

THE COMPOSER AND THE PERFORMER

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Introduction

An artist of a plastic art form, whether a painter, a sculptor, or an architect, is the sole creator of the material object. There is no need for an intermediary or interpreter between the author and the spectator. True, in order to finalize his project an architect (and sometimes a sculptor) turns to the help of experienced workers who realize his models and sketches in stone and wood. But their work is purely that of the craftsman and does not involve any new, additional creative impulses.

The situation in music is entirely different. The composer needs an intermediary-performer, a creative interpreter of his composition. The word "performer" does in fact express the essence of the artistically significant and intensely creative process of musical interpretation. The more perfect, complete and brilliant the performance of an artist, the more exposed is his artistic persona. He is not an "executor" of another's will; rather the mind of the composer should become the performer's own, and blend with the individual traits of his talent, with his own artistic aspirations. The performer gains strength and courage in this unity, which is necessary for the concrete realization in sound of the ideas and images contained in the work.

A musician-interpreter, at one and the same time, realizes his connection to the composer's intentions, and realizes himself as an artistic personality: acknowledging both the enormous importance of the author of the composition – and at the same time his own role in the realization of the composer's ideas.

Naturally, a composer can be a performer of his own compositions. Probably this combination of composer and performer in one person is the most fruitful and yields the highest artistic achievements. The author then is an actor playing the main character in the drama written by him. However, the composer is not always a perfect instrumentalist. Creation of a composition and its concert performance are two different aspects of the musical art. Therefore it shouldn't be surprising if a composer relegates the interpretation of his work to another musician with a greater mastery of the instrument.

Even composers who have the necessary instrumental proficiency and technique are still not always the best performers of their work. In such cases, the composer has somehow exhausted his main source of creative force in the composition process.

This problem has a special interest from the historical perspective. It is known that separation of the roles of the composer and performer is related to the development of virtuosity and the emergence of professional performers whose artistic efforts go mostly

into performance/recitals. The many reasons for this division of creative tasks require a study of their own.

It happens sometimes that a composer is unable to take into account all the technical, colorful and expressive possibilities of a master instrumentalist. Depending on the precision with which the composer estimates the instrument's potential one may talk of a sensitive or insensitive presentation of compositional details, and a good or bad instrumentation. However, no matter how great the abilities of the performer – a pianist, violinist, singer, conductor – no matter how diverse the individual qualities, character and emotions of the artist-interpreter, or how widely differing are the various styles of playing and interpretation of the composer's ideas; any valuable and artistically justified concert performance requires from the artist the most careful and deep penetration of the composer's ideas and emotional intentions. The interpreter must present the composition to the listener as an undistorted whole, and he should see this as his first and foremost artistic goal.

Does the composer need the artist-interpreter as an independent creative personality? Do the brilliance and emotions of the performer not impede our view of the ideas and images of the work interpreted? And, finally, doesn't the composition potentially contain everything that an interpreter may present? Is the live sound related to the written notes as cause and effect or is it simply an occasion for display of the individual features and virtues of a great master-performer?

All these questions were answered differently by different schools in various times. There are artists who not only treat the author's text arbitrarily, ignore the performance directions, tempo and dynamic markings, but also change the text according to their own notions, add their own cadenzas, other harmonies, new passages etc. This was an accepted practice by many performers of the old school, and attempts to revise the text of a composition still appear in our day.

Sometimes a composer trusts the performer to introduce some changes into the text: not only editorial modifications – in the most general sense – but also radical compositional changes that are most definitely the author's prerogative. This may be explained by the composer's desire to employ the knowledge and mastery of the performer-instrumentalist, who knows playing technique and the possibilities of the instrument perfectly. Such a friendly collaboration may help the author find a path to the most grateful exposition.

Technical perfection is a gift that the performer presents to the composer. The last and decisive component in the musical creation – concrete realization – depends completely on the skills of the performer, his technical perfection, and the individuality of his interpretation.

Quite often a composer has sufficient skills as a pianist. However, he would naturally seek advice from an expert when creating a part for a less familiar instrument.

The tradition of relegating the composition of virtuosic cadenzas to the performer is quite understandable, because of the historical development of the relationship between composer and performer. This musical practice takes full advantage of the knowledge and mastery of both, without a strict division between the creative domains of the composer and his interpreter. Still, these two areas of musical art are separated even when the composer himself is a noteworthy interpreter.

In that case we often hear a composition written in a way that takes into account the composer's own accomplishments as a virtuoso instrumentalist. On the other hand, a prominent instrumentalist often develops an urge to create his own compositions for his recitals. It is hard to determine the creative stimulus for these: whether it is the performer's vigor and the perfection of his artistry, or whether the very saturation and force of the creative ideas causes them to come to life, in realized sound, through powerful and perfect technique.

Still, musical practice shows that though the combination of the composer and performer in one person is both natural and harmonious, and despite the large impression left by gigantic creative personalities of the past (who possessed deeply and totally both a purely creative gift and perfect methods of realization) – usually we encounter the familiar separation, and the instrument in a concert hall usually resounds under the fingers of a performer and not the author himself.

Transcriptions

The composer's desire to participate in the realization of his intentions is quite understandable. Performance markings, sometimes very detailed, which complement the written notes, point to a vital interest on the part of the composer in perfect, and closely directed, future interpretation.

On the other hand, a noteworthy performer who has devoted his life to working on perfect realizations of the ideas of various composers, has spent many hours on practice and technique, and has penetrated special mysteries that have been opened only to him – may hardly remain indifferent to the misses and shortcomings of presentation committed by even the greatest of composers. It would be a mistake to attribute the performer's adjustments and corrections solely to lack of modesty and to a presumptuous crossing of the boundaries demarking his subordinate role.

Music history knows many examples of great collaborations full of fruitful and selfless labor, such as Rimsky-Korsakov's creative help to Mussorgsky, or Liszt's transcriptions, which popularized his favorite composers; even those without worldwide fame. The numerous transcriptions of Bach organ works by the great masters of pianism – Busoni, Tausig and others – also belong here. (We should point to Bach transcriptions by A.F. Goedike, and more specifically to his symphonic transcription of the Passacaglia, as far as our own country is concerned.)

We should, however, quickly mention that the purpose of any transcription is not precisely editorial correction of the presentation. Transcription leads to deeper modifications that depart somewhat from exact adherence to the author's original. Such changes are caused quite logically by the features of another instrument or instrumentation system.

Thus, some changes in the text are unavoidable in a transcription. However, it is difficult to find an example of a successful intervention by a performer into the notes of a composer.

The reality of concert performances and quite often of editions by famous pianists demonstrates that even a small deviation from the author's text, addition of even one extra note into a chord, a change in figuration or other detail, typically distorts the composer's intentions. Most frequently such "improvements" show that the performer doesn't have a complete grasp of the author's style.

It is regrettable that many excellent musicians and remarkable performers sometimes did not have sufficient tact and artistic sensitivity, and allowed themselves to modify the author's text arbitrarily, not only on the concert stage, where this may be at least explained as an improvisational gimmick, but also in thought-out and carefully considered editions of the classics. Even the greatest performers were sometimes guilty of taking such unnecessary liberties, such as, for instance, Busoni: two additional bars with arpeggiated dominant and tonic chords at the end of Chopin's Etude #1 were especially unsuccessful.

