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Undisciplining music: Artistic research and historiographic activism

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Abstract: *Disciplining Music*, by Katherine Bergeron and Philip Bohlman, was an iconic book along the road towards rethinking the relations between what were then three apparently separate fields: historical musicology, ethnomusicology, and musical practice itself. Since that distant 1992, the upsurge in theoretical perspectives and research experiences in these and other fields has intensified so much that this very interaction has spawned new opportunities for reflection and action. This article focuses on the potential of the interaction between artistic reflection and alternative historiographic perspectives, one that will be applied to the canonic repertoire of Western classical music to show how the existence of a precise tradition can turn performance into a laboratory for experimentation for both musicians and scholars. Taking as a reference point the relation between activism and performance in the writings of Richard Schechner and Dwight Conquergood, and the idea of "declassification" as shaped by Antonio García Gutiérrez, I propose the concept of *historiographic activism* as a specific framework for possible applications in Artistic Research to tap music's potential to bring about individual and collective changes.

***Keywords**: Performance Studies; periodisation; activism; declassification.*

Since they first arose, debates on artistic research have retained strong ideological undercurrents. As recently pointed out by Mine Dogantan-Dack (2015), this propensity was initially not so evident in the field of musical performance as it has been in other areas. The militant tone of our engagement, however, is intensifying by degrees: Paulo de Assis is applying an increasingly ideological dimension to his projects at the Orpheus Institute; in Brazil, Catarina Domenici, Isabel Nogueira, and others are also heading in this direction; and Dogantan-Dack's aforementioned article openly considers the role of Artistic Research in the face of the threats of neoliberalism and rising authoritarianism.

However, if anyone has conceived performance as a task of resistance against ruling powers, that person is certainly Richard Schechner, the founding father of Performance Studies. Turning art into a transformative process for individuals and society as a whole was Schechner's focus from the time of his early "activist" ideas—as he defined them—on "environmental theater" (Schechner, 2015). In his more recent book, *Performed Imaginaries*, released when he was over 80-years-old, the relationship between performance and activism becomes a call to new forms of militancy in which creators and scholars collaborate in the name of performative principles, rather than ideological ones (Schechner, 2015).

Artists, activists, and *scholars*: how could we not take it to mean us, we who are trying, in varying proportions, to be all three things? I know that to speak of activism is something very weighty indeed. And if we think of the role music can play in this context, our first glance turns to musical realities outside the Western classical tradition, such as creative protest performances, educational projects, collaborative musicology, and so on. But struggle and protest can also be effected through reflection, and this dimension is particularly relevant to classical music, with its powerful symbolic charge and the peculiar place it holds in the past and present of our society. As Mark Evan Bonds (2006) pointed out, in the 19th century the symphony orchestra became an idealised representation of bourgeois society (the concerto being, correspondingly, a metaphor of possible relationships between the individual and the

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community). Today, such a self-proclaimed anarchist as Frederic Rzewski views contemporary improvisation as "a kind of abstract laboratory, in which experimental forms of communication can be tried" (Rzewski, 2007, p. 64). And Catarina Domenici (2013a, 2013b) has shown how the work/performance relation in the European tradition reproduces the patriarchal submission scheme, demonstrating how real situations and metaphorical dimension interact to maintain gender inequalities.

Performance studies, as they have grown under the auspices of *The Drama Review*—the magazine Schechner began to edit in 1962—, have always been much more than simple reflection about stage creation. However, the formidable "manifesto" (as he himself defined it) at the core of Schechner's latest book takes this need for a broader understanding of the concept of *performance* to a new level:

1) To perform is to explore, to play, to experiment with new relationships.
2) To perform is to cross borders. These borders are not only geographical but emotional, ideological, political, and personal.
3) To perform is to engage in lifelong active study. To grasp every book as a script – something to be played with, interpreted, and reformed/remade.
4) To perform is to become someone else and yourself at the same time. To empathize, react, grow, and change. (Schechner, 2015, p. 9)

Each of these words can be applied to the daily activity of a classical musician: to explore and experience new pathways; cross emotional, ideological, and personal limits; enter into creative dialogue with written sources; and in doing so, opening oneself to mutual growth and change. Seen from the viewpoint of a guarantee of the classical-music tradition, however, these principles are genuinely subversive.

Hierarchies and moral superiority

What an activist seeks is to change the state of things. So, what ought to change in classical music? Some people would first change its name. The list of terms used worldwide for referring to it, especially in Romance languages, contains great variations. Such terminology is not the central focus of this article, but it is noteworthy that all the terms used or proposed, without exception, have poignant connotations. Names are important. Abstract language is one of the great creations of humanity, and giving a name to something is the starting point of communication.

We live surrounded by categories, labels, taxonomies. We can try to settle the argument with empty phrases such as "There are simply two kinds of music, good music and the other kind" (Ellington, 1995, p. 326), sentences which remain empty however prestigious their authors. But the reality is that we are awash with classifications, and these classifications are useful to us. "Without a system of consistent categories we cannot know things,"[2] affirmed Antonio García Gutiérrez (2007, p. 15). The problem is knowing these categories, understanding their implications, and deciding how to position ourselves in respect of them.

Classical music perfectly illustrates the dynamics of these classifications, and the powerful repercussions that can lurk behind phrases sometimes uttered unconsciously. Besides, as

[2] "Sin un sistema de categorías consistentes no es posible conocer."

