

PART IV

PERSPECTIVES

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Awareness of a musical past was not an invention of the nineteenth century, as is often maintained in music historiography today.¹ Notions that a particular kind of music was exceptionally old and therefore of special value (re-)emerged in Christian Europe in the Carolingian Empire: Roman chant melodies were privileged over local Gallican ones because of their perceived antiquity, which linked them to early Christian times.² Musical memory, and therefore the availability of repertoires from earlier periods, took a qualitative and quantitative leap in Europe from the thirteenth century onwards through the invention of new notational techniques in late-medieval Paris. These encoded not just pitches and melodic gestures but expressed measured temporal relationships, thereby enabling complex polyphonic structures to be recorded and to be transmitted across unprecedented geographical and chronological distances, in addition to and in support of living performing traditions. The preceding essays offered case studies and reflections on these developments with a focus on the period c.1200 to c.1600. They have shown how different social groups, and users of newly introduced technologies such as printing, looked back at and instrumentalized the past. They did this in order to justify, legitimize, and promote identities, and to advance a variety of spiritual and political agendas.

The musical continuities of late-medieval and early-modern cultural memories often stretched across several centuries. This process did not come to an end in the sixteenth century: for example, sixteenth-century polyphony survived as the ‘stile antico’ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and remained the pedagogical gold standard for teaching counterpoint well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The classical teaching manual of counterpoint in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Johann Joseph Fux’s *Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725), was explicitly cast as a dialogue between Fux himself and the sixteenth-century composer Pierluigi da Palestrina.³ Lutheran chorales, themselves based on older melodies, are still sung today, and some Christmas carols like *In dulci jubilo*—regularly heard in the Low Countries and Germany—can boast a pedigree that goes back at least as far as the fourteenth century.⁴

- 1 • See my Introduction ‘Towards a New History of the Musical Past’ to this volume.
- 2 • See the contributions by Susan Rankin in this volume. See also Margot Fassler, ‘The Liturgical Framework of Time and the Representation of History’, in Robert A. Maxwell (ed.), *Representing History 900–1300: Art, Music, History* (University Park, PA, 2010), 149–71 and 239–47 (notes). For a pre-Christian example of a strong cultural awareness of the past, one might cite Homeric poetry in classical and post-classical Greece. For more details and further case studies, see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992).
- 3 • For more on Fux and his musical world, see Jen-Yen Chen, ‘The Tradition and Ideal of the *Stile antico* in Viennese Sacred Music, 1740–1800’ (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000).
- 4 • On *In dulci jubilo*, see Anne-Dore Harzer, *In dulci jubilo: Fassungen und Rezeptionsgeschichte des Liedes vom 14. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Tübingen, 2006).

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The cultivation of the past in music acquired a striking new quality, however, in the course of the nineteenth century. All the—greatly varied—strands and traditions discussed and highlighted so far were imbricated within a historical continuity that reached from their (relative) point of origin to their (relative) present. In contrast, historically inclined musicians alongside musically inclined academics of the late eighteenth, early, and mid-nineteenth century successively introduced a novel element into the relationship of European cultures to their musical pasts when they initiated and nurtured—against considerable resistance—an experiment that had never been proposed before with such radicality: the sounding revival of musical traditions that had previously come to an end.⁵

Mention must be made at this juncture of the interest in the sixteenth century, prevalent among musically inclined humanists, to revive the music of Antiquity. This desire might well be considered an earlier attempt to revive a distant, musical past. The differences between humanist and nineteenth-century historicism lie both in the aims and the methods applied: humanists sought to recreate the *effects* that music of the ancients was thought to have on the human soul. Based on the assumption that music's rules were eternal and therefore unchangeable, they strove to adapt the musical language of their own time in ways that would allow their contemporaries once more to experience the marvellous properties of music as laid down in the texts of the ancients.⁶

The humanist quest led to some noteworthy and, indeed, highly consequential innovations in musical practice, helping aesthetically to legitimize the expansion of the tonal system, favouring monody over imitative polyphony, and, eventually, stimulating the development of opera. As such, humanists' confrontation with an imagined musical past undoubtedly exerted significant influence on music history. But humanist objectives were by necessity also incongruous with the historicizing drive of nineteenth- and twentieth-century music scholars. For the latter, the aim was to reappropriate the musical past as a form of national heritage. Their preferred method was Lachmannian philology, and their practical objective to reintroduce the music of the past into the performed repertory as a living practice. In this they were successful. It is ironic in this context to note that Richard Wagner's *Musikdrama*—quite antagonistic in the nineteenth-century context to the historicists' goals—aimed, like the humanists of yore, to re-create the *effects* of antique drama whilst using a contemporary musical idiom, now under the banner of the quest for a genuinely Germanic form of opera.

