Towards a new understanding of the score-performance dilemmas: A holistic hermeneutic of musical interpretation

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Abstract: In scores from the Western Classical tradition, the ambiguity between the notated music and the actual performance and perception continues to draw audiences to live concerts. This discrepancy presents dilemmas that are challenging to resolve but warrant further investigation: What could be notated but is deemed unnecessary or unfeasible? What constitutes 'licence'? Where do the boundaries lie between cultural norms and personal expression? To what extent can a composer's intentions be discerned? Which of these considerations should be integrated into music education? The aim of this conceptual article is to enhance the theoretical understanding of musical score interpretation by drawing on existing empirical and theoretical insights from different fields. It seeks to identify relationships, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in existing literature, highlight their shortcomings, and outline future directions to address these questions. I conclude that current research on this topic does not yet provide universally accepted answers, thereby hindering the development of a comprehensive, explanatory model of musical score interpretation. Lastly, I propose a novel hermeneutic approach aligned with Elliott's praxial philosophy in music education and Ricoeur's concept of Mimesis. This approach offers a new framework for conducting interdisciplinary studies aimed at developing a holistic model for understanding musical score interpretation.

Keywords: Music, performance, interpretation, score, interdisciplinary.

Resumen: En las partituras de la tradición clásica occidental, la ambigüedad entre la música notada y la ejecución y percepción reales sigue atrayendo al público a los conciertos en vivo. Esta discrepancia plantea dilemas que son difíciles de resolver

pero que justifican una investigación más profunda: ¿Qué podría anotarse pero se considera innecesario o inviable? ¿Qué constituye una 'licencia'? ¿Dónde están los límites entre las normas culturales y la expresión personal? ¿Hasta qué punto pueden discernirse las intenciones del compositor? ¿Cuáles de estas consideraciones deberían integrarse en la educación musical? El objetivo de este artículo conceptual es mejorar la comprensión teórica de la interpretación de partituras musicales, basándose en conocimientos empíricos y teóricos existentes de diferentes campos. Se identifican relaciones, contradicciones, lagunas e inconsistencias en la literatura existente, discutiendo sus deficiencias y delineando direcciones futuras para abordar estas preguntas. Concluyo que la investigación actual sobre este tema aún no proporciona respuestas universalmente aceptadas, lo que impide el desarrollo de un modelo explicativo y completo de la interpretación de partituras musicales. Por último, propongo un enfoque hermenéutico novedoso alineado tanto con la filosofía praxial de Elliott en educación musical como con el concepto de Mimesis de Ricoeur. Este enfoque ofrece un nuevo marco para realizar estudios interdisciplinarios destinados a desarrollar un modelo holístico para entender la interpretación de partituras musicales.

Palabras clave: Música, interpretación, partitura, interdisciplinariedad.

Introduction: The Enduring Challenge of Score-Performance

The musical score provides a series of written instructions intended to ensure its performance can be unmistakably associated with it. Yet, no two performances by humans can ever be identical, leading to what Nicholas Cook has termed the "basic paradox of music" (Cook, 1998, p. 70-71): "we experience music in time but in order to manipulate it, even to understand it, we pull it out of time and in that sense falsify it." Thus, the score itself is not the music but rather a hypothetical construct requiring interpretation to bridge the gap between what is written and what is not. This interpretative process is fraught with complexities. For instance, the interpretation of written musical symbols and expressions adheres to conventions that have evolved over time. Consider the notation practices: a dot placed after a note traditionally extends its duration by half, yet in the 17th and 18th centuries, it indicated a significantly larger augmentation; similarly, the symbol for a brevis currently signifies the longest note in conventional rhythms, doubling the

duration of a whole note, whereas in the Middle Ages it denoted the shortest possible note. These examples, detailed by Dart (1978), have inspired the practice of Historically Informed Performances, wherein performers seek to understand the historical context and interpretative traditions of musical symbols (Butt, 2012). According to Harnoncourt (2006), the evolution of these conventions reached a threshold around the year 1800, marking a transition to our present-day stable norms.

