

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

1. THE POWER OF MUSIC

1a. From a letter of St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (300s)

Passions sprung of lack of breeding and baseness are naturally engendered by licentious songs. But we should cultivate the other kind, which is better and leads to better, through his use of which, as they say, David, the poet of the Sacred Songs, freed the king from his madness. And it is related that Pythagoras, too, chancing upon some drunken revelers, commanded the flute player who led them to change his harmony and play to them in the Doric mode; and that thus the company came back to its senses under the influence of the strain, so that, tearing off their garlands, they went home ashamed. Yet others at the sound of the flute are excited to a Bacchic frenzy. Such is the difference between giving full ear to wholesome and to licentious music. Hence, since this latter is now in vogue, you should participate in it less than in the very basest things.

St. Basil (ca. 330 – ca. 379) was a high-ranking leader in the Christian church in Caesarea, now the city of Kayseri in Turkey. He references the biblical story of **David** who was said to free King Saul from madness caused by an evil spirit simply by playing his harp. The **Doric mode** was a type of scale used in ancient Greek music.

1b. From the *Confessions of St. Augustine* (397-398):

I used to be much more fascinated by the pleasures of sound than the pleasures of smell. I was enthralled by them, but you broke my bonds and set me free. I admit that I still find some enjoyment in the music of hymns, which are alive with your praises, when I hear them sung by well-trained, melodious voices, but I do not enjoy it so much that I cannot tear myself away. I can leave it when I wish. But if I am not to turn a deaf ear to music, which is the setting for the words which give it life, I must allow it a position of some honor in my heart, and I find it difficult to assign it to its proper place. For sometimes I feel that I treat it with more honor than it deserves. I realize that when they are sung, these sacred words stir my mind to greater religious fervor and kindle in me a more ardent flame of piety than they would if they were not sung; and I also know that there are particular modes in song and in voice, corresponding to my various emotions and able to stimulate them because of some mysterious relationship between the two. But I ought not to allow my mind to be paralyzed by the gratification of my senses, which often leads it astray. For the senses are not content to take second place. Simply because I allow them their due, as adjuncts to reason, they attempt to take precedence and forge ahead of it, with the result that I sometimes sin in this way but am not aware of it until later.

St. Augustine (340-430) was an important theologian and intellectual who was born in what is now Algeria. He is considered an important figure in the early church but is perhaps best known today for his thirteen-volume long *Confessions*, a work in which he candidly discusses his life and beliefs. It is considered one of the earliest autobiographies in Western culture.

So I waver between the danger that lies in gratifying the senses and the benefits which, as I know from experience, can accrue from singing. Without committing myself to an irrevocable opinion, I am inclined to approve of the custom of singing in church, in order that by indulging the ears weaker spirits may be inspired with feelings of devotion. Yet when I find the singing itself more moving than the truth which it conveys, I confess that this is a grievous sin, and at those times I would prefer not to hear the singer.

This then, is my present state. Let those of my readers whose hearts are filled with charity, from which good actions spring, weep with me and weep for me. Those who feel no charity in themselves will not be moved by my words. But I beg you, O Lord my God, to look upon me and listen to me. Have pity on me and heal me, for you see that I have become a problem to myself, and this is the ailment from which I suffer.

1c. Charles Burney's *A General History of Music* (1776)

Music is an innocent luxury, unnecessary, indeed, to our existence, but a great improvement and gratification of the sense of hearing.

With respect to excellence of Style and Composition, it may perhaps be said that to practiced ears the most pleasing Music is such as has the merit of novelty, added to refinement, and ingenious contrivance; and to the ignorant, such as is most familiar and common.

As Music may be defined as the art of pleasing by the succession and combination of agreeable sounds, every hearer has a right to give way to his feelings, and be pleased or dissatisfied without knowledge, experience, or the fiat of critics; but then he has certainly no right to insist on other being pleased or dissatisfied in the same degree. I can very readily forgive the man who admires a different Music from that which pleases me, provided he does not extend his hatred or contempt of my favourite Music to myself, and imagine that on the exclusive admiration of any one style of Music, and a close adherence to it, all wisdom, taste, and virtue depend.

There is a certain portion of enthusiasm connected with a love of the fine arts, which bids defiance to every curb of criticism; and the poetry, painting, or Music that leaves us on the ground, and does not transport us into the regions of the imagination beyond the reach of cold criticism, may be correct, but is devoid of genius and passion.

Charles Burney (1726 – 1814) was an English scholar and musical enthusiast whose *General History of Music* was the most ambitious work on the subject up to that time.

1d. From Hector Berlioz's book, *À Travers Chants* (1862)

Simply by glancing around it would be easy to cite incontrovertible facts in favor of the power of our own music—facts whose worth would at least equal that of the doubtful anecdotes of ancient historians. How often, at performances of the masterpieces of our great composers, have we seen listeners overcome by the most violent spasms, crying and laughing at the same time, and manifesting all the symptoms of delirium and fever! A young musician from Provence, overcome by the impassioned feelings aroused in him by Spontini's opera *La Vestale*, could not bear the thought of returning to our prosaic world after leaving the poetic heaven that had just been revealed to him; he forewarned his friends by letter of his intention, and after hearing once more the masterpiece that was the object of his ecstatic admiration, thinking rightly that he had attained the maximum share of happiness allotted to man on earth, one evening, at the entrance to the Paris opera house, he shot himself.

Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) was a major French composer best known for his work *Symphonie Fantastique*.

Gaspere Spontini (1774–1851) was an Italian composer who spent much of his life in France and Germany. His opera *La Vestale* (1807) is rarely performed today but was quite popular during the early 19th century.

1e. From *An Autobiography* by Igor Stravinsky (1936)

The phenomenon of music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order in things, including, and particularly, the coordination between *man* and *time*. To be put into practice, its indispensable and single requirement is construction. Construction once completed, this order has been attained, and there is nothing more to be said. It would be futile to look for, or expect anything else from it. It is precisely this construction, this achieved order, which produces in us a unique emotion having nothing in common with our ordinary sensations and our responses to the impressions of daily life. One could not better define the sensation produced by music than by saying that it is identical with that evoked by contemplation of the interplay of architectural forms. Goethe thoroughly understood that when he called architecture petrified music.

The Russian-born **Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1971) was among the most influential composers of the 20th century. He rose to fame while living in Paris in the 1910s with a series of ballets adapted from Russian folklore. In subsequent decades, however, he would become a strong proponent for music that he believed was devoid of non-musical associations. In an infamous passage from his 1936 autobiography he claims that music is “incapable of expressing anything at all.”

2. AUTHENTICITY

“The Spin Doctors of Early Music” by Richard Taruskin (*New York Times*, July 29, 1990)

What does early music have to do with history? In theory, everything. In fact, very little. At the beginning, the movement was frankly antiquarian—a matter of reviving forgotten repertoires and, with them, forgotten instruments and performing practices. Nobody objected to that, nor did most musicians even pay much attention to it. Now, it seems, Early Musickers are performing almost everything. They have laid claim to the standard repertory, and attention must be paid. More than that, sides are taken—the movement in its present phase has become controversial. But on closer inspection, it becomes ever more apparent that “historical” performers who aim “to get to ‘the truth’” (as the fortepianist Malcolm Bilson has put it) by using period instruments and reviving lost playing techniques actually pick and choose from history's wares. And they do so in a manner that says more about the values of the late 20th century than about those of any earlier era.

Whatever the movement's aims or claims, absolutely no one performs pre-20th-century music as it would have been performed when new. This may be so easily verified that it is a wonder anyone still believes the contrary. Here are some examples:

- Frans Bruggen, appearing with his Orchestra of the 18th Century at Zellerbach Hall on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, tells the audience during an intermission feature at the open dress rehearsal that the purpose of his enterprise is “to be obedient to the composer.” He then conducts a performance of Beethoven's “Eroica” Symphony in which the composer's meticulously indicated tempos are all ignored.

Richard Taruskin (1945-) is a professor of music at UC Berkeley and a prominent musicologist. An expert in many subjects, he has long been an ardent critic of musicians who claim to perform early music in a style that is “authentic” to either its time period or the composer's intentions. The term **early music** refers principally to music written before 1750. The “movement” Taruskin references is the 20th-century revival of interest in performing such music in historically accurate ways.

- Roger Norrington launches a meteoric career as “historical” performer of the standard classical repertory with a cycle of Beethoven symphonies on CD in which the composer's metronome indications are not only (pretty much) followed, but also emblazoned on the containers in an act of pious bravado. Having set the tempos, however, the conductor adheres to them with dogged rigidity, contradicting every eye-witness report we have of Beethoven's own conducting, as well as the explicit instructions of 18th-century conducting manuals.
- Mr. Bilson and John Eliot Gardiner (the latter conducting the English Baroque Soloists) complete the first recorded cycle of Mozart piano concertos on “original instruments,” representing the pieces in their true colors at last. But the notes they play, for the most part, are just the ones Mozart wrote. They do not add all the extra notes Mozart's audiences actually heard.

These performers and others like them can be counted on to flout historical evidence whenever it does not conform to their idea of “the truth.” They do it knowingly. In fact, because they are so much more historically aware than conventionally trained musicians tend to be, they flout historical evidence more knowingly than do their “modern” counterparts. With the growing success of Early Music, we are increasingly surrounded by unhistorical sounds masquerading as historical—or “authentic,” to use a word that more sophisticated performers now shun but that musical salesmen and spin doctors still spout to seduce the unwary consumer.

So is Early Music just a hoax? Are the Bruggens and Bilsons deceiving us, or themselves? Is “authentic” performance as inauthentic as all that?

Not at all. It is authentic indeed, far more authentic than its practitioners contend, perhaps more authentic than they know. Nothing said above about Messrs. Bruggen, Norrington and Bilson or the rest should be taken in itself as criticism of the results they have obtained. They have been rightly acclaimed. Their commercial success is well deserved. Conventional performers are properly in awe and in fear of them. Why? Because, as we are all secretly aware, what we call historical performance is the sound of now, not then. It derives its authenticity not from its historical verisimilitude, but from its being for better or worse a true mirror of late-20th-century taste.

Being the true voice of one's time is (as Shaw might have said) roughly 40,000 times as vital and important as being the assumed voice of history. To be the expressive medium of one's own age is—obviously, no?—a far worthier aim than historical verisimilitude. What is verisimilitude, after all, but correctness? And correctness is the paltriest of virtues. It is something to demand of students, not artists.

