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Review by: John Butt

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John Butt

Acting up a text: the scholarship of performance and the performance of scholarship

Richard Taruskin, *Text and act: essays on music and performance*

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It is difficult to express my opinion that this is the most significant publication in the field when the reputations of so many friends and colleagues are strewn throughout its pages in various stages of bloody dismemberment. On the other hand, given that it is written by yet another close friend and colleague, it is equally difficult to side exclusively with the 'victims'. Perhaps the best I can do is somehow to show the superlative value of the book while demonstrating that some of its author's views are not necessarily eternally binding or—outside the context of his particular writing environment—necessarily true.

The most significant publication in the field? What field? It could loosely be termed 'performance practice criticism' perhaps, or 'the ideology of authenticity', and it is a field that Richard Taruskin has not only dominated, but largely defined over the last 15 years. There have been several other fine writers on the subject—those, for instance, who appeared along with Taruskin in a 1984 issue of *Early music*, and in a volume issued by Oxford University Press in 1988¹—but Taruskin's voice has been the loudest, the most influential and by far the most thought-provoking. His strengths as a scholar come not only from his own experience as a significant performer of early music (a side to his career that is, alas, now dormant), but also from the sheer breadth of his scholarly expertise: 15th-century music, Russian music and Stravinsky as the focal points, but virtually every issue of historiography, criticism and theory besides. As the book also shows, his mastery of fields outside 'pure' musicology is vast: the reader

will find frequent references to literary theory, anthropology, philosophy and law, usually presented in a pertinent, coherent and non-pretentious way.

Text and act presents virtually all Taruskin's major writing on performance criticism, beginning with a student piece of 1972 (essay 16), edited with post-scripts and a new introduction (some 50 pages) in 1994; there is now no excuse for those who continue to quote Taruskin's views from hearsay, since everything is now conveniently in one place. Seeing the essays together, one marvels at the breadth of material—chapters on Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Josquin, Busnoys, Monteverdi and Stravinsky, not to speak of copious discussion of theoretical issues.

Of course, there are disadvantages in presenting all the essays together. There is a certain amount of repetition of views and arguments, and a parsimonious editor might well have slimmed the book down somewhat. However, part of the potency of Taruskin's writing is its rhetorical force; some of the repetition actually contributes to the overall argument, by presenting material in slightly different ways. Indeed, the effect is not unlike the rhetorical aspect of music. But, as with musical works, the unity and order of the arguments is often the reader/listener's construction—the book can yield almost as many internal contradictions as coherences, as I shall show later. The basic division of the book into two sections, 'In theory' (essays addressing specific critical issues) and 'In practice' (essays addressing particular performances) makes sense, although there is some degree of overlap between the two, particularly the critique of Nelson Goodman's philosophical definition of the musical work (pp.207f.) which appears in the first chapter of the 'practical' section.

The range of publications from which these essays

are drawn is also astonishing: e.g. *Nineteenth-century music*, *Current musicology*, *Early music*, *Notes*, *Opus*, *New York times*, *Musical America*. It is rare to find an author who can address so many types of readership with equal skill. Indeed, it is rare to find a scholar who makes such a successful journalist, or to find a music journalist who is both scholarly and stylish: this writing places Taruskin on a par with Shaw, Tovey and Virgil Thomson. He has a remarkable control of colloquial—sometimes even purposely ugly—expressions: ‘If all that Early Music was was taste, why then we could take it or leave it.’ (p.4) Of his more spectacular pictorial displays I could single out the comparison of successive tempos by a variety of Beethoven conductors, rendered as a horse race (p.242) and, my favourite sentence of all, ‘Now that we have had Beethoven lite from Christopher Hogwood and Brahms lite from John Eliot Gardiner, and even Wagner lite from Mr. Norrington, it was inevitable that someone would bring us Stravinsky lite, even a lite “Rite.”’ (pp.365–6) Even if one disagreed with every word of the book, the writing is always a joy to read.

