The Performance of Mediæval Music in Contemporary Culture

Meditations upon creative performance in the late 20th century and the dynamic flux between the performer and the performance-object

MUSIC MA DISSERTATION
(TRIPLE MODULE)

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Contents

Having read the University regulations, I declare that this work is my own and does not contain any unacknowledged material from other sources.

1 A Brief Survey of the Early Music "Scene"

We will consider throughout this work the performance of mediæval music. As part of the study will be the relation of the notation to the performance, we will consider mostly vocal music, as this has a better-documented manuscript history than purely instrumental music.

Since the assertion in the late 1970s by Christopher Page (amongst others) that most mediæval music was primarily vocal, and used instruments to a far lesser extent than previously inferred from iconography, the nature of mediæval performing groups has become predominantly vocal.[1] This 'Renaissance' of vocal mediæval music was spurred on by English scholars, Page amongst them with his group called Gothic Voices.[2] Other groups drawing upon the tradition of vocal music in English cathedrals also sprung up, such as the Tallis Scholars (prior to Gothic Voices) and the Hilliard Ensemble. By the mid-1980s there were many 'baroque choirs' to mediæval vocal consorts being recorded commercially. All well and good. However, what was happening in tandem with the interest in performing 'early' repertory was the increasing currency of the opinion that, in order to understand the music, it must be performed 'authentically'. This term embodies many notions; some will be shown to be mutually-contradictory. The two important *general* notions are concerned with fidelity: fidelity to the 'composer's intentions' and fidelity to 'the work'. Much of the musicological discussion has centred about these two notions. An analysis of the whole concept of authenticity will be found later.

The types of presentation used by the groups above may be said to characterised as "art" based. The vocal qualities used are mostly pure and are derived

[1] The earlier history of the performance-practice of early music from the first publication of the MSS can be found excellently explicated by Leech-Wilkinson (1998).

from a mixture of Solesmes-style and English Cathedral tone production. There is another approach, which may be termed "folk". While this has had a larger impact on instrumental performance, where the lack of early manuscript traditions has encouraged a more improvisational approach, it has had repercussions on some primarily vocal ensembles. In 1982 a French group was set up, headed by Marcel Pérès (to be found spelled in a variety of different ways, even within the same CD insert booklet; hereafter standardised as above), named Ensemble Organum. Their recordings consist of various chant 'dialects' from various geographical and chronological locations, mediæval polyphony, some in its mediæval liturgical context, and replication of a still-extant Corsican polyphonic vocal style. This mixture of genres is entirely typical.

The first thing that is apparent is that Ensemble Organum do not follow the modern score to the letter. Some other groups also alter the conventional approaches to plainchant in particular, adding ornamental or chromatic notes in pseudo-accordance with musicological research. Ensemble Gilles Binchois under Dominique Vellard are a good example of less extreme exponents in this school.

1.1 Case-Study: Plainchant

The Gradual *Statuit*, as recorded in manuscripts of Roman use from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries is subjected to an interesting interpretation by Ensemble Organum,[3] which differs from all other performers in most key areas.

The first thing to observe is that Pérès provides an underlying pulse.[4] This pulse commonly undergoes a ternary or duple subdivision, and it often falls into trochaic or (less often) iambic metre. The pulse has great flexibility in performance,

[2] The sudden switch of emphasis to a vocal presentation and the almost total absence of instruments from the recordings thereafter has also been summed up by not a few as the '*a capella* heresy'.
[3] As recorded on their compact disc of "Old Roman Chant".

and is partly disguised by misplaced accents – rather in the manner that the *ictus* of Solesmes-method plainsong need not be congruent with any other textual or musical features. There are small ornamental nuances given to some pitches, and subtle protamenti between others, although some more obvious ornaments are apparent. These may correspond to the notation of *quilismata* in the original source. These are executed as a trill between the main note and that above it, along the lines of current musicological consensus. The tempo is slower than might be expected for chant. It seems that Pérès has sought to present a chant that can be 'beaten-out' metrically as described by Guido d'Arezzo and the author of the *Commemoratio brevis*. Indeed, his use of a predominantly ternary metre supports this. However, Guido's discussion of metre in chant mentions that the last notes of neums are to be held, not the first. This provides a true iambic metre:

∪ ─ | ∪ ─ | etc.

Whereas Pérès presents it as trochaic:

─ ∪ | ─ ∪ | etc.

But a trochee cannot be obtained unless the first note of the neum is lengthened. Furthermore, as each neum can only correspond to at most one syllable of text, it would be difficult to infer the rhythms used in this performance from any neumatic notation. The rhythm can also be seen to depart from this trochaic metre frequently (which is no problem in itself), and some of the rhythmic patterns have no analogue in classical metrics. It might be possible to argue that the metre is basically actually spondaic (long-long) with an emphasis on the 'arsis' first note of the two, but this would be playing semantics, and would not explain the syncopated moments.[5] It

[4] No critics have realised this, to the best of my knowledge. Indeed, Peter Wilton describes the style merely as 'fluid' on the Gregorian Association web pages.

[5] For instance, some of the unequivocal moments of two-to-a-beat can be rationalised as spondees, but the syncopated phrasing (similar to the rhythm of some cadential embellishments found in early fifteenth-century polyphony) cannot be adequately described using 'feet'.

might be worth observing that the metre used by Pérès does not correspond to that of the text itself – either in qualitative or quantitative metre.

The reason for Pérès presenting the chant quasi-metrically is hard to discern. While it must have been inspired by Guido's insistence upon it, it does not tally with Pérès's own view on what 'Old Roman' chant actually is. He sees it as a kind of written-out elaboration of a kind of Ur-melody that may be similar to the Frankish 'Gregorian' melodies – a sort of notated improvisation. If it is a written-out embellishment then presumably some of the pitches are purely ornamental, and therefore may not be assimilated into the metrical scheme.[6]

The most startling feature of the piece is the use of a drone beneath the chant. This technique is applied as an accurate copy of Byzantine *ison* singing. It cannot be analogous to *organum*, as *organum* described by Guido (which is the nearest in time to the chants presented) is not conceived as a drone, but as a set of parallel fourths adjusted to avoid tritones and to maintain modal integrity towards phrase-endings.[7] The *vox organalis* is also fully texted in the same manner as the chant voice. The largest intervals were fifths (or fourths, if we are to take Guido as completely prescriptive).

Thus when the drone enters with no text, vocalised to 'ah', and uses intervals as wide as a minor sixth, there can be no doubt that this is *not organum*. This *is* Byzantine *ison* singing. There seems to be no evidence whatsoever that *ison* singing has ever been performed in the Latin rite, and it is first documented in the Byzantine

[6] Unless we view this repertory as a harbinger of the 'trope' of later Gregorian styles, where the original melody is totally subsumed under the structure of the added material. This is an interesting possibility, but does not seem to be backed-up by the examination of the history of the 'Old Roman' chants themselves.

