

Postmodern Views on the Early Music Practice: Analysis, Performance, and Society

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Introduction

At the dawn of this millenium, Margaret Bent [2000, 50] concluded her article about Historically Informed Practice's "impossible authenticities" with these ambivalent terms: «One challenge for the next generation, the next century, is to accept the futility and limitations of authentic sound-quests, and rather to refine our command of the individuality of past musical languages, particularly those elements that survive the vicissitudes of changing performance fashions». How was this challenge undertaken in the beginning of our century, and what new issues have emerged since?

While the Early Music movement has been flourishing in Southern Europe during the last decades, an important quarrel recently shook social media and the community, namely about the validity of certain practices, deemed as "commercial". In this paper, I analyse the concerns of the Early Music community in Latin Europe, namely in Italy, Spain and Portugal, and to a certain extent, France. In order to understand the origin of the different positions involved, I refer to earlier and mostly Anglophone literature on Historically Informed Practice (HIP).^[1] I simultaneously read the ideals represented by this practice through French linguistic theory. My aim here is not to present a historical review of the HIP movement, but rather to propose a personal interpretation of the development of the movement in a broader context and of the values that are under question in today's practices. I show that the theoretical concepts that supported the movement at its origins contained the seeds of the contemporary discontentment shared by many artists today. In particular, I argue that the parallel development of the Early Music movement and of the recording industry is a contradiction which creates a tension in the community's various practices.

"Historically Informed Performance" (HIP), is not a term that applies to the specialization in a *determined historical period* of classical music as much as to a *contestatory approach* in the performance of Western Art music. It was, from its beginning, «essentially an attitude of mind rather than a set of techniques applied to an arbitrary delimited body of early music» [Kerman 1985]. To sum it up, the aim of the movement is to develop a critical attitude to Western art music usually focused on (but not limited to) repertoires from the Middle-Ages to the Romantic period. The Early Musician is expected to investigate any element that can provide knowledge about the way this music has been performed in its original context: instruments, scores, treatises, or other historical data. We can trace the origins of HIP to the 1950's or even to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, here I examine more specifically the expansion it underwent in the 1980's and 1990's. This HIP movement's peak and main period of growth was concurrent with a more general crisis in the music disciplines, in the midst of the shift toward a "new musicology" and the creation of new and independent academic music disciplines. A few decades later, some artists have now attained the status of "mainstream" musicians and the type of interpretation, fostered by HIP movement, has been largely accepted as a normal practice by musicians, audiences and producers. Still, I argue that in Latin Europe, where the implementation of the movement is more recent, there is still a large part of the practitioners that think of Early Music as a subversive practice, which aim is to challenge mainstream and commercial trends, even created by those who identify with the HIP movement.

I speak here from the position of an "insider", being myself active in professional circles as a historical bassoon

player since 2010. In addition, I studied the Early Music community through ethnomusicological methods, based primarily on participant observation, oral history and digital ethnography including online semi-directed interviews. For the sake of this paper, I also give a large emphasis on social media communications, mainly through Facebook posts. My informants are self-defined professional musicians, dancers, teachers or instrument makers, active in the Early Music scene of Italy, Spain and Portugal. Using the Savall-Gini quarrel as a starting point, I examine my community at large and observe its specific positions in the beginning of 21st century.

Quarrels and discussions on public and social media

During the summer of 2017, members of the Early Music community in Europe have partaken in heated quarrels on social media, often opposing leading figures of the Early Music movement to individual practitioners and teachers who reacted to some of their statements in public media. One of the debates that got much visibility in Europe (mostly in Italy, Spain, France and Portugal, although it also reached Germanophone and Anglophone circles)^[2] brought the renowned Jordi Savall to respond publicly to the critiques that Roberto Gini, a former student of his, had posted on Facebook.

