

Artistic Research in Classical Music Performance: Truth and Politics

MINE DOĞANTAN-DACK

Mine Doğan-tan-Dack is a leading figure in a new generation of artists who are also academic researchers. Mine was born in Istanbul and after receiving a BA in Philosophy from Boğazici University in Istanbul, she studied piano performance at the Juilliard School of Music in New York with Oxana Yablonskaya and was awarded the Scholarship of the Turkish Ministry of Education for Young Artists. While at Juilliard she won the prestigious William Petschek award. After receiving a BM and MM from the Juilliard School, she continued her studies in musicology first at Princeton University (MA), New Jersey and later at Columbia University, New York. She received an MA, MPhil and PhD in Music Theory from Columbia University, studying with Fred Lerdahl. Mine performs as a soloist and chamber musician, and has given concerts in USA, UK,

Germany, France and Turkey. She participated in the Mozart Bicentennial Festival in New York, and recorded the music of JS Bach and Scriabin for WNCN. She also recorded various programs for the Turkish radio and television. Mine is the founder of the Marmara Piano Trio and received an award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for her work on chamber music performance. Her books include *Mathis Lussy: A Pioneer in Studies of Expressive Performance* (2002), and the edited volumes *Recorded Music: Philosophical and Critical Reflections* (2002, Middlesex University Press), and *Artistic Practice as Research in Music* (forthcoming May 2015, Ashgate). Mine was awarded Professorship in 2008 by the Turkish Ministry of Education.

THE MOST RECENT socio-economic wave of neoliberalism that has swept across the globe around the turn of the twenty-first century has been changing the nature and role of higher education, particularly in Europe, in profound ways. Representing for some a ‘neo-capitalist assault’¹ and ‘an aggressive programme’² of reforms, neoliberal policies have been associated with the increasing influence and representation of business interests, and the adoption of corporate practices within universities. In a climate where higher education institutions are expected to become more and more involved with and conform to national – and international – economic, social and political goals, their financial as well as academic autonomy has been under threat; and the independence of their most fundamental pursuit – the independence of academic research – from economic and political interests is considered by many to be increasingly imperilled.³ As market values continue to encroach upon higher education institutions, knowledge produced under their roof is evaluated in financial terms and in accordance with its economic function.⁴ In the words of one researcher, ‘We no longer have independent knowledge underpinned by academic freedom, but a knowledge economy where the value of knowledge is decided by political elites on the basis of its utility to them... [T]he role of academia has become one of servicing the status quo rather than challenging it in the name of justice, human flourishing, freedom of thought or alternative visions of the future’.⁵

While it is questionable, and most likely naïve, to assume that there was ever a time when academic knowledge was pursued purely for its intrinsic worth – i.e. knowledge for the sake of knowledge – it is only during the last decades that the *value* of research and knowledge has become thoroughly intertwined with ‘extrinsic’ values driven by economic interests. Knowledge-producing institutions are now expected to pay much greater attention to evidence of national and/or international economic benefits for the research they fund, over and above the contribution it makes to the sum of human knowledge. Even if knowing is still judged to be better than ignorance, within the neoliberal society it appears to have become a value increasingly associated with economic gain rather than with practical wisdom, and personal or social

1. De Regil, A. The Neoliberal Tide 1: The New Global Capitalist System and Its Global Society. In *The Neocapitalist Assault: The Perils of Globalisation and the Path to a Sustainable Global Economy*. Digital Edition: The Jus Semper Global Alliance. 2001. URL: <http://www.jussempere.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/The%20Neo-Capitalist%20Assault/theneo-capitalis.html>; Hill, D. Class Struggle and Education: Neoliberalism, (Neo)-Conservatism, and the Capitalist Assault on Public Education – a Marxist Analysis. In A. T. Costigan & L. Grey (eds), *Demythologizing Educational Reforms: Responses to the Political and Corporate Takeover of Education*. London: Routledge. 2014. pp. 34–67.

2. Roberts, P. & Peters, M. A. *Neoliberalism, Higher Education and Research*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. 2008.