3. BACH'S DUTIES

Bach's agreement with the Town Council of Leipzig (1723)

Their worships the Council of the town of Leipzig, having accepted me to be Cantor of the School of St. Thomas, they have required of me an agreement as to certain points, namely:

1. That I should set a bright and good example to the boys by a sober and secluded life, attend school, diligently and faithfully instruct the boys.
2. And bring the music in the two chief churches of this town into good repute to the best of my ability.
3. Show all respect and obedience to their worships the Council, and defend and promote their honor and reputation to the utmost, and in all places; also, if a member of the Council requires the boys for a musical performance, unhesitatingly to obey, and besides this, never allow them to travel into the country for funerals or weddings without the foreknowledge and consent of the burgomaster in office, and the governors of the school.
4. Give due obedience to the inspectors and governors of the school in all their command in the name of the Worshipful Council.
5. Admit no boys into the school who have not already the elements of music or who have no aptitude for being instructed therein, nor without the knowledge and leave of the inspectors and governors.
6. To the end that the churches may not be at unnecessary expense I should diligently instruct the boys not merely in vocal but in instrumental music.
7. To the end that good order may prevail in those churches I should so arrange the music that it may not last too long, and also in such wise as that it may not be operatic, but incite the hearers to devotion.
8. Supply good scholars to the New Church.
9. Treat the boys kindly and considerately, or, if they will not obey, punish such in moderation or report them to the authority.
10. Faithfully carry out instruction in the school and whatever else is my duty to do.
11. And what I am unable to teach myself I am to cause to be taught by some other competent person without cost or help from their worships the Council, or from the school.
12. That I should not quit the town without leave from the burgomaster in office.
13. Should follow the funeral processions with the boys, as is customary, as often as possible.
14. And take no office under the University without consent of their worships.

And to all this I hereby pledge myself, and faithfully to fulfill all this as is here set down, under pain of losing my place if I act against it, in witness of which I have signed this duplicate bond, and sealed it with my seal.

Johann Sebastian Bach
Given in Leipzig, May 5, 1723

J.S. Bach (1685-1750) is now widely considered one of the most important composers of the Western art music tradition. Though he was generally well-regarded during his lifetime (particularly for his ability as an organist), he was not especially famous and was still treated as a rather ordinary employee when in 1723 he was hired to teach at the St. Thomas School in Leipzig, Germany.

4. MOZART AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF SALZBURG

4a. Mozart to his Father. Written in Vienna, May 9, 1781.

I am still filled with the gall of bitterness; and I feel sure that you, my good kind father, will sympathize with me. My patience has been so long tried that it has at last given way. I have no longer the misfortune to be in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg, and today is a happy day for me.

Three times already has this—I know not what to call him—said the most insulting things to my face, which I did not repeat to you, from the wish to spare your feelings, and I only refrained from taking my revenge on the spot because I always had you, my dear father, before my eyes. He called me a knave and a dissolute fellow, and told me to leave if I would. And I endured it all, though I felt that not only my own honor but yours also was aggrieved by this; but as you would have it so, I was silent. Now hear what passed. Eight days ago the messenger came to me quite unexpectedly and said I must instantly leave my lodgings. Due notice had been given to the others, but not to me. I packed up my things hurriedly, and old Madame Weber [Mozart's mother-in-law] was so kind as to take me into her house, where I have a pretty room, and am with obliging people, read to supply me at once with all that I require. I fixed my journey to Salzburg for Wednesday the 9th (this very day) with the post-carriage. Not being able, however, in the interim to collect the money I am still owed, I postponed my journey till Saturday.

When I went in to the Archbishop the first thing he said was, "Well! When are you going, young fellow?" I replied, "I intended to have gone tonight, but every place in the post-carriage is already engaged." Then came all in a breath that I was the most dissipated fellow he knew, no man served him so badly as I did, and he recommended me to set off the same day, or else he would write home to stop my salary. It was impossible to get in a syllable, for his words blazed away like a fire. I heard it all with calmness; he actually told me to my face the deliberate falsehood that I had a salary of 500 florins—called me a ragamuffin, a scamp, a rogue. Oh! I really cannot write all he said. At last my blood began to boil, and I said, "Your Grace does not appear to be satisfied with me." "How do you dare to threaten me, you rascal? There is the door, and I tell you I will have nothing more to do with such a low fellow!" At last I said, "Nor I with you." "Be gone!" said he; while I replied as I left the room, "The thing is settled and you shall have it tomorrow in writing." I put it to you, my dear father, if I was not rather too late in saying this than too soon. My honor is more precious to me than all else and I know it is the same to you. Be under no anxiety on my account; I am so sure of success here, that for a much less cause I would have given up my situation. I have, besides, three different times had good reason to do so, till such treatment seemed to become quite a matter of routine. I was twice called a cowardly fellow, so I was resolved not to deserve the name a third time...

As with many composers of his day, much of what we know about the day-to-day life of **Wolfgang**

Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) comes from letters written and received by the composer throughout his life. Here we have excerpts from two letters written by Mozart to his father Leopold. Leopold Mozart had helped his son acquire a position as composer and musician for the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg. The relationship between the young Mozart and the Archbishop, however, was frequently strained. Moreover, Mozart felt trapped and isolated in the relatively provincial community of Salzburg. In these letters Mozart writes to his father from the vibrant and cosmopolitan Vienna where he has finally decided to quit his job with the Archbishop for good. Leopold Mozart, whose own aristocratic employers were allied with the Archbishop, was not at all pleased by this decision.

4b. Mozart to his Father. Vienna, 12 May 1781.