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we all know, prudence quickly fades when a feeling of superiority is present, and classical music has often looked upon other traditions with genuine scorn. Such an eminent figure as Bruno Walter said to the *Los Angeles Times* critic, Albert Goldberg, in 1958:

> I see that jazz is an insult to me. I feel debased by listening to it. The monotony of the use of percussion, the uninterrupted shrieking of the muted bass is very unbearable to me. And I feel that the popularity of jazz gives us a very distressing look unto the civilization of our time. […] I only can say that Jazz is a danger because it appeals to the lower instincts of the listener and this is characteristic for some tendency in our time, which I only can regret. (Walter, 2017, 37'30''-39'10'')

Hardly different tones would be used slightly later, in 1967, by Andrés Segovia, in reference to flamenco ("I had to rescue the guitar twice. First from the noisy hands of the flamenco players. And second from the poor repertoire that it had." Nupen, 2016, 4'41''-4'58''). And for those thinking that this was such a long time ago, here is what was said on May 13, 2017 by the living icon, Plácido Domingo, on the need to promote classical music:

> I think it would help us a lot, that it would help children even spiritually to stop listening always to *bad* popular music. Because there is *good* popular music. I love good popular music. But bad music! For example, without wanting to criticise, rap is something that... [silence] That is what they are giving us today! And then the Grammy Awards come around and the rappers get them.[3] (Domingo, 2017, 0'06''-0'46'')

Chronology, in this case, is overwhelming: four days after these words were pronounced, Harvard University announced solemnly that its student Obasi Shaw had become the first ever to graduate presenting a rap album as a thesis—*Liminal Minds*, now available in full on Spotify and Soundcloud—while in February 2017 another university, Clemson University, South Carolina, had accepted a 34-track hip-hop album—*Owning My Masters: The Rhetorics of Rhymes and Revolutions*, by A.D. Carson, also available on Soundcloud—as a doctoral dissertation. The world turns, and these trajectories can be difficult to comprehend if looked at according to earlier paradigms.

Since the 19th century, the real enemy has been popular music. *Bad* popular music, as Domingo said: that which is endorsed by commercial success. And it is here where it becomes most clear that classical music, from the moment in which it has been defined as such, does not just want to be *different* to others, but *superior*. This was explained with great subtlety by Matthew Gelbart in his *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music"* (2007): "art" music emerged as an "elevated" alternative to new interest in local, anonymous traditions with inscrutable origins, but its darker ambitions did not appear until it sensed a threat from the commercial music successfully emerging as part of a new leisure culture during the 19th century. Around these classifications, essential moves have been made, as stated by Josep Martí: "The content we allot to the delimiting lines of the internal frontiers of our musical universe accords to our need to see certain values prevail"[4] (Martí, 2000, p. 223).

[3] "Yo creo que nos ayudaría mucho, ayudaría espiritualmente también a los niños a dejarse de escuchar siempre la música popular *mala*. Porque la hay buena. A mí me encanta la música popular *buena*. Pero la música mala... Por ejemplo, sin ánimo de criticar, pero el rap... es algo que... Y eso es lo que nos dan hoy. Y entonces vienen los premios Grammy y se los llevan los raperos..."
[4] "Otorgamos a las líneas demarcadoras de las fronteras internas de nuestro universo musical unos contenidos de acuerdo con nuestras necesidades de hacer prevalecer determinados valores."

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Prevail. That is the key word. This is about power, not merely an ethical issue. The supposed spiritual dimension of classical music was, from the start, the affirmation of a moral superiority. There were praiseworthy intentions behind the driving force, because it is easy to agree with pedagogues from the 18th century onwards that studying music makes us better people, more sensitive, cultured, and intelligent. But this reality hid sinister resonances. The conservative European bourgeoisie (and their emulators around the world) converted this *elevated* music (*their* music, in fact) into the moral endorsement of the power the political game was guaranteeing it, not only in their continent of origin but throughout the world.

In the geographical area that is today's Germany, these pretensions crossed the path of a precise political plot: the Prussian nationalist project. From the mid-18th century, efforts to turn music into the seal of a national identity, based on the affirmation of an explicit superiority, had followed a surprisingly coherent roadmap, as Bernd Sponheuer showed in his contribution to the fundamental *Music and German National Identity* by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (2002). The idea of progress was at its heights, and the foundational historiographic plan Baroque-Classicism-Romanticism was a powerful tool for the global spread of an evolutive conception of music, one built around the centrality of the score, and in which German composers played a central role. That project has turned into the core of the actual identity of classical music, still so linked today to the symbolic horizon mounted by 19th-century musicology.

A long list of "don'ts"

The nuances musicology brought to that national project activated other interests—such as the inner powers of the discipline, whose mechanisms are revealed by Kevin Korsyn in his *Decentering Music*—and other forms of control: those embedded in performance paradigms throughout the 20th century, gradually isolating the guidelines of performance from wider intellectual debates. When Foucault and Barthes began to talk in the 1960s about the "death" of the author, classical music was engaged in an unprecedented process of monumentalising the authority of the composer. At the beginning of the 1980s, while we were discovering how postmodern we were, conservatories worldwide continued to teach a Eurocentric, teleological history of music. And whereas ethnomusicology, in the midst of the collapse of structuralism, already focused on performance from an anthropological perspective, in classical music the label of "performance practice" was primarily associated with the study of historical treatises in order to better decipher the scores. Of course, there were plenty of exceptions. But performance and its principal discourses have remained on the periphery of the ideas that have contributed so much to other areas of music research.

This issue is doubly relevant since classical music is what it is because we *play* it in a certain way. Consciously or unconsciously, when we think about classical music we are not thinking about a repertoire, but a *particular* repertoire played in a *particular* way. The most watched classical-music event in the world, the New Year's Concert, usually features the music of a composer, Johann Strauss Jr., who became in his time the icon of what then stood out as *popular music*: commercial, urban, widely distributed, and linked to both dancing and entertainment. Set against Wagner's monumental dramas, Strauss' light operettas were the most glaring example to date of the contrast between metaphysical aspirations and everyday life. And among Strauss' waltzes and the instrumental works written by Brahms over the

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same years in same city, leading critics such Eduard Hanslick identified the yawning gap between the ephemeral, functional vacuity of "low-brow culture" and the incalculable worth of *pure music*, art music at its highest. It hardly counts that Brahms loved Strauss's music unconditionally. Strauss was the pop of his time, and that is how his music was experienced: music that enlivened balls, interacting with the latest trends in urban life. The emblematic *Blue Danube Waltz*, to mention just one example, was first performed in Vienna, on February 15, 1867, at the ballroom into which the then fashionable Dianabad—the prototype of modern covered swimming pools—was converted each winter.

