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Socio-Musical Performing Artistry

Aron Eddin

Abstract

Philosophical discussion of artistry in performance has focused on the relation of performers to musical works and to their instruments. But an important domain of musical artistry is social, relating musicians to their fellows in performing groups. This "socio-musical" artistry contributes to the artistic accomplishments of performing groups as a whole. I identify two distinct kinds of socio-musical artistry, and discuss some of the ways in which different forms of group organization articulate different possibilities for their exercise. Finally, I discuss at some length the extreme case of a performing role that is purely socio-musical, that of the orchestral conductor. I discuss both discontinuities and some subtle and extensive continuities between the conductor's role and the musical roles of instrumentalists and singers, with the aim of situating this purely socio-musical activity in relation to musical performing more generally.

Key Words

audience; collaboration; conductor; music; performance

1. Setting the stage

Philosophical consideration of performing art leads almost immediately to questions of the scope of performing artistry. In what David Davies calls the Classical Paradigm, performers execute works (plays, musical compositions, choreography). Artistic agency in the shaping of a performance is unequally divided between authors (playwrights, composers, choreographers) and performers. Once performers select a work to perform, the scope of their artistic agency is constrained by the nature of the work.^[1] Much philosophical work on musical performance explores the scope of such agency in the performance of compositions in Western art music (WAM).^[2] Work on historical authenticity in performance focuses on additional constraints that might be imposed by considerations of authenticity.^[3] And some authors have investigated the kinds of actions which constitute the exercise of performers' musical artistry.^[4]

This work typically addresses the simple case of a single performing agent, focusing on the relation of performers to musical works and to their instruments or voices. The division of artistic labor between composer and performer raises the same issues for solo and group performance. But solo performance is a relatively small subclass of musical performance in general. Group performance creates a further division of musical agency among the performers themselves, engaging kinds of musical artistry that don't figure in solo performance. This domain of musical performing artistry is obscured by work which focuses on solo performance alone. A broad philosophical understanding of the art of musical performance will need to do justice to the varied forms that this art can take, and the various dimensions of artistry involved.

The following is meant to contribute to such an understanding by characterizing kinds of musical artistry that are essentially interpersonal or social in nature. I'll begin with some considerations that are common to solo and group performance. My aim will be to distinguish performing artistry proper from other artistic contributions that are made by performers (notably in the preparation of performances). I'll then discuss kinds of performing artistry that emerge only in group performance. The artistry of group performances is in key respects a collective accomplishment. The ways in which individual performers contribute to this accomplishment mobilizes musical artistry of a kind that is found only in group performance. I identify two distinct kinds of 'socio-musical' artistry, and discuss some of the ways in which different forms of group organization articulate different possibilities for their exercise. Finally, I'll discuss at some length the extreme case of a performing role that is purely socio-musical, that of the orchestral conductor.

2. Artistic agency in musical performance

Before proceeding to issues that arise in group performance, it will be necessary to make some points which apply to both solo and group performance.^[5] Performers typically exercise musical agency in two distinct stages. Prior to performing, there is a stage of rehearsal and score-study, in which the performance-plan embodied in the score^[6] is elaborated with further planning. This activity, like composition, is a matter of creating musical plans for later execution.

Then there is the performance itself. This is the stage of execution rather than planning. There's an element of continuity in that performers' planning can determine musical details not settled by the work, and the performance can determine details not settled by the work or the performers' planning. Moreover, performers' planning will typically

narrow the range of performing options from those established by the work, and the performance will complete the process of narrowing to one exhaustive set of choices. But in performance, the details are set not by planning but by carrying existing plans out in one particular way. The determination of details is intrinsic to the activity; there's no such thing as a detail left undetermined in performance.

The musical artistry exercised in the planning stage is basically compositional. Any collaboration in the planning will involve musical activity that goes beyond the image of the solitary compositional creator, but it won't introduce elements that are specific to the role of performers, and I'll have nothing more to say here about this stage.

Musical agency exercised in the course of performance involves the determination 'on the fly' of features of the performance not determined by prior planning. Composers, and performers in the planning stage, develop plans for performance. But in performance itself those plans are executed, and the artistry specific to performers lies in features of the performance that are set only in the execution. In the central repertoire of WAM, this is limited to fairly fine nuance. The musical character of the performance is determined in great detail by the constraints of the work performed, and by additional planning carried out in score study and rehearsal. Still, nuances determined in performance can make the difference between successful and unsuccessful performance, and between performances that succeed (or fail) in different ways. In jazz and other musical domains that allow more scope for improvisation, much more of the character of the performance is determined only in the performing. Even in WAM, different works (and different rehearsal-to-performance processes) can define the details of performance to different degrees.

