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Performing Classics Today

The Role of the Performer
in the Actualization of Music

Il ruolo dell'interprete
nella performance della musica classica

EDITED BY / A CURA DI
ANTONIO CASCELLI – SUSANNA PASTICCI

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INTRODUCTION:
PERFORMANCE, IMPROVISATION, AND MULTITEMPORALITY

During the 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 concert seasons at Carnegie Hall, New York, Maurizio Pollini curated a series of concerts titled *Perspectives: Maurizio Pollini*. Franz Xaver Ohnesorg, Executive and Artistic Director, described the series as occurring «at the boundary between millennia, a border crossing between eras, where one is naturally tempted to look back at the territory left behind and to anticipate the unknown landscape ahead».¹ The concerts featured music by Machaut and Messiaen, Ockeghem and Fernyhough, Monteverdi and Berio, Bach and Ligeti. As Ohnesorg further notes, «Maurizio Pollini has broken through the traditional constraints of programming in several essential ways. He encompasses a millennium and more in musical history, drawing unexpected connections among works that rarely, if ever, occupy the same programmes. Here one can find a string quartet, solo singers and instrumentalists, a chorus, and orchestras, often mingled within the span of a single evening to perform repertory in a fresh context».² The concert on 30 March 2000, for example, began with Monteverdi's *Lamento di Arianna*, followed by Schoenberg's Quartet No. 2 in F-sharp minor, Op. 10, his *Five Piano Pieces*, Op. 23, Nono's *Cori di Didone*, and concluded with madrigals by Gesualdo.³ The concert on 1 April 2000 opened with a selection of Gregorian chants, followed by Josquin's *Missa L'homme armé sexti toni*, Palestrina's *Stabat Mater*, and concluded with Beethoven's String Quartet no. 15 in A minor, Op. 132.⁴ Pollini's intentions in this programming are clearly laid out in his own words in the introduction to the accompanying booklet:

Almost all of these concerts contain at least one work by a composer from the second half of the twentieth century, and it is to the creative artists of this

1. Theodore W. Libbey, Jr. (ed.), *Perspectives: Maurizio Pollini*, The Carnegie Hall Corporation, New York 1999, p. 4.

2. *Ibid.*

3. The performance featured conductor Erwin Ortner, with the Juilliard String Quartet, sopranos Melanie Diener and Claudia Barainsky, the Arnold Schoenberg Choir, and Maurizio Pollini at the piano.

4. The concert brought together conductor Erwin Ortner, the Juilliard String Quartet, the Arnold Schoenberg Choir, and Maurizio Pollini.

period that the series is dedicated. The end of the millennium provides an opportunity for reflecting on the important role of contemporary music in the musical life of our times. The task for listeners is to absorb, to make their own, the music that reflects the world around them. Our task is to pay homage to the major composers of our day and to encourage future creators. [...] This series of concerts presents music composed during historical periods that are very distant from one another. In addition to contemporary music, there are pieces from the classical repertory, works of special significance in the evolution of musical language. Early music will also be represented. In order to place works from different eras side by side on the same program, I looked for common threads, relating to such concepts as aphorism, modality, transitional moments, and monody.⁵

In times like ours, accustomed to streaming platforms and playlists, it is certainly easier to create juxtapositions of music from different eras and genres, both within and outside Western art music. Young students are used to mixed listening habits, which should be celebrated as they reflect a breaking of barriers: at one moment they might be listening to Lady Gaga, and the next to Chopin. Yet mainstream concert programming — today as in 1999–2000 — remains rigidly organised by historical periods. At most, music from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is programmed alongside Classical-Romantic repertoire. Pollini's concert series had the vision to challenge that rigidity. To be sure, Pollini was still guided by a sense of modern master narrative. In fact, he writes:

What we find interesting in all these works is the way in which the poetics of the composer emerge, inspiration successfully triumphing over contrapuntal difficulties. In Ockeghem's music, it is the most complex parts that are also the most fascinating. Much the same is true of the music of Josquin, in which his contemporaries found "divinum et inimitabile quiddam" [something divine and inimitable], as will we.⁶

However, through his modernist approach, he began to offer suggestions for rethinking music-historiographical models of playing and listening.

