

## RPS Lecture 2001: Nicholas Kenyon The Barbican Centre, 24 February

### Tradition Isn't What it Used to Be

*This is an edited text of a lecture which included extensive sound and video extract, which are inevitably omitted here. The lecture was linked to a performance at the Barbican Centre on 26 February 2001 of Purcell's Dido and Aeneas and Charpentier's Actéon by Les Arts Florissants, directed by William Christie.*

*A list of the recordings used is at the end of the text.*

When Bernard Haitink came off the stage at the Royal Albert Hall after giving an electrifying performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic at last year's BBC Proms, he looked at me with a twinkle and said 'ah, just some old-fashioned Beethoven for you, Nick'. But it wasn't. It was an absolute model of what an up-to-date modern Beethoven performance could be, a performance that had absorbed some of the best insights of the period-instrument movement while remaining resolutely crafted out of the sound of the Berlin Philharmonic, achieving miracles of textural clarity: how often do you hear the single first flute ascending above the orchestra in the final bars? It made me think again about what is old-fashioned and what isn't, how tradition changes before our eyes and ears, how performance styles evolve and how performing traditions get established.

If you listen to Herbert von Karajan's very first recording of Beethoven's Seventh, from 1941, you hear a performing tradition that did not get established, as the horns sweep in at the first Vivace. The second horn plays a written D instead of C (see opposite), an absolutely deliberate wrong note (as they do it twice, it must be deliberate!), playing in thirds in the way people think horns play, instead of playing with the harmony.

I've never seen that mistake or re-writing referred to anywhere, and I haven't been able to establish (even from that wizard of Beethoven editions, Jonathan Del Mar) where the tradition came from or went to. Performing traditions have often extended to changing the notes, both the retouches that generations of conductors gave the orchestrations of Beethoven symphonies because they thought they needed them, or pianists changing Chopin's notes on the grounds they had lived with the music for far longer than the composer did.

If you can change notes, it's a small thing to change or ignore metronome marks, and Furtwängler's account of the Seventh Symphony, recorded a decade later than that Karajan version, in the 1950s, adopts a massively slow approach to the Trio of the Scherzo, sounding the battle hymn of some distant republic at dotted minim equals about 42 (as against Beethoven's mark of 84!) Toscanini, on the other hand, performed it at exactly Beethoven's metronome mark as early as 1935 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, a performing tradition that did not get re-established until the 1980s. You may remember our colleague Peter Stadlen's tireless enquiries into Beethoven's controversial metronome marks. I feel sad that he didn't live into the heyday of original-instrument Beethoven, because his reasoned conclusion - that some of the marks (including that 84) could not be right because they were either unplayable or nonsense - was completely transformed by what the articulations of old instruments showed us was possible.

A performing tradition that oddly did get established for a while, at the end of the second movement, was Erich Kleiber's. He believed that the word *arco* in the first and second violins was not in Beethoven's hand and that therefore these notes should be *pizzicato*: a practice followed, I was surprised to find, by Klemperer in his famous Seventh.

When Kleiber said this after the war, the autograph had rather conveniently disappeared into Eastern Europe and so couldn't be checked, but it has now turned up and opposite is the relevant page of the autograph, reproduced in Jonathan Del Mar's new critical commentary to his edition: make what you can of it!

Now the twist here is that what Del Mar believes on this evidence is that yes, *arco* is certainly in the composer's handwriting, but the positioning of the word has been misunderstood by all previous editors and performers. His new edition places the word in the first violins a note later:

You can judge for yourselves by comparing this with the autograph whether you feel Del Mar's idea is justified: it has just been recorded like this, I believe for the first time ever, by Claudio Abbado in his new Beethoven symphony cycle with

the Berlin Philharmonic. Now is that a performing tradition which will become established? It will depend which conductors notice it, which believe it, which take it up, which orchestras bother to buy that new edition. Frankly it seems perverse, and certainly inconsistent. But we know how many crimes have been committed in the name of making composers' scores consistent, so perhaps we should give it a try. My prejudice may just be a reflection of how I thought this piece went, and it's worth drawing attention to as an illustration of just how tricky is this whole notion of what the composer's intentions really are.

