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Performance and Analysis:

An Empirical Research on the Interactions between Analysts and Performers

ABSTRACT

This text consists of the written version of the semi-plenary talk 'Performance and Analysis. An Empirical Research on the Interactions between Analysts and Performers' presented by Mario Baroni, Anna Maria Bordin, Antonio Grande, Luca Marconi and Egidio Pozzi during the Ninth European Music Analysis Conference. It shows the main results of a research conceived by GATM, the Italian society of analysis and theory of music, with the intent of deepening the knowledge of the interactions between experts of music analysis and performers. The project was accepted by RAMI, an Italian association for music and artistic research. It involved the participation of 21 musicologists and musicians from 10 conservatories, 4 universities and 2 other institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the history of European music and the culture surrounding it, analysis has always been strongly linked on the one hand to theoretical research, and on the other to the history of composition, of which it has often proved to be a crucial aspect. In the early twentieth century, the research and theoretical-analytical production undertaken by figures such as Donald Francis Tovey, Hugo Riemann, Arnold Schoenberg and Heinrich Schenker, brought about an initial transformation of the discipline, both by developing contents and highly effective methodologies and by occupying a place within the nascent discipline of musicology. An autonomous sector of the latter and fostered by specialised researchers, it was soon provided with an in-depth and wide-ranging literature. Placing the studies published by the figures mentioned above at the root of its own reflections, the discipline of theory and analysis saw, during the century in question, a remarkable increase in both its topics and its methodologies, ultimately extending its field of action to include the various possible relations between analysis and performance.²

Since 1999 the 'Gruppo Analisi e Teoria Musicale' (GATM) has been studying these relations, initially creating a dedicated working group and later giving this issue ever greater attention, in the context of conferences and seminars, as well as in its publications.³

2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In 2015 the GATM issued a call for participation among Italian Conservatories and Universities. The project was accepted by the Associazione per la Ricerca Artistica e Musicale in Italia (an association for musical and artistic research) and involved 8 pairs (or groups) of participants: 21 musicologists and musicians from 10 conservatories (Bologna, Cagliari, Como, Castelfranco, Ferrara, Genoa, Novara, Pescara, Turin, Trento), 4 universities (Calabria, Venice, Bologna, and Graz in Austria) and 2 other institutions (the Teatro Comunale and the Fondazione Liszt in Bologna).4 The repertoire studied was drawn from Western music, whose scores must be performed; the pieces chosen were the following: Niccolò Paganini, Capriccio VI, for violin; Robert Schumann, Papillons Op. 2, for piano; Fryderyk Chopin, Nocturne Op. 27 No. 1, for piano; Franz Liszt, Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este – Thrénodie, from Années de pèlerinage. Troisième année, for piano; Claude Debussy, L'isle joyeuse, for piano; Arnold Schoenberg, Sechs kleine Klavierstücke Op. 19, for piano; Olivier Messiaen, from: Huit préludes pour piano: No. 3, Le nombre léger and No. 4, Instants défunts; Bruno Maderna, Aquarelles, from Liriche su Verlaine for soprano and piano.

Cagliari), Marco Ciccone (Conservatory of Pescara), Rossana Dalmonte (Fondazione Istituto Liszt), Laura di Paolo (Conservatory of Turin), Massimiliano Genot (Conservatory of Turin), Francesco Giammarco (Conservatory of Cagliari), Antonio Grande (Conservatory of Como), Anna Maria Ioannoni Fiore (Conservatory of Pescara), Marco Lutzu (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Stefano Malferrari (Conservatory of Bologna), Luca Marconi (Conservatory of Pescara), Francesco Parrino (Conservatory of Genoa), Egidio Pozzi (University of Calabria), Manuela Rasori (Bologna, Teatro Comunale), Carla Rebora (Conservatory of Castelfranco Veneto), Simonetta Sargenti (Conservatory of Novara), Piero Venturini (Conservatory of Trento).

¹ This text was conceived by its 5 authors, but sections 1 and 2 have been written by Mario Baroni, section 3 has been written by Anna Maria Bordin, section 4 has been written by Antonio Grande, section 5 has been written by Luca Marconi and sections 6 and 7 have been written by Egidio Pozzi.

