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Antiquarianism & Authority: the Period Instrument Revival through the Lens of Modernism

Maia Perez

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The relationship between the modernist movement and the early music revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century might seem to have little in common beyond sharing approximately the same time period. Modernism, after all, conjures up the sound of serial and atonal music, and early music that of harpsichords and J.S. Bach. But the early music revival might be seen to share more with modernism than at first glance assumed, and has, in fact, even been argued to be a direct manifestation of modernist thought and ideas—simply applied to music from a vastly different time period than one the modernists were composing in, and veiled by a claim to historical “authenticity.” One of the foremost scholars on this topic, and one of the foremost advocates for early music’s position as a “version” of early modernism is Richard Taruskin. As he claims in his collection of essays on early music performance practice in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Text and Act*, the early music revival “embodied a whole wish list of modern[ist] values.”<sup>1</sup> While the early music revival fixated on scores hundreds of years old, consulted scholars of music history, and rediscovered old performance practice texts and instrument instruction books from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and earlier in a desperate attempt to find an “authority” for the musical decisions they were making, they actually were “embod[y]ing” the same thoughts and values of their actual era. The early music revival may have searched for “authenticity,” but Taruskin utterly rejects the idea that they found the type of historical “authenticity” they desired. Instead, he argues that while the music is “authentic,” it is only so to its own modern values, ideas, and the modernist thought that influenced its creation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Taruskin gives one of his more coherent definitions of modernism at the beginning of “Music in the Early Twentieth Century” in his *Oxford History of Western Music*. He states

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

that modernism “asserts the superiority of the present over the past (and, by implication, of the future over the present), with all that that implies in terms of optimism and faith in progress.”<sup>2</sup> This definition acknowledges both the modernist belief in the present’s superiority and the still-conflicted relationship between the present and the past. For in order for modernists to have believed they were progressing, they must also have believed they understood the past—and that the past had value. Their “faith in progress” necessitated “faith” that the past had also been continually and beneficially progressing. This connection—and even apparent contradiction—between the past and the present thus becomes a dichotomy that influences and is associated with many modernist ideas. Taruskin further explains the conflict in terms of the “musical inheritance” modernist composers viewed themselves as possessing. He states that although modernist composers tried to view their “relationship to...tradition” as “an unproblematic matter of inheritance, it was a deeply conflicted and contentious relationship.”<sup>3</sup> Their relationship to “tradition,” or to elements of the past, and past composers’ music, was thus both conflicted within itself and conflicted with their dedication to the present and to the future.

Another major component of modernism that Taruskin discusses is the composer’s self-awareness. He claims “modernists live in the present with enthusiasm, an enthusiasm requiring audacity, high self-regard and self-consciousness (along with its complement, heightened alertness to the surrounding world), and above all, urbanity.”<sup>4</sup> Modernist’s “high self-regard and self-consciousness” meant that many of these composers were

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Taruskin, “Music in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” in *Oxford History of Western Music*. (New York: Oxford University Press), accessed May 2014, “Reaching for Limits.” <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume4/actrade-9780195384840-miscMatter-014008.xml>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

concerned with how well performances and scores conveyed their musical intent, and how to position themselves historically.

And from this definition—and this unveiled dichotomy between the present and the past—it becomes clearer why Taruskin felt able to argue that the early music revival is yet another manifestation of modernism itself. He sees the early music revival's preoccupation with the composer and the score a direct result of modernism's obsession with the composer. He argues that although early music looks backwards to the past more than modernism, it does so through a modernist lens. However, Taruskin primarily focuses on the later early music revivals during the 1950s onwards, and not the early beginnings of these revivals—such as the English Period Instrument Revival.

Unsurprisingly, modernism and the Period Instrument Revival shared many of the same ideas and values, as both began around the same time and even included some of the same people. Most scholars consider the “early” modernist period to begin about a decade before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to continue through the 1910s.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, one of the earliest figures of the Period Instrument Revival—and one of the most important in this early stage—Arnold Dolmetsch, began performing his “authentic” viol concerts in the 1890s.<sup>6</sup> His performance practice text, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries: Revealed by Contemporary Evidence*, was published for the first time in 1915—two years after the first performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The chronological overlap is important, but what is perhaps surprising is how many personal connections between the two movements existed as well. Two prominent modernist poets, William

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “Mr. Dolmetsch's Viol Concert,” *The Musical Times* 34 (Feb. 1, 1893): 90.

Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound, were both friends of Dolmetsch.<sup>7</sup> And later in both movements' histories, the modernist composer Paul Hindemith ran a summer clinic for early music performance at Tanglewood.<sup>8</sup> Even Arnold Schoenberg composed a work transcribed from a Handel concerto, despite his personal distaste for Handel's compositions.<sup>9</sup> Considered from this perspective of shared ties, it should be no surprise that just as Pound included Dolmetsch in his *Canzones*, Period Instrument Revivalists like Dolmetsch would have included modernist values in their own works.

Though thus far modernism has been referenced as a seemingly homogeneous movement, this is obviously not the case. Even from the five figures already mentioned—Yeats, Pound, Stravinsky, Hindemith, and Schoenberg—it should be obvious that modernism existed in numerous forms,<sup>10</sup> and that its ideas and values were likewise varied. And in many cases, various modernist ideas contradict themselves. Yet when focusing on a comparison of modernism to the Period Instrument Revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most interesting of its values to consider are those that deal directly with modernism's previously-mentioned conflicted dichotomy between the past and the present. Three values considered below in relation to the Period Instrument Revival include modernism's frequent use of the past as a source of “exotic” source material, its

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<sup>7</sup> Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the revival of the bardic arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Johann Buis, “Early Music and Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) in the United States: A Centenary Evaluation,” *College Music Symposium* 36 (1996).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Auner, “Schoenberg's Handel Concerto and the Ruins of Tradition,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49 (1996).

<sup>10</sup> These various forms comprise both various mediums and various types of modernism itself. Modernism stretched across literary, musical, and artistic divides, as explored in-depth in Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. And within modernism itself, numerous contradictory movements existed—Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone system, Neoclassicism, German expressionism, and extreme experimentalism.

desire to canonize the past to secure the canonicity of the present, and its view of the composer (past and present) as an indisputable if lonely authority. These three values all challenge or problematize the modernist claim that the present is superior to the past, and that musical “progress” must be their only goal. It is also in these three major ideas where the Period Instrument Revival most overlaps with modernism—because it too is a seeming contradiction of a movement attempting to revive the past and yet to perform in the present. And by focusing on these particular three shared qualities, especially during the beginning of the modern early music movement—the Period Instrument Revival—it becomes apparent that there are also some crucial differences between modernism and early music as well, which even Taruskin may not have yet considered.

One of the most widespread modernist ideas was exoticism—and the primitivism, historicism, and the resurgence of folk-song that accompanied it. Modernists, like their Romantic predecessors, remained fascinated with places, cultures, and times other than their own. Pound, for instance, appropriated the Japanese *Noh* tradition, while Stravinsky used Russian folk songs as a form of primitivism in *Rite of Spring*. And in England, composers like Ralph Vaughan Williams, Edgar Elgar, and Gustav Holst were writing a pastoral style that, although once seen as a direct contrast to modernism, has more recently been argued to be merely another extension of it.<sup>11</sup> This English version of exoticism—returning to its own past as an “other”—demonstrates the conflicted relationship modernist composers had with the past. By exoticizing it, they at once distanced

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<sup>11</sup> See Eric Saylor, “‘It’s Not Lambkins Frisking at All’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” *The Musical Quarterly* 91 (2008), 39-59, and J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

themselves from it and made it appropriate to use it in their own “modern” compositions. The past became both an “other” and a familiar part of their own music.

Even the neoclassicism of composers like Stravinsky could in some ways be seen to be another instance of this use of the past as “exotic” source material. One of his earliest neoclassical works, the ballet *Pulcinella*, premiered in 1920 and was inspired by rediscovered 18<sup>th</sup>-century scores. And in England, Benjamin Britten was also experimenting with and composing neoclassical music.<sup>12</sup> As Taruskin argues, “like its collateral descendent, the ‘historical performance’ movement, [neoclassicism] was a tendentious journey back to where we had never been.”<sup>13</sup> Like many early music revivals, the past that appeared in ballets like *Pulcinella* and other modernist, neoclassical works was not by any means an accurate representation of the past. But it was an attempt to engage with the past, and to use it as an “other” in their compositions.