Equally tricky is the idea of 'the work'. We have already glanced at three things that might or not be part of 'the work' - the notes, the articulations, and the metronome marks. Now any common-sense person would say that the notes are most central to the piece, but in those examples from Beethoven's Seventh, in terms of its effect on the meaning of the piece as we heard it, it was surely the least central, the metronome mark, that had the most effect. This echoes Wagner's remark about tempo, that you have to determine your interpretation of a piece before you can decide its tempo. Certainly the evidence of Furtwängler's performance was that the piece meant something different to him from whatever it meant to Toscanini.

In any case, the idea that there was a final form of a piece of music fixed for ever seems pretty old-fashioned in these post-modern days. And, in recent years, we have all experienced how quickly taste changes. If you compare Klemperer's famous Seventh, given in the Royal Festival Hall as late as 1970, and Roger Norrington's recording with the London Classical Players from the 1980s, they sound like different pieces. At the opening of the first Vivace (a misnomer here) in the first movement of Klemperer's Seventh (the same passage as Karajan's wrong-note horns), the flautist Gareth Morris and the New Philharmonia sustain a speed whose deliberateness would drive flautists today to apoplexy. (It was Gareth, remember, who told the excellent story that Karajan insisted that the solo flute obbligato in Bach's B minor Mass had to be shared between two flautists, so you never needed to hear either of them take a breath. It was also Gareth who stood up to a 16-year-old prodigy who conducted Beethoven's Seventh with the Philharmonia and told him that he was playing a wrong note in bar 6. It was actually wrong in the young prodigy's edition of the score rather than in the flautist's part, but no other conductor had ever noticed.)

Whether or not you revere Klemperer's memory and that particular performance, the question is: do we actually hear it any more as he performed it? All I can say is that I don't. (Before you object that that was just how he did it at the end of his life, the tempi on his 1955 recording are almost exactly the same.) Norrington finds an agility and dance-like step in the music that doesn't remove an ounce of its power. I don't want to argue that one is right or one is wrong; why things turned into that particular argument we'll consider in a moment. What I do want to suggest is that the insights of period-instrument performance changed certain things beyond recall, and as a result the tradition of performance has been completely altered by what has happened to our musical culture. There has been no greater influence on the performing traditions of our generation than those brought about for good or ill by the early music movement. And the effect of this has been to make us think in an entirely new way about our approach to history and repertory. In other words: tradition isn't what it used to be.

Though the early music movement started as a revival of forgotten repertoires and forgotten instruments - the pioneering work of the Dolmetsches, developing towards the hugely popular success of David Munrow - in the fascinating last decade of its life the movement's importance has been as a challenge to traditional performing styles in the central repertory (though what repertory is central has also been under intense pressure in the last ten years). There are always some performers who seem to stand outside any tradition, almost outside time. An example in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony would be Carlos Kleiber, whose mesmerising performance with the Concertgebouw Orchestra (preserved on video directed by Humphrey Burton) is one of the great miracles of modern conducting. A performer of genius like that is someone who can persuade us that his or her performance is the only possible one for the length of time it takes. A performer of talent may nudge a performing style one way or the other, and have a modest influence on how others perform. A performer of talent in tune with the temper of the times will pick up the mannerisms and nuances of current fashion and work effectively with them (I'm leaving you to add your own names here, by the way). A maverick will argue against the style of the times and may then as a result change it. But a man of genius in tune with the temper of the times can change performing tradition quite decisively.

In a completely different repertory, this change was effected by the sound of Victoria's Tenebrae Responsories, as unforgettably recorded by Westminster Cathedral Choir under George Malcolm in 1959. That full-throated, chest-voiced, text-conscious, passionately intense performance had a direct influence on everyone in this country concerned with that repertory. Some rejected it, others modified their style to take account of it, but it created a sea-change in the whole way we think about that repertory which remains today.

