

Post-Prelude: Author's Meta Program Note

Among the very first creative artifacts I produced after embarking upon graduate music study at the California Institute of the Arts in September of 2011 were the opening lines of the essay which appears below as *Why I Hate Program Notes (and you should too)*. This moment, when I learned of the compulsory program annotation requirement for MFA graduation recitals at CalArts, was too perfectly apropos of the strained relationship even the most scholarly among us have with contemporary musical academia. It planted the first (and not the last) familiar seeds of regret, and triggered that old “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” feeling that is the bond of shared suffering among American graduate students across many disciplines. I had long since resolved, however, that I was wholeheartedly there to “do,” which meant embracing privileges and obligations alike as opportunities to develop my work and myself. The document presented here is, at least for its author, emblematic of that resolution and affirms it as a constructive one.

Following this initial spark, the project necessarily languished in my subconscious for the ensuing three semesters, throughout which many other fulfilling projects were brought to fruition. Even so, the issue had stirred up too many old thoughts and memories to suppress, and it was armed with this pent-up determination (and an awful post-semester cold) that I stalked into the CalArts library on the very first day of 2012-13 winter break, haunting the place for months to come.

Inevitably, though, the time crunch of a final semester of MFA coursework and the purely administrative burdens of graduation proved too great to do this project the justice I thought it deserved, and so my best-laid plans of putting beautifully produced, meticulously researched, unusually long and dense program books in the hands of each listener at my May 2013 graduation recital fell by the wayside in favor of exhibiting a single poster-size copy of the already-lengthy but quite incomplete historical essay which appears below, along with a more-or-less complete but less-than-thoroughly edited version of the notes to individual musical selections, which follow the historical essay here. Specifically, the thumbnail histories of program annotation in various countries and milieus were omitted completely in the version that appeared at my recital as I simply had not been able to locate or marshal enough of the right sources; working piecemeal for the intervening year or so, this section has now been buttressed by much-needed additional research, largely rewritten, and, as the saying goes, not so much completed as abandoned as of this writing. The notes on individual works, meanwhile, were originally submitted alone to officially fulfill the program note requirement for the recital. Already based heavily on existing writings from my blog *Fickle Ears*, here they have for the most part merely been polished rather than overhauled so as to best reflect my thinking at the time of the performance and only minimally the substantial reflection that has taken place since.

While the document presented below has existed in my head for nearly three years, many of the ideas have been there longer than that but, in absence of the inclination to engage with traditional modes of scholarship, have mostly languished as poorly supported rants. I am pleased to archive this project here, albeit belatedly, as a souvenir both of a particular performance and of the unique opportunity that performance provided me to “find out what I think” about these questions by researching and writing about their documented histories.

Stefan Kac
July, 2014
North Hollywood, CA

*California Institute of the Arts
Herb Alpert School of Music*

presents

Unidisciplinarity

*a one-man tuba recital by Performer-Composer Stefan Kac
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts*

May 15, 2013
8pm
The Wild Beast

Prelude (2013)	Stefan Kac (b. 1982)
Encounters II (1966)	William Kraft (b. 1923)
Suite in G Major for Solo Cello (ca. 1720) <i>Minuet I</i> <i>Minuet II</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Composition with Advanced Technology (2013)	Kac
Standard Jazz Tune TBD	TBD
Delta City Blues (1998)	Michael Brecker (1949-2007)

~~INTERMISSION~~

Postlude (2013)	Kac
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Why I Hate Program Notes (and you should too)

By Stefan Kac

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“Program notes are...*required?*”

“For a *tuba* recital?!”

“At *CalArts?*!!”

“*Really?*!!!!”

For the whole of my musical adulthood, I have steadfastly refused to provide program notes for my performances in every circumstance under which I am afforded a choice in the matter. As you have surely gathered, this is not one of those circumstances. Hence, reluctant as I am to comply with this seemingly innocuous demand of my present course of study, this compulsion does in fact present a unique opportunity, as the saying so often goes, “for performer and audience alike.” It was upon this realization that I resolved to eschew the writhing fit of adolescent sarcasm that might have filled this space in my younger days and instead opt for a more mature, scholarly interrogation of both the musico-cultural phenomenon of the program note and my own long-standing contempt for it.

My conclusion, as it turns out, has remained the same: that the convention presently being enforced is one exceptionally fraught with anachronism, cross purposes, and even a kind of false consciousness. It endures nonetheless on account of the program note’s peculiar ability to remain an attractive solution to a variety of perceived musico-cultural problems across more than two centuries of evolving Western economic and cultural conditions, the benevolent veneers of audience outreach and academic rigor thus belying the profound influence of myriad unseen forces on form and function alike. Dilettantish, gimmicky, and impulsive as its earliest instances may have been, program annotation soon became the domain of highly-trained and respected critics and scholars, and today, as this very instance attests, a musico-academic consensus has emerged touting program note writing as an unusually productive composite assignment for music students, a seductively pragmatic vehicle for the concurrent development and evaluation of research, writing, marketing and performance preparation skills. This contemporary function, it cannot be overemphasized, bears the hallmark privileging of expedience over measured aesthetic-philosophical consideration which has enabled the program note to cement its place in concert life without, I would argue, being properly held to account. Such is the task to which I set myself here.

Before proceeding, I should say also that if this sounds like altogether too much for one evening out, I’m afraid that it quite literally is, at least in terms of length. Hopefully the audience will forgive me for offering tonight’s thoughts and sounds alike the way most any artist would aspire to; that is, very much on my own terms. The key distinction, I suppose, is that while sound is

inherently transient, the essence of the written word can be captured and disseminated after the fact quite a bit more effectively, permitting me to make these notes available online for any reader inclined to take them up in earnest. For my part, I feel that the perspective taken here is too important *not* to share, the issues involved being so central to my own thought that the occasion of my MFA graduation recital is, so it turns out, not at all an inappropriate one on which to share them. If anything at all about these notes is so inappropriate by the standards of polite twenty-first century academic concert music etiquette, it is their verbosity; after all, an autobiographical bent is, unlike elsewhere in scholarship, generally considered an attribute in this domain for its ability to “humanize” the performer. (As a performer myself, perhaps I have always taken the hidden premise underlying that assertion a bit more personally than I should; in any case, a desire to meet this dubious cliché head-on certainly forms a secondary motivation here, as if one was necessary.) Fortunately for those so disinclined to continue reading, one can likely discern the gesture here perfectly well simply by beholding its physical dimensions, the conflict between thoroughness and efficiency thus laid bare by my having resorted to the opposite extreme from that which convention dictates. I would, on the other hand, assure anyone inclined to persevere that there is quite a bit more to it than that.

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Historically speaking, program notes can fairly be characterized as artifacts of a mid- to late-nineteenth century European musical culture quite foreign from our own, just one of many such enduring conventions which in spite of their often unquestioned ubiquity fit at best uncomfortably within much contemporary thought. Music majors will be quick to identify the 1830 premiere of Berlioz's *Symphony Fantastique* as the signal event in the history of the program note, a point which demands a certain clarification: Berlioz's program was not so much a guide to the work as an integral part of it, an important distinction with the “analytic,” “annotated,” or “descriptive” programs authored by critics and scholars which would not come to dominate symphonic activity in quite the manner they do today until decades after Berlioz's death. Where Berlioz might more accurately be understood as a direct predecessor to contemporary practice, rather, is in his use of the *Symphony Fantastique* program as a marketing tool in the era of an emergent Bourgeoisie. For instance, Cairns (1999: 365) writes that Berlioz was

not above exploiting his well-known and fashionably hopeless passion for Harriet Smithson to whip up interest in his symphony. ...It is a fact that the programme, publicized in advance in the press, caused a very useful stir and aroused the curiosity of the musical and literary public both because of its known autobiographical connotations and because of the unprecedented degree to which it associated instrumental music with a story.

An unprecedented *degree*, and yet some of Beethoven's greatest works were (and are) thought to be programmatic, Haydn's oratorio “The Creation” (1798), widely heard and discussed in its own time, has been posited as an important escalation of representational tendencies in music (Grove, 1962: 187), and Cone (ed. 1971: 294) credits the now-forgotten Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf with having composed a program symphony at the strikingly early date of 1785. Berlioz's composition and its program certainly stand apart from these precursors in style and degree alike, but it is above all, for lack of a better term, the sheer literariness of *Symphonie Fantastique* which was and is most striking; and that is to say that the work both *embodies* and *exploits* an emerging Romantic

aesthetic in which music and literature shared a jointly elevated status. (To call it a symbiotic relationship would, I hasten to point out, be to level a value judgment.)

In the words of Leon Botstein,

The wide application of ordinary literacy to matters of music brought with it the transference into music of aesthetic ideals associated with literary culture. The public realm of music became one in which one talked about music, imagined music through reading about it, and developed a language of response and evaluation as a vital surrogate and companion for playing. Listening no longer was a species of thinking musically; rather it became an act that helped verify and vindicate a literary image.

Further,

Part of the reason that the interest in music in the nineteenth century urban middle-class population ran parallel to the rapid growth in general literacy after 1848 was the heritage of social prestige connected to musical culture. A sense of democratic triumph was associated with the broadening of participation in a cultural form linked historically to privilege and aristocracy in both patronage and active participation.
(1992: 138)

Hence, when no less sympathetic and well-versed a Berlioz biographer than Cairns remarks parenthetically that, “The mixture of sharp calculation and naive spontaneity is one of the more disconcerting things about Berlioz,” it is the dual organic and contrived nature of this literary Episode in the Life of an Artist, loosely based on real events and people but hyper-sensationalized and embellished beyond the natural realm, to which he is largely referring.

The gesture was, needless to say, polarizing in its own time and has never completely ceased to remain so. According to Barzun (1969: 155), *Symphony Fantastique* “succeeded all too well as a piece of sensational literature and proved an encumbrance to his own freedom as a musician. People discussed what they read and not what they heard, and the ultimate effect on Berlioz’ reputation was disastrous.” In his memoirs, Berlioz himself complained that, “The hostile critics nearly all blamed me for the wrong things. Instead of pointing out the palpable defects in both works...they attacked the absurd ideas I was supposed to have, though I had never had them”; and even in praise, “my partisans too have often been given to crediting me with ridiculous and totally alien intentions.” (Cairns, ed. 1969: 140) A cautionary tale, I suppose, for any similarly ambitious young composer with a literary bent acting as their own promoter, but more to the point, the crest of a wave which continues to wreak similar havoc on classical music concert life is now, for our purposes, made visible.