A signal event for the historicist approach was the first re-performance of J. S. Bach's St Matthew Passion under the aegis of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in Berlin on 11 March

- 5 • For a discussion of some key aspects of this process with a focus on the epicentre of this development in 19th-c. Europe, the German-speaking area, see Karl Kügle, 'History as Identity Politics: The Case of Mid Nineteenth-Century Germany', *Context: A Journal of Music Research*, 22 (2001), 95–103.
- 6 • For an overview of this development and its larger intellectual and practical contexts, including further bibliography, see the chapters by Giuseppe Gerbino, Inga Mai Groote, and Jacomien Prins in Iain Fenlon and Richard Wistreich (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Sixteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2019), 381–413 and 439–71.

1829.⁷ Mendelssohn's initiative did not remain an isolated incident: as the importance of the historicist movement grew, much of nineteenth- and twentieth-century musical life and musical aesthetics came under the influence—and soon became informed by—the incorporation of the past into the present. Beginning with the complete-works editions of Bach (initiated in 1850) and George Frideric Handel (1856), music of the past became available to professionals and amateurs alike for both study and performance in ever-increasing quantities; the trend continues unabated today. The revival of the musical past in both musical scholarship and in music, for example in historicizing genres like the suite, and—most importantly—in the live performance of the music of long-dead composers on the concert stage and at home, have added an entirely new quality both to the musical present *and* to the musical past.⁸ While cultural awareness of the past grew, the past also began seriously to impact on musical life of the present, and not just aesthetically: living composers now had to compete for space in concert programmes with music by long-dead composers, and eventually some performers began to specialize exclusively in music of the past, creating new performance traditions of their own.⁹ Today, the historicist turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continues to impact significantly on concepts and practices of cultural memory and cultural heritage in music, providing justification for the ongoing construction of musical pasts around the globe.¹⁰

The historicizing quest of the Romantic and modern age perforce required 'inventing' musical traditions, since both the material sources and the data conveyed through them, by virtue of their fragmentary, even patchy, nature required reconstructive, creative ways to make sense to modern readers, performers, and listeners.¹¹ Our sources, both historical and musical, in many regards are random survivors from the past, and it is an ongoing, vexing problem of historical studies to theorize and justify in an intellectually satisfactory manner the drawing

- 7 • The Passion was composed by J. S. Bach for the liturgy of Good Friday 1727 at Leipzig's Thomaskirche and performed again there on the same occasion in 1729. It was performed at the Thomaskirche in a reworked version in 1736 and perhaps once more in 1742, but was never heard in full after that until the Berlin revival. See Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (Oxford, 2000), 288–303 ('The "Great Passion" and its Context') and 295 (Table 8.16: Calendar of Passion Performances in Leipzig, 1723–50). For further discussion and historical context of this much-discussed performance, see the essays in Anselm Hartinger, Christoph Wolff, and Peter Wollny (eds.), *'Zu groß, zu unerreichbar': Bach-Rezeption im Zeitalter Mendelssohns und Schumanns* (Wiesbaden, 2007); Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (Ithaca, NY, 2005); Martin Geck, *Die Geburtsstunde des 'Mythos Bach': Mendelssohns Wiederentdeckung der Matthäuspasion* (Stuttgart, 1998).
- 8 • A particularly striking case is the reinvention of plainchant by the Benedictine community of Solesmes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries within the framework of an (intended) restoration of the Roman liturgy. See Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments: The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998). On Solesmes's influence on late nineteenth-century music in France, see, most recently, Patrick Hala, *Solesmes et les musiciens*, i: *La Schola cantorum: Charles Bordes, Vincent d'Indy, Déodat de Séverac, René de Castéra* (Solesmes, 2017).
- 9 • For example, the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska (1879–1959). See Edmond Johnson, 'The Death and the Second Life of the Harpsichord', *Journal of Musicology*, 30 (2013), 180–214.
- 10 • See, for example, Kim Kattari, 'Identifying with the Rebel of the Past: An Ethnographic Exploration of Nostalgia in the Contemporary Rockabilly Scene of the United States', *Volume! La revue des musiques populaires*, 11 (2014), 175–89 (special issue: *Souvenirs, souvenirs: La nostalgie dans les musiques populaires*).
- 11 • The classical study on this is Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). It specifically (and exclusively) investigated cultural phenomena of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

of conclusions when faced with the haphazard absence or serendipitous availability of data. For present purposes, simply recognizing the existence of such a fantasy-prone, reconstructive component in our image(s) of the past, musical or otherwise, introduces into our historical narratives a salubrious awareness of their suppressed or neglected uncertainties.