In the letter I sent by post I wrote as if we were in the presence of the Archbishop, but now I am going to talk to you, dearest father, quite confidentially. Let us say nothing whatever of all the injustice with which the Archbishop has treated me from the very beginning of his reign to the present moment, nor of his incessant abuse, nor of all the impertinences and insults which he lavished on me to my face, nor of the undeniable right I have to speak about what has induced me to leave him, even without any cause of offense.

I have here in Vienna the best and most useful acquaintances in the world; I am beloved and esteemed by the highest families; I am treated with every possible consideration, and generously paid for my services as well. Am I to pine away my life in Salzburg for the sake of only 400 florins, to linger on without significant payment or encouragement, and unable to benefit you, which I shall certainly have it in my power to do here? What would be the result of staying in Salzburg? Ever and always the same: I must either worry myself to death or again go away. I need say no more, for you know it to be true yourself. But this I must tell you: everyone in Vienna has heard my story and all the nobility take my side and say that I ought no longer to allow myself to be defrauded in this manner. Dearest father, no doubt they will try to beguile you by many kind words, but these people are snakes and vipers; all dishonorable souls are so—disgustingly proud, and yet always ready to crawl. How odious!

The two valets know the whole obnoxious affair and one in particular said to someone, “As for me, I really can not say that I think Mozart wrong—in fact, I think he is quite right. Only suppose the Archbishop had treated me in such a way! He spoke to him as if he had been some miserable beggar. I heard it all—infamous!”

The Archbishop acknowledges his injustice, but has he not had frequent cause to do so? And has he ever behaved better in consequence? Never! So let us have done with it. If I had not been afraid of perhaps injuring you, things should long since have been on a very different footing; but, in fact, what can he do to you? — Nothing! When you know that all is going well with me, you can easily dispense with the Archbishop’s favor. He can not deprive you of your salary; besides, you always do your duty.

I pledge myself to succeed, or I never would have taken this step, although I must confess that after such an insult I would have quitted his service even if forced to beg my bread. For who would submit to be bullied, more especially when you can do far better? In the meantime, if you are afraid, pretend to be displeased with me, scold me well in your letters, and we two alone will know how the matter really stands; but do not allow yourself to be misled by flattery—be on your guard. Adieu!

5. BERLIOZ'S *SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE*

5a. An excerpt from *Le Figaro*, December 3, 1830.

If we must believe the rumors of the musical world, and the hopes which M. Berlioz's talent inspire, a concert announced for tomorrow, Sunday, will be one of those rare solemnities which attract the musical dilettantes to the temple in the rue Bergère. We will find there, they say, something to console us for the degradation of our lyric theatres. Let us not speak of the first pieces in the concert: an overture of the *Francs-Juges* already applauded, a cantata of *Sardanapalus* which earned its author the great Prix de Rome. Let us move on to the *Symphonie Fantastique*, which seems to us the main work.

This is the first time that a composer has tried to give an exact meaning to instrumental music. Until now, a symphony has been a development, more or less successful, of a melodic idea without denoting a specific meaning, and where the composer's only perceptible purpose has been to make a pleasing piece of music. M. Berlioz's symphony is a novel. It tells you with instruments a story like that of René, that of Werther.

5b. An excerpt from *Le Temps*, December 26, 1830.

Here is a young man, lanky, skinny, with long blond hair whose disorder has something that reeks of genius; all the traits of his bony form are drawn forcefully, and his large deep-set eyes, under a large forehead, dart jets of light. The knot of his necktie is tightened as though with rage; his suit is elegant because the tailor made it elegant, and his boots are muddy because his impetuous character refuses to sit still and be pulled along in a carriage, because the activity of his body must match the activity going on in his head. He runs about among the hundred musicians who fill up the stage of the Conservatoire, and although all these regulars in the Conservatoire orchestra make up perhaps the most admirable orchestra ever heard, he begs, he growls, he entreats, he excites each one of them. This man is Berlioz, he is the young composer who, despite his talent, has just carried away the prize at the Institute; and when the public applauds him, he does not advance to give an elegant bow and to let his arms fall servilely towards the parterre; he only stops where he is; he nods his head to acknowledge the applause which rings in the hall, and he continues the remark he was making to Launer or to Toulou. All that is what we saw at the concert which this young composer gave for the benefit of the wounded of the July Revolution.

Le Figaro and *Le Temps* were popular Parisian newspapers during Berlioz's day. *Le Figaro* (which was named after the "Figaro" in the Mozart opera and the Beaumarchais play) is still in production today. *Le Temps* was shut down in 1942 during the Nazi occupation of Paris.

René and **Werther** were the title characters of two of the most famous Romantic literary works (by Chateaubriand and Goethe, respectively).

The **Conservatoire** in Paris is the most prestigious school of music in France.

Berlioz won the coveted **Prix de Rome** in 1830, a prize that paid for an extended stay in Rome.

Episode

IN

THE LIFE OF AN ARTIST,

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE, IN FIVE PARTS,

By Hector Berlioz,

PERFORMED FOR THE FIRST TIME DECEMBER 5, 1830,

At the Conservatory of Music in Paris.

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Program.

The composer's aim has been to develop, IN WHAT THEY HAVE THAT IS MUSICAL, various situations in the life of an artist. The plan of the instrumental drama, lacking the help of words, needs to be explained in advance. The following program should thus be considered as *the spoken text of an opera*, serving to *introduce* the musical movements, whose *character and expression it motivates*.