[7] A 'boundary tone' of C or F was held as a kind of drone at the end of a phrase ending on D or E, or F or G respectively. While earlier treatises explain this is to avoid tritones arising from the maverick version of the gamut they propose, Guido's scale renders this reason obsolete, yet he maintains the 'drone' as a stylistic feature. It seems to have the effect of maintaining the modal integrity of the *vox principalis* by keeping to the ambitus of the mode and reinforcing the final or the 'leading note' just beneath it at the important cadential-points. The *organum* is actually a form of heterophony, not a drone.

rite only in the fifteenth century (although it might be possible to argue for a much older origin in Armenian chant traditions). When questioned on this, Pérès attempts to justify its use (again quoting at length, as there is much to comment upon):

> There is some evidence that this practice might come not from the Greek but from the Latin…. The use of the *ison* seems to be known in the Byzantine tradition around the fifteenth century, but not in other Eastern churches. The first clear description of this technique, though, comes from a Western source, the *Micrologus* by Guido d'Arezzo in the eleventh century. For him it was a sort of organum. He teaches us that this practice was common in Rome. We know from the *Ordines Romani* that by the seventh and eighth centuries there were traditions of organum singing in the pontifical chapel. Later the anonymous author of *Summa Music*, a treatise written around 1200, describes the sort of organum that consists of a drone. He calls this manner *diaphona basilica*: that's very interesting, because the term *basilica* in liturgical matters often refers to the Roman tradition. So in the thirteenth century there was still in the vocabulary of singers a word that seems to referred [*sic*] to the Roman Basilican tradition and that means a vocal drone. It is very possible that the Greeks borrowed this practice from the Italian singers. We find in some fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Greek sources, written in Byzantine notation, some instances of polyphony in this style with parallel fifths and contrary motion. In one manuscript a rubric says, "This is done in the Italian way." We know that from the thirteenth century the Italians, chiefly the Venetians, had a very strong influence in some regions like Crete and Byzantium itself, where there existed a Latin government for almost seventy years. So there is a strong basis for this scenario.
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> But, you know, above all it is important when you make a theory to experiment and see how it works. In this matter, the big question is, Why do we have so few recorded instances of drone singing? Was it so common that it was not necessary to talk about it? Or maybe some people did not consider it a form of polyphony at all, as is the case today in Greece, so that maybe it was assimilated into monody. Or maybe it existed in only a few places. But musically speaking it works, and that helps us to better hear the modal structure of a piece.[8]

The first flaw in this response has already been mentioned: in no way can the *ison* be assimilated into the theory of Guidonian *organum*. Guido also does not teach us that the practice was common in Rome. Next, the 'organum' referred to in the *Ordines Romani* does not necessarily refer to vocal polyphony. The terminology of this early period is extremely troublesome, and the Latin word *diaphonia*, which is how it is described there, means just 'intervals'. These usually mean consecutive intervals much in the same way as a 'consonance' might mean consecutive consonant pitches.

Diaphona basilica as given in the *Summa Musice* is more like the Notre Dame or Aquitanian *organum*, where the *melody* (i.e. *not* the accompaniment) is given in long notes, and the accompanying voice sings a free part above it. Again, this is

[8] Sherman, ed., (1997) 36-37

conceptually very different from *ison* drones.[9] The idea that the term 'basilica' is in reference to Roman tradition is useful, although now we are in the thirteenth century looking for evidence of a style of singing from the tenth or eleventh centuries.

Next Pérès claims that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Greek polyphony uses features 'in this style'. In what style? It is the style of neither Guidonian *organum*, nor Byzantine *ison*. What does the 'Italian way' as perceived by the Greeks in the fifteenth century have to do with a style half-a-millennium previously? Why should a heavy Venetian presence in Byzantium have a relevance to Roman liturgical singing practices? Italy was not unified until the nineteenth century. Venice was as foreign to Rome as Greece was in the thirteenth century – which is still at least three hundred years after the period of concern to us.

The set of rhetorical questions in his last paragraph all proceed from the tacit assumption that the *ison* was used in the Latin freely and from great antiquity. One tempting answer to, 'Why do we have so few recorded instances [none, in fact] of drone singing?' must be, 'Because instances were either very rare or non-existent.' The polyphony of the Latin Church developed freely along well-documented lines. We do have a good chronology of the development of the Latin polyphonic repertory. Of course, this does not mean implicitly that the *ison* was not used, but it does mean that to try and claim that it was a fundamental part of the Latin style, and was even got from here by the Byzantine singers, is pushing ideology too far. The last sentence would have been better stated alone. Pérès uses the *ison* because it sounds good, and it might be considered that such creativity on the part of a performer being curbed by his obligation to justify historically his interpretation is a little stifling.

[9] Alexander Lingas & Luca Ricossa, MRM

1.2 Case-Study: Parisian Organum

The performance of Parisian *organum* has received much scholarly discussion. It seems that the score was indeed meant to be subject to embellishments. Roesner provides the most comprehensive discussion of these embellishments, and seems to be the main source for the interpretation of Ensemble Organum. Roesner, in more than one article, explains how he interprets the writings on the ornamenation associated with Parisian *organum*. As he codifies his ornaments and rhythmic suggestions fully, it is not surprising that his suggestions have had more practical currency than those of other authors who may be more content to leave some areas as "unknowns". Roesner, gathers together work of other scholars to codify the appropriate opening ornamental "trill" for the uppermost voice in *organum*, with the tenor joining in next, followed by the other parts, all without ornamented entry. He explains how one is to discern a section of copula at the end of a section and that this is to be sung in more "free" rhythm. He also suggests other ormnaments to be used in *organum*. Most of his suggestions are not based on *organum purum*, but on many-voiced polyphony, and are therefore not often associated with the problems of how to sing the precise rhythms of *organum purum*. These, have been discussed by other authors though, and while some hold to an approach that favours some sort of directly proportional note values, many are willing to concede that the rhythms may have been as flexible as we can now find in musics from the Coptic and Ethiopian churches. However, it seems that Roesner's ideas have been the most popular to catch on amongst performers, perhaps because they give most blessing to a freer interpretation of the notation than in the work of other, more restrictive and cautious scholars.

The differing tempos used by different performers seems to be a matter of taste. It is not based on the idea of *tactus* as described in the later middle ages, where the 'beat' was about the same as the human pulse (c. 60-80 b.p.m.), and is slower than

this in the Ensemble Organum performances. Marcel Pérès has claimed that high feasts utilised slower chant recitation. This is well documented for later centuries. He claims that the held-tone *organum* represents the extreme of this æsthetic (i.e. it is *very* slow chant!). However, why he therefore sees the need to further prolong the chant by singing the upper-voices slowly is not explained though.

The other very noticeable feature of his presentation is the use of ornaments. Most of these consist of *echappé* notes, to which no reference can be found in literature concerning the performance of the time. There is reference in *organum purum* to a type of 'wobble' (or perhaps a 'trill'-type effect) that can be inferred to occur on every repeated pitch, although it seems to refer more specifically to *longs* only in certain contexts. Finally, a metrical freedom is employed at the close of some phrases, again suggested in Roesner's article. Pérès stakes his allegiance to Roesner by quoting his views in his article on the performance of twelfth-century vocal polyphony.[10]

The fact that other musicologists have disagreed with Roesner over the finer points of his article has not prevented it from gaining wide support. The differences of interpretation seem to be based on study of sources from different times. The fourteenth-century version of performance of *organum* is different from that described a century earlier, and so on. Whether or not Ensemble Organum's recording demonstrates fidelity to *one period as a whole* is uncertain. The recording places all the music in the context of a Mass for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and so we might rightly expect a chronological integrity of style, something which Marcel Pérès speaks of when he mentions mediæval polyphony being sung at the same time as baroque music.[11] He knows that the performance-style of one type of music is informed by that of music from a different period that remains in contemporary use,

[10] Pérès (1988), 174

so he ought to be presenting the music 'as *all* was sung at such-and-such a date', rather than 'as *each piece* was *originally intended* to be sung. This sort of integrity, or 'authenticity', must be called *chronological* rather than *inherent*, and many critics overlook this.

