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Execution and Expression – Leopold and Wolfgang Amadé Mozart between System and Sensibility

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So schaffe eine Wissenschaft,
die noch im Schoße der Empfindung liegt!

J.G. Herder, *Viertes kritisches Wäldchen* (1769)

This paper attempts an exposition of Leopold and W. A. Mozart's thinking on the place of personal expression in musical performance. It is divided into three parts. The first is an appraisal of the ‚system' of musical performance found in Leopold Mozart's *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (1756), which I contend was only a partial success. In part two I will sketch an alternative to this system drawn primarily from the philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder. In a postscript, I will sketch W. A. Mozart's ideas on freedom in performance.

I will build my portrayal of Leopold's position around two theses:

1. The *Violinschule* – his magisterial contribution to the ‚science' of musical production – asks a fundamental question: What is the relation between system and sensibility?[1]

For Leopold as for almost all of his contemporaries, the main purpose of music was to move the hearer. For performance, this means that the main duty of the performer is to communicate that which does the moving, that is music's affective content. In order that this might happen, the performer's ‚sensibility' must be tamed so that music's message can make its way undisturbed from the composer to the hearer: composing, making, and receiving music are here a kind of

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[1] Cf. Panajotis Kondylis's thesis: „Die sogenannte Aufklärung sei ein Versuch oder vielmehr eine Vielfalt von Versuchen, die Frage nach den Beziehungen von Geist und Sinnlichkeit zu beantworten." *Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus*, Munchen 1986, p. 19.

‚communicative system'. The purpose of the violin method is to set forth a method for the training of musicians who will then be in a position to operate within this system.

2. Because it is a polemic, the Violinschule does not always argue consistently[2].

In his violin method, Leopold musters whatever arguments he can in support of his main point, which is that learning to play the violin – and, in a higher sense, learning to communicate the meanings found in musical compositions – is a systematic undertaking. Mastery of the instrument can be achieved if the student submits himself to learning a complex, interlocking series of techniques. Yet it is impossible, in a book, to describe all of these in detail sufficient enough to guarantee that the student achieve such mastery. Leopold is in agreement with almost all contemporary writers when he admits, in the twelfth and final chapter of the *Violinschule*, that only experience can supply the rest. This is the method's fatal flaw: experience (or ‚empiricism') is poison for systems. Unlike other authors, who hold the violin method to be a s u c c e s s f u l example of a ‚communicative' or ‚critical system', I propose that it is a system doomed by its own success, brought low, in the end, by two opposing – and, ultimately, not reconcilable – claims it attempts to make[3]. The violin method is both a ‚first philosophy', in the sense that its represents a closed system upon which practice must be built, and a ‚last philosophy', in the sense that it yields, in the end, to the openness of empirical investigation[4]. A s u c c e s s f u l philosophy cannot be both at once. Nonetheless, the ultimate ‚failure' of Leopold's system of performance does not make Leopold himself a failure; indeed, in my eyes at least, it makes him all the more admirable. For by grappling with this problem he engaged with debates about the human capacity to communicate emotion that were central to his age's shifting image of itself.

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2 See ibid. pp. 20-35 on polemical quality of the Enlightened debate about the „rehabilitation of the sensual" (and there many references to a wider literature).

3 On the *Violinschule* as system see Pierluigi Petrobelli, „Leopold Mozart e la ‚Ausbildung' di Wolfgang", in: *Beiträge des Internationalen Leopold-Mozart-Kolloquiums Augsburg 1994*, ed. Josef Mančal and Wolfgang Plath (= Beiträge zur Leopold-Mozart-Forschung 2), Augsburg 1997, pp. 103f.; Eugenia Angelucci, „La forma della communicazione nel systema didattico della ‚*Violinschule*' di Leopold Mozart", in: ibid., pp. 107-146; and Ulrich Weiß, „System und Methode. Überlegungen zum Philosophischen Hintergrund von Leopold Mozarts *Violinschule*", in: ibid., pp. 91-104.

4 For more on ‚double meanings' in Leopold Mozart's life and writings see Joseph Mančal, „Zur ‚Verfremdung' historischer Entfremdungsprozesse am Beispiel Leopold Mozarts", in: *Leopold Mozart. Auf dem Weg zu einem Verständnis*, ed. Josef Mančal and Wolfgang Plath (= Beiträge zur Leopold-Mozart-Forschung 1), Augsburg 1994, pp. 183-198.

Systems of Meaning

As long as we have thought about music, we have thought about what it says to us, and how. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, those who made and thought about music paid a special, and as it turned out, slightly different, kind of attention to its communicative power. The idea that music was a language of affects, current at least since the rise of opera in the ferment of late-Renaissance Florence, was clear to many. For some, however, this simple metaphor was not enough. In their eagerness to view the world as a system, Enlightened musical theorists found themselves drawn with fascination to the function of language itself. Music – notated on paper just like language, sounding in the world just like language – seemed like an ideal field in which to seek evidence that meaning can be born of system. Perhaps music's opacity, its mysterious dependence on the spontaneities of individual performance, on the contingencies of sounding bodies – then, of course, mechanically irreproducible – made the challenge of finding a system of meaning in it irresistible.

Up until the middle decades of the eighteenth century, in German-speaking lands especially, the practical performance of music (*musica practica* as opposed to *musica theoretica*) was ruled by a single metaphor, the comparison of music to persuasive speech, to the *ars rhetorica*[5]. This art, in turn, had deep roots in European culture, going back to Cicero's codifications in first century Rome, and had been revived by Humanism's strong desire to recreate ancient practice. Applied metaphorically to music, the *ars rhetorica* engendered an elaborate theoretical literature, a *Figurenlehre*, throughout the seventeenth century; it can safely be said that the image of the performer as orator was thoroughly naturalized by every even slightly learned musician well into the eighteenth.