What is left of all this in the New Year's Concert? Not a lot. We have slowly turned Strauss' music into *classical* music experiencing it as such: enjoying in silence, while seated in a concert hall, listening to perfect renderings of his scores. We conceive it, experience it, and play it as classical music. And the same occurs with many other repertoires. Today it is shocking to listen to a record such as *Love Fugue* by Uri Caine (in which Schumann's *Dichterliebe* op. 48 are versioned as pop songs, each in a different musical genre) or Schubert's *Winterreise* sung in Catalan by pop singer Judit Neddermann, accompanied by the Brossa String Quartet. This is because we are accustomed to listening to this repertoire sung with operatic technique, in the original language even though we don't understand German, and with a Steinway grand played according to 20th-century canons. But neither Schumann nor Schubert had this on their minds. In fact, the lieder were pretty much not "theirs", since it was habitual in the first decades of the 19th century for the authorship to be identified with the poet ("ein Lied *von* Goethe," "*in Musik gesetzt von* Franz Schubert").

Transitions of this kind are not so innocent. Depending on what the music and context might be, favorable judgements are applied to vibrato use, portamenti, and heterophony that other traditions have marked down as aberrations, and vice-versa. Intonation, rhythmic precision, dynamic balance are not absolute realities; within the actual classical-music global framework, certain agogic inflections are praised when we play the works of one author, while they are strongly condemned in the works of another. And music teaching is usually strict in recognizing from the outset where our playing field lies. As soon as you begin, you will hear a long list of "don'ts": "*don't* do that because it sounds bad", "*don't* use this vibrato", "*don't* play like that because it is in bad taste", "*don't* strike in this way", and so on, often leading to precise professional attributions ("only *amateurs* do that!). A decisive part of classical-music education involves explaining to students what they must *not* do, how they must *not* play.

The disciplined canons of classical music

This *organised* music, *disciplined* in order to maintain the status quo, was the subject of the book *Disciplining Music*, edited by Katherine Bergeron and Philip Bohlman, first published in 1992. "Disciplining music was an act of domesticating music, making it our own and commanding it to be docile," wrote Bohlman in the epilogue of the book, giving a historical perspective to the dominant discourses in musicology (Bergeron and Bohlman, 1992, p. 198). As in many 20th-century texts, in *Disciplining Music* little is said of performance but much of repertoires. But one section does stay with you for life: Bergeron's unyielding description—in explicitly Foucauldian terms—of the role of scales in traditional music training, seen as the axis of the taming of bodies, intervals, rhythm, and intonation (Bergeron

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and Bohlman, 1992, pp. 1–3). This channeling of the will is the connecting axis that Bergeron pinpoints between the technical precision required of the classical performer and veneration for the great composers of the past.

These *great* composers integrate the central canon of classical music, that canon whose role in this exercise of control is explicitly underlined by Bohlman: "Canon establishes authority, and that authority is understandably attractive to those who would discipline music" (Bergeron and Bohlman, 1992, p. 201). *Canon*, in this context, is a decisive word; it determines which composers and what repertoires deserve to be preserved, studied, and performed. In fact, these canons have proved essential for musicology as a *discipline* to do justice to the etymology of a word with such notable connotations: *discipline* as in to *tame* and *control* music; an action of authority over people and music itself.

As in any operation of control, categories prove decisive. For this reason, proposals aimed at changing the established order must not necessarily start out by reconsidering the *external* frontiers of classical music, placing it in dialogue with other traditions and practices. They may depart from a reconsideration of its *internal* frontiers. And in a music so imbued with historical issues, these frontiers are inseparable from the historiographic framework in which we classify styles, forms, works, and composers.

In the historiographic game, the table is always laid with more than labels, namely the status hidden behind these very labels. And performance itself is fully involved in this process, because there is a symbiosis between the historiographic frames with which we tag composers and the way we perform their compositions. Musicians and musicologists continually feed back to each other; if we play works in line with the idea we have of them, the sonic outcome will inevitably reinforce that idea, bringing it the best imaginable endorsement: that of a sensory reality in the form of sound. The relationship between historiography and performance is thus an ideal field of militancy in order to unveil and reshape the discourses now backing those power games.

In his *Desclasificados: Pluralismo lógico y violencia de la clasificación*, the aforementioned Antonio García Gutiérrez offers us a perspective from which to raise this change. García Gutiérrez's *declassification* of knowledge does not mean renouncing a system of categories but rethinking its parameters: "Declassifying, that is, bringing down a structure of dominant ordering—generally a hierarchical one—means reclassifying with parameters different to those of that structure"[5] (García Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 5). It is not, therefore, a question of shifting one structure for another, but of seeking a "logical, cultural, social, and cognitive pluralism"[6] (García Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 6) capable of taking in the complexity of the world.

It would undoubtedly be correct to apply this process to historiographic periodisation and to the compositional styles we usually associate with it. I propose something different, however: to put declassification into action through performance. Performance can play a decisive role, if we conceive it not as an extension and illustration of musicological discourse but as a generator of knowledge with its own characteristics, as shown by Jorge Salgado Correia

[5] "Desclasificar, esto es, desmontar una estructura de ordenación dominante —generalmente jerarquista—, implica reclasificar con parámetros distintos a los de esa estructura."
[6] "Un pluralismo lógico, cultural, social y cognitivo."

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(2013). And this links to another of García Gutiérrez's principal concepts, that of a "meaning network" (*red de sentido*). It is hard to believe that García Gutiérrez is not thinking precisely about musical performance when he advocates concepts "defined. . . by their own transformation" within "ephemeral reinstatements and transfers into a network of exchange—which is knowledge and cognition—in which necessarily open meanings and concepts would be renegotiated as many times as perspectives entered into the game of communication"[7] (García Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 25).