Tabling for now the much-discussed issues of nineteenth century Bourgeoisification and the faux-aristocratic aspirations of this new, enlarged classical music audience, one might reasonably identify a hidden premise in any assertion that “associat[ing] instrumental music with a story” or conceiving of music listening as “an act that helped verify and vindicate a literary image” might enhance a work’s appeal rather than detract from it. The observation that pure music is the most abstract of the arts and hence benefits disproportionately from verbal explication is no less relevant for being so trite, but Botstein provides, I believe, a more important and historically contingent angle when he identifies a basic issue of supply and demand in the form of

a gap between the access to performance and the size of the public, a gap that would be filled only in the twentieth century with the radio and gramophone. There was a far larger spectator audience than could be accommodated even by the newer halls built all over Europe and America between 1870 and 1913. ...the demand among the musical public for descriptive literature about the musical canon and new music became nearly insatiable in the last decades of the nineteenth century, because literature on music served as a surrogate for the opportunity to hear professional performances. (1992: 140)

Herein lies, then, the linchpin *material* distinction between the epoch which spawned the symphonic program note and the one which we inhabit today, namely that of under- versus over-production. Today, live classical music is decidedly a buyers market, and recordings, while of course not truly interchangeable with live concerts, are more or less viewed this way by most listeners and have thus become ubiquitous. In this respect, program notes represent a response to a problem which the cumulative effects of subsequent cultural and technological revolutions have not so much alleviated as turned on its head. And if it would be absurd under the material conditions in virtually any corner of today's developed world to speak of verbal descriptions of music serving by necessity "as a surrogate for the opportunity to hear professional performances," one might also remark in the broadest sense on the absurdity of accepting verbal descriptions of music as legitimate stand-ins whether such performances are accessible or not. Indeed,

By the 1870s, a conservative critique of the spread of the new musical culture was visible. Observers decried the loss of musical skills, the dependency of the public on bad teaching, and low standards. The inability of the public to hear and think musically was held responsible for the excesses of Wagnerism and for the loss of the aesthetic virtues of symmetry, structure, and economy associated with classicism. The critique of Wagner and of program music in general stemmed in part from the view that this newer form of music was itself a concession to a public with a debased standard of musical education, to a public that needed language and scenery to enjoy music. (Botstein, 1992: 143)

A conservative critique indeed: Wagner's oeuvre has worn particularly well despite his and others' best efforts, and it would be an exceedingly rare contemporary observer, regardless of their own predilections, who would therein find evidence of a lack of sophistication. Similarly, while I might in my own weaker moments snipe that "a public that need[s] language and scenery to enjoy music" is exactly what we have today, it would be exceptionally imperceptive of me to locate the explanation entirely in historical circumstance, especially since there have always been a few of us who have had no use for language and scenery despite having come of age in the epoch of their pronounced dominance over the ability "to hear and think musically." I suppose that is another topic for another time. For now, I merely wish to highlight the fact that the late-nineteenth century escalation of writing about music in support or in place of the real thing had an authentic material explanation in that era which it can no longer claim today, and thus that contemporary musical life has inherited a practice which, whatever its other values may or may not be, has outlived one of its primary purposes. In a post-scarcity age, the need for descriptive language powerful enough to serve as a memory cue for music one will never hear again is not a need any listener alive today can legitimately claim, and such is one compelling defense of the contemporary musician or curator who refuses to provide it.

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Just as the nineteenth century profusion of pianos enabled broader musical participation at the cost of encouraging rote learning, so the explosion of words accompanying music constituted an

equally insidious push-button instrument for the masses to blindly hammer away at. Reduced for much of his career to eking out a living writing popular criticism, Berlioz ironically grew deeply embittered by and distrustful of this new industry so inextricably linked with his own brand of musico-literary fusion. He also occupied a curious interstice in the social history of the orchestra, that is after it had ceased to be exclusively tethered to the court and the church but before most all of the major modern symphonic organizations had become firmly and independently established in the public sphere. As just one representative facet of the seismic societal and musico-social changes which gripped nineteenth-century Europe, that process would see the music acquire much heavier baggage than mere narrative associations: indeed, polemics of high versus popular taste escalated in bitterness, concert attendance itself became an articulation of class distinction, and a quasi-religious fervor developed around the notion of classical music as moral uplift and the artist as spiritual guide. Concurrently, “musical as well as other works of art became commodities, the worth of which depended on their salability in a free market consisting of a new, anonymous general public,” and in turn, “the spread of periodicals, the expansion of publication, and the growth of criticism attested to this commercial spirit attuned to the requirements of mass consumption and coupled with the rise of a vast complex of bourgeois musical organizations.” (Porter, 1980: 212) In tracing the ways that program annotation, as one musicological institution within this larger burgeoning industry of writing about music, both affected and was affected by these larger musical and social developments, I trust it will become clearer yet why the convention gives me pause as a practicing contemporary musician.

Befitting such an insidious convention, the nitty-gritty history of program notes is elusive, mostly strewn about in small bits among monographs on more prestigious musicological topics. Exceedingly few such volumes contain entries for the topic in the index, and those that do tend to have, ironically, the least to offer in quantity, if not necessarily quality, of information. The notes themselves, of course, would tell the story better than any secondary source, but lacking, for the moment at least, the will or capacity to undertake even a cursory survey of such a vast corpus, I rely below on the most widely available secondary literature to demonstrate how the advent of the practice reflects the aforementioned “baggage;” that is, the social privileging of refined taste, the conflation of the aesthetic and the moral, and a predominance of terms of musicological dialogue designed to sell music first and describe it second.

The first two of these postures ceased to be common practice in program annotation even before being as broadly and decisively rejected across postmodern Western musical culture as they have in recent decades; the third, on the other hand, is bound to persist as long as there is music and a marketplace for it. In any case, it is my contention here that the very gesture of supplying program notes necessarily carries these three postures along with it, no matter the wholesomeness of stated intentions, the level of erudition, or the historical veracity of their content. This is to say that in telling the listener something, anything, about the work which is not transparent in a conscientious audition, the annotator privileges a refined understanding of the work over an unrefined one, a given set of descriptive terminology over all other possible sets, and between these two acts thereby creates an *ethic* to which listeners conform to greater or lesser degrees depending on their willingness and ability to assimilate to the prescribed framework.

Should it be disputed whether anything quite so sinister could possibly inhere in the seemingly innocuous annotation practices of contemporary symphonic organizations and academic

institutions, it is important to emphasize that the very concept of program annotation did not exist until such ethics, as I have called them, had observably become no less than an integral part of the culture which spawned the common practice classical music to which they were first applied. In other words, as Carse (1940: 13) writes, “We cannot picture an 18th century Italian opera audience, the ruling prince of a German state, the Paris aristocracy, the ‘quality’ or ‘haute ton’ of 18th century London being taught musical appreciation by any composer. They would soon have sent about his business anyone who had tried to do so.” Indeed, the emergence of program annotation directly parallels the emergence of classical music into the public sphere, the perceived need for this music to be explained (or, as it is more frequently put today, to explain itself) springing directly from its presentation to audiences for whom it was quite unfamiliar. And if the groups Carse lists might with some justification be villainized as elitist dinosaurs by contemporary social-democratic standards, it is then necessary to ask whether prescribing modes of musical engagement as thoroughly as nineteenth century classical music culture attempted to does not in fact betray the presence of the selfsame problematic ideologies. There is a difference, after all, between beating the aristocracy and joining them.

It must also be clarified here that if the courting of uninitiated listeners under a humanistic guise seemingly points to a material *similarity* with more recent classical music culture, this is so only under the auspices of the flickering embers of past centuries’ unsustainable expansionism (or rather, sustainable only by resorting specifically to the undue circumscription of the listening experience as a means of control). Questions of “outreach” or aesthetic “accessibility” are seldom the altruistic tacks they purport to be, a condition which can indeed be observed as readily today as it can in so many chronicles of nineteenth century European and American high musical culture. In other words, it is the influence of the *market* more so than that of either navel-gazing philosophers or sappy sentimentalists which has made the archetype of the “naive” or “uninitiated” listener such a powerful rhetorical device in the unfolding colloquial dialogue surrounding classical music institutions under which much discussion of program annotation remains necessarily subsumed, so much so that one might reasonably suggest “untapped” be used in place of those two more obfuscatory, mystifying terms. Such it is as well that the most visible contemporary representatives of the Western musical tradition, in spite of this tradition’s exceptional breadth and depth, have arrived more or less by their own volition at the absurd condition of allowing the terms of discourse on this and many other matters of no small importance to be dictated by the least experienced observers, if not in fact by erroneous assumptions and focus group generalities about such people.

Skepticism of that nature aside for just a moment, I would dare venture that in a broader sense, there is today most truly a stronger and more wholly altruistic desire than ever before to ensure access to concert music experiences for as many people as possible, and would assure the reader that my remarks here are made very much in accordance with this outlook and not in opposition to it. My concern, rather, is to ensure that those very qualities which impel practitioners to share the music with others are not simply maimed in the process. The term “elitism” is too often thrown around with impunity here, usually at the suggestion that concert music (or art generally) is not for everyone, a position which the most profligate slingers of the e-word will customarily find implicit in the argument I have outlined above. This familiar tantrum amounts to nothing more than an *ad hominem* mischaracterization. Rather, in such terms, my position would more accurately be stated as holding that concert music *may* or *may not* be “for” any given individual

possessing any given cultural background living in any given social context; that everyone *deserves* access and exposure to concert music, but that having been provided such access and exposure it be left solely to the will of the individual to determine if and how they become or remain involved; and that *institutionalized* interference in this process of individual mediation with received musical culture and tradition represents an abridgment of the will, and is thus thoroughly at odds with democratic (and indeed, counter-elitist) ideals.

It must be granted, of course, given that musical cultures are ultimately just networks of human beings, complete with all of our attendant vanities, fallacies, and vicissitudes, that there can be no perfectly unencumbered process of discovery, just as there can be no perfect force applied to an object without some small degree of friction. There is, even so, something inherently essentialist about the gesture of program annotation, and it is an essentialism thoroughly at odds with the practice's clearly *non-essential* role even in the concert music culture from which it spawns. There is hardly an instinct so universally shared among musical minds of all stripes as the need to proselytize for one's most cherished works, and yet we must not fail to recognize at the heart of this impulse a desire, however seemingly trivial or innocuous, for control and self-validation. The notion of "letting the music speak for itself," then, is not so easily dismissed (or embraced) solely on aesthetic or philosophical grounds without also considering its *ethical* ramifications.

Concert music's expansionist legacy, meanwhile, continues to militate against this kind of openness at every turn, customarily donning the clothes of altruism to conceal its agenda. The right of abstention, a hallmark of free societies, ceases to be recognized by a culture-industrial complex that measures success in dollars, with faux-liberationist declarations that art is, in fact, for everyone trotted out merely to mask the unsightly gainfulness at play behind the scenes. In light of this condition, so widely observable today from the level of the individual arts entrepreneur all the way up to the largest arts organizations, one might reasonably posit any number of hidden premises lurking not far beneath the surface of any appeal to program annotation as an outreach tool, and it is upon evaluation of such premises which that observer's opinion of the practice might reasonably hinge. The premises to which I refer are so well-known as to have become trite, but they remain contentious: that relevant technical understanding and historical knowledge equate directly to greater musical enjoyment, and that these forms of experience, which musicians acquire directly through their studies and practices, can be indirectly synthesized in a listener simply by communicating them verbally.

A wholehearted belief in these premises on the part of individuals known to have played key roles in escalating program annotation from an impulsive, naive, informal practice to an ubiquitous, professionalized one is significant but does not by itself particularly distinguish them from a great many contemporary musicians who live by the selfsame principles. The more crucial points are that (1) these premises were seldom their only nor even their primary concerns, and (2) that these extra-aesthetic concerns, particularly those such as nationalism and expansionism which could rightly be called *ideologies*, were and are intensely problematic. To be clear, it is superfluous here to deal in the same type of slippery abstractions as does the atheist who condemns the music of Bach for being Lutheran or the populist who attacks Haydn's music as elitist; aesthetics and functionality alike have redeemed these composers for observers of many, if not all, such stripes. Rather, if the very scene of program annotation is similarly polluted, this is merely incidental to the fact that the practice does not so much serve the aforementioned

ideologies as these ideologies *inhere* in its very fabric regardless of stated intentions, thus putting redeeming qualities out of the question. The only way to win, then, is not to play the game.

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The seemingly modern innovation of the pre-concert talk, one branch of what twentieth century composer and critic Virgil Thomson so colorfully dubbed the “appreciation racket,” was in fact visible in German musical culture at least as early as the 1770s in the work of Johann Nikolaus Forkel at the University of Gottingen. As put by Riley (2003: 414),

Unaware that later generations would come to regard his lifetime as a golden age in the history of composition, [Forkel] diagnosed a fateful decline in musical culture since the days of J. S. Bach in the first half of the century. In Gottingen he vigorously set about remedial action, which involved an ambitious attempt to educate his audience. In free, public lectures that accompanied his concerts, Forkel offered nothing less than a complete course in music theory, starting from first principles in acoustics.