The debate started from a post by Gini on July, the 19th 2017. This post was written as a response to an interview given by Jordi Savall on «La Stampa» on July, the 17th 2017. Jordi Savall had commented, in particular, that classical music was «without future» and that it did not «know any more how to create», sentences that «La Stampa» editors chose as a title for their article. In this interview, where Savall discusses among others political and cultural issues between the West and the Middle-East, he states that in Western Art Music, «a certain routine prevails, a sort of formal ritualism».^[3] The eloquent and quick responses that followed on social medias show that such statements are seen as threatening by classical musicians, and in particular by the Early Music community.^[4] Any such comment may provoke indignant reactions, but here the threat was worsened firstly by the fact that Jordi Savall is surely the most well-known individual playing Early Music, whose huge fandom goes well beyond the circle of Early Music aficionados, and secondly because, as Gini assures, Savall would have his part of responsibility in the “decadence” of classical music. The wind of the quarrel exceeded social medias circles, as the review «Scherzo»^[5] covered shortly the debate. Savall himself was asked to respond to the polemic in the journal «La Repubblica», to which he states that his former student «does not deserve a response», while defending the positive social impact of his activities as a musician.^[6]

In his first passionate open-letter, Roberto Gini accused indeed Savall to «have created a non-existing repertoire, which became so paradoxical that [he] may even believe [himself] it was authentic».^[7] Gini’s reaction to Savall’s interview has been dismissed by some social media users for being a personal vengeance motivated by jealousy.^[8] On the contrary, it appears that his critiques are largely shared by professionals from the Early Music community. Gini’s writings emphasise the *perversion* of the practice as creating a cultural cul-de-sac: «[...] I don’t accept, on the other hand, the annoying and boring seasoning of true repertoire, adapted and coloured in other to please the audience».^[9] Simultaneously, other discussions on similar themes emerge on Facebook. Pedro Sousa Silva writes: «I think indeed that in the Early Music scene has settled a perverse and intellectually crooked idea of what is historically informed performance, of what is creativity and of what is improvisation».^[10] This comment was part of a positive reaction to Pierre Hantai’s interview published in “EcoDiario” in «El Economista» on August 8, 2017, just a couple of weeks after the Savall/Gini quarrel. Hantai attacked the commercial aspect of the classical music scene, what he described as “terrifying”. For him, the problem is due to «a lack of preparation of the large audience and of communication medias [...] supported by specialized radio canals that have converted themselves in “commercial production machines” instead of tools for instruction».^[11] among other comments on the attention given to the physical aspect of classical music performers. But the question that provoked most different points of view is the one about the legitimacy for a “marketing” curriculum in conservatories. Similarly to the debate on musical fusion provoked by Gini’s posts, the central

point of this discussion is the need of today's musicians to be more attractive to the large audience, what is seen as a threat to the quality of their dedication to research and interpretation. In a general trend, it seems that musicians from most recent generations defend the idea of having such courses that «create a bridge to the labor market. Because indeed, this one exists».[12] A different era where artists could be dedicated to the music, without having to worry about marketing strategies, seem to have faded. «The problem of young generations is that the market is expecting innovations. The dilemma is between being honest and being commercial».[13] They acknowledge that, «the need to make yourself known has always existed. But [this kind of] “marketing” is a more recent phenomena».[14] Some other musicians wish to “break the prejudice” about aesthetic fusion between musical styles, affirming that they are still motivated by a quest for the right sound, by intense research and commitment.[15]

Indeed, the question between marketing and artistic commitment is a long one. As reacts on of my informants to Hantai's comments, «the relationship between Baroque Music and “Business” dates from... 1650, maybe»?[16] French sociologists as Eve Chiapello or Pierre Menger have explored, among others, the managerial aspect of the Early Music scene. For Chiapello [1997], the tension between art and management is delicate but necessary, as its existence is what allows artistic production to act as a critique to the capitalist system. Menger [2010] discussed the ideology of “creative freedom” as always in interaction with a series of other factors embedded in society. But there is more now, happening precisely with Early Music practices, for how they have developed in the first place. It is because Early Music, as a specific process of interpretation toward the written score, is distinct both from “modern” classical practices and from music traditions of aural transmission. It requires an effort of *imagination* from the interpreter - and in some cases, from the listener too. Still, imagination doesn't equate with total freedom. This delicate border is inherent to Early Music as a conceptual form of performance, therefore its scene is a privileged space for controversy about all its constitutive aspects, processes and results.