As examples of less than completely successful editions one may mention a great number of publications of the classical works, starting with Bulow and Czerny, and up to editions by Klindworth, d'Albert, Lamond and others. Some of the Siloti editions of the Tchaikovsky works belong here as well; for instance, Variations in F major.

Unsolicited intervention by the editor is especially unpleasantly surprising in those cases where there is no reason to doubt the caliber of the composing – which is the work of a composer with a perfect style. Thus many experienced performers prefer to study compositions using the main unedited publications, which present the author's text correctly.

Many editors find it possible – in lieu of a careful reading of the composer's text, an understanding of his intentions and ideas, and careful preservation of the note pattern as a characteristic signature of the author – to instead supply arbitrary modifications, introduce their own considerations into every detail of the text, transpose voices into different octaves, and replace nearly all the performance directions. The editor treats the author condescendingly, as an inspired lunatic or a spoiled child who has no time to finalize his intentions precisely or to descend from the heights of his creative metier to the prosaic task of careful writing.

Some corrections are introduced by editors out of considerations related to the gradual development and perfection of instruments and playing technique. For instance, they often add notes or transpose the sound into a different register, either higher or lower, based on the fact that at the time when the work was created, the author's keyboard had a lesser range. Indeed, Beethoven had to vary the repeat in many sonatas, as well as in the first movement of the Fourth Concerto. On the other hand, restoring the exact correspondence of repeat and exposition, we lose a precious variation, one that creatively enhances the composition, even though the reason for the author's inventiveness was in this case merely the restricted number of octaves on contemporary fortepianos. A note that crosses the scale of the composer sounds foreign to the composing style, like a random instrument in a well thought-out score. For instance, in the Tchaikovsky Sixth Symphony, the commonly practiced first-movement introduction of the bass clarinet for four notes in the transition to the secondary theme, should be considered not totally justified.

Reality demonstrates that even though theoretically an experienced and talented performer-pianist, undertaking to edit the author's score, may conceivably help the composer, one may hardly find an example where such corrections and addenda improve the quality of the original. If one undertook the thankless task of writing the history of editions of classical compositions, it would be a study of more or less radical but almost always unjustified distortions of the author's text. Liszt, a genius interpreter of the Beethoven scores, regretted at the end of his life that he allowed himself deviations from the true text in his concert interpretations.

Thus the only place where a pianist has the right to make creative corrections to the author's style is in transcription and arrangements. But even in this domain one should avoid unnecessary deviations, the extraneous rhetoric of invented passages, and ornaments that violate the style of the composer. The goal of a transcription is to express the sound-character of the original by alternate means, while retaining the composition's style as much as possible. This is impossible to accomplish mechanically. One has to know the possibilities of the instrument well, and also creatively find adequate forms of presentation and new means of expression, to shed light on the composer's intentions. New avenues of presentation and expression are needed solely in order to preserve, not break apart the concept of the work.

The metrically transcribed melody contour in the Liszt transcription of "Gretchen am Spinnrade" attains almost vocal expressivity due to this shift. By contrast, the precisely maintained movement of the accompaniment in the "Erlkoenig," performed by the left hand in the transcription, produces the impression of stressful virtuoso jumps in place of the airiness of the Schubert original. Of course, some difficulties can be smoothed out by the virtuosity of a performer, but that has no bearing on the transcription itself.

The transfer of thematic elements leads to corrections in the notation, not only in piano arrangements with a significantly different specific presentation but also in the handing off from one instrument to another in symphonic compositions. Beethoven often replaced two quarters by one half-note in the presentation of the Freude theme by cellos and

basses in the finale of the Ninth Symphony. Comparison to a literary translation suggests itself – as when a translator-poet changes the meter and the number of syllables of the original in order to express more precisely its very spirit.

No matter how we treat transcriptions and arrangements for other instruments, it is impossible to deny that many examples of this genre have the right to exist and are themselves a special kind of creative expression. There is also no doubt that the border that separates composition and performance tends to encroach, to a certain extent, on the domain of the composer's art.

Individuality of a performer

Discussing the individuality and originality of a formidable artist's playing, we try to distinguish him from less distinctive performers as if a performance satisfying artistic demands without introducing personal qualities is even possible. This false distinction often leads to the conclusion that there are special, artistic types of performers who create their own worlds of images and ideas, which differ from that of the composition.

One may, of course, artificially separate the issue of how the composition is performed from that of what is being performed. Reality shows that indeed an artist-performer type does exist whose impetuous virtuosity and pretentious phrasing hide the true intentions of the composer. Can, however, such playing be justified artistically? Individuality of performance may shine brilliantly only when it is illuminated by the light emanating from the composer's ideas. Otherwise the artist's playing is dimmed and turns into a calculated, cold display of technique and mannerisms. Such playing is an unnecessary spinning of the wheels of the performing machine, one that does not touch the essential aspects of the composition.

On the other hand, is it possible to speak of good playing by an artist if he does not invest any individual qualities into his performance, does not transmit his personal interest in the ideas and emotional intentions of the composer, and does not possess his own, special and refined mastery? Listening to a superlative artist we become convinced that every phrase, every chord and passage invariably transmits a special charm, characteristic of the true creative process.

If the sound of a composition were fixed for eternity (say, a composer's performance has been preserved) – would it be possible to treat this performance as the only one possible, an undisputed and unsurpassable standard for all other performers?

A composer should, of course, take into account the possibilities of great performing art. Still, an outstanding interpretation invariably introduces special qualities that shed new light both on the composition and on the author himself.

One should not suppose that a performer's individual characteristics are visible only at moments of significant deviation from the score. Individuality and brilliance of performance are seen not only in free tempo variation, weight of stress on certain parts of

the sound thread, or magnitude of crescendo and decrescendo, but also in the smallest details and shadings of playing.

Everything that is overly obvious and explicit in the playing of an artist may be imitated and may become characteristic of a whole group of pianists, or even of a school. By contrast, the hidden, invisible features of playing, the finest shadings of rhythm and sound, which may not be transmitted and are hard to teach – all this constitutes the mystery of an artist-performer's charm, and makes us lend an infinitely attentive ear to his playing; playing that opens up the deep sources of a truly creative realization of the composer's ideas. Listening to such an artist we experience the widening of the usual boundaries of our imagination, the ideas are purged of the everyday common sounds that create layer upon layer in our consciousness, and the composition recovers its original force, vitality and relevance.

An ordinary performance never crosses the horizon beyond which lies the composer's art; the original stimuli that led the composer to the work remain indiscernible.

Spirited playing by an artist completes the continuity of process that leads from the vague, dimmed images of the original concept to their complete realization in sound.

Without broaching the depths of the matter of simplicity and complexity in art, or the question of why a composition's complexity and accessibility are treated as inversely proportional, it is still necessary to determine whether these issues are relevant in the performing art.

The complexity of a composition may be regarded as the quantifiable complexity of its components, at least in some respects. One may point to the number of voices in a fugue, the multi-layered content of harmonic combinations, the conjoining of varying meters, the complexity of thematic and variation development, or finally to broad formal development that requires special attention. One might say that polyphonic compositions are more complex than homophonic and that polytonal and polyrhythmic compositions require greater attention by the listener and performer.

However, no matter how complex a given work may be, all of its components can be accounted for, described and analyzed. Sometimes the sources of art are infinitely far away. Their appearance may not succumb to analysis. However, every musical element is subjected to special temperament in the final form of the score, in order to be expressed in the metrical system. A composer's ideas obtain their complete and final form gradually, as they progress from infinitely remote, infinitely complex, unaccountable creative sources.

