University of California, San Diego

Classical Music in My Life
Confessions of a Confused Violinist

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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in

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by

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The dissertation of Batya MacAdam-Somer is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2014
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of János Négyesy and Harold Benjamin Somer.
This whole word’s wild at heart and weird on top.
—Lula
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Classical Music in My Life
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by

Batya MacAdam-Somer

Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Anthony Ivan Burr, Chair

This dissertation discusses classical music culture from the standpoint of interpretation, discourse, and personal reflection.
Chapter 1

Alles

What I’d like to do with this text is discuss my time at UCSD; but rather than focus on specific projects, I’m more interested in talking about larger questions that I’ve been trying to sort out through my work. The overarching question I have is this: what are we, as classical musicians, actually doing?

Making music is an obvious answer. But being a classical musician means certain things: it means interpreting scores, and it means operating within a specific cultural system that produces the genre of classical music.

These two factors— a classical music cultural system and the interpretation of scores— are aspects of the practice that I have focused on during my time at UCSD. My interest in them has risen out of a personal need to sort out my relationship to the violin. In coming to UCSD, I wanted not only to become a better violinist and musician, but also to expand my own understanding of what being a classical musician means.

All of this emphasis on meaning stems from a dissatisfaction; there are times when I don’t like being a classical musician. Times where it doesn’t feel good. When I say that, I don’t mean to suggest that I expect everything in life to feel easy and great. But it’s also important to acknowledge frustration and determine whether or not situations can be improved.

Prior to coming to UCSD, I was unsure of my future as a professional musician. On a personal level I knew that if I wanted to pursue a living as a violinist, I needed to address certain problems that were mostly concerned with
performance anxiety. I realized that this was something that could only be solved by myself; but I also felt that I would be unable to do this in a typical conservatory setting.

This reasoning came from an overall sense of pressure that I feel emanates out of conservatories. Pressure not just in a literal sense of having to perform under pressure, being pressured to learn difficult music, pressured to practice, etc. But pressure to be a certain way- to have a particular outlook on making music, with a particular kind of purpose.

This sounds vague- and it was vague to me at the time. I had completed my undergraduate and felt, in all senses, tied up into knots. There were times when I thought I just wasn’t cut out to be a classical musician. But I didn’t want to abandon the violin completely. I didn’t feel as if I had had a chance to give it a proper shot. And I wanted to see if the frustrations I had with classical music lifestyle/culture could somehow be turned around. Perhaps, I thought, if I can redefine what being a classical musician means to me, I can enjoy being one.

I first heard about UCSD through composer friends: “They do crazy things out there”. It sounded appealing to me; many of my positive experiences in New York came out of experimental collaborations with friends. This was mostly because there was a sense of fun and freedom involved in the process, something that had been lost in working on standard repertoire. I think this is a large draw for new music in that it is an arena where classical musicians can feel less inhibited.

On the other hand, the culture surrounding contemporary music practice can be just as rigid and conforming as any conservatory setting. And certainly for me, any lack of enjoyment in playing common practice music came not from the music itself but rather from the approach I was taking. My interests have never laid in specialization. What attracted me to UCSD was the prospect of an environment where I would have the time to evaluate my approach to both the violin and to music in general.

Time. Time to wander, time to get a little off track. Time to really rehearse. As a musician I value time more than anything. Time is luxury- an attitude that has been reiterated over and over to me in reference to being a professional
musician. And indeed, as I have been transitioning into the freelance world during this final year of my DMA, I have been terrible about managing my time. Even though it goes against my better judgment, I take on work because I’m afraid to say no to anything. It’s a common enough problem, and I’ll learn as I go. But I do know that in order to grow as a musician, I have to give myself time to actually hear things, to hear a piece when I’m not practicing or rehearsing it, hear it in other music, be reminded of it in movies, books, etc.

I understand the impracticality in securing ample rehearsal time. But I wish rehearsal time was coveted more, to the degree that musicians felt supported in the decision to take more time for their projects, rather than feel pressured to learn music quickly for the sake of presenting more music more often.

UCSD has been an environment where I have felt, at times, comfortable seeking out this kind of timeline. Part of the art of interpretation occurs, I would say, by following one’s own specific path. My path includes the writing of pop music critic/sociologist Simon Frith. I first came across Frith’s writing while working as a teaching assistant for The Beatles class. Frith’s essay, “Rock and the Politics of Memory”, struck me immediately. The article’s main point- that the perceived failure of the 1960s cultural revolution is tied up in conflicting notions of what rock and pop stood for in the first place- situates music/listeners as part of a larger social narrative. Frith describes ideological shifts within society as expressed through the musical timeline of the decade: youthful optimism of mid 60s pop (The Beatles), mod rock style and irony (Buffalo Springfield, the Who), the emergence of rockstar bohemians as a facet of rock claims to poeticism and emotional sincerity (Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin), and the self-consciously anti commercial sounds of psychedelia (The Grateful Dead). To be a rock/pop listener at the time meant defining yourself through the tensions of pop artificiality/rock authenticity.

For Frith, it was the rock-as-meaningful vs. pop-as-superficial ideology of the time that missed the mark: “I don’t doubt rock’s achievements but its claims.” One reason pop mattered in the first place, he argues, was its comfort in expressing clichés and being silly. The rock world’s attempt to differentiate itself from pop as

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1Simon Frith, “Rock and the Politics of Memory,” *Social Text*, Nos. 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984) p. 62
serious music resulted in a denial that rock singers/musicians were still tied up in mass/consumer culture. In post punk 70s terms, this surfaced as an insincerity- the exact opposite of what rock culture supposedly stood for- thus making 60s rock out as hypocritical and self-aggrandizing. The problem with this, Frith asserts, is that it glosses over why rock mattered (and continues to matter) in the first place. By reassessing rock music of the late 1960s not as a “valid art form”2 but more broadly- as an expression of and backdrop for what it meant to be alive at the time- the appeal of the music can be better understood. For instance, Frith maintains that it is the banality, rather than the eloquence, of the Doors that makes them a relevant 60s rock voice. Like pop, rock is “a music of transitory private pleasures.”3 Ultimately, Frith concludes that both rock and pop are important not for their ability to evoke specific meaning but rather as environments in which we can safely face the ambiguity of meaning in our world.

This essay resonates with me in that Frith approaches musical meaning not as something fixed but as an expression of cultural context. In these terms, listening to/interpreting music means being an active participant within cultural practices. Frith writes, “the politics of pop lie in what people do with it, how they use it to seize a moment, define a time, cull meaning around official knowledge.”4 What, then, are the politics of classical music? What do people do with it? Why does classical music matter?

These questions are always on my mind, and were there when I prepared for and presented my three doctoral recitals. The program of my first DMA recital consisted of Kurtág’s Kafka Fragments, Book 1; Feldman’s Voice, Violin, and Piano; The B Flat Major Violin Sonata, KV 454 by Mozart; reading by Nils Vigeland; and the premier of Clint McCallum’s were running through the woods. Tiffany Du Mouchelle had approached me about learning the Kurtág as she was going to be attending a workshop on the piece and wanted an opportunity to work on it beforehand. I had heard some Kurtág performed before but had never learned anything by him, so I readily agreed. I chose the Mozart because I had

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2George Martin quoted in “Rock and the Politics of Memory,” p. 60
3Ibid, p. 68
4Ibid, p. 68
never seriously studied one of his violin sonatas and decided it was time. Nils Vigeland is a member of the composition faculty at Manhattan School of Music. He was one of my favorite professors at the school, so I was honored when he wrote a piece for the two of us to collaborate on. At this point, 2010, we had performed the work once before and were scheduled to play the work again in New York. I needed to work on it anyway and liked the idea of playing a piece by Nils at UCSD. Nils had studied with Feldman and was greatly influenced by him, so I thought it would be interesting to include a Feldman piece on the concert as well.