Modernism was also deeply concerned about the generations of musicians and styles of music that came before it, just as the Romantics had been before them. Though they “othered” and distanced the past, this “othering” also allowed them to glorify it, and to use it as a way to canonize specific composers and create a musical “lineage” of progress. One of the other main preoccupations of many modernists became seeing themselves as direct inheritors of this “canonized” chain of influential composers—particularly German composers, like Arnold Schoenberg, saw themselves as the rightful “heirs” to a long, continually progressing, tradition of Western music. In order for them to believe that the present was superior to the past, they also had to believe the past had continually

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<sup>12</sup> Philip Rupprecht, ed., *Rethinking Britten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Richard Taruskin, “Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 16 (1993): 287.



progressed, getting better and better, until it had reached them. This idea was most easily understood when encapsulated in a specific and direct “lineage” of great composers—like the familiar Bach, to Mozart, to Beethoven line. By placing certain composers on the highest points of progress during their own lifetimes, modernist composers were able to believe they also had the potential to individually contribute significantly to the “progress” of music. And this idea would not have been able to exist without the canonization of previous generations—a concept that began early in Romanticism, and was clearly still a foundation for some of the most important modernist values.

This obsession with canonization also led to an increasing view of the composer as the ultimate authority in music. The lineage many modernists created focused entirely on composers, creating the fiction that only they contributed to musical progress. As modernism progressed, the absolute authority of composer intent became an ever-greater concern. Stravinsky’s remark that performers were only “interpreters”<sup>14</sup> of music, and not creators themselves, is one famous representation of this popular modernist view. As the inheritors of their canonized lineage, many modernist composers saw it as their duty to demand this authority and use it to progress music even further.

Perhaps because of this focus on both the canonization of the past, and the incessant concern for progress in the present and their own authority, modernism became an increasingly “high-art” movement, removing itself from audiences and retreating into scholarship and the university. Composers became authorities, and pushed music forward no matter the cost—and the cost was often people actually liking their music. As Schoenberg explains: “I had the duty of developing my ideas for the sake of progress in

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<sup>14</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Stravinsky, selected correspondence*, trans. Robert Craft (New York: Knopf, 1982).

music, whether I liked it or not; but I also had to realize that the great majority of the public did not like it.”<sup>15</sup> Even the title of this article—“How One Becomes Lonely”—emphasizes this sense of increasing isolation from the public.<sup>16</sup> Communicating or engaging with the public became less and less of a goal, and the progress of music became far more important. As Taruskin explains, modernism “has always insisted on representing art as divorced from the social world, subject only to internally motivated stylistic change.”<sup>17</sup> The modernists who focused on “progress” saw the purpose of music as having little to do with audience enjoyment, or even with expending the necessary energy to educate audiences. Instead, modernism sought only music’s own “internally motivated” progress. Modernism’s obsession with progress had resulted in an increasing isolation from its society.

The idea of the artist as an isolated “genius,” separate from society and necessarily distanced from his audience, was not a new idea in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, it had been consistently developing throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was particularly tied to Romanticism. The Romantic artist created through internal reflection and communion with the natural world—thus turning inwards and distancing himself from society. But while the Romantic artist distanced himself from society in order to create, he still was, in fact, creating for his society. As M. H. Abrams, a literary critic best known for his work on Romanticism, says: “The Romantic aesthetic was of art for man’s sake, and for

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<sup>15</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, “How One Becomes Lonely (1927),” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: University of California Press, 1974), 53.

<sup>16</sup> One of the well-known later extremes of such an attitude is Milton Babbitt, “Who Cares if You Listen?” *High Fidelity* (Feb. 1958).

<sup>17</sup> Taruskin, *Oxford History of Music*, “Reaching for Limits.”

life's sake."<sup>18</sup> The Romantic artist desired to function as a type of "prophet"—a leader who, through his natural and internal observations, would be able to guide humanity in the right direction.<sup>19</sup>

The separation between the artist and the society continued to increase throughout the century, and as composers became more and more isolated from their society, they became far less venerated. By the time modernism began, the gulf seemed impossible to cross. And as many modernist composers continued to focus on the "progress" of music, they moved ever farther away from their audiences and their society. Their music was met not with admiration and awe, but with misunderstanding, confusion, and occasionally disgust. Thus rejected by their present audiences, modernist composers increasingly looked towards the future—hoping to find there a musical society that was ready to understand them. As Hindemith argues, "the great geniuses lived and died unrecognized."<sup>20</sup> They could only hope for future recognition in the face of present misunderstanding and rejection. Taruskin explains that because "prestige attaches itself more readily to the esoteric than to the popular," "it has been the lonely modernist's chief consolation."<sup>21</sup> The self-imposed isolation of the Romantic artist had transformed into a bitter refusal to

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<sup>18</sup> M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1971), 429.

<sup>19</sup> Beethoven is the most obvious musical example. As Tim Blanning, writing about the history of public perception of music, claims, "he was the true mould-breaker, establishing the model of the composer as the angry, unhappy, original, uncompromising genius, standing above ordinary mortals and with a direct line to the Almighty." Beethoven was isolated, but held in reverence. Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music* (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 2008), 99.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Hindemith, *A composer's world, horizons and limitations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 218.

<sup>21</sup> Taruskin, *Oxford History of Music*, "Research vs. Communication."

engage with the society that had rejected them. As Schoenberg says: “an artist treated in this way becomes not only suspicious, but even rebellious.”<sup>22</sup>

Like modernism, the Period Instrument Revival too struggled to find a “place” in society for its specific, and at times inaccessible art. The Period Instrument Revival began in the late 1880s and at first centered almost entirely on one man—Arnold Dolmetsch, mentioned previously. Dolmetsch was a French violinist and instrument maker who moved to England in his 20s and became obsessed with period instruments.<sup>23</sup> He learned to make them and began performing on them in England, holding concerts in London with ensembles consisting primarily of his family and his students. His concerts eventually became popular throughout Europe and the United States, and he himself profoundly influenced early music; but at the beginning the movement was beleaguered with complaints of “antiquarianism” being its only possible value. Period instruments were “exotic” in the way museums were—dusty and dead. The Period Instrument Revival’s foundation in the modernist ideas of exoticism and canonization had also given it an untenable place in current musical culture, no evident purpose, and an isolation from audiences similar to what modernists themselves faced.

By exploring similarities between modernism and the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century English Period Instrument Revival as well as their two most major differences—their engagement with audiences and respective authorities—we can see that despite the Period Instrument Revival’s similarities to modernist ideas, and their shared resultant problems, it did not embrace modernism’s isolation from audiences and subsequent retreat into scholarship—

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<sup>22</sup> Schoenberg, “How One Becomes Lonely,” 38.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Campbell, *Dolmetsch: The Man and his Work* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975).

instead, the Period Instrument Revival strove to engage with audiences, and reclaim a musical, and most importantly, cultural value for its music. And although Arnold Dolmetsch may have been just as authoritative and off-putting as the worst of modernist composers, this vastly different goal resulted in a movement that rejected the label of antiquarianism, and in doing so dispersed authority to not just the composer, but to the historians, performers—and the instruments themselves. We will use the contemporary reception of Dolmetsch’s work to understand how the movement dealt with these dual problems of “antiquarianism” and authority, and how the movement did not seek the isolation of modernism, but rather tried to assert its social and cultural value, an issue intrinsically connected to their attempts to validate the use of period instruments.<sup>24</sup>

### The Problem of Antiquarianism

Like modernism, the Period Instrument Revival struggled with its music’s place in its society, but the way Revivalists reacted to this struggle, at least during its formative years in England, was quite different. As the novelty of the rediscovering of these old, historical, instruments wore off, critics began to question the value of continuing to learn these instruments and to perform the musical works that accompanied them. And even its supporters too-often applied the label of “antiquarian”—relegating period instruments and their music to museums, and only allowing them to be of historical, not musical, interest. But rather than reject this audience, the people most closely tied to this beginning of the Period Instrument Revival argued that their music did, in fact, have a valuable role and

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<sup>24</sup> See Katherine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Ellis takes a similar approach to discuss early music revival occurring in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, a revival which she argues was also an attempt to revive French culture, and one which was connected to French nationalism.

place in society—they maintained throughout the movement’s history that not only were the instruments and early music not merely “antiquarian,” but that they possessed important musical value and even greater cultural value. By focusing on Arnold Dolmetsch and the contemporary reception of his works, we can trace his rejection of both “antiquarianism” and the modernist trend of social isolation, and the affirmation that using period instruments in performance was a necessity in establishing these values.

Throughout this section we will discuss reviews of Dolmetsch’s concerts and festivals, primarily from *The Musical Times*. This long-running journal had a well-educated audience, but not necessarily one entirely composed of dedicated musical scholars. The largely anonymous reviews provide at least a small glimpse into how educated, middle and upper class English society responded to and perceived Dolmetsch’s performances, writings, and ideas. And because *The Musical Times* consistently reviewed Dolmetsch’s performances from the start of his career in England to the end of it, it also provides a reasonably consistent source by which to explore how the perception of Dolmetsch changed throughout the Period Instrument Revival’s history.