On the other hand, interpretation is subject to the unavoidable "expression" of the performer, which depends not only on the semiotic conventions of written symbols and texts but also, more intriguingly, on what is omitted from the score. Transforming a score into musical sounds requires an interpretation of elements that cannot be fully notated—such as the precise dynamic progression of a crescendo, the exact rhythmic progression of a 'ritardando', or the fluctuations of a 'rubato'. It also involves numerous 'deviations' from what is written. These deviations may result from deliberate choices by the performer to accentuate certain facets of the 'musical message', whether to fulfill a personal interpretation of the piece, align with presupposed intentions of the composer, meet audience expectations, or a blend of these factors. They may also arise to accommodate the technical capacities of the instrument and the performer. Additionally, deviations can originate from a collective unconscious, coincidental feelings, thoughts, or sensations during the performance, or even from a misunderstanding of the score's symbols. Regardless of their origin, non-notational elements are an inevitable part of any musical performance. According to Goodman's (1976) perspectives, their presence is not merely incidental but is instrumental to the aesthetic qualities of the Art of performance. Variations in the interpretation of a score among different performers, or even in successive performances by the same musician, generate the aesthetic interest that attracts us to concert performances of repertoire pieces. Consequently, interpretation offers creative opportunities for performers, elevating their role to a status akin to that of composers: "a fundamental [agreed] principle in musical performance (...): performance is a recreative, rather than reproductive, act; each performance is a specific realization of a piece of music, and there is no

reason why any two such realizations should converge toward identity" (Clarke, 2004, p. 84).

Moreover, the creative role of the performer is emphasized in the Western tradition: while other traditions prioritize the preservation of cultural identity (Clarke, 2005), our culture values innovation and creation over tradition and reproduction, likely driven by what Cook (1998) described as the necessity to compete in the marketplace. As a result, the link between score and interpretation has often been stretched to its limits, amplifying its unresolved questions and inherent challenges. Furthermore, twentieth-century composers have not only redefined the composer-performer relationship and listening practices but have also pushed the boundaries of notation to such an extent that it sometimes requires the necessary yet unconventional interventions of the composer, leading to what Meyer (1967, p. 124) called a "crisis in notation."

While these factors are inherently involved in the process of music production in Western culture and subtly affect all participants (composers, performers/conductors, audiences) in a musical performance, their intricacies remain elusive. Scores and performances will persist whether or not we deepen our understanding of the hows and whys, as they are relics of a past where such questions were seldom considered. However, the significance of addressing these complexities extends beyond potential impacts on music performance or education; it also pertains to our understanding of ourselves and our society, as these elements dialectically connect individuals to their context and to each other.

Changing the Focus: From the Score to the Music

While traditional musicology has long prioritized the study of how to play a music score, its focus was primarily on the score itself, through its analysis and the examination of supporting documents and historical contexts. Consequently, music as performance did not attract significant interest until the emergence of a new field termed 'Empirical Musicology'. The inception of this field was marked by the convergence of two traditionally separate disciplines: musicology and psychology, including their sociological branches.

This fusion has blurred, if not erased, the boundaries between Empirical Musicology and the Psychology of Music, rendering it difficult to discuss one without referencing the other.

A comprehensive overview of this nascent field is provided in a reference book edited by notable figures Nicholas Cook and Eric Clarke (Cook & Clarke, 2004). Confirming its relative novelty, Clarke in a chapter titled "Empirical Methods in the Study of Performance" acknowledges that "although performance occupies a central position in nearly every musical culture, systematic studies of performance only date back to the early twentieth century" (Clarke, 2004, p. 77). Despite the recent shift in focus from the score to 'the music', I contend that the majority of studies within this field remain limited because they primarily examine recorded performances and consequently miss other vital components and methodologies. Clarke shares this viewpoint, noting that "measuring the timing, dynamic, and even timbral properties of performances has unearthed a wealth of previously unknown information, yet it provides only a very partial view of what occurs during performance" (Clarke, 2004, p. 91). However, Clarke's suggested improvements might still overlook crucial aspects of the musical experience, particularly those involving the composer and the audience. He argues that "traditional approaches miss the social dimension of performance... Much can be gained by having performers discuss their own work and analyzing both their commentary and their practices".

Another influential scholar in the field, John Rink (2006), identified a similar issue in contemporary research and proposed a more comprehensive solution: "Performance research has predominantly adopted an individualistic perspective of the performer and their mental processes. However, the social context of performance—including interactions with co-performers, the audience, and the influences of teachers and mentors, as well as exposure to recordings and performances by others, societal attitudes towards performance, and prevailing performance 'fashions'—is critically important but remains poorly understood in any explicit manner". Despite these advancements in framing the 'research equation', one crucial element is consistently overlooked: the composer.

The prevailing atomism in current research might be attributed to the manner in which musicology and psychology have been integrated. Musicology, on one hand, tries to apply its traditional score-analysis techniques to music performance as if it were 'a new score'. Psychology, on the other hand, seeks to apply its traditional positivist methods to something as intangible as Art and its aesthetics, often overlooking the nuanced interplay of human emotions and cultural contexts that influence musical expression.