RÊVERIES. — PASSIONS.

(First Part.)

The author imagines that a young musician, afflicted with that moral disease that a well-known writer calls the *vague des passions*, sees for the first time a woman who embodies all the charms of the ideal being he has imagined in his dreams, and he falls hopelessly in love with her. Through an odd whim, whenever the beloved image appears in the mind's eye of the artist it is linked with a *musical thought* whose character, passionate but at the same time noble and shy, he finds similar to the one he attributes to his beloved.

This melodic image and its model pursue him incessantly like a double *idée fixe*. That is the reason for the constant appearance, in every moment of the symphony, of the melody that begins the first *allegro*. The passage from this state of melancholy reverie, interrupted by a few fits of groundless joy, to one of delirious passion, with its movements of fury, of jealousy, its return of tenderness, its religious consolations—this is the subject of the first movement.

A BALL.

(Second Part.)

The artist finds himself in the most varied situations—in the midst of *the tumult of a party*, in the peaceful contemplation of the beauties of nature; but everywhere, in town, in the country, the beloved image appears before him and disturbs his peace of mind.

This is an English translation of the original program that Berlioz distributed at the concert in which his *Symphonie Fantastique* was first performed. The fonts and spacing approximate those found in the French-language original.

SCENE IN THE COUNTRY.

(Third Part.)

Finding himself one evening in the country, he hears in the distance two shepherds piping a *ranz de vaches* [a mountain melody] in dialogue. This pastoral duet, the scenery, the quiet rustling of the trees gently brushed by the wind, the hopes he has recently found some reason to entertain, all come together to afford his heart an unaccustomed calm, and in giving a more cheerful color to his ideas. He reflects upon his isolation; he hopes that his loneliness will soon be over...But what if she were deceiving him!... This mingling of hope and fear, these ideas of happiness disturbed by black presentiments, form the subject of the *adagio*. At the end one of the shepherds again takes up the *ranz des vaches*; the other no longer replies....Distant sound of thunder...Loneliness...Silence.

MARCH TO THE SCAFFOLD.

(Fourth Part.)

Convinced that his love is unappreciated, the artist poisons himself with opium. The dose of narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him into a sleep accompanied by the most horrible visions. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he is condemned to death and led to the scaffold, and that he is witnessing *his own execution*. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now somber and fierce, now brilliant and solemn, in which the muffled noise of heavy steps gives way without transition to the noisiest clamor. At the end of the march the first four measures of the *idée fixe* reappear, like a last thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

DREAM OF A WITCHES' SABBATH.

(Fifth Part.)

He sees himself at the sabbath, in the midst of a frightful troop of ghosts, sorcerers, monsters of every kind, all gathered together for his funeral; strange noises, groans, bursts of laughter, distant cries which other cries seem to answer. The beloved melody appears again, but it has lost its character of nobility and shyness; it is now no more than a dance tune, mean, trivial, and grotesque: it is *she*, coming to join the sabbath...A roar of joy at her arrival...She takes part in the devilish orgy...Funeral knell, burlesque parody of the *Dies irae*, sabbath round-dance. The sabbath round-dance and the *Dies irae* combined.

6. VIRTUOSITY

6a. Niccolò Paganini in *The Tatler* by Leigh Hunt (June 23, 1831).

His playing is indeed marvelous. What other players can do well, he does a hundred times better. We never heard such playing before; nor had we imagined it. His bow perfectly talks. It remonstrates, supplicates, answers, holds a dialogue. It would be the easiest thing in the world to put words to his music. We are sure that with a given subject, or even without it, Paganini's best playing could be construed into discourse by an imaginative person.

Last night he began a composition of his own (very good, by the way)—an *Allegro Maestoso* movement (majestically cheerful) with singular force and precision. Precision is not the proper word; it was a sort of peremptoriness and dash. He did not put his bow to the strings, nor lay it upon them; he struck them, as you might imagine a Greek to have done when he used his plectrum, and “smote the sounding shell.” He then fell into a tender strain, till the strings, when he touched them, appeared to shiver with pleasure. Then he gave us a sort of minute warbling, as if half a dozen humming birds were singing at the tops of their voices, the highest notes sometimes leaping off and shivering like sprinkles of water; then he descended with wonderful force and gravity into the bass; then he would commence a strain of earnest feeling or entreaty, with notes of the greatest solidity, yet full of trembling emotion; and then again he would leap to a height beyond all height, with notes of desperate minuteness, then flash down in a set of headlong harmonies, sharp and brilliant as the edges of swords; then warble again with inconceivable beauty and remoteness, as if he was a ventriloquizing-bird; and finally, besides his usual wonderful staccato notes, in distinct and repeated showers over his violin, small and pungent as the tips of pins.

In a word, we never heard anything like *any* part of his performance, much less the least marvel we have been speaking of. The people sit astonished, venting themselves in whispers of “Wonderful!”—“Good God!”—and other unusual symptoms of English amazement; and when the applause comes, some of them take an opportunity of laughing, out of pure inability to express their feelings otherwise.

