

“You cannot step in the same river twice.” -Heraclitus

Whenever I am in the audience, I feel as though I am witness to two performances-- that of the performer, and that of the audience. I have been a part of a single audience for three weeks straight, an audience that witnessed many musical performances, lectures, and guided visits as a group. I have tuned into the audience's inherently social nature, and the way that this shapes and creates the phenomenological experience of a performance for each individual. In being an audience member, though it is generally conceptualized as a more passive role than that of the performer, I argue that one necessarily does as much interpretation and creation as the performer. Being in the audience allows us to experience ourselves as subjects and objects simultaneously, and it is in this duality of perspectives that the meaning in a performance is created uniquely within each individual.

Taruskin's essay demonstrates that there is no coherent notion of authenticity with regards to musical performance, and thus all performance is an act of interpretation by the performer. Regardless of how rigorously documented notation we have— which in the case of most troubadour songs is little to none — it is impossible to know precisely how the composer “intended” the piece to be played. The composer likely did not have explicit intentions with regards to every aspect of a piece, so any search to recover their intentions is always incomplete. Taruskin deconstructs this notion of authenticity even further by defining a performance not as an objective phenomenon but rather as a subjective one. There is an entirely subjective dimension to the performance because it is a temporal phenomenon, and it contains something that cannot be captured or reproduced. Taruskin argues for a notion of musical performance as a conversation between the past moment and present moment, dependent on the emotions channelled into a piece by the performer just as much as the notes

on the page. In the search for musical historicity, Taruskin observed that musicians remove the life from a musical piece by prioritizing performing it faithfully, rather than giving it life in the present that resonates into the past. Genuine performance for Taruskin involves an interpretation and a transformation of what has been received from the past, an act which influences the piece of the past as much as it does the piece of the present.

I have spent this trip as an audience member, rather than a performer, which has led me to consider how one can view the act of being an audience member as interpretation and even as creation. Taruskin is interested in how performers must interpret, and I am interested in how audiences must interpret. Of course, as consumers and critics of works of art, we are always trying to interpret and analyze what we receive in order to glean meaning from it. With regards to troubadours, we might think about the symbolism or the poetic devices of the lyrics, we might note the intricate melodies, but all this usually goes on retrospectively. It does not reveal information about what a performance is really like in the moment. In reality, a performance is one continuous act of interpretation that happens in the moment of the performance. This principle can extend not just to musical performance but to all acts of artistic consumption—reading, watching, listening—whether live or recorded. An example— you are reading this essay now, but there are a million things going on in your brain at the same time. They are maybe quieter than your reading voice, but they are still influencing your perception undoubtedly. The room around you, the people or lack of people around you, all this stuff that is in your consciousness while you read are influencing you as well. I think it is this texture of the world, this stuff that is so essential to constructing a conscious experience yet so seldom talked about, is exactly what has been thought about in the case of performance, an acutely temporal phenomenon.

We must take what we can call a phenomenological approach to understanding what it means to be amongst the audience to a performance by reflecting on what we really paid attention and were affected by during each performance on this trip. I think our group of students and teachers has become like it's own little medieval court, in that we all know each other intimately— we have certain smaller alliances within our group, but we also have a conception of ourselves as a unit. We all have inclinations to each other which are ever-evolving, we have conversations that ebb and flow, and inside jokes which grow, propagate, and die. We are a microcosm. This intimacy is why it becomes so obvious to me when we are sitting or standing together that my classmates, my fellow audience members, have a profound effect on my experience of each and every performance we witness. I see how you all react, we share knowing looks or side comments, and it is all just as much a part of the performance as the performance itself. It is the phenomenological substance of that audience experience. The audience can be viewed as a performance unto itself, or perhaps better, as a performance that shapes an individual's experience of the performance proper.

As an audience member, the performance furthermore allows me to comprehend myself simultaneously as a subject and an object in the world. For example, as I watch Sandra sing with a beauty and grace that totally commands her audience and fills up the whole room, I am amazed because I cannot do what she does. I also think back to the times I have performed, when I have been the object of the audience's gaze, when the voice that takes up the room has been mine. Though I am acting as the subject in the moment, witnessing the object perform, I can simultaneously see myself as a potential performance object.

However, something happens when I observe my fellow audience members which provides an even stronger affirmation to my own simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity. I identify myself with the social group that is the audience, and I know that I am just one of its

members. Yet by being in the midst of the audience, I can feel the way the other members influence my consciousness as all the objects in the world do. I can watch the other members of the audience watching a performance, and in that moment I see them as both observing subjects and objects to be observed. The audience can be watched and objectified just as the performance is, and I am part of the audience. Thus, by watching the performer and the audience both performing in a sense, I can simultaneously experience my own subjectivity and objectivity, and I can occupy both perspectives at once.