Origins and theories of the Historically Informed Performance movement

One of the interesting critiques by the HIP movement to classical "modern" music practices can be understood as a critique to the logocentrism that had long prevailed in WAM. Unlike most other musical genres, WAM traditionally puts a large emphasis on its notation as the privileged medium for transmission. Indeed, we can understand musical notation, like the writing aspect of languages, as a repertoire of *signa*, or a collection of «arbitrary design [that] may not be significant, but [which] may mean what people agree it should say» [Goody 1987, 5-6]. Moreover, for Derrida, «the epoch of logocentrism is a moment of the global effacement of the signifier: one then believes one is protecting and exalting speech, one is only fascinated by a figure of the *technè*» [Derrida 1976, 286]. We can assume that there is little relation between “J” and the shape of a sound that, besides its pitch and duration, may include particular types of articulation, timbre and vibrato. In that sense we “escape” the realm of neumes that *pictorially* represent the music they signify, just as the alphabetic system overthrew hieroglyphs and lost pretension to any direct pictorial signification.

Rousseau explored further the implication of a society of “mute writing”, where the *signa* would progressively substitute direct communication and eventually, would not any more need to refer to any particular *phonè* (as it is the case in mathematics, for example). In such a “civilized” (read “perverted”) society, the sounding voice would resemble a «catastrophe, an unpredictable misfortune» [in Derrida 1967, 343], as it brings the human back to a preverbal state. In an epistemological context where the physical sound is depreciated over writing, what will be left to music, which is by essence the realm of the (articulated) voice? Does “music” come to be *what is left when sound is not considered?* Tomlinson [2007b, 11-27] reads the ambiguity in Rousseau's statement - through Derrida - that while the sound of the

voice precedes the word, singing is also an *addition* to speech. I see in this contradiction the proof of a distinction between what Western modern societies tended to consider as “music” on the one hand, and the sound (instrument playing or singing) on the other.[17]

Around the 1980’s, critiques to the linearity of language as a «vulgar and mundane concept of temporality (homogeneous, dominated by the form of the now and the ideal of continuous movement, straight or circular)» [Derrida 1976, 86] progressively penetrated the music disciplines. Simultaneously appeared the consciousness that this specific temporality was not neutral, but rather the assertion of a Western “Grand Narrative”. The taken-for-granted aspect of this teleological narrative reasserted a strong “tradition of the West” that remained convinced of its own supremacy [Zizek 2000], and which would see other cultures - or other times of its own culture - through the lens of its own, contemporary canon. Such ethnocentrism and chronocentrism, in the music disciplines implied a use of temporality that long allowed musicologists and music theorists to «dispense with meaningful engagement with historical texts as part of present-day theoretical praxis» [Judd 2000, 58-59].

Still, through the influence of poststructuralist and postcolonial theories, academicians became gradually conscious that positions promoting a Western “Grand Narrative” in fact underlined supremacist agendas and established structures of power. This fomented, for example, the emergence of ethnomusicology in response to the colonial aspect of “comparative musicology”, which was previously leading the study of non-Western musics. It also lead musicologists to understand music history through new narratives including gender perspectives, or the opening of the music scholarship to popular music studies.[18] Music scholarship at large, including historical musicology, had to rethink their values. The trend of “new” musicology attempted to replace music at the center of the cultural and to investigate the reciprocal interplay between the musical and the social.[19] Coincidentally, logocentrism lost credibility, and the progressive recognition of some disruptive elements occurring in musical performances led to the consideration of sounding events more than to the text that supposedly embeds it. Not by coincidence, the consideration of ethnocentrism and the studies of non-dominant cultures have opened the discussion about the reproduction of systems of power that are part of a sensibility of music based on its written character. Pop, jazz, and black musics provided a ground where scholars had understand music out of the score, and to rather focus on the performance itself.[20]

It is very significant that the importance of «participatory discrepancies» calling for a «liberating musicology» [Keil 1987, 279], or recognition of disruptions between the mental idea of music and its actual performance, have emerged in large part through to the spread of recordings. The shift implied by the normalization of commercial recordings created a change in the listening, the understanding and the conceptualising of music [Bayley 2010]. When the recorded sound became fixed, reproducible, and as such could serve as an object of study, the musical fact became two-sided, with an attempt to finally include what had been left aside previously.[21] On one side remained the “music in itself” where the signifier (musical notation) had taken meaning for the signified, and on the other sides were the leftovers, the parts of the sound that cannot be contained in the signifier. With the development of Performance Studies, musicologists started to consider music as taking part into the whole cultural construct, specific to each cultural context, as recording made them realize the instability of performance [Bowen 1993].