This reflects one aspect of what T.S.Eliot wrote about tradition - 'if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us or timid adherence to its successes, tradition should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents lost in the sand, and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance'. It is, but it's also a much more complex matter than it was when Eliot wrote that, since recording and broadcasting were then new and their implications undreamed of. Tradition

used to be embodied by the Vienna Philharmonic claiming that because as an institution it had its roots in Beethoven's Vienna it had passed on the truth about this music. Simple. But that was really just the old game of Chinese Whispers, by which A speaks to B speaks to C and by the time you reach Z (especially as it is now a couple of centuries later), the message has completely changed. It must be true that much has been transformed, especially as those generations saw the growth of public concerts, the expansion of the orchestra and the development of instrument technology, in order to project into larger and larger halls, not to mention the cultural and political changes that drove musicians across Europe into exile. How could performance not be affected by all this?

A beautiful expression of the old approach to an organic tradition was quoted recently by Andrew Porter from Lili Lehmann's memoirs about singing in Mozart opera: 'An immense amount of material for each role lay garnered up in my memory. Had I not seen for almost fifty years all the Don Giovanni performances everywhere? Everything that was pregnant and subtle had stayed with me. My own individuality created, from the many admirable representations I had seen, ideal figures... I wanted to bring was what was beloved and sanctioned by custom to the audience, not the unfamiliar and incomprehensible.'

That is the authentic voice of Mozart production pre-Peter Sellars. But we now live in a disorientated world where the most peculiar things are possible. You can hear the singing of Enrico Caruso recorded in 1906 accompanied by the sophisticated playing of the Vienna Radio Orchestra in 1999: a perverse triumph of technology which demonstrates, like being able to morph a photo on the computer screen, how far we have come in bending traditional notions of history. Actually, and fortunately for our sanity, the combination is deeply unconvincing. But does it make you feel you are somehow in touch with history?

Experiences like this suggest why it is that authenticity has been such an issue in our generation. Perhaps authenticity was always a straw man; it's easy to take that rather patronising view now. But I'm not so sure you can dismiss it so easily. There is a real need for us, once we have a disorientated tradition, to cling to ideas of closeness to the composer's vision. As the American scholar Richard Taruskin put it, what happens now in the game of Chinese Whispers is that the historical performer, Z, gets up and walks round to the chair occupied by A. He says 'excuse me, is this chair empty?' which it is because A has been dead for a couple of centuries, and sits in it.

We should not have been shocked when the notion of one organic, developing tradition crumbled before our eyes, but we were. It was a terrible shock to our system, in every sense of the word. The certainties of the twentieth century were never as firm as they seemed: even though Schoenberg seemed to embody the idea that there was a single tradition that could be developed, there was at the same time Stravinsky, who danced around, magpie-like, and made ingenious use of everything he could find from the present and past. And we now know who won that particular battle of attitudes to tradition. In any case, the arrival of broadcasting and recording was always likely to deal a death-blow to the idea of a single tradition, because by definition they allowed a bewildering variety of styles, idioms, performances and traditions to co-exist simultaneously. The realisation that this would make a radical difference to our ideas of the repertory, as well as to composition, was surprisingly slow to dawn.

The stand-off between early music and conventional performance was an unhealthy but probably necessary period of polarisation. It was difficult for players to embark on the labour and risk of the historical approach to performance (and players were taking big risks in cutting themselves off from the mainstream of orchestral life to develop these techniques) without making some noise to claim that they had got it right. It was equally difficult for mainstream performers to resist claiming (as Raymond Leppard once implied, but many, many others also believed) that people went into playing period instruments because they would have a pretty hard life in the real world.

Though it was performers who were attacked for making excessive claims about the rightness of a historical approach - or at least their publicists or their record companies - there was a climate of opinion in musicology too that caused at least as much trouble. Take this typical sentence from *The New Grove Handbook of Performing Practice*. 'The proximity of the 19th century ensures that the central task in the study of performing practice is to separate the practices which have survived unsullied from the past, and those that have been corrupted by the vagaries of changing taste and fashion.' Now it doesn't take a great critical intellect to point out that 'unsullied' and 'corruption' are not exactly neutral words. Here are a few contrasted opinions I collected a while ago for a BBC documentary, *Back To The Future*, from performers and scholars in the field about their approach to authenticity.