3. Ensemble performance and socio-musical artistry

In the case of solo performance, the single performer is the only one responsible for the control of fine details of the performance's musical features 'on the fly.' Artistic agency is shared with the composer, but the *performing* artistry is the single performer's. Part of what changes with group performance is just a multiplication of the agency and artistry present in solo performance. In a performance of the 'Kreuzer' sonata, one musician is responsible for the piano part and another for the violin part. Each exercises musical artistry in the control of detail in her part.

The typical use of sheet music in WAM ensemble music makes this division of agency particularly vivid. Typically, each performer plays from sheets containing only that performer's part. There's a multiplication of the solo player's case; in effect, each player has the material for a (not very satisfying) solo performance, and the solos are performed simultaneously.

Putting the matter this way is an over-simplification that suggests something like the parallel play of young children, or the pre-established harmony of windowless monads. If this was the only difference between solo and ensemble performance, an investigation of musicmaking artistry wouldn't need to go far beyond the solo case.

But even in a 'parallel play' group performance, there would be a dimension of collective outcome unlike anything present in solo performance. Musically important features of a performance are not limited to those of one part or the other, even though the performance comprises only the performance of those parts. Balance between the parts, or the matching or varying of nuance in phrases which occur in both parts, are not features of either part taken by itself. They are features of relations between the parts. The control of such features is the cooperative work of both performers. This control and artistry extends to such domains as those of overall tempo, dynamics, and so on. A group performance will exhibit a particular overall tempo, for example, only if it exhibits the relational characteristic of coordination among the tempi of the parts. Given such coordination, the tempo of any part reflects the tempo of the whole. But the overall tempo *is* the tempo of the whole, accomplished by the coordinated activity of all of the performers. We might call these details of relation or coordination 'details of group performance.'

In the artificially simple case of parallel musical play, the details of group performance would emerge from the simple combination of the features of the individual part-performances, as long as the latter were suitably related. (This might require particularly careful preparation in the planning stage; the harmony of the monads would need to be effectively pre-established.) So even in this simple case, there would be group-directed elements to the musical agency of the individual performers.

4. The artistry of interpersonal musical responsiveness

In real-world ensemble playing, cooperation among performers can include extensive interaction in the course of performing. Tempo is coordinated by listening to one another. Phrasing is matched or varied, balance is adjusted, tuning is maintained on the fly (within parameters

set by the work performed and earlier planning in rehearsal), as each performer listens and responds to the others.

This is a crucial dimension of the activity of performing with others in groups. And this dimension engages a kind of musical artistry not found in solo performance. We might call the artistry with which a performer responds to the musical activity of fellow musicians *the socio-musical artistry of interpersonal musical responsiveness*, where the phrase 'socio-musical' indicates the dimension of musical interaction in a performing group.

The lore of both chamber music and jazz places a particularly high value on this sort of interpersonal responsiveness. A handbook entitled *The Art of String Quartet Playing* emphasizes that:

The first requisite for a good ensemble is that each player shall have *the sense of the whole*. This he can only feel by *listening to the others* – constantly, whether he knows the music or is reading at sight.... In performance, it is the only way to achieve the necessary give-and-take, to play in and out, to respond freely to the others' interpretations, to meet the unexpected.[7]

An ethnomusicology of jazz performance makes a corresponding point:

From the performance's first beat, improvisers enter a rich, constantly changing musical stream of their own creation, a vibrant mix of shimmering cymbal patterns, fragmentary bass lines, luxuriant chords, and surging melodies, all winding in time through the channel of a composition's general form. Over its course, players are perpetually occupied: they must take in the immediate sensations around them while leading their own performances toward emerging musical images, retaining, for the sake of continuity, the features of a quickly receding trail of sound. They constantly interpret one another's ideas....[8]

By way of this sort of interaction, members of an ensemble can exercise musical artistry in shaping a performance, controlling the nuances left to performers by WAM compositions or the larger-scale features subject to jazz improvisation. This engages the socio-musical artistry of responsiveness. The passages quoted above describe an artistic relationship between individual performers and their fellows. The artistry of listening and responding is fundamentally interpersonal.[9] In solo performance, musical artistry is exhibited in the production and control of musical sound in singing or directly manipulating instruments. Following Stan Godlovitch, we might call this 'musical primary craft artistry.'[10] Such primary craft artistry is certainly an important element in ensemble performance. But the artistry of individual musicians in group performance also includes socio-musical artistry. Nicholas Cook writes of musical scores as 'scripting social action,'[11] and socio-musical artistry is the artistic reflection in performance of this feature of musical works. This is a kind of individual musical artistry that can be exercised only in the course of group performance.