² See, for example, Cone (1968), Kamien (1983), Larson (1983), Schmalfeldt (1985), Berry (1989), Dunsby (1989), Schachter (1991), Cook (1999), Lowe (2003) and Barolsky (2007).

³ See, for example, Troncon (1999), Pozzi (2006), Baroni, Bordin and Sacco (2012).

⁴ The participants in this research project were: Mario Baroni (Bologna, Archivio Maderna), Erica Bisesi (Centre for Systematic Musicology, University of Graz), Anna Maria Bordin (Conservatory of Genoa), Roberto Calidori (Conservatory of Ferrara), Fabrizio Casti (Conservatory of Ferrara)

The research was conducted by applying an investigative method which shared many characteristics with scientific procedures. These characteristics were consistent with the definitions provided in the 'Frascati Manual' (Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys on Research and Experimental Development) and described in the White Paper of the AEC Council 2015. More precisely, this method involved a wide range of subjects and was divided into autonomous phases of study that were demonstrable and verifiable, used replicable procedures, controllable variables and specific circumstantial conditions. Our protocol was previously communicated to the participants, together with definitions of the research project and a considerable bibliography.

The objective of this research project was to test the following hypotheses: an analysis provided by a specialized analyst of a certain piece of music, chosen in agreement with a specialized performer, can lead the performer to change their performance of the piece in question; a performance, given by a specialized performer of a certain piece of music, chosen in agreement with a specialized analyst, can lead the analyst to change their analysis of the piece in question, written before hearing the performance.

The research project also aimed to collect empirical data to help understand which type of analysis, performance and exchange method, could foster and facilitate collaboration between analysts and performers.

The protocol was based on the following 6 phases:

- 1. Formation of the pairs of analysts and performers (in each pair there could be more than one performer). Each pair chose a piece of music to work on;
- Collection of the circumstantial conditions: the participants were requested to fill in an initial questionnaire aimed at defining their experiences, specializations, and willingness to exchange information;
- 3. Collection of the first products: the expert of theory and analysis made an analysis of the chosen piece and the performer made a recording of its performance. Each member of the pair worked independently of the other, without any communication between them. They did however communicate their results to the organizers of the research;
- 4. Discussions: the two members contacted each other and discussed and compared their respective 'readings' of the text, in order to improve, if possible, their performance and their analysis. They recorded their discussions and made a written summary of them, to be given to the organizers;
- 5. Final activities of the pairs: after the comparisons and the discussions, the members of the pair decided upon the final version of the analysis and the performance. Their results were once again given to the organizers;
- 6. Analysis of the data: a group of experts, chosen by the organizers, received the documents provided by the groups; the performances, analyses, and documents of their discussions were examined with the aim of obtaining a global and final result embracing the various aspects of the research.

The aim of this article is to summarize the results of the research project. For this purpose, given the large scope of the study and of the results obtained, we will limit ourselves to mentioning the parts we consider most important.

3. THE FIRST PRODUCTS: THE INITIAL ANALYSES AND PERFORMANCES

First of all, we will describe the analyses that emerged from phase 3, along with information regarding the initial performances, gleaned from the statements made by the performers and given to the group of experts.

3.1 Niccolò Paganini, Capriccio No. 6

The theoretical background to this analysis is expressed in Rink 2002, from which the concept of 'informed intuition' was drawn. The analysis identified the piece's formal divisions and related them to the tensions generated by its harmonic logic. A good part of this analysis concentrated on specifically melodic features, using graphic schemes which represent linear connections, called 'wires', or 'warps', terms taken from Pagannone and Melis 2011. One specific part considers the 'motivic' analysis using Schoenberg's model for interval categorization. Agogic and dynamic aspects were considered as 'secondary' musical parameters.

The violinist, who has performed this piece many times in public, prepared his performance by considering tonal paths, formal units and motivic relationships, and by drawing a mental map of the piece, intended to effectively define his interpretation.