Riley’s contextualization of these efforts within the German philosophical tradition Forkel inherited is worth excerpting at length:

...faith in the value of the untrained percipient’s immediate reactions was typical of mid-eighteenth-century German attitudes to the arts. It was given formal expression by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in his *Aesthetica* (1750-8). Baumgarten reorientated the German rationalist philosophical tradition that had...shown little interest in art, distrusting any form of mental activity that did not meet the exacting standards of reason and logic. Baumgarten offered instead a systematic investigation of ‘sensory cognition’: the work of the ‘lower cognitive faculties’ such as the senses and the imagination. His treatise simultaneously had a pedagogical agenda, since it was intended to promote the ‘art of thinking beautifully’, in other words, to show how the sensory cognition it described could be perfected. This would involve not rigorous instruction, but the ‘exercise’ of the lower faculties through exposure to suitable aesthetic objects. Stated in the musicians’ terms, Baumgarten was describing a programme for cultivating the perception of a *Liebhaber* [musical amateur or casual listener] without resorting to the communication of theoretical, ‘pre-aesthetic’ information.

Forkel, like most critics of the arts of his generation, absorbed Baumgarten’s aesthetic vocabulary. But he set much less store than his predecessors by the *Liebhaber’s* musical intuitions; his faith lay instead in the informed judgement of the *Kenner* [trained musician]. . . Forkel’s goal was to eliminate the divergence of taste and judgement between the two groups of listeners by exposing the *Liebhaber* to the *Kenner’s* technical knowledge. (2003: 417)

In that last sentence, contemporary readers will recognize not one but two polemics which remain familiar in our own time, and while evaluating careless assertions about the impact of musico-technical training on the listening experience remains a pressing task, I will concern myself here with interrogating the broader desire to “eliminate the divergence of taste and judgment” among the stakeholders in any given musical culture, a recurring theme in the history of program annotation regarding which questions of conditioning are just one of several important facets.

Stated so baldly, this is an objective which smacks variously of idealism, hubris, essentialism, and, at its most extreme, repression; and though today we might charitably and relativistically absolve a thinker of Forkel’s milieu from such harsh judgments leveled on contemporary terms, the perseverance of such worldviews in art music culture right through to the present day nonetheless

demands explication. Such an endeavor becomes yet more pressing following the realization that this view cannot be so neatly pigeonholed as belonging exclusively to either modernism or elitism, but in fact lives in the minds of ostensibly populist, postmodern musicians as well. Consider one such example, the composer and critic Kyle Gann, who rails against the notion of an intractable diversity of listening styles with some regularity on his widely read weblog *Postclassic*, in one such instance reluctantly quoting “the late James Tenney, whom I admired in so many ways, saying, ‘I can’t think about the listener, because there is no such thing as the listener. Everyone listens differently.’” Gann calls this position “one of the field’s most widely aped platitudes,” claiming that it is trotted out by academic composers with unseemly motives and obvious shortcomings merely to insulate themselves from criticism. (Gann, 2013) Timely as that critique may be, there is nonetheless an incongruously essentialist tinge to Gann’s die-hard insistence that musical taste is, or should be, inherently tractable, and hence a strikingly bare internal contradiction in his position that “there are musics that I myself dearly love...that I would never write, because they are esoteric enough to seem predestined for only a narrow specialist appeal, even though it’s wide enough to include me.” (Gann, 2010)

Forkel and Gann are just two individual thinkers separated by vast temporal and music-historical distances, but their cases make convenient endpoints within which to bracket the present discussion. They also invite the common conclusion that the best of intentions vis-a-vis “the audience” can go quite astray in absence of any reliable theory of mass listenership on which to base them. I suppose that the theory I am ultimately espousing here (evidently in the illustrious company of Tenney, for whatever that is worth) is that the only such assumption that can be taken at all seriously is indeed that “everyone listens differently.” I am not prepared to investigate that claim with the thoroughness it demands, nor is such an expedition advisable within the confines of the present study. It is possible (and relevant), however, to namecheck this theory’s happiest potential consequence independent of whether it is true or not, namely the enabling and tolerance of diversity. If creative ferment among Western musicians, like an intellectual gene pool of sorts, has historically thrived on a certain diversity of thought, and just as clearly suffocated under the weight of incestuous academic codification, it seems plainly reasonable that the same could be said of listenership. This is, of course, a vastly oversimplified analysis, but it sums up quite well the worldview for which I am advocating here, one which thus militates strongly against the notion of annotated programs which, whatever their value as distanced scholarship, run greatly afoul of this individualism in purporting to intervene in the act of listening itself.

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Scholes (1964: 24-5) identifies “a Concert of Catches and Glee, given by [Thomas] Arne at Drury Lane Theatre in 1768” as the earliest known instance of program annotation, and locates other early examples in Potsdam (1783), Philadelphia (1787), Biberach (1790), and at Covent Garden (1801). The Philadelphia example is significant on account of America’s comparative underdevelopment at the time, musically and otherwise. The concert in question was given on April 12, 1787 under the auspices of the Uranian Society, formerly “The Institution for the Encouragement of Church Music,” an organization founded by the American singing teacher and song collector Andrew Adgate. The annotation consisted of brief “remarks” accompanying the text of Handel’s *Messiah*: sentence fragments describing the music, indications of how many

times lines were repeated, and a few humorously naive displays of enthusiasm (Sonneck, 1907: 115). Sonneck notes both the musical evangelism of the society, explicitly founded to raise singing standards, and also that the organization “survived on public bounty, a rather bold and optimistic point of departure.” (103) Hence, anomalous as this example might appear to be in the larger history of program annotation on account of its location, the presence of just this combination of underlying motivations would soon become familiar, and their appearance at this early juncture speaks ever more strongly to their responsibility for the practice’s rapid growth.

It is if not notable then at least intriguing that the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra does not appear in Scholes’ pre-history, nor anyone else’s that I have examined. According to Grove (1962: 91), this ensemble’s programs were annotated for the first time only in 1807, still quite an early date in the history of the practice but late enough in the history of the organization itself to warrant consideration. To that end, Hennenberg (1962: 6) reminds us that

Leipzig was a city of merchants and scholars. It was never a seat of the court, no princely privy purse aided the small budget for the muses. However, this had its good side: the musical life here was not dependent on the caprices of a sovereign, whose propensities and tastes could promote the cultivation of music, but also hinder it.

Like Adgate’s Uranian Society, then, public support was essential to the Gewandhaus concerts; this support was, however, never in doubt, a key distinction. Having in fact anticipated classical music’s emergence into the public sphere by several decades, the Gewandhaus Orchestra represented a homegrown musical tradition in a city which came by its musical patriotism honestly, obvious but crucial distinctions with so many future strongholds of German music all over the Western world where the tension of importation is palpable in the surrounding dialogue. Indeed, from 1780 the scroll on the front of the Gewandhaus concert hall read *Res severa est verum gaudium*, rendered by Hennenberg as, “A serious thing creates true joy.” (10) Appeals to such sentiments were soon to become contrived, and ultimately to lose their meaning entirely as a result, but it is important to recognize the authenticity of the gesture in this early instance, an authenticity which it seems precluded any further written commentary in the programs, at least until the practice began to be taken up elsewhere.

Incidentally, Hennenberg (21) notes that Mendelssohn, who famously took over at the Gewandhaus in 1835, was by his own description “not one to talk about music” and had on that account previously declined Leipzig’s initial courtship in the form a professorship, telling his suitors, “Not once have I ever been able to follow an entire colloquium satisfactorily, and always came away feeling more unmusical than I did when I went in, so that little by little I set myself the goal of being a practical musician and not a theoretical one.” (Mendelssohn, 1986: 204) Similarly, Weber (1975: 19-20) writes of contemporaneous Vienna that “discussion of the difference between [high and popular culture] took on a characteristically modern cast” in this era, positing that

A strong anti-intellectual streak also lay in the attitudes of wealthy business families. While they valued musical skill, they looked down on any form of erudition in musical activities. A Viennese satirist who championed popular music taste chided certain families (obviously those active in classical-music life) for their “philosophical mania” toward “higher music” and their snobbish name-dropping of Goethe and Schiller. (34)

To be sure, the “characteristically modern” condition underlying this schism was (and is) marketplace competition between high and popular culture, a competition in which the former stands at an extreme disadvantage and hence is driven to contrive all manner of linguistic appendages with which to bang its chest.

Fittingly for such an insidious process, there emerged a certain desire to cover one’s tracks. Waxman (2012: 112) identifies “the beginning of the idea of the ‘objective’ program note” in John Ella’s notes for London’s Musical Union concerts starting in 1845, wherein Ella, in his own words, aspired to write “without bias, and always with a religious sense of truth.” Waxman also points out that early twentieth century American annotators “often placed themselves in the background using self-effacing phrases such as ‘the annotator’ or ‘the editor,’ and often left their notes unsigned, or simply affix[ed] initials at the bottom.” (189) All of this is to say that even among those writers who pioneered program annotation there prevailed in some much the same discomfort with the notion of a particular person and their viewpoint unduly and uninvitedly meddling in the listening experience of another individual as I have expressed throughout this study. Only by appealing to the conceit of near-perfect objectivity could this discomfort be overcome, a maneuver which has, of course, been relentlessly scrutinized throughout the intervening century.



The Philharmonic society of New York was founded in 1842, making it the oldest surviving organization of its kind in the U.S. By 1892, distinguished New York critic (and program annotator) Henry Edward Krehbiel had published a history of the society, which includes this summary of its earliest annotation practices:

It must be borne in mind that in the most literal sense the Philharmonic Society at its first concert appeared as a pioneer of musical culture. Practically a knowledge of symphonic music was confined at the time to the better educated musicians and those fortunate members of the community who had enjoyed the advantages of European travel. There are evidences in the writings of the day that the notions concerning the music which the society had organized to cultivate, even of those who were enthusiastic in their desire to help advance the art, were of the haziest description. The Board of Government itself, by sanctioning some of the explanatory notes which appeared upon the society's first programmes, confessed to an ingenuousness of thought which to-day compels a smile. Readers of that singular kind of literature which passes for musical exposition are accustomed to fantastic things, but I cannot recall anything much more diverting than a Philharmonic programme annotator's appeal to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice to explain Beethoven's Symphony in A major, or anything more convincing of the low state of theoretical knowledge amongst the musicians themselves than the statement officially made that the variations which compose the finale of the “Eroica” are “a combination of French revolutionary airs.” Obviously the musicians were venturing on what was little better than unknown ground when they began the production of those masterpieces which occupy the same position in the literature of music to-day that they did fifty years ago. (Krehbiel, 1892: 57-8)

The characterization of the Society as “a pioneer of musical culture” says as much about the time at which this history was written as it does about that in which the Society was inaugurated. Krehbiel, “Hanslick’s nearest journalistic counterpart in New York” (Botstein, 1985: 883), objects to the arbitrary, flowery language of the notes but excuses it nonetheless on account of its authors’ devotion to music’s noble cause. All the while, concertgoers in Krehbiel’s own time evidently remained “accustomed to fantastic things” appearing in their program books.