Rounding out the program: I was interested in working with a composer at UCSD. One day I overheard Clint McCallum talking about a violin piece he was writing for a friend. I asked him about it and he explained that the work was based on the sound of women’s screams in particular horror film scenes. The idea of the violin as/commenting on women’s voices intrigued me. I had recently watched Robert Altman’s *3 Women*, in which the characters’ identities swap, and began to consider each piece on the recital as a space to explore characters/voices/emotional states. The Kurtág and Feldman both feature voice, so it was interesting to look at ways in which the violin and voice, as well as the piano in the Feldman, shared a voice, became two/three voices, merged and then separated, commented on another voice, had dialogues, etc.

Nils’ piece is for violin and piano and is written without a specific meter or tempo. The violin and the piano operate on their own time but exist within one sound world. Where individual phrases and fragments never line up in the same way, the instruments move through larger section together. Kate Lukács performed with me on this piece as well as the Mozart and Feldman (where Stephanie Aston joined for the voice part). We would typically work on the Vigeland and Mozart in one rehearsal and I enjoyed thinking of the Mozart as if it were in the flexible realm of *reading*. Though in the Mozart our parts were very much aligned, I tried to imagine the motion of the music moving through spaces where time itself became plastic, bendable.

Besides the works themselves, it struck me that each performer involved was a woman. Tiffany and I started the concert out together with the Kurtág
which then moved into Clint’s piece, a solo. I began the second half with the Feldman, featuring Kate and Stephanie, and then closed the concert with Kate, doing Nils piece followed by the Mozart. The order of the concert was influenced somewhat by 3 Women- I particularly liked the idea of beginning and ending the concert with the duos, where by the end Tiffany had morphed into Kate and the voice had morphed into the piano through the experience of the McCallum and Feldman. Through all of this, the violin acted as both a constant (remaining a violin) and as a shapeshifter, trying on the identity of a voice and a piano.

Around this time I had picked up Frank Kogan’s Real Punks Don’t Wear Black. The book is quoted in Simon Frith’s Performing Rites, and Frith mentions Kogan personally in the book as being a good friend and influential colleague. Real Punks features a variety of Kogan’s work: personal essays, album/artist reviews, and excerpts from various blogs he writes for. In an essay from 1995, Kogan compares the vocal styles of Courtney Love and Mariah Carey. He describes his admiration for Hole and the deep emotional intensity of Love’s voice. Carey, he feels, is flippant with her voice. But though Carey is “totally irresponsible” with the emotions in her music he admires her style, writing, “...she’s splashing all over the pool and off the planet, leaping buildings and outracing bullets.” Love, on the other hand, is too careful. “When she sings, ‘Someday you will ache like I ache,’ yes, you really get it, there’s the ache...But, you know, everything else turns off, the juice and the splash of music disappear while she’s delivering the ache.”

I was preparing for this first DMA recital and presented Clint’s piece in Focus class (a masterclass setting). Anthony Burr was running the course at the time and commented that my rendering of the screaming was, as he heard it, constraining the sound. Where other composers might have written the piece more graphically (“play high and fast in repeating rhythms”), Clint notated the screams with detailed rhythmic and pitch patterns- a quarter tone here, the notes moving in this order here, a patterns of four and three alternating, etc. These details were getting lost in my attempt to create a blood curdling sound, to be terrified/terrifying. Anthony had me play some of the work again, where I tried

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Figure 1.1: A few measures from *were running through the woods*

to let go a little and allow the sound to reverberate and sing: to embrace Clint’s violinistic and virtuosic writing. The result was exciting—more energy, more sound. More music.

I can’t remember which occurred first— the Focus performance or reading the bit in *Real Punks*— but regardless, the two experiences are linked in that both address the relationship between earnestness and expressivity within interpretation. I have always leaned towards the “Love” paradigm: thinking in emotional modes of interpretation as in, am I conveying the blank quality of this phrase. The virtuoso aspect— the tactile display— I find more difficult to embrace. There are times when I have a very clear idea of what I want to sound like but I’m physically disengaged, or frustrated, or stressed in some way—the result of which is that whatever I’m going for doesn’t get realized.

I’ve been fortunate to have time to sort this out at UCSD. The Alexander Technique has been incredibly useful in connecting what I’m doing physically to what I’m trying to do musically. I’ve come to realize that virtuosity can be expressive—Kogan’s point about Mariah Carey—and this has given me a new vantage point in relating to the violin. But what’s also important here is the connecting line between two different musical worlds. Kogan’s writing and Anthony’s message in Focus situate *were running through the woods* alongside Courtney Love and Mariah Carey. I can listen to their voices and gain insight into my own practice—and simultaneously become more acquainted with their work, their history, the people they collaborate with, their influences, and so on. In this sense, the practice of classical music is no longer just about conservatory traditions—it’s also about listening and developing a musical sensibility from any source.

Part of my frustration with classical music culture comes from a sense of ex-
clusivity, as if the only relevant aspects of the practice exist within concert halls and university seminars. My experiences—i.e. the Love/Carey/McCallum connection—counter this attitude, which indicates that it could be so for others. But there is little evidence of this within the mainstream discourse: *Strad* magazine, for example. Reading *Performing Rites*, the Frith book mentioned above in connection to *Real Punks*, was extremely useful for my understanding of this issue. In *Rites*, Frith discusses the social relevance of pop music as a component of everyday discourse. He argues that this discourse is at the heart of individual identity and subsequently peoples’ place within society. The problem for Frith arises when popular culture becomes an object of study. According to him, academic approaches to popular culture suffer from their reliance on mid-20th century political theories of mass production and consumption.\(^6\) Popular culture is seen as expressive only through consumerism, leaving out the opportunity for further investigation into the relationships between people and the cultural practices they are involved in. Frith points out, for example, the fact that many of us buy cds or attend movies that we end up not liking. But whether mass organization is seen as manipulative and deteriorating our societies (Adorno, The Frankfurt School), or is held up as positive through ways in which people can actively engage in consumerism (Lazersfeld, 1950s American liberalism, British subculture), the implication is that popular culture is defined solely through the avenues of production/consumption or ideological theory. Frith writes,

> Other ways of valuing a song or film or story, by reference to beauty, craft, or spectacle, are notable for their absence. Cultural value is being assessed according to measures of true and false consciousness: aesthetic issues, the politics of excitement, say, or grace, are subordinated to the necessities of interpretation, to the call for “demystification”.\(^7\)

This approach avoids the problem of claiming authoritarian rights over decisions of good and bad. But it also means that popular culture in the classroom

