realize that the competition's prestige is nothing more than what its participants already are.

Competitions are nothing more or less than the participants who enroll that year. The absurd practice of sometimes refusing to award a first prize (most famously in the 1990 and 1995 Chopin competitions) is evidence of the competition's explicit efforts to locate its legitimacy in some disembodied source. This move committed by the panel gives credence to the unidentifiable center of the Panoptic observation system.

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century European composers. For his survey of the programming practices of professional orchestras as seen in the League of American Orchestra's *Orchestral Repertoire Reports*, see Henry Valoris. "Recent Trends in orchestral Programming among Major American Orchestras," MM thesis. (American University. 1988–2009, 2009), ii, 31–39.

One should not confuse the modern music competition with the Thalberg and Liszt duel of 1837 and other such “battles.” Modern competitions operate using the reflexive value-giving forces of modern power and assimilate all practitioners under a common decentralized evaluative scale. In the 1837 example, however, the pronouncement that Thalberg was “le premier pianiste” while Liszt was “le seul” shows an appreciation of paradigmatic difference between these two individuals. In accepting that the contest was fundamentally inconclusive, Countess Belgiojoso provides evidence that Foucault’s *second* type of political power is at play, the type of model which fundamentally is concerned with seating power in the *individual* and not the *state*. While it is true that Countess Belgiojoso herself is a part of the hierarchy of the aristocracy, the musicians are considered within a different model. The Thalberg/Liszt duel displayed a model where the power held by one individual (Liszt) was categorically different from that held by another (Thalberg); they were in effect two distinct princes in the Machiavellian mold. Modern competitions, through the institution-centered logic of the *raison d’état*, organize certain individuals neatly along the same spectrum using the ordered systems of more/less prestigious competitions, separate rounds, and numerically ordered prizes. The strength of the individual is not measured on their own terms but in relative terms to that of the institution. Indeed, at those times when a competition decides that no participant merits its “first prize,” it thereby proclaims *itself* as a sort of winner. If Liszt and Thalberg represent the princes of two different and mutually exclusive city-states whose source and deployment of power is distinct from the other, modern power orders all individuals within a single authoritarian court and seats the nameless

canonical/Panoptic ideology of the institution in the position of emperor.

Although Adorno references other causes for this effect in his essay, he nonetheless notes that “soloist concerts, the number of which shrinks because of increased risk to the concert agent, no longer encounter their former interest; through their reduction in number, they recede more and more from the public consciousness and restrict themselves obviously to the circle of monopolized stars.”<sup>154</sup> If the soloist presents a risk to the concert agent, it is because the individual is no longer seen as a viable source of musical value. This elite “circle of stars,” however, through which booking agents and promoters are guaranteed a financial return, is a tool that competitions and other institutions helped create in order to better define, therefore control, the populations on which they built. The Celebrity Series of Boston speaks for itself in this regard. This is the program of the modern musical institution as an apparatus of Foucauldian modern power: “Human needs [are] no longer considered as ends in themselves or as the subjects of a philosophic discourse which [seeks] to discover their essential nature. They [are] now seen instrumentally and empirically as the means for the increase of the state’s power.”<sup>155</sup>

Cynicism comes cheap to interested buyers, and it is neither my intention to drift into moralization or to create distance between myself and the systems in which am so evidently involved. I raise these examples to show the extent of the massive and all-

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<sup>154</sup> Theodor w. Adorno. “On the Social Situation of Music,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 420.

<sup>155</sup> Dreyfus, Rabinow, and Foucault, 139–140.

pervasive influence that a decentralized, disembodied ideology such as the canon can have. This is not to say the canon itself is responsible for these changes. Rather the canon is the discourse employed by administering bodies to mask their manipulation of practitioners into strictly hierarchical models. These systems of power have developed self-reflexive value-giving instruments of deployment that are realized in both the practical and administrative realms. In the practical aspect, we see the staging of authenticity, priority given to technical execution, and compositional virtuosity. In the administrative realm, we see the deployment of modern music schools and competitions to embody these ultimately decentralized sources of power. It is decentralized in that canonic discourse has taken the position of the panopticon's guard. Structurally, it operates the same way, but instead of a living figurehead like Joachim or Clara Schumann, the system operates with a discourse at its center. These institutions function through the same Panopticon-like methods of enforcement where everyone perceives that there is some tangible force regulating their behavior (a professor, competition juror, concert critic, or job-search panelist for example), but in reality, it is the disembodied and decentralized ideological pressures of modern power (as deployed by the canon and musical institutions) that control the whole system's behavior at once.

Barbara Herrnstein Smith points to another central tool in the formation of canons as a decentralized power: "the boldest move in the mid-century effort to give disciplinary respectability and cognitive substance to criticism was...to redefine itself as a project that banished evaluation altogether."<sup>156</sup> If one hides behind the decentralized mechanisms of

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<sup>156</sup> Smith, 9.

modern power, any other model of value giving becomes easy to attack either as dilettantry or subjective. Panoptic power systems are what initially allowed for the claims of intellectual objectivity that the last forty years of scholarship have spent debunking. This move represents the apotheosis of trends that first began alongside the disembodiment of pianistic virtuosity towards compositional virtuosity. Since the early nineteenth century, the origins of musical value continued to distance themselves from the practicing body, and by the mid-twentieth-century, moves were made to cut ties with the final remaining shimmer of an individual's personality: taste. The ideological vector that began by tearing virtuosity away from the performing body fulfilled its mission by placing analysis and criticism at the height of aesthetic musical practice: "works need analysis for their truth content [*Wahrheitsgehalt*] to be revealed."<sup>157</sup> Herrnstein Smith, a literary critic herself, deplores efforts to create "systematic studies" that had attained existential levels of import through the work of Northrop Frye in literature and Theodor Adorno in music.<sup>158</sup> If Foucault cites the end of the eighteenth century as the decisive period when humans became at once the subject and object of their own knowledge, the twentieth century has done this paradigm one better by establishing an entire genre of discourse that examines the examination of itself: canonical studies and the discourse

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<sup>157</sup> Theodor w. Adorno. "On the Problem of Musical Analysis," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan Gillespie. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 167.