Analogous to the artistry of interpersonal musical responsiveness is a form of responsiveness available in both solo and group performance: responsiveness to cues from the audience.[12] Even the quiet audiences of conventional WAM performances can evince momentary shifts of attention, pleasure, puzzlement, and related reactions to the ongoing performance. Other sorts of performance involve conventions that allow much more vociferous reaction by the audience. And attentive performers can include these reactions in the input to which they respond artistically. There is not, of course, the sort of mutuality of artistic response that characterizes interplay among the performers; the roles of performer and auditor are very different. But the artistry involved in responding musically to such cues seems closely related to artistic responsiveness to fellow performers. And one important difference between hearing a performance in person and via recording or broadcast is that in-person auditors can participate in this process and (spatially or temporally) distant auditors cannot.

5. The artistry of interpersonal musical initiative

The socio-musical artistry of interpersonal musical responsiveness, and the concomitant interplay of individual and group music-making, characterizes all of the members of a performing ensemble alike. The members of a string quartet or a jazz ensemble should all exhibit artistry in listening and responding to their fellows and so contributing to the group activity of shaping the performance on the fly. Much of the rhetoric surrounding string quartet playing valorizes the equal participation of all the members; on this view, the social activity scripted by the quartet score is intrinsically equal and democratic.[13] But the fact that the group as a whole must exercise musical artistry in the control of details of group performance does not imply that all the members of the group have equivalent roles in the process.

In the dynamic interplay of ensemble performance, one performer might take the initiative. A minimal degree of this is built into the very idea of listening and responding. To respond to another performer is to take one's cue from her, and in that interaction she (at least momentarily) functions as initiator. But initiative may also be more deliberately assumed or assigned, and can extend beyond audible cues to visible gesture. Such leadership may be assigned to different performers for different passages, as in the Guarneri Quartet's assignment of visual 'leads,' a sort of equitable interchange of unequal roles.^[14] Or such interchange might be accomplished by more-or-less spontaneous initiatives in the course of performance, as often occurs in jazz performance.^[15] Finally, initiative of this kind might be taken more-or-less permanently by one performer. (The traditional opposite-pole to the democratic model of the string quartet is one in which the group is permanently led by the first violinist.)^[16]

This sort of leadership demands the artistry of interpersonal responsiveness; the shaping of a performance at a particular point should be responsive to its prior shape. And the spontaneous interchange of initiative requires responsiveness not only in particular musical gestures but in role-assumption as well. But especially when leadership is retained over a considerable span of musical time, it engages a further dimension of socio-musical performing artistry, which might be called *the artistry of interpersonal musical initiative*. This is the artistry specific to the role of *leading* performances or performance episodes. The musical role of group leadership resembles the overall performance-shaping agency of solo performers. But while the solo performer exercises this control in her own playing or singing, the socio-musical initiator's agency is partly located in her playing or singing of her individual part, and partly in the social action of guiding the performance of others. And while the leader's cues may be found in the way she sings or plays her part, they may also be conveyed in other ways, particularly by visible gesture.

Here it might seem that the role of a leader *replaces* the collective activity of the ensemble in shaping relevant features of the performance on the fly in the course of performing. Since the leader is a member of the group, a more accurate description would be that the ensemble's activity involves a division of roles among its members, allocating particularly extensive musical agency to one of them. The activity of a leader might constrain the scope of musical artistry of the other members, but their artistry remains an essential part of the picture, and they retain musical agency in their response to the gestures of the leader. Particularly in more improvisational settings, some of the response may be unexpected, taking up the initiator's cue in musically creative ways.^[17]

Here again there's a somewhat analogous form of interpersonal artistry involving the relation of performers and audience, which is again available to solo and group performers alike. Even in situations in which the audience doesn't participate in performance (singing along, rhythmically clapping, etc.), performers can use audible or visible gesture to guide the listening attention of auditors. Visible gestures intended for the audience are often derided as showboating, at least in WAM performances. But there's reason to think that following visual cues is important to the musical experience of auditors with access to them.^[18] The interactive interpersonal context of performance includes (spatio-temporally present) audience as well as fellow-performers, and socio-musical artistry can be engaged in both connections.