Taruskin’s central argument (most comprehensively stated in essay 4) can be condensed into a diagnosis, a judgement and an axiom: his diagnosis is that very little historical performance is, or can be, truly historical—much has to be invented; that the actual styles of historical performance we hear accord most strikingly with modern taste; that the movement as a whole has all the symptoms of 20th-century modernism, as epitomized by the objectivist, authoritarian Stravinsky in his neoclassical phase. His judgement is not that historical performance practice is intrinsically wrong, rather that it is a true and indeed ‘authentic’ representation of modernist thinking. (Needless to say, he would prefer it to move in what he sees as the ‘postmodernist’, ‘postauthoritarian’ direction.) And the axiom on which much of his work hinges is that the methods on which we base—and by which we judge—scholarship are not those on which we base artistic performance. Each may inform the other, but the one cannot be reduced to the other. Thus the inclusion of a couple of essays addressing the question of editing helps to consolidate one of Taruskin’s central points, encapsulated in the title: performance, of any kind,

should be an *act* and not reduced to the status of a *text*. Performance is significant for its human component and not for its objective veracity.

These central arguments are supported by several other opinions: the ‘seductive simplicities of determinism and utopianism have got to be resisted ... and ... the endlessly renegotiated social contract, dowdy patchwork though it be, is the only cause worth defending’ (p.192). This ties in with Taruskin’s concern for the audience—an opinion that interestingly seems to grow in the later essays, as he becomes further removed from his performing career—a move from a production-oriented system to a ‘proper’ reassertion of consumer values (p.47). This development is also shadowed by Taruskin’s growing distaste for the concept of *Werktreue*, something he sees as central to modernist performance (whether ‘historical’ or ‘mainstream’) and one that ‘inflicts a truly stifling regimen by radically hardening and patrolling what had formerly been a fluid, easily crossed boundary between the performing and composing roles’ (p.10).

His reservations about the work-concept—the idea of individual, fully formed and authoritarian pieces of music—ties in with his distrust of the composer as an authoritarian figure. So much of historical performance, runs Taruskin’s argument, is bogged down with questions of the composer’s intentions, and, what is worse, those of a most mundane and provincial kind, when in fact ‘We cannot know intentions ... or rather, we cannot know we know them. Composers do not always express them. If they do express them, they may do so disingenuously. Or they may be honestly mistaken, owing to the passage of time or a not necessarily consciously experienced change of taste.’ (p.97) In his view, our need to gain the composer’s approval ‘bespeaks a failure of nerve, not to say an infantile dependency’ (p.98). This argument is bolstered with an impressive array of cases where composers changed their minds, did not expect their intentions to be followed, or were simply working in an environment (especially opera) where adaptations and cuts were a matter of daily routine.

So if authority comes neither from the work nor exclusively from the composer, where are we to turn? To ourselves, would seem to be the short

answer: 'Authenticity ... is knowing what you mean and whence comes that knowledge. And more than that, even, authenticity is knowing what you are, and acting in accordance with that knowledge.' (p.67) In fleshing out this concept Taruskin tends to draw on two theories in modern thought: the history of *reception* as a major carrier of meaning and *tradition* as an alternative to authority. According to reception theory, 'Change of context adds as much meaning as it may take away' (p.267); the meaning, for us, of *Don Giovanni* has been 'mediated by all that has been thought and said about it since opening night, and is therefore incomparably richer than it was in 1787.' Reconstruction of original meaning (and here Taruskin clearly includes reconstruction of original performance practice) 'should add its valuable mite to the pile' but cannot substitute for the pile itself. His conception of tradition also follows from this: tradition is 'cumulative, multiply authored, open, accommodating, above all *messy*, and therefore human' (p.192). For the performer this means less fetishization of documents and instrumental hardware, more listening to one another, reaction and competition; historically informed performance is productive only when it spawns its own 'viable oral tradition' (p.194).