Arnold Dolmetsch, the most well known revivalist in England, began performing on his period instruments in the early 1890s. Although he was born in France to a family known for their instrument playing and instrument making, he moved to England in the 1880s to attend the Royal College of Music in London.<sup>25</sup> Dolmetsch played the violin, and, as his period instrument making developed, many other historical instruments; but he especially performed on lute, harpsichord and viol. Dolmetsch’s family also participated in his fascination with early music—his third wife, Mabel Dolmetsch, learned period dances

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<sup>25</sup> Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, 13-14.

to accompany his performances, and his children learned to play viols and other instruments as well. Dolmetsch began his performances in his own home and other small venues, attracting rather eccentric audiences. But as his popularity grew, he eventually was invited to perform at numerous universities, festivals, and even for recordings. His life-long dedication to the revival of period instruments took many forms—performer, instrument-maker, scholar, and teacher—and his work and ideas about the purpose of Period Instrument performance became a major influence on the larger early music revival itself.<sup>26</sup>

Dolmetsch was adamant that both the music of the past and the instruments of the past were not lesser than their modern day counterparts—only entirely different. But this difference made it difficult for his audiences to understand these performances. Audiences no longer shared the same musical styles or values of the musicians who originally played the instruments, and often had never even heard these instruments in performance before. Dolmetsch had almost rediscovered a hitherto relatively untouched collection of music and instruments, and it is thus unsurprising that his first performances were often greeted as a mere novelty, just as many modernist performances were first received.<sup>27</sup> Dolmetsch, through his attempts at recreating the past, was also presenting something entirely new to his audiences. As one reviewer for *The Musical Times* stated about a performance in 1895:

The “oldest inhabitant” of [London] cannot recall a performance of the last-named [works of Bach], and the Concerto and Sonata are certainly new to the present

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<sup>26</sup> Some of his students who we will discuss later are Gerald Hayes and Robert Donington, and especially through the Haslemere Festival (also discussed later), he was able to influence many other younger period instrument performers.

<sup>27</sup> For one discussion of how a modernist work could be received as a novelty, see Walter B. Bailey, “Will Schoenberg Be a New York Fad?: The 1914 American Premiere of Schoenberg’s String Quartet in D Minor,” *American Music* 26 (2008): 37-73.

generation. Mr. Dolmetsch should be warmly thanked for bringing these admirable works to a hearing.<sup>28</sup>

Although this is a positive review, the value it ascribes to Dolmetsch's music is that of novelty. Nothing is said about the musical value of these pieces, just that they are not often performed or heard. The reviewer makes it clear that the primary value of this music is this novelty—not necessarily anything else. And while bringing these novelties to an audience is presented as a positive and “admirable” goal, it raises the question of what purpose this music will have when that novelty has faded.

The perceived novelty of these works indicates that they also possessed an almost “exotic” quality—the same quality that many modernist composers desired in their compositions. As another reviewer in the same year writes: “these works—so delightfully fresh to modern ears, [are] so old and yet so new.”<sup>29</sup> Just as modernist composers often cultivated novelty by borrowing from other cultures and times, the music that Dolmetsch had rediscovered was often directly “borrowed” from England and other European countries' own pasts. Like the quotes of orientalism or folk-song in modernist compositions, these works were “fresh to modern ears.” They may not have, like the quotes, been newly incorporated into modern music, but they still allowed audiences to hear musical styles with which they would have been unfamiliar. Their distance from their current audiences allowed them to be interesting and novel. And as these reviewers have indicated, for some members of the audience, this was probably purpose enough—for now.

But other reviewers and concert-goers did not see this old music and these old instruments as an interesting novelty—instead, they saw one of the most important

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<sup>28</sup> “A Dolmetsch Concert,” *The Musical Times* 36 (Jan. 1, 1895): 26.

<sup>29</sup> “Dolmetsch Concerts,” *The Musical Times* 36 (Feb. 1, 1895): 98.



interests in this revival as an antiquarian interest. The use of the term “antiquarian” reflects a sense that this music was only relevant in that it helped scholars study the past—it no longer had a place in living performances or musical traditions. “Antiquarian” implies a focus on studying, collecting, and preserving. Thus “antiquarian” music belongs not in concert halls, but in universities and museums.

The label of antiquarian is a complicated and nuanced one, but also a label connected to the modernist ideas of canonization and exoticism. If something is antiquarian, it is fit for historical study—a relic of the past that has been preserved enough in order to survive into the present. Like something labeled exotic, it is an “other” from a different place, although in this case from a different temporal place. Because it is an “other,” it is not truly connected to the present. Instead, an antiquarian object, like an exotic object, provides a foil against which the present can be compared. And antiquarianism also connects to the idea of canonization. To canonize something also involves an element of preservation, as the act of canonization fixes a person or work in a specific relationship to other people or works, and usually also fixes them at a specific point in a progression. And similarly to exoticizing something, it provides something to compare current people and works against. Throughout the history of the Period Instrument Revival, antiquarianism held implications from both of these connections—music called “antiquarian” was preserved, dead music from an ancient past, and fit only for either historical study or as a mere novelty.

And for many of both Dolmetsch’s critics and his supporters, his concerts were indeed this type of historical relic, to be studied and preserved. In a review of one of his earliest concerts, in 1893, the reviewer refers to the music as “charming and most

interesting specimens.”<sup>30</sup> Although the reviewer is again positive, and acknowledges that the pieces are “charming” the use of the word “specimen” immediately creates a sense that these pieces, rather than being important to the present, are rather relics of the past.

“Specimen” has a scientific implication—and particularly one of preservation. They may be charming, but they are also dead and “preserved,” and thus so tied to their own historical setting as to be unimportant influences in the present. And other reviewers are even more critical of the musical worth of such music. As an anonymous reviewer writing in 1894 claims, the period music played by Dolmetsch is “characterized by a vagueness of tonality that to us deprives them of great musical interest.”<sup>31</sup> The musical style of the works is too far removed from the modern audiences to be of anything other than reasonably enjoyable—“charming.” Instead, the true interest lies with the historians. As the reviewer continues:

Most interest was attached to the performances of Lock’s chamber music, of which probably very little if any has been heard by even musicians of antiquarian tendencies.<sup>32</sup>

This reviewer’s perspective is clear; musically, these pieces have little interest for a modern audience. Instead, their purpose is an antiquarian one: to accurately represent the past in order to better study it and to preserve it.

This preservationist, antiquarian attitude towards the purpose of Dolmetsch’s period instruments and his music also indicated a distance between the general audience and the music—a distance similar to the isolation that some modernist composers

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<sup>30</sup> “Mr. Dolmetsch’s Viol Concert” (Feb. 1, 1893): 90.

<sup>31</sup> “Mr. Dolmetsch’s Recitals,” *The Musical Times* 35 (Apr. 1, 1894): 244.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

experienced. The reviewer's comment that this music is new even to "musicians of antiquarian tendencies" implies the existence of a more educated, perhaps even elite audience. And while this reviewer seems to mention this audience in order to emphasize that the "novelty" of this music has a widespread appeal, other reviewers only wanted that elite audience. Like some modernist composers, some reviewers of Dolmetsch also occasionally expressed a distaste and rejection of the "typical" concertgoers. In 1897, Dolmetsch presented a concert at the University of Edinburgh. The reviewer of this concert explains that:

It was very fortunate that these fascinating old works on the no less fascinating original instruments could be presented in the quiet of academic groves, where one had a chance of hearing them undisturbed by the necessities of catering to popular taste.<sup>33</sup>

This delight in being able to experience Dolmetsch's music "undisturbed" by "popular taste" reflects the same kind of rejection of the popular audience that many modernist composers also felt. This concert almost seems a perfect example of a modernist desire to retreat to the university—to the "quiet academic groves" where music could be heard without worrying about being beholden to the "average" audience, and instead be appreciated by a fully educated one. And this reviewer, at least, seems to share that exact desire.

But despite some of his reviewers and supporters desiring this distance from the audience and holding antiquarianism in high esteem, Dolmetsch himself, in both his manner of presenting concerts and his book, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth*

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<sup>33</sup> "Music in Edinburgh," *The Musical Times* 38 (Jan. 1, 1897): 31.

*and XVIIIth Centuries: Revealed by Contemporary Evidence*, demonstrates his desire for the exact opposite. He continually tries to engage with audiences, and wants the Period Instrument Revival to not only have the novel and antiquarian interest often ascribed to it, but also value and influence on both modern music and modern culture—a significant difference from the modernist trend of isolation.

