Expressiveness in music performance
Empirical approaches across styles and cultures

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Dedicated to Alf Gabrielson, Bruno Repp, and John Rink for their pioneering work, leadership, and inspiration in music expression research
Philosophical Reflections on Expressive Music Performance

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Grau, traurig Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1808)

Within contemporary music performance studies, research in expressive performance is exceptionally conspicuous not only for its long history, but also for its role as the motivating force in the systematic development of quantitative and computational methods in music psychology and musicology during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Since its beginnings, which coincide with the emergence of musicology as a scientific discipline during the last decades of the nineteenth century, expressive music performance research has been closely connected with psychology. Indeed, the earliest research in this area was motivated by the rise of scientific psychology and its influence on theories of musical rhythm and performance pedagogy during the nineteenth century (Doğantan-Dack 2006). While the American psychologist Carl Seashore (1866–1949) is standardly referenced as the founder of expressive performance research (e.g. Clarke 2004; Gableston 1999, 2003), the first systematic—albeit qualitative—empirical investigations of expressiveness in music performance were carried out a generation before Seashore by the Swiss theorist Mathia Lussy (1828–1910), who over a period of 40 years diligently annotated musical scores in order to record some of the details of timing, dynamics, and phrasing he observed during live performances by contemporary musicians, including Hans von Bülow and Anton Rubinstein.

The psychological theory proposed by Lussy, which put forward the idea that expressiveness in performance is the behavioral manifestation in sound of the performer’s affective response to the formal and rhythmic features of the music (Lussy 1874, 1883, 1903), was a hugely important step in firmly establishing the irreversibility of the phenomenon of performance expression to empirical investigation and theory. While it had much influence on his contemporaries (e.g. on Hugo Riemann, see Doğantan 2002, p. 140), Lussy’s research was overshadowed during the twentieth century by the preference for quantitative methods in studying expressive music performance. Introduced by Seashore in the 1930s, such methods evolved over the last two decades to include the use of sophisticated software and digital signal-processing techniques, allowing researchers to obtain rich data about the acoustical properties of musical performances. It is owing to these...

1 "Grau, deiner Freund, ist alle Theorie, und grün des Lebens goldner Baum."
2 For a detailed discussion of Lussy’s theory of expressive performance, see Doğantan (2002).
3 Prior to Lussy, discussions on music typically discussed performance expression in terms of the intuitive notions of sensitivity and inspiration, and regarded it as being inexplicable. See Doğantan (2002, 2012).
(ongoing) dramatic advances and refinements in the capabilities of research tools employed in measuring various performance parameters that our understanding of what lies behind one of the most complex achievements of the human mind and body has considerably expanded. The success of the methods of psychology in leading the way towards greater knowledge of expressive music performance understandably prompts music psychologists to give their research tools the pride of place in this endeavor. One music psychologist, for example, has written in the context of a discussion of performance expression that "for much too long, psychologists have deferred to philosophers in matters concerning expression. I believe it is time for psychologists to reclaim the study of expression. Many, if not all, issues concerning expression are such that they can be resolved empirically." (Juslin 2003, p. 274).

One of my main contentions in this chapter is that there are certain fundamental questions that have a direct bearing on the identification, description, and exploration of the phenomenon of expressive music performance, yet cannot simply be resolved empirically. It hardly requires any rigorous argumentation to maintain that the bedrock of any scientific research is based on philosophical thought. Any empirical enquiry necessarily proceeds from certain philosophical assumptions about the way the world is and/or is understood to be, whether these remain implicit or are explicitly articulated. Research never functions in a philosophical void. What we research and how we go about researching it are always in the grip of our underlying philosophical views regarding what is real, what can be known, and what is worth knowing. Consider, for example, the question "When does a musical performance start?" While it cannot be answered only by observation and empirical analysis, it is by no means a trivial question as far as expressive performance research is concerned. Should the researcher simply assume that a musical performance starts with the first sounding musical event, and the listener's experience of the expressiveness of a performance with the onset of the first musical note? If the answer is yes, why? Is it at all self-evident that the touching image of the octogenarian American pianist Charles Rosen (1922–2017), who "tottered on stage with the help of a walking stick" (Wilson 2011) towards the grand piano to play his last London concert on 15 May 2011, was not part of the singular expressiveness that audiences heard in the sounds of his performance? And is it a cut-and-dried fact that Rosen's private experience of this show public performance from the green room to the piano as the lights dimmed would have had no meaningful impact on how he rendered his music making on this particular occasion expressive? When indeed does a musical performance start as far as the sources and experience of performance expression are concerned? It is not difficult to see that the answers researchers give to such questions would influence the identification of the kind of phenomena they would then go on to explore in attempting to understand the nature and function of expressive music performance. Pondering such philosophical questions often highlights new relationships that might otherwise remain hidden from the researcher's perceptual and conceptual view.

To date, there has not been any systematic and thorough philosophical study of—and consequently any philosophical discourse surrounding—expressive music performance, as distinct from, albeit related to, philosophical studies of music performance (e.g. Levitin 1990; Kivy 1997; Goddewitch 1998; Davies 2001). While there is a long tradition of philosophizing about the expressiveness of music in Western scholarly discourses, there is no similar tradition of philosophizing about the expressiveness of musical performances. My aim in this chapter is twofold: to initiate and hopefully inspire the establishing of a tradition of philosophizing about expressive music performance, and to draw attention to the immense complexity of the phenomenon. My enquiry is driven by the belief that a human science that probes and is aware of its own philosophical bases is a more "human" science (remember the terma "love" and "wisdom" that are part of the literal meaning of "philosophy"?), and it is in the spirit of the plea John Sloboda made in the context of research on music and emotions: that our efforts to simplify and deconstruct phenomena, which are the driving principles of scientific endeavor, "need to be constantly held up against the richness of everyday...musical experience to ensure that it is the full experience we are attempting to explain, and not some conveniently simplified portion of it." (Sloboda 2005, p. 392).