Organum purum is a different genre and The Early Music Consort of London contrasts greatly with Ensemble Organum in their approach. While The Early Music Consort of London represent an older approach, the stylistic interpretation is more or less the same as that of Gothic Voices and other modern groups. It is the manner of voice production and blend that differs, the interpretation of the basic pitches and rhythms remains the same. Again the older recording shows a more or less exact rendition of the score's pitches as transcribed modally, whereas Ensemble Organum's performance is significantly altered. The scholarly view on the performance of *organum duplum* is split between those who advocate a mensural performance, based on strict observance of modal notation in the sources, and those who believe that consonance and dissonance provides differentiation between note lengths.[12] Marcel Pérès follows the latter school:

> Leur technique était donc celle de l'ornamentation des intervalles consonants. Les chanteurs se mettaient d'accord sur les notes qu'ils feront longues et sur celles qu'ils feront brèves. La notation par elle-même n'indique pas systématiquement le rythme…. La nature de ce rythme «libre» n'est pas d'ordre conceptuel mais organique; son principe génétique n'est pas à chercher dans une division arithmétique du temps, mais dans le flux dynamique créé par la matière sonore elle-même.
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> Un exemple tiré de l'*organum* sur le graduel *Viderunt omnes*, va nous montrer comment le mouvement peut s'organiser uniquement à partir d'une analyse harmonique du discours musical. La grande phrase sur *Dominus* a été réalisée non pas en essayant d'appliquer un mode rythmique mais en laissant parler librement l'alternance consonance-dissonance, comme le préconise l'Anonyme IV dans le chapitre 7 de son Traité: les intervalles consonants sont longs tandis que les dissonants le sont moins. Nous comprenons ainsi comment certains théoreticiens, en entendent ce type de clausules, ont essayé de les codifier en y appliquant le principe abstrait des modes rythmiques. Mais nous, si nous voulons faire revivre cette musique, nous devons effectuer le chemin inverse, c'est-à-dire partir de la matière musicale pour créer le rythme, et non pas appliquer plus ou moins aveuglément des schémas rythmiques.[13]

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[11] Sherman, ed., (1997) 30-31

[12] It must be admitted by those favouring a thoroughly mensural approach that not all of the ligature-patterns in the upper voice are typical modal patterns, and some must be 'squeezed into' the modal patterns – whether this means they are wrong is another matter though.

[13] Pérès (1988), 173 [*Their technique was basically that of ornamented consonant intervals. The singers decided upon which notes would be longs and which would be breves. The notation for this did*

This approach is based very much on how the music is *heard by the singer*, and has little relevance to how it was conceived, or how it was heard by the listener, although that is not to presume that these differed in any way. It simply provides a justification for any approach along the lines of the singer shrugging and saying 'I feel it that way.'[14]

It may be paradoxical that this interpretation may have been the *original* intention of the scribe who compiled the manuscript, but if later singers *did* read it mensurally, then any other music of this later time cannot be performed alongside a 'free' interpretation without transgressing the 'chronological authenticity' concept mentioned above, although it may be perfectly 'inherently authentic'.

It is important to observe Pérès's use of the word 'revivre' in describing his performance aim, as this will be discussed later.

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not systematically indicate the rhythm…. The nature of this 'free' rhythm was not conceptual, but was 'organic'; its governing principle cannot be found in the arithmetic division of time, but in the dynamic flux created through the nature of the sound itself.

An example taken from the organum on the Graduale Viderunt omnes will show us how the [rhythmic] movement can be uniquely organised by starting from a harmonic analysis of the music. The long phrase on Dominus was not realised in performance by the application of a rhythmic mode, but by allowing the alternation of consonance and dissonance to speak freely, as in the description by Anonymous IV in chapter 7 of his treatise: 'the consonant intervals are longs whereas the dissonant ones are short.' We understand that certain scholars, in presenting this type of clausula, have tried to codify them by applying the abstract principle of the rhythmic modes there. But we, if we want to re-vivify this music, must do the opposite, that is to say use the actual musical substance for the creation of rhythm, and not apply rhythmic schemes more or less across the board..]

[14] A position described by the same Anonymous IV when he says that the singers justify their long and short notes on the basis of: 'I understand that note to be long and this one to be short.' (Given by Pérès: 1988, 173)

2 Historically Informed Performance and Mediæval Religion

The movement formerly known as "authentic performance" is more correctly referred to as "historically informed performance", or "HIP". It has been recognised that authenticity is not the result of historical mimicry. The extents to which HIP has really had an effect on musical performance are still uncertain. Much of the applications have tended to be on the surface, considering itself with mere technical anachronisms. Art in the mediæval period was not purely *sine fontus*. It came from within the mediæval society itself and should not be considered apart from that in the first instance. It is unclear how much effect theological or social history studies have affected the HIP movement to date. Marcel Pérès certainly speaks as though he is aware of the issues which we deal with here, though whether he then ignores them is a moot point. A case-study incorporating an extreme example of event-specific function will prove of worth in turning up the sorts of philosophical and practical areas of concern here.

2.1 Case-Study: Liturgical Drama

It is believed that the mediæval liturgical dramas were designed to fulfil an iconographic function within the liturgy. The first play, known as the *Visitatio Sepulchri* (the visit to the sepulchre), originated at Matins on Easter Sunday at Winchester in about 970 AD.[15] It was meant to illustrate the events of the first Easter morning to the assembled monks in the quire. It was not intended as a public 'performance'. Nonetheless, it did involve rudimentary dramaturgy, and extensive use of music. The music was lifted from the plainsong of normal liturgical usage, and was

[15] Probably written by the then bishop of Winchester, Ethelwold. The section of Matins for Easter Sunday containing the phrase asked by the angel of the two Marys - '*Quem quaeritis'* (Whom are you seeking) - was expanded into it.

not specially composed to illustrate the drama, unlike the later mystery plays, which were performed outside the church, and used newly composed material. The style of music used in these was still predominantly liturgical though, and each would usually end with the *Te Deum* - recalling a religious service.

The early liturgical dramas were similar to the spirit of the ancient Greek *dithyramb* or early tragedy. It has been attested that:

> The so-called "Drama of the Medieval Church" is almost always contained in service-books. Thus its context is wholly liturgical; it is an inseparable part of the much larger annual ritual practice of specific religious communities. Usually it is impossible to say even with certainty where the "play" under discussion begins or ends. Is the singing of the *Te Deum* which comes at the end of the Easter *Visitatio Sepulchri*, for example, part of the dramatic office or does it mark the resumption of the usual liturgy of Matins?... Nearly all of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* offices were not originally regarded as plays in our sense of that term but as dramatic rituals.[16]

This ritual nature of liturgical dramas is very important. The 'cultic' power of a ritual is not present in purely dramatic works - or so the theory goes. Drama is *re-enactment* of events, whereas liturgy renders them cultically present in a real sense. The congregation at a liturgy are not mere spectators but are part of the cultic event; an audience watching drama are not part of it usually. Indeed 'dramatic performance entails a clear-cut definition between audience and players, [the latter of which] represent actions and characters but are powerless to re-present them.'[17] The liturgical calendar may also be seen as infusing certain times of the year with specific 'cultic power'; thus certain liturgies are performed at certain times. Drama, for which seasonal use may be more *appropriate*, is not governed by these constraints.

The use of 'time' in liturgy is also different from drama. In drama it is expected that a clear chronology will progress, or at least will be revealed. The liturgy uses chronologically disparate elements and does not attempt any exposition of 'plot'.[18] It transcends the notion of 'time'.

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[16] Flanigan in Campbell ed.: *The Fleury Playbook* 1985, 3
[17] Ibid., 3
[18] For instance, the liturgy of the Eucharist recounts the events at the Last Supper, but the Eucharist itself contains within it the notion of the resurrection, which had not yet happened at the time of the historical Last Supper.