Dolmetsch firmly believed that period instruments could belong as much to present living musical culture and style as to the past's. He may have attempted to recreate historical performances in his concerts, or to be “authentic,” but in reality these concerts demonstrated a commitment to education and provided an opportunity for audiences to more actively engage with the music in a small chamber setting. Part of this was out of necessity, for in order for audiences to understand and appreciate this “new” music, someone had to educate them about it beyond, perhaps, what a typical concert-goer might have already known. But despite the necessity of these arrangements, they also speak to a desire to engage with the audience on a fairly personal level. Reviewers of his concerts frequently mention his “interesting historical remarks”<sup>34</sup> and describe how he “waxed enthusiastic”<sup>35</sup> over elements of the music being performed. Dolmetsch clearly sacrificed “authenticity” for audience education and engagement—as a review states, the “old-world evening” was “but slightly broken” by these educational interludes.<sup>36</sup> And while this education could be seen as a manifestation of the type of historical study ascribed to “antiquarian” music, the enthusiasm which Dolmetsch apparently brought to it and his willingness to engage with any type of audience, including less than musical scholarly

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<sup>34</sup> “Dolmetsch Concerts” (Feb. 1, 1895): 98.

<sup>35</sup> “Mr. Dolmetsch’s Viol Concert” (Feb. 1, 1893): 90.

<sup>36</sup> “Dolmetsch Concerts” (Feb. 1, 1895): 98.

ones,<sup>37</sup> demonstrates that his concerts were not merely a way of preserving history for study, but rather a way to generate a continued interest in the time periods, instruments, and musical works he chose to perform and thus bring this music back as a valued part of the present music culture.

This desire to “revive” early music and its period instruments is explicitly stated by Dolmetsch himself in his performance practice text, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries: Revealed by Contemporary Evidence*. As Dolmetsch argues:

As soon as it is recognised that not only it is not “wrong” to give the old music its natural expression, but, on the contrary, that the so-called traditional way of playing it is an insult to its beauty, the players will not be afraid to follow their own instinct, and the music will come to life again.<sup>38</sup>

The “traditional way of playing it” that Dolmetsch refers to is a way of performing this music without consideration of style, interpretation, or musical “beauty.” Although he never explicitly states its problems, from his book it can be inferred that he found previous generations’ ways for performing older music to be missing some crucial elements—such as dynamics, ornamentation, and phrasing. Such a manner of playing is, perhaps, a way of “preserving” the music as it appears in the score—but not a way of interpreting or actually engaging musically with it.<sup>39</sup> But what Dolmetsch truly desires is to revive this old music.

As he says, if performers are able to engage with the music in the present, using their “own instinct,” then the music will be able to “come to life again.” Although this reliance on a

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<sup>37</sup> Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, 41.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries as revealed by contemporary evidence* (London: Novello and Company, Ltd., 1915), 7.

<sup>39</sup> As will be discussed later, the Period Instrument Revival does actually at least claim to share this attitude of perceiving the score as an authority with modernism, although there are crucial differences.

necessarily modern instinct might complicate some of the goals of the later early music movement, or even some of the avowed goals of Dolmetsch's book—such as “authenticity”—it certainly reflects a desire to directly engage performers with the pieces, and for these pieces to be played musically, not pedantically.

But his goal of reviving this old music and its period instruments was not due to their musical value alone. Dolmetsch and his supporters also saw performing music from these time periods a way to regain an important and valuable connection between music and society in general. As Dolmetsch's concerts continued to grow in popularity, one way they expanded was into the Haslemere Festival of Chamber Music. This festival, started in 1925, prominently featured Dolmetsch, his instruments, and other period instrument performers. One of the main reviewers and supporters of Dolmetsch during this time, Gerald Hayes, explicitly describes the larger social goal behind the revival of period instruments and their music:

The time is ripening for a return of chamber music to its proper sphere in domestic life, and the viols and their music offer the ideal inspiration to a generation which is getting rather tired of the tempest of Scriabin and Gustav Mahler.<sup>40</sup>

Hayes sets the music of the Period Instrument Revival and Dolmetsch in direct contrast with “modern” (and modernist), concert-hall music. The “tempest” of Scriabin and Mahler is the constantly increasing size of orchestras, the length of symphonies and operas—even the inherent projection and greater possible volume of modern instruments. Dolmetsch himself admits this when he explains a major difference between the harpsichord and the piano: “What could a harpsichord do now against a hundred players or so? Whilst for

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<sup>40</sup> Gerald R. Hayes, “The Haslemere Festival of Chamber Music,” *The Musical Times* 66 (Oct. 1, 1925): 937.

power the modern pianoforte can nearly match an orchestra.”<sup>41</sup> Although Dolmetsch merely emphasizes that there is a real difference between the instruments that justifies the continued use of the harpsichord, Hayes sees this louder, bigger, tempestuous music as yet another way of alienating the audience and isolating music and its performers from society.

And Dolmetsch’s repertoire, played on period instruments, provides an ideal solution to the audience that is “getting rather tired” of such a distance. Because the limited volume capabilities of the instruments themselves demand that they be performed in a small ensemble or chamber setting, the Period Instrument Revival seems the perfect way to develop a type of music that is intrinsically connected to the “domestic life.” Hayes and Dolmetsch both obviously believe that music’s return to domesticity would be of great benefit—for while the music of Scriabin and Mahler, performed for massive audiences in large concert halls, might be a means of fully expressing the composer’s thoughts and emotions, Dolmetsch and Hayes clearly think that something far more important than personal expression exists when music returns to an active role in daily life—that music regains an essential cultural value and effect. To these early revivalists, few things are, in fact, more important. For as Hayes says, Dolmetsch “would regard his life’s work as wasted if it has not helped to bring concerted music back into the domestic circle.”<sup>42</sup>

Although neither Dolmetsch nor Hayes fully explains what this “essential cultural value and effect” might be, it is perhaps possible to infer this goal from other artistic movements concurrent with the Period Instrument Revival, such as the Arts and Crafts

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<sup>41</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 433.

<sup>42</sup> Hayes, “The Haslemere Festival,” 935.

movement. Several scholars have noted Dolmetsch's connection to the movement,<sup>43</sup> but fuller explorations of this connection have only happened more recently—one example being Edmond Johnson's article, "The Green Harpsichord Revisited: Arnold Dolmetsch, William Morris, and the Musical Arts and Crafts," published in 2012.<sup>44</sup> William Morris's theory of "useful art" shows a fairly clear parallel to Dolmetsch's insistence on "living" music and especially, domestic music for amateurs. Morris too decried the decline of English art, and tied it to his political and cultural values, such as socialism.<sup>45</sup> Morris firmly believed that by changing the way people participated in and created art, the social and economic structure of the entire country could be changed for the better. However, he was not a musician himself, and though friends with Dolmetsch,<sup>46</sup> never made music one of his focuses.

And for music, the reestablishment of a national and cultural English style of music was perhaps even more essential. The cultural value of this music was closely tied to its national value, and Hayes and other reviewers saw the opportunities the revival provided for performing English viol music as a way of establishing that England too had once contributed something of value to the musical canon. Dolmetsch states that "English music, even more than any other, is in need of [revival], for the French, the Germans, the Italians, the Slavs, have at any rate preserved their nationalism... whilst the English so thoroughly

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<sup>43</sup> See Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, 100-104 and Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1996), 29-30.

<sup>44</sup> Edmond Johnson, "The Green Harpsichord Revisited: Arnold Dolmetsch, William Morris, and the Musical Arts and Crafts," *American Musical Instrument Society* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> Williams Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1882).

<sup>46</sup> Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, 29.



destroyed their own.”<sup>47</sup> As early as 1894, a year after Dolmetsch had first begun presenting concerts, one reviewer writes that the “performances happily illustrated the advanced position held by England at the period in which these composers lived.”<sup>48</sup> Referring to some English viol pieces, it is clear he sees their performance as a “happy” way to demonstrate the brief time in which England held “the advanced position” in musical “progress.” By the time of the first Haslemere Festival in 1925, Hayes calls Dolmetsch’s performance of English viol consort music the “real raison d’être of the whole Festival.”<sup>49</sup> This implies that when Hayes later claims “the viols and their music offer the ideal inspiration” to the current generation, as discussed above, he is claiming that they not only have a cultural value through their position as domestic music, but that they also serve as a constant reminder of the “period when we [the English] were the acknowledged leaders of the world in music.”<sup>50</sup> The revival thus gives both contemporary audiences and musicians a source of national pride, and an incentive to work to help England achieve that height in music again.

Hayes does not even limit this to audiences and performers—he also claims that it is within this viol consort music that “the future composer may find the finest inspiration in outlook, construction, and tonal effects.”<sup>51</sup> Hayes believes that it is through a revival of England’s “Golden Period”<sup>52</sup> that contemporary English music’s standing in the world may also be revived. Percy Grainger, who was very interested in English folk music, shared this

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<sup>47</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 469.

<sup>48</sup> “Mr. Dolmetsch’s Recitals” (Apr. 1, 1894): 316.

<sup>49</sup> Hayes, “The Haslemere Festival,” 935.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 936.

