

THE CAMBRIDGE  
HISTORY OF



MUSICAL  
PERFORMANCE

EDITED BY  
COLIN LAWSON  
AND ROBIN STOWELL

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MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

The intricacies and challenges of musical performance have recently attracted the attention of writers and scholars to a greater extent than ever before. Research into the performer's experience has begun to explore such areas as practice techniques, performance anxiety and memorisation, as well as many other professional issues. Historical performance practice has been the subject of lively debate way beyond academic circles, mirroring its high profile in the recording studio and the concert hall. Reflecting the strong ongoing interest in the role of performers and performance, this *History* brings together research from leading scholars and historians, and, importantly, features contributions from accomplished performers, whose practical experiences give the volume a unique vitality. Moving the focus away from the composers and onto the musicians responsible for bringing the music to life, the *History* presents a fresh, integrated and innovative perspective on performance history and practice, from the earliest times to today.

COLIN LAWSON is Director of the Royal College of Music, London. He has an international profile as a period clarinettist and has played principal in most of Britain's leading period orchestras, notably The Hanover Band, the English Concert and the London Classical Players, with whom he has recorded extensively and toured worldwide. He has published widely, and is co-editor, with Robin Stowell, of a series of Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music, for which he co-authored an introductory volume and contributed a book on the early clarinet.

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## Contributors

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ANTHONY PAYNE, composer, was born in London and studied at Durham University. His commissions include three orchestral works for the BBC Proms, and works for the BBC Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta and Cheltenham Festival. His discography includes two complete CDs of chamber music. He has published books on Schoenberg, Frank Bridge and Elgar's Third Symphony, the completion of which, in 1997, brought him international acclaim, as well as South Bank and Evening Standard awards. It has been performed by the Philadelphia and Chicago Symphony Orchestras, as well as all the major UK orchestras. There are now six CD recordings in existence. He has been Visiting Professor at Mills College, California and Composition Tutor at the New South Wales Conservatorium, and is a frequent broadcaster for the BBC. He holds Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Birmingham, Durham and Kingston, and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Music.

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WILLIAM WEBER, Professor of History Emeritus at California State University in Long Beach, has written *Music and the Middle Class* (1975/2003), *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England* (1992), and *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (2008). He edited *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* and *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914* (2005). He has been a member of doctoral committees in France, Finland and Canada as well as the United States and is an Associate of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at the University of California, Los Angeles.

RICHARD WISTREICH is a scholar, singer and teacher whose work centres on the cultural and social history of music-making in Europe in the period between about 1500 and 1800. More specifically, he investigates how vocal performance of all kinds contributes to the construction of individual and collective identities. His book *Warrior, Courtier, Singer: Giulio Cesare Brancaccio and the Performance of Identity in the Late Renaissance* was published in 2007, as was *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, co-edited with John Whenham; he is also co-editor, with Iain Fenlon, of *The Cambridge History of Sixteenth-Century Music*. He has an international profile as a singer of both early and contemporary music, specialising in the performance of fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century solo and ensemble song. He is Professor of Music History and Dean of Research and Enterprise at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

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## *Editors' preface*

Over the past generation the intricacies and challenges of musical performance have attracted the attention of writers and scholars to a greater extent than ever before. The net has been cast widely, as research into the performer's experience has begun to explore such areas as practice techniques, performance anxiety and memorisation, as well as professional issues such as alcohol and drug abuse. There has even been greater recognition that a true understanding of musical excellence draws fruitfully upon such diverse fields as exercise science, psychophysiology, sports psychology, cognitive science and medicine. Furthermore, a relatively recent sub-discipline loosely embraced by the term 'performance studies' has circled around a large range of subject matter while not always fully engaging the attention of the executants themselves. At the same time, historical performance practice has been the subject of lively debate way beyond academic circles, mirroring its high profile in the recording studio and the concert hall. Histories of music nevertheless continue stubbornly to be based on composers and their achievements rather than on those musicians who have been responsible for bringing the music to life. Like Heinrich Schenker, many theorists have considered 'the mechanical realization of the work of art . . . superfluous', not least because 'a composition does not require a performance in order to exist'.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the reason, 'we have regarded performance as a totally secondary aspect of music, merely a clothing or a realisation of "the real thing", which are the written dots on the page'.<sup>2</sup> The complex relationship of score, musical work and performance demands a more flexible and detailed approach. 'For generations, we wrote the story of music as the history of compositions. But it is surely a mistake to think that music actually exists on library shelves in weighty collected editions. It is the history of performance that has shaped the course of music, and the history of