A similar attempt at rethinking music-historiographical models is offered by Josep Colom (Spanish pianist, born 1947, only five years younger than Pollini).⁷ Among his extensive discography, we would like to draw attention to three

5. Libbey, Jr., *Perspectives: Maurizio Pollini*, p. 6.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

7. Born in Barcelona, winner of the Paloma O'Shea Santander National and International Piano Competitions (1972 and 1978), Colom has also served on the juries of major competitions, including the International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw.

albums: *Confluences – Bach & Chopin* (2017), *Moments musicaux* (recorded live at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid on 10 October 2018 and released in 2022), and *Mozart: Piano Sonatas K.333, 457, 545 & 576* (2024). In *Confluences*, Colom alternates a selection of preludes from both books of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* with a few of Chopin's Etudes and Nocturnes. He opens with Bach's Prelude No. 1 in C major, followed by Chopin's Étude Op. 10, No. 1 in C major; he then proceeds with Bach's Prelude No. 15 in G major from Book I, followed by Chopin's Étude Op. 10, No. 5 in G-flat major, and so on. But Colom does not limit himself to alternating compositions that are usually presented separately in concert, such as the complete Book 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and Chopin's Études Op. 10. This alone already marks a departure from standard practice; yet he goes further by introducing improvisatory sections to transition between pieces, creating a continuum of sound and reviving the nineteenth-century piano tradition of preluding. Whether the transitions in *Confluences* are fully improvised remains unclear, since this is a studio recording. However, the album *Moments musicaux* is a live recording, and the same principle is applied here with compositions by Schoenberg, Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart, Brahms, Bach, this time alternating with short transitional passages clearly indicated in the CD track listing as *Improvisations* (1, 2, 3, etc.). The concert begins with the last of Schoenberg's *Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke*, Op. 19. The piece is followed by *Improvisation 1* (specified as live from the Fundación: En vivo desde...), which recalls the opening of Schoenberg's piece and transitions smoothly to the fifth of Beethoven's *Bagatelles*, Op. 126. This is followed by Schubert's first *Moment Musical*, then Colom's own *Improvisation* No. 2, which this time recalls the opening of Schubert's piece. In the last of the three albums, dedicated to Mozart's piano sonatas, Colom inserts full-length interludes in between the sonatas' movements.

What Pollini and Colom do, each in their own way, is disrupt the horizon of expectations that have become almost fossilised in our listening experiences. Attuned as we are to «the imaginary museum of musical works»,⁸ we tend to regard them as untouchable, sacred, unchangeable monoliths, immune to the flux of cultural context and performance practices, forgetting that this is a modernist construction and that performance practices have varied through history. They play with the temporality of the work of art, thereby creating new dynamics of artistic production and reception.

In the field of art history, Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have explored the plural temporality of the work of art. In *Anachronic Renaissance*, they argue that no medium conveys temporal complexity more powerfully than the

8. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992.

work of art, which they describe as a «strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural». Although produced at a specific historical moment by an individual or a collective, the artwork simultaneously exceeds that moment: it may refer back to distant origins, earlier artefacts, or even to a timeless, transcendent source, while also projecting itself forward toward future viewers, who continually renew and reinterpret its meaning.⁹

To articulate this phenomenon, Nagel and Wood introduce the term “anachronic” as distinct from “anachronistic”.¹⁰ The latter is a judgmental term rooted in historicist thinking, which assumes that every object or event has a correct place in a linear historical sequence. Anachronism implies error or misplacement. In contrast, the anachronic artefact is one that moves freely in time, not to signal historical confusion, but to perform a specific artistic function. «To describe a work of art as an “anachronism” is to say that the work is best grasped not as art, but rather as a witness to its time. [...] To describe the work of art as “anachronic”, by contrast, is to say what the artwork does, qua art».¹¹ This distinction is crucial. The anachronic work is not a passive historical document but an active agent that “folds”, bends, and reconfigures time. It is “late” or “belated” not in a pejorative sense, but because it re-presents a prior reality and is repeated across successive acts of reception. It “remembers”, “hesitates”, “projects”, and “performs” — all temporal gestures that resist linearity.¹²