Accordingly, the question of a musical work's complexity and simplicity is legitimate and logical. Is the matter similar in the performing art? May we speak of the finiteness of its basic elements? Are its qualities and accomplishments accessible to thorough analysis?

May one speak of a simplicity in a remarkable violinist's sound, or an expressive phrasing, that admits of scientific analysis? Or count the number of vibrations of a singer? Or point to the exact means and principles of construction of a flexible and free rhythm?

This is no place to list all the components of the live performing process. It is clear that none of these elements have a precise, closed form. A critic has to leave the realm of scrupulous analysis and measurement when describing an outstanding performance. He can find only approximate and unreliable reference points for measuring the actual impression left by the playing of a remarkable artist. The man-made bird of the Andersen tale is a precise mechanism; all its wheels may be counted. It is "simpler" than the live nightingale whose singing – in its inexpressible delight – cannot be subjected to precise analysis. An artist's performance isn't necessarily "simple." The most telling and impressive sounds in music are those created by the perfect motions of a formidable artist. In that sense the most refined and complex movements may create an impression of simplicity, whereas imperfect, approximate or apprentice methods can create the feeling of a complicated and confused mess.

If we imagine the entire path of a composition, from its origins to its completion in a real interpretation, we see a line passing from infinity, through the finite elements of the written score, and back to infinity. The original stimuli of art are infinitely complex, the sound elements that need to be written as notes are finite, and the number of interpretations that appear out of them is endless. Performance depends on an uncountable number of reasons and conditions. Performing style changes with the tastes and moods of the times. It responds to the demands of new audiences. Each new performer introduces special, individual qualities into his playing.

Therefore it is extremely difficult to fix the character of any performance in strict and precise terms. The author himself envisions the inevitable variability of future performances of his composition. He equips his work with detailed directions to the performer, striving to avoid the total dissipation of his intentions in the numerous individual interpretations to come. However, two difficulties arise.

The composer understands that a restriction of the performer's will and freedom of interpretation hinders the natural expression of the artist-performer. Too pedantic an adherence to the author's directions may rob the artist's playing of the necessary freedom and persuasiveness. Everybody remarks on the value and exacting precision of Beethoven's performance directions. Still, even these often slow down and obstruct the natural flow of an interpreter's ideas. The overly frequent variations of dynamics and force of sound that are fixed in the shadings of the score may destroy a performer's internal conviction as to the correctness of his choice of interpretive ideas, and rob his playing of unity and logical development.

How often a composer softens his directions by such terms as *mezzo*, *poco*, *non troppo*, so as not to make the stipulated performance shading sound like a teacher's directive or unsolicited advice. Nevertheless, in the real world one sees that the natural and logical

flow of playing is most often disrupted precisely where there are composer's or editor's performance directions

Another difficulty, maybe the most important one, lies in the dichotomy between pre-imagined ideas of sound, and the realized work. This dichotomy treacherously awaits both the composer and the performer throughout the entire creative process. It is easy to make a mistake as to future interpretation while sitting at one's desk, writing down and playing the work in one's mind. Introducing tempo markings and shadings, the composer either recalls his own playing or imagines the ideal effort of a performer-interpreter. In both cases his imagination can mislead him, presenting only a partial rendering of the actual performing process – which depends on various factors: the creation of sound, overcoming technical difficulties, and most importantly – the possibilities and restrictions of a concrete instrumental style.

It sometimes happens that an author makes requirements that cannot be realized on a given instrument. Among these are Beethoven's crescendos on one note in the first movement of his Sonata Op. 81a, or the Adagio of Sonata Op. 7 or the end of Liszt's B-minor Sonata. These errors may be explained as carelessness but one may also conjecture that the author was attracted by some imagined instrumental sound.

Quite often accents, *rinfondanzo*, and other shadings that for one reason or other are not appropriate for the piano, can be successfully applied on other instruments. A composer can easily exaggerate the possibilities of the piano in his imagination, attributing to it the additional wealth and color of foreign sounds.

One is led to the conclusion that the flow of an imagined sound thread follows its own rules and principles, and is not necessarily identical to real sound. Imagined sounds are somehow lighter. They are independent of the technical, material aspects of playing. Notes stressed in the author's mind may not need to be played any more loudly: it suffices for the composer to stress them in his own mind. An accent stressed in the realm of the imagination may not always be transferred adequately to performance.

Illusion and reality always complement and affect each other in music. The mutual penetration of these two elements permeates the sound fabric. Both the composition concept and the style of interpretation are built upon the synthesis of imagined and real sounds. The very perception of music is related to these differing varieties of sound. Many Schumann shadings—stress, softening and accents—belong to the category of mentally stressed sounds, more speculative than empirical. Sound elements that occur in reality and imagined ones, intended for the mental ear only, can complement each other but can also be contradictory. Their struggle sometimes increases the tension of the perceived musical fabric.

A careful analysis of performance directions (especially as far as the Romantics are concerned) shows that many performers not only fail to follow them with pedantic precision, but tend to do the opposite. The observations of B.L. Yavorsky, who noted the

contradictions between Scriabin's performance markings and his own interpretations in concert recitals, are especially interesting.

It is highly interesting and instructive to compare recordings of the playing of noteworthy composers with the markings in their scores. In his recollection of Rachmaninov's performance of his own Second Piano Concerto, A.B. Goldenweiser points to significant differences between the author's interpretation and the tempo and dynamic markings in the score.

The Role of the Author's Directions

We find the most precise performance markings in Beethoven. Notation is less scrupulous in the Romantic works. In Schumann, one may find them to be contradictory.

Bach wrote almost no tempo or other markings, obviously following the custom of his time. It is difficult to judge the playing style of a period in the distant past. Probably tempo variations were not so significant or were understood without explicit differentiation. One may name composers of modern times who have supplied their compositions with few and imprecise markings, but at the same time used very extensive means of expression in their performances. Accordingly it is not always possible to determine a composer's own playing style from the directions in his scores.

It is necessary to point out significant differences between three varying systems of composer directions.

In the first case, as we have seen in Bach, the author restricts himself to an insignificant number of tempo and dynamic directions. He provides the performer with a maximum of freedom in interpreting the score.

In the second case, performance markings are so closely related to the character of the music that they follow inevitably from the notes themselves. A performer often follows the markings in the score unwittingly, as the music itself directs him to the interpretive style destined by the composer's notations. The more a performer may infer directly from the author's composing style, from comparisons and analogies, and from the rhythmic and melodic components of the composition, the less he needs the composer's directions, and as a result his playing relates more naturally to the notated score. The system of physical and technical devices suggested by the score often assumes a certain character of interpretation.

The supremacy of the composer in interpretation, his will directing performance along a certain path, is most profoundly felt when the composer himself is a proficient performer. Then all the qualities of his performing art unwittingly find a place in the notes of the score, in the specifics of the writing. The work itself implements in its musical images and compositional character the performance style and technical proficiency of the

author-performer. The often stated thesis that if such composers as Liszt, Chopin, Rachmaninov, Medtner, and Prokofiev had left their scores without any performance directions at all, their compositions would have been interpreted exactly the same way, is quite sound.