The structure of the chapter is as follows. I first revisit Seashore's definition of expression in performance, leaving apart some of its conceptual and methodological components and implications. This is followed by a discussion of the epistemological premises that have pervaded psychological research on expressive music performance: expression as the performer's structural interpretation of the music, and the attendant view that regards the performer as the sole agent behind the sounds of a musical performance. In the section that follows, I scrutinize the connection between performance expression and emotional expression in an attempt to identify potential universals of expressive music performance. My examples throughout the chapter are drawn from both Western and non-Western cultural contexts. Needless to say, this chapter provides only a selective tour of the philosophical landscape around expressive music performance, and only from the perspective of analytical philosophy, and each researcher should ideally go back to explore this rich scene in greater detail by him- or herself.

Revisiting Seashore: expression in performance as deviation

It is extremely difficult to define "expressive music performance" and delineate clearly the object of research, since ontological questions regarding the properties that should be considered essential to its definition are dependent on ontological questions about the nature of music and performance, phenomena that are notoriously for having highly fuzzy conceptual boundaries themselves. The difficulties involved in any attempt at a universal definition of either term are well known (e.g. Bohman 1999; Schechner 2009), and each related concept we introduce into the discussion, such as "performer," "listener," "musical instrument," "interpretation," and "emotion," only adds to the complex challenges involved in seeking an unequivocal definition. To date, the analysis and interpretation of data in music psychological research have largely proceeded from a definition of expressiveness that is derived from Seashore's Psychology of Music of 1938 (Clarke 2001), which states that "the artistic expression of feeling in music consists in aesthetic deviation from the regular—from pure tone, true pitch, even dynamics, metronomic time, rigid rhythms, etc." (Seashore 1938, p. 9). The longevity and resilience of the basic components of Seashore's definition have not been due merely to their amenability to rigorous empirical research. Various cultural and historical circumstances played major roles in providing full methodological support to deeply ingrain them within the mainstream of research. One has to remember that Seashore's definition was a direct outcome of the empirical possibilities and context afforded by early recordist technology. Because the initial findings of quantitative research in expressive performance originated in acoustical data, made available through audio-recorded materials, Seashore identified the "acoustical" as the dwelling place of performance expression, and specified expression as deviation from the acoustical regularity of pure tone, even dynamics, etc. Consequently, the sonic properties of musical performances quickly became the primary focus of research, establishing and fortifying the belief that this is the site where data about the essentials of performance expression are to be unearthed. The natural alliance between the core element of scientific methodology, namely the repeatability of the experimental procedures and reproducibility of data, and the most basic affordance of audio recordings, namely the repeatability of the sounds of a performance, further augmented the belief that the essence of music performance is sound. Contemporary modes
of consumption also contribute significantly to such an ontology of music performance. Given that the majority of musical experiences, not only in the West but also globally, arise from interactions with recorded music (Doganian-Dack 2008), audio recordings have come to be regarded as the normative representation of musical performances: they are not merely viewed as ways of disseminating what is in essence a different kind of phenomenon, but constitutive of the essence of that phenomenon in significant ways. In the imagination of those who use recordings, the recorded sounds can represent simultaneously the music, the performance, and the performer’s artistic identity. As Nicholas Cook recently wrote, “mechanical, electrical and digital technologies have progressively redefined performance: technology and business practices would at one time have been considered mere vehicles for the dissemination of music; and therefore peripheral or extraneous to the study of the music itself, whereas I am claiming that they must now be seen as central to an understanding of music as performance.” (Cook 2010, p. 16).

Until recently, the combined effect of these cultural-historical circumstances has been such that contexts other than the acoustical, and thereby the audio-recorded, for exploring expressive music performance have been largely neglected in research. In reality, music performance continues to inhabit many other ontological realms, even if recordings may define—statistically—the largest context for everyday engagement with performances. For example, across different cultures, people involved in a unique, real-time creation of a musical performance in a specific spatio-temporal location—as performers, listeners, or perhaps in a role that is not clearly identifiable as either—routinely attribute valued expressive meaning to the event. However, because there is very little research in music psychology and musicology on live performance,2 we know little about if and how these expressive meanings generated during a live event resemble in their source, structure, function, and aesthetic value the expressiveness that psychologists and musicologists identify, or everyday listeners hear, in audio recordings. Furthermore, “expressive performance” can legitimately be extended to cover widely familiar phenomena such as going over in memory a live or recorded performance one has experienced (Lucas et al. 2010), or more specialized ones such as imagining a performance while reading a musical score (Repp 2001). Whether such contexts should be part of expressive performance research cannot be decided on empirical grounds alone, but requires philosophically based decisions about what constitutes musical performance.