6b. An account of Liszt in Germany by Moritz Saphir (May 1838)

After a concert, he stands there like a conqueror on the field of battle, like a hero in the lists; vanquished pianos lie about him, broken strings flutter as trophies and flags of truce, frightened instruments flee in their terror into distant corners, the hearers look at each other in mute astonishment as after a storm from a clear sky, as after thunder and lightning mingled with a shower of blossoms and buds and dazzling rainbows; and he the Prometheus, who creates a form from every note, a magnetizer who conjures the electric fluid from every key, a gnome, an amiable monster, who now treats his beloved, the piano, tenderly, then tyrannically; caresses, pouts, scolds, strikes, drags by the hair, and then, all the more fervently, with all the fire and glow of love, throws his arms around her with a shout, and away with her through all space; he stands there, bowing his head, leaning languidly on a chair, with a strange smile, like an exclamation mark after the outburst of universal admiration: this is Franz Liszt!

Leigh Hunt was a London theater critic and his struggle to find appropriate words to describe violinist **Niccolò Paganini's** (1782-1840) playing gives us some idea of the amazing level of the latter's musicianship.

About a decade after Paganini shook-up the musical world with his violin, the Hungarian **Franz Liszt** (1811-1886) did the same with his piano playing. This account was published in the German music journal *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. Liszt was known to play the piano so forcefully that he would frequently break strings and damage instruments during the course of a concert requiring several spares to be kept in reserve.

7. MUSIC IN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

Women and Keyboard Instruments in the Late 18th Century (excerpt from *Men, Women, and Pianos* by Arthur Loesser)

Who played these middle-class keyboards? Women mostly, and especially girls. They were the ones who had the most time and the most opportunity. The instrument was a house furnishing, and they were mostly at home. Their leisure also allowed the more imaginative among them plenty of encouragement for the tender introspection, for the emotional autointoxication of which home singing and clavier playing were convenient expressions.

There was another point: the keyboard instrument enabled females to preserve a maximum of decorum in the exercise of their musical efforts. Chastity, especially for women, is of course a universal value, yet it was the middle classes to whom it became an especially emphasized object of pride. It was one of their best-fortified perches from which they could strike their poses toward the other classes. Their girls were not tempted to laxity through want, like those of the peasantry; and their mature women did not lead the diffuse lives that would let them acquire the technique of sophisticated wantonness, or of using their sex in the furtherance of political and social influence, as did those of the aristocracy. At least, that is what the burghers liked to think: it was an ideal to which they aspired and pretended. Later eighteenth-century plays, aimed at a middle-class public, abounded in burgher maidens whose virtue was sharply set off against the lascivious goings-on among the nobility.

Chastity, however, as well as a lapse therefrom, is difficult to prove. Judgments in particular cases are likely to be guessed based on relatively insignificant elements of the suspect's behavior. Rarely did a mean-spirited person shadow a girl and become an eyewitness to her derelictions; but if her dress were too revealing, and too charged with abandon, why, it was possible that some people would presume her to be leaning perilously toward sin. In such a case, where great stress is laid on a virtuousness that must, almost always, remain a matter of conjecture, its appearance is almost more important than its reality. It is absolutely essential to her family's good repute that a middle-class girl seem to look and behave with a respectable "modesty."

Moreover, as we have noted before, it was a matter of almost equal pride that the wealthier middle-class women be relieved of heavier physical labor. To make all this unmistakably evident in public, their appearance was expected to exhibit a meticulous personal daintiness, their gestures an absence of violent muscularity, and their clothes and hairdress an unfunctional fragility and extravagance.

When a woman plays the flute, she must purse her lips; and she must do so likewise when she blows a horn, besides also giving evidences of visceral support for her tone. What encouragement might that not give the lewd-minded among her beholders? When she plays a cello, she must spread her legs: perish the thought! "In thousands of people it calls up pictures that it out not to call up," primly said the anonymous *Musikalischer Almanach für 1784*. When she plays the violin, she must twist her upper torso and strain her neck in an unnatural way; and if she practices much, she may develop an unsightly scar under her jaw. For centuries the violin was generally regarded as a quite unwomanly instrument.

Arthur Loesser (1894-1969) was a concert pianist and a professor of piano at the Cleveland Institute of Music. His book *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* was first published in 1954 and tracks the role the instrument played in society from its inception around 1700 into the 20th century.

All of these negative suggestions were avoided in the case of a keyboard instrument. A girl could play a harpsichord, a clavichord, or a pianoforte with her feet demurely together, her face arranged into a polite smile or a pleasantly earnest concentration. There she could sit, her well-groomed hands striking the light keys with no unseemly vehemence. There she could sit, gentle and genteel, and be an outward symbol of her family's ability to pay for her education and her decorativeness, of its striving for culture and the graces of life, of its pride in the fact that she did not have to work and that she did not "run after" men.

8. TWO TAKES ON PROGRAM MUSIC

8a. E.T.A. Hoffmann on the Nature of Instrumental Music (1813)

When we speak of music as an independent art, should we not always restrict our meaning to instrumental music which, scorning every aid and every entreaty from another art (specifically, poetry), gives pure expression to music's specific nature, recognizable in this form alone? It is the most Romantic of all arts—one might almost say that it is the only genuinely Romantic one—for its sole subject is the infinite. The lyre of Orpheus opened the portals of the underworld: music discloses to man an unknown realm, a world that has nothing in common with the external sensual world that surrounds him, a world in which he leaves behind all definite feelings to surrender himself to an inexpressible longing.

Have you even so much as suspected this truth about the nature of music, you miserable composers of instrumental music, you composers who have laboriously strained yourselves to represent definite emotions, even definite events? How can it ever have occurred to you to treat after the fashion of the pictorial arts the art diametrically opposed to depiction? Your sunrises, your tempests, your battle scenes, and the rest—these, after all, were surely quite laughable aberrations and they have been punished, as they well deserve, by being wholly forgotten.