In addition, considering the extant research from a fine-grained perspective, two specific yet significant problems emerge. Firstly, the ecological validity of studies in musical performance is often compromised: concert settings and live performances are frequently replaced by recordings in the absence of an audience. In the uncommon instances where research involves many listeners (e.g., Repp, 1997), the participants are typically limited to a few graduate music students or specifically untrained subjects, rather than the average concertgoer. Additionally, the music utilized in such studies often consists of isolated cells (i.e., small, decontextualized excerpts or even specific sounds) or passages, rather than complete compositions. Secondly, there is a noticeable omission of contemporary music from the Western Classical tradition in research studies. Clarke (2004, p. 99) acknowledges this issue: "the repertories that have been investigated have been limited. Most of the psychology of music has been concerned with tonal, metrical concert music characteristic of the period from about 1750 to 1850." This avoidance of contemporary music is a common trend in research (Mateos-Moreno, 2011), likely due to its highly varied and complex nature, which makes it a challenging reality to analyze.

These limitations in current research often lead to constrained or biased responses, creating 'gaps' and persistent 'unresolved questions' in the field. Numerous issues are highlighted in the literature. For instance, Clarke (2004, p. 84) points out the difficulty in defining the boundary between cultural norms and individual expression, noting that "few researchers have devoted much attention to these issues". Davies & Sadie (2012) remark on the challenge of distinguishing between interpretation and license in performance. Wood (1997) discusses the open-ended nature of performance,

questioning the authority over 'the work'. Timmers & Honing (2002, p. 3) observe that the diversity of interpretations complicates the identity of a musical piece and calls for a reconsideration of norms, posing the question: "Can music research be determinative, or should it address diversity in an adaptive manner?".

The 'Meaning' of a Musical Performance

As early as the Thirteenth Century, Wu Chen articulated in his *Ten Rules for Playing the Lute*, "It is necessary to understand the meaning of music. If one just plays the music as is written, one will not be able to express the sentiments of the composer" (cited in Racionero, 1983, p. 204). This notion that music inherently possesses a 'meaning' to be understood or interpreted persists in contemporary discussions, as evidenced in the scholarly literature. For instance, Rink (2006, p. 68) notes, "when a performer 'characterizes' a piece in performance, he or she is constructing meaning through expression", and Clarke (1988, p. 15) observes, "each expressive act operates so as to project a particular functional meaning for a given musical structure". The pivotal questions then become how this meaning is conveyed, which aspects of it are intended, projected, or perceived, and why these elements matter.

Addressing these concerns, Small (1998, p. 47) offers a critical philosophical insight: "musical performance is [wrongly] thought of as a one-way system of communication, running from the composer to the individual listener through the medium of the performer". This traditional view perceives the transmission of music as linear and unidirectional, a perspective that aligns with the reductionist tendencies of conventional scientific inquiry. However, if we recognize music as a component of social construction, this notion becomes problematic. In a concert setting, performers interpret music not only for an audience but also inevitably for themselves, suggesting that the flow of musical communication is more accurately characterized by reciprocity rather than a singular direction.

In addition, the debate over the existence of a common practice in music performance supports the view of music interpretation as a socially oriented construct, a topic mainly discussed in philosophical circles. In this

vein, Sparshott (1967) argues that firmly pre-established rules cannot exist because performance is akin to a conversation that evolves based on the exigencies of the situation. Contrarily, Wolsterstorff (1980) contends that such rules do exist but should be viewed as 'social artifacts' shaped by sociological, historical, and cultural influences. Although both perspectives align on the sociological underpinnings of performance rules, they diverge regarding the consistency of these rules—Wolsterstorff suggests a more fixed persistence, while Sparshott views them as more fluid and adaptable. Reimer (2004) maintains that performance aligns with stable 'rules and regulations culturally established', within which interpreters are encouraged to 'add their own imaginative expressions'.

While psychology has explored various facets of the common practices of music and its cultural rules (for a detailed discussion, see Timmers, 2002), Silverman (2008, p. 251) critiques the atomistic nature of the conclusions reached: "[Assuming that there are rules,] But how, when, and where? I believe we need to probe more deeply into the relationships among issues of musical technique, 'feeling', rules and regulations, and related matters". Silverman (2008) also points out a significant disconnect between this research and its application to music education, suggesting that further exploration is necessary to bridge these gaps effectively:

> "the tendency towards vagueness and incompleteness in some writings on musical interpretation, and the aforementioned lack of studies that relate to selected works and selected performers/performances may be partly related to a traditional tendency to separate strictly the education of future performers, educators, and researchers, and/or a lack of interest in integrating all music students' development of (1) music-making techniques; and (2) musically relevant historical, social, cultural, and theoretical understandings" (p. 252).