So, in group performance, the ensemble shapes the performance as it occurs. Members of the group exercise primary craft artistry in the performance of their individual parts, and socio-musical artistry in responding musically to one another and to their audience. For (temporary or more permanent) leaders, musical agency extends further into the shaping of the performance as a whole and its reception, and socio-musical artistry extends to the artistry of interpersonal initiative.

6. The conductor as socio-musical performer

The possibility of leading not just by example but also by visible gesture suggests that someone could lead a performance exclusively by gesture without participating directly in the production of musical sound at all. And this, of course, is precisely the practice of conductors, the paradigmatic leaders of WAM performance. The detachment of key socio-musical performing roles from direct physical music-making represents a significant departure from other modes of organizing group performance.

More than one author since the middle of the twentieth century has described conductors as the virtuosos of present-day classical music. The critical practice embodied in reviews of performances and recordings is united in assigning the responsibility to the conductor for artistic success or failure in orchestral performance. And to the extent that musicology has turned to the analysis of performances, it too assigns the relevant musical agency to conductors.^[19] An adequate

understanding of musical performing art must extend to the artistry exhibited by conductors. But this is no simple matter.

The role of conductor is of course limited to group performance; solo conducting would abandon music in favor of mime. The role is exclusively socio-musical, and we might expect the preceding discussion of socio-musical performing artistry to be helpful in sorting out the musical performing artistry exercised in this role. If we mobilize the categories developed above in combination with Godlovitch's discussion of primary craft, we can develop a nuanced understanding of the role of conductors as musical performers who exercise a distinctive form of musical performing artistry. Such an account will need to do justice both to the continuities between conductors' performing activity and that of paradigmatic musical performers (singers and instrumentalists) and to the distinctive features of the conductor's performing role.

7. Playing the orchestra like an instrument

To get a better sense of what needs to be sorted out, it will be helpful to articulate some of the tensions surrounding the idea that conductors are performing musicians. There is a perspective from which this idea may seem pretty bizarre. Norman Lebrecht captures the *prima facie* incongruity when he writes of the conductor:

He plays no instrument, produces no noise, yet conveys an image of music-making that is credible enough to let him take the rewards of applause away from those who actually created the sound.^[20]

Is the conductor a performing musician in the sense that she exercises the musical artistry specific to classical performance? The conventional response to points like Lebrecht's is that the conductor's role is indeed analogous to that of an instrumentalist, but that the conductor's instrument is the orchestra itself.

The instrument which the conductor uses...is the most sensitive, most richly and diversely equipped and articulated, inexhaustible, and most inspiring: it is an organ of which each pipe is a human being.^[21]

This suggests that the conductor's real-time control of the details of orchestral performance is analogous to a soloist's control of the details of her solo performance. The conductor's control is chiefly applied to details of group performance. Individual musicians may still exercise musical artistry in controlling the details of their own parts. But if the conductor plays the orchestra like an instrument, it must be that conductor's guiding role is crucial for many or most of the most important features of the performance.

This, then, is the conventional response to the incongruity of classifying silent baton-wavers as performing musicians. Arguably, a performing group the size of a symphony orchestra can't exercise flexible real-time control of many details of group performance in the absence of a single leader, and it seems that at least many such details are best controlled by the visible gestures of a leader who is clearly visible to the entire orchestra. In any case, this is the mode of control practiced by symphony orchestras for the last century or so.

Clearly, the conductor is at least a party to the artistry of a performing group consisting of conductor and players together. But of course the conductor doesn't 'play' the orchestra just like a fiddler plays the fiddle, and the disanalogies threaten the suggestion that the conductor is a musical performing artist in her own right.

The cliché that the conductor's instrument is the whole orchestra captures an important analogy between her artistic role and those of singers and players. But the contrast that I emphasized above between developing and executing plans for performance suggests a central disanalogy. The artistry proper to performance resides in the execution of directions (plans) embodied in musical works and elaborated in rehearsal, but in both rehearsal and performance, the conductor is the source of further directions that are executed by players and singers. To the extent that the conductor controls details of group performance, she does so by directing the playing and singing of others.