<sup>158</sup> Adorno's appeal to concepts such as the "truth content" of a work is yet another example of Foucault's claim that in systems of modern power, even critics of the system appeal to the very discourse that helped found it. "Truth content" is a descendent of the *Werktreue* ideology of the nineteenth century and Adorno's attacks are evidently not against the concept itself, but rather against what he sees as modern society's inability to do justice to the idea.

surrounding the work-concept.

*A house of mirrors: the work-concept and its coterie*

The year of 1800 has a triggering effect for those involved in the contemplation of the musical work. What if the time has come to move beyond re-evaluating Lydia Goehr's *Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*? Should we feel bashful or proud that, by way of incessant responses, we seem to have erected a very real museum of articles and conversations devoted to a supposedly imaginary thing? In his *The Pythagorean Theorem, a 4,000-Year History*, Eli Maor cites the aura that the theorem manifests for mathematicians. Specifically, he describes it as imbalanced and “decidedly undemocratic.”<sup>159</sup> He also references Elisha Scott Loomis who claimed that “in the Middle Ages, it was required that a student taking his Master’s degree in mathematics offer a new and original proof of the Pythagorean theorem.”<sup>160</sup> Goehr’s thesis has attained a remarkably similar status for socio/musicologists. First, echoing the allegedly undemocratic nature of the Pythagorean theorem, Goehr’s thesis is seen as unaccommodating to all those alleged “works” that came before 1800. Second, it has become a rite of matriculation into “current musicology” for commentators to grapple with their own interpretation of when or over what period, if not in 1800, the “work-

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<sup>159</sup> Eli Maor. *The Pythagorean Theorem: A 4,000-year History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), xiii.

<sup>160</sup> Maor. xiii.

concept” emerges from the cocoon.

For me, the entire reception tradition of the *Imaginary Museum* continues to lose relevance as it turns evermore into quibbles over methodology and definitions of terms. Just as it would be vain (and in a world proliferated by free access to virtually any recording, pointless) to attend a concert and enjoy it only if the performance matched my pre-conceived concept of the piece, what is the point of re-responding to a book that already has a well-known reception, other than to jump on the bandwagon. Responding to Goehr’s 1992 book for the musicologist has become equal to the performance of Beethoven’s piano sonatas for the pianist. Nearly thirty years later, all who respond to *Imaginary Museum* content themselves in the same way, to paraphrase Tolstoy, and those who move on, can do so in their own way.

To avoid making this about the scholarly practice of individual people, I will indebt myself to the good will of the reader by limiting specific citations. Suffice it to say that a quick search on Lydia Goehr and the *Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* will yield many more results outside of the original book itself. Since it was published in 1992, few today will argue against Goehr’s point that the concept of the “musical work” is historically contingent. If one extends this line of thinking however, one arrives at the reasonable conclusion that the entire conversation over the emergence of the musical work is itself historically contingent. This is one of the bemusing and reflexive qualities of post-structuralist thought; it is part and parcel of the methodologies and questions engendered by the school of thinking. Put more simply, it is historically contingent to think of things as historically contingent: the snake that eats its own tail.

From the performing perspective, I find it far more informative to consider why this debate over 1800 is happening in the first place rather than working towards any firm conclusions about years and genres that the debate so fruitlessly seeks. As recent as the mid-2010s, scholars have continued to unpack and re-present Goehr's initial argument and the resultant counter arguments.<sup>161</sup> These efforts might make it seem as though the debate is still fresh today, but if one considers Goehr's ideas outside of the realm of music, a different view presents itself. One can find roots for the notion that hermeneutic modalities are both historically contingent as well as tricky to pinpoint (and therefore arbitrary time markers are employed in service of a grander argument) at least as far back as Foucault's 1961 *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. In the mid-twentieth century, Merleau-Ponty (whom Goehr herself has written on) developed the ontology of the flesh, which philosophically formalized the early twentieth century Duchampian vision that an individual cannot trust their own senses or intellect to faithfully apprehend what "really is." Even the work of people such as Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Hannah Arendt who, among other things, worked on the phenomenological situated-ness of ideas and language, can be seen as laying the groundwork for the types of proposals Goehr lays out. Heidegger and Wittgenstein were both born over a century before the release of *Imaginary Museum*. Significantly, none of these hugely influential figures in their own fields are mentioned in a typical musicological response to Goehr, who, it should be remembered is a *philosophy*

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<sup>161</sup> See for instance, Gavin Steingo, "The Musical Work Reconsidered, in Hindsight," *Current Musicology*, no. 97 (2014): 81–112.

professor, not strictly a musicologist. This leads me to believe that the undying furor roused by Goehr's book, which was published eight years after the death of Foucault, reveals more about the scholarly world into which the book was thrust rather than being representative of the supposedly groundbreaking nature of her thesis. The question is not *which* ground is she breaking, but *whose* ground. In light of the other twentieth century thinkers mentioned above, it dawns that the transgressive nature of Goehr's work is not so much its content but its intended audience.<sup>162</sup>

I do not wish to take issue with Goehr herself or her work. It might be clear by this point that if pressed to respond, I would admit to admiring her approach. Nonetheless, I believe the uproar caused by her first book overstates the audacity of its contents. Her claims are in line with an observable international trajectory of thought that spans the whole twentieth century. On top of this, I worry that the premise of the arguments that have arisen in response to her are of dubious consequence. To be more specific, I take issue with the pretense that the subsequent discussion that continues to swirl concentrically around the 1800 debate has any import or relevance on today's musical practices outside of scholarly career building. For all the deliberations one can peruse on the subject, what are the concrete ways a performer, critic, or audience member should act differently based on these conclusions? Whether Goehr is right or wrong, I

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<sup>162</sup> I will restate here (originally cited on page 47 of this dissertation) the passage from Vanderhamm in which he suggests the possible origin of Anglophone musicology's apprehension towards phenomenological thinking: "There are many potential explanations for the relative absence of phenomenology in Anglophone historical studies of music, but I would argue that it stems from an understanding of phenomenology—especially as practiced by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty—as radically *presentist*." (Emphasis original) Vanderhamm, 56

find it difficult to think of what would change about music making today. For instance, I don't see what is gained or lost in answering the question of whether it is possible for Bach to have created musical works even if he didn't intend to create works as we think of them. The fact is, today we see them as works whether Bach did or not, and this view is our historically contingent cross to bear. Bear it we most certainly do.