A pianist would be wise to try to find the source of his interpretation solely in the notes when playing the works of genius composer-performers. He will find the concrete features of the author's performance in every bar. Not only the presentation but also the only possible means of execution, even hand position on the keyboard, are suggested by the character of figurations; they point the interpreter in the right direction and tell the attentive and sensitive performer more than the most detailed directions

No matter how attentive regarding composer's directions the performer is, he should pay the greatest attention to composing style. The music itself bespeaks the heart and mind of the musician to a greater degree than do the additional directions. The more so, in that sometimes the composer's intentions and his tempo and dynamic markings contradict each other.

The third type of performance direction is the most valuable and necessary. It complements essentially the metric-pitch coordinates of the text. Such are directions of piano and forte at the same note density in chords, identical registers or presentation. In this category are sudden tempo changes at moments distinguished neither by new thematic content nor by varying treatment: the same music, interpreted by the author in different ways. In these cases the performer should follow only the composer's notations since the notes themselves provide no ground for adopting one interpretation or the other. Such absolutely necessary performance notations happen most often in the classical works, especially in Beethoven. These are mostly directions for unexpected tempo or dynamic changes, which form a third dimension of coordinates, complementing the metric-pitch row of written notes.

All these considerations make us strongly distinguish between the text that is written in notes, and the accompanying composer's directions.

These remarks should not of course lessen the enormous respect and quite understandable aura surrounding not only author's directions but each and every comment by the great composers that has reached us, on their compositions. Are the tempo markings themselves, as well as occasional extensive tempo characterizations, not a kind of authorial pronouncement on the content and expressive means of the music itself?

Such tempo markings as *tempetuoso*, *stretto*, *marcato*, *molto con fuoco* serve more to characterize the content of the composition than to regulate tempo and dynamics. They are so figurative that in essence they allow the performer to choose the appropriate tempo himself. One often encounters pathetic characteristics and adjectives among them. However, when the author speaks of the exalted, deep, and penetrating character of his music, there is no reason to accuse him of immodesty, since the composer is looking for a friend in the performer, united with him in common striving for a high goal.

A quip by Taneyev comes to mind. Upon hearing Scriabin's Third Symphony, he commented that many of the performance directions, such as *divin*, *grandiose*, *sublime* or *sensual*, *passionné*, *caessant*, seem to be compliments to the music, not notations.

As I have already mentioned, Chopin's works rarely contain tempo or dynamic markings that are not confirmed by the composing style. Therefore it is hard to justify the abrupt tempo or dynamics changes that some performers indulge in, cultivating a variety of interpretations that agree with neither the score's notes nor its performance notations.

For example, the tradition of beginning the repeat of the famous funeral march in the Chopin B flat minor sonata *fortissimo* has no basis. If that were the composer's intention, then – given the wealth of expressive means and diversity of textural techniques that Chopin so amply possessed – there is no doubt that he would have found chords better suited to *fortissimo*. One may point out many other cases where composing style is violated by unjustified shadings of dynamics and tempo, though the note-text by no means conforms to that interpretation.

A luminous example of total unity of performance and text is provided by Rachmaninov's playing. Listen carefully to his interpretation of the finale of the Chopin sonata. How flexibly and precisely the genius performer follows each change in figuration character, shading melodic and harmonic elements, underlining thematic elements in continuous, swift motion. It suffices to compare Rachmaninov's interpretation with most of the other available performances to understand its perfection and logic.

We have established three main types of composer's directions accompanying the note-text. That is, the system of sparingly used directions; the method of detailed directions that follow from the composing style and the notes themselves; and finally, the case of additions that significantly enrich the metric-pitch coordinates themselves. Nevertheless (though with some danger that we might be accused of insufficient respect for the performance markings of the classical composers), we suggest giving preference to the note-text, which fixes the main metric-pitch coordinates of the composition, and with them what are, for a performer, the most precious details of style.

Experience shows that matters that are finalized and fixed turn out to be not necessarily the most durable in the development and evolution of style. Much is destroyed under the attack of historical changes and new trends, in art as well as in real life. Style changes, the evolution of consciousness, individual ways of perceiving – all shatter the seemingly unshakable basis of the greatest accomplishments of genius, and quite often accepted canons and traditions suffer because of the rigidity of their construction.

A performer possesses a complex and perfected mechanism for opening up the content of a composition to a given audience, making it valuable to people close to him in their esthetic judgments, attaching it to a certain period and place in the listener's consciousness. Therefore those pianists who learn a work using examples established in recordings make an error. Imitating another artist they adopt not only his interpretation

but also the conditions under which it developed and was realized. But all those conditions may be radically different from the ones a given performer can reliably expect.

Are we always confident that the best example would be the composer's playing? If samples of Bach, Haendel, Mozart or Beethoven playing had been preserved, given the great interest they hold, would these high examples seem blemish-less to us? If the gramophone record had been invented two hundred years ago, it is in fact unlikely that a modern performer would precisely replicate the performing traditions of times long past.

The evolving performing art is less durable than the composition itself. A fruit tree's flowers come and go every spring, but the tree itself may live for centuries.

A musical composition that has been fixed in notes but has not been performed, that is only on its way to full realization in sound, is not completed. Probably it is because of this that a beautiful but for whatever reason unperformed composition sometimes retains an unexhausted potential energy of ideas and emotional essence. On the other hand, typically great works that are heard over several artistic epochs successfully survive the stylistic diversity of performance techniques. Not only do phrasing styles and the means of sound-production change, but also the very instrument that the work has been written for undergoes evolution and perfecting. The modern listener might not be satisfied by the sound of the harpsichord in performances of old works written for the instrument. The modern piano is so different from the original keyboard instruments that the appearance of new stylistic trends related to new sound and technical possibilities is quite natural. Descriptions of the playing of the great pianists of the past do not always conform to modern esthetic demands. Even in the course of his own life a pianist often witnesses changing tastes and styles of interpretation.

However, playing is devoid of conviction when the performer himself is unsure of the logic and necessity of his interpretation. If a performer changes the basis of his interpretation too often, if he exhibits a constant readiness to move away from his understanding of the piece – under the influence of critics or random mood changes – this is a sign of a superficial, insufficiently deep penetration of the composer's ideas.

A student should be willing to attempt varying kinds of interpretation, following a teacher's directions. An artist is distinguished by conviction and the stability of his artistic positions.

One should not think that a performer's confidence that the correctness of his way comes from the structure and style of the composition is a sign of over-confidence, an overblown notion of his merits. On the contrary, the clearer and more convincing the artist's vision of his path, the more demanding is his attitude toward his performance. The more distinctly the desired result of his efforts emerges, the more clearly the artist sees the shortcomings of his playing. A clear musical vision increases demands on performance.

A well prepared plan of interpretation helps to solve not only problems of style but technical difficulties as well. We always consider the harmonic agreement of goals and means to be the highest stage of mastery.

There exist champions of curatorial trends in the performing art. Their basis is the idea that the loss of the original – coeval with the work – performing techniques and playing styles; new instruments, evolving virtuosity and changes of technique – all widen the gap that separates us from the earlier composers, and serve to attribute foreign stylistic qualities to him. These views permit of no progress in performing techniques for the classical works. *Mutatis mutandis* (introducing necessary modifications), one should not put new wine into old barrels: new "clothes" do not conform to the artistic aspirations of the past.

The authorities who strive to preserve the integrity of composers' ideas consider those ideas inseparable from the performance styles of past times. The old instruments are restored for that purpose, the finest details and stylistic particulars of prior eras are imagined, using descriptions and evidence that have reached our times, the old atmosphere is recovered, turning off the electric lights and lighting the candles.