Theodore Thomas was a German-born, American-bred violinist and conductor who spearheaded much early classical music activity across the U.S. in the nineteenth century and was instrumental in the early history of the New York Philharmonic. In 1865, he initiated a series of what today would be called “pops” concerts in New York’s Central Park Garden. By 1873, these concerts having met with much success,

Thomas boldly convinced the management to raise prices on Thursday nights so that he could enlarge his orchestra and do full-scale symphonic works. To elevate the “tone” of the concerts and teach his audiences more about music, he provided them with a major essay on music and short news items in the printed programs. The first essay read like a sermon about Thomas and his mission, reminding readers that the Thursday concerts would have been too ambitious a few years back, that Thomas was “a teacher as well as an entertainer;” and that, although he did not intend “to make the concerts mainly a study,” he would exclude “whatever is not sound and wholesome.” (Schabas, 1985: 58-9)

Schabas, Thomas’s modern biographer, describes the notes as “puffery, poorly concealed in Gilded Age rhetoric, noble artistic concerns expressed in florid and tedious prose,” and remarks that even Thomas’s admirers were uncomfortable with the gesture. Indeed, “Thomas’s plan for audience development—from light to serious music in gradual stages—would have been more effective if he had not cast himself as the standard-bearer of the German connection, a symbol of the artificiality and hypocrisy of the times.” (62-3)

As strongly as Thomas believed in German music, however, he believed the New World could do it bigger and better, touting America’s “ambitious driving purpose” in putting on ever “bigger, greater, more impressive” concerts, and thereby challenging Europe’s classical musical supremacy (115). Tellingly, the program books swelled in direct proportion to the orchestral forces, to 143 pages for the New York leg of an 1882 three-city music festival which boasted an orchestra of 300 and a chorus of 3,000. The very next year, sporting a more reasonably proportioned ensemble, Thomas embarked on a seventy-three day, thirty city tour stretching from Baltimore to San Francisco, the latter city’s

thorough preparation for the festival reflected in a 110-page program that rivaled the New York festival’s in scope and content. Included were: the seven concert programs; annotated program notes with musical examples; full texts for choral compositions; biographies of Thomas and the soloists; lists of members of the local advisory committee, subscribers to the guarantee fund, and members of the 500-voice chorus and orchestra; a history of American music festivals, beginning with the *Cincinnati Sängerfest* in 1849; “A Local Retrospect,” which gave accounts of instrumental music in San Francisco from its beginnings thirty years earlier and the work of Rudolph Herold, the city’s first serious musician. (127)

Thomas was by all accounts a man of exceptional musicality and intelligence, so much so that he must have understood the sheer visceral impact of a 300-piece orchestra does not require scholarly annotation in order to get over. He was also, however, a first-order expansionist, as the gesture and content alike of his program books speaks to: one essay for his Central Park Garden concerts stressed “the need for a permanent orchestra hall to put New York in respect of orchestral music on a level with the musical capitals of Europe;” (59) while in the notes for San Francisco, “The leading urban center of the Far West proclaimed that it needed ‘endowments’ to establish a permanent orchestra like Thomas’s and build a symphony hall like Cincinnati’s.” (127) Annotation in this case, then, was not merely a disinterested charitable gesture toward an

uninitiated audience, but in fact one which overtly suggested reciprocation at every opportunity, a necessary clarification of the cause these spectacles were staged in support of. The notes indeed said what music alone could not, and perversely so.

The local presses were for their part hardly oblivious to the panhandling. As Petteys (1992: 173) reports,

After the Kansas City festival the Daily Times commented: “The results of the festival in effecting a local musical awakening may already be discovered, and the music dealers agree that the harvest for them will be a profitable one. The construction of a music hall and the repetition of the festivals yearly were favorably discussed, and it is by no means improbable that both these ends will be attained.”

Similarly, in San Francisco “a local newspaper reported another positive effect of Thomas’s visit: ‘It is not too much to expect as the result of this festival some definite action toward the founding of a school of music in this city.’”

Indeed, in his survey of California musical publications throughout the same era, Saffle (1998: 167-8) finds that

advertising of one kind or another constituted most (if not, as it sometimes seems, virtually all) of the reading matter in turn-of-the-century American music periodicals. It also constituted most of the *materia musica* published in daily newspapers and the popular press as a whole. Even factual accounts of musical events in places like London or Rome were frequently run in American periodicals for purposes of comparison—which is to say, in order to encourage local music-lovers to perceive themselves as sophisticated. . . Only during and especially after World War I, with the rise of strictly “professional” magazines like *The Musical Quarterly*, was American music journalism replaced by musical scholarship, thereby achieving a standard of objectivity previously unknown in our nation’s periodical press.

Such was the extent to which the act of writing about music could become only secondarily about music itself.

All of this being as it is, Thomas, in spite of his healthy ego, rarely acted purely out of self-interest, and I would argue against understanding his expansionism this way. At worst, we might by today’s standards find in his quasi-religious devotion to classical music a misplaced faith in the universality of this (or any) music, one which diverted his considerable talents and generosity of spirit towards a cause of more limited scope than that which he imagined it to be. Such relativistic conjectures aside, though, it is much plainer that as Thomas’ endeavors grew in scope, so did the sheer amount of text accompanying them, and that the motivations for this were not purely or even largely musical or aesthetic ones.

It is telling, then, that critics themselves eventually turned against the more-is-more outlook that fueled this short-lived festival craze in the American classical music world, among them Krehbiel, who himself had edited the 1882 New York program book. Thomas of course maintained that such excesses were “not ‘mere sensationalism’ but necessary if one were to hear the ‘monumental creations in...choral music’ that would be brought out in ‘their full potency, with solo and instrumental forces commensurate in all respects with the magnitude and magnificence of the choir.’” (Schabas, 1985: 117) It is not inconceivable that Thomas believed just this strongly in the

power of sheer visceral excitement at the expense of subtlety, and it is important not to allow our present-day vantage point on this repertoire and its place in a very different modern world (that is, where classical music is more readily seen as a foil to the unmediated visceral excitement of more technologically advanced contemporary mass spectacles with which it can scarcely compete in this particular way) to cloud our assessment of this interpretation's plausibility. I am nonetheless secure in speculating that Thomas's expansionist tendencies informed his modes of presentation more so than the reverse. Here it bears mentioning Botstein's observation that "when flashy concerts were performed with the [Vienna] Philharmonic, particularly by famous stars, there was no program note at all. The brilliance of the virtuoso performance -- the thrill of the acrobatics -- made a musical guide unnecessary. Cliches of virtuosity required no translation." (1985: 962-3) Thomas was, again, plenty intelligent enough to know that the same holds for mass spectacle, a fact which justifies a certain amount of skepticism about the ballooning of his program books.

Program annotation, though present in New York from an early date and later central to Thomas's transcontinental endeavors, nonetheless remained sporadic there throughout most of the nineteenth century. Shanet (1975: 462) confirms that, "There were no regular program notes until 1887-88. Before that time there were only occasional 'descriptive programmes,' either unsigned or merely initialed, for individual pieces that seemed to invite verbal explanation." Thomas's expansionism was picked up by his successor, Anton Seidl, who took over as conductor in 1891:

Expenditures for advertising had gone ahead slowly but steadily under Thomas until they exceeded \$1,700 in his last year; under Seidl they rushed on to reach \$3,700. Regular program notes, or "descriptive programmes" as they were called, were now commissioned by the society; A. Mees wrote them from 1887 through 1896 at \$15 a concert, after which the distinguished critic Henry Edward Krehbiel took on the job at a fee more in keeping with his position in the musical community--\$25 a concert. (180)

Krehbiel would continue writing the notes through 1912 (462).

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Of programs at the London Philharmonic Society, Dale (2003: 35-6) reports that

Prior to [1836], the identity of the pieces was rarely even stated in full; for example, the listings in the early programmes of the Philharmonic Society include 'Symphony, Mozart' or 'Symphony, never performed, Beethoven', and it was not until 1817 that the number or key of the work was indicated. The next development came in 1835 with the printing of the texts of vocal works, with translations where necessary, on the fly-leaf of the programme, and in May 1844 the performance of Beethoven's overture 'Leonora' no. 1 was accompanied, at Mendelssohn's instigation, by a short account of the origin and dates of the four overtures. (35-6)

Of this era's program notes, Dale contends that, "the validity of considering them as a unified corpus of works within the context of a study of music analysis is arguable;" rather, "they comprised...an *ad hoc* amalgam of historical, biographical and technical discussion couched in a more or less literary narrative style." (36)

Later in the century, we find not only the institution expanding but in fact the repertoire itself. Foster (1912: 304) reports that for the Philharmonic Society's 1869 season,

Mr. G.A. Macfarren was asked to prepare analytical programmes of the concerts; a novelty in those days and looked upon as a doubtful experiment, but considered, at the end of the season, successful. There were some amusing complaints from certain Subscribers, one Member of Parliament writing that he "objected to penny-a-liner analytical programmes, and preferred a simple to an historical bill of fare." Another wanted musical illustrations added!

The reference to a distinction between "simple" and "historical" programming is quaint and, in fact, confusing when taken out of context, but it is important. Part and parcel with so many other nineteenth century musicological tropes about capitalism, the middle class, the rise of the virtuoso, the ubiquity of the piano, and so on, many scholars have pointed to a new and distinctive consciousness of received tradition which emerged in the Romantic era, and which fed, among other things, the burgeoning moral overtones of much classical music criticism and outreach. As "the first to play the whole keyboard repertory (as it then existed), from Bach to Chopin," (Walker, 1987: 285) Liszt was a key figure in this regard and representative of a larger trend. Indeed, it was not just premieres of brand new works by Wagner, Brahms, and Bruckner which posed unfamiliar repertoire to many nineteenth century concertgoers but the newly-rehabilitated works of Baroque and Classical masters as well. Odd as it may seem today, the classical canon was for a time being expanded in *both* directions, and along with it, the perceived necessity for annotation expanded as well.

This new musico-historical self-consciousness had a profound effect on the professionalization of criticism, and therefore on the institution of program annotation. Indeed,

By the 1870s...the explosion of newspapers and journals had spawned new fields and new vocational possibilities, which encouraged a career centered on writing music criticism and studying music history. ...Writing about music and preparing editions of historical music became a professional option all its own.

In contrast to the generation of Hanslick...familial pressure to take university training in professions (law and medicine) or philosophy could be overcome (especially in the absence of marked instrumental or compositional talent). By the 1880s, university training in music history could equip one for a career either in "belles lettres" or in teaching without requiring of the individual an active career as composer or performer. (Botstein, 1985: 875)

Perhaps, then, ripples of this emerging historical self-consciousness extend all the way to the artificial division of labor between performer, composer, and scholar which characterized much of the twentieth century, and therefore to the distinctively contemporary distrust of music-makers' own critical perspectives as well. Certainly each of these trends dovetails seamlessly with the giving over of musical culture to market forces, wherein the perspective of the idealized naive listener (not just ideally naive, it should be added, but also ideally numerous) is privileged in critical discourse over that of the studied practitioner, the latter being a member of a tiny minority thought to give a false readout of sorts on account of having received technical training, and therefore representing too few listeners (an elite, perhaps) to be of use as a populist barometer. As with the essentialist theories of listenership I ascribe to Forkel and Gann above, this is a view which has both an elite and a populist manifestation, with, on one hand, distanced scholars customarily dominating practitioners at the Yales and Berkeleys of the world, and, on

the other, militant autodidacts freezing out formally trained musicians throughout many jazz, rock, and pop music subcultures.