These multi-angled perspectives impacting on "the game of communication" are those which we, as creators, bring to our activity. A route that can begin precisely by rethinking current historiographic labels. Even using the same sources and methodology that musicology has employed to create its most repeated 20th-century discourses, it is possible to defend different and, sometimes, antagonistic positions. Yet artistic practice can transform these categories from within, and in a deeper range.

In classical music, declassification enables the defiance of far-reaching categories, besides those directly involved in periodisation. It can be applied to the relationships between musicology and musical practice, between written scores and improvisation, and between Western music and its *others*. All of them, by all accounts, are power games in which the categories used are essential, exactly as they are inside the always complex inner tension between the authority of the composer, the freedom of the performer, and the weight of tradition.

Classifications are never neutral: they channel identities and establish hierarchies. Challenging the ruling order by conceiving historiography as a field of militancy can be a way to look for other equilibria.

Towards a performative historiographic activism

In academic debate, the idea of *historiographic activism* has fleetingly appeared, always in very specific frameworks and never in relation to music. Jennifer Terry proposed it incidentally in 1991 within her struggle for a *deviant historiography* capable of finding alternatives to the dominant narratives in the queer domain (Terry, 1991, pp. 284–289); and more recently it appeared in relation to the defence of oral tradition and popular culture as alternatives to history based on written documents (especially in *Oral History and Public Memories* by Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes, 2009). But the notion of *historiographic activism* never took hold as a concept with its own features, and even less in reference to musical historiography. Despite the role of music in Performance Studies, specific links between music and activism are usually removed from any historiographic perspective, a clear example being the recent *Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in Multicultural Activism* (2013) by Eunice Rojos and Lindsay Michie.

Given the specific nature of classical-music performing paradigms, any "activist" action in this field necessarily implies redrawing the link between *compositional* styles and *performative*

[7] "Reposiciones y transposiciones efímeras en una red de intercambio —que es el conocimiento y la cognición— en la que los sentidos y los conceptos, necesariamente abiertos, se renegociarían tantas veces como perspectivas intervinieran en el juego de la comunicación."

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styles. In the framework inherited from the 20th century, these form a precise hierarchy that drastically delimits performers' margin for action. We thus need to enable ourselves, as performers, in claiming our right to act in the face of tradition. In fact, what has always been treated as the submission of the performer to the will of the composer is actually a surrender to the continuity of a tradition that consists of looking at the score in a particular way. And this way is inseparable from our well-known historiographic labels.

The authoritarian stance ratifying this role was tackled by Catarina Domenici in her ingenious article "His Master's Voice": "On consolidating the image of the performer as a mechanical executant, decoder of the score as well as replicator of interpretative canons, tradition eventually becomes a phantasmagoria of itself on silencing the interpreter's voice"[8] (Domenici, 2012, p. 75). Mine Dogantan-Dack has recently returned to this subjugation in eye-opening terms:

> 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 […], 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. (Dogantan-Dack, 2015, p. 34)

The relation between the idea of the composer supposedly embodied by the score, and the force of a tradition to which performers who came before us have contributed so much, obliges contemporary performers to take up a position. It is up to them to either accept the situation or look for alternatives, since "a voice only has power when there is someone who responds to it or obeys it"[9] (Domenici, 2012, p. 73).

In February 2014, as a keynote speaker of the 2nd Iberoamerican Meeting of Young Musicologists, organised by the group Musicologia Criativa, I underlined how historiographic thinking and performative codes feed off each other in this process, and I supported this with the following figure.

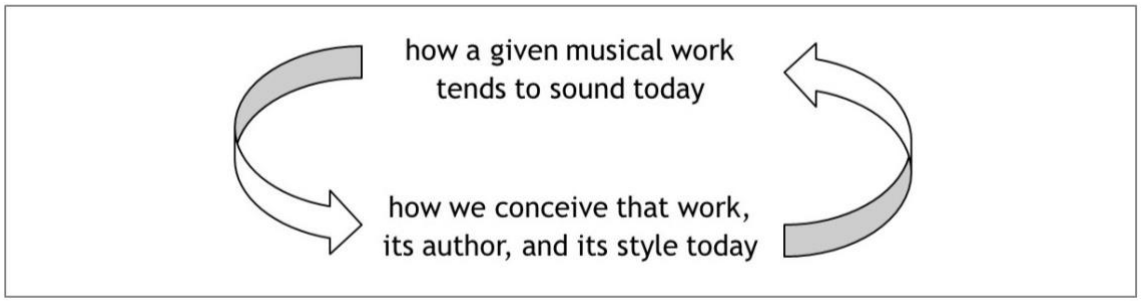

Figure 1. In a conservative feedback framework, musical practice and historiographic categories are mutually endorsing. [Luca Chiantore (cc) 2014, rev. 2017]

At least in theory, this system can hold up indefinitely, as long as we accept the status quo.

8 "Ao consolidar a imagem do performer como executante mecânico, ao mesmo tempo decodificador da partitura e replicador de cânones interpretativos, a tradição acaba por criar uma fantasmagoria de si mesma ao silenciar a voz do intérprete."
9 "Uma voz só tem poder quando há alguém que responda ou obedeça."

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But what if this web of obligations does not fit in with our personality, or with our curiosity? If we dare to modify one of the elements, everything changes. The specific interpretation that each performer decides to give a musical work is the one that will shine in the memory and the imagination of its hearers, and collective knowledge directly depends on these personal perceptions.