Many readers, at this stage, might well be led to agree with the popular mythology that Taruskin is fundamentally opposed to the whole enterprise of historical performance. Furthermore, the temporal progression of the essays suggests that he has progressively distanced himself from it (only the earlier writings refer periodically to 'our movement'). But, as his introduction and postscripts to the essays often aver, he believes himself to be continually misrepresented as a crusty opponent to the movement when all he intends to show is its shortcomings. Perhaps part of the problem is that his praise for the movement and his recommendations for its direction are far less strongly argued, most often couched in ambivalent terms and consequently less easy to summarize than his pointed criticisms. Even the historically minded performer Taruskin most respects is treated in a very odd way over the course of the essays: first (1987) he states unequivocally that 'in Roger Norrington and the London Classical Players I can point at least to musicians whose work

exemplifies every principle I hold dear, and who are keeping the promise of authenticity in ways their colleagues and competitors, most of them, have not begun to imagine.' (p.230) So startling is Norrington's quality that Taruskin predicts his work will not sell as well as Hogwood's, since 'You have to pay attention to it.' (p.234) In the 1989 essay on Norrington's recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony Taruskin is still complimentary but disappointed by Norrington's rigid approach to tempo. By the time we get to 1991 (essay 20) Taruskin gives the following judgement of Norrington (apparently applied to all his work, not just the Ninth): in comparison to the work of Toscanini, Furtwängler and Nikisch, his 'is fleeter, lighter, drier, brittler, more uniform in every way. And it is therefore less individually characterized, less particularly memorable, less consequential—which is precisely the way it wants to be, and the way the passive, distracted contemporary audience evidently needs it to be.' (p.363)

Throughout there are intimations that the movement has failed in some wider objective to revolutionize performance: 'A movement that might, in the name of history, have shown the way back to a truly creative performance practice has only furthered the stifling of creativity in the name of normative controls.' (p.13) Yet, only a few pages later Taruskin gives a virtually contrary opinion: 'The enthusiastic reviews I have entered on behalf of many "historical" performers ... should offer sufficient testimony to my esteem for first-rate performance practice research, for the inferences it has allowed imaginative minds to draw, and for the benefits that have on occasion accrued therefrom to listeners.' (p.18) Later he even states that 'At its best it is the best thing now going.' (p.192) The most vertiginous clash of this kind comes with essay 13 (1987), where in the main text he sees the brightest future for performance as that on present—rather than past—instruments, when they are played in a postmodern, transgressive and inspired way; i.e. the mainstream has become original, historical performance *passé*. In the postscript of 1994, on the other hand, he states blatantly that 'the best specialist performers get much closer to their chosen repertory than their "mainstream" counterparts manage to do' (p.306), and that 'those who have the vision will want to

use the old—er, new—instruments’ (‘new’ in this context meaning new to the performer, rather than of recent origin). This sort of back and forth between what seems total condemnation to what seems to be fulsome praise characterizes the entire volume; the net result of all this is that there are apparently good ‘historical’ performers and there are bad ones.

So what constitutes good historical performance for Taruskin? One thing that seems clear is that many performances need to be ‘more historical’, particularly if the historical evidence implies creative departures from the text, something he demands particularly for the performance of Mozart piano concertos (p.167). He seeks a return to a conception of classical music that began to die out two centuries ago, something that would bring the music closer to the values of pop music than ‘classical’ (p.170). Another useful comparison, which unfortunately he uses in only one chapter (essay 15), is that between ‘crooked’ and ‘straight’ performance. Straight performance is fine ‘if what you want out of music is something to sit back and relax to’ while the crooked performers are the ‘real artists’, such as *Musica Antiqua Köln*, whose ‘responses are conditioned not by generic demands that can be easily classified ... but by highly specific, unclassifiable, personal and intensely subjective imaginings’ (p.317). In short, historically informed performance is all very well provided the ‘literalism’ (i.e. following of some documentary evidence) is ‘inspired’:² Roger Norrington, with his strict adherence to Beethoven’s metronome markings; Christopher Page, with his Stravinskyesque approach to 15th-century courtly songs, whose style ‘arose out of a fundamental rethinking of the repertory in its specific details, and on as close to its own aesthetic and historical terms as human nature and human epistemics allow, rather than from the acceptance of a standard of beauty or of audience appeal imported unreflectingly from past experience’ (p.351); Gustav Leonhardt produces joyful results in Bach performance through ‘passionate and committed experiment with original instruments’ (p.148); while Nikolaus Harnoncourt refuses to succumb to the customary efforts to prettify and sanitize Bach’s severe message in the sacred music (essay 14).