The danger of confusing these distinct functions - and thereby misunderstanding the 'real' nature of the liturgy - was one of the reasons that Pope Innocent IV discouraged the performance of religious plays in the churches in the thirteenth century.[19] The impossibility of reconciling liturgy and theatre has been stated by Karl Young:

> Because of the impossibility of there being impersonation in the liturgy of the Eucharist.... the Mass has never been a drama, nor did it ever give rise to drama.[20]

However, Cynthia Bourgeault believes that it is in this opposition between liturgy and theatre that the life of the plays lies; she sees a certain vital 'interbreathing' between the two realms.

As a director, she sheds light on effective performance of these plays. She believes that realist acting, Stanislavsky-style, does not work, although neither does complete stylisation. She believes that the emotional aspects of the plays only work if performed 'naturally'. Perhaps she is thinking of the gentle 'naturalness' of a priest's actions. She sees the use of the church building as important, and does not consider a

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[19] The dangers of misunderstanding liturgy as 'dramatic' have been passionately put by Berger. He sees the intrusion of dramatic elements into the liturgy (not just plays but dramatic gestures of all sorts) as destructive to the sacred liturgy itself. He believes the two should remain apart. He is thus equally dismayed when 'liturgical power' is attempted to be invoked in the theatre (as the use of the verb 'menacer' - to menace - shows):

> Mais si la liturgie, comme on le voit, est toujours menacée de "théâtralisation", le théâtre est à son tour menacé de "liturgisation". Cela est clair chez Artaud par example, qui parle de l'art théâtral comme véritablement sacré et hautment symbolique, même si la métaphysique qui sous-tend sa conception est d'un tout autre type que la métaphysique chétienne. On pense aussi au drame wagnérien, et tout particulièrement à *Parsifal* qui se termine, dans une atmosphère sacrée, sur la Cène Mystique autour du Graal retrouvé. Par respect pour la communion religieuse qu'il voulait instaurer par son œvre, Wagner a demandé qu'alors on n'applaudît pas: chaque année au *Festspielhaus* de Bayreuth, *Parsifal* se termine dans un religieux silence.
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> (Berger: 1976, 215-216)

> [*In the same way as which we have seen that the liturgy is 'menaced' by 'theatricalisation', the theatre is in its turn 'menaced' by 'liturgicalisation'. This much is clear from Artaud, for example, who spoke of theatrical art as genuinely holy and highly symbolic, even though the metaphysics underpinning its conception are completely different from Christian metaphysics. One thinks also of Wagnerian drama, and in particular of* Parsifal *which concludes, in a sacred atmosphere, with the Last Supper after the retrieval of the Grail. Out of respect for the institution of Holy Communion which he was evoking in his work, Wagner asked that no-one applaud the work: each year at the* Festspielhaus *in Bayreuth,* Parsifal *ends with a religious* [or maybe 'religiose'] *silence.*]

[20] Young: 1933, 1, pp. 84-5

theatre an appropriate venue for performance. Finally, she believes in involving the congregation dramatically by means of spatial considerations. For instance, the procession of the wise men would take place *through* the nave, and the shepherds would be stationed there when the angel visits them. The use of the 'congregational space' includes them in the drama to an extent.[21]

The question is raised whether or not ritual 'power' is given to anything other than pure ritual.

The processional nature of nearly all liturgical plays and their seemingly relative independence from the liturgy itself may suggest that in fact the more successful compositions re-create the liturgical domain while in some sense remain apart from it.[22] Can drama draw upon a cultic power of its own to make *real* representation, or is really only powerless to anything but 're-present'? Does it invoke or evoke?

These philosophical speculations aside, it is readily apparent how many æsthetic and historical gulfs must be straddled (or ignored) in attempting to portray this music in an "authentic" manner. The issues are as valid for other, less multimediumed genres of the middle ages, where the religion and thinking of the period played such a huge part in the contemporary reception of the music-artworks.

2.2 Text and Music in the Middle Ages

Ancient Greek theorists and philosophers of music went to great lengths to emphasise the power of 'music'. The word 'music' comes to us from the Greek word '*mousike'*; a word used in ancient times to denote the psychic-arts (i.e. as opposed to gymnastics - a bodily pursuit), including in particular poetry.

[21] Bourgeault in Campbell ed.: *The Fleury Playbook* 1985, 144-160
[22] Campbell: *The Fleury Playbook* 1985, xiii-xiv

The early fathers of the Christian church recognised the power of music, but would not condone its power over the words to be sung. Indeed St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) declared that 'whenever it happens that I am more moved by the singing than by the thing that is sung, I admit that I have grievously sinned, and then I should wish rather not to have heard the singing.'[23] However, in stating this, he was admitting recognition that music (as we now use the term) has a vital connection with the poetic text, and moreover can transform the very meaning of that text.

From almost as early as we have sources of notated music, we find sets of rules being laid down explaining how a text should receive a musical treatment. It will be shown that the considerations given when setting a text are conditioned by the social æsthetics amongst which they arise. The absolutes of one period may not be those of another. Therefore in order to understand the considerations that must be made when setting a text to music, we must examine the differing attitudes as put into practice historically.

Assuming that Western music is basically derived historically from the plainchant of the Church,[24] this chant repertory must be examined briefly to shed light on some fundamental principles.

Classical Latin poetry was composed in metrical units (known as 'feet').[25] Each foot was composed of a mixture of two or three 'long' or 'short' syllables (fig. 1). There were sets of rules governing whether syllables were 'long' or 'short', such as whether its vowel was followed by two consonants or not. The idea was that these syllables were not deliberately made longer in speaking, rather that they by their nature took longer to pronounce anyway. The poet would use a repeating pattern of feet for each line of text.

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[23] *Confessions X. 33* quoted in Routley (1978) 242

[24] The truth may be that both are more correctly derived from an earlier common source, and interacted with each other during their development.

fig. 1: Some common metrical feet

trochee –∪	anapæst ∪∪–	spondee – –
iamb ∪–	dactyl –∪∪	tribrach ∪∪∪

– = Long syllable ∪ = Short syllable

However, these long and short syllables did not specify the stresses in the text, which only started to appear in the spoken language towards the end of the imperial period. It was not until after about 400 A.D. that the stresses in the text were used as structural means to compose a poem.

This means that when examining a plainchant setting of an early text such as the hymn, *Ut queant laxis* we are confronted with a metrical structure of feet at odds with the stresses within the text. The metrical structure is the *sapphic stanza*:[26]

lines 1-3: trochee, spondee, dactyl, trochee, trochee/spondee

line 4 dactyl, trochee/spondee

When the text is annotated with the metrical lengths and the stresses it is clear that they do not correspond. While the second and third lines are in agreement as to the location of stresses, line one is not. The stresses also do not necessarily fall upon long syllables.

[25] Derived from Greek techniques.
[26] Hiley (1993), 281

– ∪ – – – ∪ ∪ – – – ∪
. / . / . . . / . / .
Ut que-ant la-xis re-son-ar-e fib-ris

– ∪ – – – ∪ ∪ – – – ∪
/ . . / . / . . . / .
Mi-ra ge-sto-rum fa-mu-li tu-o-rum,

– ∪ – – – ∪ ∪ – – – ∪
/ . . / . / . . . / .
Sol-ve pol-lu-ti la-bi-i re-a-tum,

– ∪ ∪ – ∪
/ . . / .
San-cte Jo-an-nes.