3.2 Robert Schumann, Papillons

The analysis considered each of the 12 movements describing their internal organization 'bar to bar'. It did not consider Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre*, from which the piece was inspired, because the 'program', according to Schumann, was conceived after the composition of the piece. The analysis concentrated on the main aspects involved in performing the piece and added 'suggestions' for the performance of some components. It identified three macro-formal subdivisions: the first 4 episodes; the successive 4 episodes (a Suite of dances); the last 4 episodes.

The pianist, an expert in the performance of Schumann's pieces, observed that her interpretations, which always concentrated on specifically musical aspects, were based on aesthetic groundings and literary resonances, which Schumann knew very well.

3.3 Fryderyk Chopin, Nocturne Op. 27 No. 1

The analysis, combining the approach developed by Rink 2002 with a semiotic approach, had the objective of inferring 'potential effects' from the score. With a bar-to-bar analysis, it connected both local and global aspects to metaphors, topoi and intertextual references (bells tolling, imitation of opera arias, references to pieces composed by Beethoven and Rossini).

The pianist, an expert in the performance of Chopin's pieces, prepared his performance considering formal units, melodic phrasings and tonal paths.

3.4 Franz Liszt, Aux cyprès de la Villa d'Este

The analysis considered both the score's 'specifically musical traits' and its 'expressive markers', adding 'suggestions' for the performance. It found, in the first 32 bars, a 'triadic post-tonality' (studied with a neo-Riemannian approach), i.e. harmonic elements in which the functions of 'Tonic', 'Subdominant', 'Dominant' do not prevail. The macro-form of the piece,

referable neither to traditional 'schemes' nor to a succession of non-related elements, was defined as having 5 episodes with a 'coda'.

The pianist, an expert in the performance of Liszt's pieces, analyzed the piece, without writing down his analysis, considering formal units, tensions (intervallic, rhythmic and metric) and tonal paths.

3.5 Claude Debussy, L'isle Joyeuse

The first part of this analysis used a statistical elaboration of some parametric aspects (ambitus, density in the distribution of the pitches, polyphonic aggregates, dynamic variations) thanks to a digitalization of the score using a MIDI protocol. The second part considered relationships of repetition, contrast and transformation; it presented a paradigmatic analysis, with 23 types of different segments, variously transformed.

The pianist has been performing the piece since 1985, and has used it in his teaching activity. From a formal point of view, the performer preferred analyses that used traditional criteria involving dynamics, agogics and articulation, believing certain information on historical-cultural references of the time to be particularly important.

3.6 Arnold Schoenberg, Sechs kleine Klavierstücke Op. 19

The analysis was presented as a search for and description of the 'salient linguistic aspects' of each piece: fundamental constructional procedures such as recurrence, contrast and variation, as well as particularly evident features regarding timbre, dynamics, register and articulation. The way of conducting the analysis did not follow a specific methodology, but defined 'unities of sense' concerning sonority, melody, harmony, rhythm and form, relating them to their historical meaning.

The performer, a specialist in twentieth century music, reflecting on his own performance of these *Klavierstücke*, remarked that, in line with the piece's historical context, he wanted to underline, and in a few cases render even more extreme, the harshness of Schoenberg's language and his expressionist *Urschrei*.

3.7 Olivier Messiaen, Préludes

The analysis concentrated on the two pieces' macro-form and above all on a few aspects tied to tradition and the techniques theorised by Messiaen 1944 (modes of limited transposition, non-retrogradable rhythms, etc.). The analysis also insisted on the use of the tritone and the 'added note', and lastly used some tools of Allen Forte's Set Theory (Forte 1973), capable of measuring a few forms of coherence among the various materials used. Lastly, it added observations regarding the evocative nature of the title and some agogic and dynamic aspects.

The performer, who had previously performed the piece on several occasions, underlined the importance of the suggestiveness of the titles and the fact that her choice of phrasing and segmentation derived from an initial macro-formal analysis she had done herself.

3.8 Bruno Maderna, Aquarelles

The analyst first sent an analysis of his own, based on 4 aspects of the piece: its macro-form (tripartite, in line with the 3 stanzas of the poem), vocal part (phraseology, accents and interval range of the phrases), piano part (texture, harmony,

quality of the dissonances), system of repetitions (both rhythmic and melodic). Immediately before the discussion, he sent a second analysis, deemed less 'abstract' and more geared towards a possible later discussion with the performers.

