

evidence tells us that in the early nineteenth century, the first three movements of a symphony of Mozart or Beethoven were most often played faster, and the last movement slightly slower, than in performances today. This is easy to understand if we reflect that at the time, the public clapped and cheered after each movement (often forcing a repeat of the slow movement), and not just at the end of the symphony, so that the musicians were not forced into extra brilliance in the finale in order to get their meed of applause. To make sense of an authentic restoration of the original tempi, we should have to encourage applause between the movements (by holding up a sign, perhaps?); yet the modern tradition of keeping back the applause until the end is a justified tribute to the unity and integrity we now perceive in (or attribute to) the symphony as a whole. An unthinking restoration of the original tempi is not a wholly rational project—and if recordings ever become not just a mimesis of public performance but the normal musical experience, our concepts of musical excitement and intensity will have changed and will alter our ideas of tempo once again.

It is clear that I think that the basic philosophy of Early Music is indefensible, above all in its abstraction of original sound from everything that gave it meaning: authentic sound is not only insufficient, as most people would grant, and not only often an illusion, as many now realize, but sometimes positively disastrous. Sound is dependent on function: Bach's harpsichord concerto became a concerto for organ, chorus, and orchestra when it was used for a church service.

It remains to acknowledge that Early Music has been and is a remarkably beneficial movement. It has made us realize how contrasting are the demands of concert life, which force us to play Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Debussy, and Boulez with the same instruments, the same kind of sound—looked at rationally, an insane result, even if the facile solutions of Early Music are equally odd and even more constricting. Early Music has laid bare the deadening uniformity of today's conventional concert world, where we find the same phrasing for Mozart and Beethoven, the same vibrato for Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky, the same pedaling for Beethoven and Chopin. It has also had extraordinary successes, from Roger Norrington's work with Beethoven and Sir Charles Mackerras's performances of Mozart and Schubert symphonies to John Eliot Gardiner's reconception of Monteverdi.

One could say that the successes have been achieved in spite of the philosophy. This would not be true: it has been by taking the indefensible ideal of authenticity seriously that our knowledge has been increased and our musical life enriched.

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