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[5] See George J. Buelow, „Music, Rhetoric, and the Concept of the Affections: A Selective Bibliography", in: *Notes* 30 (1973), pp. 250-259. For a broad approach to rhetoric in the eighteenth century see Rüdiger Campe, *Affekt und Ausdruck: zur Umwandlung der literarischen Rede im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1990. Musicological treatments include Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration*, Cambridge/Mass. 1991; and Elaine Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, Cambridge/Mass. 1993. For general treatments of music aesthetics in the eighteenth century cf. Bellamy Hosler, *Changing Aesthetic Views of Instrumental Music in 18-Century Germany*, Ann Arbor 1982; *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Peter Le Huray and James Day, Cambridge 1981; Carl Dahlhaus, „Das 18. Jahrhundert als musikgeschichtliche Epoche", in: *Die Musik des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (= Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft 8), Laaber 1985, pp. 1-69; and Laurenz Lütteken, *Das Monologische als Denkform in der Musik zwischen 1760 und 1785* (= Wolfenbüttler Studien zur Aufklärung 24), Tübingen 1995.

As Carl Dahlhaus has argued, the arrival of functional harmony in the 1720s appeared to render the *Figurenlehre*, which focused on the melodic surface of music, redundant[6]. Expressive dissonances, for instance, were no longer viewed as exceptions to the rules: the new rules assimilated dissonance as a vital constituent of the syntax of functional harmony. Thus Johann Mattheson's *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) restated the rhetorical model as an *Affektenlehre*, claiming for it epistemological prestige as imitation of nature[7]. Mattheson's *Figurenlehre* was no longer an implicit theory of the past, but an explicit theory of the present; no longer a set of rhetorical rules, but a semiotic system. It was a system that justified music's presence in world ruled by reason. Mattheson's intervention was nothing less than a subjection of rhetoric to systematic control; the language he used was prescriptive (‚this is what affect x sounds like') and no longer – as had been the case in the rhetorical literature – descriptive (‚this figure can be described with this Latin term'). The dream of a musical *Wissenschaft* born in Mattheson's generation is the dream of subjecting all elements of music and music making to the control and discipline of *Vernunft*.

By mid-century, a growing number of musical journalists were carrying the battle to rationalize music to a burgeoning German public sphere[8]. For Mattheson's younger colleague Johann Adolf Scheibe, the „Endzweck" or final justification of music was the communication of „Gemüthsbewegung": „Wir müssen", he wrote in his *Critischer Musikus*, „den völligen Ausdruck der Sachen [that is, affective content] und die Bewegung der Zuhörer von der Musik überhaupt und aus der Vereinigung der Melodie mit der Harmonie erwarten."[9] In his *Der Critische Musicus an der Spree*, Scheibe's contemporary and journalistic competitor Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg added: „[Die Musiker] müssen zeigen, daß sie das, was sie vortragen, selbst fühlen und verstehen."[10] The article on „Vortrag" in

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6 Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musiktheorie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zweiter Teil: Deutschland,* Darmstadt 1989, pp. 6-22.

7 See John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics,* New Haven 1986.

8 On the ‚public sphere' see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* Cambridge/Mass. 1989.

9 Johann Adolf Scheibe, *Critischer Musikus. Neue vermehrte und verbesserte Auflage,* Leipzig 1745, repr. Hildesheim 1970, p. 45.

10 Anon. [Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg?], „Über die Exekution, oder die Ausführung musikalischer Stücke", in: *Der Critische Musicus an der Spree* 26-28, Berlin 1749/50, repr. Hildesheim 1979, here vol. 26, p. 207. Marpurg was, of course, Leopold Mozart's main contact in North German theoretical circles. On Leopold's impressive intellectual range see Pierluigi Petrobelli, „La cultura di Leopold Mozart e la sua ‚Violinschule'", in: *MJb* 1989/90, pp. 9-16.

Johann Georg Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* concentrates on performance's dangers: „Von dem Vortrage hängt größtentheils die gute oder schlechte Würkung ab, die ein Stük auf den Zuhörer macht. Ein mittelmäßiges Stük kann durch einen guten Vortrag sehr erhoben werden; hingegen kann ein schlechter Vortrag auch das vortrefflichste Stük so verunstalten, daß es unkenntlich, ja unausstehlich wird."[11] The author recognizes the power of musical performance; good performances can ‚rescue' bad music, just as bad performances can ruin good pieces. This is not the same as admitting music's pure contingency on performance: „Da die Musik überhaupt nur durch die Aufführung oder den Vortrag dem Ohr mitgetheilt werden kann, und der Tonsetzer bey Verfertigung eines Stüks allezeit auf den Vortrag desselben Rüksicht nimmt, und dann voraussetzt, daß es gerade so, als er es gedacht und empfunden hat, vorgetragen werde, so ist die Lehre vom Vortrage die allerwichtigste in der praktischen Musik, aber auch die allerschwereste, weil sie gar viele Fertigkeiten voraussetzt, und die höchste Bildung des Virtuosen zum Endzwek hat."[12]

Such a ‚Bildung zum Virtuosen' acquired its own literature via a remarkable series of treatises, mostly in German, about musical performance. For all of these authors, authorities like Johann Joachim Quantz, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, and – of the most interest to us here – Leopold Mozart, a successful performance was one in which every element referred to the affective content of the piece being performed: musical performance was therefore always subordinate to musical texts. This was especially true of instrumental music, otherwise open to the charge that in the absence of reference to content expressible in words it communicated nothing and thus lacked a final purpose or ‚Endzweck'. Like the treatments in the journals cited above, the discussions of expression in such treatises stress the musician's obligation to serve as a conduit of musical meaning; expression is i n t h e m u s i c and not in its performance. The final goal is the encoding of expression, and the creation of the illusion of a perfectly transparent system of signs.