3. Marginson, S. *Are Neo-liberal Reforms Friendly to Academic Freedom and Creativity? Seminar on Ideas and Issues in Higher*

Education, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne. 2007. URL: http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/marginson_docs/Seminar280507-Marginson.pdf; Anderson, T. Hegemony, Big Money, and Academic Independence. *Australian Universities' Review* 52/2: 11–17. 2010; Reay, D. From Academic Freedom to Academic Capitalism. *Discover Society* 5. 2014. URL: <http://www.discoversociety.org/category/issue-5/>.

4. Chomsky, N. *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*. New York: Seven Stories Press. 1998.

5. Reay, D. From Academic Freedom to Academic Capitalism. *Discover Society* 5. 2014. URL: <http://www.discoversociety.org/category/issue-5/>.

6. Cottingham, J. *Philosophy and the Good Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998.

moral good.⁶ The neoliberal demands of the power structures within and outside higher education institutions that distribute funds are thus re-ordering the disciplinary priorities and processes of research, leading to the emergence of new forms of academic subjectivities shaped by the ‘compromise and calculation’,⁷ ‘self-interested competitiveness’,⁸ and ‘compliance, conformity and surveillance’⁹ that ‘entrepreneurialisation’ brings. Increasingly, researchers are pitted against one another as competitors, and pressurized to prioritize benefitting a corporate or organizational interest by ‘chasing after grants, promotions, and conventional research outlets’¹⁰ over thinking critically, acting with civic sensibility, and ‘perhaps feeling their way towards a new [research or knowledge] paradigm’.¹¹ In fact, as Henry Giroux has noted, ‘increasingly within the university, thinking critically and embracing forceful new angles of vision are all too frequently viewed as heresy’.¹² Various authors have written about the increased *standardization* such a climate brings.¹³ As the power structures that fund research ‘intellectually police’¹⁴ the mechanisms of knowledge production in order to standardize – and thereby render marketable – the new knowledge and understanding researchers achieve, research that does not replicate existing designs so as to converge on the ‘leading project’ of the current ‘research market’ risks becoming marginalized and forced out. Within the neoliberal university, where the processes of standardization continue to curtail plurality of perspectives and diversity of methods, negotiating a research path through the confines of socio-economic forces while simultaneously keeping in clear sight the intrinsic value of the pursuit of knowledge and understanding often becomes a political act, requiring political judgement.

As ‘the latest (the last) scion in the family of knowledge in Western society’,¹⁵ the rise of *artistic research* has coincided with these momentous changes taking place in the power structures, strategies and policies governing higher education institutions. While some would like to argue that, historically, artistic practices have always been based on research processes and therefore constituted artistic research (e.g. Malterud 2010), it is the total intertwining of the large-scale socio-economic and cultural circumstances with the recent entry of expert artistic practitioners into academic research scenes that renders *artistic research* an essentially contemporary phenomenon

7. Peck, J. *Zombie Neoliberalism and the Ambidextrous State*. *Theoretical Criminology* 14. 2010. pp. 104-110.

8. Kenning, D. Refusing Conformity and Exclusion in Art Education. *Mute*. 2012. URL: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/refusing-conformity-and-exclusion-art-education>

9. Kultz, C. Academies and the Neoliberal Project: The Lessons and Costs of the Conveyor Belt. *openDemocracy*. 2014.

10. Giroux, H. *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. 2014.

11. Connell, R. *Neoliberalism and Higher Education: The Australian Case*. In *Universities in Crisis: Blog of the International Sociological Association (ISA)*. 2013. URL: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/universities-in-crisis/?p=994>.

12. Giroux, p. 80.

13. Harland, T. The University, Neoliberal Reform and the Liberal Educational Ideal. In M. Tight, K. H. Mok, J. Huisman & C. C. Morpheu (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Higher Education*. New York: Routledge. 2009. pp. 511-522; Kenning, D. Refusing Conformity and Exclusion in Art Education. *Mute*. 2012. URL: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/refusing-conformity-and-exclusion-art-education/>; Kultz, C. Academies and the Neoliberal Project: The Lessons and Costs of the Conveyor Belt. *openDemocracy*. 2014.

14. Giroux, p. 78.

15. Coessens, K., Crispin, D. & Douglas, A. *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto*. Leuven: Leuven University Press. 2009. p. 44.