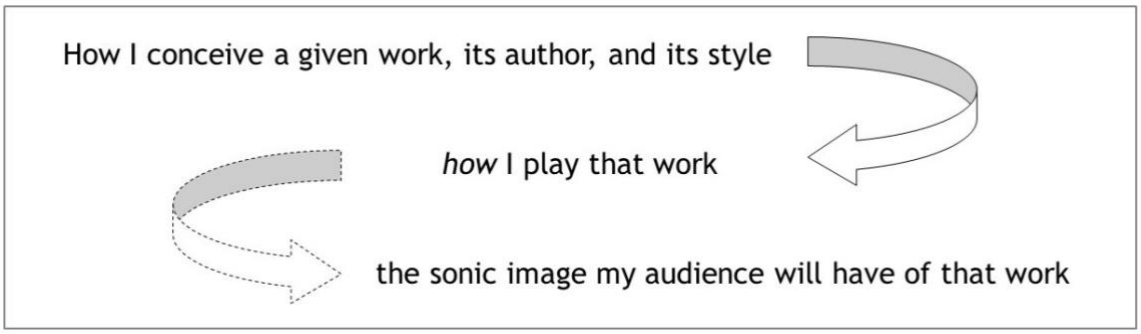

Figure 2. Performer's personal decisions mark the specific experience of each listener; that is where received inheritance encounters the present. [Luca Chiantore (cc) 2014, rev. 2017]

This individual, human-sized act reminds us that the power to change the world begins with the ability to act upon our immediate surroundings. Here, Foucault's way of looking at the past in order to understand the present is again an inspiring reference. In my opinion, there is not a single page of *L'Archeologie du savoir* that cannot be related to our own present time of musicians, musicologists, and educators. And Foucault helped more than anyone to show to what degree our living in society makes us part of a network of discourses, procedures, and concepts full of implications.

Precisely because of this, it is important to locate specific areas for action. We can plan a full-scale attack or consider other, subtler tactics, leveraging the weak points, the contradictions of the system, in order to open breaches and allow new air to enter. Because contradictions exist, and there are many. They begin even before taking on the problematic relationship between compositional and performing styles. Any synthetic description of what we usually understand—compositionally speaking—by "Classic" and "Romantic", for example, does not fit any work by their iconic representatives. It is supposed that Haydn is "Classic" and Chopin is "Romantic", but then when you try to fit any definition of the distinctive features of one or other "style" to the first five minutes of Haydn's *Creation*, or to Mozart's *Requiem*, something fails. And the same occurs with many brief pieces by the supposedly "Romantic" Chopin. The Prelude Op. 28 No. 7, for example; what is it most like? The turbulent world of Liszt's B-minor Sonata or the symmetry of a Mozart minuet? It depends, of course, on which Mozart minuet we choose. But here is the point: these categories are a simplification that tames music, trivialising its richness. And this reduction to order is not solely a musicological issue; performers themselves often exclude from their repertoire those pieces that do not fit the mould. We pianists know this only too well: works such as Beethoven's Fantasy Op. 77, Chopin's *Allegro de concert*, Albéniz's Etudes Op. 65, and a long list of others are not regularly played because they do not match the stylistic model we associate with their authors.

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"Styles" as a whole are a magma in which musicology, performers, promoters, and audiences themselves create surprising trajectories. Since the 1970s we have heard time and again that "classic(al) period" is not the same as "classic(al) style". Yet despite the authority of those at the head of these battles (among them Charles Rosen and Carl Dahlhaus), the concepts of *style* and *period* are often still treated today as perfectly interchangeable. Something similar occurs with the sibylline concept of "contemporary music", and with some attempts to better define—or replace—certain terms. We have not reached an agreement on what "galant music" means; Beethoven is either "Classic" or "Romantic" according to generations; and we usually label Debussy as "impressionist" despite his explicit scorn for it. Frontline musicologists are tracing alternatives to all this, of course, but their production is rarely known among musicians and teachers, while websites such as Wikipedia or IMSLP accept and display the traditional historiographic classifications, contributing to their increasing diffusion.

These inconsistencies are even more shocking in the dominant theory of performance, and in its intersections with historiography. When I approach historical sources and see the degree to which what is found there does not coincide with so many of the rules we associate with a "style of the epoch", I cannot avoid noticing the biggest of these contradictions. We are supposed to be interested in the composer's standpoint, but our sonic image of any work is the product of the passing of time. There is nothing wrong in this. But if what we seek are new ways and new knowledge, then what we have there is a mine of information. In theory (but just in theory, as we soon see), it can be quite distinct:

A. Seek a stylistic framework based on a diachronically-unsustainable approach, in which the works created in a given historical context are analysed and played according to the codes of another time and/or another place.
B. Find an unconventional historiographic focus resulting from a re-reading of the sources from the time the works were written.

This second option can turn out to be mould-breaking because it directly confronts tradition, yet it seems methodologically acceptable. The paradox is that the first option, apparently far from any historical justification, closely resembles what classical-music tradition has always done, to a lesser or greater extent. And I am not necessarily referring to such "rebels" as Ivo Pogorelich, whose Chopin, especially at the start of his career, resembled Prokofieff, Glass, and Pärt, depending on the passage. Even a mainstream artist as Leonard Bernstein could fit in this description; in his recordings, Stravinsky's works seem much closer to the image we have of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov than under Stravinsky's baton. And, after all, is it not the same chronological asymmetry we experience on adopting a 19th-century historiographic category such as "Classicism" for Haydn's and Mozart's works, or when we study them through Schenkerian analysis?

Clauses of obsolescence and subversion

Placed in the same discourse that justifies the continuity of the tradition in the name of a supposed respect for the "will of the composer", asymmetries such as those we have just seen acquire unexpected value. The resulting inconsistencies become true "clauses of obsolescence and subversion", according to García Gutiérrez's description (2007, p. 33). And they remind us to what extent these same repertoires might fit with other discourses,

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among which a special place is occupied by those that were replaced by the current ones:

> Classifying means exiling all possible orders except those authorised by the powers that be. And it is really these exiled orders, which never disappeared, that will end up subverting the apparent classificational calm. From inside the categories they grow strong, and they will side with the poorly-treated texts and bring about the downfall of the categories.[10] (García Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 35)

There is no doubt: hidden by dominant categories, often cloistered behind the supposed need to play a specific way and with the backing of the academy, are other ways of tackling our own repertoire, other ways of looking at tone, rhythm, dynamics, and sound production techniques; alternative ways to all that we have learned to be stylistically "correct" for each composer.