Johann Joachim Quantz, in his well-known comparison of the performance of instrumental music and oratory („musical execution may be compared with the delivery of an orator"), notes *Vortrag*'s inherent unpredictability: „Man weis, was bey einer Rede ein guter Vortrag für Wirkung auf die Gemüther der Zuhörer thut; man weis auch, wie viel ein schlechter Vortrag der schönsten Rede auf dem Papier schadet; man weis nicht weniger, daß eine Rede, wenn sie von verschiede-

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[11] Art. „Vortrag", in: *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste. Neue vermehrte zweyte Auflage*, ed. Johann Georg Sulzer, 4 vol., Leipzig 1792-99, repr. Hildesheim 1967-70, vol. 4, p. 700.

[12] Ibid.

nen Personen, mit eben denselben Worten gehalten werden sollte, doch immer von dem einen besser oder schlimmer anzuhören seyn würde, als von dem andern. Mit dem Vortrage in der Musik hat es gleiche Bewandniß: so daß, wenn ein Stück entweder von einem oder dem andern gesungen, oder gespielet wird, es immer eine verschiedene Wirkung hervorbringt."[13]

Thus for Quantz there are as many potential performances as there are interpreters. For him, and for the other theorists we have been discussing here, this is not an advantage. It is a situation that requires regulation. A bad performance can ruin a perfectly good piece – that is, prevent it from conveying the message inherent in it.

Leopold Mozart's treatise emerged, then, in a climate of increased critical interest in the power of musical performance as a medium of communication and, indeed, as system of signs. For many of his contemporaries, performance was subjected to rules beyond the metaphorical ones of rhetoric; the new doctrine of the affects legislated l i m i t s to the performer's freedom. This setting of limits was part of a process of rationalization, a demystification of the previously more arcane processes of rhetorical persuasion. Performance was – at least ideally – no longer an a r t to be learned by emulating the rhetorical practice of the ancients; it had become a s c i e n c e. And thanks to a class of musical consumers that was growing every day in numbers and economic power, it had become a matter of general interest. A broad public of willing ‚Liebhaber' was eager to participate in music without having to bear the burden of understanding the arcana of its technical details. One might say that the emergence of this new public sphere for music demanded regulation: the increasing economic power of the musical public required that the universal language of emotions be subjected to discipline.

The attempts to ‚discipline' musical performance evident in a wide literature around 1750 bear marks of the processes Michel Foucault traced in his influential 1975 study *Discipline and Punish*[14]. At the opening of the chapter on ‚panopticism', for example, he describes the new ‚disciplines' of social control as „techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities". First, these techniques „obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost". Nothing is secret anymore[15]. Musical performance is demystified as the tools used to ‚decode' musical expression shift from the learned jargon of rhetoric to the simple

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[13] Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen*, Breslau [3]1789, repr. Kassel etc. 1953, pp. 100f.

[14] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York 1977, p. 218.

[15] On the decline of the ‚secret' arts of counterpoint see David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint*, Cambridge 2002.

and direct language of the emotions, with the concomitant growth of the concept of ‚musical materials' like specific harmonic formulas, melodic ‚themes', and even whole generic categories like ‚the minuet' or ‚the ode'[16]. Second, the disciplines „bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and [...] extend them as far as possible", in our case, for instance, with the help of the greatly expanded musical press. Third, the disciplines „link this ‚economic' growth of power to the output of the apparatuses [...] within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all elements of the system"[17]. How else are we to understand Leopold Mozart's words in his dedication of the *Violinschule* to his patron Archbishop Schrattenbach: „[...] wie viele [der musikalischen Jugend] müßten seiner Zeit bey dem Anwachse der Jahren vor Noth und Armuth darben und als unnütze Weltbürger der Gemeinde zur Beschwerniß seyn; wenn Euer Hochfürstl. Gnaden solche nicht nach dem Unterscheid ihres Talents und ihrer Geschicklichkeit in dieser oder jener Wissenschaft hätten gnädigst unterweisen lassen."[18]

Yet perfect communication via musical performance remained a utopian goal. In his essay „Über die Exekution, oder die Ausführung musikalischer Stücke", Marpurg writes of an ideal performance: „Unser Herr Bach spielete vor einiger Zeit einem meiner guten Freunde die sechste aus dem zweyten Theil seiner herausgegebenen Sonaten vor. Dieser Freund gestund mir, daß er sonst das Unglück habe meisthentheils zerstreuet zu werden, ehe ein Stück zu Ende käme; bey diesem aber habe er seinen Plan wahrgenommen, und eine Ausführung desselben, die ihn in beständigem Feuer und in unverrückter Aufmercksamkeit erhalten. Dieser gute Freund ist ein blosser Liebhaber der Music, und er hat die Sprache der Töne ohne hinzu gekommene Worte verstanden."[19]

„Herr Bach", of course, is Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. As we will see later in this paper, he is not necessarily the most obvious choice to play the role of the perfect musical communicator.

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[16] Cf. Nicholas Mathew, „Wie Kommerz klingt: Mozarts Klaviersonate KV 332", in: *Acta Mozartiana* 50 (2003), pp. 51-62.

[17] Foucault (wie Anm. 14).

[18] Leopold Mozart, „Zuschrift", in: *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule*, Augsburg 1756, repr. Kassel etc. 1995, s. p.

[19] Marpurg (cf. footnote 10), vol. 27, p. 217.

Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* and the Challenge of Empiricism

The twelfth and final chapter of the *Violinschule* („Von dem richtigen Notenlesen und guten Vortrage überhaupts") is dedicated to performance. Yet already in the first paragraph we can make out cracks in the foundations of the kind of perfectly regulated musical communication we have just examined: „An der guten Ausführung ist alles gelegen. Diesen Satz bestättiget die tägliche Erfahrniß. Mancher Halbcomponist ist vom Vergnügen entzücket, und halt nun von neuem erst selbst recht viel auf sich, wenn er seinen musikalischen Galimatias von guten Spielern vortragen höret, die den Affect, an den er nicht einmal gedacht hat, am rechten Orte anzubringen, und die Charakters, die ihm niemals eingefallen sind, so viel es möglich ist zu unterscheiden, und folglich die ganze elende Schmiererey den Ohren der Zuhörer durch einen guten Vortrag erträglich zu machen wissen."[20]

This paragraph raises two issues. First, Leopold Mozart's decision to appeal to „daily experience" calls systematic approaches to musical performance into question. Second – note the comparison with Quantz – by choosing the image of a b a d piece being rescued by a g o o d performance, Leopold ascribes an autonomy to performance incompatible with a closed system.

The doctrines of empiricism and individual experience played an important, formative, and controversial role throughout the Enlightenment, from René Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum* in the seventeenth century to Immanuel Kant's epistemology at the close of the eighteenth[21]. Panajotis Kondylis has argued that – despite all efforts to the contrary – the „rehabilitation of the sensual" in the eighteenth century threatened to overpower Enlightened systems across the board; indeed, for Kondylis, the Enlightenment was just as much an ‚age of Locke' as it was an ‚age of Newton'[22]. The challenge of the sensual could be found everywhere. Materialist arguments in ethics, for instance, which drew on empiricist positions, were seen by their opponents as leading to a vicious and dangerous nihilism. It would take the full force of Kantian philosophy, and the Idealism of the generations after Kant, to stem the challenge such arguments raised. In musical discourse the situation was no different. The role of ‚feeling' as a c o m p o n e n t of the *Affektenlehre* and the attempts made, at the same time, to regulate feeling by encoding it in a system of performance, were signs that the system itself was unstable.

One response was an attempt to co-opt ‚experience', to put it to work for the system. Scheibe, for instance, claimed with some optimism that experience was

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20 *Violinschule* (cf. footnote 18), p. 252.

21 For an overview see Kondylis (cf. footnote 1), pp. 98-118, 307-309, and passim.

22 Ibid., p. 21.

the heart of *musica practica*, and thus the basis of all theory. „[...] endlich erfahren wir auch aus der Theorie die wahren Eigenschaften der Leidenschaften der Gemüthsbewegungen und aller derjenigen Dinge und Sachen, die ein Componist ausdrücken, rühren, bewegen oder nachahmen soll."[23] Yet Marpurg, in contrast, admitted that while „Aller Ausdruck in der Music hat entweder einen Affect oder doch eine Empfindung zum Grunde", a musician must nonetheless „wechsels weise hundert verschiedene Rollen spielen; er muß tausend Charactere annehmen, nachdem die Componisten solches haben wollen."[24]

Johann Adam Hiller, Leopold's slightly younger contemporary, sought a balance between communication of affect and originality of performance, yielding, in the end to the power of the ‚experience' of the moment. „Nicht zwey Menschen in der Welt", he claimed, „sind einander gleich; am wenigsten, wenn es auf Sachen der Einbildung und des Geschmacks ankömmt." A good performer ought first to master the mechanical aspects of musical production, and of course acquire as much knowledge as possible about the affective content the music expresses, before he attempts „bey der Ausübung selbst sein Herz nach der eingesehenen Empfindung, auf welche es hauptsächlich ankömmt, zu erweichen, und bekümmere sich nicht ängstlich darum, ob die Ausübung im Geschmack des einen oder des andern großen Künstlers sey, oder nicht."[25]

Hiller's model of musical communication is complex, and demonstrates the narrowness of the path between the imperatives of the *Affektenlehre* and the lure of individually expressive performance. His attention to the matter in a widely read periodical suggests that his readers were insecure about performance, and their judgment of it. The question of what exactly it was that performance did, and what exactly it was supposed to imitate – the affective meaning of the piece, the successful performances of great masters, or their own sensation? – was particularly vexing.

The authors of performance treatises were inclined to allow good performance a certain positive ineffability. Despite his clear conviction that good performance must be transparent („Worinn aber besteht der gute Vortrag? In nichts anderen als der Fertigkeit, musikalische Gedanken nach ihrem wahren Inhalte und Affekt singend oder spielend dem Gehöre empfindlich zu machen."), even at the opening of the section on „Vortrag" in his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu*

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[23] Scheibe (cf. footnote 9), p. 35.

[24] Marpurg (cf. footnote 10), vol. 27, p. 215.

[25] Johann Adam Hiller, „Anmerkungen über den musikalischen Vortrag", in: *Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen die Musik betreffend*, 15. Stück (1767), repr. Hildesheim 1970, vol. 2, pp. 111f.

spielen, Emanuel Bach warned against mechanical playing[26]. After a passage criticizing both those who play too fast („die geschwinden Spieler") and those who play too slowly („[die], die einen aus Gefälligkeit einschläfern"), he notes that both „üben ihr Instrument bloß maschinenmäßig aus, da zu dem rührenden Spielen gute Köpfe erfordert werden, die sich gewissen vernünftigen Regeln zu unterwerfen und darnach ihre Stücke vorzutragen fähig sind."[27] For Bach, then, mechanical playing does not equal rational playing. Expressive performance that moves the listener depends on „good thinking" („gute Köpfe").