Nagel and Wood further elaborate this temporal complexity through two competing yet coexisting models of artistic production: substitution and performance. The substitution model posits that an artefact is linked to an unknowable origin through a chain of replicas, emphasizing continuity and reproduction over originality. In the performance model, by contrast, the artist intervenes in time through a single, unique, and unrepeatable act that introduces a punctual difference and underscores the dimension of rupture and invention.¹³

These two models are not mutually exclusive but coexist in a dynamic tension. The work of art thus emerges as a temporal operator that continually negotiates between recurrence and rupture, memory and projection, permanence and transformation. As in the visual arts, music likewise oscillates between these two poles, combining elements of repetition and reinvention. In religious contexts, for instance, music can function as a substitute for a divine presence or as a reenactment of sacred time: Gregorian chant privileges continuity with a ritual tradition

9. Alexander Nagel – Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, Zone Books, New York 2010, p. 9.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

rather than the individuality of the performer. By contrast, the performance model emerges in practices that foreground the performative event as a creative act situated in the present: live performance, jazz improvisation, Baroque ornamentation, and contemporary experimental music all place the production of novelty at the forefront of the musical act in real time.

As Eva Kernbauer observes, works of art can assume an active role in shaping art-historiographical models themselves, not merely reflecting pre-existing temporal structures but actively contributing to their reconfiguration. In this view, «art can become a historiographical instrument on its own accord», able not only to represent time but to reshape it.¹⁴ Performance thus becomes not only an object of historical inquiry but also a means of producing historical knowledge.

This is the horizon within which this volume operates, exploring how performance may function as a historiographical device capable of interrogating the past, renegotiating traditions, and redefining our relationship with temporality.¹⁵

Performing Classics Today

Within this framework, the articles in the present Chigiana volume may be broadly grouped into two partly overlapping orientations: on the one hand, studies that take nineteenth-century performance historiography as a point of departure, and on the other, those that engage more directly with twenty-first-century perspectives. This distinction is not, however, rigid, and the organisation of the volume into sections instead reflects thematic and/or repertorial affinities, highlighting continuities and points of intersection among different approaches.

The studies with a nineteenth-century emphasis examine the broad margins that defined performance in that era — a continuum stretching from improvisation to fully composed works — showing how historical performance practices were shaped by fluid boundaries. The investigations not only offer new perspectives on the past but also suggest possibilities for contemporary reflection and performance practice. Meanwhile, the articles engaging with twenty-first-century perspectives often return to historical practices — particularly those of the nineteenth-century — to reread and reinterpret them in light of present-day sensibilities. They explore how contemporary performance can sustain incompatible temporal models in suspension, resisting their resolution into a single, definitive interpretation. In this sense, performance does not merely represent the past but actively summons

14. Eva Kernbauer, *Anachronic Concepts, Art Historical Containers and Historiographical Practices in Contemporary Art*, «Journal of Art Historiography», 16, 2017, pp. 1–17: 1.

15. This volume has been conceived, developed, and carried out within the framework of the PRIN 2020 research project *Improvisation–Composition: The Double Identity of European Music*, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MUR).

it in the present, reconfiguring temporal experience and at times projecting itself toward future possibilities. Together, these contributions demonstrate that performance is not simply a medium for historical reproduction but a dynamic site of historiographical inquiry — one that challenges linear narratives and opens up new ways of engaging with time.

The first section of the volume, “Composing and Improvising at the Piano”, focuses on the instrument that more than any other embodied the dynamic interplay between composition, performance, and improvisation from the late eighteenth century onward. As both a medium of musical invention and a principal vehicle of performance, the piano fostered practices in which the boundaries between compositional design and performative realization remained porous.