As Taruskin remarks regarding Furtwängler’s atti-

tude to performance, it seems that for his own tastes ‘anything is all right if it is enough so’ (p.242). Retreating somewhat from his insistence that we cannot and should not be slaves to historical evidence, he seems to suggest that we should do precisely this if it causes us to refashion ourselves and produce a performance that is fully committed. As is so often the case, Taruskin’s huff and puff reduces to the simple statement that dull performers will use historical evidence dully and inspiring performers will use it inspiringly. But it is probably worth all the huff and puff, since Taruskin’s very approach betrays a passionate commitment to the issues. His is the work of an inspired performer.

Another conclusion that could be inferred from Taruskin’s approach is that everyone concerned with issues that are remotely historical will use history to serve their current needs. In other words, the initially surprising affirmation that historical performance is largely modern make-believe is true insofar as it applies to any historical undertaking, whether written, manufactured or performed. Any seemingly objective account of an event or narrative in history will be a modern construction; what we call historical ‘facts’ are inevitably ventriloquists’ dummies which speak in our voices and with our prejudices. This condition does not, however, render the historical enterprise invalid. It merely restates what we have tacitly known all along: history is useful because it teaches us about ourselves and helps us form our own identities. Thus Taruskin’s complaints of passive literalism in the endeavour of historical performance could equally be applied to the entire field of music history, and this is doubtless the direction in which much of his future work will go.

There are two interconnected areas where I take most issue with Taruskin: his desire to ‘democratize’ performance by catering to the needs and wishes of the audience; and his tendency to promote postmodernism as the answer to all modernism’s ills. He introduces the issue of audience satisfaction within his argument that all classical performance is under the grip of the work-concept, all joining ‘the ranks of museum curators, with disastrous results—disastrous that is, for the people who pay to hear them’ (p.13). Does this imply that there is some standard by which we may test

whether or not the audience has had its money's worth, whether or not it has been cheated of some profounder experience?

Things become a little clearer with the next reference, for now Taruskin identifies himself as a member of the audience (this is the non-performer Taruskin of 1994): 'My first commitment is to the mortals—that is, the audience—and to their interests, since I am one of them.' (p.18) Using the force of the oppressed masses to justify one's own position is a common tactic among politicians—particularly those who advocate a reduction in 'government' in the name of the people's freedom. This impression is strengthened on p.47, where he states that he is 'glad to see increasing impatience with an excessively production-oriented system of values in classical music and the proper reassertion of consumer values (yes, audience response) as a stylistic regulator', surely the language of a free marketeer. But most of the evidence he cites for this shift in priority concerns changes at the production level rather than a revolution from the bottom up: pluralism in the concert scene, the breaking down of the walls between the 'high' and the 'low' in the field of classical composition. In other words, the shift is in the direction of what Taruskin believes the audience should want rather than unequivocal evidence of the people's will at work. What would count as evidence in any case? If consumer values are the issue, surely the remarkable prosperity of Taruskin's *bête noir*, Christopher Hogwood, must be strong evidence; somebody must have bought all those records. Of course, the audience may have been stunningly uninspired in its choice of purchase, perhaps cruelly hoodwinked by the hype of authenticity. But if this is the case, how can Taruskin insist that the audience calls the tune? If he wishes to persist in so harsh a view of Hogwood, he must, along with 'virtually all important artistic movements since Romanticism ... have shared in [the] contempt for the public as arbiter of taste' (pp.72–3).³ That Taruskin surely agrees with me on this point is suggested by his comment regarding Roger Norrington on p.234 (quoted above): 'I don't know whether his work will prove as marketable as Hogwood's. Probably not: You have to pay attention to it.'