Such good thinking implies, of course, being aware of and following rational principles. At some point, however, rules can no longer help. Experience of good performance is then the only substitute: „Um eine Einsicht in den wahren Inhalt und Affeckt eines Stückes zu erlangen, und in Ermangelung der nöthigen Zeichen, die darinnen vorkommenden Noten zu beurtheilen [...] thut man wohl, daß man sich Gelegenheit verschaffet, so wohl einzelne Musicos als gantze Musickübende Gesellschaften zu hören. Dieses ist um so viel nöthiger, je mehrern zufälligen Dingen meistentheils diese Schönheiten unterworfen sind."[28]

Like his contemporaries, when faced with the problem of those musical parameters most challenging to notation, Bach appeals beyond rules to experience. No system of notation is complete enough – although here we must note that Bach implies that some composers are better than others at supplying complete notation – to convey every nuance of good taste in performance. Only its experience in person can supplement rules in a treatise. Bach enjoins the student to observe as many performances by good musicians as possible, for the rules, no matter how rational, can never substitute for such experience. The section on performance in the second part of his *Versuch*, which deals with the art of good accompaniment, begins with a warning: „Es ist ein Irrthum wenn man glaubt, daß sich die Regeln des guten Vortrags blos auf die Ausführung der Handsachen erstrecken."[29]

Yet despite these warnings it is clear that for Emanuel Bach a good performance c a n be based on rational rules; he would hardly have taken the trouble to write his treatise otherwise. The performer must know the rules of performance, and, importantly, observe others putting these rules into practice. His inclusion, in the second part of his *Versuch*, of a rationalized set of instructions for a highly

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[26] Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, Berlin 1753, repr. Kassel etc. 1994, p. 117.
[27] Ibid., pp. 116f.
[28] Ibid., pp. 119f.
[29] Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen. Zweyter Theil*, Berlin 1762, repr. Kassel etc. 1994, p. 242.

irrational genre, the free fantasy, then, comes as a surprise. It is worth dwelling for a moment on this irony. *Phantasieren*, like *Vortrag*, seems for Bach to be fundamentally learnable. Fantasies, indeed, can be captured in notation and sold[30]. Yet every observer of Emanuel Bach as a fantasist remarked on the unique and even challenging qualities of his improvisations[31]. This contradiction between the mechanically reproduced text and the unlimited expressive range of performance lies at the heart of the problem we are investigating here. The free fantasy stood for the irrationality of human performance itself and was perhaps even the space in which musical aestheticians tried to hide their unease with all performance.

The reliance of fantasy as an example points to another danger of an overly empirical approach, of an excessive identification of performance with works[32]. It would take us far beyond the scope of this paper to untangle the complicated web of composition, textuality, genius, and inspiration that defined the relation of expressive performance to text in the mid-eighteenth century. Scheibe summed up one important aspect when he claimed that naïve melody – i. e. pure, natural performance – „nimmt ihren Ursprung aus uns selbst, und hat dazu keine Regeln vonnöthen."[33] It would take, at the century's end, a displacement of genius from performers to composers to untie this knot. The composer-as-genius gives the rules and requires none.

We return to the *Violinschule*. It too bears the weight of the conflict between system and experience. Its polemical arguments – as I argued at the beginning of this paper – move with ease from the one side to the other. In chapter twelve, after suggesting at the outset that performance is an autonomous element in the system of musical communication, Leopold Mozart takes aim at those performers who are unable to make sense of musical notation, only to claim at the same time that experience is the ultimate judge: „Die musikalischen Stücke von guten

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30 See Annette Richards, *The Free Fantasy and the Musical Picturesque*, Cambridge 2001, p. 34, on the market power, for instance, of Bach's two fantasies in his fourth keyboard collection for „Kenner und Liebhaber".

31 For descriptions of Bach's powers of performance at the clavichord see Richards (cf. footnote 30), pp. 151-55. Neal Zaslaw has warned against taking all such reports at face value: see his „Ornaments for Corelli's Violin Sonatas", in: *EM* 24 (1996), pp. 95-115.

32 I am grateful to Oliver Wiener for this formulation. On the vexing historical problem of the ‚musical work' see Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford 1992 and Reinhard Strohm, „Looking Back at Ourselves: Problems with the Work-Concept", in: *The Musical Work, Reality or Invention?*, ed. Michael Talbott, Liverpool 2000, pp 128-152.

33 Scheibe (cf. footnote 9), p. 48.

Meistern richtig nach der Vorschrift lesen, und nach dem im Stücke herrschenden Affecte abspielen ist weit künstlicher, als die schwersten Solo und Concerte studieren. [...] Denn man muß nicht nur alles angemerkte und vorgeschriebene genau beobachten, und nicht anders, als wie es hingesetzet ist abspielen: sondern man muß auch mit einer gewissen Empfindlichkeit spielen; man muß sich in den Affect setzen, der auszudrücken ist; und man muß alle die Züge, die Schleifer, das Abstossen der Noten, das Schwache und Starke, und, mit einem Worte, alles was immer zum schmackhaften Vortrage eines Stückes gehöret, auf eine gewisse gute Art anbringen und vortragen, die man nicht anders, als mit gesunder Beurtheilungskraft durch eine lange Erfahrniß erlernet."[34]

The majority of the *Violinschule* – with the exception of chapter 1, which is dominated by a history of music and musical instruments, and the opening of chapter 12 – is dedicated to specific, practical instruction about how to read music and how to play the violin. Indeed, one could approach the treatise as one might approach one of the musical machines so popular in Leopold Mozart's era. If we take the instructions in it seriously, any piece of music must be subjected to countless operations, all detailed in the method, before it can be adequately performed[35]. A piece must be investigated for its rhythmic and metric qualities (chapter 1, part 2: „Von dem Tackte, oder musikalischen Zeitmaase"), articulation (the many sections on bowing and articulation in chapters 4, 6, and 7; all are full of situational advice), tone quality (regulated both by the discussion in chapter 5 of how one „durch eine geschickte Mäßigung des Bogens den guten Ton auf einer Violin [...] recht hervor bringen solle" and the choice of position addressed in chapter 8, „Von den Applicaturen"). These are just the beginning, for then the erstwhile performer must also consider the matter of ornamentation (chapters 9 through 11: „Von den Vorschlägen", „Von dem Triller", and „Von dem Tremolo, Mordente und einigen andern willkührlichen Auszierungen"). And all of these, in turn, are subject to regulation by the affective parameters set forth by the „Musikalische Kunstwörter" in chapter 1, of which Leopold writes: „Aus allen den itzt erklärten Kunstwörtern sieht man Sonnenklar, daß alle Bemühung dahin gehet, den Spielenden in denjenigen Affect zu setzen, welcher in dem Stücke selbst

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[34] *Violinschule* (cf. footnote 18), p. 253.