Christopher Hogwood: 'We inherited 'authentic', I suspect, from the Dolmetsch generation and we probably at one time should have spelt it with a 'k' on the end. I think that 'olde music' and authentic has mercifully gone and in its place we have this shorthand, meaning an interest and pursuit of some historical relevances, and a guarded absorption of those into what we would consider a correct modern performing practice. That's probably a circuitous way of saying we invent it as we go along and look for back bearings, as it were, to the past.'

Gustav Leonhardt: 'I'm trying to be after that unreachable thing, realising that it's just as well it's unreachable, but I would like to play in such a way that, hopefully the composer not being present, but one of his best friends saying, 'Well, yes'. If

it's a moving piece, that man is moved. If it's a pleasing piece, that he is pleased. My playing is not 18th-century playing, but I would like it to be and I would like the present-day audiences to have the ears of an 18th-century audience because then it would enjoy that music best, I'm sure.'

Nikolaus Harnoncourt: 'I never used the term authenticity. I never used the term of right and wrong because I was always absolutely convinced that authenticity is a nonsense. We knew that any piece in the moment the composer has thrown it out of his workshop starts its own life. And the only authentic performance of a work is the performance of the composer himself, and it has nothing to do with instruments. So the only thing which really interested me personally was, in the music of a certain time, is it music of that time or has it a message which is not bound to a certain time. If that is so, then this part of the message is the important thing for us.'

Robert Morgan: 'I think that you always need to keep in mind the limitations of authenticity and the slipperiness of the word. The word is, of course, insupportable in a lot of reasons. It's so laden. I mean if you say you are doing something authentic, what are the implications for what everybody else is doing, right? It's inauthentic and therefore in some way dishonest, I suppose. I think that's the part of the authenticity movement that one has to keep reminding oneself about, that after all the decision to perform using historical evidence is a decision and it is in a sense an arbitrary decision in my view. It is a perfectly understandable, comprehensible and supportable decision, but it is only one of many decisions that one can make in deciding how one might deal with the music of the past.'

Richard Taruskin: 'I don't attack anybody about authentic performance, I attack the misuse of the word 'authentic'. Well, the word authenticity is used to mean nothing more than historical verisimilitude. Historical verisimilitude is not a very important thing to achieve it seems to me and we can't achieve it anyway. It seems to me that what performers like Roger Norrington are achieving, what many others - Malcolm Bilson is a good example, even though I don't like what he says I love the way that he plays - many performers are achieving now a kind of vital modern novel approach to the music which is so much more important than mere historical verisimilitude. [NK: But because historical verisimilitude is not obtainable, that's no reason for not using the historical information that is there?] I'm not an obscurantist, Nick. We should use whatever information we can find, and I wouldn't even say that because historical verisimilitude is unobtainable we shouldn't try to achieve it. What I do say is that it isn't a very important thing to achieve and why it has been so maximised as an aim for performance, I think, has a lot to do with the neuroses of the 20th century and very little to do with music aesthetics.'

Christopher Hogwood: 'I think historical evidence is definitely a moving target and preoccupations are also moving targets, public expectations are also moving targets and we're really in the grip of fashion. We knit our own baroque as Ray Leppard always said. I don't think any of it was spelt out as being this is an ur-performance and I don't think anybody except the more gullible public ever thought that you could get back to one particular performance which was the original and from which you should never again deviate.'