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\(^6\)I recognize that this book is now nearly two decades old and that Frith’s assessment of cultural studies’ education may at this point be dated. But I choose to include his thoughts in order to set up my own examination of the issues surrounding value judgment within the classical music world.

is based off of research that disregards the value terms within the practice of pop culture itself. As the writer Frank Kogan puts it,

*The message that sociology sends to you, if you are a student, is that you are not real or as important as what you are studying (or why would you be studying it?). But pop throws a monkey in the works by being something that you know how to practice well but whose value hasn’t been established. Academia fends off the monkey...by having the student not study pop but pop’s importance.*

Where Frith acknowledges the thorniness of making explicit value judgments as an instructor, he points out that what is needed is not judgment itself but discussion on evaluation. I see a similar problem within conservatories—indeed all aspects of classical music culture. The importance of classical music is taken for granted as being obvious due to its status as art. There is no need to discuss its value because it has already been established. Yet Frith’s point on the cultural significance of pop music defies this attitude because it demonstrates that musical value is not determined solely by measures of artistic merit but also by terms of use: listening to music for, example, its playfulness, or raucousness, or contemplative mood. If we take Frith’s message to heart, we have to acknowledge that forms of low culture (pop) and high culture (classical music) function similarly within society. Frith writes, “As a matter of analytic strategy I believe that we should begin from the principle that there is no difference between high and low culture, and then see how, nevertheless, such a difference has become a social fact.”

During the 18th century, distinctions between high and popular musical practices were minimal. Musical practices were separated by the amount of training they required. Romanticism emerged in the 19th century, causing new ideologies to form within musical culture. The growing reverence for great musical geniuses centered around Ludwig van Beethoven and the canon of German instrumental music. This became distinguished from lighter classical fare (Frith gives the example of Italian opera) which in turn created new camps of audiences: serious listeners invested in the canon of great music vs. popular music lovers seeking

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9Frith: *Performing Rites*, 19
concerts driven by excitement and spectacle.

This is not to suggest a complete polarization between concert-goers; it rather demonstrates the ways in which the classical music world became organized through historical and sociological developments. As Frith sees it, this redefined the bourgeoisie: “[An] affluent ‘popular’ classical music public came to dominate musical institutions and [merged] with upper-class audiences to adopt ’art’ music values.”

What this meant for classical music was a greater emphasis on a professionalized musical tier as well as an association with social upward mobility. The marking off of classical music practice as an elite echelon involved selling the idea of classical music as a sacred art and then separating it from other kinds of musical institutions (the example of The Boston Symphony vs. The Boston Pops is given.) This created somewhat of a paradox because it meant conflating mass commercialization with the illusion that what was being sold was the “exclusive property” of the elite.

Frith makes the point that though there were decided efforts to separate high and low, those divisions overlapped over the different classes of the day. Up through the late 19th century, listeners were still attending programs that featured both European classical and American parlor music. And the fact that classical musicians at the end of the 19th century (and now as well) performed in both the high cultural sphere (symphony orchestras) as well as the low (musical pits, summer pops) attests to high/low being more a matter of setting than a distinct group of people.

Classical music was also (again, as it is now) used in advertisements, as is described in an obituary for Edward Elgar. In discussing the popularity of his 1st Symphony from 1904 it states, “…enterprising commercialists even engaged

10Ibid, 28
11Frith quotes Lawrence Levine commenting on Dwight’s Journal of Music to emphasize notions of sacred in relation to classical music: “[For Dwight classical music was] an art that makes no compromises with the temporal world, an art that remains spiritually pure and never becomes secondary to the performer or to the audience, an art that is uncompromising in its devotion to cultural perfection.”
12Frith notes that though concerts such as these were becoming rarer, they were still occurring in England as late as 1897.
13Ibid, 30-31
orchestras to play it in their lounges and palm courts as an attraction to their winter sales of underwear.”

Frith cites Irving Wallace’s description of none other than P.T. Barnum’s merchandising techniques for the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind’s first appearances in 19th century America. Amongst other tactics, Barnum plastered weekly bulletins in newspapers emphasizing the purity of her voice and chastity of her character. This created a fervor in anticipation of her concerts and resulted in Lind being greeted with wild enthusiasm when she finally arrived.

“Barnum was selling the classical ideal” writes Frith and also suggests that classical, rather than popular, musicians opened the door for mass marketing possibilities within the music business. In addition then to bourgeoisie aesthetics, classical music’s history also involves ties to mass sales and production. For Frith, the significance of this is that it defines mass culture not in terms of the working class but instead as a faction of the middle class, “characterized by middlebrow concerns, marked by highbrow traces”.

Connecting mass culture with the middle class redefines the high and low conflict; rather than being a social class divider, high versus low describes tensions that are bound up in the ways we process the commercial world through all cultural practices. In classical music, this is expressed in conflicts between performers/audiences (issues of programming) as well as the development of different appreciation camps (new and early music aficionados, symphony subscribers).

For me, recitals have a way of programming themselves. Unlike my relationship to pop music, where I assume a more critical stance on what I choose to listen to, I have a kind of open door policy with classical music repertoire. My philosophy, so to speak, is that I’ll learn something from any work. I’m not so interested in proclaiming pieces to be bad or good- not because there aren’t bad or good pieces (there are) but because, as I see it, my job as a classical musician is to find meaning in a score regardless of how little I like it. Through playing a piece, I can decide whether I think it’s worthwhile. And what find is that even the

14 Quoted in Frith: Performing Rites, 31.
15 Ibid, 32.
16 Ibid, 31-32.
17 Ibid, 32.
most insipid works have their own moments: maybe just one chord, one phrase. When those moments are discovered, it can be really exciting.

This isn’t an attitude for everyone. I admire my colleagues who have strong opinions about which pieces they want to learn and present. And certainly I want to be excited about pieces that I put on my own recitals because it is a reflection of myself and what I’d like to share. But the process of determining which pieces those end up being is something I approach more casually than curatorially.

My second DMA recital may have been the most programmatically ambitious. I wanted to learn the Berio Sequenza VIII for violin and János wanted me to learn Bartók’s Solo Violin Sonata. Both pieces are intensely virtuosic and require the generation of a lot of sound. Both ended up on the recital, which meant that I had to rehair my bow about every 3 weeks. It wasn’t the smartest choice, programmatically speaking. I included the E Major Partita by J.S. Bach to lighten up the program, though the piece is also large in scope in that it consists of 7 movements.

I’m not sure how I heard about Bob Pierzak’s Four Songs, who approached me. But similarly to Clint’s piece, Bob was composing music for a violinist friend and we ended up collaborating on the work as he wrote it. Four Songs are for violin and voice, but are written for one performer. Singing has always factored largely in my musical sensibility— I think of the violin as a voice, a version of what I might sing if I were to use my voice instead of the violin. It could be due to my education in the Suzuki Method, in memorizing pieces before playing them, therefor “singing” them in my head. It could also have to do with my listening habits as a child. I would often go to sleep with the oldies radio on, in replacement of the “endless” tapes that would play my Suzuki rep on repeat, encouraging memorization. I was fascinated by oldies music, the singers, the arrangements, the different styles, the emotions. This was my introduction into the world of pop, music with words and sounds that correlated directly to things I was becoming more curious about: romance, heartache, becoming a teenager, growing up.