One of the methodological consequences of the support that Seashore’s definition of performance expression received from various cultural-historical contingencies is that what is quantifiable—and verifiable—because the definition of the phenomenon being studied. While this, by itself, does not invalidate the definition, not infrequently it leads researchers to proceed as if what can be measured by means of current technology is sufficient to account for the source and experiential content of the expressiveness perceived in musical performances. To give an example from an area that I am familiar with from first-person experience, one of the most important aesthetic criteria in classical piano performance is the constancy of touch within a musical phrase, which can range from several notes to a complete phrase. The ability to deliver such a unit with a constant touch is one of the hallmarks of the expert pianist. Constancy of touch, from the pianist’s perspective, is related to evenness in the depth of key depression, as well as control over intensity (which is not equivalent to dynamic loudness, but includes control over timbre). Although the relationship between the acoustics of piano touch and the auditory perception of piano tone is still not well understood (Glellessen et al. 1998; Goebel et al. 2014), constancy of touch is a clearly perceivable phenomenon and contributes greatly to the expressive quality of piano performance in our contemporary culture (Doganian-Dack 2011). The acoustical details that technology allows us to measure in a piano performance in effect represent the surface of this constant background within musical units. In piano performance, touch is the expressive skeleton on which the pianist infolds the expressive flesh. Because this element that remains constant in expert piano performance is not part of the conceptualization of piano touch in empirical research, and because it is not clear how it can be quantified, it receives much less attention compared with other, more easily measurable variables.

While the second phase of expressive performance research, starting in the late 1970s (Clarke 2010), continued to emphasize the sonic features of performances methodologically, Seashore’s original definition underwent at this stage a conceptual transformation to adapt to the dominant twentieth-century scholarly discourse that regarded the musical score as the primary ontological locus of music. This conceptual transformation would lay the foundations of an epistemological agenda that turns to the score in search of the basic explanation for the sonic features of a musical performance. Although Seashore himself identified deviation as departures from the acoustical regularity of pure tone, true pitch, etc., and did not relate expressive performance conceptually to the musical score, contemporary research has to a great extent interpreted his definition as departures from the nominal values noted in a musical score. Clarke has explained this preference as a methodological convenience by pointing out that “the overwhelming majority of research on expressive performance has focused on western art music” (2010, p. 36), which is typically noted. Nevertheless, psychological research on expressive performance has remained strikingly close to the ideological legacy of an ontological commitment to the score as the identity condition of music within the majority of twentieth-century musicological discourses. Even if music psychologists do not necessarily believe in the sanctity of the musical score and subscribe to the idea that it is immutable, making the score the point of reference has nonetheless largely supported a score-based ontology.

The inadequacy of conceptualizing performance expression as deviation from the values noted in a score has already been noted (Clarke 2004, 2010). Not only is such a conception oriented exclusively towards one particular musical tradition, but also it regards the score as ‘the piece’ in a kind of disembodied, ahistorical fashion, apparently divorced from any of the cultural assumptions about how the notation might be understood and interpreted” (Clarke 2004, p. 84). Consequently, it reinforces an ontological hierarchy between music and its performances such that the latter is construed as derivative of the former—a philosophical stance that scholars of the recent "performative turn" (Cook 2001, 2003) have been ardent to leave behind. One line of inquiry that could potentially circumvent the problems of a definition of performance expression that is reliant on the score is to conceive "deviation" as departure from a representational performance of a given piece (Repp 1997, Goebel 1999). As far as empirical enquiry is concerned, however, this particular conception of performance expression is not unproblematic. Determining which performances should be considered prototypical is very difficult, given that we do not know how far the boundaries of stylistic constraints can be taken as far as the expressiveness of performances are concerned. It is not possible to determine on empirical grounds, without

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2 By ‘live performance’, I mean a performance event that includes the real-time dynamics of performer–audience communication and live communion and effective exchange, as well as the rituals surrounding the event, such as the dimming of the lights, the appearance of the performer on stage, etc. In this sense, real-time performances on a Disklavier in a lab setting to record MIDI data, although mode live, are not covered by this term. Joni Davidson’s pioneering work (e.g. Davidson 1993, 1995, 2001, 2007) that established the non-sonic aspects of performance, such as the bodily movements and facial gestures of performers, as vital in the generation and reception of performance expression has led the way in widening the locus of expression beyond the acoustical realm in research. For an example of research that studied the continuous responses of audiences to a live performance in a natural concert setting, see McAlpine et al. (2004).
making certain aesthetic (and ideological) assumptions, at which point the performance of a Mozart piano sonata, for example, crosses over into an expressively unacceptable stylistic realm. What is representative in terms of performance expression is a function of cultural-historical contingencies, and in order to more fully understand its nature and conditions, multidisciplinary approaches that move beyond quantitative psychological research are necessary.

An alternative understanding of the notion of "deviation" has recently been introduced into expressive performance research by musicologist Daniel Leech-Wilkinson. Stating that deviation from the score is in fact the norm in a musical performance, since it is not possible for humans to perform without any deviation, Leech-Wilkinson argued that what makes performances expressive is the deviation within acoustical parameters from the established local norm, or change (Leech-Wilkinson 2009). Accordingly, what generates expressivity is how much the notes "differ from their surroundings and from what we've come to accept over the last few moments of listening to the (local) norm. Difference from the score is not what's expressive; change is" (Leech-Wilkinson 2009, chapter 8.1, paragraph 15). This alternative definition, however, still inheres some problems. First, in a trivial sense sounding music always involves acoustical change because its basic material, i.e. sound, consists of vibrations—that is, change; in this sense, another criterion appears necessary in order to determine the (minimum) degree of change in any acoustical parameter that can qualify as expressive. Secondly, by itself change is neither necessary nor sufficient to define performance expression. Just as not all deviation from the notated values is necessarily expressive, nor all change is necessarily a source for, and part of the experience of, expressiveness: a performer can affect a change in acoustical parameters that is nevertheless not expressive. More importantly, non-change can also be expressive. Having defined performance expression in terms of change, Leech-Wilkinson notes that "expressivity has less of a role in the performance of minimlistic scores" (Leech-Wilkinson 2009, paragraph 8.1.17), presumably because there is relatively less noticeable change in the acoustical parameters. However, any definition that connects expressivity to particular styles is epistemologically problematic: certainly, there are listeners who find the sounds of minimalist music in performance expressive, i.e. generative of a valued affective response triggered (at least in part) by the sounds of the performance. In fact, monotony, constancy, and continuity can all make the sounds of a performance expressive.