Botstein in fact devotes an entire chapter of his PhD thesis *Music and Its Public: Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 1870-1914* specifically to program annotation, therein making the following rather bold assertion:

Music journalism, which experienced its heyday in the decades around 1900, completed a process of the transformation in musical hearing and perception that precipitated the final collapse of the power of novel contemporary music in the classical tradition to reach [a] wide audience...It accelerated the final “museumization” of the live concert into a social ritual celebrating the past and inhospitable to new music. The isolation of the modern composer and the failure of modernity in music to enter the mainstream of so-called educated taste in the 20th century derived in part from the way in which the public was guided in its approach to music by writings about music, regular criticism, and by the conception of music history. (878-9)

If such a claim is bound to initially strike contemporary observers as farfetched, this is because the “museumization” process to which Botstein refers is such an overdetermined one, with program annotation for its part comprising just one marginal branch of the institution of “music journalism” and thus seeming a relatively harmless gesture. Botstein, however, proffers a number of compelling reasons for suspicion, among them the severe constraints of brevity and accessibility imposed by the very nature of the emergent popular press and embodied in the institution of the *Feuilleton*, the nineteenth century equivalent of today’s newspaper gossip columns, and the “quintessential medium of Viennese newspaper commentary and criticism from the decades after 1860.” (865)

Its implicit ideal of literary refinement (hinted at in the use of the French name) was matched by its demand for brevity. A three- or four-column newspaper essay at the bottom of the first two pages (at most three) of a major newspaper had to convey a distilled judgment and an argument, both carrying the appearance of the greatest subtlety about weighty matters of art. (865)

According to Botstein, *Feuilletons* were “widely read,” “prestigious examples of cultural sophistication” which nonetheless were short and “could be taken in rapidly,” hence becoming “profoundly influential in the ongoing cultural and musical life of the city.” (866)

Botstein anoints Hanslick the perfecter of *Feuilleton* writing, but the practice had another notable (if reluctant) profligate who had already figured prominently in the history of writing about music: Berlioz. Finding himself estranged from many of the institutions that might otherwise have supported his composing and conducting careers, Berlioz had come to rely heavily on *Feuilleton* writing for income despite grave misgivings about the practice, expressed in the following colorful memoir:

The critic – let us suppose him intelligent and honest – writes only when he has something to say: when he wishes to illuminate some question, challenge some theory, bestow well-merited praise or blame. He always has reasons, to him genuine, for airing his opinions and dispensing his accolades or his thunderbolts. The wretched *feuilletonist*, obliged to write on anything and everything within the domain of his *feuilleton* (gloomy domain, bog-ridden, infested with toads and grasshoppers), wished for one thing only – to be done with the labor that weighs upon him. More often than not he has no opinion about the objects on which he is compelled to give an opinion; they stir him to neither anger nor admiration; they do not exist. Yet he has to behave as if he believed in their existence and felt strongly about them and had powerful motives for

bringing his whole mind to bear upon them. Most of my colleagues can extricate themselves without difficulty and often with a dexterity which it is a pleasure to watch. But for me, it is a long and painful struggle to keep up the pretense. (Cairns, ed. 1969: 355)

Towards the end of contextualizing the institution of the feuilleton, this hardly registers as an objective account; yet it certainly does color the musico-literary excesses of younger Berlioz in an unexpected, perhaps even tragic way.

Botstein also devotes lengthy consideration to the work and thought of Robert Hirschfield, an influential Austrian music critic and historian (though not a performer or composer) who wrote and edited program notes for the Vienna Philharmonic from 1892 to 1913. (887-8) According to Botstein, one of Hirschfield's primary objectives as annotator was "to relieve the audience of any anxiety that they would encounter surprises;" rather, "the program note functioned the way a libretto summary did at the opera. No part of the dramatic action was unaccounted for before the curtain rose." (950-1) This meant that some descriptions reflected the relative familiarity and unfamiliarity of various musical elements more so than those elements' relative importance to the piece, and were often more detailed for newer, less familiar pieces than for their longer-established and more frequently heard counterparts. "For mid-19th century music," asserts Botstein, "Hirschfield took even greater pains than in 18th century music to mark every critical or striking sounding moment," and thus, "what Hirschfield chose to describe...was therefore not always elements central to structure" but rather those which were thought to contribute to the sense of drama. (950-1)

In the final analysis, then, "The pleasure of the audience was no longer an echo of the pleasure of the listener who heard a work of music as if he were or could be a player and participant, or could 'compose' along (*mitkomponieren*) with the music," (957) a striking departure from earlier Viennese musical culture.

The audience had changed since the early 1800s from a world of Viennese listeners that prized novelty, new works, and an ability to participate or hear as if they could or might participate. It had become a passive audience that prized recognition of the familiar and acknowledged. It demanded the familiar and required a translation of the language of music. (958)

Botstein ascribes to Hirschfield "a romantic view of the emotional spontaneity of an idealized but untutored audience -- a faith in the responsiveness of the wider populace..." (899-900), rooted in the belief that

in order to fight against the spirit of vivisection in science, the triumph of photography and newspaper criticism, dry analytical procedures, commercialization and the conspicuous consumption of learning and culture as mere symbols of personal exterior differentiation, modernity had to throw away its crutch: its desire for precision. (913)

And yet,

The correspondence between musical forms and singular [that is, "precise"] musical elements and music's power to affect the emotions and inspire moods was referred to and relied on by Hirschfield, even though he ideologically resisted this manner of viewing and hearing music...The use of technical musical terms in the program notes maintained for the lay reader, who often could not hear what they described, was hopelessly inadequate from a musician's viewpoint. (940)

Indeed, subsequent Viennese critics would soon point out that

the kind of knowledgeable appearance generated by Hirschfield's notes...made musical response a hybrid between feeling emotional associations and recognizing compositional landmarks. Anticipation of the familiar, repetitive and obvious was reinforced by Hirschfield's prose guides. An aural experience was turned into following a set of formulae. Little was left to chance... (940)

It is not difficult to locate mainstream or even revered musicological thinkers from the Twentieth century who took direct exception to this way of doing things. In a now-famous essay, Virgil Thomson cynically but perceptibly wrote that

Teachers tend to form opinions about music, and these are always getting in the way of creation. The teacher, like the parent, must always have an answer for everything. If he doesn't he loses prestige. He must make up a story about music and stick to it. Nothing is more sterilizing. Because no one can make any statement three times without starting to believe it himself. One ends by being full of definite ideas about music; and one's mind, which for creative purposes should remain as vague and unprejudiced as possible, is corseted with opinions and partis pris. (1939: 111)

Thomson writes here from the perspective of the teacher, but there is an obvious lesson for the student as well. In the career of Theodore Thomas, for example, we have already seen attempted the explicit transfer of the teacher-student relationship to the performer-listener relationship; it is at best a strained analogy, which is to say that the unavoidable political dimension of education is in fact quite avoidable in concert music life once we liberate ourselves from free market ideology and cease to conceive of the listener as passive consumer. Listenership is, rather, *productive* of musical culture itself, an equal partner with performance, composition, and, for better or worse, education also; and just as the performer, composer, and educator must each “find their voice,” so too must the listener be permitted to do so.

The pre-concert talk and the program note may wear an egalitarian cloak, but in inhibiting this process they actually reinscribe the worst kind of institutional paternalism. Kerman's (1980: 314) assertion that “the true intellectual milieu of analysis is not science but ideology” speaks to this point, as does Cook's (2001: 173) observation that “the development later in the [twentieth] century of more formalized approaches to analysis as an attempt to regulate debate” represented a backlash of sorts against “a mid-nineteenth century ‘rush to interpretation’ in which extravagant claims about musical meaning were made in the absence of serious engagement with musical texts.” This maneuver, adds Cook, ultimately “went well and truly off the rails,” a point which I can only think resonates heartily with a great many music majors past and present.

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Jann Pasler's study *Concert Programs and Their Narratives as Emblems of Ideology* documents late-nineteenth century Parisian annotation practices and the agendas they served. As with so many institutions and individuals already discussed, Pasler ascribes to French critics, composers, patrons, and “even state officials, too” the belief that “concerts have a mission to accomplish,” that “they are educators and it is they who have the honor of forming *musical taste*.” (Pasler, 2008: 365) Also familiar is “a remarkable change in the size of the program books” after 1900 at the *Concerts Lamoreaux*, an important private musical association founded in 1881, ballooning from “no more than four to six pages” to include “up to thirteen pages of advertising – for pianos,

organs, perfume, train travel, and clothes,” eventually expanding yet further to include inserts. (395-6)

“Perhaps to defend their support of German music,” writes Pasler of the *Concerts Lamoreaux*, “in the program notes – which remained virtually the same from year to year – the annotators made every effort to appropriate Wagner as one of their own,” emphasizing for example the “Celtic and by consequence essentially French” origin of the Tristan story. Similarly,

as for Wagner’s other works, such as the *Faust overture* and *Rienzi*, they cite the composer’s various stays in France, meticulously describing which parts he composed in Paris. When it comes to other composers, the program notes likewise point out any association the composers might have had with France. For example, we’re reminded Gluck wrote his masterpieces for the French, Tchaikovsky had a French mother (or at least a mother with French blood), and so on. This kind of information invariably comes in the first sentence of the notes. (367)

Writing about the *Société des Grandes Auditions Musicale de la France*, Pasler locates a more general “increasing interest in foreign music per se and in its national identity.” (375) “When it comes to which foreign music to perform and which visiting composers to invite, the program notes make it clear that the organizers chose what their peers in Russia, Germany, Austria, England, and Italy considered their countries’ best work.” “As such,” according to Pasler, “their concert programming functions as subtle flattery of their peers in other countries and an expression of support for nationalist energies.” (375-6)

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In proffering this necessarily incomplete frisson of critical perspectives and my own occasional commentary and conjecture based upon them, it has been my objective to paint the history of program annotation in three phases, the program note’s late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century forerunners being defined by spontaneity and pragmatism, its catching on in the mid-nineteenth century being hastened by classical music’s emergence into the public sphere and the free market, and, from the late-nineteenth century, its acceptance and ubiquity in classical music culture, bolstered officially by the values of professionalism, eloquence, and humanism, and unofficially by economic expansionism and the will to power, remaining largely unquestioned. To these three important periods, each of which continues to leave its imprint on contemporary classical music criticism in much the same manner that musical styles themselves are variously revived and absorbed over time, I would add a fourth and equally important recent development: the program note as required coursework for music students. This is a circumstance which, to state what should by now be obvious, I see as effectively and thoroughly making the implicit explicit, laying bare the inherent philosophical and ideological problems with program annotation in a manner which is less easily coddled than it has been throughout the practice’s first two centuries of widespread acceptance.

It would be reasonable to assume that as program note writing became increasingly professionalized, as it thus became an important income source for those who practiced it at the highest levels, and as it concurrently was, some would say, itself elevated to an art form in the hands of its greatest practitioners, greater academic currency was inevitable. I for one, however, have found no reason to think based on either scholarly or anecdotal sources that the practice’s most overdetermined advocacy within the academy is motivated by anything quite so innocuous.

Rather, the drive to institutionalize program annotation in courses of pre-professional musical training is quite clearly rooted in expedience rather than idealism, the task itself being, as advocates miss no opportunity to point out, an inherently multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary one. This is to say that a student's writing, research, marketing, and performance preparation skills all factor into the final product, and knowledge acquired in core undergraduate classes (which increasingly include a Music Business component) must thus be applied to a “real life” musical situation of just the type to which music schools of all stripes are under escalating (if largely self-imposed) pressure to subject their charges.