On the practical level, some of the distortions introduced by musical historicism can be pinpointed quickly and easily: present-day performances almost invariably take place outside the original contexts for which a piece was written (liturgical or otherwise). We tend to comprehend music primarily as an object retrieved from our ever-growing museum of musical works rather than as a practice.¹² Our socialization in an industrialized, technology-prone, consumer society—musical and otherwise—inevitably differs dramatically from that of anyone who lived in the remote past. It is almost impossible to assess aesthetic factors, such as what would have been considered a good performance by listeners in centuries past.

Even the comparatively brief history of performances since the arrival of sound recording shows significant changes in musical aesthetics: how much more of this might we expect over a much longer distance in time? Suffice it to say that it is by now the scholarly consensus that ‘early music’—both as performance and as a concept—is a creation of *our* time, notwithstanding its tether to historical data and the evidential value of historically informed performance practices based on empirical results that were obtained through musical and organological trial and error.¹³

Within the discourses of recent musical revivals, then, a surfeit of new traditions, historical narratives, and counter-narratives has arisen. Their development, including their political contexts and social embedding, has been traced in detail by the occasional scholar of nineteenth- and twentieth-century music,¹⁴ but the historiographic chart of this aspect of the recent musical past is far from comprehensive at the time of writing. In the end, historical music performance and scholarship are and will have to remain bifocal: on one hand, taking into account that they are clearly dependent on the sources that have come down to us from the past—after all, the texts copied in the sources are read, sung, and interpreted as faithfully as possible to the notes that come with them; on the other hand, reflecting both the historical and the political contexts within which, first, the source itself, and, second, the scholarship or the modern-day performance derived from that source, were created.¹⁵ Both were and are

12 • On the concept of the ‘imaginary museum’, see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, 1992; rev. edn. New York and Oxford, 2007).

13 • The bibliography on the subject is rather large, and growing. For a recent example, see Nick Wilson, *The Art of Re-enchantment: Making Early Music in the Modern Age* (New York, 2014).

14 • For example, Kailan Rubinoff, “‘The grand guru of Baroque music’: Leonhardt’s Antiquarianism in the Progressivist 1960s’, *Early Music*, 42 (2014), 23–35, and ‘Authenticity as a Political Act: Straub-Huillet’s *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* and the Post-War Bach Revival’, *Music and Politics*, 5 (2011), 41–53; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (Cambridge, 2002).

15 • See the (growing) corpus of scholarship investigating the history of musicology. For example, Kristy Swift, ‘Getting the Story Crooked: Donald J. Grout, Claude V. Palisca, and J. Peter Burkholder’s *A History of Western Music, 1960–2009*’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2013); John Haines, ‘Friedrich Ludwig’s *Musicology of the Future*: A Commentary and Translation’, *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, 12 (2003), 129–64, and Haines, ‘The Footnote Quarrels of the Modal Theory: A Remarkable Episode in the Reception of Medieval Music’, *Early Music History*, 20 (2001), 87–120; Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich* (New Haven, 1998).

of their own times: then as now, we create, and reflect on, the past in our own image, musical and otherwise.¹⁶

Music of the Past in Today's Present: Sedimentations and Bifurcations

The two final contributions to this book take a closer look at this meta-history of musical-historicist scholarship from the late eighteenth century onward, and investigate potential futures of performing and studying music of the past from the perspective of today's performing musicians.

As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, both musicology and historical performance practice can look back on considerable histories of their own. Bartłomiej Gembicki introduces the concept of the meme as a starting point for his analysis of the musicological discourse that developed around the term *cori spezzati*. He shows that studying the remote (musical) past has generated its own discursive pasts. Within the matrix of the past-in-the-present, seemingly 'objective' terms rapidly can develop a distinct life of their own. The case of *cori spezzati* seems both extraordinary and typical: extraordinary in the explosion of meanings demonstrated by Gembicki, and typical, because there are many more examples of such musicological memes that could be cited.¹⁷ Plucked as it was by editorial choice from a very limited number of original sources, the term acquired new meanings early on in its reception history to the point of more or less obscuring its straightforward meaning of 'divided choirs'. Today, *cori spezzati* is a code word to designate a sound ('polychorality'), a place (Venice), a set of myths ('Venice' today and the 'Venice' of the past), and a justification for cultural practices like tourism. The musicological term *cori spezzati* is far from a dead letter—on the contrary, it produces and reproduces meanings with viral speed. A term *from* the past, through the discourse about music of the past, becomes a source of seemingly unlimited new meanings in the future, starting from the moment that it is rediscovered. The sedimentation makes it difficult to identify the original under the thick overlay that the term has generated. Meanwhile, the discursive sludge continues to accumulate.