Since both the musical score and audio recordings encourage the abstraction of music from the cultural-historical circumstances of its creation and reception, perhaps the most serious weakness of research on expressive performance that revolved around the musical score, on the one hand, and the sonic properties of performances, on the other, has been the dehistorization of the epistemological agenda, sustaining an ideology of autonomy. In the majority of twentieth-century musicological discourses the score has been read and interpreted as representing abstract musical structures. Audio-recorded data—by suggesting the severance of the causal ties between the performance context, the performer, and the recorded performance—can also prompt researchers to understand the sounds of a performance in similar terms, i.e. as abstract musical structures. The total integration of expressive music performance within the wider historical and cultural ideologies and practices has only recently started to be rigorously articulated in musicological and psychological research, particularly by scholars associated with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM 2004-09: <http://www.charm.ruhull.ac.uk/index.html>) in the UK. CHARM has been highly influential in re-evaluating musicologist's priorities and moving musicological ontology from musical scores towards performances. Although its research agenda was exclusively shaped around recorded performances, projects carried out within CHARM have, from the start, been wary of the assumption that the fundamentals of expressive music performance can be understood by studying the sonic properties of music without any reference to culture- and history-dependent factors. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's work (Leech-Wilkinson 2009), for example, brings to light how the changing styles of performance, evident from listening to early recordings, are related not only to the gradual shift in the parameters of music modified for expressive purposes, but also to period tastes, discourses, habits of communication, etc. In Clarke's words, "Recordings from different times and places demonstrate that expressive performance cannot be divorced from its cultural and historical context" (2010, p. 45).

This new epistemological posture is a welcome move towards developing alternative definitions and approaches that promise to leave behind the problems and weaknesses inherent in Seashore's definition of expressive performance—alternatives that acknowledge not only that music performance is more than sound in integrally involving other sense modalities and the body (e.g. Davidson 2012) in its creation and reception, but also that in fact the sounds of a musical performance signify more than sound such that the expressive meanings emanating from the sounds of a performance are the reflection of non-sonic factors, of historical-cultural contingencies, and of complex social dynamics that have not been targeted by the mainstream conception of expressive performance, namely expression as deviation.

More than sound: some epistemological issues

Although the minute examination of the sounds of a performance does remain one of the most important and rigorous methods in expressive performance research, it is crucial for researchers to remember not to treat acoustical data as a source for revealing universal psychological principles at the expense of other kinds of (non-sonic, cultural, and historical) variables, the traces of which may nevertheless be imprinted in the sounds of a performance. In this section, I consider in greater detail some of the epistemological premises that dominated expressive performance research for the longer part of its history—premises that have been closely connected with the ideology of autonomy mentioned earlier.

One of the implications of the mainstream conception of performance expression as deviation from the notated values in a musical score has been the epistemological necessity of defining the artificidal activity of the performer in relation to a score. Consequently, the sonic features of a performance have been considered to be a manifestation of the performer's score-mediated interpretation of the music. Clarke has commented that the rationale for defining performance expression in terms of deviation from the score is "that what makes a performance expressive is what the performer brings to the piece beyond what the composer specified in the score" (Clarke 2004, p. 84). According to this view, music making is concealed in terms of the score-mediated relationship between the performing agent and the soundscaping music. This assumption has been naturalized to such a degree within the research literature that it is still not uncommon to find assertions to the
effect that "the ultimate goal of research on expression in music performance is to understand what exactly the performer 'adds' to a written piece of music" (Juslin 2003, p. 280), or that expression is "the deliberate shaping of the music by the performer, the imposing of expressive qualities onto an otherwise 'dead' musical score via control of variation of parameters such as intensity, tempo, timing, articulation, etc." (Goebel et al. 2008, p. 196). However, there is no evidence to demonstrate that performers, at any stage during the process of learning and performing a noted piece of music, ever mentally represent the score as exactly noted and then transform this representation to a later stage to include performance expression. The experiential reality for the performer is such that the visual symbols in a score are always already perceived as "music," together with various expressive details that are understood immediately as constitutive of the music and are not inferred from the score. Indeed, there is a long tradition within instrumental pedagogy advocating the idea that making music requires mentally hearing and imagining the notation as music (Dogantant-Dack 2012). Crucially, each of these mental processes is mediated by cultural norms and expectations, as well as personally idiosyncratic factors, and in this sense the score does not inherit a fixed performance expression. Consequently, the visual, objectively identifiable and fixed entity that researchers regard as the musical score, and the audible, subjectively construed phenomenon that defines the score for performers are not ontologically the same phenomenon. Furthermore, in our contemporary culture, learning and performing classical music routinely involve listening to recordings in addition to studying scores; in fact some musicians learn music primarily aurally by repeatedly listening to recorded performances by other musicians. Without extensive research about the music learning practices of performers, the nature of the relationship between the performer and the score remains inadequately theorized. To be sure, psychological research has its specific concerns that are frequently "foreign to the wider study or practice of music" (Windisch 2011, p. 329), and a conception of the performer's role that is delimited in a particular way can still yield some results as far as general psychological principles in relation to musical performance are concerned. However, there is a need to take into account the performer's complex experiences and conceptualization regarding music and expressive performance, which are always embedded within specific cultural contexts, if psychological research is to pursue a more complete understanding of the nature of the performer's artistic behavior in making music—and to avoid the charge that it attempts to explain expressive performance without the performer.