Countering Goehr's 1800 thesis, there must exist a reciprocal twentieth-century ideology that would take offense to her views. The main effort of the first two chapters was to show the foundations of such an ideology in the nineteenth century and the present chapter describes this ideology's twentieth-century ascension to the creation of a system of Foucauldian modern power that regulates performance practices, reception, scholarly work, pedagogy, and the wider institutionalization of music. If the post-modernist and post-structuralist quibbles of musical practitioners are not extrapolated onto tangible practices by scholars who straddle musical and non-musical realms, then just like the snake who eats its tail, musical practice will wind up binding practitioners into a historically contingent strait-jacket. The feedback loop of post-structuralist scholarly thought needs a practical release valve to escape the paradoxes it creates. Post-structuralist work, as Foucault himself advocated, cannot be an end in and of itself. Otherwise, it will become no different from compositional virtuosity, the staging of authenticity, and the repressive hypothesis. It will become a discourse which presents truth and knowledge as a key which, once established, unlocks the "real" order of things.

From the point of view of hermeneutics and primary sources that resurface/disappear, it is clear that our interpretation of past traditions is subject to wild

change. Given this fact, even if scholars establish a concrete year for the birth of the work-concept, it is only a matter of time before it becomes tossed to the side just as we have tossed away the myth of the Great Composer that held sway a century ago. Goehr herself does not cling to the year itself with much devotion: “Finding a ‘rough’ date is satisfactory because conceptual change, like the change in practices, has no sharply defined beginning or end.”<sup>163</sup> History is an unbreakable continuity and Goehr knows this. If we embrace the fluidity of historically contextualized thought, then why do Goehr’s critics invest so much effort in nailing down a “correct” interpretation of the past by attacking one of the more minor parts of her larger argument which she herself is rather ambivalent about: the year 1800. The love of finitude that historical analysis has inherited from nineteenth century positivism is unsustainable when it comes to *interpreting* history. As such, musical historical inquiry ultimately needs to be manifested through a medium that fully embraces the “in real time” of ideas. Performance is that medium.

### *The scholarly canon as non-performance-practice*

In his analysis of canon development, William Weber lists three main types of canon: the scholarly, pedagogical, and performing. The scholarly canon emerged from a tradition where music is “studied in theoretical terms” or the “philosophical and scientific consideration of music, such as that discussed in treatises and taught in the medieval

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<sup>163</sup>Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2007.

quadrivium.”<sup>164</sup> Though this is a useful delineation, I would like to immediately diverge from Weber’s meaning of “scholarly canon,” as he maintains that in the present day, “this aspect of musical canon has had a much closer relationship with musical performance.”<sup>165</sup> Weber sees the emergence of historically informed performance in early music as the contemporary heir to the study of music in “theoretical terms.” But what then of the work Weber himself is doing? What of Adorno? What of Dalhaus? What of Goehr? What of McClary? Does this body of work itself not participate in a tradition that is centered on the theoretical nature of music? Granted, the nature of these theories has merged with the theories of other fields (sociology and feminism, for example) but nonetheless, these undoubtedly scholarly approaches to music must be acknowledged as having their own place within the musical canon. I believe Weber is overly generous to his fellow, non-performing scholars, in seeing the research-inclined practices of historically informed performance as the descendant of what he calls the “scholarly canon.”

In light of this, I would counter Weber’s claim and instead maintain that there is in fact a large sector of contemporary engagement with music that is exclusively “a high academic tradition not often practiced by musicians.”<sup>166</sup> I believe that it is more appropriate to place the practical applications of scholarly work (such as questions of appropriate vibrato within a repertoire and other historically informed practices) as

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<sup>164</sup> Weber, 339.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

subsections of what Weber calls the “pedagogical” and “performing” canons. He describes the pedagogical canon as the “emulation of works by master composers of a previous generation.”<sup>167</sup> Strangely, Weber limits this emulation to compositional practices and ignores the desire of contemporary practitioners to emulate not just the works, but the performance practices known by master composers. Surely these performance practices are subsumed by the same impulse of emulation. Of the performing canon, Weber writes that it is “more than just a repertory; it is also a critical and ideological force.”<sup>168</sup> Again, I would argue that the scholarly research devoted to performance practice is better conceived of as an elaboration of this “critical and ideological force” rather than the true heir of the scholarly canon.

In this way, one must be careful of treating all scholarly work as cut from the same cloth. Some types of scholarly work, such as determining the size of Bach’s choir, can have explicit implications for performance practice. Some types of work, such as the writing of Dalhaus is deeply involved with music but does not always imply prescriptions regarding performance practice. It is not only theoretical/philosophical work that ignores practice; the recent academic practice of studying reception history by definition considers everyone’s view but the performer’s. Weber’s desire to relate all scholarly work to performance practice does more to harm performance practices than it does to benefit scholarly work. It continues to align performance practices with the discourses that mask the operation of music as a system of modern power.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Weber, “The History of Musical Canons,” 340.

The previous two chapters of this dissertation highlighted a trend in the nineteenth century in which the prevailing values of performance practice distanced themselves evermore from the performing body, thereby symbolically staging the sublimation the performer's individual agency. This chapter has endeavored to highlight the confluence of the scholarly canon alongside certain compositional/performance practices as united under the umbrella of modern power rubrics. The efforts of nineteenth-century practitioners of the love of music to situate musical value outside of the performing body laid the groundwork for the twentieth century's huge investment in musical institutions (competitions and schools among others) as well as the scholarly and critical approaches to musical issues. In recalling McElhney's sculpture, these twentieth century additions to musical life are based on replication and redistribution as methods for building value. In using Foucault's analysis of modern power systems, this chapter suggests that each of these twentieth century developments in music can be seen as systems that ultimately serve their own interest as institutionalized ideologies rather than the musical practitioners they purport to serve.

