

On Phenomenology of Music: Music as Aesthetic Form and Lived Experience

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The paper discusses music performance as interpretation by analyzing distinctive approaches to the exemplary case of the Partita No 2 in D minor as distinctive configurations of temporal organization and articulation.

Johann Sebastian Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo (BWV 1001-1006), written between 1708 and 1720, without doubt pertain to the outstanding compositions in the history of musical arts. As an exemplary point of reference, the paper focuses on the Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004, with the well-known "Chaconne" as the concluding movement. This work provides us with a unique example for the study of the complex correlation between the written musical work and the sounding materiality of lived musical experience.

Not only do Bach's Sonatas and Partitas, and especially the "Chaconne", represent a model for other composers writing for unaccompanied violin, like Eugène Ysaÿe and especially Béla Bartók. Also, a long history of transcriptions exists. Bach himself wrote a version for lute of the Partita in E major, and the first movement of the same Partita, in a transcription for organ solo and orchestra, became the first movement of Cantata 29. After Bach, particularly the Chaconne attracted several composers.

Prominent transcriptions are Johannes Brahms' version for piano left-hand and the famous and virtuoso version for piano by Ferruccio Busoni. A third and outstanding aspect related to Bach's works for solo violin is the long history of sound recordings, started by the celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim in the early days of gramophone and disc record, in 1903. Between 1934 and 1936 Yehudi Menuhin first recorded the complete set of the 3 Sonatas and 3 Partitas, and since then an enormous number of recordings has been published, providing an excellent basis for the reconstruction of developments and contrasting differences in performance practice and aesthetic concepts. As the paramount example of polyphonic violin writing, Bach's works for violin solo are particularly interesting in terms of performance practice. As performing four-part chords on the violin confronts with specific violinistic and aesthetic problems, in the case of Bach's works for violin solo the discussion on authentic performance practices of the eighteenth century started long before historically informed performance practice and period instruments gained prominence in the concert halls and in musicological discourse. Among the first to raise these questions, including explicit reference to the problem of polyphonic violin play, we find two authors, who both played a significant role in Alfred Schutz' musicological studies: Albert Schweitzer, who's monograph on Bach first

appeared in 1905, and Ernst Kurth. His book *Foundations of Linear Counterpoint*, published in 1917, presented an approach to the analysis of polyphonic music that started from Gestalt psychology and the study of the temporality of experience, with backgrounds in the *Lebensphilosophie* Henri Bergson's and his analyses of time and time experience (*durée*).

How *Gestalt*, i.e. pre- and non-linguistic dimensions of meaning, and temporality are screwed together becomes understandable, if we refer to Edmund Husserl's distinction of two different modes, in which the sense of past experiences can be "grasped" - the distinction between polythetic and monothetic mode.

In *Experience and Judgement* (1938) Husserl analyzes experience as becoming originally constituted step by step, resulting in a polythetic unity: „In streaming forth in a linear continuity, the act of contemplation would become a simple fixed view if it did not disengage itself and pass over into a chain of individual apprehensions, of individual acts, in a discrete succession of separate steps which, bound internally to one another, form a polythetic unity of the individual theses“ (p.112).

Many cases allow for a transformation of such a discrete succession of separate steps into a "onerayed" object, which can be "grasped" monothetically. "Every such many-rayed (polythetic) constitution of synthetic objectivities – which are essentially such that "originally" we can be aware of them only synthetically – possesses the essential law conforming possibility of transforming the many-rayed object of awareness into one that is simply one-rayed, of "rendering objective" in the specific sense and in a monothetic act what is synthetically constituted in the many-rayed object" (*Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, p.336).

But, as Alfred Schutz points out in *The Structures of the Life-World*, the transformation of a "manyrayed" into a "one-rayed" unity of experience is impossible in the case "of those experiences whose meaning is *essentially* contained in the polythetic structure of its elements, that is, experiences of so-called temporal Objects" (p.54). "When it concerns the meaning of a musical theme ... I must carry out polythetically, ... what has been built up polythetically. ... In order to grasp the sense of a composition, I must reproduce it, at least internally, from the beginning to the last measure" (ibid.).

Indeed, music in many ways is essentially and indispensably dependent on, in Husserl's wording quoted above, "the discrete succession of separate steps which, bound internally to one another, form a polythetic unity of the individual theses". Correlating with it's exclusively polythetic organization, music lacks a conceptual or semantic scheme of reference. But although it is self-evident that music does not have a predicative structure, it is equally self-evident that "music is a meaningful context", as Alfred Schutz sums it up in "Making Music Together".

As such a context of non-predicative meaning, music confronts musicians, composers, critics and listeners with the problem of interpretation, i.e. with the problem of a hermeneutics of

the pre- and nonlinguistic dimensions of meaning – indeed at least a challenge, if not an imposition.

Against this background and starting from the presentation of music demonstrations, distinctive interpretive approaches to the exemplary case of the Partita No 2 in D minor are analyzed as distinctive configurations of tempo and articulation.