We invented, for instance, a sound for Mozart, along the 19th century. We did it in line with a precise historiographic frame, and we have changed it just a little since then. But historical sources endorse a long list of practices in open contradiction to that sonic image (and which better match our idea of "Romanticism", a term that Stendhal and Goethe associated precisely with Mozart more than any other composer). It would not be so historically unsustainable to double or add new bass parts while playing his keyboard works (from 1784 his piano had a specific *pédalier* for this), or to blend harmonies together through long, uninterrupted pedal use (Michael Latcham has shown that the knee lever we find today in Mozart's Walter piano is, in fact, a later addition that replaced the then standard hand-stop mechanism, which impeded changes while playing), and to play his orchestral works with large ensembles including 10 double basses and 6 oboes (as in his own premiere of Symphony K.338). If we do not do it, let it not be because in its day it was not done. We do not do it because *today* it is not done, because we have adapted our taste to other practices, which over time have become an inviolable frame of reference. So much so that the central argument tends to be ethical: "fidelity" to origins. That same fidelity that the sources themselves disavow, over and over again.

This inconsistency, in itself, has enormous potential. The problem arises precisely from the ease by which we are surrounded by an excluding dogmatism. So, it all comes down to a very simple question: do we accept the status quo or not? If we do not accept it, and the *origin* has such importance, it is there we can attack the discourse in order to change it. "The logic of the origin inspires Western reason to such a degree that without the fiction of a beginning there is no reality,"[11] underlined García Gutiérrez (2007, p. 33). And that "fiction of a beginning" is fundamental to the continuance of the system: "At root, what lurks under all power is dominating the origin once the control of the present and the apparent taming of the future is fulfilled"[12] (García Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 33). Dominating the origin, controlling the present, taming the future: the perfect plan for domination.

[10] "Clasificar supone enviar al exilio a todos los órdenes posibles salvo el autorizado por el poder. Y son en realidad esos órdenes exiliados, que no se fueron nunca, quienes terminarán por subvertir la aparente calma clasificatoria. Desde el interior de las categorías se harán fuertes, serán cómplices de los propios textos maltratados e instigarán el derrumbe de las categorías."
[11] "La lógica del origen inspira la razón occidental hasta tal punto que sin la ficción de un comienzo no hay realidad."
[12] "En el fondo, lo que subyace a todo poder es dominar el origen una vez satisfecho el control del presente y el aparente amansamiento del futuro."

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In Western culture, our whole musical categorization has been built, from the last third of the 18th century, around the argument of *origin*. Yet the narrative of our musical history is full of other *fictions*: polyphony as a European creation, the overtone series and its relationship with the "laws" of tonality, the 19th-century roots of certain present-day "national schools", the "authority of the text" claimed to endorse 20th century practices applied to 18th and 19th century music (often in open contrast to any possible interpretation of the period sources), and so on.

Musicology has an immense task here. But we are currently addressing performance, and there I see above all a never-ending treasure for Artistic Research, and in particular for investigations inspired by new equilibria between past and present, and between scores and musical practices. Because Artistic Research is not just practice. It is discourse and reflection as well. And this delicate relationship between written production and performative actions is proving decisive to find a suitable insertion in academic debate. The musicological tradition tends to give written texts the central place, making them the engine of everything and the seat of ultimate knowledge. But the danger of falling into the opposite pole also exists. Already in the distant past of 2002, Dwight Conquergood pointed out the risk that the legitimate defence of the importance of oral culture, bodily experience, and other knowledges excluded long ago from academic debate can induce undervaluation of the subversive potential of written texts themselves.

> Textocentrism—not texts—is the problem. […] The performance studies project makes its most radical intervention, I believe, by embracing *both* written scholarship *and* creative work, papers and performances. We challenge the hegemony of the text best by reconfiguring texts and performances in horizontal, metonymic tension, not by replacing one hierarchy with another, the romance of performance for the authority of the text. (Conquergood, 2002, p. 151; also in Conquergood, 2013, pp. 40–41)

Conquergood was not referring to scores and treatises, but this danger, in the case of classical music, is crystal clear. Dialogue between music and musicology generates fertile and creative dynamics that are immediately deactivated if everything is reduced to a banal affirmation of the superiority of the practice of music over reflection and written knowledge (as is the exact opposite of this, i.e. driving everything towards the authority of the written text and its internal relations, which is also just another way to give up on thinking). Statements such as "writing about music is like dancing about architecture" (which Frank Zappa never said, by the way, and whose origin dates back to 1918; see O'Toole 2010) are not merely absurd; they are a true threat to anyone who believes in Artistic Research.

Debating the relation between artistic practice and historiography is merely one among many options for overcoming the "apartheid of knowledges"—according to Conquergood's incisive simile (2002, p. 153; 2013, p. 43)—that tends, within the academic framework, to split theory and practice, reflection and creation, thought and corporeal action. But applying this idea to Artistic Research can unleash most fascinating processes.

Historically-informed overthrows

Of all the possible routes to proceed to a declassification of traditional historiographic categories, probably the most appealing is to proceed to an unconventional reading of the

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scores guided by the corresponding historical sources. A simple step in this direction can be enough to entirely redesign a complex web of symbolic and professional frontiers, as in the case of singers who would sing the 18th and 19th century repertoire accompanying themselves at the piano, as was usual at the time (and today, among pop singers!). And rescuing forgotten practices fosters new skills, especially when improvisation or multiple instruments are involved. A good example is Laura Puerto, the only person who has developed the necessary skills to do today what the musicians of the times of Cabezón and Venegas de Henestrosa regularly did, namely play the Spanish 16th-century repertoire indifferently on harp, organ, and harpsichord, directly from the original tablature, in *cifra ibérica*, as shown in her record, *Ultimi miei sospiri* (2015).