<sup>1</sup> H. Schenker, *The Art of Performance*, ed. H. Esser, trans. I. S. Scott, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> N. Kenyon, 'Musical Tradition in a Time of Anxiety', Twelfth Leverhulme Memorial Lecture, The Leverhulme Trust (2005), p. 6.

performance has never been written. The history of repertoires and institutions and taste and reception is only beginning to be written.<sup>3</sup>

*The Cambridge History of Musical Performance* takes up the challenge, aspiring to be nothing less than the largest and most comprehensive history of musical performance to be published in the English language. Apart from Frederick Dorian's *The History of Music in Performance* (New York, 1942), a now outdated book and of limited value, it can reasonably be claimed that there has been no previous publication on the subject, and certainly none matching the scope of the content and scholarly expertise represented within its pages. A collaborative project by leading music scholars, historians and practitioners, it seeks to trace the rich panorama of performance history, conventions and practices from the Ancient World to the present day, aiming to provide not only an invaluable and up-to-date source of reference about the subject but also an appreciation of the historical interrelationship of style and interpretation during the various musical epochs.

The format of this volume aligns with others in the 'Cambridge History' series. It reflects the research and performance experience of an international authorship, presenting a synthetic historical overview of a fascinating and complex subject that demands distinctive treatment. Much of the book addresses performance and performance practices in specific periods of history from times ancient to modern. From the Middle Ages onwards, an overview chapter for each period lays the historical foundations on which the immediately succeeding chapters are built, devoted respectively to vocal and instrumental performance. Case studies outline the performance history and the performance practice issues involved in interpreting a particular work or works from six of the periods under scrutiny. By way of introduction to this investigation of chronological developments, the opening chapters address broader issues that are immediately relevant to the performance of music, focusing respectively upon 'Performance today', 'Political process, Social structure and musical performance in Europe since 1450', 'The evidence', 'The performer and the composer', 'The teaching of performance', and 'Music and musical performance: histories in disjunction?'

With classical music increasingly being challenged in our society by pop music, world musics and a vast range of alternative mass entertainment, advocacy is clearly an important aspect of any performer's work. Yet the digital age has brought new opportunities, as the ways in which musical performance is disseminated have become subject to radical change. Contributors discuss these technological developments along with other performance-related topics

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

such as repertoires, audiences, criticism, careers, patronage and venues. An analysis of the complex and ever-changing relationship between composers and performers centres upon several areas of enquiry such as notational conventions, leadership roles and the cult of personality. Performance through the ages has been subject to a variety of didactic practices, often focusing on musical learning within institutions, whether church, court, university or conservatoire. An appropriate curriculum for performers beyond the immediate study of music has been promulgated in many different contexts, one eighteenth-century source prescribing for music students 'the whole of worldly wisdom, as well as mathematics, poetry, rhetoric and many languages'.<sup>4</sup> This idealism scarcely found long-term favour, though in more recent times theory and analysis have gradually been supplemented by a host of other performance-related subjects, such as acoustics, performance practice, psychology and world music. In addition, the increasing interaction of performers with their communities has brought into focus the benefits of music to disadvantaged members of society.

Recording has made musical performance durable, its natural evanescence captured and preserved by technology. No longer is music's sound necessarily inseparable from the actions of the performers creating it, with a perishability once described by Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*, 1776) as 'leaving behind no tangible, vendible commodity'.<sup>5</sup> And social, economic and cultural change after Smith's day – with new expectations of a more leisured society for its edification and entertainment – meant that the virtuoso eventually became a social achiever, acclaimed for his skills and exploited for his marketability. This was a new situation compared with Smith's observation (1776) that being a professional performer was an essentially discreditable occupation, 'a sort of public prostitution'. Such change over so short a time underlines the advisability of examining concepts of canon, repertoire and music reception in relation to the ways in which musical performance has been marketed and distributed. Traditionally, music was listened to within some sort of social context, such as a concert or a liturgical setting. This experience generated a collective aesthetic response in groups of listeners, giving rise to a common understanding of what constituted a canon of exemplary works. But today's digital miniaturisation, and the unparalleled choice of recorded repertoire now available, puts consumers (with their own individual sensibilities and musical preferences) in complete control of what they listen to, when they listen and whether they listen to favourite moments or an entire work. Increasingly,

4 P. Poulin, 'A view of eighteenth-century musical life and training: Anton Stadler's "Musick Plan"', *Music & Letters*, 71 (1990), 215–24.

5 A. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), ed. E. Cannan, New York, Random House, 2000, p. 361.



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