/ = accent . = no accent

Indeed, an examination of the chant melody for this text does not shed any light on the problem (see the melody in the *Liber Usualis* for comparison). It would be expected that either 'long' syllables or stressed syllables would be prolonged by extra notes. But as the stresses vary from verse to verse, and the music is repeated for each verse, we should not expect the stresses to be reflected in the music. We do find that when a melisma is used it only occurs on a long syllable. But most of the long syllables actually carry only one note. The best assumption is that performers altered the lengths of the sung notes in some way to highlight accurately the metrical feet, although that does not even begin to explain most of the melodic features found. Until we know how, or even if, performers did this it is safer to assume that the æsthetic of the period when this text was set was different from that of the later middle ages and Renaissance, which we will examine next.

Towards the end of what are termed the "middle ages", the growth of "humanism" became an important philosophical and social propeller. It has been often rehearsed how the philosophy known as humanism came to spread itself through

European thought from the late mediæval period onwards. The reasons for this are many and have been covered in detail elsewhere. What is important is what humanism meant for music.

Put simply, humanism was a reaction against 'divine power' and an assertion of the significance of man. Man saw his salvation as much in his power to reason and understand divine truths, as much as to the power of those same truths to save him.[27] This had far-reaching significance for all areas of society, art, religion and science.[28] Religious music - still the most developed form of music at this time - underwent a change of æsthetic. As man was now entitled to comprehend the divine, he demanded access to the ecclesiastical texts.[29] He demanded that musical settings of texts do not prevent the text being completely comprehended on its own terms.

The first stirrings of the idea that the grammatical structure of the text must be reproduced by the music are to be found in the writings of Hucbald (c.840-c.930) and Guido d'Arezzo (c.1030). The latter mentions that pauses should not be introduced mid-phrase, but references to accents and meter are obscure, perhaps implying that just long syllables (or maybe just accented ones) be fitted to longer neumes, or perhaps longer individual notes whether in neumes or not.[30]

Much of the writing on word-setting until the early sixteenth century was concerned with the underlay of text, explaining that neumes only carry one syllable, and that each syllable is sung to the notes above it until a new syllable is found. This was rudimentary stuff, intended for the direction of scribes (who seldom paid much attention to the details of textual underlay) and to singers confronted with less-than-reliable copies of the music.

[27] The word 'man' should in no way be seen as implying gender-specificity in this case.
[28] And ultimately the reformation was precipitated by the same reasoning that man was now his own master.
[29] And indeed this attitude is what prompted publications of the bible in the vernacular.

Of course the bulk of the vocal music from the period now in question was polyphonic means that we must examine the polyphonic repertoire for indications of how a text-setting was approached. The principles underlying this are in fact the same as those for the song proper.

Gradually, from deeper thought on how a text relates to a melody, rules came to be devised regarding what melodic gestures were suitable for particular grammatical constructs. By the middle of the sixteenth century important treatises had been published by many Italian musicians. Zarlino, in 1558, published *Le institutioni harmoniche* for composers to follow when setting texts in Latin and Italian. Much of his work is derived from that of Lanfranco (the *Scintille di musica* of 1533), and like him championed the 'ultra-humanist' composer Adrian Willaert (c.1490-1562).

While Zarlino's rules on text-setting are not the most comprehensive, or the most illustrative of the contemporary practice, they were probably the most widely circulated, and therefore we reproduce them in outline here:[31]

1) Music should reflect the syntactical structure of words, including musical observation of long and short syllables.

2) All notes larger than semiminims carry their own syllables.

3) A ligature may have only one syllable.

4) A dot (i.e. a dot of division of alteration) cannot carry a syllable.

5) After a dotted minim, the semiminim and following note only infrequently carry syllables of their own.

6) Textual repeats never occur in plainsong, yet they do in mensural music when enough notes are available.

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[30] Although Guido's suggestions for making a melody from the vowels in a text by assigning a particular vowel to a particular note in the hexachord is too arbitrary to claim that details of melodic construction had yet been codified into theory (see chapter 17 of his *Micrologus*)

[31] The treatises of Zarlino and other writers are excellently discussed at length by Harrán (1986). It is his summary of Zarlino that is paraphrased here.

7) When the phrase has more notes than syllables, the extra notes should be assigned to the penultimate syllable and the last note to the last syllable.

Another rule that was stated by theorists of the time was that the first longer note after a series of semiminims cannot carry a new syllable, and neither can the middle or end notes of that group of semiminims.

These rules are aimed as much at singers as at composers, yet it is clear that they are in the service of humanist doctrine. The specification that long syllables receive long notes occurs in most of the theorists' writings. It seems to be based on the ideal of a return to classical poetry and music. The ambiguity of the writings makes it clear that the theorists themselves were not sure whether they were talking about long syllables or accented syllables for much of the time. And the practice generally reflects the stresses of the text and not its meter.

Zarlino advocates homophony in part-writing as this makes the text clear. He condemns the 'old-fashioned' composers (such as Ockeghem) who confuse the text with their grammatically-distorted polyphony.[32]

While it is to be admitted that Zarlino falls outside of the mediæval period, the rules he formulated were built upon a long a tradition of text setting.[33] The question for performers is, on the surface of it, what to do when the text setting appears to contradict all formulated rules known (and, indeed, common-sense). Does one correct the text setting (even if the modern edition used is generally "respectable" in these areas)? A deeper question concerns how one views the entire musical structure. Is it to be presented as an expression of "word" or of "music"?

[32] Although less intensely humanistic theorists such as Stoquerus (in 1570) were aware that there were different musical rules being used by the 'modern' composers and that these in themselves do not invalidate the music of older times.
[33] Traced fully by Harrán (1986)

3 The Music versus the Musician

It is clear that some confrontations are becoming inevitable between the music (for which we might better substitute the phrase "notation and theory") and those who are obliged to make a presentation of that music. In order to understand what this presentation actually *is* we will make some study of theories about the nature of a "work" and of an "interpretation".

3.1 The Created Work

The basic idea that the emotive content of music should match that of the text is as old as music itself. From Plato and Aristotle to the present day composers are told to match the expression of their music to that of the text.[34] The way this is done depends upon the conventions of the musical language at the time. This has been the æsthetic up to the present day. No small wonder then that the occasions of the breaking of this rule stand out for their apparent profundity. Mozart's opera *Cosi fan Tutte* has aroused controversy over whether or not the music actually 'lies' about the true emotions of the characters. And in the Elizabethan period, within earshot of Morley writing that 'you must therefore, if you have a grave matter, apply a grave kind of music to it; if a merry subject you must make your music also merry, for it will be a great absurdity to use a sad harmony to a merry matter of a merry harmony to a sad, lamentable, or tragical ditty,'[35] Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623) composed a set of mournful fa-las in

[34] Witness the - to some - painfully conservative ideas of Virgil Thomson (1989) 74-76
[35] Morley (1597/1952) 290

his madrigal pair *O Care thou art too cruel/Hence Care thou wilt despatch me*.[36] These are not the only examples in history.[37]

However, some details of the æsthetic do change. We no longer experience the various emotive 'affects' of plainsong as documented by the writers before 1200. All plainsong tends to create the same 'affect' within modern listeners.