While a superficial name-checking of such considerations has become commonplace, the deeper philosophical questions raised by such developments are customarily ignored. In any case, experience will show, I think, that even the supposedly pragmatic, real-world conditioning thought to follow from such requirements is a red herring. To wit: this being no less than the fifth academic recital I have put on, to say nothing of the several dozen others on which I have collaborated, what eventually becomes most striking about the experience in contrast to one's concurrent and subsequent professional activities is the highly *controlled* nature of the situation and its minimal bearing on anything whatsoever that might be encountered post-graduation, first and foremost because the audience for academic degree recitals, if there is to be one at all, is near-exclusively comprised of specialists and personal acquaintances. This condition has become so widely and frequently maligned for so many reasons that raising it here might seem too obvious a tack; is it not fair to say, though, that such a setting well and truly obviates the need for program notes by virtually any measure? This is hardly the ideal curatorial laboratory it is made out to be: rather, students may write notes for their known audience in a manner which has little application to any other listeners, or write notes for an imaginary, uninitiated audience as an empty academic exercise of precisely the type advocates of the practice explicitly disavow. (The third option, to do the absolute minimum amount of work needed to earn a passing grade for the recital, typically resulting in notes which achieve nothing whatsoever by either standard, is of course the most popular choice, raising a host of issues that must necessarily be tabled for the moment.)

As the ravenous two-headed monster of general-academic and discipline-specific accreditation increasingly squeezes the life out of music school curricula, such composite assignments become increasingly attractive for their potential to combine many requirements into a single task which can be rolled into the student's existing course load under the heading of applied instrumental study, recital preparation, or other courses which students are already required to take. It is not my task here to question the validity of ascribing such value to the practice within an academic context. All else being equal, the maneuver seems to me in fact rather logical, perhaps even a bit clever. My objection even so is that all else is never quite equal here; that such an institutionalization of program annotation offers none of the benefits and all of the drawbacks as I have outlined them elsewhere in this paper; and most of all, that institutionalizing the practice over such objections threatens to privilege and enforce particular modes of listening while at the same time insulating them, along with the very notion of such maneuvers, from criticism.

According to Gorzelany-Mostak (2009: 431-2), the virtues of compulsory program annotation include “a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis and research of songs,” a chance for students to “hone interpretive skills and gain in-depth knowledge and coherence of individual

works in the short term, as well as potentially prepare them for future work as teachers,” and to “devote more time to honing their writing style while adhering to the fundamental components of a good essay, rather than becoming bogged down with the arduous planning and outlining that a more lengthy paper entails.” She argues that core curriculum theory and history classes, “while valid and integral in their own right, fall short of providing singers with the tools they need to become skilled song interpreters,” touting program note writing as a missing link of sorts between foundational musico-academic coursework and the act of music-making itself. Henry (2002: 53-4) also cites “opportunities for interdisciplinary learning,” and appeals to standards-based learning models when she remarks that “a perusal of the National Standards shows us that we are responsible for creating musicians who are also knowledgeable about the music they play.” To the question of “whether pieces typically programmed for secondary-level choral concerts were significant enough to merit substantial discussion,” she argues that “any thoughtfully chosen musical selection contains numerous musical attributes that can be described or emphasized,” thereby skirting the more relevant question (and the one which she purports to be addressing) of whether they *should* be.

In addition to codifying such newly-recognized educational potential, this sort of advocacy also remains chock full of appeals to program annotation as an outreach tool in terms which have scarcely changed for two centuries, and in this sense it reflects a certain constancy of thought as well. Fogg (2011: 37-8) requires his students to write program notes for every piece they study whether or not they are giving a recital, and believes that, “it is our privileged responsibility as performers to inform audiences about what they are going to hear.” The newfound academic function of program notes can indeed be partially accounted for based on its seamless fit within this traditional outreach narrative, as when Block (2008: 20) relates the view that, “the goal of a concert program should be to show that music is not just an important part of school but an essential one,” and that, “the ideal program tells its readers that ‘we’re in the middle of an educational process.’” Academic currency, then, is also cultural and political currency given the constant need for music and art to justify themselves on empirical grounds to tone-deaf public and private funders, and insofar as extra-musical academic import can be claimed for compulsory program annotation, it offers a refreshing compliment to threadbare extrinsic benefits tropes which have worn thin both within the musical community and outside of it.

Such it is that the altruistic and the Darwinistic remain as entangled as ever in shaping how musicians write about their work, a point recognized by Downie (2008: 197) when he writes that “those performance measures associated with commodity form and behavior have spread to encompass not only public sector services such as health care, utilities, infrastructure, and education, but also cultural provision and production,” and that, “phrases such as ‘selling yourself’ or ‘making the right impression’ point to a process that seeks the extension of the commodity form away from material artifacts and goods to soft services and interpersonal behavior profiling.” Citing Bourdieu's assertion that “cultural artefacts are different from material goods in that they can only be successfully consumed once their meaning has been apprehended,” Downie calls program notes “texts that function to further determine and constrain that network of signifiers that manage the impressions given to composers’ customers.” (204) Indeed, it is precisely this constraining of the dialogue surrounding music, and, by extension, of the listening experience itself, which I have been arguing is rather inherently incompatible with both aesthetic pluralism and selfless musico-institutional outreach. More

specifically, though, it is beyond incompatible with the spirit of free inquiry and open dialogue that Western academia has traditionally considered essential; rather, the two are anathema.

Ultimately, though, I am less concerned with achieving the purely selfless, non-ideological act than with the far simpler matter of personal honesty and directness. To that end, if it can fairly be asserted, as many have in all manner of colorful ways, that the very notion of writing or talking descriptively about music poses, in spite of the act's ubiquity and, indeed, necessity, some substantial philosophical problems, then there remains no more effective way to steer clear of such problems than that of simple abstention. Perhaps this view becomes absurd taken as an absolutist declaration, but as a matter-of-fact observation it is plainly logical. Only when verbalization solves greater problems than it creates can it be conscientiously relied upon. Those who continue reading will find that despite such misgivings, I have not only complied with CalArts' own program annotation requirement, but, if I might humbly say so, gone above and beyond it. In my view, the pitfalls of grandstanding in this case outweighed those of reification. It bears emphasizing even so that nothing contained in either this essay or the ensuing notes is essential to the experience of the music I will perform this evening, and it is thus telling of the peculiar insidiousness of the drive toward verbalization that an institution known first and foremost for nurturing both plurality and subversion for their own sake is nonetheless a signatory to one of mainstream classical music culture's most enduring emblems of top-down conformity.

Indeed, is American musical academia not content living in infamy merely for its well-known tendencies toward institutionalizing and politicizing musical taste? Have we grown tired of merely dictating *what* is worth hearing and thus moved on to the question of *how* it is to be heard? Further, given the concurrent turn toward teaching Music Business alongside music making, is there not good reason to fear that Downie's constrained network of signifiers, the discourse of culture manufactured for a free market, threatens to have a far greater influence on this emerging faux-dialogue than will the matter-of-fact scholarly missives of those program annotators of last century whose writing earned its scholarly currency the old-fashioned way? And finally, is it *really* progress for the academic community to not only encourage but celebrate a Cliff's Notes level of musicological dialogue, repackaging superficial amalgams of elementary writing skills under the headings of interdisciplinarity, outreach, and accessibility? Seen in that light, perhaps academic absorption, codification, and acceptance is actually the death knell for program annotation, just as it has been for the vitality of so many musical styles and traditions before it. If so, it certainly is hard to imagine a more welcome or fitting end.

Unidisciplinarity: “Toward a New Isolation”

Solo (that is, “unaccompanied”) tuba performance doesn’t have much of a history, at least not in comparison to the more highly developed instrumental traditions inherited by so many of our colleagues in the orchestra and the jazz band. The first question to ask before setting out to build one, then, is whether one can be built at all, an uncomfortable question for tuba players to ponder since it forces us to stare our inadequacies squarely in the face, and ultimately, if we are at all serious about the matter, to take inventory of them: to distinguish the real from the imagined, the technical from the conceptual, occasionally even the social, the cultural, or the political from all of these and from each other; but most importantly of all, *to distinguish weaknesses which truly belong to the instrument from those which live inside of us.*

Performing this exercise for myself, it becomes quite clear that the relative youth of the instrument (the modern tuba is less than 200 years old), the role for which it was explicitly designed (a decisively accompanimental one), and its very real and numerous technical limitations do not begin to explain the underdevelopment of its identity in musical styles and settings which postdate its advent. Unaccompanied solo performance in particular is a discipline which tends to coax out precisely these well-worn excuses, all while raising more immediate questions of physical endurance and sonic contrast, concerns which are otherwise so frequently and customarily mitigated by ensemble textures. I have assembled and prepared this program under the assumption that there is in fact hope for musically effective unaccompanied, unwired solo tuba performance, even though I was and still am to some extent unsure of what it might look like. This has been, for lack of a better term, an experiment, albeit in a somewhat more limited sense than we tend to use that word at this institution, and it would be worth explaining what exactly prompted me, uncharacteristically, to commit myself to a project with such an uncertain outcome.

As performer, composer and listener alike, polyphony has been and remains my primary interest, and it is this predilection which kept me for a time from seriously considering a thorough investigation of unaccompanied performance. My taste for polyphony remains strong, but it has also become difficult not to see it as a form of dependence (i.e. in my case as a player of a monophonic instrument, on assemblages of other monophonic musicians, each with their own tastes, schedules, egos, and other complications). In this social sense, live polyphony, it might be said, requires either consensus or domination in order to be realized, and has in this capacity found itself the target of deconstructionist critique, notably by Christopher Small in his widely read book *Musicking*:

The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be... (Small, 1998: 13)

I myself have collaborated with very few contemporary musicians who claimed (or could claim) to be idealizing human relationships in their work, but it certainly has become clear to me that many collaborators I have sought out over the years who come from musical traditions where collectivism and co-composition are quite a bit more prevalent than they have historically been in

the classical tradition have, notwithstanding my music's clear aesthetic indebtedness to their own traditions, indeed found in it a model of authoritarian domination under which they find themselves subordinated simply by virtue of the substantial through-composed content my music typically contains and the traditional technical grounding and discipline required to realize it. Such it is that having been brought up on polyphony in the home as well as the classroom as a social allegory for working *together*, I eagerly entered the postmodern professional music world only to find that the allegory was understood in precisely the opposite manner by a great many of its inhabitants, including several upon whose talents it seemed the thoughtful realization of my life's work depended.

This has been a difficult and occasionally bitter experience, but one which has attuned me to a more tangible political reality of my polyphonic endeavors than that of unspoken domination, namely my own dependence on others (sometimes many others) just to be able to make music. It is that burden from which solo playing offers complete escape, and indeed, it is thoughts of just such an escape which have been the earliest and strongest motivations for the present project.

Admittedly, this manner of allowing social considerations to dictate artistic directions is something I myself have never missed an opportunity to critically deconstruct; indeed, it is far too convenient for writers such as Small to simply overlook the tyranny of groupthink which social theories of art enable and enforce, thereby merely trading one form of "domination" for another. It must be said that with the present solo project, I am for the first time in my musical life submitting to this distinctively contemporary brand of soft repression and surrendering a degree of artistic self-determination to the ineluctable thrust of the society I inhabit. Concurrently, then, polyphony becomes a personal act of resistance against these dynamics, not because I believe it models more ideal social relationships, but because so many material conditions now militate against its thoughtful realization, its vestigial existence representing, in my opinion, an unacceptably severe aesthetic impoverishment.

Abandoning this cause, even for a short period, in direct acquiescence to the same material conditions I have grown so accustomed to working against, represents a compromise I have always been loathe to make, an issue which will haunt this project as long as I pursue it. And yet, had I not in this single instance given in, I would never have discovered the redeeming value here, which is the tremendous opportunity for musical growth inherent in addressing the substantial technical and conceptual challenges of putting on a full-length solo tuba concert. It is indeed a greater challenge in both of those respects than any I have previously imposed on myself, and one which offers to make me better at everything I do, an unusually powerful solution to the twenty- and thirty-something doldrums during which musicians tend to quietly abandon *métiers* rather than sharpen new ones. That is as close to reconciling the two projects as I can get without also admitting that working alone does in my case more often than not, "model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participant[s] in the performance imagine[s] them to be" far more so than working in groups ever has or could. As those who know me will agree, it doesn't take postmodern deconstruction to see that my personality and my aesthetic have always been somewhat at odds in that way; but I suppose that is another story for another time.