John Rink’s essay, *Reimagining Chopin: In Pursuit of Alternatives*, examines the creative implications of the numerous variants found in the autograph and printed sources of Fryderyk Chopin’s works. Rather than interpreting these variants as evidence of compositional uncertainty or a search for definitive form, Rink presents them as traces of an ongoing process of musical re-hearing. Particular attention is given to the composer’s practice of notating alternative passages — often in the form of ossia annotations written in pupils’ scores — which provided performers with interpretative options rather than prescriptive solutions. By offering the first systematic investigation of these alternatives, the essay reconstructs a practice of performance that was inherently flexible and open-ended, suggesting that Chopin’s works themselves invite a degree of improvisatory engagement. In doing so, Rink outlines what he terms a “rhetoric of variation”, a model that not only sheds light on Chopin’s own musical practices but also offers contemporary performers a framework for reconciling fidelity to the score with creative agency.

Valerie Woodring Goertzen’s contribution, *Written and Unwritten: Arrangements in Brahms’s Performances*, likewise addresses the fluid relationship between composition and performance, focusing on Johannes Brahms’s activity as a performer of arrangements and transcriptions. Drawing on contemporary concert reviews and documentary evidence, Goertzen reconstructs a performance practice in which Brahms reworked compositions by figures such as J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Gluck, Schubert, Chopin, and Robert Schumann, alongside his own works, in ways that blurred the distinction between interpretation and re-composition. These performances not only introduced audiences to unfamiliar repertoire but also established a dialogue with works that were gradually entering the nineteenth-century canon. Particularly significant is the fact that many of Brahms’s arrangements were never published and may never have been fully notated. This reinforces their status as context-dependent realizations, conveying an improvisatory quality that led listeners to perceive the unfolding of the creative process in real time.

The relationship between improvisation, pedagogy, and compositional technique is at the centre of Claire O'Donnell's essay, *Vocabulary and Syntax in the Preludes of Tommaso Giordani: Perspectives for Pedagogy and Performance*. The study situates the practice of preluding within the broader context of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Italian musical pedagogy, in which improvisation relied on the internalisation of a shared musical vocabulary and the mastery of combinatory procedures involving conventional figures. Through a detailed analytical examination of Tommaso Giordani's *Fourteen Preludes for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte* (c. 1780), O'Donnell demonstrates how these pieces exemplify a systematic syntax of musical construction. Drawing on William E. Caplin's theory of formal functions and Robert Gjerdingen's schema theory, she shows how Giordani's preludes articulate recurrent structural patterns while generating variety through chromatic inflection, textural modification, and metric transformation. By highlighting the pedagogical potential of these relatively formulaic yet flexible structures, the essay reconnects historical improvisational practices with contemporary approaches to performance and musical training, while also shedding light on the dissemination of Neapolitan musical traditions across Europe.

Friedrich Kalkbrenner knew his audience. Touring Britain and continental Europe in the 1820s, he improvised on themes that were locally familiar, calibrating his performances to the expectations of a rapidly expanding concert public. Gigliola Di Grazia's study reconstructs this practice from newly uncovered sources — including unpublished correspondence and contemporary press reviews — and illuminates a performer for whom improvisation was as much a social negotiation as a musical one. By improvising on familiar and locally resonant themes, Kalkbrenner adapted his performances to the tastes of a broader public while simultaneously asserting his artistic authority. The essay thus reveals how improvisation functioned not only as a display of technical skill but also as a means of negotiating the relationship between performer and audience, illuminating broader transformations in the cultural economy of musical performance.

Viewed together, the essays in this section demonstrate that composing and improvising at the piano were historically intertwined practices that challenge modern distinctions between work and performance, permanence and contingency. By foregrounding the performer's agency and the openness of musical works to reinterpretation, performance emerges as a process of continual re-creation across time, shaped by historical conventions yet constantly reactivated in the present.

The second section of the volume, "Beyond the Keyboard", expands the inquiry into improvisation and performative agency to contexts extending beyond the pianistic domain. While the piano historically provided a privileged space for the negotiation between composition and performance, improvisatory practices also

shaped other areas of musical life — from string and wind performance to orchestral conducting.