– a contemporary academic discipline. From the moment of their inception, discourses of artistic research have been permeated by political judgements, whether these are explicitly stated or remain as unarticulated assumptions. These judgements often have a doubly-political bent: on the one hand, they are made with the ‘external’ pressures of neoliberal policies in mind – just think of the recent expectation, particularly in the context of Research Councils in the UK and Australia, to articulate and demonstrate the measurable impact of one’s research in funding applications, for example, which necessitates ‘thinking of a good idea that might get funding’, and ‘expressing it in a simple catchy statement that politicians will understand’, making sure it ‘conforms with the government policy’¹⁶; on the other hand, these judgements concern ‘internal’ issues regarding the nature and identity of artistic research as an academic discipline. Debates about the *epistemological* and *methodological* controversies surrounding artistic research – can artistic outcomes constitute research on their own? Can intensely subjective, situated perspectives provide the basis for valid methods that yield ‘scientific’ knowledge? Does artistic research improve artistic practice? etc. – are frequently tinted with the political motives of the authors, who represent one or the other interested parties in the discussion: how one talks about artistic research depends on whether one writes as an artist, as a non-practising academic, an institutional policy maker or enforcer, or an artist-researcher.¹⁷ In order to forge a way forward, those who have been committed to making space for and establishing artistic research as a valid and sustainable discipline with equal ‘rights’ within academia often resort to the language of persuasion and emotion – as in politics – while simultaneously aiming to provide rigorous philosophical and theoretical arguments, and/or case studies of first-rate examples of artistic practice as research. When practitioners of artistic research speak on behalf the discipline, there is almost always a moment that is, for them, ‘existential and political’.¹⁸ For example, Borgdorff speaks of ‘the emancipation’ of the discipline from the scientific paradigm that sets the problematic notion of ‘scientific objectivity’ as the basic aim of research, and writes: ‘We knew we would face tough resistance, and, though that may dampen our spirits from time to time, it is a challenge we can meet’.¹⁹ Other authors speak of overcoming ‘the resistance of established

16. Paul, n.d.

17. As knowledge production never takes place in a culturally neutral ‘void’, academic research in *any* discipline is influenced by various motives that can be identified as ‘political’. What makes the emerging discipline of *artistic research* distinctive in this connection is the confluence of externally motivated pressure to become an active player in the neoliberal research game with the internal requirement to demonstrate – to other, well established fields of knowledge – that it has come of age as an academic discipline.

18. Gritten A. Determination and Negotiation in Artistic Practice as Research in Music. In M. Doğanatan-Dack (ed.), *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice*. Aldershot: Ashgate. 2015.

19. Borgdorff, H. The Debate on Research in the Arts. *Sensuous Knowledge 2*. Bergen: Bergen National Academy of the Arts. 2006. p. 20.

disciplines' and allude to the struggle awaiting artistic researchers in this endeavour.²⁰ The need to be 'bold' in undertaking artistic research,²¹ to have 'the courage' to ask the difficult questions concerning artistic experience and scrutinize the 'ideological battlefield'²² between scholars and practitioners appear just as essential and urgent as rigorous theoretical and philosophical arguments in putting the case forward for artistic research to the scholarly and artistic communities. The discourses that grow out of the commitment of artistic researchers to the discipline at times resemble genres of political discourse, leading to a manifesto,²³ or a declaration of value judgements.²⁴

In comparison to other arts practices such as Design and Visual Arts, which were among the first to embrace artistic, practice-led research, music – particularly music performance – has been a late arrival in the scene of artistic research. Whereas the former already involve established bodies of literature that propose a variety of theoretical positions for thinking and conceptualising the relationship between artistic practice and academic research, a shared discourse on epistemological and methodological issues, and a wide range of examples of creative practice as research, in music performance the sense of a community of artist-researchers, as well as a plurality of views on the ways musical performance and research might be integrated, is beginning to emerge only slowly. In the area of musical performance, we are just starting to engage in substantial and sustained debates about the cultural policies, ideologies, academic discourses, theories and methods that are shaping artistic research in this field.