Of course it was wrong ever to say of a performance 'this is how it was'. The best results at this time in the mid-1980s came from those who used real musical insight on either side of the fence: the re-imaginings of Beethoven symphonies by the London Classical Players and Roger Norrington (who said 'the point about playing Beethoven on old instruments is, of course, to make him sound new') while at exactly the same time Simon Rattle was working away with his Birmingham orchestra to reveal the textures of Haydn symphonies. Scholars like Richard Taruskin did a huge amount to point out the logical inconsistencies of the theologically historical approach. He attacked the musical analogy of cleaning 'the dirt from the painting' on the very reasonable grounds that firstly, the 'dirt' was what performers had done to these pieces over the years and secondly, there was no 'thing' underneath anyway. This was undeniably true, but where I part company with him is that I don't think you can adopt a pose of moral indignation towards simply what people said they were doing, when actually what they were doing (whether it was what they said they were doing or not), was so revelatory in musical terms.

But this is almost now the ancient history of early music. What has really happened in what I think has been an enthralling last decade of our musical life? I think it must be true that the central reason why performing styles changed so quickly can only be that they had fallen drastically out of synch, as it were, with our experience. We became dissatisfied almost subliminally with the Vienna Philharmonic swimming through creamy Mozart with Karl Böhm and James Levine, with orchestras playing second-hand, muddy, bombastic Beethoven, and when the Academy of Ancient Music recorded the early Mozart symphonies with wonderful freshness under Christopher Hogwood, and then Roger Norrington recreated the Beethoven symphonies (I can recall so vividly the very first Eighth in St John's in February 1983, which seared across the sky like a prophetic comet), you had the sudden sense that here was the musical voice of the moment.

This had widespread appeal: you can be sure that the record companies would not have had three concurrent Beethoven symphony cycles on period instruments going at the start of the 1990s unless the public had really been responding to these sounds. Just as it had been Karajan and Walter Legge who created a style in the 1950s that

perfectly suited the needs and the tastes of the LP buyer, it was surely Hogwood, Norrington and Trevor Pinnock in the 1980s who created another style on the back of that short-lived CD boom.

So what is happening now? It looks as if two very contrasted movements from opposite ends of the spectrum may lead in the same direction. On the one hand, you have the early music movement rushing, as fast as its little mezza di voce legs will take it, away from the idea that there was a single historical style to which everyone had to conform. But on the other hand, there has been the extraordinary spectacle of our most traditional musical institutions wanting desperately to get up to speed with what is going on and to use the insights of the early music movement to rejuvenate themselves.

Anyone who had the startling experience just a couple of months ago of hearing the Vienna Philharmonic play Beethoven's Fifth as Simon Rattle wanted them to play it would have realised that this is a real revolution. Nikolaus Harnoncourt gave the 2001 New Year's Day concert in Vienna at the very heart of the European establishment. Roger Norrington and John Eliot Gardiner have been changing the playing style of the Vienna Philharmonic over the last few years and obtaining some remarkable results. Now in a sense this is not so surprising: it's what you might expect if these early music conductors are put in front of conventional but responsive orchestras.

What is more surprising is what is happening with other conductors, those who may be in or out of sympathy with the early music movement, who have probably never conducted a period instrument in their lives, but are now being profoundly affected by them. The new Beethoven symphony cycle from the Berlin Philharmonic and Abbado which I referred to earlier has just been followed up by his apparently even more remarkable live Beethoven cycle in Rome; these would simply not have been possible without the insights of the early music movement.

This fact was noted with typically nostalgic regret by Richard Osborne in his Gramophone review of Abbado's cycle, where he accused the Berlin Philharmonic of 'airbrushing out of the picture the music's German character and ending up with the Berlin Philharmonic sounding like a kind of glorified Chamber Orchestra of Europe', which I sense from Richard is quite some insult. He points out as a puzzling fact that Abbado can perform like this and yet venerates . Simon Rattle also venerates Furtwängler, but he and Abbado would surely be the first to say that this doesn't mean that either of them could physically perform anything like Furtwängler today. We're back to the fact that the music just doesn't sound like that to us any more, and though thanks to recordings we can still love their old performances, those conductors today who just ape and copy Furtwängler's mannerisms achieve nothing.