Before Pablo Casals, someone else was performing Bach's Cello Suites — and doing so with piano accompaniment. Edward Klorman's essay reconstructs that earlier tradition, revealing a nineteenth-century history far more complex than the familiar narrative of rediscovery by Casals would suggest. Drawing on early editions, concert reviews, and historical recordings, the study documents a wide range of performance practices, including the addition of expressive markings, editorial interventions, and even piano accompaniments intended to enhance the suites' appeal in public concert settings. Through three case studies — early pedagogical editions, Friedrich Grützmacher's contrasting editorial approaches, and Friedrich Wilhelm Städe's accompanied version — Klorman reconstructs how these performances may have sounded and how they were perceived by contemporary audiences. The essay thus reveals a historically contingent understanding of Bach's works, in which fidelity to the text coexisted with practices of adaptation and transformation, highlighting the extent to which performance actively shaped the meaning and status of the musical work.

Questions of constraint, transformation, and creative agency are also central to Robert de Bree's contribution, *Shackled Freedom, Growth within Constraints. Improvising Nineteenth-Century Monothematic Fantasias for Wind Players*. Addressing a comparatively underexplored domain of nineteenth-century performance practice, the essay examines the pedagogical and aesthetic potential of improvisation in monothematic fantasia form for wind instruments. Taking Carl Czerny's *Anleitung zum Fantasieren* as a theoretical point of reference, de Bree investigates how a single thematic idea can function as a generative nucleus for extended musical structures through processes of variation, transformation, and formal manipulation. Through the analysis of pedagogical repertoire and method literature, the study highlights the tension between established formal models and their creative subversion, showing how compositional deviations may evoke the impression of spontaneous invention. Drawing on William E. Caplin's theory of formal functions, de Bree demonstrates how these works operate simultaneously as compositional artefacts and pedagogical tools, encouraging performers to internalise structural principles while cultivating improvisational fluency. By presenting constraint not as a limitation but as a generative condition for invention, the essay offers a methodological framework through which contemporary performers may re-engage with historical improvisational practices and rethink the relationship between discipline and creative freedom.

If the first two contributions address improvisation within instrumental performance, Claudia Patané's essay shifts attention to the role of improvisation in orchestral conducting. Traditionally associated with control and fidelity to the

composer's intentions, the figure of the conductor has often been understood as the embodiment of interpretative discipline rather than spontaneous creativity. Patané challenges this view by drawing on recent developments in performance studies that emphasise a stage-to-page perspective, foregrounding performance as a relational process rather than a unidirectional realization of the score. From this perspective, orchestral performance emerges as a dynamic negotiation between conductor and musicians, shaped by processes of communication and shared interpretative decision-making. Through a comparative analysis of rehearsal practices in filmed recordings of Sergiu Celibidache and Carlos Kleiber, the essay explores different modes of improvisational interaction between podium and orchestra, revealing how extemporaneity may arise through the circulation of musical and interpersonal knowledge. In doing so, Patané reconceptualises conducting as a form of situated creativity grounded in collective practice and examines recent developments in the profession in light of this improvisatory dimension.

The third section of the volume, "Voices", turns to the human voice as a primary locus where the tensions between textual authority and creative agency have been negotiated with particular intensity. Across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, vocal performance constituted a domain in which the boundaries between composition and performance remained especially fluid, shaped by practices of ornamentation and expressive transformation that continually redefined the relationship between written text and its realisation in sound.