Since there is a more or less established consensus that one of the defining features of artistic research is '*the exploration of the tacit dimension of knowledge embedded in artistic processes and works*' (italics in original)²⁵, and that 'the places' it 'seeks to investigate and illuminate are those of artistic practices and their inherent knowledge',²⁶ most of the projects in musical performance to date have focussed on performing musicians' artistic *processes* in order to explore and reveal the tacit-embodied, and the expert cognitive-artistic knowledge that drives performance making (e.g. Emmerson 2006; Hultberg 2013). As Hultberg noted, 'Considerations in performance preparation and public presentation of works of music often belong to a tacit dimension of artistic knowledge and are therefore important to reveal'.²⁷ In the context of one of my

20. Scheuermann, A. & Oforu, Y. On the Situation of Artistic Research: An Appraisal. In C. Caduff, F. Siegenthaler & T. Wälchli (eds.), *Art and Artistic Research*. Zurich: Zurich University of the Arts. 2010. p. 202.

21. Lilja, E. Throw the Stones Really Hard at Your Target or Rest in Peace. In C. Caduff, F. Siegenthaler & T. Wälchli (eds.), *Art and Artistic Research*. Zurich: Zurich University of the Arts. 2010. p. 131.

22. Coessens et al, p. 146.

23. Coessens et al.

24. Schenker, C. Value Judgments. In C. Caduff, F. Siegenthaler & T. Wälchli (eds.), *Art and Artistic Research*. Zurich: Zurich University of the Arts. 2010. pp. 154-63.

25. Hultberg, C. Artistic Processes in Music Performance: A Research Area Calling for Interdisciplinary Collaboration. *Swedish Journal of Musicology*. Special Issue on Artistic Research in Music 95. 2013. p.80.

26. Coessens et al, p. 17.

27. Hultberg, C. p. 87.

own artistic research projects, I have emphasized the value of revealing the insider's perspective through the first-person narration of the creative processes the performer engages in, without which the artistic issues involved in performance making would remain unarticulated, and wrote: 'The insider's view on what happens in a musical performance – and why – can be brought to light only through a discourse that takes account of and thrives on the situatedness and the very subjectivity of the aesthetic judgements made by the performer in relation to his or her performance'.²⁸

While one of the primary roles of artist-researchers is thus to make known the insider's expert perspective on art making, this is not the only aim, or accomplishment, of their work. Just as significant is the contribution they can make to unmask 'untruths', and thus advance knowledge, in relation to particular traditions of art making. The art of musical performance in the context of the classical tonal repertoire presents a most remarkable, and possibly unique, case in this connection. Throughout the twentieth century, literature, visual arts, dance and drama have been the site of radical artistic experimentation that challenged the traditional and institutionalised 'rules' of art making. While classical music composition did not remain immune from such radical developments, *classical music performance practice, as a form of art making*, remained untouched by the critically reflective and socio-politically engaged stances and discourses surrounding it. Although the reasons for this state of affairs is complex, arguably the strongest factor has been the deeply-rooted ideology that regards the function of classical performance as the communication of the composer's musical intentions to listeners, and demands that any performative creativity be confined by the expressive limits presumably set by the composer through the symbols on the score. The discourses surrounding music performance in the classical genre have been thoroughly permeated by the ideology of *Werktreue*, largely understood as *Texttreue* – faithfulness to the musical 'work' and faithfulness to the musical score;²⁹ furthermore, the notion of 'the music' is often used interchangeably with that of 'the work'. To give but one, randomly selected, example, one author has written:

We value imagination and originality in performers, but recognize that (normally) this serves the music they perform, helping to illuminate its character or make palpable

28. Doğan-tan-Dack, M. The Art of Research in Live Music Performance. *Music Performance Research* 5. URL: [http://mpr-online.net/Issues/Volume%205%20\[2012\]/Dogantan-Dack.pdf](http://mpr-online.net/Issues/Volume%205%20[2012]/Dogantan-Dack.pdf). 2012. p. 39.

29. In the context of her widely accepted account in relation to the emergence of the regulative concept of the musical work at the end of the eighteenth century, Lydia Goehr has written that 'The ideal of *Werktreue* emerged to capture the new relation between work and performance as well as that between performer and composer... The relation was mediated by the presence of complete and adequate notation... Thus, the effective synonymy in the musical world of *Werktreue* and *Texttreue*: to be true to a work is to be true to its score'. Goehr, L. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1992. p. 231.