<sup>51</sup> Gerald R. Hayes, “The Festival of Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch,” *The Musical Times* 66 (Jun. 1, 1925): 526.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 527.

view. In a 1933 article on Dolmetsch, he argues that “the best training for future musical perfection lies in at least some working knowledge of those past periods of musical culture that possessed some real perfection.”<sup>53</sup> Unlike Hayes, Grainger admits to being “not primarily interested in ancient music”<sup>54</sup> and so his suggestion that it is within this “ancient music” that modern composers learn and study has even more weight. The “perfection” of this old English viol music not only provides a source of national pride, but also a way to ensure the continuation of talented English composers into the future. This demonstrates a modernist concern with canonization and lineage, but focuses on establishing a uniquely English lineage that derives its start from the perceived last great period of English music, the viol music.

Of course, Hayes and other supporters of Dolmetsch were very aware that in order to achieve these dual goals of reintroducing music into the domestic sphere and reviving nationalistic pride in English music, they must reach larger audiences. The Haslemere Festival was one way of doing that, but they also worked to have Dolmetsch’s music recorded, and established an organization devoted to the promotion and support of his work—The Dolmetsch Foundation.

But both of these methods to ensure Dolmetsch’s popularity and success also illustrated that Period Instrument Revival still struggled with label of antiquarianism, and its continued intersection with modernist ideas like composer authority and canonization. Recordings were a way of promoting Dolmetsch’s repertoire and performances, but they also served as a way of preserving them—an antiquarian impulse in direct contrast to his

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<sup>53</sup> Percy Grainger, “Arnold Dolmetsch: Musical Confucius,” *The Musical Quarterly* 19 (1933): 197.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

supporters' disavowal of the larger concept of "antiquarianism." And as the Foundation may have helped to garner support for Dolmetsch, it may also have unearthed vocal critics who once again used the label of "antiquarian" as a way to devalue and dismiss Dolmetsch's music. Both of these problems demonstrate that even in the 1920s and 30s—about 40 years after Dolmetsch first started performing on period instruments—the Period Instrument Revival still struggled with this important conflict between "antiquarianism" and true "revival."

Although recording technologies were relatively new during this time period, they were of great interest to period revivalists like the Dolmetsch Foundation—perhaps because revivalists were most aware of the amount of information about music that became lost when the only way of representing it was through scores, instruments, and reviews. Theoretically, recordings offered a potential way to preserve the "correct" way of performing each piece, or at least to preserve the piece performed the way the composer intended, as long as the composer was still living and involved in the process. Although this was often not a reality (and was further complicated by the low-fidelity of early recording technology), it still perhaps seemed at least possible. This desire to "preserve" Dolmetsch's performances seems like a contradiction of his and his supporters' earlier outcry against "antiquarianism" and museum-level preservation. As Robert Donington,<sup>55</sup> writing for a pamphlet of the Dolmetsch Foundation, argues:

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Donington studied with Dolmetsch and went on to participate in the later early music revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including performing in multiple early music groups and writing performance practice guides, such as *The Interpretation of Music*.

It had long been felt that one of the most valuable contributions that could be made to the preservation of Dolmetsch's work, would be to secure a series of recordings representative of his playing.<sup>56</sup>

By calling the "preservation" of Dolmetsch's music one of the "most valuable" things to achieve, Donington clearly indicates that this is a major goal for the foundation—and he seems to find no contradiction between recording music in order to preserve it and simultaneously insisting that Dolmetsch's music was "living" music that needed to engage with the culture and audiences of the present. This conflict between these two disparate goals shows a very modernist paradox. Like modernist composers, Dolmetsch's supporters were already focused on the future, and deeply concerned with losing any of Dolmetsch's personal decisions about period music. Yet their insistence that the music is not preserved or antiquarian, but "living," potentially conflicts with this goal. Living music, with its reliance on performers' musicianship, and its connection to present cultural values and society, could not be so easily encompassed in recordings.

This tension between preservation and "living" music is especially evident in one of the main sources of Dolmetsch recordings—*The Columbia History of Music by Ear and Eye*, a multi-volume collection of examples of famous and important works arranged chronologically, and intended for use in music history classrooms.<sup>57</sup> This collection began to be published in 1930, and the second volume, focusing on Baroque music, is interesting not only for the number of Dolmetsch recordings it includes, but also for the position of

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Donington, *The Work and Ideas of Arnold Dolmetsch* (Haslemere: The Dolmetsch Foundation, 1932), 23.

<sup>57</sup> *The Columbia History of Music by Eye and Ear, vol. I & II*, ed. Percy Scholes (Bridgeport: Columbia Masterworks, ca. 1930). Arnold Dolmetsch performs two Bach preludes, and with his family also performs on lute and viol.

authority such a recording gives him. Including Dolmetsch on a collection of music specifically designed to be educational and to catalog representative pieces from different time periods demonstrates an acknowledgement of his expertise. These recordings thus also demonstrate an attempt to preserve an “authority’s” interpretation and performance of these Baroque works.

And it is in this attempt to “preserve” that Dolmetsch and his supporters reveal a desire similar to a major modernist desire we will explore later—a desire to capture, as accurately as possible, the composer’s intent so that it may be perfectly replicated in the future. Dolmetsch is not the composer, but he is one of the closest “authorities” that existed. Yet the purpose behind the recordings still retains its educational emphasis—and Dolmetsch’s supporters, at least in part, also wanted to use the recordings to reach a popular audience. Modernism and the Period Instrument Revival may have shared an interest in preserving authority, but the Period Instrument Revival’s focus on attracting larger, general, audiences indicates at least some slight differences.

One of the other major ways in which Dolmetsch’s supporters attempted to reach larger audiences was by creating the Dolmetsch Foundation—an organization designed to promote Dolmetsch’s work and provide financial support for his endeavors. The Foundation was, like the *Columbia History of Music*, started in 1930, and still exists today. Its first appearance consists of a letter to the editor of *The Musical Times*, published in January, and signed by Robert Bridges, Selwyn Image, Percy Buck, D. Lloyd George, Walford Davies, Richard Terry, Henry Hadow, and W. G. Whitaker.<sup>58</sup> They claimed that in order to

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<sup>58</sup> “The Dolmetsch Foundation,” *The Musical Times* 71 (Jan. 1, 1930): 61. These people are a collection of politicians, musicians, and other artists. For instance, Robert Bridges was the

reach their goals, “a large membership is essential,” and asked that any “who have the interests of music at heart” join or financially contribute.<sup>59</sup> Like the recordings of Dolmetsch, the Foundation was an attempt to reach out beyond his original, smaller audiences, and establish a far more general one.

But the Foundation almost immediately ran into criticism over both their goals and Dolmetsch himself. In the May edition of *The Musical Times* of the same year, Clinton Gray Fisk wrote a response to the Foundation’s appeal, criticizing or disdaining almost every goal of Dolmetsch—both the musical and cultural value of his repertoire, and especially the choice to use period instruments to perform it. He argues that period instruments have only antiquarian value, illustrating that despite the efforts of Dolmetsch and his supporters, they had to yet to wholly vanquish that pervasive and damaging label. Fisk’s criticism of the Dolmetsch Foundation and the numerous responses it garnered thus provides a small-scale environment in which to observe and analyze the interplay and interactions between the larger ideas, internal conflicts, and major questions still existing in and being asked of the Period Instrument Revival.

Fisk first questions the musical value of these performances. He claims that though the “research and instrument-making” may have “antiquarian” value, the music itself is “being mangled and distorted beyond recognition by a group of amateurs.”<sup>60</sup> This biting assessment of Dolmetsch’s skill harshly contests any possibility of musical appeal in these performances, and thus of these performances having any musical value. He further

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current poet laureate, and David Lloyd George a former Prime Minister. Walford Davies would later become hold the title of the Master of the King’s Musick.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Clinton Gray Fisk, “The Dolmetsch Foundation,” *The Musical Times* 71 (May 1, 1930): 442-443.

emphasizes their lack of musical value, and even their lack of cultural value, by calling Dolmetsch and his group “amateurs.” To Fisk, amateurs clearly have no place performing music, as they will inevitably be compared to far more skilled professionals. He ignores the potential cultural value in having amateurs play these works—the same cultural value for which Dolmetsch specifically argued.