Francesco Izzo's essay, *Singing Verdi: Tradition, «come scritto», and Creativity*, examines the complex negotiation between fidelity to the composer's written text and the persistence of performance traditions in the interpretation of Giuseppe Verdi's operas. Drawing on both documentary research and practical experience gained through his work at the Festival Verdi at the Teatro Regio di Parma and the Accademia Verdiana, Izzo investigates how contemporary singers and conductors mediate between the authority of the score and historically transmitted performance conventions. Central to the discussion is the tension between a literal approach to Verdi's notation — often described as *come scritto* — and a body of practices that crystallised during the twentieth century through recorded performance traditions. By emphasising the role of critical editions and primary sources as points of departure for interpretation, the essay advocates a model of historically informed creativity grounded in a nuanced understanding of Verdi's notational language. Within this framework, practices such as the variation of cabaletta reprises, the execution of cadenzas, and the use of appoggiaturas and other ornaments emerge not as deviations from the text but as integral components of a historically situated performative practice. More broadly, Izzo calls for a renewed dialogue between musicological research and artistic practice, proposing a vision

of Verdi performance in which scholarly inquiry and creative interpretation mutually inform one another.

Questions of vocal agency and the historical transformation of operatic performance practices are further explored in Gianluca Bocchino's contribution. Adopting a historical-performative and semiological perspective, Bocchino examines the persistence of improvisatory practices in Italian opera from the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, interpreting them as the final flowering of a long-standing tradition grounded in ornamental freedom and vocal co-creation. By examining treatises, historical testimonies, and early phonographic recordings, the essay traces the gradual transition from improvisation as a shared and normative component of performance — characterised by variation, cadenzas, and spontaneous interventions — to its progressive marginalisation under the growing authority of philological approaches. Yet, as Bocchino demonstrates, these practices continued to operate, often in subtle or implicit forms, as a kind of performative resistance to the fixation of the musical text. The careers and vocal practices of singers such as Giovanni Battista Velluti, Laure Cinti-Damoreau, Gemma Bellincioni, and Adelina Patti reveal a genealogy in which variation functions not only as a technical procedure but also as an aesthetic and identity-defining device.

The relationship between historical vocal practice, embodiment, and contemporary performance is approached from a complementary perspective in Claire Burrell-McDonald, Anna Fraser, and Neal Peres Da Costa's essay, *Extrapolating Eighteenth-Century Bel Canto: García, Corri, and the Continuum of Vocal Practice*. Addressing the methodological challenges of reconstructing historical singing styles without direct sonic evidence, the authors propose a practice-led approach that integrates documentary research with experimental performance. By examining early recordings of singers trained in the nineteenth century alongside written sources spanning the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, the study identifies a continuum of vocal practices characterised by declamatory delivery, flexible rhythmic treatment, ornamentation, and a wide range of expressive vocal effects. Particular attention is given to the pedagogical and physiological writings of Manuel García II and Domenico Corri, whose detailed descriptions of vocal production provide crucial insights into pre-modern singing techniques. Through emulation and the experimental translation of written sources into sound, the authors seek to reimagine the sonic world of earlier vocal traditions while critically reassessing the aesthetic assumptions of modern operatic singing. This approach not only expands the expressive resources available to contemporary performers but also foregrounds the role of musical embodiment as a means of accessing and actualising historical performance practices.

By foregrounding the creative agency of singers, the persistence of improvisatory traditions, and the possibilities of practice-led research, the essays in this

section demonstrate how vocal performance operates as a dynamic process of actualisation in which past practices are reinterpreted in the present. In doing so, they reinforce the broader argument of the volume that performance — whether instrumental or vocal — constitutes a form of knowledge and creative action that reconfigures the relationship between music, history, and interpretation.

The final section of the volume, “Interactions”, brings into focus the relational and mediational dimensions of musical performance, examining the conceptual, technological, and cultural webs through which performance practices are transmitted and transformed.

Focusing on the paradigmatic case of *partimenti*, Ludovico Peroni’s study seeks to develop a conceptual tool capable of relating the interpretative practices of the Western written tradition to musical practices involving varying degrees of real-time creation. In this perspective, historical improvisation emerges as a point of intersection between writing and orality, codified tradition and performative flexibility. Drawing on distinctions between interpretation, extemporisation, and improvisation derived from audiotactile music theory, Peroni outlines a taxonomy designed to illuminate the medial and cognitive dimensions of different performative models. *Partimenti*, understood as long-standing pedagogical devices grounded in the internalisation of stylistic patterns and reactive invention, offer a privileged site for observing the interaction between stylistic conventions and creative freedom. By situating improvisation within a broader network of cognitive and cultural processes, the essay challenges its traditional marginalisation within musicological discourse and proposes a framework that supports both theoretical understanding and contemporary pedagogical application.