Among other paths that provided tools for a consistent critique of the methods, interests, and analytical frames in the study of Western Art Music (WAM), stood a musical repertoire that seemed to *predate* the systematic cultural penetration of logocentrism and the predominance of the written in classical music. Music from before the 18th century appeared not only as an alternative subject of study to traditional approaches of classical music, but also as a perfect entry point for contextualised studies. This repertoire was at the same time out of a canonical monolith build around the romantic era, and still inside the very discipline, it wished to subvert.

Alternatives to the internalism and formalism that have dominated musicology (...) will resolutely historicize musical utterance, exploding it outwards through an imaginative building of contexts out of as wetly a concatenation of past traces as the historical can manage [Tomlinson 1993, 21-22].

HIP allowed one to engage both with the cultural (or, historical) context that gives meaning to the music, and with the performance aspect of the musical sound. This meant to shift the focus of attention from *the written score as object of study* to *a possible sound that precedes it*. This inversion of predominance between logos and embodiment, or to put it in better words, the collapse of a hierarchical system between these two terms, is probably one of the aspects of HIP that, at its period of expansion, threatened most consistently “modernist” approaches of WAM. Indeed, once one unveiled the issues that were dormant under the reassuring lure of a fixed structure of meanings embedded in the musical score, «the real issue [was] not historical performance at all, but the nature of music» [Kerman 1985, 202]. There is an act of deconstruction of previous knowledges that happens through, I argue, a *free play* in the interpretation of the written, or the *logos* [Derrida, 1967]. Thus HIP, as it has been largely discussed, was at the end of the 20th century, typical of a postmodern questioning, uncertainties, and discomforts that simultaneously opened the way to new imaginaries and plural interpretations.^[22]

Deconstruction in music does not mean recognizing that the score is *not* music as much as that musical sound is *not* accessible *completely* through the score. After all, the sound has still some reminiscence in the score, although in an evanescent manner. The idea of the *trace* in linguistics, developed by Derrida, is relevant when examining Early Music approaches to the score: «Writing is one of the representative of the trace in general, it is not the trace itself. The trace itself does not exist» [1967, 167]. Similarly, John Butt purposefully recalls Jameson’s concept of simulacrum as «the desire for a copy of an original that has ceased to exist, that is unknown or somehow inaccessible, or that never really existed in the first place» [in Butt 2000, 158-9]. The distance that separates us from the past, in creating an unresolvable *lack*, allows for a permissiveness of *play*, which opens to richer experiences and more integrated actions. This “play”, in evoking a large range of sets of meaning for each signifiers and the use of metaphors, offers a legitimate ambivalence to the written text. In the case of Early Music, this means also using the power of *imagination*, backed by historical knowledge, in order to compensate for the lack of presence.

An active and conscious analysis, in the sense of play or deconstructive interpretation of metaphors, doesn’t only precede a sound production; it is also *performed* through it. This is how performance *became* analysis.^[23] Practitioners who engaged with a music than was not thought of presenting a self-contained truth had to make practical (and *temporarily definitive*) choices on interpretation. To do so, they had to recur to analysis: not a “modern” analysis that seeks to universalise, but a contextualised and potentially “deconstructive” analysis. By being able to assume the whole level of ambiguity of a text means being confronted to a score that had become an *Opera Aperta* [Butt 2002, 104]. Musicians then had to engage with active resolutions of such ambiguities. Judd’s solution was based on the metaphor of a triangle: the mediation between theory and practice was not any more represented on a bi-dimensional axis but rather the performer had the possibility to reconcile the past and the present, standing in between, through a process for negotiation, thus opening «new possibilities for interpretation» [2000, 62]. This reconciliation brought together exploded temporalities through an active process of re-imagination, where performers-analysts «seek[ed] to reconfigure the epistemological status of the past as a theoretical activity of the present [...] that [had] become actual in and as critical performances» [Franko Richards 2000, 1].

In conclusion, the recording technology, in complement to an important shift in the academy in general and in the music disciplines in particular, has permitted a conception of the musical sound that is detached from the score, where performance could act as a *supplément* to the score. In Early Music in particular, interpretation started to be seen as a form of knowledge and analysis, more than as a technical process, in reaction to a certain logocentrism that had prevailed

in the romantic period and had been reinforced in the modern era of Western Art Music. The result of such analysis cannot be produced in a written form; the sound itself is where the accumulation of knowledges can be displayed. Early Music has developed itself through *sound-images*,^[24] which means that the sound, in order to be grasped in its entirety, should be not only *heard*, but also *listened* and *understood* in its particular context.^[25] This sound-image may be produced during live concerts, but is more broadly diffused through recording.