But Fisk’s true focus is on the use of period instruments for these period compositions. He deems such a decision utterly antiquarian, and argues that just because the works were originally composed for them does not mean that they “were fore-doomed to be performed for the rest of time on those (now) superannuated specimens.”<sup>61</sup> Here we see the return of the word “specimen,” though Fisk uses it in a far harsher manner than the previous reviewer did, in order to imply the modern irrelevance of these relics from the past. He, unlike Hayes, sees no purpose whatsoever in using these instruments. While Hayes argued that the necessity of more intimate and domestic performances required by playing on period instruments was a good thing, Fisk argues that only the harpsichord “is at all practicable for concert use.”<sup>62</sup> Fisk claims that Dolmetsch views the piano and orchestra as “pernicious and dangerous developments, and that our only artistic salvation lies in returning to and resuscitating obsolete instruments.”<sup>63</sup> This interpretation of Hayes’ argument ignores any cultural value in favor of artistic value, and perhaps this is why Fisk is so wholly disdainful of the Dolmetsch Foundation’s goals. But as we will continue to discuss later, the necessity of justifying the use of period instruments was a difficult and important issue, and like the struggle against the label of antiquarianism, an enduring one.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

The Foundation was quick to respond to these (admittedly very harsh) claims, and the next *Musical Times* was filled with their fervent arguments against Fisk, and in support of Dolmetsch. Their responses obviously vary, but one of the most common threads is a direct rejection of the label antiquarian. The people responding to Fisk continuously emphasize Dolmetsch and the Foundation's belief that this music has current value, and is not dead, but alive. One letter, from R. Wane-Cobb, emphatically states:

If there is one quality that I feel confident about in Mr. Dolmetsch it is that he has never regarded this study of early instrumental music as mere historical research; in fact, it could be only his intense belief in it as a living thing, of importance in life to-day, that could have led him to devote the whole of a long life to such a study.<sup>64</sup>

Wane-Cobb rejects "historical research" as a valid reason to perform this music. Instead, his description of Dolmetsch's music as "a living thing" illustrates perfectly the danger associated with allowing his music to be labeled as antiquarian. Antiquarian music is dead; Dolmetsch's music must have present relevance, and must be alive, in order to have a purpose driven enough to sustain it.

Hayes himself also responds, providing a direct quote from one of the Foundation's publications to further emphasize this important distinction. The extract says:

It must be emphasised that the present attitude towards this music is not in any way antiquarian. The instruments, with the music proper to them, make a living art. They are to be regarded in the same spirit as any more familiar forms and as having an equal potentiality for the future.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>R. Wane-Cobb, "The Dolmetsch Foundation," *The Musical Times* 71 (Jul. 1, 1930): 635-637.

<sup>65</sup> Gerald R. Hayes, "The Dolmetsch Foundation," *The Musical Times* 71 (Jul. 1, 1930): 637.



Hayes emphatically states the direct contrast between “antiquarian” and “living art,” and the necessity of the period instruments themselves to this living art. And he goes even further, emphasizing the potential for these instruments to have an impact on future music as well.

Other responders, such as Mary Pendered, hint at these future possibilities as well, and in doing so provide another avenue besides intimate chamber concerts through which these period instruments might influence daily life—radio. She writes that she would prefer if the B.B.C. radio included more period instrument programs, claiming that the harpsichord’s tone “comes through the loud-speaker as well as, if not better than, that of the pianoforte.”<sup>66</sup> This claim, and the larger desire the Dolmetsch Foundation had for recording Dolmetsch’s music, provides a very contemporary method of bringing music back into the home. While it may not have been practical for everyone to learn viol and form consorts within their families, as Dolmetsch did, certainly most people had access to a radio. Modern technology thus became another way through which Dolmetsch’s music could become domestic, and thus culturally valuable and available.

From all of these responses to Fisk’s critique, we can see that Dolmetsch and his supporters were still actively fighting against the label of antiquarian throughout the Period Instrument Revival’s development. Some, like Hayes, were closely connected to the Foundation and able to quote its own literature against the label, while others, like Wane-Cobb and Pendered, demonstrated their acceptance of Dolmetsch and the Foundation’s claims. But despite their shared avowed opposition to the label of “antiquarianism,” even close supporters like Hayes clearly maintained both some antiquarian-esque views and

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<sup>66</sup> Mary L. Pendered, “The Dolmetsch Foundation,” *The Musical Times* 71 (Jul. 1, 1930): 635.

some similar modernist views when promoting the value of recordings. Their efforts to promote Dolmetsch and his music thus revealed not only an external conflict with critics of his work, but an internal conflict as well. And central to both of these conflicts were two major issues—the issue of authority and how to preserve it, and the justification for the use of period instruments.

### The Problem of Authority

Modernism and the Period Instrument Revival shared a similar fascination with the idea of authority in music, though neither perhaps did so consciously. And the authority they eventually subscribed to—composer intent—was also the same for both movements. As discussed previously, modernism’s continuation of the romantic ideal of the prophet-artist naturally led to the veneration of a single individual creator—the composer. And in the Period Instrument Revival, the “authenticity” of each performance was judged by how well it appeared to represent the original composer’s intentions. But while modernist composers were alive during this period, and thus able to directly influence the production of their music, as well as to make “authoritative” recordings of pieces,<sup>67</sup> the composers of the Period Instrument Revival were all dead. This dilemma thus required the musicians of the Period Instrument Revival to instead seek out these composers’ intentions from scores, treatises on the instruments—and the instruments themselves. And in doing so, revivalists actually began to subvert the seeming authority of the composer that modernism

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<sup>67</sup> Stravinsky provides one excellent example; he supervised, performed and/or conducted the recording of many of his works. A modern discography of these recordings is *Composers in Person—Stravinsky*. Schoenberg provides another—his Society for Private Musical Performance allowed him to limit the audiences of his works and carefully control the environment they were presented in.

promoted. By making these decisions by themselves, they became “authorities” as well. Unlike performers of modernist music—beholden to the direction of living composers—the distance they had from period composers allowed the Period Instrument Revival to instead regain “authority” for performers.

In modernism, the composer retreated from the audience and assumed an even more powerful authority over their music than he had possessed in previous eras. Even performers were held at a distance as music became more and more focused on realizing exactly what the composer intended. As previously discussed, the Romantic veneration of the artist as a “prophet” naturally led to a focus on an individual artist. As Carl Czerny, an editor of Beethoven’s works, wrote in 1840: “one wants to hear the artwork in its original form, as the Master thought and wrote it.”<sup>68</sup> Thus even early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many believed that the “Master” or composer had sole authority over the “original form” of the work. And the increasing isolation composers felt throughout the development of modernism even further contributed to these individualistic views. The more that their music aimed only at “progress,” the less it allowed any “outside” interpretation—even from the performers playing it.

As the composer became more and more authoritative, the score also became imbued with some of the composer’s authority and was increasingly portrayed as the most accurate possible representation of the composer’s original conceptualization. That conception supposedly existed within the score, unaltered by any performers who might accidentally (or deliberately) deviate from it or interpret it in a way the composer did not

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Mary Hunter, “‘To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer’: The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58 (2005): 357-8.

expect. Thus scores during this era became increasingly detailed and complex, leaving very little to the musician's own choices. As Thurston Dart, an English musicologist and editor of *The Galpin Society Journal*, says in his *The Interpretation of Music*, published in 1954:

The performer was in earlier times regarded as a more intelligent member of the musical community than he is now, if the markings of dynamics, phrasing, tempo and what-not scattered over a modern work are any indication of the composer's attitude towards the performer.<sup>69</sup>

The more that modernist composers marked their scores, the more they seemed to be trying to control the performer and the more they reduced the number of choices the performer was able to make. Dart's criticism of this practice highlights the lack of trust such an attitude demonstrates. The scores were attempts to as accurately as possible represent the composer's intent, and performers were required to follow them exactly.

Beyond the scores, modernist composers also had the advantage of recording technology to "preserve" their works for future generations. This desire to preserve via recordings is of course instantly recognizable as similar to the Period Instrument Revival's goal discussed earlier. Like their early music counterparts, some modernist composers sought to create recordings demonstrating an "ideal" of the piece—in this case, one whose performance was directed by the living composer. Some composers took this idea even further, arguing that due to technological advances, including recordings, performers would soon be obsolete. H. H. Stuckenschmidt, writing in 1926, claims both that "for the production of a record only a single performance is necessary. One recording made, for example, in New York can supply the whole globe" and that "the mechanical piano has

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<sup>69</sup> Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Harper Collins, 1954), 14.

delivered the proof that a machine can replace musical interpreters.”<sup>70</sup> If Stuckenschmidt could replace musicians (or “interpreters”) with these new technologies, he would become the sole creator of his music, not beholden to any musicians, who might have their own thoughts and interpretations of it. He would preserve this authoritative performance through a single recording that could be distributed throughout the world.

Even though the Period Instrument Revival lacked any living composers to consult with, revivalists too shared this modernist viewpoint and tried to faithfully recreate the “authentic” performance of their period works—the performance they believed the original composer must have envisioned. As Dolmetsch says, “Should not modern musicians treat the works of their masters as they wish their own may be treated in future centuries?”<sup>71</sup> Dolmetsch, asking modern performers to respect the wishes and musical style of their predecessors, indicates that they must attempt to perform music in the way composers originally conceptualized it. But because of this dearth of living composers, the Period Instrument Revivalists were forced to use outside sources to recreate what they thought this “authenticity” was. In order to attempt to faithfully follow the composer’s “authority” over their work, Dolmetsch and other Period Instrument Revivalists used scores, treatises on performance, and the instruments to piece together and supposedly re-create composer intent.