I would like to stress that I do not wish to pit this issue as the premise for some ideological battle between performers and non-performers. This dissertation has in fact shown that both performers and non-performers have equally adopted practices that align themselves with modern power models. If some commentators can be accused of "the pot calling the kettle black," I am here to say that both the both and kettle are very much of the same metal. Members from both groups have worked to develop ideologies which ignore the aspects of individuals which are truly their own as individuals. For instance, in

believing that Beethoven's genius is merely the result of sociological contingencies, one ignores the part of Beethoven — famously evidenced in the Heiligenstadt Testament — that viewed high-level music-making as a matter of life and death. Historical contingency cannot account for the emotional experience of Beethoven's ambitions and tastes. It can only account for how those ambitions and tastes manifest themselves externally.

In other words, if composers treat me, the performer, as a vehicle for their works and scholars treat me as a sociological case study, what is to be made of my desire to become “my own” musician? Is this even possible or does becoming a musician mean becoming the messenger of what *someone else* believes musical value is? What is to be made of the fact that I prefer Chopin's second Ballade to mainstream prioritization of the first and fourth? What is to be made of the fact that I, often for professional reasons, perform the works of composers that I don't especially value myself? The sociologically contingent view might account for the fact that I value Chopin in general, but does not account for my personal dissatisfaction with the canonically ordained fourth Ballade. If one is committed to the staging of authenticity as founded by Brahms's circle, then one has completely erased the potential to access the part of themselves that takes issue with a work. In the modern power systems of classical music, it doesn't matter what the performer thinks, it only matters if they represent the work “authentically.” After considering the strength of such ideologies as the canon and other instruments in the deployment of classical music as a system of modern power, the question arises as to whether performers, as individuals with their own desires and preferences, have anything left to offer classical music on their own terms? If Rob Wegman is worried that

musicology runs the risk of “[critiquing] itself out of business,” I worry that the issues raised in this chapter have already completed the erasure performer’s individual agency.<sup>169</sup> Considered as a modern power system, the world of classical music seems resembles the modern myth that AI will eventually become more powerful than its designer and ultimately dispose of them. Simply, as a performer, what is there left for me to do?

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<sup>169</sup> Rob C. Wegman, “Historical Musicology: Is It Still Possible?” In *The Cultural Study of Music, A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edition, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 40.

## IV

*Epilogue: The Canon and the Individual*

For whom do we play? Ourselves? The composer? The public? Only those we respect? History? The piece of music itself? There is no single answer to this question. Professionally and practically, the sources of obligation we feel when we play are dependent on the venue, the piece itself, our audience, and countless other factors. Obligations are here understood in the scheme known as “bipolar obligation,” which features “a three-place relation between an obligor (A), an obligee (B), and the content of the obligation (C) of the form ‘B owes it to A to [perform action] C’.”<sup>170</sup> The following three anecdotes will explore distinctly different combinations of sources which prescribe how we should play.

Over the past several years I have played a lot of Robert Schumann’s music, specifically focusing on his chamber music and lieder. In bringing these collaborative works to coaches, I have received drastically different advice from highly qualified professors who express their views with conviction. When I brought the F-Major Piano Trio to my Russian professor, the strings were advised to play with the fullest and most

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<sup>170</sup> Caveat: The roles of “obligee” and “obligor” in Kubala’s formulation are the direct opposite of standard legal/contractual uses of those terms. However, since this dissertation takes directly after the thought of Kubala, I will continue to use his meanings which see the pair as similar to “employee” versus “employer.” The former is in service of the latter. Robbie Kubala, “Grounding Aesthetic Obligations,” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 58, no. 3 (2018): 273.

exuberant vibrato because of the distinctness of instrumentation's constituent parts. In this way, the three instruments can be better appreciated as separate lines. An American professor however suggested that the strings should limit their vibrato so that they might blend better with the tone of the piano. In this view ensemble sound should be prioritized over the individuality of the voices. Presented with two opposite views that are equally substantiated with aesthetic consideration as well as performance tradition, which route was our trio supposed to take? In this scenario, there are two main sources of obligation represented by the individual professors. The group's obligation to its own desires is subsumed by the student make-up of its formation; as a student group, we were primarily beholden to our teachers' instruction.

In 2016 I was helping a friend prepare the Stamitz Viola Concerto for a regional New England competition as well as an audition for a top-tier European orchestra. As I accompanied him in a preparatory lesson, he performed an original cadenza he had written for the first movement. After we finished, his professor went over some details about the earlier parts of the first movement, and after bemusedly praising his somewhat anachronistic cadenza, sternly warned, "you'd better not play that over there." She In this scenario, there are four evident sources of obligation. First, by composing his own cadenza, my friend obliges himself to his own perspective on the Classical style. Since he is presenting it in a public competition, we can assume that the resultant product adequately reflects his standards. Second, the violist is obliged to his professor's view. She evaluates the cadenza on her own terms with guarded appreciation and agrees that he should present it in the American competition, which represents the third source of

obligation. Fourth, my friend must consider the European orchestra which his professor unquestionably recognizes will *not* appreciate his work.

As a final anecdote, I can reference my recent recording project with the same violist in which we self-produced a commercial recording of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata. In this final scenario, we were beholden solely to our own views on the work. This naturally meant that we had to fund the entire project ourselves, but we were free from obligation to the perspectives of critics, professors, audition panels, or a label's producers. Beneath all of these obligations, however, lurks a deeper lying normative force: the third chapter's discussion of the canon and modern power. In describing schools, competitions, orchestra auditions, and personal projects, each of the sources of obligation involved differentiates itself by a slightly different interpretation of what the canon's value-giving practices are.