I relate to Bob’s writing in Four Songs in that he also draws upon the pop aesthetic, using everyday language such as, But oh, how you do it to me in the
lyrics and often employing/commenting on common pop music chord progressions. The ending of “Do it to Me”, for example, sometimes sounds like a more chilling or anxious version of Beach Boys harmonies to me. I was very excited to include Four Songs on my recital, to present music that operates in both classical and pop aesthetics.

Learning Four Songs also gave me an opportunity to explore new modes of physicality. Drawing the bow became a different action when combined with vocalizing- where previously most of my attention was fixated on the bow, my focus had to broaden in order to coordinate singing and playing. Instead of thinking in technical terms- bring the bow in at the frog, bend the pinky more, watch the bow’s relationship to the bridge, etc- I relied more upon the sound for information. I was listening more. And this resulted in more fully experiencing not only the sound but also the physical sensation of playing the violin. I realized that I didn’t need to micromanage my movements- I could let my concept of the sounds inform the use of the bow. I began to enjoy the physical/aural sensation of the voice resonating through the violin. Compositionally, Four Songs features a large amount of unisons between the violin and voice. Part of the fun of interpreting the piece involves varying the balance between the two and experiencing changes in timbre that occur.

Looking back, my overall impression of the recital is of its physical nature.
The program was technically demanding and required a great deal of physicality. To get through the concert successfully I had to become physically savvy, more aware of how I was using my body. Four Songs provided an interesting context for me to explore the physical act of playing the violin as it related to the voice, and vice versa. But it also encouraged me to consider the physical aspect of playing the Bartók, Berio, and Bach. I remember doing a lot of slow practice, particularly with the Bartók. The chordal writing in that piece is so dense—playing slowly gave me a chance to draw the harmonies out and by doing so, sort out the physical needs required to make the piece heard. I began to hear the piece in slow motion, almost wanted to perform it that way.

I’m never sure whether ideas like that are worth realizing. Is it too gimmicky to present a piece slowly— with the intention of allowing the audience the chance to hear the piece at a tempo that works for the performer? In his essay “Interpreting Musical Performances” David Carrier talks about the morality involved in performing notated works. Is it morally lazy to ignore tempo markings if you as the interpreter prefer a slower pace? Does it alter the piece and change it into a different work? And by doing this, are you no longer operating with classical music aesthetics? Would it be more in the vein of performance art, a kind of commentary on the practice itself?

Lydia Goehr’s *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* examines the prevalence of works within classical music culture. Goehr’s central claim is that, “the work-concept began to regulate a practice at a particular point in time”.18 Looking historically at classical music development, Goehr notes that prior to the 1800s, “serious” (synonymous with what we term “classical” today) music production was primarily tied to the church and court. Rather than being valued for its “absolute” musical qualities, serious music was important for its “extra-musical” connotations, specifically its ties to religion, education, politics, and general conceptions of morality. The beginning of the 18th century saw subtle changes in aesthetic theory alongside developments in musical form. Goehr writes,

*With all their various nuances, these changes were constitutive of the de-

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velopment of fine arts. The changes prompted not so much a new way, but a new expression of a way, to assess art.\textsuperscript{19}

The changes Goehr refers to centered around the concept of mimesis. Prior to this point, imitation in the arts was conceived of as an act of exact representation, imitation itself being necessary in order to link the arts with aspects external to them (as in serious music with its reliance on the extra-musical). The theoretical shift involved mimesis now as the mirroring of an essence or an ideal rather than the act of directly copying something. Theorists continued to cling to mimesis as the recreating the ideals of tangible objects though, which meant that instrumental music, lacking any references of this kind, still did not meet the criteria for being a valuable artistic pursuit. This shift is still significant, however, in that it sets up further developments in philosophy which eventually led to Romanticism.

Art itself was redefined under this new conception of mimesis to include anything that could concretely represent objects’ essences and ideals; Goehr calls this approach an \textit{imitation of the general-via-the-particular}.\textsuperscript{20} Thus poetry, sculpture and painting, architecture, and vocal music became the fine arts.\textsuperscript{21} At this point a distinction began to emerge between \textit{art} and \textit{craft}, art being entwined with beauty and loftiness, craft with function. The fine arts were increasingly associated with the creation of objects of enduring aesthetic value: works of art to be admired (for their own worth) and preserved. This marks the emergence of the work-concept in the second half of the 18th century through the fine arts, though the ideology itself was not fully recognized until the beginning of the next century.\textsuperscript{22}

Though not yet equal to vocal music, instrumental music flourished in 18th century court culture. In this setting, musicians’ main concerns were to please their employers and provide the appropriate music for the occasion. The music itself needed to be adaptable in order to suit various kinds of events within these establishments; this meant that the instrumentation of a piece might have changed

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid, 141.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid, 142.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid, 143.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid, 152.
from one event to another, thus emphasizing the music’s general, rather than individuated, characteristics. This mode of production prevailed as the 18th century unfolded, and some composers of instrumental music, feeling constrained, rebelled. Goehr points to J.S. Bach’s habit of adapting secular works for sacred occasions as well as his use of instrumental material in his cantatas. She also remarks on the seriousness with which he approached both sacred and secular composition, as the content of his surviving music demonstrates.\textsuperscript{23}

Since instrumental music was most often written as a matter of function, authorship of specific music was largely insignificant. Composers often borrowed material from music they had not written in their own compositions, an aspect of imitation that was accepted and even expected.\textsuperscript{24} The work-concept, therefore, did not yet regulate instrumental music production and practice. Rather than being written with any sense of permanency, instrumental music’s existence was one of temporality, a facet of a particular party or ceremony. Although instrumental music was being composed with greater levels of complexity, musical notation still functioned as a guide, rather than a preconceived aural condition, allowing players the ability to adapt the music for various settings. Goehr writes, “[Instrumentalists] treated music pragmatically, as a language or medium for use.”\textsuperscript{25} Extemporization, composing through performance, was a common attribute of musicians and became popular as a form of respectable public entertainment during the 18th century. These events often featured prominent composers of the day, Goehr referring to “an extemporization competition in 1781” between Mozart and Clementi.\textsuperscript{26} Of significance here is that composition and performance were in these instances one and the same, and innovation in compositional development/originality of material was realized through performance itself.