Early Musicians today in Latin Europe

Is the actual “crisis” of Early Music a contextual and contemporary fact, or are the tensions between practitioners a necessary challenge that maintains the practice alive and always aware of its own weakness? Since its 1980's wave of development up to our current days, the Early Music scene has grown up continuously. In Latin Europe in particular, Festival and concert halls are each year more likely to programme Early Music concerts, reaching spaces with national and established visibility.^[26] Schools and courses have expanded exponentially in the last decade or so.^[27] Furthermore we can see a very significant increase in the available recorded music of early repertoire on period instruments.^[28] If this assertion holds for any kind of music since the advent of commercial recordings and the proliferation of online video platforms such as youtube, it has for the development of Early Music a very specific role to play. There is indeed a double correlation between the recording and the success of Early Music practices. As presents Bent [2000, 39], «the pursuit of authenticity and the boom years of the recording industry mutually fuelled each other». As we explained earlier, the recording was a fundamental tool that made possible the shift of musical consciousness toward the performative aspect, central in Historically Informed Performance.

But here lies also a social phenomenon that is crucial to the development of Early Music, as the quest for “authenticities” - whatever it may mean - is indeed typical of postmodern societies in quest of themselves. Among practitioners, the debates around the meaning of authenticities in HIP have been exhausted for long, and it is rare today to see Early Musicians that defend the discourse of an “original sound”. Rather, HIP re-established music as a communicative tool by an emphasis on *sound as a rhetorical object* as it was supposed to be in the 18th century [Haynes 2006], where music contains elements to *communicate* affects to the audience. Performers and listeners are suppose to share some predefined concepts of relation between sounds and feelings, and this is how contemporary musicians manage to implement an *authentic* version of old musical artefacts into performances, that resonate retrospectively in 21st century society. This is this objective that most Early Musicians are following:

The objective that I followed [...] was then to develop a project which, based on a robust musicological support, and simultaneously, operating and reflecting critically about the concepts of authenticity and historical investigation, would create a pertinent artistic object, meaningful to contemporary audiences.^[29]

Still, for the audience, the idea of authenticity didn't lose its attractive appeal, even if this one often acts at the unconscious level. The “authentic” still fulfills both the need for contestation of what is considered “modern”; and the quest for some roots that will minimise the postmodern discomfort of standing on unstable grounds. As an example from social media discussions, Renato Rivolta^[30] interrogates the reasons for such a success: «what is the psychological substratum that kindles this collective wave of interest» ? He places it on a possible misplaced nostalgia that imagines a different society from the past and gives it all the aspects that the contemporary society is lacking.

In addition to this increased appeal, the penetration of Early Music repertoires and approaches had been boosted in great part thanks to the accrued accessibility of commercial recordings, necessary tools for the transformation of music into commodity. One of my informants asks if «the commercial success of Early Music made it always more dependent on a market system».^[31] Another informant suggests that Early Music's “attractive aesthetic” led to «create a sort of a

“brand”, although nowadays its starts being sort of corseted».[32] In those two responses, we can see that the reality of Early Music being successful means also that is it more likely to be constrained by some precise needs of the market, in order to reach a specific audience, and that this may limit the possibilities of its creativity. Does it mean that the Early Music movement, which was born on an impulse of opening (of views, of topics, of approaches, of methods) and of subversion (of logocentrism, of modernity, of universalization) risks getting caught in the web of capitalist imperatives of market-led development and entrepreneurial strategies, in spite - or *because* - of its growing success?