*its emotional content. By and large, we are not so happy when a performer's imagination distorts or disguises the music on which it is exercised... If it is the responsibility of the performer to realize the composer's intentions, then the first step is, clearly, to try to understand the music as fully as possible... This perspective may be seen as simply a matter of reading a score properly with as full an awareness of its nuances as possible'*³⁰

My purpose here is not to rehearse the various arguments that have been put forward in the musicological literature to criticize the *Werktreue* ideology (e.g. Kivy 1995; Taruskin 1995; Cook 2001; Parmer 2007; Moore 2010). I wish rather to focus on one particular idea that has been pervasive in discourses on musical meaning and performance expression – an idea that is closely related to the notion of *Werktreue*, although it can be argued to have an independent epistemological status. This is the idea that the pitches and rhythms notated in a given musical score exclusively determine their performance expression, which is to be achieved through the (only) correct ‘reading’ or ‘deciphering’ of the musical meaning of the written symbols. This idea was encapsulated in a well-known passage by music theorist Heinrich Schenker who wrote:

If, for example, the Ninth Symphony had come down to us – like most of the works of Sebastian Bach – without express dynamics symbols, an expert hand could nonetheless only place those symbols – according to the content – exactly as Beethoven has done... Performance directions are fundamentally superfluous, since the composition itself expresses everything that is necessary.³¹

While Schenker's words constitute the best-known instance of this widespread view, they are by no means unique; music theoretical and pedagogical texts include an abundance of similar words, the following selections representing two further examples. In his *Traité de l'expression musicale* published in 1874, music theorist and piano pedagogue Mathis Lussy argued that given any page of music:

without annotations and accentuation [marks], [the musician], by simply inspecting, attentively looking over the general contexture³² of the phrases, the arrangement of the rhythmic units, the ascending and descending movements in the melody or the accompaniment, the discontinuities in the progressions by steps or skips, the chromatic

30. Walls, P. Historical Performance and the Modern Performer. In J. Rink (ed.), *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002. p. 17 & p. 31.

31. Rothstein, W. Heinrich Schenker as an Interpreter of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas. *19th-Century Music* 8/1: 3-28. 1984. p. 5.

32. The word ‘contexture’ was very commonly used both in English and in French during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although it gradually dropped out of use, it still appears in French music theoretical treatises of the nineteenth century. The definition given in *The Oxford English Dictionary* for ‘contexture’ is: (1) the action or process of weaving together or intertwining; the manner in which this is done. (2) the linking together of materials or elements, so as to form a connected structure. (3) weaving together of words, sentences, etc., in connected composition; the construction or composition of a writing as consisting of connected and coherent members.

*alterations, the notes with unusual durational values, etc. will find and indicate the notes and passages where any [performing] artist would provide the accents, the places where he would accelerate, where he would slow down, etc.*³³ [my translation from the French original]

The Russian composer-pianist and pedagogue Samuil Feinberg's words sum up the consensus among performers in this context:

*What exactly does 'reading the musical text' mean? Many people might think that I regard the composer's markings as being of primary importance – those governing tempo, expression, and other nuances. But, in fact, I am referring only to the actual notes themselves. This musical notation in itself tells a pianist so much that if he is capable of assimilating it, then all the composer's other indications regarding performance become self-evident... This means that interpretation [depends]... only on the notes themselves, which any true performer can read, hear, and make perfect sense of:*³⁴ [emphasis mine]

One of the extraordinary aspects of the idea that correct performance expression inheres in notated pitches and rhythms is that it constitutes a totally rare moment of agreement between musicologists, music theorists, music psychologists and performers. And it is in this agreement that the moral basis of a regime sustained by what Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has called 'the performance police', i.e. teachers, critics, producers, promoters, directors, agents, managers, etc. lies.³⁵ When authority is shifted from real people, living in specific historical-cultural – and thereby contingent – circumstances and roles, to an *idea* presumably residing in written symbolic representations (in this case, in musical notation/scores, as the above quotations proclaim), it becomes markedly easier to enforce a contingent moral view as the natural universal law, hiding the authoritarian stances of those who dictate it in each instance of a given kind of cultural practice: conveniently, ethical priorities are no longer drawn from individuals or groups, but from an abstract authority with which one cannot enter debate or rational argumentation. In entering the classical music performance profession, performers thus submit to an ideological contract demanding of them to 'acquiesce to the disappearance of their [artistic] practice behind the musical object'³⁶ as represented by notated symbols; instead of encourag-

33. Lussy, M. *Traité de l'expression musicale: Accents, nuances et mouvements dans la musique vocal et instrumentale*. Paris: Berger-Levrault & Heugel. 1874. p. 3.