Taruskin distances himself from the dictatorship

of the market with one of his 1994 postscripts: 'I have always considered it important for musicologists to put their expertise at the service of "average consumers" and alert them to the possibility that they are being hoodwinked, not only by commercial interests but by complaisant academics, biased critics, and pretentious performers.' (p.153) This is laudable enough, but it does imply that the audience is incapable of making up its own mind and needs the benevolent dictates of a Taruskin or two. In short, shifting the performer's responsibility from 'upwards'—to the work, composer or whatever—to 'downwards'—to the audience—does not solve any problems of responsibility, since the same (and perhaps more) issues simply reappear in a new position. One is forced either to accept the judgement of the audience in commercial terms, or to dictate what the audience should enjoy (which is little different from dictating how, and in what style, the performer should play, in the name of historical fidelity, the composer, or the artwork).

Taruskin might also be implying another sense of 'pleasing the audience', one with which I can wholeheartedly concur. This is the idea of the performer taking on something of the audience's role, constantly monitoring the performance from a listener's perspective, and reacting to what he hears. While this is obviously a golden rule for all performance, it might take on a special significance in 'historical' performance as a very practical antidote to a surfeit of factual data. It is precisely this reflexive attitude which is so often a sure sign of quality in visual and musical arts, in which the earliest possible stages of reception are folded back into the creative act.

Taruskin must take credit for being one of the first musicologists to introduce the term 'postmodernism' (in essay 13, of 1987); by the time we get to the 1990s, the term is bandied around by virtually anyone who wants to appear 'relevant' and up-to-date. We even get macabre disputes between scholars trying to be 'postmoderner than thou'.⁴ The fault of this approach is to see postmodernism as the answer to all the evils of modernism, as the way for the future, even as a happy utopia in which all differences will live side-by-side in a pluralistic flux. Taruskin, in his first reference to the term (p.16), tries to erase the utopian element since he directly

associates utopia with 'authoritarian fulfillment'. Postmodernism, then, seems to have something to do with the subversion of authority. Next he implies that postmodernism in fact has much to do with 'premodernism', since it revokes the triple nexus (which has grown up since 1800) of 'serious-classical-work'.⁵ This is already an odd situation, for however much a postmodernist approach to music (i.e. subversive of musical works) may share with the concepts of music before 1800, the cultural context in which music is conceived, produced and used is radically different (i.e. feudalism, for the premodern era; it was, ironically, bourgeois 'freedom' that led to the work concept in the first place). So unless Taruskin is prepared to talk about music and its performance in the abstract (absolute music?), divorced from its cultural environment (and I'm sure he's not), the pre/postmodernist association is considerably impoverished.

Later he approvingly quotes a definition of the postmodern stance proffered by two legal scholars, which entails 'rejection either of applause or of dejection, which are themselves ... the products of specific cultural moments, in favor of a somewhat more detached acceptance of the inevitability of change and our inability to place such changes as occur within any master narrative' (p.36). This seems to me a 'genuine' definition of postmodernism,⁶ but one that hardly accords with Taruskin's approach elsewhere: rejection of judgement? a neutral stand, above culture and ideology? a detached acceptance? By these standards virtually any British conductor whose name begins with 'Hog' and ends in 'wood' must be a postmodernist. Furthermore, many of Taruskin's most trenchant criticisms of historical performance seem to target an archetypically postmodern condition: 'The art works of the past, even as they are purportedly restored to their pristine sonic condition, are concomitantly devalued, decanonized, not quite taken seriously, reduced to sensuous play.' (p.138) Perhaps, then, postmodernism is precisely what is wrong with 'authenticistic' performance. But on p.176 Taruskin claims to be elated by a letter which links him and the author with postmodernism: 'essays like yours and mine are themselves reflections of our present orientations—specifically the decenteredness and play of

postmodern culture.' Taruskin's later reference to himself as one of 'us happy-go-lucky postmoderns' (p.183) is perhaps the most gruesomely ironic in the whole book.