Thus the emotive content of word-setting may be seen as broadly constant in theory for all music springing from the Western art tradition. But the perceptibility of the methods used to achieve those affects can be viewed as amorphous.[38]

The music-philosopher Peter Kivy presents us with an admirable solution to the problem of an apparent æesthetic gulf between various forms of mediæval music and the listener or composer of today. He first quotes the biblical distinction between prophecy and speaking in tongues as given in 1 Corinthians 14, and then describes the two schools (represented by Palestrina and Ockeghem):

> "When a man is using the language of ecstasy he is talking with God, not with men, for no man understands him; he is no doubt inspired, but he speaks mysteries. On the other hand, when a man prophesies, he is talking to men...."[39]
>
> Palestrina puts texts in their natural surroundings, which are human utterances. These he represents in music.... Ockeghem sees texts as sacred objects of veneration, as "precious jewels," and puts them in their appropriate place: not in the mouths of men but in sumptuous golden frames and ivory boxes.... Because he is, in the jeweller's sense, "setting" precious objects, not representing utterances, he can, unlike Palestrina, let his musical imagination take unfettered flight, hindered neither by the meaning nor by the intelligibility of what he "sets." Such a setter of texts is hindered only by his musical powers; and the objects he mounts, some of the most precious in the world or out of it, deserve no less than the most elaborate musical structures the mind of the composer can conjure up. Palestrina prophesies; Ockeghem speaks in tongues.[40]

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[36] When Vautor paid tribute to this work in his own similar madrigal *Come Sable Night*, he followed convention and used 'sad' music for the verses, and 'happy' music for the fa-las, demonstrating that this *was* the approach expected, given the text.

[37] I am not suggesting that these examples are not 'great' music. It makes for interesting contemplation whether, had the æsthetic of their time not demanded the reflection of the textual emotion in the music, the examples given would still appear 'outstanding'. It is sometimes said that genius is merely the flip-side of insanity, and perhaps there could be mileage in these examples to back-up this maxim!

[38] In any case, one of the most important precepts of music psychology is that music *cannot* affect two people in the same way.

[39] 1 Cor. 14 quoted in Kivy (1988) 4

[40] Kivy (1988) 10-11

The passage from Corinthians could even be used as an explanation of the apparently 'perverted' æsthetic at work in the melody of *Ut queant laxis* examined earlier!

While the idea of a 'mystery' is acceptable - in part at least - in sacred situations, the secular world has tended to shy away from this. Only in the twentieth century has any significant reaction against this taken place. Musical self-exegesis is not necessarily the desired end. It is no coincidence that a composer who is avowedly anti-humanist such as John Tavener is also the one to describe his music as 'icons in sound'. The music is meant to be contemplated, not understood. While this has great resonances with Kivy's view of mediæval music, it is uncertain whether many people hearing Tavener's music are able to hear it as the composer would wish.

There is an important distinction to be made between what the listener can be told or learn, and what he 'feels'. One can know something absolutely and yet not comprehend what one feels about it.[41] That is the essence of religion, and perhaps that is why music has always had its roots in religion. Which again makes a useful presentation of mediæval music-sound something of an impossible end to achieve. Therefore, other methods for making the music "useful" today must be found by performers.

3.2 The Creative Individual

There has been a degree of theorizing about the pyche of the living artist in the twentieth century. Many disciplines have attempted to determine some sort of *Zeitgeist* for current cognition of self. It seems from preceding case-studies that in order to make something from music it must be (to use Marcel Pérès's translated word) revivified. This is obviously a creative gesture – which explains his group's approach to the presentation of much of their repertoire, albeit an extreme one. Joseph

[41] Feelings are not understood; they can only be 'felt'.

Straus has examined the writings of one author on the subject of creativity in the twentieth century. In his book, *Remaking the Past*, he attempts to grapple with the poetic theories of Yale-based academic, Harold Bloom.

Straus begins by stating that 'in the first half of the twentieth century, musical life was dominated to an unprecedented degree by the music of the past.'[42]

Straus talks about the emergence of the musical canon through the nineteenth century, demonstrating how the music of the repertory came to be dominated more an more by the music of the past. This, he says, has meant the composers in question at the start of the twentieth century felt the past bearing down upon them in an oppressive manner, and gave them a feeling of 'belatedness' to it:

> They looked back on a classical heritage grown increasingly hallowed by the passage of time, its stature enhanced by greater distance and by the deep stylistic and structural gulf between the musical periods.[43]

In brief, Bloom's theory explains poetic influence as an anxious battle against precursor poems. Bloom sees the meaning in a poem as lying in its relation to other poems, whose meaning in turn is defined by their relation to others, and so on. Densely scattering his writing with quotes from some of Bloom's books, Straus focuses upon a key concept in the Bloomian theory: that of misprision. Misprision is a creative misreading. New poets, confronted with the 'tradition', misinterpret (or misread) precursor poems. They make it appear that the precursor poem was trying to say something other than its true meaning, but not managing to say it totally successfully. They then compose a new poem that says in a better way what they misinterpreted the precursor poem as saying[44]

Straus's final point is that Bloom 'is not interested in source study',[45] quoting from Bloom that 'the profundities of poetic influence cannot be reduced to source

[42] Straus (1990) vii. This in itself may be of questionable veracity.
[43] Ibid. 5
[44] This is a radical oversimplification of Bloom's ideas, which will be examined properly later.
[45] Straus (1990) 19

study, to the history of ideas, to the patterning of images'.[46] He also quotes Bloom's idea on outward similarity between one work and its precursor work or style:

> Poetic influence, in the sense I give to it, has almost nothing to do with the verbal resemblances between one poet and another.... Poets need not *look* like their fathers...[47]

Chapter two of Straus's book examines the writings of composer-analysts. It shows how composers, when writing analytical work are still engaged in the process of misreading, this being ingrained within them from composition. Straus shows how Schoenberg (amongst others) treats analysis as an exercise in self-justification. In analysing Mozart and Brahms, Schoenberg concentrates on motivic analysis, completely ignoring any voice-leading or harmonic considerations. This, Straus says, is because Schoenberg's own music is based on the idea of the motive. Schoenberg seeks to show how Brahms and Mozart concentrated on motivic composition (by extension giving it blessing as the ideal way to compose) in order to demonstrate how he does it better and more rigorously. This, says Straus, is misprision, or creative misreading. He demonstrates the other composers displaying similar techniques.[48]

If we are to accept the possibility that something of this historical anxiety could have been current in the past, it becomes difficult to know how to treat theoretical writings from the mediæval period. The possibility must be conceded that some authors may have been interacting with their subject in something of this manner.

Harold Bloom's theories of poetry have been derived from a number of sources, but it is principally a reaction against the school of philosophy known as

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[46] Bloom (1973) 13
[47] Bloom (1975) 19-20
[48] Indeed, he warns against taking Bartók's analytical writings on Hungarian folk music too unquestioningly. Bartók was misreading that music in order to justify his own. In short 'he found in the folk tradition what he needed to find - a way of organising music through motivically controlled integration of musical space. He then used this principle to resist and remake the central canon.' (Straus: 1990, 42). And Bartók is also cleverly side-stepping the main Western canon of music by pretending to spring from the less 'hallowed' tradition of folk music - according to Straus. Straus illustrates Stravinsky's attitudes from interviews, rather than analyses, but portrays basically the same sorts of ideas.

deconstruction. Deconstruction, by examining the rhetorical nature of thought as presented in language, attempts to show that there is no actual meaning in any discourse. All text can be shown to resort to merely rhetorical figures of speech at every instance at which it attempts to convey any 'truth' or 'meaning'. This means that texts have no meaning *per se*. All a text is a 'free play' of rhetorical gestures, and it is to be understood as having no more significance than 'play'. As concepts of truth are expressed philosophically in language, which the deconstructionists hold is governed by concepts of textuality, then no truth can ever be expressed.[49] Harold Bloom seeks to reconcile this with a more common-sense view that meaning can be divined. He concedes that the meaning cannot reside *within* the text, he returns to the structuralist philosophies that posit that the meaning of a text is given by its relationships with other texts.[50] Bloom does not adopt strict structuralist approaches by any means though.[51] He takes the point that all texts can be boiled down to mere figures of speech, but then says that it is in the *dynamic* interplay of these figures of speech that the meaning lies. He is also directed by ideas contained within the mediæval Jewish book known as the *Kabbalah* for some of his interpretative approaches.