In song, where poetry, by means of words, suggests definite emotions, the magic power of music acts as does the wondrous elixir of the wise, a few drops of which make any drink more palatable and more lordly. Every passion—love, hatred, anger, despair, and so forth, just as operas give them to us—is clothed by music with the purple luster of Romanticism. And even what we have undergone in life guides us out of life into the realm of the infinite.

As strong as this musical magic is—and growing stronger and stronger—it had to break each chain that bound it to other arts.

That gifted composers have raised instrumental music to its present position of prestige is due, we may be sure, less to the more easy means of expression (the greater perfection of the instruments, the greater virtuosity of the players) than to the more profound, more intimate recognition of music's specific nature.

Mozart and Haydn, the creators of our present instrumental music, were the first to show us the art in its full glory; the man who then looked on it with all his love and penetrated its innermost being is—Beethoven!

E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) was a German writer and composer. He is an important figure in the early Romantic era and wrote many reviews of the musical works of his time. Hoffmann was an untiring supporter of his contemporary Ludwig van Beethoven and this excerpt is taken from a highly laudatory essay entitled "Beethoven's Instrumental Music."

8b. “The Music of the Future.”

(Anonymous article; *New York Times* May 11, 1873.)

The characteristic feature of what is called “Music of the Future” (as distinguished from the traditional forms of instrumental music) is this: Composers nowadays try to embody a distinct poetical idea and the musical form is modified and possibly created entirely anew under the influence of this poetical idea; whereas, under the older régime of Haydn, Mozart, and their immediate followers, instrumental music was written according to prescribed forms and shapes, in strict accordance with traditional stencils. In Haydn’s time form was paramount, and the poetical element subservient, if it was present at all. In our day the poetical idea molds and shapes the form, and music expresses intense emotions instead of being confined to a sort of ornamental combination of pleasant sounds under more or less complicated structural restrictions. The danger of the old method was that a composer should lay stress upon form and neglect contents; that he should say things extremely well which were hardly worth saying. With us the danger is that a composer might express high emotions in a chaotic manner, and that he might attempt to express things in music which the art is incapable of full realizing.

While Richard Wagner himself started all of the futuristic chatter with his 1849 essay *The Artwork of the Future* (which actually referred to his idea of the *gesamtkunstwerk*), the phrase “**Music of Future**” soon took on a life of its own when it came to be the popular slogan to represent the Wagnerian belief that opera and program music was inherently superior to so-called “absolute” music. In this short article the anonymous writer discusses the perceived advantages and disadvantages of both types of music. “**Poetical idea**” is used here as a synonym for “program.”

9. LISTENING TO *PIERROT*

From “Schoenberg, Musical Anarchist, Who Has Upset Europe”

by James Huneker (*New York Times* January 19, 1913)

Early in December last, the fourth performance of a curious composition by Schoenberg was given at the Choralionsaal in the Bellevuestrasse, Berlin. The work is entitled “Lieder des Pierrot Lunaire,” the text of which is a fairly good translation of a poem cycle by Albert Guiraud. This translation was made by the late Otto Erich Hartleben, himself a poet and dramatist. I have not read the original French verse, but the idea seems to be faithfully represented in the German version. This moon-stricken Pierrot chants—rather declaims—his woes and occasionally joys to the music of the Viennese composer, whose score requires a reciter (female), a piano, flute (also piccolo), clarinet (also bass clarinet), violin (also viola), and cello. The piece is described as a melodrama. I heard it on a Sunday morning, and I confess that Sunday at noon is not a time propitious to the mood musical. It was also the first time I had heard a note of Schoenberg's. In vain I had tried to get some of his scores; not even the six little piano pieces could I secure. Instead, my inquiries were met with dubious or pitying smiles—your music clerk is a terrible critic betimes, and his mind oft takes upon it the color of his customer’s orders. So there I was, to be pitched overboard into a new sea, to sink or float, and all the while wishing myself miles away.

A lady of pleasing appearance, attired in a mollified Pierrot costume, stood before some Japanese screens and began to intone--to cantillate would be a better expression. She told of a monstrous moon-drunken world, then she described Columbine, a dandy, a pale washerwoman. The musicians were concealed behind the screens, (dear old Mark Twain would have said, “to escape the outraged audience”), but, ach Gott! we heard them, we heard them only too clearly!

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) was an Austrian composer (later residing in L.A.) who pioneered the writing of music in a new stridently atonal style that was highly unusual for its time. In this *New York Times* article the writer struggles to describe the experience of listening to Schoenberg’s landmark atonal song cycle, *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912). During this period the composer’s music was not widely performed and few members of the public would actually have heard any of it. The author’s colorful writing style perhaps reflects some of the exasperation he felt upon first hearing Schoenberg’s work.

It is the decomposition of the art, I thought, as I held myself in my seat. Of course, I meant decomposition of tones, as they say in the slang of the ateliers.