The noted disconnection between studies of common practice in music interpretation and those in the field of music education is identified as a contributing factor to the limited application of research findings to the pedagogy of music interpretation (Mateos & Alcaraz, 2011). Indeed, the education of performers is largely structured around overcoming the technical difficulties associated with playing a particular instrument, rather

than focusing on interpretative aspects. This emphasis on technique overshadows the broader, more nuanced understanding of musical interpretation, potentially stunting a more holistic educational approach that incorporates both technical proficiency and expressive depth:

> "In the traditional training of performers, the didactics of instrumental mechanical techniques clearly prevails over the didactics of interpretative styles. Indeed, pieces are gradually studied depending on technical difficulties, hence interpretative style is relegated to non-structured and spontaneous teachers' verbal corrections. As a consequence, style is very much learned after the assimilation of the piece, but not during the process, which provokes cognitive dissonances for students and so delays" (Mateos & Alcaraz, 2011, p. 19).

Moreover, an intriguing philosophical question, which lacks a counterpart in psychology, concerns whether the inclusion of random procedures in a music score alters the 'meaning' of its interpretation compared to traditional fixed-notation scores. Sparshott posits that "both random composition procedures and formally notated works that lead to performances are, to a certain degree, at least, indeterminate" (Wood, 1998, p. 102). Further, Sparshott elaborates on the complex dynamics inherent in musical practices in relation to the score, stating that "there are, no doubt, relations of coercion, exploitation, and tyranny in musical practice; but indeterminacy in musical composition does not alleviate them" (in Alperson, 1986, p. 56).

Additionally, two pertinent questions related to musical meaning are prominently discussed in the philosophy of music (Beardsley, 1958; Kivy, 1990): To what extent can the composer's intentions be accessed by the interpreter through the written score? And, is there a distinction between the aesthetic intentions and the object (the music) itself? In philosophy, these questions receive contrasting responses, which are not typically explored in psychology. On one side, Munroe C. Beardsley asserts a clear distinction: "while some performers are guided by reverence for the imagined wishes of the composer, most do not (...). In fact, operating solely on this principle would be impossible" (Beardsley, 1958, p. 22). On the other side, Peter Kivy contends that the composer's intentions are necessarily accessible: "while knowledge of a composer's intention is available to us through documents

and accounts, the actual decision-making process of performers regarding performance does not typically involve consulting such sources [but rather, the music itself as an accessible object]" (Kivy, 1990, p. 35). Contrary to both, Francis Sparshott views the intention as embodied in the complete performance, suggesting it derives not only from the composer but also from both the score and its interpretation within a social context: "To interpret a performance in terms of intentions (...) is to rethink what was done in the performance act rather than to describe what took place, to bring oneself and others to see how what was done made sense as the thing to do in the circumstances" (Sparshott, 1967, p. 168).

David J. Elliott presents a holistic conception of music performance within a praxial philosophy of music education, a view not commonly adopted in psychology/musicology. Elliott (1995, p. 165) delineates a broader and clearer set of factors influencing performance: "In the actions of performing, performers convey their understanding of a composition in relation to (a) what the composer must/could/should have intended, (b) what past performers must/could/should have intended, (c) what they believe their audience would expect or enjoy hearing emphasized in a composition, or (d) some combination of the above". Elliott's comprehensive view of the score remains largely overlooked in existing research. He describes the score as a multidimensional reality involving: (a) music makers or 'musicers'; (b) music making, encompassing all aspects such as performing, improvising, composing, etc.; (c) musical products, events, or 'works' including other compositions, improvisations, and aurally transmitted works; (d) listening by all potential audiences, including performers themselves; (e) stylistic traditions and contexts; (f) and their combination, which transcends the sum of its parts (Elliott, 1995, p. 39-45).

Beyond Elliott's perspectives, other philosophical approaches to musical expression range from absolute formalism to absolute expressionism and referentialism (Silverman, 2007, p. 111). While Elliott's holistic view does not directly correspond to any predominant trends in psychology/musicology, the formalistic philosophy, as expounded by Davies (2004), aligns more closely with the current focus in

psychological/musicological research. This alignment is exemplified by Clarke's assertion that "there is no plausible alternative, therefore, to the idea that expression is derived from structure" (1988, p. 11), a sentiment echoed by Chaffin & Lemieux (2004) and Sloboda (1985). However, non-formalistic philosophical interpretations of musical performance do not have clear equivalents in psychology. Connections between expressionism and the work of Gabrielsson and Juslin (1996), or referentialism and the research of Todd (1995), might be suggested, but these parallels are more speculative and superficial than substantive, with the orientations of the cited psychological studies not fully aligning with their philosophical counterparts.