There are indeed practical elements that fostered a downfall in Early Music evolution. If the advent of commercialised recordings has been one of the elements that made possible in the first place the awareness of disruptive elements upon which the Early Music movement has flourished, it became soon enough the frame which inscribed its limitations. The necessity to respond to a market (hence audience/consumers) demand has as an effect to narrow the possibilities for interpretative acts of deconstruction, in the sense of Derridean *free play*. Butt [2002, 157] had warned us that the «blending of original and copy [...] might enhance the sense of the (now lost) actual performance in the studio as authentically representing an absent original». Moreover, «musicologists have unearthed repertoires that are now widely performed, but are understood, [...] more in terms of sound quality than of musical content» [Bent 2000, 48]. Indeed, still today a recurrent complaint about the Early Music scene from its practitioners is the increasing reliance on recorded sounds, especially since the advent of broadly accessible audio and/or videos platforms. As one of my informants reports, the consequence is that, more than being interested in the process of interpretation, many musicians are crushed by the necessity to correspond to a predetermined result, to reach an established aesthetic with no interest in the process to get to it.[33]

Unfortunately, 80% (or more) of what is done today in the Early Music field is very far from having the same seriousness in the approach of the repertoire, it narrows to the idea that “to interpret” means to apply some recipe that they found in the discography from the 1990-2010 and it doesn’t have anything, really nothing to communicate.[34]

Indeed, a too great emphasis on recorded sound may lead to a position contrary to Early Music premises [Leech-Wilkinson 2002]. It means replacing a fixed text at the centre of a self-reproductive “tradition”. We replace the written text by a sounding text. It has differences, still it doesn’t allow *différance* to happen; at least not in the sense of a deconstructive act. This *sound-image* doesn't have the capacity to allow the *free-play* of a multiplicity of meanings; indeed, it is extremely un-postmodern.

For some, it seems that the energy of the 1980’s and the 1990’s have drained out, leaving space for a lukewarm trend that is more motivated by opportunities than by passion. A practitioner comments: «Especially among orchestra musicians, I find a drastic accommodation to a standard “baroque-but not too much baroque” way of living their musical career».[35] Like in Gini’s first post from the “quarrel”, witnessing this perversion provokes a feeling of *delusion*: «the *resentment* of whom sees you [Jordi Savall] protagonist for the corruption of the purest ideals (...), it’s almost lacerating».[36] Some practitioners can become sour when they address their milieu: «It is mostly a nightmarish collection of arrogant idiots who have taken a wonderful topic and material and turned it into a pyramid survival scheme where the aesthetics, the research and the honesty don't have a role to play at all».[37] If the Early Music “sound” establishes itself, indeed the whole movement risks losing its original meaning. Newly arrived practitioners who don’t need to have the same commitment as their predecessors, as the market, which ends up being dominated by standardized *sound-images*; as a consequence, there is too little space to allow constructive research and the use of imagination.

This standardisation is not simply an effect of a social change in cultural consumption. It lies in the principle of

HIP itself: performance practice does produce an actual sound from the score, while it is its *absence* that had made possible the need for interpretation, for deconstruction, and for an imaginative *play* in its meaning, allowing a creative reconstitution.

Derrida had already warned us in these convoluted terms: “From the first departure from nature, the play of history - a supplementarity - carries within itself the principle of its own degradation [...]. The acceleration, the precipitation of perversion within history, is implied from the very start by the historical perversion itself” [1967, 179]. Were practical dead ends (if we assume they are) inscribed in the very genesis of the movement? As early as the 1980’s, Tomlinson had affirmed that «postmodern musicology [would] be characterized most distinctively by the insistent questioning of its own methods and practices» [1983, 22]. His words are still meaningful for Early Music today, especially in the light of passionate comments on social media, are able to shake its community and to throw practitioners into heated debates.

We can observe two paths of traditions that have simultaneously consolidated themselves in the Early Music scene: on the one hand, a certain continuity in the sound and in performance practice styles, and on the other hand, a tradition of questioning, of challenging, and of seeking more sources to support one’s interpretation. Both these paths have some degree of stability, and the continuity of HIP-s earlier stages into the contemporary scene of Early Music is precisely in the mutual interaction and pulling of these two forces or trends. We are cautioned to rehearse - or should we say, perform - this tension in a very conscious and committed way. There remain manners and ideas about how to be respectful and creative when engaging with free play, and the most pessimistic views may be overcome through some more engaging positions.