These three anecdotes are not meant to suggest that one of these situations is more or less desirable than the other. They are all part of the complex web of obligations to which professional performing musicians subject themselves. It is often thought that being a "professional musician" is reflective of a certain skill level or knowledge. In fact, being professional or amateur has very little to do directly with skill on its own. A professional musician is someone who navigates different systems of obliging pressures on their playing with the intention of receiving institutional, public, or financial recognition. A professional musician could plausibly be at almost any skill level. Their professionalism comes from the willing subjection of whatever skill they hold to their discernment of different sources of obligation.

By no means is this pejorative. In fact, the ability of the professional performing musician to successfully navigate different modalities of contingency and obligation is precisely what I suggest as the solution to the third chapter's problems with the reception of Lydia Goehr. Whereas scholars have filled the pages of journals with disagreements on the before-and-after of the modern work concept's inception, as a professional performer I remain thoroughly unenthused about this discussion's pretensions to finality. Based on the combinations of evidence one brings to light, there are many possible routes to take in this debate, and the performing musician knows that they are not beholden to any single abstract idea as such. Instead, they adapt their position on a given day to accommodate the obliging forces of whomever they address. This should not be taken as evidence of insincerity or duplicitousness on the part of the performer. It is in fact the result of their medium's unique ability to entertain and manifest different hermeneutic dispositions at once. When my trio played for my Russian professor, the strings played with vibrato; when they played for the American professor, they used less. Both are legitimate examples of our trio's playing as the agency of our group mediates between the work and the situation in which we find ourselves. Similarly, a performance of the Stamitz is not more or less genuine when my friend performs his original cadenza versus when he performs a precomposed one.

Outside of cultivating one's own skill on their instrument, the central difficulty of being a professional then is how to understand and act on the various subtleties of different obligations. Simply put, knowing your audience is here seen as high-stakes since "audience" can here mean either a crowd or the conductor and committee of an

orchestra for which you are auditioning. If a performer is to discern the obliging forces their audience has on them, they must first consider the normative forces that gathered their audience in the first place. Simply by virtue of being an audience (either a group or an individual), the listener in that group already participates in a certain framework of normativity. Normativity, however, is an elusive thing to describe. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, sees two men who are famously bewildered by their subjection to the normative force of waiting for Godot.

After the work of the previous three chapters, we can sense that in the more concrete world of classical music (though perhaps no less absurd than *Godot*), the canon and the workings of modern power are lurking in the shadows. Aesthetician Robbie Kubala writes that “practitioners are not always able to articulate the value of a practice, or to agree on its specification but they nonetheless take for granted that there is one.”<sup>171</sup> In the scenarios described in the opening, each source of obligation had a different understanding of what the canon's value-giving practices are. Whether it is a question of vibrato in Schumann's chamber music within a student ensemble or my colleague's decision to use a precomposed or original cadenza in a professional audition, each decision is based on a different orientation to the decentralized normative forces of the canon. The professionalism of music making comes from the practitioner's discernment of whose value-giving practices should be adhered to at any given moment. Once again, this has no reflection on their integrity as an artist. As professionals it is not their

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<sup>171</sup> Robbie Kubala, “Aesthetic Practices and Normativity,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 2020): 7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12727>

responsibility, as Kubala says, to discern the meaning of the practice, only that the practice exists, and that it exists as an obliging force: “*if* they execute and interpret the work ‘correctly,’ they *will* get the job.”

So far, the discussion of the professional musician has concerned itself primarily with the first two anecdotes where practitioners are the obligees working within the dictates of an outside obligor. The third scenario, which involves the self-produced commercial album, does not include an immediately identifiable obligor outside of the practitioners and the work themselves. Presumably, the practitioners in this scenario are freed from the burden of the normative obligations described in the other situations. The value of the practitioners to themselves could be self-generated (although the forgoing of payment in this scenario renders it unsustainable), just as the modernist view (as seen in Adorno) holds that the value of the work is typically self-generated. After the elaborations of the earlier chapters however, one understands that there is very little that is truly self-generated in a performer’s value.

Chapter one shows Liszt and other early nineteenth-century figures as manipulating both authorial voice (Heine’s journalism) as well as the constitutive make up of their practice (Clara Schumann’s abandonment of operatic paraphrases) in an effort to generate and control different types of value. This value exists both for the benefit of Liszt (or any practitioner themselves) as well as the public. Liszt’s value *as Liszt* is generated *through* his practice as a fluid and malleable process. He succeeded in creating new dimensions, either pianistic or social, within his musical practice by charting his own chosen path but their value was ultimately legitimized only externally. Indeed Liszt’s

abandonment of Saint-Simonism, which had initially generated value for his music, was predicated by the quasi-cult's fall from grace in the public view. Significantly, many of these dimensions Liszt enacted were by definition non-normative. Here we return to Gooley's notion of a virtuosity which breaks boundaries. In what Foucault describes as the Machiavellian model of political power, no-one else could *be* Liszt as much as Liszt was Liszt.

Chapter two shows the opposite progression and the establishment of certain practices as normative forces. Once compositional virtuosity and the staging of authenticity were concretized as *de rigueur* practices, any individual was given license to learn the practices from a knowledge-distributing teacher, adopt them, and thereby generate their own value as a practitioner. In this way, chapter one shows the potential agency of the individual in the founding of practices eventually seen as valuable/non-valuable while chapter two presents the reverse: a scheme in which established practices determine the activities an individual takes on as value-giving. In any given period, both forces are in constant interplay with each other but chapter three shows that classical music, with the emergence of Foucauldian modern power systems, has heavily shifted the balance away from the individual practitioner's agency as value-giving and has, with the help of canonical and Panoptic ideology, significantly augmented the normative value-giving power of the practice itself through institutional bodies.