On the other hand, the semiotics of musical interpretation extends beyond music-specific analytical frameworks, incorporating methodologies originally developed for the semiotics of written words. These approaches, initially focused on textual interpretation, can significantly enhance our understanding of the interpretation of symbols in music scores, especially when adapted appropriately to music. As noted by Umberto Eco in *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990), he builds on Habermas's (1981) conception of discourse as a cooperative process between the reader and writer, with the text serving as a mediator in this communication. While theorists like Hirsch (1967), Lotman (1972), and Irngarden (1965) have viewed the text as a framework to be fleshed out by interpretations or as a set of cues allowing the recipient to select from myriad possibilities (Holub, 1984; Jauss, 1988), Eco (1990) advocates for a participatory understanding of symbols, akin to a conversation, and supports the notion of a boundary to curb the arbitrariness of text interpretations—this boundary being the text itself, which should align with any feasible interpretation. Eco names this dynamic 'a hermeneutic trilogy' among *intentio auctoris, intentio operis, and intentio lectoris*, highlighting the interdependent nature of communication. By applying Eco's model— originally applied to texts— to music scores or even performances, one risks oversimplifying the complexities inherent in music score interpretation, which also encompasses specific, social aspects of music that differ from those of language. Eco's framework underscores the social dimensions of notated symbols, suggesting that a comprehensive interpretation of musical

notation should involve not only the recognition of the symbol's identity (morphology) and its meaning but also an understanding of how meaning is conveyed—the semiotics of notation. Grier (1996, p. 25) emphasizes that "the fullest interpretation of musical notation requires not only a consideration of morphology and meaning but also the way in which meaning is conveyed, that is, the semiotics of notation". This perspective invites a deeper exploration of how musical symbols communicate within their cultural and social contexts, enriching our understanding of musical interpretation beyond mere textual analysis.

The direct contributions of music semiotics to score interpretation can be illuminated through the tripartite model of semiotic analysis proposed by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, who, inspired by the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce, expanded on Saussure's classic formulation. Nattiez's model includes poietic, neutral, and aesthetic dimensions (Nattiez, 1987). The poietic level concerns the creative process and cultural influences involved in creating a new piece of music. The neutral level focuses on the score itself. The aesthetic level involves the recipients' perception and the cultural, cognitive, and perceptual determinants that influence how they experience the music. Nattiez asserts the impossibility of escaping from this trilogy due to the non-universality of music symbolism, stating, "Since etically similar phenomena can be emically dissimilar, and etically distinct phenomena may result from the same emic categories, universals can no longer be sought at the level of immanent structures, but in more profound realities" (Nattiez, 1987, p. 65). For Nattiez, these profound realities are processes rather than symbols. The commonalities among these processes related to the perception or production of music arise not from the music product itself but from psychological and mediating universalities. The structure of Nattiez's model implies that while traditional musicological and psychological research may not be incorrect, it is inherently partial. Veltman (1999) argues, "Historically, musical analyses have tended to align themselves with one pole of the tripartition and to assert the primacy of that pole at the expense of the others. Rather than forcing a decision about the 'best' style of analysis, the semiotic approach allows an ecumenical mindset in which every analysis has some

validity" (p. 6). Despite the expansive scope of the semiotic model, semiotic studies often narrowly focus on the written symbols alone—the score—positioned within "an infinite, multidimensional web of interpretants" (Veltman, 1999, p. 8). This emphasis is a natural outcome of the semiotic axiom: Eco's idea of the text as the definitive referee in semiosis. By predominantly aligning semiotic analyses to the structural function of the symbols in scores, semiotic studies in music often reflect the structuralist bias evident in psychological studies, thus overlooking holistic conceptions that could bridge philosophies of music and foster a more comprehensive understanding:

> "music semioticians tend to generate analyses from structuralist underpinnings, and in so doing subordinate expressive functions to structural functions. Philosophical theories, however, tend to work the opposite way, subordinating theoretical discourse in the attempt to account for the expressive in music. Thus there is a need for an analytical method which reconciles" (Cardillo, 2008, p. 3).

Furthermore, the traditional research approach to score interpretation in semiotics is also seen as partial. As Cardillo (2008) suggests, semiotics often remains disconnected from philosophy and, consequently, is separated from hermeneutics. The focus on the study of signs and the pursuit of a scientific methodological characterization within semiotics are the primary reasons for its distinct stance relative to hermeneutics. In the words of Ricoeur (1980):

> "hermeneutic and textual semiotics are not two rival disciplines confronting each other at the same methodological level. Instead, the second is just the science of text, legitimately subordinated to a precise axiomatic inscribed in a general theory of signals. Hermeneutics, on the contrary, is a philosophical discipline deriving from the question 'what is understanding, what is interpreting?', in relation to scientific rationales. Hermeneutics invades semiotics as far as its critical segment implies a reflection on the underpinnings that are obviated by the humanities in general and the semiotics in particular" (p. 91).