He also asks the question of how a poet comes to terms with the 'tradition'. How does a poet justify his saying anything relevant or new? How does he 'clear creative space' for himself in the overpopulated world of literary texts? Bloom first

[49] To summarise the whole philosophy thus is grossly oversimplistic, but will serve for the present. The chief deconstructionists at present are Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man (See Norris: 1982). One example of the sorts of rhetorical discussions that can be achieved from this philosophy is as follows: the 'meaning' in the poem 'Roses are red/ Violets are blue/ Sugar is sweet/ And so are you' could reside in the fact that roses are *not* red [they are rose-coloured] and violets are *not* blue [they are violet]. By extension, does this 'metaphor' mean that sugar is to be implied as not sweet? And what do we make of the 'sweetness' of the poem's 'you'?.

[50] Indeed he goes so far as to assert that 'there are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts.' (Bloom: 1975, 3)

[51] Structuralism proper would reduce texts to their fundamental structure and seek to display the 'meaning' through exposing binary oppositions within them Then the questions are asked as to what these oppositions have in common with those in other texts. Bloom does not pursue the 'structure' of texts in this manner.

takes his lead from Nietzsche that the illusion of 'truth is simply the honorific title assumed by an argument which has got the upper hand - and kept it - in this war....'[52] The second point that he takes from Nietzsche is that this 'upper hand' must be vigorously - and more often than not, aggressively - fought for.

Bloom also looks toward Freud for a solution to the problem of the 'tradition' or 'canon'. He uses Freud's theories of paternal repression (particularly that of the so-called 'Œdipus complex'), to show that poets 'murder their fathers' by making a misprision of them. They turn them into something that they never were. Thus Bloom populates the literary world with 'strong poets'[53] who were able to fight the precursor poems and 'defeat it'. The defeat comes in a successful (or 'strong') misreading of the precursor. Bloom comes up with six 'revisionary ratios' that are the techniques a poet employs to misread.

John Hollander, in his introduction to *Poetics of Influence* has the following to say:

> Bloom is not concerned with inherited, borrowed or stolen aspects of style, rhetoric, form, convention, genre or even, mytho-poetic modes. Should these be thought of as occupying the second through the sixth days of the Creation of a poetic world, then Bloom's theory would be obsessed with the first day, almost unbelievingly asking of the Word itself, "Why?" - not "How?" - and perhaps too shockingly, "Who do you think you are?"[54]

This is very important. As we are concerned here with individual interpretations of possibly *the same* music, we must regard every performance as completely distinct creative entities in order to make sense of what Bloom's theory may say about music performance. Therefore, we will not be concerned with the mere technicalities of how one performance differs from another, but rather with the question of "why?". The only useful conclusions to be drawn from asking "how?", will be a list that we can

[52] Norris (1982), 61
[53] Bloom does not use the words 'great poets', for not all 'great poets' were consistently 'strong', which is what interests him
[54] Bloom (1988) xvii

then compare with the annals of theory and consensus. Thereafter, no meaning from the approaches taken to performance can be gleaned. We must therefore ask "why?".

The one significant apparent problem with Bloom's theory is that in relying upon a 'misreading' it implies that there is actually a 'correct reading'. If there is a 'correct reading' then meaning must lie within that reading and hence in the text itself. Bloom counters this by asserting that 'there are no interpretations but only misinterpretations, and so all criticism is prose poetry.'[55] So there is no 'real' meaning anyway. The conclusion that Bloom draws from that is interesting. If the *only* meaning given to a text is given by misreading, then criticism must itself be misreading. And if the criticism is to add anything to our knowledge then it must be a fairly 'strong' misreading. Thus, by definition, criticism is itself poetry, and conversely poetry is criticism.[56]

A parallel of this sort of idea in music is to be found in the work of the analyst Hans Keller. He attempted 'functional analysis' of music, which entailed composing a new piece of music to analyse the first. This would elucidate the music without confusing the listener with words. There is no change-over from musical to verbal thought and 'vice-versa', no interruption of purely musical activity, and hence a considerable saving of psychic energy, which ought to facilitate comprehension. The 'intellectual' approach to music - the thinking about music in terms other than sound - is relegated to the background.[57] This musical analysis must be a misreading to be useful, and as analysis (which is the same as criticism) it stands as a new 'poetic' work. Perhaps this is a start along the path to a Bloomian technique of music analysis.

But what in this case is our specific analogue for "criticism" and "poetry"? We have already stated that the "work" must refer to the *specific* performance. The

[55] Bloom (1988) xix
[56] 'As literary history lengthens, all poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, just as all criticism becomes prose-poetry.' (Bloom: 1975, 3)

"criticism" can therefore only be analogous to any other performance performed by or heard by those who have previously been exposed to the specific "work". The listener or performer, in "deciding" how to hear the performance is making the same judgements of criticism that are important to Bloom. This is of course paradoxical, for the original performers of the "work" are also simultaneously the critics of it. This paradox is due to the fact that music occurs purely as a temporal phenomenon. Poetry is both temporal and fixed. It can be re-read "word for word" despite requiring certain periods of time to be read itself. However, music can only be created within time, and therefore must be completely self-referential in performance, in a way that written poetry cannot. The latter stage of a piece of music *must* refer to the earlier stage, as that earlier stage is utterly unrepeatable (philosophically speaking: a recording *does* repeat an exact performance, but by the time a listener repeats it, he has already heard it, and therefore a more complex paradox arises that the same few moments of recorded sound act as criticism *of themselves* in infinitely refracting meaning). The argument that the notation represents the "music" has been well-attacked on all fronts by many authors, and we have seen from the examination of performance earlier that in the case of mediæval music, the notation is *not* in any way analogous to the "music". A paradox does not imply a contradiction in this case.

Bloom's theory also has potential for pan-cultural use. Because the poem gains meaning from the poetic milieu in general, it can derive meaning from poems in all cultures. Nobody can write a poem about China without the reader being aware of concepts of Chinese philosophy, even if - as is most likely - they actually know *nothing* about Chinese philosophy. Bloom has said that 'an ephebe's best misinterpretations may well be of poems he has never read.'[58] In the same manner that Bloom is only interested in what meaning the reader derives from the text, we may

[57] Keller (1957)

ask - assuming that a musical text has no intrinsic meaning in itself, but is referential - in what way is a listener's grasping a musical work affected by his encounters with all other forms of music. In this way the theory is completely cross-cultural. Indeed to define a piece of music as stemming from one particular culture is to give it an absolute fact *in itself,* and pieces do not 'contain' *intrinsic* meaning such as this. Music, by the definition of the theory, is governed by where it is going to (i.e. the nature of the listener and his power to give a 'strong' misreading) rather than where it has come from (i.e. it's 'factual' background of meaning and culture). So the fact that our position in culture today is radically different from those of the mediaval producers of the notation itself is possibly even an advantage, as we are perhaps more able to make a "strong misreading" of the music as heard, and in doing so gain "meaning."

An objection to Bloom's theory would be that it does not uncover any 'truth' about the work in question, and is totally subjective.

> If it pretended to scientific status it would be laughed right out of court. But it is not science. It is conoisseurship, "a purely personal activity," Bloom has told an interviewer, having "exactly the same status as lyric poetry or narrative writing."[59]

Thus Bloom maintains Nietzsche's affirmation of the non-existence of absolute truth in all circumstances; there is only the most convincing argument or interpretation. It will have to be assumed that empirical evidence of some listeners - who maintain that they do perceive intrinsic meaning - amounts to a 'weak' reading of the music. In short, those listeners are being fooled by the music, and are basically misguided. This will not make the theory more popular.