Does a composition that touches the heart of a modern listener need these transparently ancient clothes if it makes us forget the destructive forces of time, and stimulates our imagination and aesthetic feeling? Doesn't such an attitude toward the great compositions of the past lead us away from life to the still darkness of the museum?

A composer's own performance, naturally, is especially valuable for understanding his intentions, but it is also subject to the passing conditions of time and place. Any performance is just a transparent membrane for the invariable inner force that holds together the content and form of the work, for everything that has been crystallized and finalized in the written notes. It should allow a clear vision of the potential energy that is contained in the composition, and that is eager to be seen under new conditions.

A composer exhibits the special wisdom of historical foresight when he allows sufficient freedom of interpretation to the performer, and crafts his ideas with flexibility and elasticity. The most firmly fixed material often turns out to be the most fragile. It is necessary to give freedom to the performer, if the deepest and most stable base contained in the composer's ideas is to be preserved. These ideas are the springs of time. The inner force of original ideas comes into live emotional contact with a multitude of perceptive minds – the new audience, new times, new tastes and artistic vision – through the flexible elements of the performing art.

A Professional and an Amateur

One of the main problems related to the performing art is its value socially. The need for and role of an artist-interpreter are obvious. Nevertheless it is not always possible to know which features of a performance may have objective value and which might best remain in the performer's mind – subjective feelings not meant to take on social reality.

Besides playing aloud, one may also replay the sound as reminiscence, or imagine it while reading the score.

A poem also assumes a performance. Declamation depends on an individual performance to an even greater degree than music. A reader of a poetic work is simultaneously a performer. Even if he does not recite a poem out loud, the rhythm and all the sound elements of the work are realized in his mind – as a particular interpretation. A creative refraction of the text is necessary even in reading. Still it is unlikely that a poetry lover attributes any objective value to his interpretation.

Of course, one has to consider silent reading as the most subjective degree of "performance." Such reading – in music – is the exclusive province of experts and requires the utmost imaginative concentration. The inner sound images in music appear most often as a recollection. However, the next stage of subjective interpretation in poetry – "reading out loud but for myself only" – corresponds reasonably to the playing of an amateur acquainting himself with a composition or performing at home.

Lack of technique, naturally, prevents an amateur from a complete expression of his understanding of a piece, and he realizes this, restricting his audience to his home circle or playing just for himself. However, even such intimate playing is not simply a mechanical process but rather a creative one that reflects individual treatment of the content and form of the work.

A form of competition between amateur and professional arises, which subjects the contested originality of ideas and depth of emotions to mutual criticism and analysis. All the advantages are of course on the side of the professional, who possesses a technique that allows him to completely express his ideas as to a musical work. Nevertheless, how many creative forces and ideas may be hidden in the unassuming and imperfect playing of a dilettante!

How often a listener returning from a recital by an important performer remains unsatisfied. Not because of the imperfection of the artist's playing but because of lack of penetration into the composer's ideas – ideas that the amateur has cultivated lovingly and at length, developing his own special plan of interpretation in his own modest efforts at playing alone. How unwavering sometimes is an amateur's conviction that he alone has found ideas and expressive possibilities in the piece that surpass everything he has heard in concert performance.

This reflects a deep need for one's own individual interpretation of a composition. An amateur does not completely trust the professional. He treats each new public interpretation of his favorite work with jealousy, accusing the performer of superficial, insufficient love, and lack of selflessness in his chosen pursuits.

It would be a mistake to dismiss this as a sign of sheer overconfidence. It's true that one does often encounter an ignoramus whose self-regard is shocking. However, no matter how convinced an expert is of the supremacy of his erudition and the strength of his

craft, he should take into account the persistent, passionate desire of a listener, which accompanies the active perception of music, to take initiative in conveying the ideas and images of a piece. Not only is a musical composition a treasure that belongs to all amateurs, but also not a single listener in any audience relegates himself to the passive role of spectator.

A nod, a hand movement that follows the music rhythm, an attempt to sing silently a memorable theme or tune on the way back from the concert – these are all signs of a natural desire to participate in the performing process. A listener appreciates the moment of total completion of the composer's work, in the reality of sound. The expression of even minimal creative activity leads to high moral satisfaction for an amateur, as it is accompanied by the feeling that something created as abstract, general and non-concrete, now resounds for him too.

This feeling doesn't just arise for the amateur. The movements of a professional conductor nearly turn him into a kind of master of music, independent of his immediate artistic direction. [...] He is subject to an illusion not only that the music is played for him, but that he actually creates it.

A dancer, by means of expressive plasticity, or even a marching soldier, merges his movements with the music, as if possessing it for themselves.

A perception drops any claims to its own individual plan of interpretation only when a listener becomes one of the performers – as a participant in the common musical action – as a chorister, or orchestra or ensemble member. The socially unifying value of musical art overcomes individual proclivities in this case, and expressiveness increases with the spontaneous unity of all the performers' actions.

We observe two distinct domains – those of composition and of sound realization – and establish the prerogatives of the performer and the composer. At the same time we may determine varying degrees of involvement on the part of a given [listener]. The links that connect the two ends of the chain running from a passively listening mind to the artist-performer, are the ideal listeners in Schiller's sense, who participate actively, with all their thoughts and will, in the developing musical drama. They not only follow the development of musical ideas but also feel the coming direction of the flow of sound, anticipate the importance of musical events. The destiny of the composer's creation and the musical form opens up as a united whole. Like participants in an ancient Greek tragedy, they melt together with all the turns and twists of the drama, sympathizing, feeling anguish, and foreseeing coming events.

Underestimation of the personal participation of the listener in music perception is a grave error on the part of an artist-performer. Not all the emotions, life and breath of the performer on stage reach the audience completely; a concretizing artist must be content with silence and attention. But this in itself is not sufficient: agreement and unity are needed. Accordingly, the performer's playing should carefully avoid anything controversial and overly personal.

A performance in front of an audience is an act of purification as well, of all that is hermetic and subjective, an act establishing individual features that have universal value. A performer justifiably requires total attention from listeners as he brings them not random and passing accomplishments of taste, fashion or artistic whim, but his own gift of opening the depths and values that are inseparably linked to a true creative process.

The Double Life of a Musical Image

A musical image has two lives: one in our minds, and another in real sound. Not just simple melodies but entire compositions – with all their harmonic and polyphonic riches and the timbre color of the orchestral score – fit comfortably in the part of mind responsible for musical conceptions and auditory imagination. This is a special domain of consciousness where music can live a priori – before realization in sound and before the experience of sound.

Musical imagination and inner hearing help the composer, during the creative process, write his ideas down in notes with sufficient precision. Even before concrete sound is realized, he can hear the composition in his mind with sufficient precision and clarity. Upon completion of a score, the composer knows that the created music now exists as an artistic entity. This constitutes a significant difference between a musical score and an artist's concept of a painting or sculpture.

We reconstruct a musical piece in our mind, using this same auditory imagination. The precision and completeness of this reproduction depend, of course, on the musical memory and gift of the listener. The composition is deposited in the musical imagination with greater and greater completeness and increasingly refined detail upon repeated listening. It is recorded in our mind, which is blessed with a musical memory.

This process may go faster or slower, with differing force or clarity of musical images, depending on the listener's musical memory. Still, one should hold the musical imagination in the same regard as the skill of musical perception.