Unlike the heavily-marked modernist scores, the scores left by Baroque and earlier composers were understood by the Period Instrument Revival to be only partial representations of composer intent. However, scores were still of great importance, and

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<sup>70</sup> H. H. Stuckenschmidt, “Mechanische Musik (1926),” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (Los Angeles: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 598.

<sup>71</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 470.

reviews of early music concerts during the time period demonstrate how venerated these “Ur-texts” were, and how they implied a praiseworthy dedication to the pursuit of “authenticity.” As one reviewer writes, commenting on a performance in London of Bach’s B Minor Mass by The National Chorus in 1932:

We were also told that where minor discrepancies occurred between the autograph score and current editions the autograph was to be followed in every case. All this belated observance of the authentic Bach carries its own commendation.<sup>72</sup>

By including the choice of the director to use the “autograph” over “current editions,” the reviewer emphasizes the importance of this decision to the overall value of the performance. It implies the performance was “authentic Bach,” or a performance true to Bach’s original intentions. And the comment that such a discussion “carries its own commendation” hints that by 1932, such a decision to use the Ur-text was already highly valued, recognizable, and perhaps even beginning to become commonplace.

But Dolmetsch and his supporters were well aware that faithfulness to the autograph itself was not enough to truly re-create the composer’s intentions. Instead, Dolmetsch argued that “before we can play properly a piece of old music we must find out: tempo, rhythm, ornaments, figured basses”—all elements that were most often missing from early music scores.<sup>73</sup> To find this out, Dolmetsch presents “those books of instruction which the old musicians wrote about their own art” as the proper source for determining composer intent.<sup>74</sup> Two examples Dolmetsch gives of instances where the score contradicts

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<sup>72</sup> “London Concerts,” *The Musical Times* 75 (Apr. 1934): 359.

<sup>73</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, vii.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

the “true” composer intent are the cases of *notes inégales* and ornamentation.<sup>75</sup> He claims that “were modern players less bound by the written text, they never would have played any other way”—or they never would not have played *notes inégales*.<sup>76</sup> Modern musicians, too used to the untrusting and strict scores discussed above, need first to study the writings of composer like Johann Joachim Quantz, who Dolmetsch uses to explain the practice of *notes inégales*.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, despite the fact that early music scores often left out ornaments, Dolmetsch argues that “if we do not use them we are violating his [the composer’s] intentions just as much as if we altered his text.”<sup>78</sup> Dolmetsch applies the sanctity of the score to the more nebulous information on style he has derived from these writings by composer-performers and performers. Both are representations of the composer’s intent, and both should not be altered by the performer, but instead carefully re-created.

Yet these writings, unlike edited scores, required translation, analysis, and interpretation—they were clearly not as accessible for performers, perhaps especially for the amateur performers Dolmetsch so valued. To solve this problem, Dolmetsch and Hayes both published performance practice guides in order to help instruct performers of early music in the “authentic” way of playing the works. Dolmetsch’s *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries: Revealed by Contemporary Evidence* was the first

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<sup>75</sup> *Notes inégales* are a feature of French Baroque performance style where paired eighth-notes are performed “inégale” or unequally, creating an effect that sounds almost swung.

<sup>76</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 63.

<sup>77</sup> While Quantz (and other writers, like Couperin) were performers as well as composers, Dolmetsch clearly positions them as primarily composers in his work. He uses their treatises, often by just listing quotes from various sources, to form an argument about each stylistic element, and then presents the style as historically accurate for a wider variety of both place and time than it probably actually applied.

<sup>78</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 88.

of these, published in 1915, and Hayes' *Musical Instruments and their Music, 1500-1750: The Treatment of Instrumental Music*, published in 1928, was the second. They were meant to together form a comprehensive guide to early music performance, and Hayes makes sure to state that Dolmetsch "has examined and revised all my manuscript before publication."<sup>79</sup> In publishing these books, clearly meant to be authoritative texts on early music performance, Dolmetsch firmly establishes himself as an "authority" figure. The Period Instrument Revival in England was always closely tied to him personally, and these books perpetuate his personal authority over early music. Percy Grainger, writing on Dolmetsch in 1933, implores his readers "to emigrate to Haslemere and learn there the Dolmetsch traditions from their fountain-head while they yet may!"<sup>80</sup> And for those unable to learn directly from this "authority" over the movement, he recommends Dolmetsch's books as an equally reliable guide.

However, perhaps the most important source of "authority" that Dolmetsch and his supporters established were the period instruments. By insisting that the instruments had a type of authority over the music and the performers, and could act as a guide to uncovering musical styles, Dolmetsch provided them with a purpose for contemporary, "living," music far beyond "antiquarianism," and justified their use by making them absolutely essential to the performance of early music. If the instruments were designated as authorities necessary to determine composer intent, then they no longer could be disparaged or threatened by the label of "antiquarianism." As Hayes says:

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<sup>79</sup> Gerald R. Hayes, *Musical Instruments and Their Music: 1500-1750: Vol I: The Treatment of Instrumental Music* (London: Oxford University Press), vii.

<sup>80</sup> Grainger, "Musical Confucius," 197.



To-day we are still in the course of the recovery of these dormant voices and their music. Already the stage is past when it is regarded as a lifeless antiquarian pursuit, be we must look still more to the future and guard even against any spirit that shall suggest the revival of a period.<sup>81</sup>

Promoting the instruments as “authorities” themselves was a way to “guard” against this dangerous antiquarianism label, that as critiques like Fisk’s demonstrated was hard to conquer entirely. The “dormant voices” of the instruments, once awakened, could teach and guide their players to an “authentic” early music style. By personifying the instruments and giving them “voices,” Dolmetsch and Hayes also give them authority over the musicians playing them, and the power to prevent antiquarianism. Hayes explicitly rejects the score as the ultimate authority, and places the period instruments in its place:

It is not the aimless reading of old manuscript scores, that so often passes for research, but the study of the construction and technique of the instruments and the testing of the music as interpreted through its proper medium.<sup>82</sup>

The scores might “pass for research,” but for Hayes and Dolmetsch, they fail at truly providing an “authority” on early music styles—and the “aimless reading” of the historians who fixate on them fail as well. The instruments, as the “proper medium” for the music, also provide the “proper medium” through which musicians can learn how to “authentically” perform early music. They are the guides to “living” early music.

Dolmetsch continues to establish the instrument as an “authority” by claiming that familiarity with the instruments is absolutely essential for the musicians to have true

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<sup>81</sup> Gerald R. Hayes, *Musical Instruments and Their Music: 1500-1750: Vol II: The Viols, & Other Bowed Instruments* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 237.

<sup>82</sup> Hayes, *Musical Instruments vol. I*, 52.

“sympathy” with early music style. One of the examples he gives of ways in which knowledge of the instruments can educate musicians is in the case of tempo. Dolmetsch claims that “the proper *tempo* of a piece of music can usually be discovered by an intelligent musician, if he is in sympathy with its style, and possesses sufficient knowledge of the instrument for which it was written.”<sup>83</sup> While Dolmetsch does not explain how this familiarity of the instrument educates the musician on correct tempos, Hayes does make an attempt to clarify how specific instrument qualities affect the overall style of early music. When discussing the harpsichord, he says:

A note [a plucked string], particularly in the bass strings, has far more sustaining power than would be expected, yet compared to a grand pianoforte it is of short duration, and hence much (but not all) of the music for these instruments is of a rapid and decorative nature.<sup>84</sup>

He presents the qualities of the instrument—the plucked string mechanism—directly with larger generalizations about the style of its repertoire—“rapid and decorative.” It is through the inherent qualities of the harpsichord that this style can be learned. And by comparing it to the piano, he demonstrates the piano’s inadequacy at being used to perform early music for this reason. Unlike the harpsichord, it does not reveal anything about the style of music for which it was not historically used, and thus is wholly useless to musicians learning to play in that style.

Hayes further empathizes the necessity of period instruments to early music performance by arguing that not only do they teach the style of early music, but also that

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<sup>83</sup> Dolmetsch, *Interpretation of Music*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> Hayes, *Musical Instruments vol. I*, 15.

they were an essential—even the most essential—component of creating this style originally. He begins his book by claiming that:

The characteristics and qualities of the instruments that were available have always governed the inspiration of composers. The instruments came first, the music followed.<sup>85</sup>

While Dolmetsch says that the use of period instruments is as equally necessary as “sympathy with its style,” Hayes argues that it is actually the instruments that originally determined this style. They thus not only help to guide the musician, but also provide a way of relearning and recreating the style of early music in the same way it was originally created. Hayes takes this argument further in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of his book, by arguing that:

Without musical instruments, Music could not exist. Their sounds, technique, limitations even, are the foundation and framework of Music. Their innumerable varieties, their transformations, are intimately connected with the musical ideals and fashions of all times and countries.<sup>86</sup>

Here he directly subverts the criticism that period instruments are limited and useless in modern performance. The “limitations” of the instruments are not a reason to avoid using period instruments, but rather another benefit to using them, for they reveal crucial components of style, and of “musical ideals”—the “framework of Music” itself. By learning to play these period instruments, the contemporary performer thus also learns the style through the same medium and process that the original performers of these instruments used.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>86</sup> Hayes, *Musical Instruments vol. II*, ix.