According to Ricoeur (1980), the fundamental question for hermeneutics revolves around 'understanding'. This concept of understanding is derived from the seminal proposition of interpretation as illustrated by Martin

Heidegger. Heidegger posited that understanding is not merely about deciphering direct meanings or recreating the intentions of authors but involves a deeper engagement with the text (or, in the case of music, the score). This engagement is an existential act, where the interpreter encounters and co-creates meaning through a process that is both analytical and experiential, weaving together the historical, cultural, and personal contexts that inform the interpretation:

> "In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding" (Heidegger, 1962, pp.188–189).

Ricoeur (1980) highlights three critical distinctions where hermeneutics surpasses semiotics, emphasizing the depth and complexity of interpretation beyond the structural confines of semiotics:

1. Priority of Code over Manifestation: Semiotics prioritizes the code and its formation over how it is manifested. This focus overlooks the essential understanding that comprehending a dialogue between a sender and a recipient requires a preliminary understanding of the dialogue itself. By concentrating primarily on the structural aspects of codes, semiotics may miss the dynamic and evolving nature of communication.

2. Separation between Code and Message: Semiotics assumes that the separation between code and message results not from the actual interaction between the text and the reader but from a hypothetical prior interaction between the reader and the writer. This view implies that understanding the message depends on understanding its intended receiver, thereby neglecting the multifaceted interactions that influence interpretation, such as cultural and contextual factors.

3. Role of the Recipient's Intention: Semiotics does not fully acknowledge that the recipient's *intentio lectoris*—the reader's or listener's intent and interpretation—is the true creator of meaning in the interpretative

process, making it the only valid judge of that process. Instead, semiotics often limits its scope to analyzing how signs and meanings correlate with predefined codes or norms.

In contrast, hermeneutics engages in a deeper comparison of interpreters and their interpretations, rather than merely contrasting signs and their conventional meanings. This approach allows hermeneutics to capture the dynamic, subjective, and context-dependent nature of interpretation, providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of texts, including musical scores, as living dialogues between the text and its interpreters.

A holistic hermeneutic of musical performance

According to Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics, the varied approaches from psychology, musicology, and philosophy could be seen as occupying distinct yet interconnected segments within a broader hermeneutic circle, which he identifies using the term "Mimesis" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 93). Derived from the Aristotelian concept of 'resemblance' to reality, mimesis in the context of interpreting written symbols presents a paradox as it strives to replicate a reality that exists not in actuality but on paper—echoing Cook's earlier noted 'basic paradox' of music. Ricoeur delineates mimesis into three stages:
   - Mimesis I involves a prior understanding of the world and its symbolic representation.
   - Mimesis II refers to the symbolic restructuring of the world.
   - Mimesis II represents a re-symbolization, akin to Mimesis I, but focused on a particular interpretation of the world.

Considering these stages within the hermeneutical arc, and reflecting on the discussions above, one might position music semiotic studies primarily within Mimesis II, due to their focus on the form of symbols. Traditional musicological studies could fall into Mimesis I or II, depending on whether they concentrate on the history of music and musicians or on the score/performance, respectively. Philosophical studies, given their varied

nature, could intersect with any part(s) of the arc. Psychological studies related to perception might align with Mimesis III, while those connected to performance could relate to Mimesis II, reflecting their tendency towards an atomistic focus.

The hermeneutic circle is conceptualized not as a positivistic structure aimed at uncovering a 'final reality' but as a means of engaging with the world to foster a nuanced understanding. Aigen (1995, p. 292) articulates that "The goal of hermeneutic research is not to develop fixed, singular bodies of knowledge, but to engage deeply in the circle of understanding in order to develop insightful and plausible interpretations of events." This perspective suggests that hermeneutics does not solely rely on logical concepts, which are inherently limited and defined, but integrates them as part of a broader, evolving dialogue. Gadamer (1976, p. 607) expands on this by contrasting the hermeneutical circle with formal logic, noting that it "allows a flow of time and a flux of meaning," and does not fix concepts eternally but, akin to practical philosophy, develops them only in outline—thus enabling a continuous evolution of understanding.

Distinct from the positivism of science, which seeks absolute truths devoid of prejudice, hermeneutics acknowledges the inherent presence of prejudices as an integral aspect of understanding. Gadamer (1976, p. 607) articulates that the acknowledgement of the limits and temporal nature of understanding means there is no 'zero' point of understanding, indicating that complete objectivity or an unbiased starting point is unattainable. He further explains that our level of awareness of our own prejudices determines the extent of our engagement with the hermeneutic circle: "The hermeneutical circle is paradigmatic for any understanding, and we can only enter it through our prejudices. Prejudices represent the foundational structure of all our understandings, which is always mediated by tradition" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 607).