34. Feinberg, S. *The Road to Artistry*. In C. Barnes (trans. & ed.), *The Russian Piano School: Russian Pianists and Moscow Conservatoire Professors on the Art of the Piano*. London: Kahn & Averill. 2007. p. 23.

35. Leech-Wilkinson, D. Compositions, Scores, Performances, Meanings. *Music Theory Online* 18/1. 2012. 3.3. URL: <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.12.18.1/mto.12.18.1.leech-wilkinson.php>

36. Gramit, (D). Music Scholarship, Musical Practice and the Art of Listening. In R. B. Qureshi (ed.) *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*. London: Routledge. 2002. p. 16

ing them to explore the plurality, and understand the contingency of meanings that *any* written symbolic representation implies, this contract obliges them to search for and adhere to an ‘authentic’ meaning that in reality does not exist.³⁷ Artistic freedom gives way to regulated conformity; aesthetic judgement becomes part of a self-perpetuating political regime. Years of indoctrination in a deeply-rooted tradition shapes the belief that if they learn to recognize the musical meaning behind notated symbols by unearthing *the* musical structures formed by melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and metric patterns these symbols imply, performers would have direct access to the *true* expressive content of ‘the music’, and thereby become *true* performers and be admitted to the hall of great minds of music.³⁸

In reality, what is laid down as learning to recognize *the* meaning behind notated musical symbols, i.e. the ‘objective’ expressive content of ‘the music’, amounts to learning to perform canonical pieces of music in accordance with their performance tradition and within the currently accepted expressive style. Contingency is packaged and marketed as universality and necessity. Yet, unless particular performance traditions and styles are invoked, there are no plausible grounds for maintaining that the tonal-rhythmic patterns gleaned from the score of a given piece of music make specific expressive demands on its performance. In a recent article, Leech-Wilkinson has argued that it is unavoidable to read musical scores as imagined performances and that ‘as soon as we imagine music sounding we imagine it in a particular performance style, the performance style current around us’.³⁹ Through a sleight of hand, the current performance style, the current way of performing canonical pieces of classical music, come to represent *the* expressive meaning embedded in the score. Yet, performance styles and traditions change ‘more than even our most progressive current thinking about compositions and their contexts encourages us to suppose’,⁴⁰ as research on historical recordings demonstrate (e.g. Cook et al. 2009; Leech-Wilkinson

37. Various authors have noted that musical notation, by its nature, is incomplete in representing a composition, and offers only a schematic prescription for performance, thereby leaving room for multiple interpretations and re-interpretations: Ingarden, R. *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*. Trans. A. Czerniawski. London: The Macmillan Press. 1986; Godlovitch, S. *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study*. London: Routledge. 1998; Kania, A. *Pieces of Music: The Ontology of Classical, Rock and Jazz Music*. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Maryland. 2005. The point I make here, however, concerns the persistent *ideology* that dictates how this *semantic space*, left open by symbolic notation, is to be occupied by the performer – by setting very narrow limits for creative manoeuvre and stipulating that there is a correct, true, authentic manner of performing, known, unsurprisingly, by the ‘performance police’. This ideology persists even as performance styles gradually change. Leech-Wilkinson, D. Recordings and Histories of Performance Style. In N. Cook, E. Clarke, D. Leech-Wilkinson & J. Rink (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009. pp. 246-262

38. The late pianist Charles Rosen should be mentioned here as a rare example of a musician who was openly critical of the standardization and conformity that the classical performance pedagogy and profession involve. He wrote: ‘When the conservatory imposes a respectably correct performance with the rigor of authority, it not only encroaches on the indispensable liberty of the students, but hinders their artistic development’. Rosen, C. *Piano Notes: The Hidden World of the Pianist*. London: Penguin Books. 2002. p. 100.