I believe that the troubadours explicitly played with this notion of the dual subjectivity and objectivity of the audience, and the access to multiple perspectives which the performance space gives all its participants. I will hone in on Bernart de Ventadorn's poetry as an example of this audience awareness at work. In Goldin's introduction to Ventadorn, he theorizes that Ventadorn's poetry is not told from a fixed perspective but rather inhabits many different perspectives, all within the same song, and that these perspectives represent viewpoints held by various members of the audience. This leads to poems in which the speakers' attitude seems to radically change and even contradict itself when one reads it on paper. This is the kind of phenomenon that could only really come to life in the performance space where the troubadour can direct his gaze to different members of the audience. Ventadorn's poems thus function as conversations with the audience, an engagement with the intersubjective nature of the performance space. The way that Ventadorn gives audience members an actual piece of his songs concretizes the idea of the performance as a socially-constructed, audience-constructed phenomenon. As Goldin put it, "The audience has become a more complicated instrument for the poet to sound" (Goldin 119)

Goldin proposes that Ventadorn's ability to see his love from the perspectives of his enemies, the other men in the room, is his only way of proving that he is the genuine lover. This

suggests that an ability to engage with multiple perspectives at once is indicative of truly mature, courtly love. However, Goldin simultaneously views this lack of a coherent perspective that can be agreed upon as a sign of courtly love's separation from reality. As Goldin put it, "...the singer needs his enemies. Their incomprehension is the clearest proof that courtly love has nothing to do with real experience" (Goldin 118) Goldin thinks that this is indicative of courtly love as pure representation and pure performance, which has abstracted itself from any real sentiment. He goes on to suggest that troubadour poetry died out fast because of its imbalance between representation of a collectiveness and the richness of person experience. The troubadours, because of the rigid form and vocabulary of their poetry, eventually became pure collectiveness rather than expression of the individual.

In an essay about interpreting medieval art, Krohn comes to similar conclusions as Goldin about the purely performative nature of troubadour songs and the traditions they inspired. Krohn argues that the Minnesang, the German troubadours, were actually able to create songs in which the form was identical to their content— that is to say, they are not actually born out of a real declaration of actively experienced love, but they are able to actually construct this emotion purely through the performance. "Its performance is therefore identical to its content," Krohn says. (Krohn 263) Though Taruskin suggests that performance is about a conversation between past and present emotional states, Krohn suggests instead that the emotion of a performance can be entirely fabricated in the moment through precision of form. Krohn would thus agree with the historicity approach to musicology and performance opposed by Taruskin— a performance must be precisely orchestrated in order to evoke the desired effect.

In comparing the distinct conclusions reached in these texts, a question arises — is the performer's subjective experience or the audience's subjective experience what is prioritized in

a performance? Taruskin is absolutely thinking in terms of the performer's experience. The performer has the power and the duty to interpret a piece and revitalize it through putting their own experiences and emotions in conversation with what was put into the piece in the past by its other performers. Krohn, on the other hand, clearly sees the audience as the locus for the manifestation of emotion, emotion which did not necessarily come from the performer's emotion. The emotion rather was constructed in the moment of performance, through allegiance to a very rigid form. The question boils down to—is the performer supposed to perfectly craft something to make the audience experience a particular emotion? Or is the performer supposed to channel their own emotions in the construction and delivery of a performance, in order to emotionally stir the audience?

As an audience member, it is perhaps impossible to know what genuine emotion the performer channelled into a piece that stirs us, but we can have access to how our social and emotional facticity create a unique temporal experience for us, the substance of performance. When I listen to my favorite songs over and over again, they are never the same, even though I listen to the same performance of them. This is of course because I am not the same-- my mood and my surroundings are always in flux. I can go to see my favorite bands in concert dozens of times because the experience is never the same-- the crowd is always different.

I think great performance, great art, and perhaps great love all have one thing in common-- they give use access to a kaleidoscope of perspectives. Perhaps Goldin is correct that *fin'amor* and *amor de lohn* were artistic tropes designed to inspire emotion in the listener rather than to reflect emotion that comes from the performer. Yet nonetheless, as an audience we have an irresistible tendency to converse with a performance and let it resonate with our own lived experience. When I listen to music, at home or at a concert, I feel myself both

projecting my feelings onto a song and having the song project its feelings back onto me. It is this conversation and exchange that makes music truly meaningful.

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