Composers, in these displays of extemporization, were in full control of their music; in cases where they were not performing or directing the performance themselves, they were becoming increasingly concerned with the manner in which their

\textsuperscript{23}Goehr cites David and Mendel, eds., \textit{The Bach Reader}, 33.
\textsuperscript{24}Goehr: \textit{The Imaginary Museum of Music Works}, 179-181.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid, 188.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid, 189.
music was presented. When composers were unable to attend the performance of their music, they often sent instructions which were necessary due to the incomplete nature of notational conventions of the time.\textsuperscript{27} The absence of composers (when learning/performing their music) was felt, as Prince Esterhzy admitted when he stated, “it would be very difficult- especially in the case of new works- to perform music without the personal direction of the composer.”\textsuperscript{28} Composers were thus not fully detached from their scores, blurring the distinction between themselves and their work. The term work itself more often referred to published sets of music, as in “the work of Handel” rather than a single piece. It was in 1798 that individual instrumental units of music were denoted works for the first time. Over the next eight years, new editions of music by Mozart, Haydn, and Bach, all organized in terms of works with individual opus numbers, were made.\textsuperscript{29}

With the turn of the 19th century came a shift in aesthetic ideals. Theorists no longer valued the fine arts for their representation of the world but rather for their “ability to probe and reveal the higher world of universal, eternal truth.”\textsuperscript{30} This was the result of changes in society itself, namely the emergence of a professional middle class whose lives were increasingly less dictated by the church. The void this left in peoples' lives was filled by the fine arts themselves. They became associated with aspects of religion- ritual, holiness, transcendence, etc., allowing for the “separability principle”.\textsuperscript{31} The separability principle refers to the new treatment of the fine arts as being separate from everyday life, from anything routine and ordinary. Take Hegel’s comments that a work of fine art, “cuts itself free from any servitude in order to raise itself to the truth which it fulfils independently and comfortably with its own ends alone. In this freedom is fine art truly art.”\textsuperscript{32}

The qualities that had previously prevented instrumental music from being a fine art- its inability to directly mimic objects and ideals- now gave it precedence

\textsuperscript{27}See Haydn’s comments on his ”Applausus” Cantata in Goehr: The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works, 190.
\textsuperscript{28}Quoted in Goehr: The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works, 191.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid, 203.
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid, 153.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid, 157.
\textsuperscript{32}Quoted in Goehr: The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works, 158.
over the other arts. Goehr points out two specific qualities that became tied to instrumental music under the new romanticized aesthetic: transcendence and formalism. The abstract nature of instrumental music, now a “universal language” allowed it to be perceived as the ultimate embodiment of the spiritual realm. The paradox is that divinity, being extra-musical, could no longer justify music’s worthiness; rather, music’s inner make-up- its structure and form- was perceived as pure and therefore provided for its transcendental qualities.33

The social and aesthetical changes occurring at the beginning of the 19th century allowed musicians- especially composers- to be thought of less as servants to the court and to god and more as individuals in control of their own musical means. This brought about new relationships between musicians and their employers as well as amongst musicians themselves. Copyright laws in Western Europe now gave ownership rights to composers themselves rather than to their employers or publishing houses.34 Romanticism championed the value of the individual and consequently, an individual’s right to free will and expression. Composers were thus compelled to seek out employment that allowed them their creativity. Though they were not granted full “superiority” within society until the 1840s, the impetus to be respected, even revered, took shape at the beginning of the century.35 A new rhetoric surfaced amongst composers, referring to each other and previous masters as gods and saints. This served to uphold the new concept that musical composition aspired to “express higher truths”.36 Music came to be discussed and evaluated on purely musical terms and the purpose of writing music became how to create enduring musical products. These products were expressed compositionally as individual musical pieces; thus the concept of “the work” comes to light.

Goehr’s focus on 1800 as the date for this emergence correlates to her argument that Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), over any other composer of the time, embodied the idealized conception of a romantic composer. While composers before him had desired full control over their music, Beethoven lived during a time

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34Ibid, 218-220.
36Ibid, 209.
when the ability to live as a liberated composer, though difficult, became a reality. When Beethoven accepted a position in the court of King of Westphalia, the employer understood that the composer must be able to, “occupy himself exclusively with the composition of larger works and will not be prevented from doing so by other duties or by economical considerations.”

Goehr’s “Beethoven Paradigm” describes a new kind of composer: a “genius” creating masterpieces. Copyright law now gave composers the ability to claim ownership of their works, which shaped compositional developments in that borrowing material from colleagues was now considered stealing, and worse, unoriginal. Thus musical plagiarism was to be avoided. Protecting ones work from plagiarism created a need for composers to be more specific in notating their scores. Developments in notation included the standardization of symbols as well as clearer copies of the scores themselves. Beethoven’s habit of including metronomic markings was influential in further specifying tempi beyond general directives (i.e., allegro which translates as “joyful”, refers to an upbeat tempo). Metronomes had been used traditionally to keep ensembles from falling apart, but Beethoven’s purpose in providing exact tempo markings went beyond merely keeping time, as this comment to his publishers in 1826 demonstrates:

The metronome marks will follow soon, do not fail to wait for them. In our century things of this kind are certainly needed. Also I learn from letters...that the first performance of the symphony received enthusiastic applause, which I ascribe mainly to the use of the metronome. It is almost impossible now to preserve the tempi ordinari; instead, the performers must now obey the ideas of the unfettered genius.

As is clear from this quote, Beethoven was not at the premier of the symphony he refers to. Unambiguous notation was beneficial also in that it meant composers were assured a proper presentation of their music without actually having to be in attendance at rehearsals and performances. On one level this allowed for a clearer separation between composer and score; but on the other hand, scores

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38 Ibid, 218.
became inextricably linked with their creators. In the absence of the composer, the score became the composer. Similarly, the dominance of the work-concept served to differentiate the activities of composition and performance— but it simultaneously bonded the two practices together in that the practice of composing works involved the concept of the work being reliant on a particular kind of performance, a performance that was “true to a work”.

Here we see the emergence of the concept Werktreue. Now that highly detailed scores became essential for composers to produce, a larger demand was placed on performers to accurately convey exactly what was on the page. Being “true to a work” became the highest priority, which meant, as Goehr notes, being true to a score.\footnote{Ibid, 231.} This lent new tensions to the practice of interpretation. Allegiance to works/scores meant performances had to be both inspired and faithful, creative but only for the purposes of fidelity to the score/work/composer. These contradictions were reconciled by the ideal of performers channeling the composer’s meanings so that performers became in essence the works themselves. In 1888, the writer George Bernard Shaw spoke of the pianist Sir Charles Hall as giving “as little as possible of Hall and as much as possible of Beethoven”, and thus concluded that this would always provide him with an audience.\footnote{Ibid, 232.} Goehr writes, “A performance met the Werktreue ideal most satisfactorily...when it achieved complete transparency. For transparency allowed the work to ‘shine’ through and be heard in and for itself.”\footnote{Ibid, 232.} Though the concept was developed throughout the 1800s, the term Werktreue did not surface within the musical community until the late 19th century. It was first used in German debates over issues of authenticity in performance. While the term later became used in other forms of performative arts, its rareness of appearance within the visual art world is notable in that it reinforces Werktreue not as a concept of works themselves, but as a specific kind of performance.\footnote{Ibid, xxxii.}

David Carrier’s article “Interpreting Musical Performances” attempts to
develop a theory on the nature of classical music interpretation. Carrier goes through differing conceptions of the performer-to-score analogy: performance as quotation (Thomas Mark), as the attempt to reach an idealized yet impossible limit (Charles Rosen), as a perfectly compliant reading of characters (Nelson Goodman), as an intentional sound event bringing out the meaning of a work’s structure (Jerrold Levinson), and as a type linked with a particular text (Richard Wollhem). Though these explanations differ from one another, each present their cases in terms that clearly distinguish subject from object. Carrier emphasizes the important role that the object— the score— plays within the practice by starting the article with a quote from Mark Roskill which says that interpretation involves morality. This is because, (as was noted in the discussion on Goehr) an interpreter is obligated to act with fidelity to that which is being interpreted. Without this understanding, the source material that calls for interpretation is jeopardized and the act of interpreting becomes meaningless. Carrier uses this view on interpretation to examine the unique relationship that performers have to scores. Unlike works of visual art, where a critic’s relationship to a given painting involves highlighting its significance as an artwork, compositions rely on performances in order to exist. Defining the role of a performer’s own voice within the need to preserve the object seems to be the point where theorists diverge from one another. The pianist Charles Rosen sees interpretation as an attempt to reduce the distance between the performer and the score. David Barnett’s remark in The Performance of Music, that performers seek out the stimulus behind what a composer writes and search their own experiences for something comparable in order to find meaning within the piece, describes one way a performer may succeed in melding themselves with a score. Carrier sees this description of interpretation as an “imaginative conception based on a score, but which goes beyond what is written in the score.” By this definition, a musical work is not merely dictated by a score and presented by a player, but rather emerges when a musician engages with a score. Works cannot be defined only in terms of scores but also in recognition of the presence of an

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interpreter. Carrier points out that a performer’s ability to achieve transparency is itself an interpretive decision and therefore refers not only to the composer but also to the performer’s own character.  