As this dissertation reaches its conclusion, I will propose an alternative to the value-giving power dynamics with which classical music is currently saddled. I am not the only one to hold the views I am about to express. Feminists, sociologists, racial

theorists, and many others make up a wide-spread body of contemporary voices that express a similar desire to shift classical music away from an ideologically based practice and back to the agency of the individual practitioner as value-giving. The March 2021 outcry over Oberlin Conservatory's centering of white performers in an event celebrating of Black History Month clearly shows that the individual practitioner's agency is increasingly seen as equal in value to that of the work itself.<sup>172</sup> "Who is playing?" is beginning to regain ground over "what is being played?" Outside of classical music, the wider movement of Black Lives Matter very literally vocalizes the will to explicitly, though not exclusively, ground value in the life and perspective of individuals and communities that have been institutionally oppressed. In this way, the final section of this dissertation is unique only insofar as it contextualizes this trend within the previously elaborated themes of compositional virtuosity, the staging of authenticity, Foucauldian modern power, contemporary aesthetics, and the increasingly repeated failure of modern musical institutions to meet the needs of musical practitioners.

***Breaking the Canon's Glass Ceiling: Reasserting the Agency of the Practitioner***

So far, I have endeavored to establish both historical and theoretical evidence that points towards two models of western classical musical practice: practitioner-based

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<sup>172</sup> Kaylyn Hlavaty, "Oberlin Conservatory of Music issues apology following backlash over Black History Month flier." ABC News 5 Cleveland, March 1, 2021. <https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/black-history-month/oberlin-conservatory-of-music-issues-apology-following-backlash-over-black-history-month-flier>

systems and practice-based systems. Does the pianistic practice primarily give value to the pianist-practitioner or does the practitioner give value to the practice? While one can find evidence of both systems during any given period, the examples presented have attempted to show that there has been a marked shift towards practice-based paradigms while moving away from practitioner-based systems. This shift can be seen in all dimensions of musical practice from composition and performance practice to institutional structures that reinforce the value the practice over the value of the individual. Today, the term “classical music” can refer to such a great variety of musical practices that it would be foolish to try to prescribe a path forward that would address the nuances of each sub-culture. The “next step” for the disciples of Helmut Lachenmann will surely involve different considerations than the “next step” for classical crossover musicians or period-instrument chamber orchestras. Nevertheless, whichever way the different streams of classical music will ultimately wind, I believe, as Foucault has helped to show, that they are all departing from a relatively similar starting point: their structure as systems of modern power. The remainder of this dissertation will provide suggestions for how my own particular strain of classical music practice (solo and collaborative piano) could re-orient itself towards a practitioner-based system rather than a practice-based system.

Kubala’s work on the nature of aesthetic objects/practices as obligation-generating provides a brilliant starting point for anyone trying to unpack the forces at play that lead an artist to action. There is however, one issue I take with his analysis. As a philosopher and aesthetician, his discussion of these forces largely ignores the

professionally obliging demands that are responsible for large amounts of artistic production and consumption. Kubala circumscribes his point a bit too tightly when he writes that “aesthetic obligations do not inherently alter our normative relations to other persons.”<sup>173</sup> The violist’s aesthetic obligation to play either his own cadenza or the cadenza by another violist as well as possible is very much wrapped up in his normative relations to the audition panel. The same can be said for the audition panelists themselves. Their own aesthetic obligation to a work is very much related to their normative relation to the applicant performing their audition. As a system of modern power, many aspects of musical practice can be explained very simply as professionally pragmatic rather than aesthetically theoretical. This is the reason why I provided the Schumann Trio and Stamitz Concerto examples: to show that the evidently changeable ways an artist might complete an aesthetic task like interpreting a piece (or choosing which cadenza to insert in a concerto) does not necessarily constitute a failure to fulfill their sense of aesthetic obligation to a work. Additionally, as an aesthetician, Kubala does not go so far as describing normative forces as types of power. Clearly, this is a move that I would like to make. By no means do these omissions discredit the aspects of aesthetic obligations on which he *has* written. Indeed, much of my thought on the matter can be traced back to his writing.

In “Grounding Aesthetic Obligations,” Kubala describes a model of aesthetic obligation that is linked to what he calls “practical identity” as a person’s “sense of what

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<sup>173</sup> Kubala, “Grounding Aesthetic Obligations,” 278.

is most important to her in life or what makes her the person she is.”<sup>174</sup> He presents this concept after refuting two prominent approaches of aesthetic grounding. The first view he refutes is the “Special Weight Approach” which holds that “obligations differ only in degree, not in kind from other normative considerations.”<sup>175</sup> The second is the “Relational Approach” which bases obligations “in the normative relations we bear to other persons.”<sup>176</sup> Incidentally, my quibble with Kubala about professionally obliging forces is neatly accounted for in the relational approach. This being said, surely anyone who is involved in any sort of aesthetically oriented practice will agree with him that there is a large component of their practice which “essentially alter[s] only their sense of themselves.”<sup>177</sup>

Kubala argues that in this (non-professional) orientation to aesthetic objects, “the decisive force of obligations ... would not be features of aesthetic objects by themselves, or features of persons as such, but the connections that features of aesthetic objects bear to the practical identities of persons.”<sup>178</sup> He goes on to describe a passage from *À la recherche du temps perdu* where Marcel feels an aesthetic obligation to stop his stagecoach and admire some hawthorns that are off the road, an obligation he does not fulfill. Kubala writes, “Marcel may not know precisely which features of the hawthorns

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 277–78.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 278–279.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

give them their importance-for-him, but in finding out, he will discover more about what he is responding to.”<sup>179</sup>

This feeling is similar to the one I experience in my desire to play Rameau as a pianist. I know that ultimately, I will never play the music “as it should be played” since I am a pianist. Nonetheless, I feel an aesthetic obligation to give special attention to the details of this music and I can ultimately materialize this attention through performance. Doing so might not give the most “authentic” performance of Rameau but it does teach me something about *myself* and answers some questions about what I find aesthetically compelling: carefully selected overtones through limited pedal use, exploring rhythmic inequality between notes, or the structure of binary forms. Bearing in mind that we have put professional considerations to the side, my obligation to attend to these details is purely my own. Aesthetic stimuli (musical compositions) provoke an obligation within me to give them my full attention. The pursuit and fulfillment of this attention teaches me in the first place about the piece, but in the second place, it teaches me also about myself. I ultimately know myself better through the music and this creates a reciprocal value-giving relation between me and the aesthetic stimulus. The unpacking of my aesthetic obligation contributes to the grounding of my own self-worth.