What did I hear? At first, the sound of delicate china shivering into a thousand luminous fragments. In the welter of tonalities that bruised each other as they passed and repassed, in the preliminary grip of enharmonies that almost made the ears bleed, and the eyes water, the scalp to freeze, I could not get a central grip on myself. It was new music, or new exquisitely horrible sounds, with a vengeance. The very ecstasy of the hideous! I say “exquisitely horrible,” for pain can be at once exquisite and horrible; consider toothache and its first cousin, neuralgia. And the borderland between pain and pleasure is a territory hitherto unexplored by musical composers. Wagner suggests poetic anguish; Schoenberg not only arouses the image of anguish, but he brings it home to his auditory in the most subjective way. You suffer the anguish with the fictitious character in the poem. Your nerves—and remember the porches of the ears are the gateways to the brain and ganglionic centres—are literally pinched, scraped.

I wondered that morning if I were not in a nervous condition. I looked about me in the sparsely filled hall. People sat still, they didn't wriggle; perhaps their souls wriggled. They neither smiled nor wept. Yet on the wharf of hell the lost souls disembarked and wept and lamented. What was the matter with my own ego? My conscience reported a clean bill of health, I had gone to bed early the previous night wishing to prepare for the ordeal. Evidently I was out of condition. (Critics are like prizefighters, they must keep in constant training else they go “stale.”) Or was the music to blame? Schoenberg is, I said to myself, the cruelest of all composers, for he mingles with his music sharp daggers at white heat, with which he pares away tiny slices of his victim's flesh. Anon he twists the knife in the fresh wound and you receive another horrible thrill, all the time wondering over the fate of Lunar Pierrot and—hold on! Here's the first clue. If this new music is so distractingly atrocious what right has a listener to bother about Pierrot? What's Pierrot to him or he to Pierrot? Perhaps Schoenberg had caught his fish in the musical net he used, and what more did he want, or what more could his listeners expect?—for to be hooked or netted by the stronger volition of an artist is the object of all the seven arts.

How does Schoenberg do it? How does he pull off the trick? It is not a question to be lightly answered. In the first place the personality of the listener is bound to obtrude itself; dissociation from one's ego—if such a thing were possible—would be intellectual death; only by the clear, persistent image of ourselves do we exist—banal psychology as old as the hills. And the ear, like the eye, soon “accommodates” itself to new perspectives and unrelated harmonies.

I give the conundrum the go-by; I only know that when I finally surrendered myself to the composer he worked his will on my fancy and on my raw nerves, and I followed the poems, loathing the music all the while, with intense interest. Indeed, I couldn't let go the skein of the story for fear that I might fall off somewhere into a gloomy chasm and be devoured by chromatic wolves. I was miserable afterward all the afternoon, my nerves fretted and on edge, and not even the sorcery of the pale amber witch, pilsner ale, soothed me. There was no antidote for the poison but sleep. I recalled one extraordinary moment at the close of the composition when a simple major chord was sounded and how to my ears it was of heavenly beauty; after perilous tossing and pitching on a treacherous sea of atonality it was like a field of firm ice under the feet.

10. MUSIC AND PROGRESS

From “Who Cares If You Listen?” by Milton Babbitt (1958)

Why should the layman be other than bored and puzzled by what he is unable to understand, music or anything else? It is only the translation of this boredom and puzzlement into resentment and denunciation that seems to me indefensible. The time has passed when the normally well-educated man without special preparation could understand the most advanced work in, for example, mathematics, philosophy, and physics. Advanced music, to the extent that it reflects the knowledge and originality of the informed composer, scarcely can be expected to appear more intelligible than those arts and sciences to the person whose musical education usually has been even less extensive than his background in other fields. But to this, a double standard is invoked, with the words “music is music,” implying also that “music is *just* music.” Why not, then, equate the activities of the radio repairman with those of the theoretical physicist, on the basis of the dictum that “physics is physics”? It is not difficult to find statements like the following, from the *New York Times* of September 8, 1957: “The scientific level of the conference is so high...that there are in the world only 120 mathematicians specializing in the field who could contribute.” Specialized music on the other hand, far from signifying the “height” of musical level, has been charged with “decadence,” even evidence of an insidious “conspiracy.”

Imagine, if you can, a layman chancing upon a lecture on “Pointwise Periodic Homeomorphisms.” At the conclusion, he announces: “I didn’t like it.” Social conventions being what they are in such circles, someone might dare to inquire: “Why not?” Under duress, our layman discloses precise reasons for his failure to enjoy himself; he found the hall chilly, the lecturer’s voice unpleasant, and he was suffering the digestive aftermath of a poor dinner. His interlocutor understandably disqualifies these reasons as irrelevant to the content and value of the lecture, and the development of mathematics is left undisturbed. If the concert-goer is at all versed in the ways of musical lifemanship, he also will offer reasons for his “I didn’t like it”—in the form of assertions that the work in question is “inexpressive,” “undramatic,” “lacking in poetry,” etc., etc., tapping that store of vacuous equivalents hallowed by time for: “I don’t like it, and I cannot or will not say why.”

Granting to music the position accorded to other arts and sciences promises the sole substantial means of survival for the music I have been describing. Admittedly, if this music is not supported, the whistling repertory of the man in the street will be little affected, the concert-going activity of the conspicuous consumer of musical culture will be little disturbed. But music will cease to evolve, and, in that important sense, will cease to live.

Milton Babbitt (1916 -) is an American composer and professor emeritus of music at Princeton University. His music focuses on the serial techniques first introduced by Arnold Schoenberg and later expanded by the generation of composers that followed the second World War. Babbitt became infamous for this article, originally published in the magazine *High Fidelity* in 1958. The provocative title was actually added by the magazine’s editor; Babbitt’s original title was the decidedly less caustic “Composer as Specialist.”