Every great performer wants to be in touch somehow with the composer, and must feel that in their way they have achieved that. Wanda Landowska is often credited with that notable put-down: 'You perform Bach's music in your way and I will perform it in his'. But perhaps truer to her approach was this splendid line: 'I study, I scrutinise, I love, I recreate.' Who could disagree with that? It's precisely the delicate balance in which those four elements are held that determines the spirit of our performing traditions. There is an excitement in sensing the immediacy of a direct contact with the creator - whether it's Ligeti or Elliott Carter or Mozart. It's just that bit more difficult with Mozart. I remember when I first went to the Mozart house in Salzburg, was in Mozart's own room, saw Mozart's own piano, and picked up an exhilarating CD by Malcolm Frager and Robert Levin recorded on that piano. One of the pieces I liked best turned out to have been mostly written by Robert Levin, from Mozart's uncompleted fragment. Then a few years later there was an article in *Early Music* saying just how many changes had been made to the structure and sound of Mozart's piano. And of course so much of Mozart house is really completely factitious and another of the Mozart houses in Salzburg has been completely rebuilt on the basis on architectural drawings by the Nazis because it was bombed and replaced by an office block..

Direct access to history is more elusive and subtle than we think. But does that mean we shouldn't try to get there? Different generations' ideas of recreation will be fundamentally different. None, surely, is morally privileged. When Percy Grainger transcribed a John Dowland song for modern piano it showed you, rather wonderfully, how he actually heard the music. When Stokowski arranged Dido's Lament, that timeless melody sang eloquently in a cello solo. He would introduce this piece without even mentioning that it was a transcription. To him it was Purcell as he heard it.

That sense of a great creator working with another great creator's material is instructive. You can go into the British Library and see Stravinsky's little score of *Pulcinella*, the originals by Pergolesi or Gallo or whoever it was drawn out for him, and his brilliant orchestrations added in. And what that reminded me of, over a century earlier, was Mozart's orchestration of Handel's *Messiah*, a creative act of practical performing necessity, where you can see that the copyist has prepared Handel's original so that Mozart could add the orchestral touches that turned it, in his view and that of Baron van Swieten, into contemporary music that could be performed anew. Really, that's not so far from what the best performers do. It's not far from what conductors did to the scoring of Beethoven symphonies with the best of intentions. We need a much more open, flexible attitude, a more creative approach to recreation, and maybe that is what the early music movement is now ready to give us.

For instance, it's surely true that rather than a dogmatic attachment to old instruments in all circumstances, we can recognise that some music needs old instruments more than other music. Certain repertoires, and certain parts of

certain composers' outputs, benefit more than others. The music of the French baroque, Couperin and Rameau, would not flourish as it does today had not performers such as John Eliot Gardiner and William Christie unlocked the codes in the language and found the instruments that made it sound (whether historically right or wrong) at least utterly convincing. The same was true of Berlioz with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment last autumn; when Simon Rattle conducted the *Symphonie fantastique* with them he said he didn't realize he's been conducting a transcription all his life. Perhaps sonority is especially important to French music: I would see more point in Debussy and Ravel with French woodwind than I would trying to revive an original orchestral sound for many other 20th-century composers.

The experience of reviving the baroque, too, showed us that the Germanic idea of abstract music was but one part of a world that includes theatre, spectacle and dance - and these things were quite as important in giving meaning to music. Handel's operas, after years of clod-humping basses singing the castrato parts, needed the not-quite-historical-but-it's-as-near-as-we-will-get beauty of Andreas Scholl's voice to persuade even conservative Glyndebourne that there was life in opera seria. (Will they wake up to Rameau? Only time will tell, but the current signs are not good.) And opera seria, as Reinhard Strohm has reminded us, is a prime example of an art-form where 'the work' really did reside not in the score, but in the performance, in what the prima donna or leading castrato made of it, not what the composer had put on the page (which was mercilessly changed from performance to performance): more like the musicals of today.