However, it has been shown that what a listener imagines as 'truths' about or within music may be misguided. Blaukopf discusses the use of works of art by society in general in such a way as to affect the meaning of the work. The original work may

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[58] Bloom (1973) 70
[59] Taruskin (1993) 119

never be able to be experienced as it first was, indeed 'even a "historically faithful" performance creates a different effect today than it would have at the time the music was first created or first performed.'[60]

José Bowen has written on the 'preexistant meaning' of text and music. He says that 'preexistant meanings [in the words used in speech] are necessary for conversation to take place at all,'[61] but they can confuse the intention of the speaker unless articulated carefully. Likewise he implies preexistant meaning in musical sounds, that are modified and changed by the act of performance. In brief, he begins to show how the act of performance itself is a misprision, and this seems the supreme vindication of Bloom's ideas:[62] The musical work only exists when performed, but in order to be performed 'well' the musical work *must* be changed. To play 'woodenly' from the score is to perform badly; the 'meaning' of a piece of music is only granted when a performer performs 'well' and therefore makes his own 'interpretation' of the music. As there are many different interpretations all claiming to be 'correct' all are in fact 'misinterpretations'.[63]

Frederic Jameson tries to equate social change around the composer with what the composer is then 'empowered' to produce, and to draw our attention to the fact that a composer is bounded by the notation he uses. He cannot compose 'outside' the notation and society in which he finds himself. Thus the musical work is itself defined

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[60] Blaukopf (1992) 69
[61] Bowen (1993) 144
[62] Bowen also makes a quote from M. M. Bahktin that it is interesting to repeat here

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adopting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words! [i.e. he makes them up]), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own."

It is difficult to conceive of a sentiment more closely allied with that of Harold Bloom than in this paragraph!

by extramusical factors. While this view is further from Bloom's theory, it nonetheless takes up the theme that music is referential, and has it's meaning given to it by everything other than itself. A composer cannot be the fount of his own creativity. He is bounded and defined by contexts such as these. In this way we approach a feeling of the 'psychic battleground' of Bloom where the artist fights to create a belated (with reference to the 'tradition') artistic space for himself.

Harold Bloom's ideas are based to a significant degree on the work of Freud. One is obliged to ask what their application to a female poet would be, as they are so profoundly Œdipal in conception, and this issue has never been properly addressed. That aside, the very notion of Freud's theories have been rigorously attacked, not least by Ludwig Wittgenstein. He portrayed the whole of Freudian psychoanalysis as an invented fiction, whose sole purpose is as a means to solve problems, not to diagnose them.[64] In many ways it can be seen as similar to the mathematical concept of 'imaginary numbers', which, while they cannot properly be said to 'exist', are the only way in which certain problems can be solved, never appearing as the final solution.[65] In mathematics, being an abstract science, this causes no real objection, but in psychoanalysis it seems it does. Likewise for the arts it might be said that Bloom's theory represents one way of explaining what happens in a poem, but makes no attempt to discover any 'truth' about it (indeed it denies the very existence of that!)

The question seems to be whether this matters or not.

Nicholas Cook seems to think it does matter, because by imputing 'real' meaning - or 'truth' - to things that are not real (called 'reification') we 'fall into an

[63] Nicholas Cook examines similar issues in attempting to discern what constitutes 'the musical work', and he also concludes that the work only exists at all in the reception (and misinterpretation) in the listener's mind. (Cook: 1990)
[64] As documented by Nicholas Cook (Cook: 1990, 224-225).
[65] The imaginary numbers are defined as multiples of 'i'. So we have i, 2i, 3i, etc. The value of i is defined as the square root of minus one (i.e. i x i = -1), which has no 'real' meaning.

error whose social consequences are devastating'.[66] Bloom might well counter this by stating that he does not attempt to convey the notion of 'truth', because he does not admit its existence in his poetic texts. However, in some way he is attesting to the 'truth' of his own theory, even if not what it actually uncovers. This leads to the paradox that, in eschewing 'truth' one might yet discover an 'absolute truth'.[67] Even an absolute lack of truth is an absolute truth in itself.

The traditional field of music analysis may be closer to Harold Bloom's ideas than is readily apparent in any case. When a piece of tonal music is analysed according to Schenker's formulations, we are showing how it is the same as another piece. We are demonstrating it's relational meaning to an extent; and we are also deconstructing it - revealing it's underlying 'rhetoric'. Many theorists of musical æsthetics have believed that the æsthetic satisfaction from music lies in the setting up of expectations and in their consequent fulfilment or denial. The idea is that denial brings greater joy because it adds to one's understanding of the implications of the original expectations, but fulfilment brings a different joy - for instance - because one was perversely actually not expecting it. This lies close to Bloom's ideas of relational meaning, because expectations are set up with relation to music already heard.[68]

Ethnomusicologists in particular are increasingly moving away from the idea of 'music as sound' (which would not be something that Bloomian theory would

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[66] Cook (1990) 225

[67] Bloom's own texts say that there is no intrinsic meaning in poetry text. They also state that all criticism is prose-poetry; so his texts are also to be understood as prose-poetry. So does this imply that his text therefore has no intrinsic meaning, by its own definition? This paradox is not easy to unravel. Certain methods of writing were attempted by some 'anti-truth' philosophers such as Nietzsche and Derrida that attempt to *give the impression* of their arguments without ever actually resorting to discourse upon them. This, naturally, makes the texts highly ambiguous in some circumstances - which is part of their point. It may also explain part of the reason why Nietzsche ended his days in an asylum (although, to be fair, there was a history of mental illness in his family).

[68] Because music occurs through time, as opposed to peotry, which is fixed on the page (unless read aloud), it may be prudent to ask whether or not one's experience of a piece is music is referential with respect to an earlier moment in the *same piece* of music. Of course, to do this would appear to be to disagree with Bloom's assertion that 'there are no texts', as it would admit a sense of self-reference. But we could argue that it is *not* self-reference, as music already heard is totally divorced from music

concern itself with either) to one of 'music as culture'. Bloom's theories cannot help us here. Alan Merriam, while discussing what the study of ethnomusicology entails has suggested that it is 'the study of music in culture'.[69] The nearest a Bloomian theory could get to that is 'the study of culture in music'. However, both Merriam and Bloom are interested in the behaviour of people associated with music; on the one hand not treating music as a psychological phenomenon, and on the other as *purely* a psychological (or better, 'psychic') phenomenon, respectively. But these do not seem to be irreconcilable poles.

Nicholas Cook believes that any theories of music must necessarily not be concerned with sounds of music at all (in this he and Bloom agree that the actual work of art has no existence - only its reception has that) and states that 'it is up to the psychologist or the social scientist, and not the music theorist, to study music scientifically.'[70] He believes that even the discipline of traditional music analysis must form part of the object of this scientific study. The music analysis is, according to the theories examined, equivalent to the actual "music" in a deeper way than the mere notation can ever be, notwithstanding that musical performance is itself also both analysis and criticism.

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being heard: the former is stimulus, the latter is memory. Is the memory of a different piece so different from that of an earlier moment in the *same* piece?

[69] Merriam (1964) 6

[70] Cook (1990) 243

Summary

It has not been the purpose of this work to make any conclusions about the nature of mediæval music performance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, but merely to give a background to the areas of study that are involved in its discussion. What is required specific to this area would be a detailed study of the reception history of mediæval music. This would have to incorporate æsthetic theory, theology (perhaps of the neo-Platonist ideas of St Thomas Aquinas and his contemporaries) and social research of the periods of production of the music right up to the present day. When we do not know where we are or where we are going, often the best way to get an idea is at least to work out where we have been.

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