[35] For a sense of the ‚machine's' complexity, see Angelucci (cf. footnote 3). Two North American dissertations actually attempt this kind of ‚notes in, performance out' approach: see Ralph Cherubini, *Leopold Mozart's Violinschule as a Guide to the Performance of W. A. Mozart's Sonatas for Piano and Violin,* Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University 1976 and David Wallace Kerr, *A Performance Edition of W. A. Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, K. 525, Based upon Performance Principles Propounded in Leopold Mozart's Versuch einer Gründlichen Violinschule*, D.M.A. diss., University of Northern Colorado 1986.

herrschet: um hierdurch in die Gemüther der Zuhörer zu dringen und ihre Leidenschaften zu erregen. Man muß also, bevor man zu spielen anfängt, sich wohl um alles umsehen, was immer zu dem vernünftigen und richtigen Vortrage eines wohlgesetzten musikalischen Stückes nothwendig ist."[36]

Yet the meanings of the „Kunstwörter" themselves are only accessible via experience. Some are maddeningly circular in their definitions: „Affetuoso", for instance, tells the player to seek „den Affekt, der in dem Stücke stecket" and „folglich alles beweglich, eindringend und rührend anspielen"[37]. Others depend on experience to make sense, like „Cantabile [...] Das ist: Man solle sich eines singbaren Vortrages befleissigen [...] [in such a way] daß man mit dem Instrumente, so viel es immer möglich ist, die Singkunst nachahme"[38]. This last, he adds, is the „schönste in der Musik". No doubt it is, but such beauty is – by Leopold's own admission – accessible only through imitation and not through the system outlined in the *Versuch*. Like so many of the era's musical machines, this one was also, to a certain extent at least, dependent on polemical illusion for its success[39].

Herder's Search for ‚Ton'

In the concluding section of the fourth of his fragmentary *Kritische Wälder*, Johann Gottfried Herder lamented, in his own customarily polemical tone, the incompleteness of contemporary music theory. On the one hand the „*Eulers*, und *d'Alamberts* und *Diderots* und *Mersenne* und *Gravesande* und *Saveur*" have brought the physical and mathematical theory of music to a „Vollkommenheit [...] zu der nur die Optik der Farben hat gelangen können"[40]. And on the other, „wer kennet nicht die vortrefflichen *Praktischen Anweisungen*" like „*Quanzens* Flöte und *Bachs* Klavier und *Mozarts* Violinschule [...] als Meistertheorien ihrer Instrumente [...]?"[41] Yet a ‚middle' is missing, a third way between *musica theoretica* and *musica practica*, since none of the two ‚ends' addresses what music really does, or as Herder puts it, „sie erklären nichts *vom Tone*"[42]. In the *Viertes*

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36 *Violinschule* (cf. footnote 18), p. 52.
37 Ibid., p. 50.
38 Ibid.
39 See Annette Richards, „Automatic Genius: Mozart and the Mechanical Sublime", in: *ML* 80 (1999), pp. 366-389.
40 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Viertes kritisches Wäldchen*, in: *Johann Gottfried Herder. Werke*, 10 Bde., Frankfurt a. M. 1985-2000 [hereafter *HW*], vol. 2, p. 336.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 337.

kritisches Waldchen Herder devotes most of his effort to developing a theory of musical sound that accounts both for what music i s and what it d o e s In other words, he seeks a compromise between empiricism and aesthetics, a compromise that might promise a way out of the conflict described in the previous sections of this paper He does this, curiously enough, without any recourse to the *Affektenlehre*, indeed, much of his argument in the fourth *Waldchen* is aimed at *musica theoretica* and not *musica practica*[43] Some of his further writings, however, and especially those on the origin of human language, offer an interesting solution to this conflict of practice and theory

Herder, more than any of his contemporaries, embodied the turn away from the systematic and towards the singular and sensual, but his polemical position never veered into outright materialism Quite the contrary his writings unite the ‚rehabilitation of the sensual' with a monist view of the world[44] For instance, in his *Abhandlung uber den Ursprung der Sprache* of 1770, he argued against models of meaning that depend on a direct relation between things and the words used to describe them, yet he never claimed that the relation was purely arbitrary[45]

The occasion for this essay was a contest sponsored by the *Akademie der Wissenschaften* in Berlin Herder set out in it to debunk the theories of Etienne Condillac In a celebrated thought-experiment Condillac had imagined that two children left alone in a desert (and hitherto unable to speak) could develop a language from scratch Each would recognize the cries of the other as more than just ‚natural signs' of fear, the s o u n d s of the cries would become s i g n s of fear A natural sound would become a word, making the jump from a ‚natural sign' to an ‚instituted sign' A one-to-one relation would be established between sign (the cries) and the signified (fear)

The problem with this argument – upon which Herder pounces – is that the children would have to ‚know' how words work, how they can stand for things at all, before the experiment begins, or else it would not function Therefore Condillac's scenario cannot describe the o r i g i n of a language, since some

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[43] For a sense of what Herder likely thought of the ‚Affektenlehre' see his devastating review of Batteux's *Einschrankung der Schonen Kunste auf einen einzigen Grundsatz*, *HW* (cf footnote 40), vol 2, pp 751-756

[44] See Kondylis (cf footnote 1), p 615 on Herder's „freigiebige und geradezu freudige Rehabilitation der Sinnlichkeit auf allen Ebenen" On Herder and monism see ibid , pp 621f

[45] The following paragraphs draw heavily on Charles Taylor, „The Importance of Herder", in *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge/Mass 1995 For a recent musicological take on Herder see Rafael Kohler, „Johann Gottfried Herder und die Uberwindung der musikalischen Nachahmungsasthetik", in *AfMw* 52 (1995), pp 205-219

kind of language must already be present. For Herder, instinct alone does not provide the requirements for language to work; only the capacity for reflection (what Herder calls „Besonnenheit") can do this. He offers his own version as an alternative to Condillac's scenario. The word for a lamb, onomatopoeic as it may be, did not arise in human language only because t h i s animal made t h a t noise. It arose because humans reflected on the animal that bleated and agreed eventually on a name for it. Indeed, depending on who and where they were, they agreed on many names for it.