But actually some groups never felt freer to explore new paths, to change the "status quo" coming from the 70s and 80s, which greatly needed new blood, as one sees in the specialised schools that exist in Europe. Groups famous in the early scene tend to stick to their formula and often don't react good to newcomers. But anyway, these new people came and are coming, so, things must change in some way...[\[38\]](#)

Some practitioners manage to sit at the crossroad of the tension, combining seriousness in the research with communicative abilities: «Early music should be less self-referring and more audience-oriented. They seem to forget that music is supposed to be a language, and to play means to communicate». The exploration of “new paths” will never cease, and eventually ongoing crisis will inject new blood into the practice, preventing it to end up in an epistemological impasse. Newcomers will again spin the wheel for another round. Sometimes, the frustration expressed can even be the stimulus for more subversive and ingenious impulses for the future: «I would like to blame Early Music to the frustration and loss of creativity I've developed towards musical performance. (...) There's lack of rebelliousness and originality in performance and approach. We don't want to BE old. We want to be young!». [\[39\]](#)

Conclusion: Imagination as a creative practice

Placing the recorded sound as a text to observe and to refer to systematically is not challenging logocentrism per se, as this does not allow for the act of deconstruction and *free play* as much as the *absence* of the sound in the written score does. Imagination should be at the center of the process, not in the sense of “inventing” new and non-existing sounds, but in the sense of entering in an active process committed to rehabilitating a rhetoric from the past, as a way out from both strict modernity and diffuse postmodernity.

Going back to Chiapello’s concept of “artistic critique to capitalism” [1997], we can see that the opposing forces at play in the Early Music community are maybe not as much a sign of disruption or instability of the community, as a sign of active ways to maintain the tension alive and to rehearse it continuously. Recurrent statements by Latin Europe

practitioners that jobs in the North (including France) are a way to earn a living, while activities in the South are where a more active form of subversion is possible - although employment conditions are definitely worse ; and the fact that the quarrel has been more heated in Latin countries, show that there is in this geographical and cultural area a space for negotiation of complex tension between the artistic critique of capitalism and capitalism itself. Although Early Music counts on a large part of entrepreneurial initiatives and by ensembles managed by the musicians themselves, there is a rich blend of ideologies. In many cases, commitments to the music on the one hand, and to the audience on the other, are not thought in opposition to each other but rather to fulfill one another in a complementary way. But this is possible only when critical positions exist and are being heard.

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[1] In this article, I mostly refer to "HIP" as the origin of the movement in Central Western Europe and the USA. I will rather use the term "Early Music" in reference to my fieldwork in contemporary Latin Europe. Online interviews are here presented anonymously except when consent have been given by their authors. Translations are mine.

[2] In particular, Gini's posts have been translated in French by Loïc Chahine, [link](#).

[3] «Prevale la routine, una certa ritualità formale» in Savall, "La musica classica è senza futuro..." 2017.

[4] In January 2018, Roberto Gini was informed on his Facebook profile that his posts in 2017 provoked almost 50 millions of reactions, probably through the multiplication of shares of his posts. He writes himself "I find this fact scaring" and comments that he would have preferred to be known for his music rather than for a Facebook post. (Roberto Gini, Facebook post from January 2, 2018). All translations are from the author.

[5] *Scherzo* 331, July 2017, [link](#).

[6] «Non merita una risposta. Non mi presto al gioco» [Sguben 2017].

[7] "Hai costruito un repertorio inesistente, diventato talmente paradossale da essere probabilmente creduto autentico perfino da te stesso". Roberto Gini, Facebook post (extract), July 19, 2017.

[8] Interestingly enough, it appears than most critiques to Roberto Gini come from other countries, namely from France (see in particular comments to Christophe Deslignes' post from July 26, 2017) and from outside of the Early Music community (by amateurs practitioners, and/or from Jordi Savall's fandom). See in particular comments to «Scherzo» Facebook post from July 24, 2017.

[9] "Non accetto invece il fastidioso e noioso condimento del repertorio vero, adattato e colorato perché piaccia al pubblico". Roberto Gini post from July 23, 2017. This post is considered as the last of a series of three messages.

[10] "Acho sim que na música antiga se instalou uma ideia perversa e intelectualmente desonesta do que é a interpretação historicamente informada, do que é a criatividade, do que é a improvisação". Aug. 5, 2017.

[11] "A su juicio, esta situación dominante en el mercado de la llamada "música seria" se sirve de la falta de preparación de una gran parte del público y de los medios de comunicación, y cuenta con el apoyo de radios especializadas que se han convertido en "máquinas de promoción comercial" en lugar de canales para instruir." From *El músico Pierre Hantaï dice que lo que ocurre con la música clásica es "aterrador"*, article published on August 8, 2017 by Eco Diario. [link](#) consulted on Aug 11, 2017.