This is of course clearest in rehearsal, where the instruction is often explicit and verbal, and is in any case temporally removed from actual performance. Here, the role of the conductor is in many ways closely analogous to that of the stage-director in dramatic performance, and nobody would classify the director as a dramatic performer.

When we reach the stage of performing, some of this doesn't change. Even in the course of performance, the conductor directs the activities of others who produce the musical sounds that the audience hears. Even in performance, her role is in this respect like that of the composer or stage-director. And this challenges the suggestion that conductors exercise the artistry proper to performance; they do not, as players and singers do, (directly) shape on the fly the audible details of musical

sound.

8. Interpersonally mediated control and socio-musical performing artistry

The parenthetical qualification in this last sentence suggests the obvious rejoinder to this line of reasoning: the conductor's real-time control of detail in performance is to be sure mediated by the activities of players and singers, but it is nonetheless real and significant. If the orchestra is a responsive one, many of the features of a performance are determined by the precise qualities of the conductor's gestures as the performance unfolds. In this respect, the role of the conductor deviates sharply from those of composers and stage-directors.

At this point, we can usefully mobilize the earlier discussion of dimensions of performing artistry in such groups as string quartets or jazz ensembles. The conductor's guidance in the course of performance is an instance, albeit an extreme one, of the sort of performance-guiding socio-musical artistry that can be part and parcel of the artistry of performing musicians in ensembles. Moreover, like the exercise of such artistry by chamber musicians or jazz improvisors, its exercise by conductors also involves the socio-musical artistry of interpersonal musical responsiveness. For example, Max Rudolf notes that:

However well-rehearsed the ensemble and however well-marked the parts, only the actual sound of the music tells the conductor which gestures to use for dynamics. If the orchestra plays too loud in a *f* passage, the conductor may decrease the size of his gesture and even use the left hand to subdue the group. On the other hand, a *p* passage may not stand out sufficiently unless the conductor gives a large beat.[22]

9. Interpersonally mediated control and primary craft

On the other hand, the fact that players and singers make musical sounds directly while the conductor is involved only via the mediation of her activity does seem quite relevant to the question of whether conductors exercise primary craft artistry in orchestral performance. Godlovitch's account of primary craft is designed to specify a kind of immediacy of sound production that he takes to be crucial to musical performance. The kind of mediation that most concerns Godlovitch is electronic rather than interpersonal; in his book about musical performance, he has lots to say about synthesizers and computers and nothing at all about conductors. But his account of what's missing when synthesizers and computers are brought to bear applies equally to the activity of conductors:

[M]usic-making skill paradigmatically requires the immediate causal intervention of the player. That immediacy provides a basis for determining and assessing performance handicaps. Instrumental skills are essentially and broadly manual; vocal skills are essentially glottal. This type of direct control embeds performance within 'primary craft' traditions. Valuing performance skill is an instance of valuing results in a primary craft.[23]

Exercising musical skill involves physically altering something directly. Every musical effect stems immediately from some physical control the player has over the vibrating object. Performance requires an intimate acquaintance with the sounding properties of one's instrument as well as ways of using parts of one's body to exploit those properties. Music-making calls for 'contiguous hands-on control' over sound. I call direct or immediate physical causation of some effect by an agent 'primary causation.' The skilled primary causation of sound I call 'primary skill' for short.

The exercise of primary skills stamps the details of the agent's actions directly into the emerging effect. Each nuance of sound reflects some physical manoeuvre.[24]

This is a rich description, containing elements that are perform absent from the activity of conducting as well as some which may be present. Immediate physical causation of the audible results is of course out of the question. Godlovitch contrasts immediate control with 'remote control,' and it's clear that a conductor's control of detail in performance is remote control. But when a responsive orchestra performs under a skilled conductor, it could yet be that 'each nuance of sound reflects some physical manoeuvre' among the conductor's gestures.