Thus, being “true to a work” is complex. If the meaning of the music emerges out of a performer’s own interpretation, which itself is based on the perfect compliance ideal, Werktreue involves first a recognition of both of these elements (the structural components of the work/the general musical knowledge of the interpreter) and then the cultivation of a dialogue between the two. This reveals works as flexible, rather than, permanent entities. For while there is a fixed ideal of the work itself within society (the imaginary museum), the practice itself (interpretation/performance) places works in state of continual flux. Interpretational processes become the crucial moments for Werktreue to go from an ideal to a reality.

Theodor W. Adorno’s draft in Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction examines interpretational processes within the practice of classical music. Written sometime in the year 1949, the draft centers around Adorno’s critique of classical music practice as failing to cultivate what he calls “true interpretation”. The problem, Adorno says, is that the approach to teaching interpretive skills has never gone beyond temporally bound ideological trends. I give a current example of this: Any classical musician today has been taught that the performance of Mozart requires certain musical parameters. In performing a Mozart violin concerto, one is expected to (generally) avoid wide vibrato, heavy accenting, and rubatos unless they are explicitly written in. Now, this is not to say that these stylistic rules did not develop out of someone’s sincere understanding of Mozart’s music. But the widespread codification of this specific performance practice has born the misguided notion that to automatically play Mozart this way is to interpret it. Thus, while aesthetic interpretation passed down from teacher to pupil and so forth has provided a wealth of tradition and a history of interpretative style, a discourse

within the practice itself on “how rendition relates to work”\textsuperscript{48} is under-developed.

The issue of “reproduction” (Adorno’s term, here synonymous with performance, realization, interpretation, etc) cannot be resolved by perfection of technique or in-depth study of the score, but by continued reflection and investigation on the relationship between the two. It is impossible, he says, for any score to be so clearly notated as to dictate correct interpretation; and, on the other hand, it is also impossible for any one performer to perfectly reproduce a score and create the “truest” interpretation. This is of course not meant to encourage lackadaisical approaches to interpretation but rather to be aware of destructive qualities that unnecessary “streamlining”\textsuperscript{49} can bring upon performances. Adorno’s favorite example of this is Arturo Toscanini’s approach to conducting, which he describes as a “fetishism of smooth functioning without musical sense and construction”.\textsuperscript{50}

Toscanini was wildly popular during the first half of the 20th century and Adorno understood this to be the result of shifts in performance practice that had occurred in the Romantic era of classical music (which coincides with Goehr’s theories concerning the dominance of the work-concept).

To illustrate this, Adorno quotes Wagner in his text \textit{Über das Dirigieren}. Wagner describes the changes in playing that he felt Beethoven’s music made necessary, writing,

\begin{quote}
Here, elements that had previously been kept apart to lead their own lives in separate closed forms are...kept together within the most opposed of forms and developed from one another. Naturally the delivery must now be in keeping with this.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Beethoven’s unique development of thematic material, written in the heterophonic, Classical era aesthetic (melody/harmony, theme and accompaniment, as opposed to the polyphony of the Baroque era) demanded that players “sing on instruments, as opposed to merely playing them”.\textsuperscript{52} For Adorno, the significance of Wagner’s comments lies in the implication that this new approach was not merely

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48}Ibid, 163.
\item \textsuperscript{49}The translator notes that Adorno uses this term in English.
\item \textsuperscript{50}Ibid, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{51}Ibid, 165.
\item \textsuperscript{52}Ibid, 165.
\end{itemize}
a stylistic trend, but was instead essential for “rendering audible”\textsuperscript{53} music itself.

The focus on the object- the score- as the basis for expressivity leads Adorno into theorizing the emergence of notation. For Adorno, notation began as the imitation of gesture, an attempt to capture motion, expression, “the echo of animistic shudder, the mimicry of the invisible.”\textsuperscript{54} Over time, the development of harmony led composition away from gestural material. Harmonization led to tonality, which organized gestural material through harmonic structure, thus providing compositions with greater cohesiveness. Notated music was rationalized and became distanced from uninhibited expression, the essence of gesture. Thus the history of notation in the Western world marks the supplanting of discrete gestural impulses for a more connected, linear narrative; musical composition became an attempt to contain and signify gesture. The problem of notation, and thus reproduction, begins here because it is essentially impossible to capture the full meaning of a gesture. For Adorno, this means that notation is actually a non-intentional language: “The written language of music is one devoid of intention...and the units of sense within which music itself operates have nothing in common with intentionality”.\textsuperscript{55} To further illustrate notations’ non-intentionality, Adorno compares notational language to spoken language, noting that unlike literature, musical writing does not deal with words (which correlate directly to specific objects and ideas) but rather with sounds (which are representative of gestural expression).

The non-intentionality of scores provides interpretation with an openness and flexibility. As history unfolds through time, relationships between scores and performers shift. This allows for musical meaning itself to change over time. Adorno writes, “the immanent gestus of music is always that of the present, for the sake of its non-intentionality, and this is why even the most ancient musical symbols apply to the now, not the then.”\textsuperscript{56} To speak of musical objectivity is not to refer to its past, but instead to speak of its current form. True interpretation, then, presents the music in its current state, placing it in context with the present,

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid, 165.
\textsuperscript{54}Ibid, 170.
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid, 168.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid, 188.
Classical music as music of the present was a revelation to me—here was an indication that classical music can be relevant, a reason that it could matter. Through interpretation, classical musicians create a context in which scores become music. And like Adorno, I feel that conservatory culture does not value the process in which true interpretation can occur. Henry Kingsbury’s *Music, Talent, and Performance* examines the conservatory cultural system from an anthropological standpoint and thus has provided excellent examples of this issue. The book was written after Kingsbury spent time at a high profile conservatory, gathering observations on classes and conversations he had with the people involved in the school. Kingsbury himself taught piano at a college of music and acted as the college’s assistant dean. This position involved counseling students: “There was a great deal of ambivalence, concern, and social or personal tension relating their musicality to their most elemental sense of self and identity” he states and it was through these interactions that first led Kingsbury to consider how the social atmosphere affected those enrolled.