For me, there is also solace here in the opportunity to chase the new, even if it is merely "new-to-you," so to speak. When your instrument has become a dubious luxury item not least for the very

musical culture which once spawned it out of perceived necessity, any questions that still need answering are important questions and work that needs doing is important work. Indeed, the more complete self-determination of the solo endeavor is a kind of autonomy not typically granted to monophonic musicians, nor even truly considered available to us in many traditions. In jazz especially, rhythm sections tend to control the logistics and economics of a scene to much the same extent as they control the texture and groove of the music itself; and in the classical realm, one would be hard-pressed to assemble an evening's worth of unaccompanied tuba music from all which exists, and to do so with any taste whatsoever would be more or less impossible.

Who knows, then, what kind of constructive havoc tubists and other monophonic musicians might wreak on these traditions by rightfully claiming this degree of self-determination for ourselves and our work? The thought is exciting enough to me to bear pursuing even at the temporary expense of the aforementioned prior obligations. I present the program detailed below as a broad exploration of possible directions this project might take.

Prelude/Postlude (Kac)

As the skill in which I have invested the most relative to what is generally expected of a tuba player, improvisation was bound to be the centerpiece of my solo identity, just as it is in much of my other work. Yet for any musician who has worked within the peculiar anti-tradition to which the labels "Improvised Music" and/or "Free Jazz" are most commonly applied, a certain paralyzing dialectic between preparation and spontaneity has a way of setting in any time process is consciously considered, as it must be here. In some corners of this community, learning on the job, so to speak, is nothing less than a tradition, naivete is valued above virtually all else, and refinement, including that which inheres in the act of performing itself, is the Devil's spawn. At the opposite extreme, the insistence that a thorough foundation in traditional techniques and pre-composed structure is *the* essential prerequisite for any valid free playing has been a part of this dialogue from the outset, if largely (but by no means exclusively) as a gesture of conservative hostility.

Having worked extensively (and, I might add, happily) over the years with militants from both ends of this spectrum, I have found it to be a highly polarized one. As a harbinger of split sympathies, conservatives find me a bit of a loose cannon (a rather high compliment, I think) while the naivists identify me immediately and intensely as an academic product (less complimentary but, strictly speaking, a fact). My aspiration, of course, is to have it both ways, no easier socially than it is musically, and if solo playing eliminates the former obstacle entirely, it merely magnifies the latter proportionately. In anticipation of tonight's maiden voyage, I have erred somewhat toward the side of preparation at the expense of spontaneity; that is, towards the conservative viewpoint given above more so than the naivist one. From the outset, I have found solo improvisation to be a fundamentally different skill from those which I have developed previously, and yet the extensiveness of that prior training dictates that there is little hope of my debut as a solo improviser being truly naive. There is something to be said here, as elsewhere in art, for avoiding the middle ground, and yet, taking the mean between my classical training and ensemble improvisation experience on one hand and my near-complete inexperience with solo performance on the other, I fear this is precisely where I am bound to start. I take solace, though,

in knowing that while naivete is bounded and irrecoverable, refinement is more scalable, and that I certainly have models for such a process in many of my previous pursuits.

Such it is that I might arrive through reason at much the same conclusion as through taste, and that is to say that my own Improvised Music aesthetic is one which strongly favors traditional techniques as foundations on which to expand, keeping in mind that subverting my classical training has proven far easier than the process of developing it. I feel I can play with an airy sound any time I want by playing out of the side of my mouth, or throw the intonation of the instrument out of whack by engaging the fifth valve and attempting to use the other four as if nothing had changed. These are two techniques among many, I might add, that I have very much discovered and developed “on the job” in improvising ensembles. Meanwhile, the classical tone I’ve spent thousands of hours polishing nonetheless becomes completely inaccessible without ideal cycles of daily maintenance and well-timed rest, a proper diet, and a good night’s sleep. To be sure, specificity of concept is a consideration here: the pursuit of very *particular* airy tones or off-kilter temperaments would entail much more work and undoubtedly prove much more elusive than the versions I utilize; it remains confounding to me even so that traditional technique continues to be a greater challenge in spite of my disproportionate investment in it. In order to have it available at all, even as one option among many, thus seems to me to be inherently a matter of refinement, and no one immersed in that process can legitimately claim to be making music the naive way.

Needless to say that the deconstructionist liberation theology of Improvised Music is at times quite disinclined to take this sort of perspective at face value. It is of course true that I have been subjected to the ravings of many a classical purist, endured quite a bit of their brand of formalized training, and gone to great lengths to jump through the hoops they have laid out for me. This experience has undoubtedly shaped my perspective, but I feel secure in saying that it has not closed me off to the many other possibilities. That I have pursued validation at the hands of the academic establishment is no less the effect than the cause of my predilection for traditional tone production, and while the classical method remains my default setting, I can say with a reasonable degree of confidence that this reflects a choice I have made for myself rather than one that my teachers and training have made for me, even if my sparing use of alternatives might innocently suggest the opposite. And it is certainly my hope that this polemic might fade into the past in the manner of so many before it, rendered petty and irrelevant by new generations of musicians who find great value and inspiration, as I do, in both aesthetics. Only then can we collectively make good on the idealism of the era which spawned this music, a time when, as many who were there have remarked, anything seemed possible.

Having said all of that, it seems to me that there is in fact little unique or essential about many common extended brass techniques and also that this is entirely predictable given the painstaking design and construction of these instruments for entirely different purposes. No matter how fluent, personal, or expressive the removal of the pitch grid barrier enables the music to be, fighting the instrument for a sound it was not designed to make can be tremendously inhibiting, and further, the tendency to accept a sound as *essential* simply because it is *available* is, I think, a significant danger for players of instruments whose traditional sound palette is as comparatively limited as is that of the brass family. If anyone out there reading this just adores the sound of the mouthpiece hitting the bell, I’m afraid we probably don’t have much in common, and until I have

witnessed an improvising percussionist traipse out on stage wielding an old trombone bell and mouthpiece, I will continue to claim the artistic high ground. I appeal to percussion as an archetype because percussionists are far more likely to be tinkers, collectors, and experimenters when it comes to finding *just the right sound*, whereas brass players are more likely to seek an instrument that suits their traditional needs, to only then investigate what else it might be able to do, and to accept the results rather more uncritically.

There is no such thing as too thorough an investigation of the capabilities of one's primary instrument, and also no such thing as too high a threshold of taste in sorting out which of these capabilities ultimately earn their way into the music. Similarly, if one is going to put up with the tuba and the various quotidian inconveniences and social stigmata that come with it, it must be in exchange for something that *only* the tuba can provide, and where the tuba ceases to provide, one must look elsewhere before uncritically accepting an approximation. It is not for nothing that multi-instrumentalism has historically been such an important part of Improvised Music, most notably through so many first- and second-wave members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), whose work represents at once equally fierce commitments to autodidactic multi-instrumentalism and traditional virtuosity on a primary Western instrument (see Lewis, 2008). Such work speaks to the realization by many great masters that the need for an expanded sound palette is the need to find just the right sounds, not merely to accept what is possible with whatever one happens to be holding. Here, however, one encounters yet further questions of essentialism, namely of that which is essential to one's own identity as a musician and citizen, and for the moment, I feel there is more to be gained in both the short and long term from exhausting the possibilities on the instrument which has given me my voice.

Encounters II (Kraft)

Composer William Kraft writes:

Encounters II was written for Roger Bobo in December 1966 and was premiered at the "Encounters" concert series in Pasadena in 1967.

The first thing Roger and I did was spend a day together, during which we engaged in a creative interplay of ideas and exploration of the instrument's possibilities. The resultant work was, as Roger described it in the liner notes of his second recording of the piece, "higher, lower, faster [probably louder or softer] than any previous work" for tuba.

From the multitude of techniques that evolved, I chose those which I felt were best suited for a piece that was basically expressive along relatively traditional lines. Certain exploratory techniques were eliminated to suit the aesthetics of the piece—an aesthetic in which I wanted to show the truly musical possibilities of the instrument without delving into effects for their own sake.

I wanted the challenge of writing a set of variations for a solo instrument which would create the illusion of accompanying itself, by using various dynamic levels, varying pitch registrations, and especially by using the voice while playing. Much of what resulted was due to Roger Bobo's remarkable virtuosity as well as his creative intelligence. (Bird, ed. 1994: 63-4)

Nearly a half-century later, *Encounters II*, in my opinion, remains something of an anomaly, and in the best sense of that term: if no longer literally the most extreme work in the standard tuba

repertoire, it remains one of the most technically challenging overall; more anomalous yet, though, is its firm place in this repertoire in spite of these challenges, and, moreover, in spite of its high modernist idiom. Some resentment at this state of affairs is palpable, tuba culture being as it is generally a bit on the conservative side, but it is decidedly a minority view, which, at the risk of coming off as backhanded, I would say speaks as strongly as anything to what Mr. Kraft has accomplished musically with this piece.

What qualities allow a high modernist unaccompanied tuba solo to endure? Commendable unity of harmonic language, sophisticated yet audible motivic development, and well-proportioned form all play a part. But most significantly, in my opinion, Kraft ventures to the extreme outer limits of playability without writing a note that is not also highly idiomatic for the instrument, and in doing so, lights the way out of tone-deaf instrumental advocacy and towards an *identity* for the instrument rooted in its own music-historical epoch. The question arises of what *can* be played, but what *should* be played is never in doubt.

I have spoken above to the untenability of a complete recital program drawn from the standard unaccompanied tuba repertoire. Such a thing has, of course, been attempted, and I would venture that *Encounters II* has more often than not appeared on these programs. This is admirable on one hand and profoundly unfair the other, and thus it is my hope that a prominent place on a more varied program might serve to better highlight those qualities of this piece which have made it the most unlikely of recital warhorses. In turn, it seemed obvious to me from the start that the standard repertoire needed to somehow be represented in the project I was embarking upon, and equally obvious which member of this repertoire was most up to the task.

Suite in G Major for Solo Cello: Minuets I and II (Bach)

In improvisational technique, the relationship between preparation and performance is muddier than with physical playing technique. There is no “reinforcement” of good habits to which one slowly acclimates and eventually ceases to be conscious of; the only “good” habit is the one you can turn on and off at will. Even so, there are ways that improvisors can purposefully enable certain possibilities and disable others based on their aesthetic, and I would argue for understanding this process as a technique of sorts, albeit one dealing more with probabilities than assurances.