Kubala goes to great lengths to explain that “it is not in virtue of the impersonal aesthetic value of an item that we incur aesthetic obligations; rather, we respond to its idiosyncratic value for our personal identities.”<sup>180</sup> Although he is not addressing himself

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 284.

to a musically inclined audience (as Goehr did with *Imaginary Museum*), with this statement, Kubala inadvertently presents a seismic existential attack on the canonic, compositionally-virtuosic, self-effacing ideologies of classical music practice. As I understand Kubala's model, my reasons for following Robert Schumann's slur markings in a piece are not that "Robert Schumann was a master and his musical intelligence and intuition should be respected in light of the influence he had on others who went on to create valuable art." My reasons are more along the lines of "giving attention to Robert Schumann's slur markings will help me better understand why I am attracted to Robert Schumann's music in the first place and this will help me to refine my practical identity and augment my own sense of self-worth." I am not here to "serve music," as the canonic model holds. Music is there to serve and, in another sense, create me. A critic might note that this is no different from a practice-based model since the practitioner's worth is molded through an acquired practice. While this specific analysis might be true, the practical-identity model significantly diverges from practice-based models in that it ultimately sees the practitioner and not the practice as the ultimate end. Said in another way, the practical identity model is in direct opposition to Foucault's third type of political power which sees the state/discourse as an end itself. I may very well perform Robert Schumann's slurs in the same fashion based on either reason but explicitly grounding this action in my own self-worth gives me much more compelling reason to play this piece again in another concert or teach it to another of my students (i.e., to keep the practice alive). There is no reason to believe that quality of playing will suffer from this reorientation but it *does* fundamentally shift the practice loving music away from one

that is practice-oriented to one that is practitioner-oriented.

Many contemporary commentators are exceedingly preoccupied with whether or not classical music is “relevant” today. In fact, I find this question entirely irrelevant in itself. To ask whether classical music is relevant or not implies that it has some fixed value to offer. Classical music is not some external entity that either does or does not have value like some currency that is no longer in use today. Classical music, like all aesthetic objects, is a means for individuals to understand themselves, and certain practices have diminished the relationship between an individual’s agency or practical identity and the music. Through compositional virtuosity, the staging of authenticity, institutions that are structured as ends in themselves, and other factors, the dominating strains of classical music have created a culture where the practice itself reigns supreme at the expense of the practitioner. This is naturally off-putting to outsiders and I suggest that it presents a banally straightforward explanation as to why it is seen to be losing “relevance.” Classical music culture has obfuscated the personal interest that an outsider would have in considering becoming a practitioner, either as performer, listener, or any type of commentator. The music itself has very little to do with it; the culture which mobilized the practice of classical music into a form of power, everything. Nothing is more “relevant” to an individual than they are to themselves. If classical music can be restructured as a means for individuals to address themselves and ground their practical identities, “relevance” becomes a non-issue. For my amateur adult piano students who began music lessons in mid-life, “relevance” or the exigent demands of training for concert life could not be farther from their minds; they come to music as a means of

exploring and reveling in their own practical identities. When one of my students incessantly asks me “but why does it sound so good?,” she wants to learn about herself just as much as she wants to learn about the piece.

I can now return to the introduction’s initial proposal that we should ask “what was a composer *trying* to do?” rather than “what did a composer do?”. We can now understand composition and performance, as actions, as an interrogation of oneself. Insofar as they concern “musical text,” composition and performance could also be seen as a mutual interrogation of composer and performer. So far, I have tried to work towards reciprocal and indivisible relationship between a practitioner and their practice. History however only allows us one component of this dyad. The latter of the two questions above pretends that the composition, through *Werktreue* and canonic ideology, can be considered on its own as a *fait accompli*. In my proposed view, the composition is no less living and breathing an organism as the composer themselves. To regard a composition as an achieved goal is the same as treating a photograph (which, by capturing a past event, naturally denies the subject’s situation in the present) as a legitimate representation of a person. Just as we know that a person continues to live and be themselves beyond the moment captured in the photo, so we should see a composition as a brief snapshot within a broadly moving personal arc. In a sense, a composition, as a composer’s interrogation and subsequent grounding of their practical identity, is something that they are *still doing*. The questions they ask themselves through composition can never fully be answered. With each passing measure of a composition’s performance, the composer simultaneously searches for and grounds their practical identity in the work. The

performer, compelled by an aesthetic obligation to the work, rather than embracing or conversing with the composer themselves, manifests the composition as a further grounding of their own practical identity as a performer.

In my undergraduate studies, I was told by a professor, “in many ways, the history of western art music is a history of notated music.” In the context of the composition, I did not take him to mean that western music was the only one that could claim a notated system of music. Instead, I believe he meant to say that if one wished to study the history of western classical music, one is in fact studying the history of system of notation. Musical text indeed finds itself at the core of our tradition. Dare I say, perhaps even more so than sound itself. This has led to great stock being put into which edition one brings into their lesson, rehearsal, or recording session. After all, many editions have been shown to contain all sorts of errors ranging from simple misprints to editors taking great liberties in how they combine the different sources available.<sup>181</sup> This culture of printed texts and what Rifkin calls their “impregnable solidity” obscures the frailty implicit in the basic human instinct to legitimize oneself through the formation of a practical identity through composition or performance. The desire to learn all the Chopin Mazurkas, to study the Bach Cantatas, compose a piece for Pierrot ensemble, collect all the Beatles albums in vinyl, read the lyrics to *Illmatic* while listening to it, is all a testament to the success music has in continually assuaging the existential complexities of life.