In short, I would be inclined to side with critics who are sceptical of postmodernism as an ideal (although it is certainly acceptable—indeed useful—as a description of the condition we happen to be in); Terry Eagleton, for instance, sees postmodernism as 'simply co-extensive with the commodification of all life in consumer capitalism ... an aesthetic reflection of already aestheticized images',⁷ and Christopher Norris quite rightly condemns Jean-François Lyotard's denial of any meaning or truth-value 'aside from the manifold language-games that make up an ongoing cultural conversation', since this allows Lyotard to affirm that there is no certain way of denouncing Faurisson for his assertion that the Nazi Holocaust never really happened—according to Lyotard, 'there is *no common* ground between Faurisson and those who reject his views'.⁸ Jürgen Habermas, who sees modernity as an unfinished project, relates postmodernism to the neoconservatives, those who attempt to 'diffuse the explosive content of cultural modernity', a group that 'asserts the pure immanence of art, disputes that it has a utopian content, and points to its illusory character in order to limit the aesthetic experience to privacy'.⁹

Much of what Taruskin has to say seems to me close to the spirit of Habermas's call for the completion of the Enlightenment: 'What I am after, in a word, is liberation: only when we know something about the sources of our contemporary practices and beliefs, when we know something about the reasons why we do as we do and think as we think, and when we are aware of alternatives, can we in any sense claim to be free in our choice of action and creed, and responsible for it.' (p.19; see, too, the quotation from p.67, above) This, together with numerous criticisms of historical performance's reliance on documented authority and lack of self-resolve, could almost be a paraphrase of the opening of Immanuel Kant's famous essay of 1784, 'What is Enlightenment?'.¹⁰ Even the least popular section of Kant's essay—that advocating absolute monarchy over republicanism, strikes a chord with Taruskin's respect

Table 1

'Good'	'Bad'
1 <i>Performance</i> sharing part of responsibility for composition (Music as Act)	<i>Work concept</i>
2 <i>Plasticity of meaning</i> Free ornamentation	(Music as object/Text)
3 <i>Essential</i> (e.g. Bach's view of humanity/Beethoven's tempos)	<i>Literalism</i> , reading documents at face value/'straight' performance
4 <i>Accrued/creative meaning</i> for music and performance style	<i>Superficial</i> (e.g. instrumental hardware, sound surface, trills ornamentation (p.295))
5 <i>Facing up, unflinchingly, to visions</i> of Bach/Beethoven	<i>Intentional fallacy</i>
6 <i>Tradition</i> (eclectic, contaminated but interactive)	<i>Distortion, dilution, sanitization</i> of conceptions that do not suit us
7 <i>Originality/vision</i>	<i>Alienated, deviant culture</i> of performance (p.194)
8 <i>Editions, critically conflated</i> from a variety of sources, to present the music in the best possible light	<i>Following the 'orders' of documents/ the dead</i>
9 <i>Censorship</i> of offensive texts	<i>Best text editions</i> that rely uncritically on a single source
10 <i>Creation</i>	<i>Documentary presentation</i> of complete text, justified by historical relativism (p.358)
11 <i>Contingency</i>	<i>Restoration</i>
12 <i>Postmodernism</i>	<i>Historical necessity</i>
13 <i>Conductor</i>	<i>Modernism</i>
14 <i>Free play/subversiveness</i>	<i>No active conductor</i>
15 <i>Popular</i>	<i>Authority</i>
16 <i>Music as challenge</i>	<i>Elite</i>
17 <i>Messy contingency</i>	<i>Music as entertainment</i>
18 <i>Idealism</i> , aiming high even if something is ultimately impossible to achieve (p.19)	<i>Utopia</i>
	<i>Defeatism</i>

for the 'inspired literalism' of those performers who fanatically adhere to a particular historical principle: 'Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!'