In this connection, it is essential to consider in some detail one of the most persistent conceptualizations of the relationship between the performer and expressive performance, namely the cognitive principle of structural interpretation as the determinant of performance expression. The idea that the expressive details of performance emerge from the performer's structural interpretation of the music—typically, though not necessarily, mediated by the score (e.g., Clarke 1988, p. 11)—had lasting popularity. Some of the problems inherent in this widely accepted view have already been noted (Cook 1999). The epistemological issues arising from a definition of performance expression in terms of the performer's structural interpretation of the music are in fact part of a larger question stemming from the idea that tonal—rhythmic patterns, as the constituents of the musical structure, determine performance expression because they establish the expressive content of musical structure. This view is such a pervasive component of discourse in expressive performance studies that one finds it in almost any scholarly text on the subject. "Demands of the musical structure" (Gabrielsson 2003, p. 231) is routinely referred to as one of the basic sources of expressiveness in performance, in fact, it is frequently put forward as an aesthetic necessity, as when Clarke writes that while there is a wide range of factors that contribute to the expressiveness of a performance, these nevertheless function "ideally in conformity with the dictates of structure." (Clarke 1991, p. 187). According to Juslin, "there is no substitute for a thorough understanding of the musical structure in shaping interpretation. This aspect of expression may be guided by structural analysis, by consulting the composer's writings, and also by studying visual graphs of performance variables alongside the score." (Juslin 2003, p. 280). In its extreme version, this position was reflected in the much criticized performance and analysis literature of the 1960s and 1970s, where an analysis of the metrical, rhythmic, and tonal structures of a piece would be used to stipulate the location and extent of the expressive details of a correct or ideal performance (Cook 1999, see also Chapter 16). The view that particular tonal—rhythmic structures generate a particular expressive content is one of the most long-standing assumptions, with roots entangled in music theory, performance pedagogy, and music aesthetics. Because it has been deeply embedded in many diverse discourses on music, it presents one of the thorniest philosophical issues for students of expressive performance. In the context of music theory, as early as the eighteenth century the composer—theorist Johann Matthias Monnotheo devoted an entire chapter to the expressive character of various "tone-feet" in his Der vollkommene Capellmeister (1739/1981). He argued that the iamb, for instance, which is a rhythm pattern consisting of a short sound followed by a long one, is "moderately gay, not haughty or running." The trochee, on the other hand, presumably possessed something "aesthetically more radical; nothing of the serious nor inaudible" (Mattheson 1981, p. 353). Derek Cook's The Language of Music (Cook 1959), which expounded in detail the presumed expressive content of musical intervals and other tonal patterns, is a twentieth-century manifestation of the very same tradition. In this connection, one should also mention the tradition of "energetics" in music-theoretical literature that regards tones and their combinations as sonic embodiments of psychic energy. According to this line of thinking, the roots of which can be traced to ancient ideas regarding the centrality of music in even though the term "energetics" is a specifically twentieth-century coinage (Rothfarb 2002, p. 927), expressive qualities of music result from the dynamism and flux created by tonal combinations. Importantly, various theorists who are associated with the energetics tradition, including Heinrich Schenker, Ernst Kurth, Hans Merzann, Kurt Westphahl, and Viktor Zuckerkandl (Rothfarb 2002), all display an antiformalist perspective towards musical materials in asserting the emergent dynamic properties of tones and their expressive effects as natural laws. As Rothfarb notes, "they claim apodictic certainty for their analyses independent of any historical consideration" (Rothfarb 2002, p. 928).

It is, of course, correct to say that if the musical materials did not have any expressive potential it would not be possible for composers to compose at all; once the notes within a particular idiom begin to form musical ideas and take shape as a piece of music, they seem to suggest expressive meanings of one kind or another. What is not at all clear, however, is the nature and extent of the relationship between musical materials and expressive content, and how one might go about setting the limit for the expressive potential of musical structures. What is the expressive potential of the interval of the tritone? Or of the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony? In spite of the resistance presented to any alternative approach by this deeply rooted tradition insisting on an ontological connection between particular kinds of musical structures and particular kinds of expressive content, it is in reality very difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate that the materials of a musical idiom have any expressive properties in the absence of a (real or imagined) performative context. In this connection, Leech-Wilkinson has recently argued that "much of what is said about pieces is actually about performance of pieces: manners of performance have become absorbed into the scholarly imagination of source." (Leech-Wilkinson 2012, paragraph 1.7), and that it is therefore difficult to state "what is the expressive potential of a score" (paragraph 3.14). This is because "as soon as we start to think about the relationships between notes we have to imagine those notes sounding. And as soon as we imagine music sounding we imagine it in a particular performance style, the performance style current around us." (Paragraph 2.1). The implication is that there are no plausible
research has long recognized the complex social dynamics involved in music making as a source of expressiveness in the making and reception of performances. Considering the performance practices of non-western cultures becomes a stark reminder of the integral role that listeners play in the emergence of this social dynamics, which then fully impact on the music created by the performers. For instance, in Indian classical music, the norms of music performance are such that audience approval or disapproval, manifested through vocal and physical gestures, actually and immediately affects the performer's music making. According to Bonnie Wade, the most significant point concerning the audience–performer relationship in this tradition is "the cultural value which is placed on the very idea that there should be an audience–performer relationship and, more specifically, that the audience should be an active agent in the performance" (Wade 1984, p. 16). To a large extent, the expressive details of a performance emerge as the performer responds to the attentive (or not) of the audience, and to their gestural and verbal interjections indicating approval or disapproval (see Chapter 10). In another cultural context, recounting a particular performing experience as a sūr player in the Arabic tradition, Ali Jhâd Râcy notes that:

- the overall structure (of the improvisation) paralleled the auditory–emotional behavior of the listeners, whose communicative silence alternated with ecstatic and correctly timed exclamations voiced increasingly as the qâdî (cadential pattern at the end of a phrase) began to approach its conclusion. In a sense, the content was the sonic manifestation of a social interactive process. From an insider's vantage point, such an emotionally conceived and interactively produced rendition was creatively distinct and qualitatively different.