One course Kingsbury regularly attended at the conservatory was a masterclass setting where Marcus Goldmann, a pianist known for being a student of the famous Artur Schnabel, coached chamber music groups. Ensembles met outside of class time and either presented music or observed during coaching sessions. Kingsbury notes that Goldmann, the instructor, continually stressed “feeling” the music. Here, “feeling” was always in reference to feeling the music and Kingsbury points out that the instructor continually stressed this a facet of extensive knowledge of the score. To feel, then in this case, meant both expressiveness and objective understanding. As Kingsbury explains, “A fundamental principle...was that students must play what is printed in the score, and yet that they must not play something simply because it is written in the score, but rather because they feel it that way.”

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58 Kingsbury uses pseudonyms for the teachers and students who are mentioned in *Music, Talent, and Performance*.
59 Ibid, 87.
contents of the score—dynamic markings, articulations, etc—and these markings were themselves contingent upon the perceived authenticity of the edition being used. Strict adherence to a score depended on the instructor’s own views on who had inserted the markings into the score—was it the composer, as confirmed by musicological research (i.e., urtext editions) or perhaps a famous performer? Acceptance of scores edited by performers was a matter of whether the instructor approved of the given editor, and this depended on the instructor’s own opinion on the performer’s lineage (who had they studied with?) and interpretive practice. Thus while “the score” was the basis for interpretation, the contents of a score were understood in relative rather than absolute terms. On the other hand, the relativity of the score was not open to just any interpretive approach but was instead considered with deference to the tradition of classical music performance practice. Kingsbury writes,

In initiating class discussion, [the teacher] had no intention of inviting subjective or impressionistic responses from the students. [He] always had a specific answer in mind, and such a discussion was rarely ended until his point was not thoroughly explained but acknowledged...by all members of the class.60 Rather than the students being encouraged to come up with their own ideas, it was the teacher’s opinions that were instilled in the students as reinforcement of the tradition.

From his observations, Kingsbury states that musical structure is itself a construction of social relationships and interactions. His position is provocative because of, he acknowledges, the commonly accepted belief that musical structure is a facet of a text and is therefore of a concrete nature. This is a product of scholarly conceptions of formalism being formed only by reference to scores. This method is, he points out, abstract itself however in that structure “is abstracted from music, which in turn is abstracted from performance”.61 Musical structure, being abstract, is open to debate and this affords classical music with a wealth of interpretive possibilities. Interpretive decisions are (as is illustrated in the description of the class above) just as much a matter of social, as they are of musical, factors which

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60 Ibid, 87.
leads Kingsbury to include “personal, human, and social elements”\footnote{Ibid, 109.} within the makeup of musical structure. He concludes:

*Music doesn’t “have” meaning, but rather...music is given meaning in performance. By the same token...music doesn’t “have” structure, so much as it is given structure in performance. Musical structure is not a phenomenon that leads to its own existence outside of social action; rather, it is a notion that is variously invoked, appealed to, or cited in the context of social action. Musical meaning is social meaning and musical structure a social structure.*\footnote{Ibid, 109-110.}

Musical meaning as social meaning forces us to examine the social environment in which classical music is made. Reading Kingsbury affirmed my own experiences within conservatory culture. And it inspired me to express my views, which came in the form of another voice and violin piece presented on my final doctoral recital. After learning *Four Songs* I was eager to do more singing and playing. But this time around I wanted to use my own words for the text. Recitals are vulnerable environments- getting up on stage in any capacity is- and I was interested in voicing that within this recital somehow. Fear and nervousness have always felt like taboo subjects. I’ve struggled with performance anxiety since an early age and the advice I’ve received the most is just not think about it. While I understand the good intention behind this attitude, the result was that for years I didn’t deal with the anxiety. I felt ashamed to mention it, ashamed to admit that I was struggling. At this point, I’m figuring out ways to work through it; but that inner turmoil will always be a part of my history with the violin.

I was curious to see what it would feel like to address these frustrations on stage. The act of going on stage and presenting yourself as calm and collected- when inside you’re terrified- has always felt fake to me. Maybe this would be an opportunity for me to get out there and feel honest, even if that honesty was ultimately unattractive and uncompelling, performance wise. My friend Nick Deyoe had recently worked with another grad student, combining their text with his music. We talked a bit and decided that I would send him some text for him to set, and the piece would unfold from there. I ended up writing two poems along with
a bio that highlighted failures and mundane details as well as successes. I am happiest with the bio. I wasn’t exactly sure what I wanted to include in it and decided to go with the premise that I would just write whatever came to mind at the time. The strange bits of information that came out were surprising— and I felt that it captured something honest about me. The poems weren’t difficult to write, but I am embarrassed by them. To me they evoke a kind of middle school emotional state— which is also honest, I guess, but maybe inappropriately so.

Nick played around with different settings and ended up writing twelve short fragments that take excerpts from the poems and bios, along with three interludes. My initial reaction to the piece was one of doubt— was this thing that we created any good? It felt bizarre to sing my own words, to perform them. I realized that my original conception of honest presentation was somewhat naive. The words are mine, and I’m up there speaking and singing them— but that doesn’t necessarily mean that their delivery will be or should be sincere. I found that as I worried less about conveying truth or sincerity, the piece began to open up and feel alive. I’m not sure whether anyone will want to perform this piece besides myself; but if someone else does learn it, the work will continue to expand in its relationship to identity/identities. Nick came up with the title lied/lied to hint at this multiplicity of meaning— lied as vocal music, the word “lied” to indicate an alternate meaning from lied, as well as the specific definition of “lied” as a lack of sincerity.

Because lied/lied consists of short bursts of music, there are a variety of ways to perform it. Nick and I agreed that the ordering and amount of fragments presented should be up to the performer. Fragments can be left out or repeated, and the piece can exist as one whole or inserted between other works. For the recital, I organized the fragments into three separate groups and performed them in different locations within the performance space juxtaposed against the other works on the program. I saw lied/lied as a part of the recital as well as commentary on it. I have since performed the work twice: on one occasion performing a single fragment between other performances by other musicians, and the other time presenting the work as a whole. Each time the piece feel vastly different. I like the modular quality of lied/lied, and the fact that I still don’t quite know what it is or what it’s
My second DMA recital was programmatically heavy—three multi movement pieces and one fairly long single movement work. I felt as if I had overwhelmed the audience and wanted to avoid doing so for my final doctoral recital. Besides lied/lied, I had one large piece in mind for the program: J.S. Bach’s *B minor Partita for solo violin*. I studied the work during my undergraduate but had only performed a few movements for an end-of-the-year jury. I felt that I hadn’t really learned the piece properly and was curious to experience performing the work in its entirety.

The *B Minor Partita* is unique in that each movement is attached to a double—a variation on its counterpart featuring faster units of rhythm: i.e. triplets into sixteenth notes. The idea of rhythm as melody has cropped up at various times for me recently. Bach wrote three solo *Partitas* and each are made up of dance movements: *Allemandes, Courantes, Sarabandes, Gigues*. In working on the *B Minor Partita*, I wanted to highlight not only the dance forms but also ways in which the motion of dance itself (and thus, music evoking dance) is melodic. There is a lilting quality, for instance, in the rhythmic motion of the first few measures of the *Sarabande*. In its *double* state, the melody is written in continuous triplets. Where the phrasing rests on beat 2 of the second measure in the *Sarabande*, the line continues in the double.