Herder's opponents, as Charles Taylor writes, „reified" the linguistic sign, by presuming that words just stood for things: „people introduced signs to ‚stand for' or ‚signify' objects (or ideas of objects) and once instituted these plainly could be rightly or wrongly applied. The error from a Herderian perspective was that they never got this constitutive feature into focus."[46] By fighting against the destabilizing dangers of the act of performance, defenders of the integrity of the musical sign like those we encountered in the first section of this paper, in a Herderian sense, made the same mistake.

This passage from Herder's *Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples* is revealing: „Aber noch mehr. Gehen Sie die Gedichte Ossians durch. Bei allen Gelegenheiten des Bardengesanges sind sie einem andern Volk so ähnlich, das noch jetzt auf der Erde lebet, singet, und Taten tut; in deren Geschichte ich also ohne Vorurteil und Wahn die Geschichte Ossians und seiner Väter mehr als Einmal lebendig erkannt habe. Es sind die *fünf Nationen* in *Nordamerika*: Sterbelied und Kriegsgesang, Schlacht- und Grablied, historische Lobgesänge auf die Väter und an die Väter – alles ist den Barden Ossians und den Wilden in Nordamerika gemein. [...] Nun sehen Sie einmal, was alle Reisebeschreiber [...] vom Ton, vom Rhythmus, von der Macht dieser Gesänge auch für Ohren der Fremdlinge sagen. Sehen Sie nach, wie viel nach allen Berichten darin auf lebende Bewegung, Melodie, Zeichensprache und Pantomime ankömmt. [...] Bei Denis stehen wir steif und fest auf der Erde: hören etwa Sinn und Inhalt in eigner, guter poetischer Sprache, aber nach der Analogie aller wilden Völker kein Laut, kein Ton, kein lebendiges Lüftchen [...] das uns hebe und schwinge, und den lebendigen Ton ihrer Lieder hören lasse: wir sitzen, wir lesen, wir kleben steif und fest an der Erde."[47]

Just as Michael Denis's translation did not begin, for Herder, to do the native North American war cry justice, the kind of thinking we examined in the first part of this paper is not adequate to performance's potential power. Part of Herder's radical solution to the crisis we made out there was to focus on what

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[46] Taylor (cf. footnote 45), p. 89.

[47] *HW* (cf. footnote 40), vol. 2, pp. 454f.

affective speech – and by analogy, music – d o e s in the moment of its reception, independent of its affective content and its formal structures. Yet this does not mean that we must surrender to materialism, and give up any hope that music might mean something. For Herder, „Gedanke" and „Ausdruck" were permanently linked, like a „Kleid zu seinem Körper"[48]. Isaiah Berlin wrote of Herder: „[His theory of] expressionism claims that all works of men are above all voices speaking, are not objects attached from their makers, are part of a living process of communication."[49] This has important consequences for art: „to say that art is expression is to say that it is a voice speaking rather than the production of an object."[50] The work of art is not an unchanging object, and the voices that are speaking in it are not voices declaiming the same thing over and over.

Postscript: W. A. Mozart on Execution and Expression

The following postscript is not meant as an exhaustive survey of Wolfgang Amadé Mozart's opinions on musical performance. Instead it is intended to stimulate discussion about how Wolfgang's music might fit into the context outlined thus far.

Wolfgang never wrote an aesthetic treatise, although he once threatened to do so[51]. One of his better-known statements on performance seems to suggest that he was a follower of his father's views on the subject: „und in was besteht die kunst, Prima vista zu lesen? in diesem: das stück im rechten tempo wie es seyn soll zu spiellen. alle noten, Vorschläg Etc: mit der gehörigen expreßion und gusto, wie es steht auszudrücken, so, das man glaubt, derjenige hätte es selbst Componirt, der es spiellt."[52]

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[48] Herder, *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur. Fragmente. Erste Sammlung. Zweite völlig umgearbeitetete Ausgabe. 1768*, in: *HW* (cf. footnote 40), vol. 1, pp. 367-540, here 404.

[49] Isaiah Berlin, „Herder and the Enlightenment", in: *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Earl R. Wasserman, Baltimore 1967, p. 47.

[50] Ibid., p. 71.

[51] See the letter to his father of 28 December 1782: „ich hätte lust ein Buch – eine kleine Musicalische kritick mit Exemplen zu schreiben – aber *NB:* nicht unter meinen Nammen [...]". *Mozart. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. Gesamtausgabe*, 4 Bde., ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch, Kassel etc. 1962/63 [hereafter *MBA*], vol. 3, no. 715, p. 246, lines 25-26.

[52] Ibid., vol. 2, no. 405, p. 228, lines 82-86. It is common to read this letter and others like it as proof that Mozart tolerated little freedom in performance; that for him, proper expression was proper execution. See for instance Lewis Lockwood, „Performance and ‚Authenticity'", in: *EM* 19 (1991), pp. 501-508. For a similar argument see Mal-

It is critical, however, not to miss the qualification of the stricture to play the notes „exactly as they are written." The qualities of „appropriate expression and taste" (experience!) are also a requirement of good prima vista playing. The illusion of unity between performer and composer is the key. Note that he does not write that it „should sound as if the composer had performed it himself" or that the „performer should understand all of the affects the composer intends". The performer must play the composer; the illusion of spontaneity is what counts[53].