39. Leech-Wilkinson, D. Compositions, Scores, Performances, Meanings. *Music Theory Online* 18/1. 2012. 2.1. URL: <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.12.18.1/mto.12.18.1.leech-wilkinson.php>

40. *ibid.*, 1.3.

2009, 2011). The authority vested in the musical text, as represented by the musical score, in discourses around western classical music performance functions to sanction performances that represent the established tradition as authentic, denying any place to non-standard interpretation. Tellingly, when contemporary authors look for the historical precedents of artistic research in classical instrumental music performance practice, they think of only one name regularly – only one musician, the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, who succeeded in making a career playing differently. Even as one tries to identify other performers who made careers without conforming to then-current performance styles – Rosalyn Tureck, Sergiu Celibidache, or more recently Ivo Pogorelich – out of hundreds of musicians past and contemporary, one could come up only with a small handful of names. Leech-Wilkinson and I have accordingly argued that ‘Creativity in classical music performance, like freedom of speech, is welcomed so long as nobody is deeply upset: the most successful performers are those who represent the score as it is usually portrayed, but just a little more vividly. A system of education – from ABRSM Grade 1 through conservatoire – and censorship – from examiners to critics, producers and promoters – ensures that the status quo appears to be maintained’.⁴¹

While philosophical arguments and theoretical positions based on empirical evidence can be, and have been, put forward to invalidate this authoritarian ideology dominating artistic practices in the performance of pieces of music from the classical tonal repertoire, arguably the most effective and conclusive means to reveal its ‘untruth’ is the methodological tool that is at the heart of artistic research, namely artistic practice. What the artist-researcher needs to do is to take a classical score, remove all original and/or editorial expressive markings – including tempo, dynamic and character indications – and approach it with an open mind, and open ears to hear beyond the current performances of it, to see if the notated pitches and rhythms indeed imply only one kind of performance expression, which presumably would coincide with the expression suggested by the signs thus removed – and with the expression the composer had in mind when placing them in the score. This is indeed the exercise I have undertaken with reference to Rachmaninoff’s *Moment Musical Op. 16 No.5*;⁴² by removing all performance indications, starting with the ‘Adagio

41. Leech-Wilkinson, D. & Doğantan-Dack, M. *How Creative Can a Musical Practice Be?* CMPCP/IMR *Performance/Research Seminars*. 24 June 2013.

42. The score for this piece is available online at: http://japanese.imsip.info/files/imglnks/usimg/3/3f/IMSLP00341-Rachmaninoff_-_Moments_Musical_5.pdf

Sostenuto' and 'pianissimo' markings at the beginning of the piece, and contemplating *only* the pitches and rhythms in accordance with the grammar of expressivity that is associated with the classical genre (and hence, without attempting to cross over genres by turning a classical piece of music into jazz, for example)⁴³, I have attempted to come up with a reading that makes musical sense *as an example of classical music*, while radically departing from the established tradition of performing this piece⁴⁴ (Audio example: performance of Rachmaninoff's Moment Musical Op. 16 No.5).⁴⁵ The fact that it still works as a persuasive piece of classical music is sufficient to reveal the 'untruth' of the traditional discourse that stipulates a one-to-one correspondence between notated symbols and their performance interpretation and expression. An account of *the process* of developing this interpretation presented in the audio example would explicate the various kinds of expert judgements that played a part in deciding what works and does not work musically and aesthetically. However, it is the 'product' that is most significant for the purposes of the argument I have been advancing in this essay: it is the artistic outcome itself that conveys the message – more powerfully than discursive reasoning and argumentation, in my view – that the emperor had no new clothes all along. To avoid any misunderstanding, I do not put this artistic result forward with the aim of replacing known – and institutionally sanctioned – ways of making persuasive musical performances in the classical genre, but to make legitimate space for non-conforming performances that still make artistic-musical sense and are persuasive, at least to some listeners. The main purpose has been to demonstrate, through artistic research, that what performance pedagogical discourses present to aspiring performers as the only way is in fact only *an option*. Coessens et al. have written that 'Artist researchers will have to counter the pressure both within the arts and from outside to conform to known academic traditions. The kinds of questions that they need to raise and address do not necessarily fit these traditions'.⁴⁶ I would add here the need to resist, when seeking answers to some of the difficult questions concerning artistic practices, the pressure to conform to known artistic traditions. When such questions disturb deeply rooted regimes of practice,⁴⁷ the answers put forward by artist-researchers, in addition to producing knowledge, acquire the quality of speaking 'truth' to power – in this case the power of the 'performance police'; the