Thinking in these terms—rhythmic motion and phrasing—helped unify the piece for me. It also provided me with ideas in tackling Kaija Saariaho’s *de la*
Figure 1.4: The first two measures of the Sarabande’s Double terre..., a work for violin and electronics that was included on the recital. I had heard works by Saariaho a number of times but had little experience performing her music. Saariaho’s music is generally atmospheric: gestural shapes rather than distinctive melodies. When I began to learn de la terre..., I was struck by the amount of detail in the score—carefully placed dynamics, complex rhythms, directions for bow speed and placement. Where the sounding result might come off as loose and improvisatory, realizing what was actually on the page involved a great amount of planning and care. The difficulty laid in connecting the material of the work. I felt as if I needed to embody the gestures in order to make them come across musically, yet what Saariaho wrote was extremely difficult to play, hard to make happen physically. Much of the writing unfolds slowly, where subtle changes occur over long stretches of held tones. I would get stuck attempting to coordinate simultaneous actions and was concerned that I would loose the attention of the audience. Recalling the rhythmic drive of the Bach inspired me to think of the Saariaho in a similar manner—with a clear idea of motion and direction, even if that motion moved at an extremely slow pace. What this meant was that I needed to hone in more closely on the actions themselves: truly follow the trajectory of the bow from sul tasto (fingertip) to sul pont (bridge) over a specific number of seconds as evenly as possible without allowing the mind to wander. And through that the process, to think of a steady pulse, an underlying rhythmic tension.

I wanted to learn de la terre... to have a better understanding of Saariaho’s music. Similarly, I programmed Charles Ives’ Second Violin Sonata having previously only played orchestra works by him. I knew a little about Ives from music history courses and was fascinated by his decision to pursue a career outside of music while continuing to write. Growing up, I felt that being a violinist was an
either/or situation- continue to play the violin and be a professional musician, or follow a different path and stop playing. There was never a middle ground where the violin could just be a part of my life- if I wasn’t trying to be a professional violinist, I wasn’t really a musician.

I know this outlook is myopic, but it’s been difficult to shake. Amateur classical music ensembles do exist: community orchestras, chamber music organizations/clubs. There is however a self-awareness in being amateur that often pervades these groups. Sometimes I see this expressed through frustration: disgruntled musicians that are sensitive to their outsider status. Or it comes out as a kind of sycophancy: players who revere professional musicians and idealize their lifestyle. There are, of course, people out there who do not fall into either category. But because classical music contains a professionalized tier, there is a general discomfort/ambiguity in identifying as someone who does not operate (or only sometimes participates) within that realm.

On the flip side, there can be frustration in conforming to accepted modes of professional activity. Ives’ father, a kind of musical mad scientist, encouraged him to take an experimental approach to music. The aesthetic he began to cultivate as a young man was at odds with compositional norms of turn-of-the century America. Rather than yielding to these pressures, Ives became an insurance salesman and was thus free to write music on his own terms. His music reflects this decision in its singular use of harmony, form, and overall expression. Ives composed with the intention of exploring what it meant to be an American composer at the time. And indeed, in his writing you hear both European traditions as well as sounds that reflect American life and culture. The melding of these elements was Ives’ reality; the only way he felt able to express this was to remove himself from the professional realm of classical composition. And by doing so, he created an aesthetic integral to American classical music culture.

Ives’ music is now considered standard repertoire. But the context of his writing- from someone who deliberately chose to be an outsider in the field- prompted me to think outside of classical modes of interpretation while learning the Second Violin Sonata. Church hymns are prevalent throughout the work,
sometimes evoking the rural setting and spiritual fervor of late 19th century religious camp meetings. How might a hymn melody be played in that context? I felt freer to dig in with the bow and give up a certain amount of control in passages that seemed to need uninhibited energy. The form of each movement is such that phrases sometimes collide with little to no transition material between them. Making sense of/embracing the nonsensical nature of Ives’ writing was an exciting challenge; I was thrilled to collaborate with pianist Todd Moellenberg because of his willingness to take risks with the music and push a little farther than comfortable to see what might result.

It took a long time for me to realize that risk taking is an important part of being a musician. It gets complicated with classical music, though, because of the presence of the score. At what point do you start to take risks with what you see on the page? Is being risky only meaningful once you’ve taken extreme care in learning the music, or is there a way to involve risk taking in the process of learning so that it feels natural? Or does that defeat the purpose of taking risks in the first place? There is a fine line that classical musicians must walk in order to be both faithful to scores and musically vibrant, vulnerable, spontaneous.

Finding the common ground between these two realms is what I find exciting about being a classical musician. There will always be a tension- a dialogue-between mimicry and contextualization. Classical musicians can never own their repertoire and scores can never dictate exactly how a player will be present them. This area of unknown is the magic of classical music- what keeps it alive. Adorno writes that the goal of interpretation is simply to find a meaningful context. (footnote) As someone born in 1983, my context as an interpreter includes all forms of popular culture- and also books I read, things I hear people say, scenes I witness. I don’t mean to imply that classical music should somehow be collapsed into popular culture. But I would love to see more recognition that classical music culture does not only revolve around practice rooms and concert halls. And by that, I don’t mean to say that it has to be brought into bars and clubs (though there is nothing wrong with that either). Rather, the experience of being in a bar goes into the interpretive process. I know this happens- but I don’t read about it, or talk about
it in rehearsals.

It’s difficult to express these experiences. I just tried to write about how I’m reminded of the Beatles when playing Brahms...and I deleted it, because I felt that I was rambling and not saying much of anything. I would like to tackle that goal more- the problem is that I’m usually in the middle of doing something when I have these thoughts. When I try to get them down on paper, I struggle...alas, writing is hard. Reading Simon Frith and Frank Kogan (and Lester Bangs too!) inspire me because they are able to weave what they hear into commentary on cultural practices. Kingsbury is right! Musical meaning is social meaning, and those guys are able to write eloquently about it. I hope to be able to do so, or encourage others to do so, within a classical context.

I am calling this paper/dissertation/journal entry a confessional of sorts, because it feels that way to me. Also, one of the most important albums to me at the moment is Madonna’s *Confessions on a Dance Floor*. It’s a kind of hybrid album/DJ set, with each song flowing into the next. What I love about it is the subject matter- the song “How High”, for example, has her questioning her fame: *What is all worth it/ How did I earn it/ Nobody’s perfect/I guess I deserve it.* And then: *How high are the stakes/How much fortune can you make/Does this get any better/Should I carry on/Will it matter when I’m gone/Will any of this matter.*

It’s universal, to be sure- who hasn’t wondered these questions- but it’s also incredibly honest. Madonna has continually reinvented herself and has reveled in her ability to do so. She’s comfortable with artifice. Publicly, there is no “real” Madonna- just a variety of characters that she cultivates through her work. So it’s especially compelling, I think, to hear a song like “How High” and know that at the end of the day, she’s as unsure as the rest of us and she’s willing to share that with us.

With this paper, I wanted to share my outlook, my frustrations, my experiences; because I like when others do so. I like knowing where people are at in their lives because it helps me to understand what they’re trying to say. I’m not sure that I’ve done what I set out to do, but I’m still learning something.
Bibliography