While Peroni’s contribution addresses the conceptual foundations of improvisatory practice, Anna Scalfaro’s essay examines the technological and cultural environments within which musical performance circulates in the contemporary world. Through a comparative analysis of pianists belonging to different generations — from figures active during the era of early television to artists who engage extensively with social media platforms — the study investigates evolving strategies of self-representation and audience engagement. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including press coverage, interviews, audiovisual materials, and digital communication practices, Scalfaro explores how media technologies reshape the public identity of the classical performer and redefine the relationship between artistic production and its dissemination. The essay raises broader questions concerning the role of the classical pianist today, emphasising the increasing importance of entrepreneurial competence and strategic media presence not only for professional visibility but also for the transmission of musical culture to diverse and non-specialist audiences. In this perspective, performance extends beyond

the concert space to encompass new forms of interaction and cultural communication mediated by technological infrastructures.

Questions concerning the conceptual and ideological frameworks that shape contemporary performance practice are addressed in Susanna Pasticci's essay, *How We Got into the Reproducibility Canon and Why We Need to Get Out*. The study examines the historical emergence and limitations of the notion of performance as the faithful reproduction of an inviolable musical text — a paradigm that has profoundly shaped modern classical performance and listening practices. Pasticci traces the development of an aesthetic model centred on the repeatability and fixity of the musical work itself, in which the written score assumes primacy over the lived experience of sound. By contrasting this paradigm with historical performance practices documented through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the essay demonstrates its incompatibility with the inherently contingent and situated nature of musical performance. Drawing on contemporary philosophical and anthropological perspectives, Pasticci argues that variability, unpredictability, and the performer's relational responsibility should be understood not as threats to musical integrity but as essential conditions for the continued vitality and cultural significance of the repertoire. The essay thus calls for a critical re-evaluation of inherited performance models and advocates the reintegration of improvisatory and extemporaneous practices within contemporary musical interpretation. It closes with an example that brings these reflections full circle. In a recorded performance of Schumann's *Phantasiestücke* Op. 73, pianist David Dolan and cellist Thomas Carroll introduce an improvised passage before each of the three movements. In this way, they continue the approach that Colom explored in Mozart's piano sonatas, extending it to a chamber music context. The temporality that Pollini opened up through programming, and that Colom pursued through the practice of preluding, reaches an additional level of immediacy: the same impulse to resist the fixity of the musical text, now folded into a single performance of a chamber music work, still reaching towards the future through the negotiations between two performing subjects.

The dynamic interplay of meanings across historical, social, and technological dimensions explored in the volume's essays points to a fundamental temporal elasticity that is not incidental but intrinsic to artistic expression. Art thrives on ambiguity and the refusal of closure; it is precisely this openness that enables it to function as a historiographical force, in which the performers mediate between the historical material and their present horizon. Glossing Gadamer, Paul Fairfield writes: «This sense of mediation is neither wholly passive — receiving as a blank slate what is inscribed on it externally — nor wholly active — legislating all that comes before it — but it is attuned to what speaks to us from the past as an

interlocutor or a text».¹⁶ The past addresses us not as a sovereign subject imposing meaning, but as a participant in a hermeneutic exchange. Thus, performative understanding is an act of temporal mediation: it does not merely reconstruct what was, but reactivates it in the present, allowing it to speak anew. In doing so, it opens the possibility of imagining what might yet be. Nagel and Wood capture this with particular force: «The ability of the work of art to hold incompatible models in suspension without deciding is the key to art's anachronic quality, its ability really to "fetch" a past, create a past, perhaps even fetch the future».¹⁷

16. Paul Fairfield, *History and Hermeneutics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2025, p. 33.

17. Nagel – Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, p. 18.