We may regard a musical image's capability of being heard and meaningfully imagined as the main distinction of this art. Hence each sound imprints in our mind an imagined sound echo. This echo occurs in a silent world. Silence in a sense serves as a neutral surface. The sounds of real music arise out of stillness. However, sinking below the surface we enter the realm of sound imagination. This opposition may be perceived as the original positive and negative sides of musical sound. Silence is the background of musical art. A real sound emerges above the surface; it sinks lightly into it, the convexity of the sound changed by the concavity of the imagination.

The imagined loud sound – the fortissimo of a slowly read score – contrasts dramatically with the solitude and silence of a musician's working office. A composer collects sounds drop by drop in his work, neither reaching nor violating the stillness.

An artist's original concept – in any plastic art form – always differs from its final form. The paint in painting, or the stone in sculpting, invariably brings essential modifications to the artistic plan. A finished sculpture stands in front of us as a result of the unified efforts of nature and artistic will.

But a musical idea usually reveals itself as an identity of inner and outer forms, the identity of an inner concept with its realization. As if a sculptor's workshop has been stripped of everything material, and art images appeared as phantoms, one after another, brought to life solely by the forces of imagination and given an illusory reality.

The absorption of a musician reading the score of a noteworthy composer is understandable: he is imagining beautiful music that has not yet been realized in sound.

Wagner claimed that creating the instrumentation of his pieces brought him a special uplifting, as he now heard the music in an ideal rendition. Schumann pointed out as well that all the signs of the score were reconstructed in his mind as he listened to music.

There is no doubt that an essential and serious barrier exists, separating imagined and realized music. A composer often approaches the instrument in an attempt to escape the enclosed world of the imagination. He is looking for support in real sound for the created musical image. He verifies his theoretical findings like an experimental scientist.

But this does not modify the principles of the composer for whom the clear picture of a musical image is simultaneously its realization – in a smooth and integral transition.

Many extraordinary composers have written without an instrument, particularly during the classical bloom of symphonism. It is said that Mozart wrote the sketch for the score of the overture to "Don Giovanni" in one night, as it had already been fully composed in his mind. With his hearing loss, at the end of his life Beethoven completely lost the ability to hear his own music. Enormous strength of conviction as to the infallibility of their creative decisions – decisions that virtually never required correction on account of realized sound – is felt in the scores of Bach, Haydn, Mozart.

However, the process of realization of sound images does not pass so painlessly and easily with some composers. Some shyness, lack of trust in the reality of sound, some fear of loss of much of the feeling and thought in the final act of creation, is felt in many Schumann scores and especially in his chamber compositions. A creative dream sometimes exceeds the possibility of its realization. The concept is grander and at the same time finer than the result.

The music dies in Schumann's ingenious pauses before merging into the world of imagined sounds. A kind of unfilled gap is left in the second movement of the Piano Concerto, or in the romance on the Heine poem "I cried bitterly in a dream" – a gap in which the imagination acts more strongly on the far side of real sound, in the kingdom of pure poetic fantasy.

The sound dries up in the second act of the "Meistersinger" before the beginning of Hans Sachs's monologue. The last precious drop of sound is spilled only after an interval of time. This is perhaps an example of the utmost expressivity that a pause in sound can produce.

It would be reckless to underestimate the special position of the art of musical interpretation – between the two contrasting but similar domains: the world of real-sound perception, and that of sound imagination. In one case the sound and sound image are perceived as they are executed in reality. The music's sound can be extremely plastic and material. In the other case, real sound is restricted to necessary and crucial moments. An importunate finality may only ruin such music. Excessive precision leaves no room for the imagination. The listener feels overly passive, paralyzed by a stranger's will.

At the same time, a musical image that lacks support in reality loses stability as well as the ability to spontaneously influence the audience.

The armory of a symphony orchestra includes not only tender-sounding instruments capable of carrying the sound to an utmost diminuendo but also the brass and percussion groups, which produce sharp formulations and strong accents. It would be naïve to think that only the weak sounds are directed to listeners' imaginations. Even at the utmost stress of real physical sound a performance can carry much that is hidden and unsaid, and that appeals to the forces of inner hearing and fantasy.

Were we to attempt to indicate the doorway between the appearance of sound and the surface that encloses the world of musical images, we would find that the appearance of sound depends on its force as well as on the physical properties of hearing, its acuity and sensitivity. Musical sounds are perceived by people placed at different distances from their source.

Beethoven's hearing threshold at the end of his life was painfully high. However this disadvantage was compensated for by the enormous capacity of his musical and creative imagination.

Nevertheless, much of the clarity of music perception depends on more than the physical "threshold" of the listener. It is the task of the performer to create an undistorted reflection of the musical image in the listener's mind. Listening to a musical composition one may receive a right or wrong understanding of the rhythm, melodic material, structure, harmony, polyphonic development of the piece. Finally, even after digesting all that, one may fail to grasp the meaning of a musical composition, its mood, its relation to other realms of mind.

Everything that a music critic knows and usually states with such confidence may seem quite unclear to many listeners even if they possess the necessary musicality and experience listening to music.

A listener sometimes has too modest an opinion of his own creative intuition, overestimating the qualities of the performer. However, the interaction and cooperation of the performer and the listener lie at the very core of musical aesthetics. If this connection is possible and assumed in almost all kinds of art – a creative connection between an object of art and a counter-directed understanding – musical comprehension remains special in this regard. Not only the evaluation and understanding of the music, but also the ability to carry an undistorted musical image to the mind, depend on the listener's gift. Sometimes the listener has to enhance the musical thread, enriching an illusory and incomplete musical message with clear musical notions of his own.

Hence we speak not only of what is known as art comprehension but also of the influence of the listener's fantasy and imagination on the aesthetic object itself, which is perceived differently by each listener.

The reality of architecture and the fine arts is not subjected to such deep shifts. A spectator may always be pointed to the correct starting place for viewing and understanding a painting, sculpture or work of architecture. However, if in even these arts the optimal viewing point is not always found immediately, such oscillations and sharp shifts are observed in music even more frequently. As if the surface of each listener's imagination had its own refraction index that modifies in its own way – either distorting or clarifying – the music.

Listening to the playing of a great pianist, we often point to the perfection of his performance, to his extended and singing expressivity of sound, rhythmic clarity, rich color palette, delicacy and logic of form and nuance, not noticing that this impression is assisted to a great degree by the imaginative abilities of the listener himself.

The very position of the performer as an intermediary between the composer's concepts and the realized world of sound makes the performer refer alternatively, by turns, to his imagination – and the musical images it creates – and to the firm support found in real sound.

The whole concept of the interpretation is formed by a listener as a consequence of impulses and moods that come from the stage. The more definite and stable the construction of the musical image – the more active the artist's role – the more inevitable the audience's subordination to his will.

The immediately gripping playing of an artist is usually mentioned in this context. Everything is done, finished and finalized on the stage so that the listener has to obey the orders of the performer.

However, could one transmit the dreamy images of Chopin, Schumann, and Scriabin that sometimes lie outside the boundaries of real sound, with didactic musical judgments of that kind? Here the performer should count more on the listener's trust than on his unquestioning obedience. These are images that are not solely created by the performer's playing, but should emerge as a response in the excited listener's soul.