Early Music tradition, in fact, is especially advanced in this sense, having, over time, turned what was supposedly the search for the "original sound" into something completely different. For decades now, the "historically-informed performance" has actually been a fertile field for reflection on the theory of performance and artistic research itself, to the point that today the barrier between experimental performance and historically-informed performance is often non-existent. Some of these experiences also show increasing ethical and political focus, often accompanied by an imaginative intercultural dialogue, as in Jordi Savall's project *Les Routes de l'Esclavage*. And few groups have been as radical in tumbling paradigms as Marcel Pérès' Ensemble Organum and Christina Pluhar's L'Arpeggiata, in which there is such clear evidence of creative dialogue with popular music and other traditions: the radical rethinking of the relationship with written sources, collaboration with musicians without classical training, unusual recording techniques, or gender roles turned into an essential element of performance. But all these cases are based on repertoires that never found a well-defined place in our academic tradition. The symbolic strength of an alternative approach is more apparent when we work with repertoires and practices well set in that ideological powerhouse which 19th century musicology eventually became.

In some cases, musicology itself offers us excellent pointers. Consider the expressionist dimension of the music of Schoenberg and Webern. Both artists defended their role as epigones of the Romantic tradition, a tradition that impregnated their ideas on performance, and which a performer with imagination could take much further than everything I have seen to date. No less attractive is the case of Ravel, so often still labelled today as "Impressionist" despite the route taken by his career proving sensitive to other tendencies such as Futurism, Dadaism and, of course, Neoclassicism. A Futurist Ravel? Why not, he being so fascinated by machines and clockwork? And how would *La Valse* or the *Tombeau de Couperin* sound if performed by someone taking this dimension to extremes?

Even more extraordinary is the case of Paul Hindemith, a musician often associated with an academicism so far removed from his sense of humour, his iconoclastic personality, his ethical commitment and, once again, his own ideas on performance, in his case accompanied by a rich discography. The Hindemith fascinated by French music, by cabaret, by Futurism; the Hindemith giving an expressive meaning to each of his chords; and the Hindemith challenging the listener in order to denounce the hypocrisy of his time: as many Hindemiths as performative approaches may be made to his music.

In all these cases, direct connection with sources allows the consideration of these

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experiences as "historically-informed performance". In other occasions, though, musicology offers widespread references, and this makes the research even more creative. What would be the sound, for instance, of a Tchaikovsky at the other extreme of Romantic thinking, more entranced by Mozart than by any sentimental hauteur? It seems like a simple provocation, and yet it is not. His letters are explicit while illustrating his disregard for Chopin and other emblematic "Romantic" composers, as well as his admiration for Mozart as a model of purity and balance. And Parnassian thinking, which began as a direct reaction to Romantic ideas, resounds in Tchaikovsky as much as in many French contemporaries, such as Saint-Saëns, Chabrier, and Massenet. Russian high society was then under the spell of everything French, and Parnassianism was in vogue in Paris. Historical recordings confirm this: the Fantasy K.396 we have incomplete on a wax cylinder recorded by Taneyev in 1891 is probably the best example of a "Parnassian interpretation" of Mozart. And holding to this line is the recording made in 1926 by Vassily Sapellnikoff of Tchaikovsky's own Concerto No. 1, which the pianist had played over and over under the baton of the author himself. The gentleness of the articulation, the austerity of phrasing, and the few pulse swings within a generally fast tempo all perfectly match what we know to be the tastes of the composer.

This same argument could be extended to other authors and areas of that same era; including composers born around 1840, like Tchaikovsky or Dvorak, as the term "Romantic" is an anomaly of musical historiography. In no other art does anything similar happen; Romanticism, as a literary movement, was over by the mid-19th century, and the philosophy underpinning it had been supplanted by other ways of viewing the world. Chopin and others leading figures remind us, however, that Romanticism itself was never such a homogenous movement, not even at its peak. We identify Chopin and Tchaikovsky as "Romantic", but other options are possible for both.

Brahms, the Impressionist

With Johannes Brahms these alternatives are still more surprising. Our music history books insist on associating him with a supposed "German Romanticism", which would bracket him with Mendelssohn and Schumann (who, to begin with, were not contemporaries of his but of his father), and even with Schubert (who, in generational terms, could have been his grandfather). So, independently of Brahms (in contrast with Schumann) never associating the term "Romantic" with his output, it is certain that his tastes and friendships were closer to a current that ran firmly against Romanticism: Positivism. His attachment to the past is not nourished by the Romantic idea of the eternity of vital principles, but by the concept of history as a succession of styles and generational changes.

Even more interesting is Brahms' fascination for tone colour. The Ottensteiner clarinet played by Richard Mühlfeld, who fascinated Brahms enough for him to write those four late masterworks for that instrument, and the Schwedler flutes that he and others continued to like over the new Böhm system, had a feature in common that we would never associate with Brahms, but instead with Debussy and Ravel, or at most with Fauré: tone-colour variety. The possibility of playing the same note with two or three different fingerings created very varied tone colour, and in Germany this seemed to warrant the great effort of handling the complex system of keys these instruments use. It meant the emancipation of tone colour as a compositional parameter, but… had we not agreed that Debussy was the key figure in this

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supposedly-French transition? Well, Schwedler flutes and Ottensteiner clarinets suggest that things were not so obvious. And to the researcher, they offer a formidable option: a rethinking of Brahms in terms of tone colour.

The two Sonatas for clarinet and piano, Op. 120, for example, were written in 1894, the year in which Debussy premiered his *Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune*. Could we not play these Sonatas, so packed with elusive harmonies and unresolved dissonances, as we play so much French music from that era? Why not? Because it is "Romantic" and not "Impressionist"? Labels, once again. And this applies even more to music for solo piano. Intermezzos such as Op. 117 No. 2, Op. 118 Nos. 4 and 6, and Op. 119 No. 1, can easily be played just as we play the music Fauré was writing over those same years. And can go further back in time (for example with the *Klavierstücke* Op. 76 or the *Ballades* Op. 10) or seek to highlight the differences from other musicians traditionally considered to be stylistically close, such as Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck.