Across the centuries music has held totally different meanings for different people, as ritual, as celebration, as canary-fancying contest, as frivolous diversion or as profound structural argument, as politics reinforcing the power of princes and fermenting revolution. Whenever you look at it from a different direction, or something new happens, the view is different. As Eliot wrote about poetry, the historical sense 'involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole literature has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order'. In another essay Eliot wrote about how the thoughtful critic will rearrange the important pieces which form a tradition in different perspectives as new works arrive and change our view of the past. He was writing when the idea of a single developing tradition was still alive, but under threat from post-First World War culture and the arrival of broadcasting and recording.

The cultural context in which we hear music today has shifted seismically from that time. But we are slow to accept that. I was looking for a simple expression of all this when up popped Norman Lebrecht in *The Spectator* in January with a sentence which begged to be quoted here: 'Beautifully as the Tallis Scholars might evoke the baroque [and their director Peter Phillips was quick to point out that they actually evoke the Renaissance, but let that pass], medieval art [not quite the same as baroque art, but let that pass] is no substitute for the cultural centrality of a Brahms cycle, which has been destabilised by onslaughts of esoterica.' As a view of music in 2001 that takes some beating.

Even the musico-politically correct director of the Barbican Centre feels he can dislike Brahms with impunity these days: in the leaflet for the LSO series *Bohemian Spring* John Tusa says of Dvorák's symphonies that they have 'a limpidity, a purity of sound and a clarity of structure that leave me satisfied in a way that Brahms's heaving muddiness cannot'. Now I won't guess whose Brahms he's been listening to recently, but the fact that John Tusa feels he can say that shows how much taste has moved on. Thirty years ago Brahms symphonies, Tchaikovsky symphonies and Beethoven symphonies were central for Prom-goers and conductors. They are still in the repertory, of course, and highly valued (though Tchaikovsky does not automatically draw the crowds any more), but the symphonic pieces that conductors want to do and audiences throng to hear are very different: Mahler 2, Mahler 5, Shostakovich 5, Shostakovich 10, Prokofiev 5...

It is the nostalgic regret of those who believe that the central experience of our musical times is the Austro-German musical legacy, which is subtly expressed for example in Richard Osborne's marvellous Karajan biography, that lies at the root of our inability to come to terms with the changes in repertory and in performance style over the past two decades. If any change from 'the centrality of a Brahms cycle' equals decay, no wonder the future for Norman Lebrecht is all doom and gloom. What a sad life it must be.

The fact is that the best conductors, the Abbados and Haitinks, have come to terms with changes in taste and changes in performance styles. They relish it, and even those who don't admit it have been influenced by it. Great performers know the imperative to change. I loved Rostropovich's decision about how he was going to re-think the Bach cello suites; he declared 'for 45 years I play it one way. Now I play it another', and he took himself off into a hotel room with a pile of Glenn Gould CDs and a bottle of vodka.

I would now go so far to say that there is no worthwhile, thoughtful, intellectually stimulating and musically adventurous performance going on today that has not been touched by the period instrument movement - and I include contemporary music in that, because that's always had such a strong overlap with the players and the open-minded attitudes of early music. András Schiff and Alfred Brendel would own the influence of period pianos, even though they don't want to play them in public. There may be some who resist it or can't be bothered: OK, so Lorin Maazel hasn't absorbed any period style. But frankly, who cares? Does it really matter that the New York Philharmonic have appointed him their music director? They will quickly back themselves into a musical sidings while the impetus passes across America to those

conductors who do know something about what's happening to performance style, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Michael Tilson Thomas.

The musical melting pot is now a fact, like it or not. The result is Radio 3's Late Junction, the result is a composer like Unsuk Chin rewriting Machaut for the London Philharmonic. In this deconstructed world of performance, what's going to happen next? It would be a brave man who would guess, but I don't now think it's going to be what we'd always thought, the move of early music into the chronological future - Verdi, Elgar, Stravinsky - for the inhibiting reason that when the reliance on historical evidence meets the evidence of the gramophone, the only result can be an artificial copying that is as bad as imitating Furtwängler.