Antonio Chemotti's text addresses potential bifurcations of the performance of music from the past that are available to contemporary musicians operating within diverging traditions. He presents an interview conducted jointly in the winter of 2018–19 with representatives of two ensembles who were part of the Sound Memories project as Associate Partners, Michał Gondko (co-leader, together with Corina Marti, of Ensemble La Morra, Basel, Switzerland) and Paweł Szamburski (Bastarda, Warsaw, Poland). Both ensembles interacted with the musical legacy of of the fifteenth-century cleric Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz through the medium of musical performance. However, they began their work from quite different starting points. Marti, Gondko, and La Morra are representatives of the type of early-music ensembles that

16 • See also Margaret Bent, 'Reading, Memory, Listening, Improvisation: From Written Text to Lost Sound', *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, 34 (2010), 13–28.

17 • For a case study critiquing a term *invented* by musicologist Friedrich Ludwig (1872–1930) but with a similar history, see Margaret Bent, 'What is Isorhythm?', in David Butler Cannata, Rena Charnin Mueller, Gabriela Ilnitchi Currie, and John Louis Nádas (eds.), *Quomodo cantabimus canticum? Studies in Honor of Edward H. Roesner* (Middleton, WI, 2008), 121–43.

present-day concert audiences usually encounter: all members are highly skilled, conservatory-trained vocal or instrumental specialists, and many also possess significant training and know-how as music scholars. La Morra's performances conform to the mould of the classical-music concert, with the concomitant requirements concerning programming and audience involvement. Based on the cultural norms embodied in the ensemble, its audiences, and the venues that they perform in, this group inhabits a sub-segment of the classical-music market, with all the advantages and disadvantages that that entails.

Bastarda found its way to Wilhelmi not through the academy or the conservatory but via the cross-currents of popular culture and the knowledge stored inside the internet, in combination with audio technologies, specifically recordings of Wilhelmi's music by another Warsaw-based early-music ensemble from the 1990s. They approached Wilhelmi from a post-modern vantage point of 'bricolage', leading to a transformation of Wilhelmi's materials which—surprisingly, or perhaps not—exhibits interesting parallels to late-medieval techniques of intabulation and to the nineteenth-century practice of paraphrasing operatic melodies for the piano. All three (late-medieval intabulations, nineteenth-century operatic paraphrases, and the work of Bastarda) find their *raison d'être* in a transfer between musical media—in Bastarda's case, from the text-carrying vocality of Wilhelmi's originals to the instrumental idiom chosen by the group (clarinet, contrabass clarinet, and cello). Such transfers require a thorough and creative reworking of the musical material to fit the new medium both from a technical (for example, pitch levels, or types and placement of embellishments) and a generic perspective (the type of audiences that, for example, Bastarda caters for, their listening expectations, and of course the creative intentions that the ensemble brought to the Wilhelmi project). The substance taken from the source has suffered a sea change, and emerges profoundly transformed, yet recognizable and easily discerned by those who are familiar with the original pieces.

Which of the two approaches is 'correct'? Here we encounter, once again, the specific dilemmas of historicism. It is impossible to control the genesis of additional meanings when a term has entered public discourse, as in the case of *cori spezzati*. It is also impossible to recreate the past in its fullness through historicizing research or reconstructed soundscapes. The outcome, the control mechanisms implicit in critical historical methodologies notwithstanding, will always be of our own time.

If so, why not choose freely to cannibalize the past by taking away from it those materials that interest us? Why not let them become building blocks for something new? Ironically, this is exactly what the inhabitants of medieval cities did when they quarried stones from antique buildings for use in their own dwellings. The medieval Venetians famously used *spolia* from Antiquity that they had taken 'according to the law of booty' from vanquished Byzantium in the thirteenth century to adorn, and transform, their own city.¹⁸ It is also what choral conduc-

18 • On the *spolia* of St Mark's, see the essays in Henry Maguire and Robert S. Nelson (eds.), *San Marco, Byzantium and the Myths of Venice* (Washington, DC, 2010). For the citation 'according to the law of booty', see the essay by Holger A. Klein, 'Refashioning Byzantium in Venice, ca. 1200–1400', *ibid.* 193–225, at 194. Klein there cites the *Memoirs* of Sylvester Syropoulos, an official of Hagia Sophia who visited Venice in 1438 in the retinue of Emperor John VIII Palaiologos. Syropoulos wistfully recognized the Byzantine treasures appropriated by the Venetians after the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 in their 'new' Venetian setting, more than two hundred years later.

tors, concert impresarios, and tourism promoters of today do when they use terms like *cori spezzati* for their own, highly divergent purposes.

Some might wish to ask which approach is 'better' or 'more justified'. The question seems both unanswerable and wrongly put. Both approaches are in equal measure 'historical' *and* 'ahistorical'—one doggedly trying (pretending?) to re-create an implicitly unreachable past, the other unabashedly creating something new out of the remains of the past. Both take us from the present into the future and into the past of our own present—simply on different paths.