Mozart's description of bad playing (in this case Abbé Vogler's) is also telling: „NB: vor dem Tisch hat er mein Concrt [sic!] [...] Prima vista – herabgehudelt. das erste stuck gieng *Prestißimo* das Andante *allegro* und das Rondeau wahrlich *Prestißißimo,* den Baß spielte er meistens anderst als es stund, und bisweilen machte er ganz eine andere Harmonie und auch Melodie. es ist auch nicht anderst möglich, in der geschwindickeit. die augen können es nicht sehen, und die hände nicht greifen. ja was ist den das? – – so ein Prima vista spiellen, und scheissen ist bey mir einerley."[54]

In the first part of his critique Mozart focuses on matters of faulty execution, that is on Vogler's misreading of his tempo markings (and, apparently, his consequent inability to play his part cleanly). In the second part, he damns Vogler for making up his own bass line and harmonies. By all accounts, this document shows that Mozart was a stickler for absolute fidelity on the part of performers to his musical texts. But as we shall see shortly, Mozart's strong criticism here could be more than a little disingenuous.

Execution and expression are concepts that return again and again in Mozart's correspondence and in the documents of his opinions on performance. Taking note of the distinction between the two makes understanding Mozart's interventions in the texts of his music, in matters of performative detail, easier. Like the warnings in the literature on performance quoted in the first part of this paper, Mozart's admonitions are attempts to preserve the integrity of the musically notated sign by steering the performer's taste. But this worry, I would argue, is always accompanied by another one: the fear of compromising the spontaneity of their expression, the power of performance in the moment. In Mozart's case we should always remember that his most adamant denunciations of interpretive

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colm Bilson, „Execution and Expression in the Sonata in E Flat, K282", in: *EM* 20 (1992), pp. 237-244.

53 Mozart was proud of his ability to write individual music for individual performers, see the letter of 28 February 1778: „denn ich liebe dass die aria einem sänger so accurate angemessen sey, wie ein gutgemachtes kleid". *MBA* (cf. footnote 51), vol. 2, p. 304, no. 431, lines 26-27.

54 Ibid., p. 228, no. 405 (Mannheim, 17 January 1778), line 66.

freedom are expressed in letters to his father, who, as we have seen, was himself a renowned and even fearsome defender of compositional integrity in the face of performative license. As in so many cases, it is easy to hear the younger Mozart protesting too loudly.

In this context this description by the composer André Grétry of a performance by Mozart as a child makes for interesting reading: „Je rencontrai jadis à Genève un enfant qui exécutait tout à la première vue. Son père me dit en pleine assemblée: Pour qu'il reste aucun doute sur le talent de mon fils, faites lui, pour demain, un morceau de Sonate très difficile. Je lui fis un Allegro en mi-bémol, difficile, sans affectation; il l'exécuta; et chacun, excepté moi, crit au miracle. L'enfant ne s'était point arrêté; mais en suivant les modulations, il avait substitué une quantité de passages à ceux que j'avais écrits."[55]

Grétry has caught the young Mozart (under his father's supervision!) doing exactly that of which Mozart later accused Vogler. We might do well to recall this passage when we read, as we so often do, that Mozart was a stickler for exact reproduction of his notation by other performers. As Grétry noticed, the matter is not so simple.

Unlike Emanuel Bach, Mozart did not necessarily telegraph the expressive qualities of his playing with facial gestures, yet this should not be taken to suggest that Mozart's playing in any way lacked expression. „Daß ich keine grimaßen mache", he wrote to his father of the reaction of the Augsburg piano builder Johann Andreas Stein to his playing, „und doch so expreßive spiele, daß noch keiner, nach seinen bekentniss, seine Piano forte so gut zu tractiren gewust hat."[56] His famous dismissal of Muzio Clementi is in the same vein: „[...] der Clementi spielt gut, wenn es auf execution der rechten hand ankömmt. – seine force sind die terzen Paßagen – übrigens hat er um kein kreutzer gefühl oder geschmack. mit einem Wort ein blosser Mechanicus."[57]

I have written elsewhere of the mature Mozart's notational practice, which tended, especially in matters of dynamics, towards extreme detail[58]. Some of this attention to detail openly contradicts the syntactical rules of expression (for instance by instructing the player to play dissonances softly) that theorists like his

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[55] Cited in *Mozart. Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, ed. Otto Erich Deutsch (= NMA X/34), Kassel etc. 1961, p. 415.

[56] *MBA* (cf. footnote 51), vol. 2, p. 83, no. 355 (Augsburg, 24 October 1777), lines 91-93.

[57] Ibid., vol. 3, p. 191, no. 657 (Vienna, 12 January 1782), line 19.

[58] „Mozart, Mannheim, and Performance", in: *MJb* 2006 (forthcoming) and a chapter (upon which some of this paper is based) in my dissertation: „Execution and Expression", in: *Echoes of Expression: Text, Performance, and History in Mozart's Viennese Chamber Music*, Ph.D. diss., Cornell University 2005, pp. 90-143.

father insisted were so important to good performance. By intervening in smaller details of *Vortrag* on such a massive scale, Mozart called attention to the paradox between the actor and the enacted, between sensibility and system[59]. This is the same paradox that vexed, as we have seen, the musical thinkers of Leopold's generation. It is hard to imagine that he believed, as his father seems to have, that every piece of music has one ‚ideal' performance and that sufficient skill in reading musical notation is enough to realize this ideal. Real expressive performance is not to be captured in texts and treatises; as Herder reminded his rational opponents, expression cannot be reified. To play any music strictly *com' è scritto* would be to replicate exactly the kind of thinking about expression (and music) that Herder – and Wolfgang? – had rejected so decisively.

[59] For an important discussion of the paradox of actor, addressed famously by Diderot, see Elisabeth Le Guin, „‚One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep': *Sensible*, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini's Chamber Music", in: *JAMS* 55 (2002), pp. 207-254.