(Wade 1984, p. 106)

The expressive meanings emanating from the sounds of a performance are thus the reflection of a complex social dynamics, and cannot be understood without taking into account the role of the listener in the performance-making process. There is uncodified information also in the western classical tradition suggesting that the sonic details of a live music performance are bound up with the social context of the event. Enrico Caruso, for instance, is known to have said that he could achieve the correct mental state in order to sing his top Cs convincingly when he was in the presence of an audience (see Davidson 1997, p. 215). Because there are so few studies of live music making in contemporary performance research we do not yet know how to theorize this social dynamics in relation to performance expression. However, in a certain ontological sense, the audience is always present in the sounds of a performance, whether it is live or recorded: if one of the defining features of music performance is the creation of a temporal experience with the intention of drawing out some (affective) response, the function of the audience is always present within the performance making even when audiences do not exist as such (as when a string quartet performs for itself, with all four members fulfilling the role of both performer and listener). What is needed is a new body of qualitative research that explores the relationship between the performers' perception and representation of their audiences and the sounds of their performances—between listening ideologies and performance practices.

Arguably the first step in this direction is to scrutinize—and challenge—the highlyiloized musicological ontology of listening that rests on a blind spot generated by a normative (and idealized) listening mode, veiling the existence of a great variety of types of listening in the real world.

8 “You recent projects that deal specifically with issues related to processes of live music performance are the 'In the spotlight: Qualitative Transformations in chamber music practice' directed by Mike Doggett-Dack (http://www.mrd.mq.edu.au/alchemy/), and the "SongArt" project led by Kathryn Whitney (http://www.songart.co.uk)."
For instance, in order to theorize the reception and impact of expressive music performance in various cultures it does not seem necessary to define the listener as a person whose primary attention is on the music making. Bohmman notes that in Javanese cultural contexts music of the gamelan has such an unremarkable existence that "there is no historical tradition of audience listening" (Bohmman 1999, p. 31). The implication of such a listening attitude is an intermittent focus on the performance, as opposed to the kind of "highly disciplined modes of listening intimately connected to the historical origins of [musicology] in which 'trained listening... is deemed normative'" (Riddle 2011, p. 68). As Clarke has noted, contemporary listening attitudes and practices, including "musicalological" listening, "did not just appear from nowhere; they have their own history and have come about by means of a historical process that continues to exert its influence" (Clarke 2005, p. 9; see also Johnson 1995), and in that sense they are cultural-historical practices through and through. Consequently, researchers need to be mindful of the fact that perceiving and responding to the expressiveness of a musical performance can indeed happen through many different modes of listening, including meditative listening, fragmented listening, listening in a live context as part of a community, alone through the headphones of an iPod, while sitting quietly in semi-darkness, while vocalizing and dancing to the music, etc. Without further research about how these different listening modes influence the reception as well as the creation of expressive performances, it is impossible to rigorously theorize what the sonic aspects of performance contribute to the experience of expressiveness.8

In working towards such a theorization, one area of research that has been under-explored to date requires closer attention. It should be remembered that while performers and listeners are inseparably connected not only in practice but also conceptually in the creation of a musical performance, we currently have little knowledge of whether their experiences of performance expression are similar or differ in important ways. There are certain facts about performing music that suggest qualitative differences in the experiences of listeners and performers in relation to expressive performance. For example, while different listening modes can generate different degrees of focusing in and out of the performance, the performer, to be able to sustain the music from its beginning to its end, needs to stay with it throughout. Even though performers report having thoughts that are irrelevant to the task at hand, they still maintain an expressive performance while performing (Clark, et al. 2007), it is highly unlikely that such uninterrupted cognitive intrusions, which perhaps have an affective function, last longer than mere seconds. I am not aware of any performance tradition where the performer can turn his or her focus away from music making for any significant duration without further research about how these different listening modes influence the reception as well as the creation of expressive performances, it is impossible to rigorously theorize what the sonic aspects of performance contribute to the experience of expressiveness.8

Another important point is the intense physicality of performing. While some may maintain that in contexts where the activities of performing and listening can be differentiated more or less clearly—such as in the western classical tradition—the difference between the experiences of the two parties is a difference in degree, performers, unlike listeners, come to know and represent the expressivity details of the music they play not only cognitively but also kinesthetically. Information regarding expressiveness is imprinted in their musculature. There is evidence from psychological research that non-practicing listeners to western classical music hardly remember any of the expressivity details of a particular performance, such as timing, dynamics, and tone color, once the performance is over, even though they are sensitive to these details while the performance is going on. The listeners' "memories of heard nuances are rarely established to anything like the same degree as those of performers" (Snyder 2003, p. 92), who commit these expressive nuances not only to implicit memory, but also to muscular memory. It is possibly the absence of this peculiar kinesthetic representation of the expressive features of performed music, among other factors, that is responsible for the listeners not remembering them once they leave the performance venue.