And alongside the instruments' portrayal as authorities, these performance practice texts also ascribe authority to the performers themselves. Although they seem to continue to operate within the framework of modernist subordination to the composer, in reality they are often returning power to performers. Just as performers hold the instruments, they also hold another type of authority—the “inner musicality” that performance practice guides consistently mention.

The idea of musicians possessing an inherent—and unchanging—musicality appears early on in Dolmetsch's performance practice guide, but he never defines or explains it further, and instead just states it as common knowledge. Dolmetsch claims that once musicians become more familiar with period music, then “players will not be afraid to follow their own instinct, and the music will come to life again.”<sup>87</sup> The player's “own instinct” is presented as a direct source through which the music may “come to life.” By tying first the instruments, and now the players directly to the period music they perform, and by giving them authority over that music, Dolmetsch maintains his stance against antiquarianism, and in support of “living” music. He restates the necessity of following their “own instinct” even more strongly when directly speaking about musical interpretation. Dolmetsch argues that:

Were modern players less bound by the written text, they never would have played any other way; their instinct would have guided them to the proper interpretation, which is much more natural and beautiful.<sup>88</sup>

Here a new contrast is drawn, between the “written text” and their “instinct.” By setting these two authorities in conflict, and by arguing that it is only through the second in which

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<sup>87</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 7.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

the music produced might be “natural and beautiful,” Dolmetsch gives the performer authority over both the score and the composer.

Yet at the same time, Dolmetsch maintains that placing this authority with the performer is, in fact, really a way of deferring to composer authority. As he says, “we can no longer allow anyone to stand between us and the composer.”<sup>89</sup> To Dolmetsch, the musical “instinct” of the performer does not take authority from the composer, but rather allows the performer to fully express the composer’s intentions. The most direct instance of this comes in the case of ornamentation. Dolmetsch explains that

In the Old Music the ornamentation is sometimes left out altogether, or indicated more or less completely by means of conventional sigs. The composer in either case had prepared his music for the ornaments; if we do not use them we are violating his intentions just as much as if we altered his text.<sup>90</sup>

Because ornamentation is not present in the score, but is present in the composer’s intentions, the performer must use a combination of familiarity of style (presumably gained through scholarship and knowledge of the instrument) and their own musical intuition to fully realize the composer’s intention. If they only relied on studying the score, they would miss this crucial part of the music. Thus while authority is ascribed to the composer, in reality it rests with the performer and the musical decisions they choose to make.

Dolmetsch gives authority to the instruments and to the performers, and argues that it is only by following these guides that early music can prevent the label of antiquarianism and become a new, revived, living musical culture.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 471.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 88.

## Conclusion

Dolmetsch died in 1940. While remembered fondly as important for starting some of the interest in early music by early music historians and performers, even his once stringent supporters—like Donington—have tried to deemphasize his influence. It is no wonder why—the few (admittedly low-fidelity) recordings we have of his performances are of rather poor musical quality, and nothing like the early music performances we hear today. And despite Dolmetsch’s genuine enthusiasm for early music and his dedication to making it a “living” movement, Dolmetsch himself was authoritative and controlling, and his book now seems too full of generalizations and dictatorial statements.

Only two biographies on Dolmetsch have been published—Mabel Dolmetsch’s *Personal Recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch*, published in 1958, and Margaret Campbell’s *Dolmetsch: the Man and his Work*, published in 1975. Both focus on detailing a history of Dolmetsch’s life, and both are from a very personal perspective—Mabel Dolmetsch is obviously Dolmetsch’s wife, and Margaret Campbell worked closely with the family when writing her biography. In larger early music history surveys, such as Joel Cohen and Herb Snitzer’s *Reprise: The Revival of Early Music*, published in 1985, and Harry Haskell’s *The Early Music Revival: A History*, published in 1996, Dolmetsch, while readily acknowledged to be an influence in promoting early music and especially period instruments, is presented as an isolated figure whose domineering personality prevented him from exerting any major influence. Haskell says “Dolmetsch’s achievement might indeed have been greater if he had been more diplomatic, more willing to collaborate.” Calling his recorded performances “maddeningly erratic,” Haskell demonstrates the ambivalent reception of

Dolmetsch to modern early music scholars and performers.<sup>91</sup> He may be lauded as bringing period instruments into modern existence, but skepticism exists as to the interpretative conclusions he stated and demonstrated in his own performances. Even as early as 1965, Sol Babitz, an early music critic, complained that Dolmetsch had not achieved the popular reception as Wanda Landowska, a virtuosic harpsichordist who was his contemporary. He claims that “because Dolmetsch did not possess her virtuosity he did not attain her success,” and argues that Dolmetsch should be held in higher importance regardless, as he was more scholarly, and more “authentic.”<sup>92</sup>

Despite this lukewarm reception, however, Dolmetsch’s ideas—especially his positioning the instrument and the performer as authorities—are still present throughout the later early music movements. Some of the best examples of this are in the performance practice guides of the 1960s and later, such as those written Robert Donington and Frederick Neumann. These guides still demonstrate and perpetuate these ideas, if more subtly than Dolmetsch himself did.

Despite both Donington and Neumann’s willingness to allow modern instruments as a viable option in performing early music, Donington still hints at the pervasive belief that period instruments do convey a type of authority. In Donington’s work, the instruments are presented as still inherently tied to their music, just like Hayes claimed. Donington states “there is an intimate connection between music and its instruments” and further explains that the composer “exerts more or less pressure on performers to extend their technique and on makers to develop or modify the instruments themselves; and performers and

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<sup>91</sup> Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, 40.

<sup>92</sup> Sol Babitz, “The Landowska Approach,” *The New York Review* (Mar. 11, 1965).

makers have their own urge to evolve.”<sup>93</sup> The composer, performer, and instrument all have a mutual relationship in which any alteration to one of these factors necessarily affects the other two as well.

And just as Dolmetsch and Hayes did, Donington and Neumann also give the performer an authority in this relationship as well. Donington claims that

Our musicianship responds intuitively to the fundamental elements in Bach or Couperin, Purcell or Monteverdi; we know them in our bones. If it did not, no power on earth could bring them back, or even make us want to bring them back.<sup>94</sup>

Here the eternal, inherent “musical intuition” that all performers apparently share is presented as absolutely necessary to revive baroque music. Those “fundamental elements” the composers intended are not possible without the performer exerting their own authority, and using their own musical “intuition” to interpret and perform the piece. Neumann’s performance practice guide, published in 1993, agrees. While stating that “we aim at performances that come close to the composer’s concept of the work,”<sup>95</sup> he also argues that

The final authority must be handed to the musically gifted and stylistically knowledgeable performer who is informed of available facts and of the best guesses that modern scholarship can provide.<sup>96</sup>

While acknowledging scholarship, Neumann ultimately hands the “final authority” to the “musically gifted”—or musically intuitive—performer. Just like Dolmetsch before him, he insists that there exists an inherent musicality, and uses it to justify giving the performer

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<sup>93</sup> Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 435.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 526.

<sup>95</sup> Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 3.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.



ultimate authority over the work. Although Dolmetsch's ideas are less explicitly stated by these later authors, they are clearly still very much present.

These guides demonstrate the depth and subtlety of Dolmetsch's impact on later early music movements—and that Dolmetsch's ideas about the long struggle between “antiquarianism” and “living” music and about the place of authority have remained. The Period Instrument Revival's response to the label of antiquarianism became a way of defining the movement and a way of justifying its decision to use period instruments, and this response moreover asserted the Period Instrument Revival's social and cultural value. And the Revival's response to the issue of authority allowed it to, while still working within the discourse of the authority of the composer, actually give significant authority to the performers and the instruments instead. Dolmetsch did not only start a movement that would go on to be an important part of musical life in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; he also, when faced with the same problems as those plaguing modernist composers, provided a very different solution.

Taruskin 's focus on the later part of the early music movement prevents the Period Instrument Revival's response to their shared modernist values from influencing our understanding of this later early music movement. Placing the early music movement wholly as a version of modernism may even be perceived as falling into a modernist trap—the idea the music must be continually progressing. But Dolmetsch's Period Instrument Revival can also provide another branch of musical ideas to follow, one that took modernist problems and reacted differently. And if the later early music movements are seen as the “inheritors” of both this Revival and modernism, then they too could be seen as an alternate path. The context the Period Instrument Revival provides is an important one.

When the long struggle against the term “antiquarianism” is considered, the issue of “authenticity” gains yet another nuance and facet. Perhaps even our own present day struggle with “authenticity” could be read as a continuation of the original problem of “antiquarianism”—or at least could be better understood by considering it.

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