Thus to me, Taruskin's advocacy of passionate commitment, risk and vision coupled with self-awareness and a sense of choice in performance, and responsibility to both the audience and the richest and deepest possible meanings of pieces of music, could be read as a neo-Enlightenment stance. This

posture is inescapably bound to a postmodern condition, to be sure, but it surely should not be confused with the playing superficial surfaces of postmodernism as a conscious movement—one that, more often than not, places the aesthetic in pride of place, above the ethical.

Some might already be drawing the conclusion that I object most strongly to the inconsistencies and contradictions in Taruskin's writing; that he demonstrates too many methods of consuming cake. This is

not strictly the case; consistency is, after all, the virtue only of a pudding. Furthermore, the paradoxical manner is the direct product of his style of presentation, a style that contributes immensely to the impact and character of the writing. This entails stating a point in the strongest possible terms, in direct or implied opposition to that which he considers undesirable or—more often than not—deplorable. Given such a relentless system of oppositions, it is almost inevitable that one of the positive terms will clash with another, or that the positive of one pair will seem to connect with, or imply, the negative of another. In table 1 I list what I consider to be the most significant pairs, something which at the very least will provide a summary of the basic lines of argument throughout the book. The first column gives the positive ('good') term and second gives the opposing ('bad') term. Vertical lines to the left of the first column link those positive terms which tend to clash with one another to some degree, while the diagonal lines linking the two columns show possible connections between positive and negative terms from different pairs (page numbers are given only for relatively rare terms).

In addition to this survey of the principal oppositions there are also two pairs of terms which are alternatively positive and negative:

1 Reception	Original meaning
2 Priority of performance mode as a maxim for performance	Priority of scholarly mode as a maxim for performance

In these two cases I present the dominant pairing, but there are significant cases where the two are reversed: in the case of (1) there is Mozart's free ornamentation of his piano concertos; Beethoven's metronome indications and 'tempo of feeling'; Bach's dark vision of humanity as epitomized in the struggle to perform his music; Page's rethinking of the repertory 'as close to its own aesthetic and historical terms as human nature and human epistemics allow' (p.351). In the case of (2) there are such instances as on p.269, where performers are accused of not adopting those recommendations of scholars which entail the most creativity; p.346, where 'Monteverdi needs musicology—to save him not

so much from Malipiero as from the virtuosos of Cologne and from the conservatory that turned them into what they are.'

Finally, there is the most interesting issue of all, where Taruskin does not and cannot directly employ the negative term to offset the positive:

Authenticity	Inauthenticity
Modernism	Postmodernism

Here the entire historical performance movement is judged as being 'authentic', not for the reasons commonly proffered (i.e. historical accuracy, restoration of original), but because it is authentic to our own age: 'Messrs. Brüggén, Norrington, and Bilson ... have been rightly acclaimed ... Conventional performers are properly in awe and in fear of them. Why? Because, as we are all secretly aware, what we call historical performance is the sound of now, not then. It derives its authenticity not from its historical verisimilitude, but from its being for better or worse a true mirror of late 20th-century taste. Being the true voice of one's time is ... roughly forty thousand times as vital and important as being the assumed voice of history.' (p. 166) 'Regarding the movement itself I have always held that, as a symptomatically modern phenomenon, it is not historical but *is* authentic. It is a message I have had great difficulty in getting across to musicians, because so many have invested so heavily in the false belief that authenticity can derive only from historical correctness ... They simply do not hear me when I say that what "historical" performers have actually accomplished is far more important and valuable than what they claim to have done.' (p.175)

So historical performance—almost always associated with modernism by Taruskin—is authentic as the true voice of the times; yet he continually suggests that the movement go in the postmodern direction. Now he must mean either that modernism is, in fact, not the voice of the times, or (probably closer) that postmodernism *should* be the voice of the times; this would seem to generate an authenticity more by edict than description.