The latter sent a performance that took into account a previous performance of their own, dating to 1989, and two other published performances.

3.9 A Few Considerations

Generally speaking, there was a certain distance between the theoretical presuppositions of the two partners.

In most cases, the analysis did not focus on problems involving performance, but rather on general aspects studied via statistics and other specialised analytical methods. In other cases, instead, the analyses included suggestions as to how to perform certain passages of the piece. The performers, in turn, stated their intentions based on the piece's historical and aesthetic context, as well as phrasing, formal segmentation, agogics and dynamics.

While the notion of performance has shared meanings that can generally be taken for granted, the notion of analysis turned out to be more open to different conceptions. Essentially, carrying out the task given to the analysts first and foremost gave rise to the question of the functions of analysis, and in particular how to initiate a dialogue with the performer, suited to solving possible interpretational problems.

4. ANALYST/PERFORMER CONFRONTATION AND TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

After exchanging their initial analysis and performance, the partners began to compare them.

In 4 of the 9 cases (Paganini, Schumann, Schoenberg, Messiaen's *Prelude* No. 4) the analyst and the performer stated that they had essentially found a convergence, while in 4 other cases (Liszt, Debussy, Messiaen's *Prelude* No. 3, Maderna) what they mainly discovered were divergences.

These divergences concerned mainly the definition of the form and its sections. In Messiaen's third Prelude the opposition between the first analysis and the first performance also concerned their general approach (the analyst considered syntactical and formal aspects, while the performer's goal was to communicate expressive aspects), while in the discussion of the harmonic interpretation of Liszt's piece it appeared that the analyst had used a neo-Riemannian approach while the performer had used a 'traditional' one.

The discussions mainly considered 3 principal types of activity:

1. Identifying the global and local characteristics of the piece using observation criteria that Nattiez 1990 would call 'immanent' or 'neutral', that is to say substantially based on an analysis of the structures. The question most frequently tackled was indisputably the form of the piece and its internal divisions: this occurred both in the previously mentioned cases of convergence and in cases where the discussion gave rise to divergences. Sometimes the same subdivisions were reached, but from different points of view: this is what happened, for example, in the discussions on the macro-formal structure of the piece by Paganini. Instead, when discussing piece by Liszt, the problem was to establish whether or not

it should be considered in terms of the well-known scheme of 'sonata form', but the discussion did not lead to any agreement due to a lack of shared criteria. In other cases the divergences concerned whether the focus of attention should more be on detail or on synthesis. For example, in the pair that worked on Messiaen the performer insisted more on detail and the analyst on synthesis, while in the case of Schumann, the opposite occurred. Other aspects that arose during the course of discussion ranged from dynamics, agogics, and harmony, to the relations between rhythm and metre and texture;

- 2. The detection of the 'expressivity' of the sounds of a piece (that is, hermeneutic interpretation): although not always occurring at the first analysis (for example, in the cases of Paganini, Schumann, Debussy and Messiaen), generally speaking everyone agreed that a piece should not be considered only on the basis of its notes and their relations, but also something else. During the discussions this 'something else' was referred to with terms such as 'expressivity' (Debussy, Maderna, Schumann), 'evocative dimension' (Messiaen), 'contents' (Schumann), 'symbolic meaning' (Liszt, Paganini), 'character' (Paganini), 'dramatic effect' (Paganini), 'effects' (Schoenberg), 'expressive effects' (Chopin). In tackling these issues two types of approach can be basically distinguished. A first type tends to oppose the two methods of analysis: this was the case, for instance, in the discussions on the piece by Messiaen, which led the analyst to decide in her second analysis not simply to make some partial changes to her 'immanent' method but to undertake a new analytical path — that of a 'semantic and musematic' analysis. A second type of approach tends, instead, to consider these two ways of carrying out analysis as compatible: in other words, the syntactic relations between units can also correspond to hypotheses about their expressivity. This occurred, for example, in the discussions on the pieces by Chopin and Schoenberg, even though at times the metaphors used to clarify the point created misunderstandings and problems. In other cases (e.g. Maderna) this type of approach was made simpler by the presence of a verbal text that served as a common starting point for the analysts and performers;
- 3. The detection of how to play a piece of music (called 'inferences for performance'):5 that is, illustrating how to play a certain passage based on what is written in the score. In this case too, two types of approach can be distinguished: a first type starts with the belief that 'purely analytical observation often proves far from giving any effective indications for the performing dimension'. This opinion, expressed by the analyst of the piece by Schoenberg, also influenced the type of approach adopted by the analyst of the piece by Maderna who, after submitting a first analysis (which would maybe have been useful for musicologists) sent the performers another analysis aimed at extracting some indications from the score that would be able to orientate their choices. On the other hand, a different type of approach consisted of the belief that the application of specific and consolidated analytical methods does not necessarily lead to conclusions