This is certainly what conductors strive for, and what the responsiveness of an orchestra can make possible. Daniel Barenboim seems to echo Godlovitch when he writes that:

...with a good conductor, musical contact can be so

strong that the musicians react to the slightest movement of his hand, his finger, his eye, or his body. If the orchestra is at one with the conductor, they play differently if he stands up straight, or bends forward, or sideways or backwards. They are influenced by every movement.[\[25\]](#)

The control of sound by gesture is perhaps simplest in the matters of overall dynamics (typically proportioned to the amplitude of the conductor's beat) and tempo (controlled by the timing of the gestured beats). But by combining fine-grained control of these elements with others indicated by, for example, the shape of the beat, the conductor can control more subtle and complex musical nuance. For example, Rudolf describes some of what goes into the shaping of melody:

The manner of interpreting melody is one of the most individual characteristics of a musician. Just as a melody played by different soloists may produce varying impressions, so a melody played by an orchestra under different conductors may not affect the listener the same way....

In short, the shaping of a melodic line is achieved by means of a purposeful combination of the basic techniques that have been discussed. The use of legato, staccato, and tenuto beat for indicating articulation has been taken up previously. It has been shown that changes in the size of the beat affect not only the dynamics but also the phrasing. In addition, subtle variations in the size of the beat, even from count to count, can express the inflections in the melody that are not indicated by interpretation marks but are 'behind the notes.' The value of variations in the intensity of the beat, from very intense to completely neutral, has also been treated.[\[26\]](#)

Frederik Prausnitz summarizes what's controlled by the conductor's beat:

The beat shows when to play,
indicates how to play,
controls the musical shape of individual lines,
coordinates all musical lines in terms of precision and balance,
directs the interchange of musical initiative within the orchestra....

What distinguishes beats, as the primary set of conducting signals, is precision and control. The exactitude with which a modern symphony orchestra is able to follow the directions of its conductor is wonderful to watch.[\[27\]](#)

Bruno Walter writes in a similar vein that

...contrary to appearance...it is in actual fact that single person [the conductor] who is making music, playing on the orchestra as on a living instrument.... The musical feeling of the listener perceives that the conductor's conception and personality sound forth from the playing of the orchestra....[\[28\]](#)

Indeed, Walter emphasizes an analogy to the handcraft that figures so prominently in Godlovitch's discussion of primary craft musical performance. So, for example,

I cannot say in what specific physical trait the manual aptitude for conducting lies, any more than I can pinpoint the physical disposition for a craft such as, let us say, joinery. But if we closely watch an artisan who is specially gifted for his craft, we see how naturally and purposefully, and with what sure instinct, he handles his tools. They appear to be part of his own body – his nerves do not seem to end under the skin, but seem to continue through the tool he uses, directly affecting the object on which he works....

In the hands of the born conductor, the baton gradually becomes a tool of this kind.[\[29\]](#)

If Rudolf, Prausnitz, and Walter are right, the conductor's 'remote control' of the musical sounds of a performance can share many salient features of a player's or singer's more direct control. All of this suggests that the musical artistry of the conductor involves a sort of interpersonal extension of primary craft artistry, and this is what animates the

metaphor of the orchestra as the conductor's instrument.

10. Interpersonally mediated control and artistic collaboration in performance

On the other hand, the interpersonal dimension of this extension of primary craft remains centrally important. The conductor's control requires the active and musically engaged collaboration of the 'instrument.'^[30] It is important not to take Walter's 'it is ... that single person who is making music' to suggest that the conductor is the only one 'making music' in orchestral performance. Barenboim addresses the hypothetical extreme suggested by Walter's 'single person who is making music:'

There is nothing worse than the attitude of an orchestral musician who comes extremely well prepared, able to play the notes perfectly, but totally without any kind of character, so that the music is, as it were, then made by the conductor. And he is in fact saying, "I play the notes, and you make the music." And there's nothing further from the possibility of good music than that.^[31]

So while the conductor's shaping of performance involves the exercise of something at least close to primary craft, its version of (or analogue to) primary craft is itself socio-musically collaborative.

The interplay of initiative and engaged response has yet another dimension that further engages the conductor in the artistry of ensemble performance. Recall that the last item on Prausnitz's list of functions of the beat is that it directs the interchange of musical initiative with the orchestra. The conductor cannot be a source of musical initiative in every element of the performance. Rudolf writes,

The conductor must decide when he will direct the melody, how much attention he will give to the inner parts, and which details need special attention. The choice of "what to conduct" lends individuality to the interpretation. For example: when two groups play the melody, the larger one is usually led more directly, but if a particular orchestral color is desired (as strings with solo wood-winds, the wood-wind color predominating), the smaller group is addressed. The effect of a passage may be greatly enhanced by directing counter-voices more strongly than the main melodic line. Generally speaking, however, it is unwise to pay too much attention to inner parts and to use elaborate gestures for a great number of small details, for this disturbs the logic of the over-all musical picture and may easily become a mannerism.^[32]

Decisions made in the course of (conducted) performance about what part of the performance to conduct might seem to be entirely specific to the art of the conductor. But we've already identified the interchange of leadership roles in the course of performance as a dimension of the socio-musical artistry of chamber musicians and jazz improvisers. The conductor's varying focus of address is a version of something that once again carries over from other sorts of group music-making.