Given Taruskin's repeated complaints (largely in the 1994 additions) of being misunderstood

and misrepresented, it would seem that he has some notion of an 'authentic' reading of 'Taruskin'. Yet, he clearly admits that his views develop over the years (although he only really mentions the gulf between the student piece of 1972 and the remainder). The author's note at the outset mentions that all essays have been thoroughly re-edited, and that those 'encountering these pieces for the first time need never know what they have been spared.' Taruskin 1994 is clearly advocating that the notion of the *Fassung letzter Hand* be applied to his work: he is always most 'authentic' the next time he speaks.

In this review I have tried first to present what I believe to be his central arguments, then the areas where I find it hard to agree, or indeed where I believe he does not agree with himself; and finally I have tried to analyse something of his style to show why there are apparent paradoxes. These I consider the by-product of the style, and thus not essential to the quality of the work (although their removal would greatly reduce the rhetorical force of the writing). Throughout I have also tried to take into account Taruskin's vast background as a scholar and the pressing demands and conditions of the age in which he writes. Have I produced an 'authentic' interpretation of Taruskin? Certainly I might be in error in many places, and I have employed not only my own opinions, but also my views of what I

believe Taruskin's opinions to be. In short, I have tried both to present my own performance and also to display what I consider 'essential' and most instructive and inspiring about the text (and author). I would surely have failed completely if I had tried to expound on the 'literal' meaning of the text, with its various inconsistencies, or indeed to concentrate only on the 'original' meaning of the text (given the temporal spread of the essays and the editing of Taruskin 1994). This is why I feel the performance analogy is useful here (despite Taruskin's reasonable injunction that the fields of performance and scholarship cannot automatically be reduced to one another); the text is so rich in its rhetorical fabric and semantic multivalency that any successful reading has to be as much a 'performance' as a textual exegesis.

At the very least, I hope in my very interpretation to have demonstrated one of Taruskin's central points: that there is no such thing as a literal, single interpretation; that the interpreter needs to engage with the text on a variety of levels, and, most of all, be true to his own beliefs. Of course, insight into the personality and creativity of the original writer are a significant portion of any successful interpretation, particularly if the writing is of any quality, but they are always seen through the eyes of the interpreter; they cannot exist in a neutral objective realm.

1 R. Taruskin, D. Leech-Wilkinson, N. Temperley, R. Winter, 'The limits of authenticity: a discussion', *Early music*, xii (1984), pp.3–26; *Authenticity and early music*, ed. N. Kenyon (Oxford, 1988).

2 Indeed Reinhard Goebel, director of Musica Antiqua Köln, is such a fundamentalist in his devotion to original sources, that I remember the *Guardian* once referring to him as 'the Ayatollah of the Baroque'.

3 And if one wanted evidence for Taruskin's contempt for the breaking down of the performer–audience divide, his distrust in the mingling of high and low, one could turn to p.296, where he berates Philips records for

leaving on applause at the end of a live recording of Frans Brüggen: 'After an experience like this G minor, the spell-shattering noise is an abomination.' No room for audience expression here, I fear.

4 I am thinking here particularly of the dispute between Gary Tomlinson and Lawrence Kramer: see *Current musicology*, liii (1993), pp.18–40.

5 L. Goehr, *The imaginary museum of musical works* (Oxford, 1992).

6 The turn away from master narratives is central to J.-F. Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge* (1979), trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi with a foreword by F.

Jameson (Manchester, 1984).

7 P. Waugh, *Postmodernism: a reader* (London, 1992), p.113.

8 C. Norris, *The truth about postmodernism* (Oxford, 1993), pp.16–17.

9 Habermas, in Waugh, *Postmodernism*, p.169.

10 'Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. It is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another.'