43. A discussion of the principles of this expressive grammar (constituted by such practices as phrasing and grouping, among others), and what the consequences of eliminating these principles might be for performances of classical tonal music would be the topic of another essay and another artistic research project. For a discussion of the philosophical issues surrounding expressiveness in music performance, see Doğantan-Dack, M. *Philosophical Reflections on Expressive Music Performance*. In D. Fabian, R. Timmers & E. Schubert (eds.), *Expressiveness in Music Performance: Empirical Approaches Across Styles and Cultures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2014. pp. 3-21.

44. A traditional or standard interpretation of this piece, as performed by Nikolai Lugansky, is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fl_Udw22tXw

45. Recorded at the Vestry Hall Studio, University of West London, on 15 July 2014. I would like to thank Dr. Simon Zagorski-Thomas and Mark Brocklesby for their assistance during the recording of this performance.

46. Coessens et al, p, 23.

47. One such 'difficult' question is: 'Why are performers driven to such levels of anxiety about stylistic accuracy when a very different reading of a piece would harm no one? Who is hurt by a new interpretation? And if no one, why are [classical] performers put under such constraints?' See Doğantan-Dack, M. & Leech-Wilkinson, D. *Radical Interpretation in Classical Performance*. Recital, workshop, discussion at the University of Surrey. 30 October 2013.

knowledge thus produced generates political overtones, particularly as it simultaneously disrupts the ongoing neoliberal standardization and ‘intellectual policing’ of knowledge production and understanding that threatens to progressively replace the value of critical thinking within higher education with that of developing competitive market skills, and gives ‘students/consumers the impression that they can choose and study highly individual programmes, but in fact treats them to mass-produced competencies in increasingly – within Europe – interchangeable modules’⁴⁸ I would nevertheless maintain that even as those committed to the discipline of artistic research justifiably feel the urgency of taking, asserting, and arguing for political positions in their discourses – whether against the neoliberal agendas that many thinkers have come to regard as antithetical to democratic values⁴⁹, or against disciplinary agendas that attempt to push artistic research through the ‘eye of the needle’ of scientific paradigms⁵⁰ – their greatest power in creating a sustainable future for the discipline will come not from any *a priori* political agenda that aims to carve out a niche within academia either in conformity with or opposition to the expectations of neoliberal higher education policies, but from keeping in clear sight the ‘categorical imperative’ of the academic – and, I would add, of the artist – as ‘truth-teller’.⁵¹ Artistic research will rather draw its strength from continually prioritizing and aspiring to realize the value of scientific and artistic knowledge and truth through artistic research projects, even when these might disagree with some immediate market values and academic managerial interests. Any consequences that might then ripple out from the fulfilment of this (some would say, old-fashioned) value and disrupt the pressures of the neoliberal power structures to ‘funnel artistic endeavour through the restrictive confines of social, economic and political expectations’⁵², will be ‘political’ in the best sense of the term, making sure that the authoritarian tendencies of the gatekeepers of these power structures are kept in check, and the plurality and freedom of artistic expression remain within their sight and at the forefront of our values driving artistic research.

48. Gielen, P. & De Bruyne, P. (eds.) *Teaching Art in the Neoliberal Realm: Realism versus Cynicism*. Amsterdam: Valiz. 2012. pp. 5.

49. Bourdieu, P. The Essence of Neoliberalism. *Le Monde diplomatique*. 1998. URL: <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>; Harvey, D. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1995; Giroux. 2014.

50. Coessens et al, p. 21.

51. Bailey, M. & Freedman, D. (eds.) *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance*. University of Chicago Press. 2011.

52. Coessens et al, p. 22.

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