We've already had enlightened pragmatism from one direction as the modern-instrument orchestras strive to adapt themselves to the best of what's been going on. And we are getting some enlightened pragmatism from the other side too, which uses historical information but isn't confined by it. Just as Haitink at a Prom stood for the best of enlightened modern performance, last season Roger Norrington and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment gave something that stood, for everyone except hardened purists, as the best of enlightened period performance, using the resources that made Bach's B minor Mass live again - 250 years to the day after the composer died, in the year 2000 in a hall of the 1880s for some 5000 people - with all the historic acumen at their disposal, but not restricted by an artificial idea of what performing forces should be. From the countless reactions to the performance that we've had ever since, it can be judged to have had a huge impact.

The new revolution will not mean that players should abandon mastering period instruments and studying treatises with all the historical documentation at their disposal. It won't mean that neglected music will not suddenly be revived to surprise and delight us. It does not mean that second-rate teachers in music colleges can go back to assuming that the way their teachers did it was the right way, and that none of this revolution has ever happened. That way does lie tradition as slovenliness. But it does mean we should be open to surprise and open to instinct. Philip Brett once said that when we can perform again without self-consciousness, authenticity will cease to be an issue. I don't think in a 21st-century world it will ever be quite as simple as that, but the walls are down in a big way, the principal guest conductor of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment is becoming music director of the Berlin Philharmonic and the first guest conductor he will invite is William Christie. What next?

Things will change, but there are permanent things too. If we think of the classic of English music that Christie and his ensemble Les Arts Florissants are going to perform in the concert linked to this lecture, Purcell's Dido and Aeneas, this is a work which was one of the earliest baroque pieces to be revived by the Victorians; it has now been performed continuously for over a hundred years in a huge variety of versions. But for all the arguments that have swirled around that controversial piece, and the many pages of Early Music devoted to arguing its dating and its origins and its political allegories and its scoring and its staging, the most surprising thing for which we ought to be grateful is that in the hands of performers of genius in tune with the temper of the times, this music can speak across three centuries with such eloquence and directness that you really can believe that it was written yesterday.

Recordings used in the lecture:

**Beethoven**

Symphony No 7

Allegro con brio  
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra  
Bernard Haitink  
Live performance  
BBC Proms 2000

Vivace  
Staatskapelle Berlin  
Herbert von Karajan  
DG 423 526-2  
Recorded 1941

Presto  
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra  
Wilhelm Furtwängler  
DG 427 401  
Live recording 1953

Presto  
BBC Symphony Orchestra  
Arturo Toscanini  
BBC Legends BBCL4016-2  
Live recording 1935

Allegretto  
Concertgebouw Orchestra  
Erich Kleiber  
DG 425 987-2  
Recorded 1950

Allegretto  
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra  
Claudio Abbado  
DG 469 004-2  
Recorded 2000

Vivace  
New Philharmonia Orchestra  
Otto Klemperer  
BBC TV recording  
Royal Festival Hall, 1970

Vivace  
London Classical Players  
Roger Norrington  
BBC TV recording  
University College School, 1990

**Victoria**

Tenebrae Responsories

Seniores populi  
Choir of Westminster Cathedral  
George Malcolm  
425 078-2  
Recorded 1959

**Verdi**

Il trovatore

Di quella pira  
Enrico Caruso  
Vienna RSO/Gottfried Rabi  
BMG 74321 69766 2  
Recorded 1906 and 1999 [sic]

**Mozart Completed Levin**

Larghetto and Allegro in E flat  
Malcolm Frager  
Robert Levin  
ORF ISM 90/1  
Live recording 1990

**Dowland Arranged Grainger**

Now oh now I needs must part  
Penelope Thwaites  
Unicorn DKPCD 9127  
Recorded 1992

**Rameau**

Hippolyte et Aricie (Dances)  
La Petite Bande  
Sigiswald Kuijken  
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi GD 77009  
Recorded 1979

**Bach**

Mass in B minor

Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum  
Choir and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment  
Roger Norrington  
BBC TV live recording  
BBC Proms 28 July 2000

**Purcell**

Dido and Aeneas

With drooping wings  
Les Arts Florissants  
William Christie  
Harmonia Mundi 4509 48477-2  
Recorded 1995

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