These images are of course always individually colored. One observes sometimes that overly zealous teachers find the greatest imprecision and distortion in student playing in exactly those musical episodes where the sound image depends almost completely on this kind of individual direction of perception.

Two Types of Interpretation

We will not label each type of interpretation as romantic, classical, realistic or psychological, etc. Contrasting terminology would serve only to sidetrack the flow of ideas. Still, one should point to a significant distinction between characteristics of playing by various artists.

Some touch the sympathetic creative inclinations of the listener, with varying success. Others cultivate a kind of interpretation that leaves no room for listener doubt as to the structure or importance of the constructed musical image.

However, it would be a mistake to consider this distinction as solely a matter of the performer's interpretation. On the contrary, the work itself is created with a view toward one or another type of interpretation. The author himself delineates in his composing style a severely underlined or dreamily wandering manner of interpretation.

The performer appealing to listener imagination is as confident of the final result of his interaction with the audience, as an artist of willful inclination. Otherwise, playing that is rich in illusory constructions and colors might not reach its intended goal, and might not induce a responsive creative wave in the listener's mind. Then artistic illusion becomes fiction – the listener ceases to comprehend the performer's intentions.

Many prefer a kind of interpretation that is better suited to their own creative imaginations' level of activity; even though a priori justification of both ways of addressing the listener depends on the individual's perceptual taste.

An injustice to a departed artist can never be corrected. It is remarkably said that "descendants do not leave wreaths at an artist's grave." Still one may recall several exceptional cases when even a performer's most ingenious accomplishments have not been understood by a wide audience in his lifetime.

It suffices to read Mikuli's opinion of the playing of his teacher, Chopin, or the negative opinions of Scriabin's playing that we still hear now, to be convinced that sometimes the greatest perfection of playing fails to be understood by contemporary listeners. Most often, lack of appreciation is the fate of playing that is blessed by refinement and poetry.

Interpretations are usually less accessible to the listener when the work performed is of a style and character meant for the imaginations of individual listeners. Such music is too often perceived as being "for oneself" to allow easy acceptance of the performer's strange creative will. No matter how penetrating, clever and perfect the reading of your favorite poem by an actor, his interpretation conflicts easily with the preconceived poetic

image. The divergence of inner image from external sound can give rise to a variety of incompatibilities.

Sometimes a composer over-trusts the plasticity of sound. When the work is performed, this results in an oversupply of color. The sound-creating phenomenon misses individual links in the chain that connects it to the creative concept. The integrity of the psycho-emotional and ideological basis of the music is once again violated.

However, sometimes the spontaneous forces of sound break loose from the hold of their creator. The method of the composer changes. He accepts that sound may express more than what was meant by the original ideas. The author is guilty of a kind of fetishism allowing the reality of sound to express its special mysterious forces. Such music may not be composed at a desk following the guidance of the imagination. One has to experiment and explore in detail the willful qualities of sound.

Such is the nature of many impressionistic scores. However, one may find that real sound spills outside the boundaries of standard musical imagination in other works as well. One may encounter such flights of fancy even in the classics. Beethoven's Prometheus as conceived in his ballet not only gives the gift of life and movement to soulless clay bodies but provides them with the ability to express their wills independent of their creator: an experienced master leaves for a time the "magician student" without supervision, knowing that he may achieve more than the teacher. A student will experiment more courageously than the teacher, as he is less confident in his knowledge and less convinced of the power his concept holds over its realization.

The calling of a performer, positioned between the realms of imagined sound and real sound, is to penetrate both worlds simultaneously. He cannot miss any shade of the music sounding in his mind while listening, carefully, to the actual sound elements he brings to life. A performer's vision is not translucent to the outside world. It is fogged, as he follows the interior image and his attention concentrates on realizing his ideas. The violinist's head turned toward the instrument expresses symbolically the essence of the performing craft.

Just as the composer's creative process is closer to the world of the imagination, the art of a performer is closer to real sound. The goal of a performer is to realize the composer's ideas and open them up to the audience.

The depth of the stillness and silence surrounding the composer as he opens the stream of unborn sounds in his soul is juxtaposed with the expressivity and force of the sounds he imagines.

A performer transposes this sensitive alertness of creative thought, the negative imagined forms, into real images, playing brought alive. His performance makes inroads into the outside world, surmounting the virtuosic difficulties of style, the resistance and inertness of instrumental means. The performer's extreme demands for perfection of realized

sound follow naturally from this: he requires more than an instrument can provide in normal conditions.

Let us recall the eternal argument between musicians and theoretical physicists as to the extent of possible influences on piano sound-quality. How remarkable that the practicing musician, and not the theoretical scientist, turns out to win in those disagreements!

A complex score intended for numerous and diverse orchestra members allows the composer to avoid the arbitrariness of the individual performer. The composer considers joint music-making as a blending of many personae sharing a unified goal. The interpretation of a symphony is realized not by one person but as the joint effort of a large group.

The conductor directing an orchestra cannot feel as free in his intentions as a soloist, especially a pianist, who is the sole possessor of the thread and development of the musical form. A conductor is not only an interpreter but also a manager of the will of the group. He must direct non-homogeneous groups of musicians like an experienced general, taking into account the spirits and weapons of his army. Still, not even the most gifted conductor can do anything with orchestral sound unless he has guessed correctly the artistic dreams of each musician and is capable of blending all these individualities into one whole, collective will.

The Creative Freedom of a Performer

In speaking of the creative freedom of a pianist one should underline the need for a musical image that is nurtured by the mental ear. Reading of the score should come before the production of sound. Each note should be first heard in the mind and only later realized. Then the pianist's playing becomes a creative act that turns the world of musical images into actual sound.

The music lives before and after the actual sound, in constant development. The musical memory connects the preceding sounds with their later development, joining the future and the past, and creating the image of a whole musical form.

The charm and poetry of a solo performance are in the fact that the transition from inner image to real sound is achieved by the individual will of an artist. The performer's art blends the inner life of a musical image and the external form of sound. The elastic reality of art and its shadow are synthesized in a united creative process.

The competition between the soloist and the orchestral accompaniment in a concerto invariably underlines the difference between objective accomplishment and the dreamy vision of the soloist. The orchestral part is closed in a concrete circle. The orchestra always "knows everything," like the chorus in a Greek tragedy.

The soloist's interpretation is full of unsolved mysteries, hopes, fears, expectations. Threads from the past lead the performer into the realm of an unresolved future. The entire art of the soloist is to address not only the hearing but to a greater extent the imagination and sympathy of the audience. It is up to him to stress or leave in shadow, accentuate or soften details in the landscape of the musical form. This is the source of the word "rubato": stealing.

An outstanding artist-performer appears in front of the listener as an important, gifted, complete individuality with an active mind, a rich inner world, and the special mastery of musical form that may be called the gift of artistic vision.

The score of a composer is not a marching order "to be performed!" – for a gifted soloist. A performer must resolve the entire depth of the ideas contained there. How often carefully notated shadings, accents, tempo changes reveal not simply a positive characteristic of sound but rather the untold sides of the author's concept. How many directions we find in Schumann, Chopin, Scriabin, even Beethoven that a pianist should follow not in a real sound but by addressing the subtlest hints to the imagination of a listener!

The observations of composers performing their works are instructive; the phrasing in their own performances, following their own directions, often turns convex lines into concave, the prescribed tempo and dynamic markings are violated. Such substitutions may only be explained by the dominance of the author's imagination over the actual sound.