If musical performing artistry is artistry which is exercised in the course of musical performance and which shapes the musical qualities of the performance as it takes place, then conductors clearly exercise such artistry. As with individual singers and players, its domain of exercise is the real-time control of detail, mostly at the level of precision left open by the score. Like chamber musicians taking leadership roles in the course of performance but to a greater and more sustained extent, conductors shape the fine-grained nuances of performed versions of compositions in collaboration with players and singers who are also artistic agents in the creation of the performance.

I've emphasized analogies between the artistry exercised by conductors in performance and that of players and singers in chamber music and jazz. The categories of primary craft artistry and socio-musical artistry, the latter including both the artistry of responsive listening and of performance-guiding initiative-taking, provide a means to bring out the extent and some of the nuances of the analogies. But for the conductor, the order of priority among the dimensions of musical artistry is reversed. For chamber musicians and jazz performers, socio-musical artistry emerges in the exercise of primary-craft artistry. The basic artistry of listening and responsiveness is exercised through instrument-playing or singing. Although visible gesture can play an important role, much of the performance-guiding activity in these domains is accomplished audibly through appropriately nuanced playing or singing. With the conductor, musical artistry is socio-musical through and through; the primary-craft-like element is itself social, accomplished through interaction with a group of musically active collaborators.

And this brings us back to the fact that the conductor's role is located within a group whose collective activity generates the details of group

performance. Like shorter- or longer-term leaders in chamber music or jazz performances, conductors have a role in the group which influences the details the group performance far beyond the leader's particular part. For the conductor, this takes the extreme form of having no 'particular part' at all, so *all* the influence is on the parts of others. It's tempting, especially if we begin our account of musical performing artistry with solo performance, to see conducting as a sort of amplified version of solo performance, leaning on the metaphor of the orchestra as the conductor's instrument. But it's more illuminating to view the performance of orchestra-with-conductor as one way of organizing the various artistic functions of group music-making, with the conductor gathering functions that are exercised in other ways, by individuals or by the ensemble as a whole, in other forms of organization. The musical artistry of the conductor is an element in the deeply social artistry of group musical performance.

To simply say that the conductor is a musical performer underplays the significance, emphasized by Godlovitch, of making and controlling sounds in a way that 'stems immediately from some physical control the player has over the vibrating object.'^[33] To simply *deny* that the conductor is a musical performer underplays the deep continuities between what she does in the course of a performance and what singers and instrumentalists do in ensemble performance. The conductor's real-time exercise of socio-musical artistry controls details of performance in ways that include many of the elements of primary craft music-making, and her socio-musical role is made up of elements that can be crucial components of singers' and instrumentalists' musical performing activity. We can accommodate the disanalogies while recognizing the fundamental importance of socio-musical artistry in performance by distinguishing two levels of genuine musical performing activity: *primary performing activity*, which requires the direct making and control of sound, and *socio-musical performing activity*. Conductors are musical performers, but not *primary* musical performers. (This is reflected in the fact that there can't be a performing group consisting only of conductors.)

11. Conclusion

The role and artistry of a conductor in performance is purely socio-musical. But the role and artistry of an ensemble player or singer is deeply socio-musical as well. Performers listen and respond, and are listened to and responded to. Musical initiative is exercised in roles that are assigned in advance (for entire performances or individual episodes), or spontaneously assumed and relinquished. And the artistic qualities of ensemble performances emerge from the socio-musical artistry of the performers.

There's no music at all without the production of musical sound, and in that sense activity involving direct control of vibrating objects is musically primary. But as soon as two musicians join in performance, their art takes on a social dimension. Only by taking this dimension seriously can we fully understand musical performing artistry. And to the extent that other kinds of group performance (in dance, drama, and so on) involve analogous forms of interaction, the point applies to them as well. Apart from the special case of solo performance, performing art must be understood as art which is exercised by social organizations (performing ensembles) by way of the artistic performing interactions of their members.