According to Gadamer, engaging with these inherent prejudices does not lead to an escape from the hermeneutic circle but rather necessitates our existence within it, embodying what Heidegger referred to as the 'Dasein'—

the being-there or presence within the context of one's environment and experiences (Heidegger, 1962). Navigating the hermeneutic circle involves a dialectical process, as Gadamer (1989, p. 611) describes: "What really occurs in the process of understanding is the formation of a common communicative situation." This dialectic interaction allows for the contrasting and blending of our knowledge horizons with those of others as we traverse the circle. Gadamer emphasizes the transformative potential of this interaction: "The genuine interweavement of all horizons is at issue... When we try to understand someone, we do not lose ourselves but move toward a more general ground that represents our shared space... It is only by understanding others that we can come to understand ourselves" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 611). Thus, hermeneutics views understanding not as an individual or isolated act but as a communal and continually evolving dialogue, where the interplay of prejudices, traditions, and interactions expands our comprehension and situates us within a broader, more interconnected context.

Investigating the dynamics within the hermeneutic arc could benefit significantly from an association with qualitative research methods derived from the social sciences, particularly Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism. This association is viable due to their notable similarities: both hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism aim to understand human behavior and assert that such understanding emerges from a dialectical process. Blumer (1981) succinctly outlines the foundational principles of symbolic interactionism: "Symbolic interactionism is based on three basic premises: (1) Humans act toward things based on the meanings those things have for them; (2) the meanings of things derive from social interaction; and (3) these meanings are dependent on, and modified by, an interpretive process by the people who interact with one another" (p. 2).

Ricoeur (1974) further contributes to this dialogue with his concept of 'distanciation'—a necessary stepping back from the text that allows for a fresh understanding. This concept aligns well with the principles of symbolic interactionism by emphasizing the role of objectification in text analysis, which methodologically counters the notion that only one interpretation is

valid or correct. According to Geanellos (2000, p. 113), this approach leads to "text plurality (that pre-understandings lead interpreters to understand the same text faithfully yet differently), and multiplicity (that texts have many meanings)". Thus, in the context of musical interpretation, different nuances among performances of the same musical work do not necessarily represent divergent approaches to a 'paradigmatic' performance. Instead, hermeneutics allows for the coexistence of multiple interpretive horizons, depending on the interpretive paths traversed within the hermeneutic circle. This perspective fosters a richer, more inclusive understanding of musical performances, highlighting the complex interplay of individual, cultural, and historical influences that shape musical interpretation.

In the realm of music, the hermeneutic process involves not only recognizing but also actualizing the convergences and divergences of interpretative horizons, considering the roles of composers, performers, and audiences. Such dynamics could effectively be examined using methodologies derived from Blumer's symbolic interactionism, such as Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss in their seminal 1967 work, aligns with constructivist interpretative traditions. This methodology focuses on generating and constructing theories grounded in empirical data, as opposed to adhering strictly to the verifiability and confirmation norms typical of positivist research paradigms. The objective is to derive a theoretical formulation not merely descriptive of the observed phenomena but one that emerges from a set of conceptual hypotheses explaining the variety of described events (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 28). This approach involves organizing coded data into various groups, sections, or categories, which facilitates the emergence of new hypotheses and conclusions—thereby contributing to a new horizon within the hermeneutic circle. Furthermore, these methodological insights could integrate seamlessly with Elliott's praxial philosophy of music education (1995), which already aligns with the hermeneutic stages of mimesis (a, b, c) and the turn of the hermeneutic circle as Elliott's d) factor. Elliott views musical interpretation and the music score as multidimensional realities that involve all potential agents in a network of mutual relationships (Elliott, 1995, p. 39-45), creating an ideal scenario for

applying symbolic interactionism researched through Grounded Theory. Thus, Elliott's praxial philosophy, when combined with hermeneutic principles, could foster a "holistic hermeneutics" in music education. This approach would account for all interactions and agents in music interpretation, providing a comprehensive model that serves dual purposes: 1) guiding the structure of new research in music interpretation, and 2) harmonizing existing research by integrating their partialities, divergences, and distinct objectives into a cohesive hermeneutic interactionistic arc. This holistic model advocates for a broader, more inclusive understanding of music interpretation, positioning it as an interdependent system of multiple interpretative processes and perspectives.