ineffective for orientating performers: this is the type of approach adopted, for instance, by the analyst of the collection by Schumann.

5. THE SECOND ANALYSIS AND THE SECOND PERFORMANCE

In 4 out of the 8 discussions between performers and analysts (Paganini, Chopin, Schumann, Messiaen) both participants expressed their intention, after the discussion, to review their first submission in the light of what had emerged during the exchange.

In the case of both Liszt and Debussy, neither of the participants expressed their intention to make changes to their previous account.

In the case of Maderna, only the performers said they intended to change their analysis, while for Schoenberg this intention was expressed by the analyst.

In the cases where the analyses supplied before the discussion were modified after the dialogue with the partner, two types of modifications can be distinguished. A first type consisted of integrating or substituting the previous analysis. This type of modification can be seen in the second analyses of the pieces by Paganini and Messiaen. The second type, instead, consisted of modifying just some aspects of the first analysis. This occurred in the second analyses of Schumann (where the revision mostly involved the segmentation of the macro-form), of Chopin (where some expressive effects were added in addition to those highlighted in the first analysis), of Liszt (where the interpretation of the formal function of the first 32 bars was partially modified) and of the pieces by Schoenberg (where other 'linguistic elements' were underlined to 'provide clearer guidance' to the performer).

As far as the performances are concerned, there were some cases of total resolve, where the performers expressed their intention to change, and changed exactly what they had said they would (Messiaen, Paganini, Maderna) and cases where they said they would change but this was not evident in their performance — because the performer didn't have time, because he/she didn't find the suitable means of putting it into practice, or because he/she still wasn't entirely convinced.

The performance of Schumann showed no noticeable changes in the points raised during the discussion with the analyst, even though the pianist had seemed open and responsive.

In the case of Schoenberg the exchange of ideas led to an atypical relational situation, in which the pianist declared to be substantially in agreement with the analysis, but responded to the analyst's suggestions by defending his choices, saying there was no need to change his performance.

In the piece by Liszt, the second performance did not take into account the suggestions of the analyst and the modifications were not explicitly declared; so it is not possible to attribute the changes to the meeting with the analyst, apart from in one phrase, mentioned by the performer during the discussion, where he said that in the second performance he wanted to highlight 'the symbolic meaning of the augmented triad'.

⁵ The term 'inference' refers here to the theories of Charles Sanders Peirce, in which it indicates any sort of argument used to glean information from whatever is available. On this matter, see Staat (1993).

6. TYPES OF INTERRELATION BETWEEN ANALYST AND PERFORMER

The interrelations that developed between the analyst and the performer can be seen as the result of 3 pairs of factors:

- 1. convergence/divergence;
- 2. openness/non-openness (towards change);
- 3. collaboration/non-collaboration.

The relations between the two partners, in the application phase, did not always match what they had intended when they agreed to take part in the exercise.

In the cases of Chopin, Maderna and Messiaen the interrelation was based on the search for criteria that would help them to agree on any changes. In these cases, the discussion basically consisted of the tendency for one partner to present his/her own field of work by making reference to that of the other partner. The analyst tried to 'translate' his/her own work into terms that would be easily understood by the performer, while at the same time the performer tried to highlight his/her intentions through the use of particular words or by playing musical examples.