Potential universals: the emotion connection

In the preceding section, I highlighted the role of listeners in the emerging expressiveness of a musical performance, while also noting some of the experiential factors that set listeners and performers apart in relation to performance expression. In this section, I ask whether there is any characteristic we can claim universality for in relation to expressive performance. In this connection, I put forward the hypothesis that there is one particular feature that subsumes all those who engage with an expressive music performance, and this is the affective involvement that it elicits. In my view, if there is one universal trait of expressiveness in performance it is that those engaging with it invariably have a culturally and/or individually valued affective experience. Citing philosopher Stephen Davies' work (Davies 1994) in support of his argument, Justin has written that "occasionally the perception of an expressive performance will also evoke an emotion in the listener (he or she is "moved"), or even an aesthetic response... but such a response is not required for a listener to hear the music as expressive" (Justin 2003, p. 276). While there are several different definitions of emotions in the psychological literature (Frijda 2004), the most common approach treats them as discrete experiential categories with labels such as happiness, sadness, anger, etc. Defined in this way, emotion is indeed not necessary for the perception and experience of the expressiveness of a performance. However, affect, as the subjective feeling component of an experience, is necessary for anyone to identify a music performance as expressive. I do not see how one can experience and know a music performance as expressive independently of any accompanying valorized feeling (not necessarily leading to a named emotion). While machines can "learn" to recognize performers and their expressive styles based on the acoustical features of their playing (e.g. Widmer and Zanone 2004), because they do not have subjective feelings they cannot be said to experience and know a performance as expressive.9 Importantly, the affective experience I posit as a universal in relation to expressive music performance is the basis of the value attributed to the performance and the performer, who may or may not set out to express or communicate the same or a similar affective content. Even if there is a mismatch between the affective content that the performer communicates (perceived/recognized affect) and the content of the affective experience the listener has (felt affect), in order to be able to identify the performance as expressive at all, the listener needs to respond to it affectively—through a felt affect of one kind or another.

8 Research in music sociology that explores the relationship between music and construction of agency, identities, and meanings by listening subjects (e.g. Dehler 2000) provides a productive platform for exploring the relationship between different listening modes and performance expression.

9 There is scientific evidence (Damasio 1999, p. 543) that affective understanding is rooted in embodied first-person feelings, and not in the mere observation of the actions, gestures, or movements of other agents. Accordingly, unless humans can experience feelings subjectively, their ability to recognize them in other agents is impaired. Patients with such impairment can still describe the movements they observe accurately in terms of shape, intensity, and rhythm, but cannot attribute any affective content to them.
Crucially, the existence and appropriateness of an expressive decision in performance can only be judged by its effect on those who experience it. In a discussion of the Arabic tarab tradition, Marcus and Solis (2004) explain the integral role of the direct affective exchange between performers and listeners in this cultural context, and note the issues involved in teaching tarab performance to western students, such as teaching them to feel the tonic note or the notes of emphasis in emotionally meaningful ways (the word "tarab" means "ecstasy") and refers to an affective state created and shared between listeners and performers. They report that one student, who was assigned a recording of a live performance by the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum to analyze and develop a sense of the aesthetic trajectory of the performance, stated: "I heard the audience on the recording loud and white, but I do not know why. I cannot tell why such responses happen when they do no. I just have not made the connection between what is happening in the music and why the audience all of a sudden is getting so excited" (Marcus and Solis 2004, p. 163).

This kind of affective response to a performance is in fact the basis for qualifying as "understanding" a particular performance style associated with a particular musical idiom. As the expressiveness of a performance is culture bound, one cannot recognize and experience a performance as "expressive" without feeling at least some of the idiomatic affective responses that go with it. While affective response is thus at the heart of the experience and understanding of the expressiveness of a performance, this does not necessarily lead to the assumption, frequently articulated in psychological research, that perception in performance is often the expression of an emotion by the performer, who can also communicate it to the listener. Psychological discourse often conflates emotional expression (which is not identical to an affective response involving a feeling) and performance expression, treating the latter as an ontological subcategory of the former. For instance, Juslin writes that "the performer's expressive intention affects almost every aspect of the performance; that is, emotional expression in performance seems to involve a whole set of cues—or bits of information—that are used by performers and listeners" (Juslin 2001, p. 314). Again, when discussing expressive performance parameters, Gabrielsson argues that "after all, expression in music is predominantly associated with emotional expression" (Gabrielsson 2003, p. 231). One of the problems with this conceptualization is that much of the empirical evidence that is provided in support of it is obtained in laboratory settings, where it is discovered that listeners are able to identify the emotions the performers are instructed to express and communicate. However, the fact that performers can make an excellent sound "happy" and that the listeners can identify this expressed quality as "happiness" does not necessarily show that this is how performers and listeners engage with performance expression affectively in real life, i.e., through the mediation of tagged emotions. In fact, there is evidence suggesting that frequently there is little correlation between the performer's experience of musical expression and that reported by audiences, and little consensus on the exact expressive content that performers and listeners experience (Whitney, 2014). Performances can be expressive without expressing a specific emotion (see Chapter 16); and listeners can develop affective responses to the expressiveness they perceive in a performance without necessarily believing that the performer is expressing an emotion. What has not been explained so far in psychological research is why the expression of emotion in musical performance should be a valued attribute over and above the valued affective experience that the expressiveness of a performance elicits.