Conclusion

The contradictions, gaps, and disconnections highlighted in the existing literature significantly hinder the development of a comprehensive theoretical model for musical performance. These challenges arise from the fundamentally atomistic and disconnected nature of current research approaches, which are largely divergent from the complexities inherent in music score interpretation. Specifically, these approaches fail to provide a coherent array of perspectives (from musicology, philosophy, psychology, and music education); they typically examine the interpretative process unidirectionally (from performer to audience), neglect contemporary music, and lack ecological validity (often substituting live concert settings with recordings and replacing average concertgoers with strictly trained or untrained subjects, and reducing full works to mere passages). Moreover, they tend to isolate agents—focusing predominantly on the performance and/or the score—thus overlooking other critical participants such as composers, audiences, and even the performers themselves, and their potential reciprocal interactions.

To construct a robust, theoretical model that accurately explains musical score interpretation in the Western Classical tradition, I propose adopting a holistic hermeneutic approach aligned with Elliott's praxial philosophy and Ricoeur's concept of Mimesis. This approach would foster a framework conducive to new interdisciplinary studies aimed at exploring the

processes through which Western classical music is understood and rendered from written scores. Such research could involve creating real, symbolic interactions (e.g., live concerts, composing new pieces, and engaging with full performances) that are subject to hermeneutic and holistic analysis. The proposed framework for future studies would establish several specific, non-conventional objectives to advance the current state of research in music score interpretation. These objectives could include:

1. Integrate Diverse Disciplines through Hermeneutics: Employ Ricoeur's Mimesis to unify research from musicology, psychology, and music education, facilitated by philosophical insights. This would involve contrasting the varied approaches from these fields at each level of Mimesis to forge a new, interdisciplinary understanding.

2. Encourage Reciprocal Interaction Studies: Move beyond traditional one-way analyses from performer to audience by exploring reciprocal interactions among all stakeholders involved, including performers, audiences, and composers. Research questions should probe how interpretations are expected to be understood versus how they are actually experienced, considering the backgrounds and interactions of all parties.

3. Inclusive Agent Analysis: Address the current research atomism by involving all agents in the musical process—composers, performers, and the public—in the research scope. This approach would also embrace the study of contemporary music, providing a broader perspective on musical interpretation.

4. Enhance Ecological Validity: Conduct studies within real concert settings and use full artistic works as opposed to isolated musical cells or passages. This shift aims to create research conditions that more accurately reflect the natural environments and contexts in which music is performed and experienced.

5. Bridge Contemporary and Historical Music Studies: Incorporate contemporary music from the Western Classical tradition to not only

understand current musical practices but also to shed light on historical contexts, guided by the idea that the present and the past continuously inform each other.

6. Link Research to Music Education: Ensure that the findings from this interdisciplinary research are directly applicable to music education at all levels. This involves considering how insights from the research can inform teaching practices and curriculum development throughout the journey of the hermeneutic circle and beyond.

These objectives collectively aim to deepen the understanding of musical score interpretation by considering the complex interplay of various agents and contexts, thus fostering a more dynamic and holistic view of the musical landscape. This approach promises to enrich both theoretical perspectives and practical applications in the field, making significant contributions to how music is taught, studied, and understood.

The proposed theoretical model, grounded in holistic-hermeneutic and interdisciplinary principles, holds the potential to significantly enhance our comprehension of musical interpretation across various aspects. This model could lead to new ways of approaching and teaching score interpretation and music performance by integrating a more comprehensive understanding of how music is both created and perceived. It may challenge and expand traditional methodologies by incorporating diverse perspectives and insights from multiple disciplines. In terms of aesthetic perception, the model could alter how listeners and performers understand and appreciate the aesthetic components of music. By exploring the intricate relationships between composers, performers, and audiences within a hermeneutic framework, it may reveal deeper layers of aesthetic engagement and meaning. This could revolutionize music education practices by fostering a curriculum that emphasizes the interconnectedness of musical elements and cultural contexts, helping educators develop more effective teaching strategies that reflect the dynamic and complex nature of musical interpretation.

The impact on musical praxis includes enhancing the expressive capabilities and engagement of practicing musicians with their audience by providing a deeper understanding of the interpretive choices they make. Music teachers might find new tools and approaches for instructing students, particularly in terms of encouraging more thoughtful and informed interpretations of musical scores. Additionally, researchers studying music could use the model to explore new areas of inquiry or refine existing research methodologies, leading to richer and more nuanced academic contributions. Beyond music, this holistic-hermeneutic, interdisciplinary model for interpretation analysis may transcend musical boundaries by serving as a basis for developing future studies in other performing arts such as dance or theater. Moreover, the results of such studies could help to better understand ourselves and our cultural assumptions, given the holistic and social standpoints.

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