An example of a second type of interrelation can be found in the discussions about the piece by Paganini: here too, the search for criteria to help reach an agreement is evident, but the 'strategies' adopted by both participants did not consist of trying to translate their thoughts into terms understandable by the partner, but rather focused on the difference in the interpretation that each of them gave to the same problem. Therefore, during the discussion each partner tended to say they agreed with the other (and to a certain extent this was true) but when it came 'expounding' the problem, each used words and concepts that didn't coincide.

Then, a third type of interrelation exists, in which the participants failed to identify criteria on which to base their agreement about any changes to be made with respect to the first analysis and first performance. In the case of the discussion on the pieces by Schumann, the analyst decided to revise his account not in the light of the discussion with the performer, but after hearing/analyzing the performance, subsequently modifying the macro-form he had initially proposed. The performer, in turn, declared her intention to revise some aspects of her performance, not so much after the discussion with the analyst, but rather after her own thoughts resulting from a comparison of her performance with considerations drawn from the first analysis, aspects that she subsequently modified of her own accord.

Regarding the discussion about the pieces by Schoenberg, after finding that the first analysis and first performance were based on broadly concordant views of the collection, the performer constantly tried to persuade his partner that no elements could be drawn from the analysis that might justify any changes to the first performance, while the analyst was not able to convince the performer to the contrary, and in the end they limited themselves to expressing a generic intention to revise their own analysis.

Finally, even less effort to search for points of agreement that might lead to changes to the first proposal can be found in the discussion on the piece by Debussy: in this case, in fact, the performer found the first part of the first analysis — carried out using digital and statistical methods — of little help, since in his opinion, the results did not provide any new information useful for the performer, while he considered the rest of the first analysis, which consisted of a paradigmatic analysis,

'interesting, meaningful and accessible', but without offering him any stimulus to modify his performance.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

These findings based on the activity of a small group of participants, albeit within limits, can be useful to understand how to proceed in further studies.

The initial hypothesis that the two partners could be encouraged (after their discussion) to revise their own first proposals was confirmed, even though not in every case. In some cases their musical and cultural background and interests were too divergent to foster any effective collaboration, and at others their mutual respect and friendship were not enough to bring about any real plan to revise their work. This aspect will need further investigation in subsequent research.

Another important point was the identification of analytical methods functional to the performance. Generally speaking, the performers were more interested in the physical aspects, such as dynamics, agogics, phrasing, accents: and therefore especially questions of form, also linked to melodic aspects and harmonic tensions. A second aspect that performers considered essential was knowledge of the historical-cultural context of the pieces and thus their aesthetic intentionality. Probably the analysts tended to take these aspects somewhat for granted and instead focused more on trying to identify slightly or even substantially divergent structural and hermeneutic components.

All things considered, the project demonstrates that the interrelation between an analyst and a performer cannot be taken for granted, it being a practice that must be carefully and rigorously pursued by both parties.

While the objective of the research was to grasp the possibilities of interrelation between these two figures, what emerged — more than a simple positive or an affirmative answer — was a wide range of ways in which this interrelation can take shape. In general, though, the best interrelation seems to come about when specialised skills and theoretical-analytical knowledge are shared by both parties.

Further stages of this research will therefore be able to aim, through additional case studies, at setting out a certain number of categories of interrelation, each with their own specific features, and also to create the most suitable conditions needed to trigger a productive form of collaboration between the two figures involved.

In this sense, the project must be seen as an initial experiment which without doubt must be further pursued and perfected. In particular, it will be necessary to study more closely how channels of communication between the areas of analysis and performance can be facilitated, creating positive conditions of interrelation.

It may be useful for the analyst to be willing to work, even in a theoretical and speculative sense, more closely on issues that are inherent to performance practice. Performers who wish to enrich their reserves of intuitions and tacit knowledge, on which performance practice is often grounded, may also benefit from moving towards forms of greater theoretical awareness.

The study has also revealed the need for further clarification between the areas that are commonly referred to as *structural* (in a very broad sense) and that which we call *expressive*, since these terms were often and in various ways raised by both analysts and performers.

Not least of all, what emerges from this experience is a more general reflection on the functions of analysis and its possible impact on instrumental teaching. This is another area, in a more specific sense, that will benefit from future research.

KEYWORDS

Performance, Analysis, Empirical Research, Interpretation.

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