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Endnotes

[1] David Davies, *Philosophy of the Performing Arts* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), Ch. 2. See also Paul Thom, *For An Audience: A Philosophy of the Performing Art*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

[2] Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performance* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), Aron Edidin, "Performing Compositions," *British Journal for Aesthetics*. 34 (1997), 323-335.

[3] Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performance*; Peter Kivy, *Authenticities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), Aron Edidin, "Look What They've Done to My Song: Historical Authenticity and the

Aesthetics of Musical Performance," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 16 (1991), 394-420; "Playing Bach His Way: Historical Authenticity, Personal Authenticity, and the Performance of Classical Music," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 32 (1998), 79-91; "Artistry in Classical Musical Performance," *British Journal for Aesthetics* 40 (2000), 317-325.

[4] Paul Thom, *The Musician as Interpreter* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2007), Stan Godlovitch, *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study* (London: Routledge, 1988), Edidin, "Artistry in Classical Musical Performance."

[5] Here I follow the account in Edidin, "Artistry in Classical Musical Performance."

[6] Or chart, in the case of jazz arrangements, or other analogous work-vehicle. That such things as jazz arrangements are musical works is somewhat controversial, but nothing in my discussion hangs on a narrow construal of the category of musical work.

[7] M.D. Herter Norton, *The Art of String Quartet Playing* (New York: Norton, 1925), pp. 22-23.

[8] Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 348-349.

[9] There is something of an analogous element in solo performance in the adaptation of the performance's later features to its earlier ones. See Edidin, 2000.

[10] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance*, pp. 53-55.

[11] Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), pp. 256-273.

[12] I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for CA for emphasizing the importance of interaction with audience as a dimension of socio-musical artistry.

[13] Mary Hunter, "'The Most Interesting Genre of Music': Performance, Sociability, and Meaning in the Classical String Quartet, 1800-1830," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 9 (2012) 53-74.

[14] David Blum, *The Art of Quartet Playing: The Guarneri Quartet in Conversation with David Blum* (New York: Knopf, 1986), pp. 10-11.

[15] Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, Ch. 13

[16] This is noted by Hunter, Blum, and Norton.

[17] Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, Ch. 13, Blum, *The Art of Quartet Playing*, pp. 5-6.

[18] William Forde Thompson, Phil Graham, and Frank A. Russo, "Seeing Musical Performance: Visual Influences on Perception and Experience," *Semiotica* 156 (2005) 177-201, Michael Schutz, "Seeing Music: What Musicians Need to Know About Vision," *Empirical Musicology Review* 3 (2008) 83-108, Chia-Jung Tsay, "Sight Over Sound in the Judgment of Musical Performance" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110 (2013) 14580-14585. For two pianists' takes on some dimensions of the artistry involved, see Alfred Brendel, *Me Of All People* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 60-61, and Charles Rosen, *Piano Notes* (New York: Free Press, 2002), pp. 128-132.

[19] For example, in various articles in John Rink (ed.), *The Practice of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[20] Norman Lebrecht, *The Maestro Myth* (Bridgewater, N.J.: Replica, 1992), p. 2.

[21] Hermann Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1933), p. 3.

[22] Max Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (New York: Schirmer, 1950), p. 312.

[23] Godlovitch, *Musical Performance*, p. 53.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[25] Daniel Barenboim, *A Life in Music*, revised and enlarged edn (New York: Arcade, 2003), p. 80. See also Stephanie A. Ross and Jennifer Judkins, "Conducting and Musical Interpretation," *British Journal for Aesthetics* 36 (1996), 16-29, ref. on 21-22.

[26] Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting*, p. 226.

[27] Frederik Prausnitz, *Score and Podium: A Complete Guide to Conducting* (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 41.

[28] Bruno Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making* (New York: Norton,

1961), p. 82.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 87-88.

[30] Ross and Judkins are concerned with the possibility of attributing performative interpretations to conductors in the presence of the artistic role of the players.

[31] Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes* (New York: Pantheon, 2002), pp. 69-70.

[32] Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting*, pp. 309-310.

[33] It's not clear in the passages I've quoted from Godlovitch whether such direct physical manipulation is meant to be a defining characteristic of primary craft. If not, it remains an important feature of his paradigm cases.