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<sup>181</sup> In but one of countless examples, Joshua Rifkin laments that the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*, “despite stated policy, did not invariably give all the relevant versions of music known in more than one form their full due...” Joshua Rifkin. “Rethinking Editions: Mass, *Missa*, and Monument Culture,” in *Rethinking Bach*, ed. Bettina Varwig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). 3.

H.T. Burleigh and Francis Poulenc are two composers that I have come to greatly enjoy in recent years precisely because I feel I get a sense of what they were trying to do that goes beyond what is simply printed on the page. With Burleigh, I particularly admire his Five Songs of Laurence Hope. Laurence Hope is one of the pseudonyms of British poet Adela Florence Cory. In this set, I can admire the exquisite *Among the Fuchsias* while simultaneously blushing at heavy-handed, almost cheap, Wagnerisms of the set's opener *Worth While*. Indeed, it is easier to perceive blemishes in the work of composers outside of the canon proper. This is not due to the "inadequacy" of non-canonical works, rather, the process of canon formation has entirely erased the possibility of weakness from its foundational pillars. Nonetheless, the side-by-side existence of the touching and sophisticated *Among the Fuchsias* next to the cavalier and sentimental *Worth While* which lacks the former's compositional elegance, I feel that as an interpreter, I can better gauge what actually mattered to Burleigh as an individual. I can better divine what the man himself was wrangling with as he sought to ground his practical identity as a black man in turn-of-the-century America through setting the poetry of a British colonial female poet to Wagnerian and American melodies and harmonies. This, I find touching above all else.

The complete edition of Poulenc's songs published by Salabert includes this epithet by Poulenc himself at the end of its table of contents:

1. My "canon" is instinct
2. I have no principles, and I pride myself on it
3. I have no system of composition, thank God!

4. Inspiration is such a mysterious thing that is it best not to explain it.<sup>182</sup>

Despite the frivolity of Poulenc's four pronouncements (which were set against the back-drop of European Serialism's rise to prominence), he still managed to craft what I find to be one of the most easily recognizable compositional voices of the twentieth century. It is clear from these statements that Poulenc explicitly and joyfully centers his own agency in his practice. I have become especially attracted to Poulenc through his songs because of how I sense him responding to his poet's lines. In *Tel jour telle nuit*, his music at once captures the bleakness of the Sartrean existentialism in Éluard's text but mediates it with a comforting warmth that only Poulenc could provide. More touching than any single detail of his admittedly sophisticated compositional style, I am overcome by his use of his gift as a composer to lay out a mediating position between his philosophic agreement with Éluard and his emotional need to provide shelter from the cold winds of this philosophy's solitude.<sup>183</sup> For this reason, I find Poulenc one of the

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<sup>182</sup> Francis Poulenc, *Complete volume of Melodies and Songs published by Salabert* (Paris: Salabert Editions, 1989), 3.

<sup>183</sup> *Je n'ai envie que de t'aimer* and *Nous avons fait la nuit*, the sixth and eighth songs from the set, exemplify this trait most compellingly. In a lighter spinoff of the themes of Sartre's *Huit clos*, Éluard's *Je n'ai envie* describes how the speaker's love exists only as the negative image of his solitude; he is incapable of seeing his lover for who they are outside of his own emotional projections. This theme is repeated in *Nous avons* through the lines "Je m'émerveille de l'inconnue que tu deviens, une inconnue semblable à toi semblable à tout ce que j'aime" (I marvel at the stranger you are becoming, a stranger who resembles you, resembles all that I love). In one of Schubert's contemplations of the "other" in *Der Leierman*, a steady rhythmic and harmonic ostinato heightens the loneliness of the text while the melody sets the text in brief out-of-mind fragments. Poulenc also employs rhythmic ostinati but they flow and embrace the text; rather than create distance, they fill the musical space to the brim. In similar contrast, Poulenc's melodic setting is long and smooth which generates a feeling of ease and sympathy for the speaker while passing harmonic shadows give credence to the speaker's melancholy.

most noble composers of all. And so, the question “what was a composer trying to do?” can be rephrased, “how can we interpret a composition as a mediating agent between a composer’s practical identity and the world in which they lived?” If we understand a composition as a mediating agent, its work as such will never be over, hence “was trying to do” and not “tried to do.” Poulenc’s compositions will never cease their work in brokering a relationship between his practical identity and the outside world.

If taken on, the effects of this dialectic re-structuring will need to be accompanied by paradigmatic shifts in areas outside of performance and interpretation. Pedagogy will need to reorient itself. Scholarship will need to reorient itself. Schools will need to reorient themselves. Audiences, recording labels, publishing houses, music festivals, and all other bodies involved in what should be the practice of loving music will need to first acknowledge the practice-based models that currently predominate the world of classical music. Practitioners will need to consciously adopt practices, both individually and communally, which re-situate their agency at the center of the practice of loving music. As previously stated, much of this is already underway within and outside of the world of classical music. Nevertheless, those that have risen to power within the system of classical music as a Foucauldian system of modern power will not easily let go of what they have gained, as evidenced by the chaos currently overtaking the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Michael Powell, “Obscure Musicology Journal Sparks Battles Over Race and Free Speech,” *New York Times*, February 14, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/14/arts/musicology-journal-race-free-speech.html>

In response to editors who overreach in controlling which sources are or are not represented in a critical edition, Rifkin warns,

“Performers will go their own way, whatever editors put on the table for them; rather than viewing that prospect with alarm, editors might want to take it as an occasion to think more deeply about what, if any, obligation they may have beyond the basic job of sorting out the transmission and providing a set of notes and markings sufficiently accurate and consistent to enable a reasonable out-of-the-box rendition.”<sup>185</sup>

Indeed, those compelled to the performance of any sort of music *will* go their own way as they continually search to ground their practical identity in their aesthetic practice. Whether or not the world of classical music is able to present itself as a fertile ground for expression of that identity remains to be seen. Of course, I, for one, intend that it will.

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<sup>185</sup> Rifkin, 18.

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*VITA*