The problem with an ontology of performance expression that is dependent on emotional expression is that it excludes reference to a wide range of phenomena and concepts that are directly related to the ways in which people experience performance expression, even though they do not represent emotions as such. Humans do not experience and conceive of music performances only as expressive (or as expressive of emotions); they experience them as beautiful, sublime, revelatory, magical, ecstatic, shocking, poetic, awe-inspiring, etc. (Zentner et al. 2008). There have been few attempts in research (Fabian 2006) to establish links between the findings of empirical study and the discourses surrounding expressive musical performance—including the layman's everyday discourse, performance pedagogical discourse, and the discourse of the performance critic. All of these discourses represent in essence the linguistic construction or translation of the felt qualities of expressive performance, i.e., its sensory-affective values as in aesthetics. Without taking into account the diverse felt qualities that are part of the experience of performance expression and that are variously described in discourse, the affective component of expressive performance remains thinly conceptualized and restricted to the discrete emotions. With limited scholarly literature on the relationship between the empirically identified and analyzed features of expressive performances and these diverse discourses surrounding them, "we are still far from understanding the aesthetic aspects of music performance and experience" (Gabrielsson 2003, p. 258).

If valorized affective engagement is a universal feature of expressive performance, I would argue that the evaluative judgement it invites is another universal—a key aspect of a music performance culture appears to be evaluative discourses around expressive music making, and indeed one of the important functions of performance expression may be that it creates a social opportunity for the practice of evaluative judgements. Cross (2009) has noted the evaluative basis of musical participation in cultural contexts, and emphasized that such participation—even only in a listening mode—can have effects in managing social relations through the platform it offers for evaluative judgement and critical action. Participation in an expressive performance can thus form the grounds for self-expression, identity formation, and value affirmation through the practice of evaluative discourse. To cite some examples, Brezis (1985, p. 401) notes that "singing is one of the few areas of Fiji Island life in which overt criticism or praise are possible without disturbing the delicate balance of social relations," and that the process of evaluation is central to understanding the expressiveness of kavali singing. According to Feld, (1990, p. 220), for the Kaluli, participating in a song performance involves making demonstrative and emotional evaluations of the performance in a communal and dramatic manner, and such evaluations constitute an integral part of the experience of performance expression. Different cultures bring different discourses to the process of evaluating an expressive performance, highlighting the kinds of values they attribute to it. For instance, in the African Manding context, listeners evaluate a music performance that achieves the desired effect by saying "it has entered me" (Knight 1984). And in many folk traditions in China, performers are evaluated in terms of their success in "adding flowers" to the melody. All of these are ways of describing the effects of expressive performance through the mediation of cultural-aesthetic values, which in turn feed back into the making of expressive performances by creating aesthetic expectations. How people talk about performance expression influences how musicians bring it about, and affirms values in relation to the aesthetic significance of performances. Discourses surrounding performance expression remind us that there are values to affirm in relation to expressive performances over and above their quantifiable content. In this connection, one important avenue to follow in advancing our understanding of expressive performance may be to start the inquiry from an expressive quality that is experienced, asserted, and valued by listeners, and move towards the sounds and sights of performance, rather than starting from measurable performance parameters.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the methodological and conceptual implications of some of the views that have defined the core of contemporary research on expressive music performance.
The selective tour of the philosophical landscape I have provided has necessarily left some of the research in the vast literature on expressive music performance untouched—research that may begin to address some of the pressing issues I have discussed. I have repeatedly drawn attention to the immense complexity of the phenomenon of performance expression, and to the integral role that cultural-historical contingencies play in its creation and reception. I have persistently made an appeal for the inclusion of philosophical enquiry within the field in order that expressive music performance may be more fully understood. Due to limitations of space I have not been able to prove other various crucial factors that contribute to the expressiveness of performances, including the social-symbolic meanings of the particular instrument(s) being used (e.g., how its connection with Zen philosophy and its symbolism as the instrument of enlightenment would affect the creation and reception of the expressiveness of a shakuhachi performance in the Japanese tradition), the role of mediation technologies in exploiting performance expression to construct artistic agencies (e.g., how artistic filming techniques used in documenting musical performances influence the expressiveness that listeners believe they hear in the sonic aspects of performances), the basis of not only the value attributed to being expressive in performance but also that attributed to being expressive in a specific manner (why after all do musicians spend a lifetime perfecting the art of being expressive in performance within particular aesthetic boundaries?), and the related—and in my view crucial—issue of the politico-philosophical implications of performance expression (do the ways in which performers continue to be expressive in the western classical performance tradition, for example, in any way encourage and sustain values that we would, in other contexts, be quick to criticize, such as the values associated with capitalism, commercial, imperialist, authoritarian, and even blindly scientific agendas—hence the need to philosophize on performance expression from the perspective of the Continental tradition and humanistic enquiry as well?). Needless to say, in this chapter I have only sketched the philosophical surface of this highly complex and extremely rich domain of human behavior. Paving the way forward will require balancing the large proportion of quantitative and computational research with qualitative—and even practice-led—studies, keeping the value-ladenness of the phenomenon fully in view, and engaging directly with the philosophical assumptions and implications of research. However, above all it will require a spirit of inquiry guided by a recognition of the discrepancy between scientific theory and phenomenal experience, portrayed by the epigram at the beginning of my chapter—a recognition that our efforts as researchers should be aimed at capturing more of the richness of phenomenal experience. Indeed, research would greatly benefit from such an acknowledgement that even as scientific analysis and theory continue to advance our knowledge of how performance expression is the way it is, this is pale indeed by comparison with the wondrous bars, tints, and shades of the human experience of expressive music performance.

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CHAPTER 1. DOLLGASTAN-DAKE. PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON EXPRESSIVE MUSIC PERFORMANCE