The gradual acquisition of realistic qualities of sound leads to drastic changes in the musical images. Therefore the inviolate reading of the score a priori – before touching the instrument – may not give the complete scope of the interpretation to come.

The performer gradually limits the composer's concept to the practical possibilities of the instrument, upon mastering it with the mental ear. Being in the center of the musical forces he creates the sound while simultaneously being carried by the sound field. The will of the playing artist expresses itself in overcoming and restraining the capriciousness of the sound matter: his creative will alternately accepts and rejects the sounds produced by the instrument.

We call playing emotional exactly when this struggle reaches an incredible stress. A flawless performance of difficult passages does not always satisfy a listener even though he acknowledges the mastery of the pianist. The playing truly overcomes the listener when the struggle of the inner image and its outside covering becomes apparent. Virtuoso playing becomes the victory of intellect over earthly matter, and the listener sees clearly the spirit and essence of the musical art. Otherwise the most precise and refined mastery seems mechanical, like a substitute for a pianola.

Gifted playing is a dialectic process where the inner world of sound constantly acquires new qualities as it is being realized.

The deeper and more penetrating the reading of the composer's ideas as found in the score, the richer and more substantial the performance. The significance of the musical ideas transmitted by the performer depends on careful reading and attention to the score. It is wrong to consider the composer's text an excuse for displaying the unique qualities of a gifted artist's playing. As if the goal of the performer is not to make the written score audible, but to impose the best aspects of his playing over the text independent of the author's ideas.

A vital, effective and impressive art cuts various paths and uses different, sometimes contradictory means to achieve its artistic goals. It is hard to distinguish in art between the carefully worked out techniques that form the everyday labor of an artist, and the more rare, enlightening and intuitively found paths and solutions. Both are necessary, "inspiration is a guest that does not like to visit the lazy," – as was said by a great Russian composer.

Sometimes the most prosaic attempts lead to unexpected artistic discoveries, while an inspired breakthrough requires long, unrelenting work for triumphal practical results. Everything in the work of an artist is important and illuminated by the grand aesthetic goal. There are no accomplishments that have not been preceded by many steps in developing mastery and an understanding of the principles of the creative method.

Any work of art, be it an artist's painting, a sculptor's creation or the inspired performance of a pianist, leaves us an impression of uniqueness and rarity, as a feat of human action. The composition itself, as well as its performance, transpires as a marvelous act born out of accomplishments, where the goal and the means stand in the usual causal relation.

Observing the creation of a painting, following the artist's brush or the chisel cutting into the stone, it is difficult to perceive the connection between the sculptor or artist's movements and the intended goal. The pianist's fingers touching the keyboard seem mysterious, possessed of special elusive qualities. We perceive this secret of mastery as a gift, a piece of genius. It is hard to believe that the complicated creative process may be reduced to a series of simple actions that can be understood and comprehended.

An observer strongly influenced by art falls into a kind of fetishism. People talk of Rafael's brush, Michelangelo's chisel as we talk of the fingers and hands of a great performer, forgetting the artistic will that guides them. However, while the metonymy whereby an artist's brush is praised is clear to everybody, many prejudices exist because of incorrectly addressed attention.

A certain palm-reading is still practiced by the many piano teachers who predict their students' future success or failure, along the thorny route to pianistic heights, on the sole basis of the build of their hands.

The goal of art theory is to reclaim slowly everything that is accessible to understanding, generalization and logical development, from the realm of the seemingly unknowable. It

is commonly objected that the path of a creative artist is different from the usual conscious behavior of man, that it is built of unconscious, intuitive acts, like the path of a lawless comet in the "predictable circle of planets." However, much can be accounted for in the domain of artistic instinct: a constant, stable logic of artistic interactions can be found, just as a comet's orbit can be marked on a map of the stars.

The pianist's art is often treated simplistically – in light of the laws of physiology and in connection with the anatomical build of the hand – or as an incomprehensible process lying purely in the domain of intuitive human actions. This simplistness is often related to the fact that many performers with insufficient knowledge of the practice of art prefer to rely on the general accomplishments seen from the motor-apparatus perspective. Others, having scaled the highest summits of art, forget the many mistakes and difficulties that they have experienced, and have overcome through ceaseless productive thinking. The superstitious theory that a clear, conscious understanding of all the stages of a creative path might hinder the freedom and immediacy of artistic thought – is sometimes invoked.

In reality artistic inspiration cannot completely reject the mind – the intellect that corrects the free flight of imagination in even the most precious moments of creative impulse. The most fruitful hours of creation may coincide with those of rigorous critical thinking.

One way or another, one has to balance "pure mind" and "pure intuition" in one's work. The artist's wisdom ideally helps and guides his inspiration, preventing it from turning into the baseless ecstasy condemned so reasonably by Pushkin. Finally, an artist does not exist perpetually in an exalted state of mind, in which artistic discoveries follow one after another. He spends many hours in everyday, but necessary, practice—hours when he needs both a clear mind and wise guidance.

Let every performer confess how many hours, days and even years have been wasted as a result of poorly thought-through ideas, either his own or his teacher's, guiding his studies!

A pianist claiming that his interpretation changes radically from one performance to the next and does not obey a careful plan, is mistakenly claiming excessive improvisation as a virtue. Naturally, an artistic plan is dynamic, and it is impossible to play a piece identically, even at the same recital. Still, these distinctions, no matter how serious, should not distort the overall, thought-out concept. They pertain only to differing realizations of the course of the prepared interpretation.

The dynamics of artistic will play an enormous role in the development of a performer's artistic self, but they should not be identified with thoughtlessness and a careless wish for on-stage elation.

One should not merely live and feel in art, one has to live through a great deal and endure a great deal. This extra qualifier applies equally to thought, as much is reconsidered while artistic images build.

And there is another danger: that the mind may overlook the most important in art and overestimate the secondary and unnecessary. How often musicians dogmatize random qualities of interpretation, or irrelevant details of a performance, especially if these features are found in the playing of a great artist! Humans are guilty sometimes of mannerisms and posturing, but those things do not hold the key to a great master's charm. Strength of analytic thought and sharpness of observation do not lie in canonizing outer, random tricks, but in capturing the essence that lies at the core of mastery but is invisible at a superficial glance. The purpose of deep critical thought is to grasp the invisible and make it tangible. On the other hand one should be careful not to fall under the dogmatic spell of theoretical preconceptions.

What can be the best hope of a researcher undertaking the task of untangling the specifics of such a refined art as piano playing? This art has no detailed theoretical system. This art changes constantly in its favorite forms and tastes, its technique and common trends. Almost all theoretical concepts have to retreat when confronted with the practice of outstanding masters of pianism, overwhelmed by the contradictions and complexity of live phenomena. This leads to an almost uniform and quite understandable skepticism on the part of expert practitioners, who tend to reject the universality of any "theory" and confine themselves to a "working hypothesis."

Hence the most we can hope for is to capture at least some universal trends and general principles, which may lead a conscientious pianist toward the steady development of his art. Anything that might be said of such a dynamic art may be of only passing value, as any principle or technique bows out to new stylistic logic. However, an artist changes with the times as well. He is alive as an artist only as long as his performing concepts remain unfinished, as long as they are transformed along with modern musical art as well as developments in other arts. Hence, the contradictions that the reader has found in these notes should be attributed to the difficulties that inevitably accompany any attempt to fix and stabilize live artistic development.

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