If improvisational technique is defined as the ability to control what one plays, then this is not only a matter of real-time decision making and technical proficiency. It also has to do with what might be called weighting of exposure. The so-called “exposure effect,” whereby that which is heard the most comes over time to be preferred, is a real phenomenon for which there exists extensive laboratory documentation. Further, “studies using subliminal or unattended stimuli produce more robust exposure effects than studies that don’t use these techniques,” meaning that “the exposure effect is most apparent when the slower (cortical) brain is taken out of the loop – that is, when conscious mental processing is disrupted or distracted.” (Huron, 2006: 133) Practice time, then, is also listening time, or, as it might be better put, hearing time, for it could be argued on account of this evidence that instrumental practice, entailing as it does a division of the player’s attention between technical, musical, and environmental stimuli, is if anything *more* likely to beget the exposure effect than focused listening as an audience member. It is therefore

incumbent upon the developing improviser (that is, upon *every* improviser) to exercise the will in deciding what material to practice and how much to practice it. *You are what you play, and in direct proportion to how much you play it.*

This is why I haven't earnestly practiced scales or scale patterns since high school, and though in the interim I have failed to convince very many teachers or colleagues of the logic behind this choice, I can at least point to any number of compliments for the "freshness" of my ideas as a jazz improviser as anecdotal validation. The point too easily lost here, however, is that there are virtually endless licks, etudes, vocalises, orchestral excerpts, Coltrane solos, Bach movements, Hendrix riffs, and on and on that are available to us should we need to address the purely technical challenges posed by scales. By privileging the bare scales themselves over all of this "real" music in the manner traditional brass pedagogy dictates we should, we greatly impoverish our *creative* voices via the exposure effect, regardless of what we might achieve technically. Such results are on display even among many of the more distinguished contemporary jazz artists, a fact to which I became attuned at an early age and which rather directly begot my early and intense desire *not* to play that way.

This is what I mean, then, when I say that it is crucial to understand the process of choosing and weighting influences as a matter of technique in the sense that one's degree of control can be quantified, if not only in one's own mind: the same way I might choose how long to spend on long tones or lip slurs each day based on a dynamic understanding of my current conditioning needs, I might choose to invest heavily in certain musical material if I feel that my frame of mind and/or upcoming obligations demand it. Intent becomes a yardstick against which outcomes are measured, inevitably so in terms of moment-to-moment technical accuracy, but also less rigidly and more fruitfully in the more general terms of conceptual realization. The difference, then, in aesthetic between this kind of improvised music and pre-composed music is slight, and the reason for choosing improvisation over composition becomes less about "freedom" per se than it does about achieving (more like enforcing) a certain frame of creative mind driven by the urgency of real time, ostensibly because one deems the potential results to be (a) somehow perceptibly (if not necessarily radically) different, and (b) worth the trouble.

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A few years ago, it occurred to me that someone of my background and predilections really should be able to improvise in the style of Bach, and also that I might find such a pursuit fulfilling and useful. When I tried it and found that I couldn't come close, I had to ask myself a tough question: how could it be that a strong internalization of the style nearly from birth (thanks, Dad), years of compulsory music theory study built largely around Bach's practice (not-so-thanks, U of MN), and a relatively high degree of proficiency as a jazz improviser did not add up to the ability to extemporize over simple Baroque and Classical structures?

When I first got serious about improvising, it was entirely through the lens of jazz. Despite being at the outset much more fluent and experienced in classical music, no classical composer, conductor, or teacher I had ever encountered had so much as uttered the word "improvise," and so it was that a wall was constructed between my two musical worlds. I have yet to succeed in tearing this wall down completely in my own work and I often wonder if I ever will. It certainly

has not been entirely to my detriment that I never fell into the trap of trying to be classically perfect in my jazz solos, an important lesson to which the bulk of aspiring jazz players who come from a classical music background seem to be oblivious. On the other hand, the freedom to play with abandon that is so essential to most jazz styles has a way of creating and concealing myriad technical deficiencies which must then be painstakingly isolated in order to be overcome, and such it is, I think, that the challenge of improvisation in classical *styles*, which at one point I would have found more intimidating, in fact pales in comparison to that of improvisation with classical *technique*, if indeed I can be permitted to separate the two for the sake of making this point.

If this is not necessarily the only mode in which I desire to operate as a jazz player, there nevertheless could be no better conditioning, physical and mental alike, for becoming the kind of jazz player I have always aspired to be. Incidentally, I really like the music of Bach, too, I have long sought a way into doing it justice on the instrument that I happen to play, and I am positive that playing it exactly as written is *not* that way, no less on account of Herr Bach's background than my own. I see glorious opportunities for creative anachronism in treating Bach movements as structures for improvisation the way jazz players treat songforms. Understand, though, that I am most decidedly *not* talking about playing Bach compositions in a jazz style, but rather subjecting them to the *procedure* to which jazz players subject standard material. This concept has two primary aspects which I find compelling:

- (1) Embellishment can go far beyond traditional Baroque ornamentation to include wholesale melodic invention within the harmonic and metrical structures of the material.
- (2) It is possible to extrapolate greatly from the written material, up to and including the introduction of non-normative stylistic elements, without necessarily sacrificing the larger sense of stylistic authority.

It is the second of these points which I believe demonstrates what classical musicians can best learn from the jazz tradition: that even within a comparatively conservative instrumental stylism, reordering stock licks does not have to mean reordering them the same way as everyone else with the same delivery in the same musical contexts; indeed, even the most narrowly-focused jazz stylists who address these issues in a unique and constructive way tend to become valued by the larger jazz community as both contributors and collaborators while those who fail to achieve this generally do not.

There remain, of course, some infamously rigid stylistic factions in the jazz world, but in general, individuality is in fact a *component* of authenticity in this tradition; to oppose the two concepts or even to speak of them separately verges on non-sensical to the jazz thinker. Players like Cannonball Adderley and Phil Woods stand as models of authenticity in the post-Parker continuum even though they play lots of things that Parker would never have played. The same could of course be said of Brahms as a post-Beethovenian or of Ligeti's relationship to Bartok, but to apply the analogy to lineages of classical *performers* would necessitate splitting hairs, since not only have the worlds of creation and re-creation grown increasingly apart in this tradition, but as many have critically pointed out, abstractions rather than specifics tend to serve as the models after which performers and composers alike construct instrumental identities.

And so, rather than simply cataloguing a bunch of things that Bach did and limiting ourselves to that material when we improvise, what if we permit ourselves to extrapolate? To take anomalous harmonic events precipitated the counterpoint and make them central? To seek our own *voice* within Bach's style the way Adderley sought his within that of Parker or Lee Morgan within that of Clifford Brown? Of course, no judgment on whether any given non-normative material "fits" within an historical style can be considered absolute, but we might at least accept the challenge and see where it leads us. The conception of authenticity as slavish re-creation is an evasion of this question, not an answer to it.

In pursuit of these ideals, I anticipated that a severe limitation of material would be necessary, and soon settled on this pair of Minuets as an ideal starting point for this project. It is well-documented that master improvisers the world over generally exert true mastery over a relatively small amount of material (Moore, 1993: 65), and there also are not more than a handful of solo Bach movements which are technically realistic for brass players. Fortunately, the structural possibilities present with just this pair are fascinating: one may play both as written before improvising on either; the first may be stated and embellished before moving on to the second; the second may be played in the relative instead of parallel minor, or its two halves may each be played in one of these keys and then the other, which sounds surprisingly smooth; and free cadenzas as introductions, interludes and finales may be added at will. I have experimented with all of these devices and settled on a relatively fixed structure for tonight's performance. When it comes to nitty-gritty, moment-to-moment concerns, I have found it particularly fruitful to isolate individual phrases and come up with as many traditional embellishments as possible before attempting a whole-cloth improvisation. This provides a starter vocabulary for navigating the given phrase, and also burns it into one's mind in just the way that is necessary to really "own" it once the training wheels come off.

Too many of today's classically trained musicians will tell you that these are highly specialized skills, that this is a lovely, maybe even compelling, musical life to lead, but that it is neither essential nor realistic given the more central demands of orchestral and chamber performance. The truth is that this degree of improvisational technique and sophistication, if not necessarily in precisely this form, was a near-universal skill among professional musicians in the European classical tradition well into the nineteenth century. Anti-elitist as we all might aspire to be these days, it is difficult to argue against the historical interpretation that the decline of improvisation in classical music was a direct consequence of the music's emergence into the public sphere, precipitated by the rise of the free market and the bourgeoisie. In order to become salable, music had to become accessible, not only *aesthetically* but also *technically*. Indeed, learning to improvise in any style involves assuming a degree of vulnerability that is the very antithesis of bourgeois comfort; hence, it is easy to see why in today's hyper-bourgeoisified classical music culture, every possible excuse will be appealed to (except, of course, for history) in order to locate classical improvisation beyond the pale.

In light of that last remark, I would offer in closing that improvisation, as intimidating as it can be at the outset, is nonetheless the discipline of musical performance which more than any other can be subtly tailored to highlight one's strengths and cover one's weaknesses. That much of the actual music Bach put to paper is difficult-to-impossible for wind and brass players to adapt does not necessarily mean that his style, taken as a grand abstraction, is necessarily so impossible for us

to assimilate as monophonic improvisors; this path is, in any case, both more attractive *and* more accessible than either strict reproduction or careless pastiche ever could be. What many will see fit to point out here is that it remains impossible is to *improve* upon Bach. I agree, of course, but that is hardly a compelling argument against taking what he has to offer us and molding it into something more personal. In that sense, all I am really doing here is playing to my strengths, and thus finding a way into music which never really loved me back until now.

Composition with Advanced Technology (Kac)

When composers speak of the challenges of “large-scale forms,” they are likely referring not only to durational but also orchestrational scale, as well as to the relationship between the two. Depending on how it is deployed, the sonic variety afforded by large forces can add interest to a lengthy piece or obliterate the unity of a shorter one. An unaccompanied solo concert on a monophonic instrument, meanwhile, lies at an extreme corner of this plot, pairing as it does maximum duration with minimum orchestration. This in large part explains the difficulty of such concerts for performer and audience alike, and similarly, the rarity with which this challenge is embraced and met by players of monophonic instruments.

Upon being told of my plans for a solo recital, the first question from many classmates was which brand of loop pedals I would be purchasing. As a distinctly outside observer on the varied world of electro-acoustic music, it seemed obvious to me from the start that a foray into live electronics, while firmly entrenched on my agenda, would not be the first step but in fact the final one. I have a strong desire to meet the challenges of monophonic solo playing head-on, first and foremost in pursuit of the aforementioned sharpening of skills which promises to substantially impact everything else I do, but also because I have no desire or intention to venture into live electronics without being completely secure that the technology is serving artistic needs and not merely covering up technical or conceptual deficiencies. (I also worry, half-seriously, about what I might do in a power outage.)

Nonetheless, I have included on tonight's program a selection of fixed media electro-acoustic music which represents a different kind of landmark for me as a composer. This music, the first I have presented publicly which was composed specifically for electronic media, is comprised exclusively of pre-recorded tuba digitally manipulated in the Audacity computer program. Audacity is a free, open-source program of limited scope, and so the otherwise-arbitrary title is an ironic reference to a component of the MFA Performer-Composer curriculum which I have, in fact, previously fulfilled in a slightly more rigorous manner. To a musician of my background, however, the possibilities inherent in the whole world of electro-acoustic music are overwhelming, and though the limitations of free software and a single sound source may seem unduly strict, they are in fact, I have found, barely strict enough to provide focus and suggest directions. The notion of “recycling” my solo performances by using the recordings as source material for subsequent electro-acoustic works is also an appealing one. So stay tuned.

Standard Jazz Tune (TBD)

It is in keeping with both the spirit of the early jazz tradition and also one of its more infamous practical demands that I have elected not to choose which standard tune I will perform in this slot

until the moment itself arrives. Any audience member who finds the selection obscure, unrecognizable, or both is entitled to a refund for the full price of admission.

Delta City Blues (Brecker)

More or less from the outset of my interest in playing post-bop jazz on tuba, the tenor saxophone has served as my near-exclusive model for “front line” horn playing, and nearly all of the significant transcription study I have done has been of tenor solos. Among that material, no other performance on the instrument has ever, to me at least, so immediately suggested adaptation to the tuba than this selection from Michael Brecker's 1998 album *Two Blocks from the Edge*. Brecker's facility, time feel, and more than anything, his clarity are more or less unattainable ideals for a tubist in this style, but in thus shooting for the moon, I hope at least to land among the stars.

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