To combine two or more authors is, in fact, especially enticing. Debussy and Ravel, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin, Mozart and Clementi: each of these pairs has left us works that can lead to surprising historiographic disparities if performed in unconventional ways. But coupling authors might be, above all, a chance to imagine a musical world able to get rid of the teleological dogma of a directional, evolutionary history of music, especially when time has made them benchmarks. The most explicit example I know is the record *Dialogues: Mozart-Chopin* (2014) by the Catalan pianist Josep Colom, in which he continually interweaves works by these two authors, also by way of improvised interludes; the first tracks all sound fresh and naive; the central ones, little by little, more serious; and the end, tragic and dark. Instead of the supposed features of the "Classic" and "Romantic" style, we see a life curve of birth, maturity, and death.

In other cases, anyway, collective ventures, not necessarily felt as such, have been able to carry out operations of even greater scope. With regard to "Baroque", in particular, performers as a whole have proved decisive throughout the 20th century in joining with musicologists to discover the variety of the music that would supposedly come under this category, one harbouring such diverse compositional codes as those of Monteverdi and Alberti, Dowland and Haendel, Sweelinck and Royer. And even so, in all its fragility, the tag still sticks.

The tenacity with which labels as generic as "Baroque", "Classicism" and "Romanticism" continue to be used is frankly surprising. But this same phenomenon turns them into an excellent tool for reflection. The point is not to discuss whether or not Brahms *is* an "Impressionist" composer, but to test through artistic practice whether his music lends itself to a reading adjusted to the criteria that others have associated with this label.

Jumping the fence

That said, we can be sure that many people will not be happy about this. No problem, if what is not liked is the sonic outcome. But we will have stumbled on the problem if what is not liked is the very fact of change. If there are frontiers, they very often have to be watched, and sometimes such control comes from the difficulty of opening up to change. Performers

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themselves are often those who take on these "patterns of refusal" as their own, defined by Josep Martí as "destined to maintain the established order"[13] (Martí, 2000, p. 225). But *power* is not the same as *authority*, as Michel de Certeau correctly argued (1998, p. 87), and a power that does not have authority can only count on material force. Corroding the authority of certain discourses becomes fundamental, and the only way for rebellion to move, as so many of us desire, in a non-violent territory. If the territory of Performance Studies, especially in its more radical angles, has admitted vocabulary that is sometimes worrying, one must not forget the metaphorical meaning of assumptions such as that of Anna Tsing's advocating "the guerrilla tactics of multiple, uneasily jostling theories and stories can at least disrupt assumptions of comfortably settled monologics" (Tsing, 1993, pp. 32–33).

The challenge is clear: stay inside the enclosure or jump the fence? Such fences are actually no more than conceptual frontiers, but stepping outside often means a clash with the prevailing power structures. And if that power is real, we run the risk of consequences. Circumstances are favourable, however. We live in a reality full of changes happening around us; that very distance between classical and popular is not as strong today as it was in the past, and decolonial thinking is growing with encouraging speed, even though there remains so much to do. The codes that emerged around an evolutionist and almost teleological vision of European classical music are crumbling, and with this demise come alternatives to the subordination of the performer to the composer, as well as new ways to widen dialogue between music and musicology, in which Artistic Research has much to say.

The ability to rethink the present begins with the capacity to see hidden options behind the most seemingly-consolidated realities. "New knowledge always lies in the dynamism of its most stable machinery,"[14] points out Antonio García Gutiérrez (2007, p. 25), and our current musical reality is showing this, day after day. Especially revealing are the cases of large-scale synergies involving great ensembles in the name of unconventional practices. Collective ventures such as the Aurora Orchestra recently surprised audiences worldwide with their performances—from memory!—of the great symphonic repertoire. And another orchestra, Teodor Currentzis' MusicAeterna (*sic*), is probably the most radical and innovative performative reality in the entire current classical-music scene. Currentzis' repertoire could not be more canonic, but playing any work at all standing up—including Mahler's 5th or Ravel's *Bolero*—, completely modifying musicians' placement on stage according to the work, and pushing them to the limits of their physical resistance (in particular running through an entire programme immediately before the concert), as well as running rehearsals like a political assembly—in which performative decisions are made in interaction with the orchestra's own responses. All this with an entire ensemble that can play period and modern instruments alike, producing a genuinely unheard-of result!

Currentzis has no doubts about his own historic role: "I will save classical music" (Culshaw 2005). It might sound overblown, but it is certain that he and his orchestra are generating first-time experiences for both musicians and audiences. And this case is so interesting here because in Currentzis' proposals the historiographic categories we know are often blown away. In his still short discography, my favourite record is dedicated to Rameau. You spend

[13] "Patrones de rechazo destinados al mantenimiento del orden establecido."
[14] "El nuevo conocimiento siempre residió en el dinamismo de sus engranajes más estables."

all your time wondering if this is French Baroque played with period instruments, a recently-discovered *Bachiana Brasileira*, a Russian symphonic work in the line of Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, or a John Williams soundtrack. And all this without one note being added to Rameau's score.

Listen to those notes, hear all that beauty, and that's enough for me to confirm that revolutions can be pleasant and thrilling. The same flexible equilibrium between reflection and action that surrounds Conquergood's trichotomy *mimesis-poieses-kinesis* is what we find in projects like this. "The performance paradigm privileges particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency, and ideology," wrote the great North American ethnographer in 1991 (Conquergood, 1991, p. 187; also in 2013, p. 92). This is the history we must construct between all of us: a history made up from corporeal, participatory, and dynamic experiences, always open to individual involvement in order to overcome any unwanted hierarchy. As said, once again, by García Gutiérrez in the conclusion of a recent essay: "To change the world without taking power" (García Gutiérrez, 2014, p. 407). I cannot conceive of a stronger or more innovative manner of imagining changes, *true* changes.

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