[12] Em relação ao Empreendedorismo fazer parte das cadeiras de leccionação dos últimos anos não acho mal, para poder permitir a ponte com o mercado de trabalho. Porque ele existe. E eu sou idealista e nunca me importei de tirar cursos universitários que me encaminhavam para o desemprego .. mas o mundo das ideias e o mundo real sempre tiveram que coexistir.” Daniela Tomaz, comment to Pedro Sousa Silva Facebook post, August 9, 2017.

[13] “El problema lo tienen/tenemos las nuevas generaciones ya que el mercado demanda estas innovaciones. El dilema está entre ser honesto o ser comercial.” Jose Arsenio Rueda Ocaña, in response to Pedro Sousa Silva. Aug 9, 2017.

[14] Daniela Tomaz, *cit.*

[15] See for example, the CD *Baroque to Fado* by Marcos Magalhães and Os Músicos do Tejo, Opus 999, 2017.

[16] Personal online conversation, January 26, 2018.

[17] Tomlinson makes himself a very careful distinction between “Music” and “Singing” in his essay *The Singing of the New World* [2007].

[18] The introduction of gender studies in musicology has known an important impulse through Susan McClary *Feminine Endings* [1991]. For the emergence and the legitimization of popular music studies, refer to Tagg [1987].

[19] Authors such as Lawrence Kramer, Kevir Korsyn, Gary Tomlinson or Joseph Kerman among others took part in the large debate about “new” musicology. For a brief discussion of the issues, see Cook [2001a].

[20] See for example Cook [2001b].

[21] Around the mid-20th century, scholars such as Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno have discussed the social risks and potential of the reproduction of music, and . However, this is not the debate that interests us here, but rather the awareness of a gap between performance and score that emerged in music scholarship.

[22] The postmodern aspect of the HIP movement is broadly discussed in Butt, *Playing with history*. Taruskin’s affirmations that HIP was essentially modern got challenged.

[23] The concept of performance as analysis has also been developed by Agawu [2004].

[24] To use a term coming from *musique concrète* and acousmatic music by Pierre Schaeffer or Pierre Boulez. About the trichotomy of the audible (audition/cognition/musicalization) see Bayle [1989].

[25] If the concept of sound-object for Schaeffer referred in particular to the spatial dislocation between a sound and its source, in Early Music there is a similar phenomena, which is the temporal separation between a sound and its intended audience, with a gap of a few centuries.

[26] I would cite, for the example of Portugal, the programmation of Centro Cultural de Belem and Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon, which have in 2016 and 2017 presented a rich selection of Early Music ensembles with the same visibility than other concerts, classical music or other. This would not have been imaginable a few years ago.

[27] In Italy, we can number over 40 conservatories that offer classes in Early Music. This was not the case until very recently, when only very few institutions would offer such courses. See [link](#), consulted on Dec, the 3rd 2017).

[28] This phenomena can be seen both in the diversification of large labels (Naive, Deutsche Grammophon, Harmonia Mundi, Naxos etc...) and in the proliferation of smaller or independent recording labels with an intense specialization in Early Music (Zig-Zag, Alia-Vox, Outhere Music, etc...).

[29] «O objectivo que persegui com o Bando de Surunyo foi assim desenvolver um projecto que, a partir de um suporte musicológico

robusto e, simultaneamente, operando e reflectindo criticamente sobre os conceitos de autenticidade e fundamentação histórica, criasse um objecto artístico pertinente e significativo para o público dos dias de hoje». Hugo Sanches, PhD Diss. Coimbra University (in press).

[30] Facebook post, August the 20th, 2015.

[31] Online semi-directed interview.

[32] Estética atractiva, se ha creado una especie de marca, aunque actualmente empieza a estar algo encorsetada (online semi-directed interview).

[33] Pedro Sousa Silva, personal conversation. July 23, 2017.

[34] “Infelizmente, 80% (ou mais) do que se faz hoje na área da música antiga está muito longe de ter a mesma seriedade na abordagem do repertório, limita-se a achar que "interpretar" é aplicar umas receitas que foram buscar à discografia dos anos 1990-2010 e não têm nada, mas mesmo nada, para comunicar”. Pedro Sousa Silva, Posted on Facebook on Aug. 9, 2017.

[35] Online semi-directed interview (in English).

[36] “Difficile vivere il risentimento di chi ti vede protagonista della corruzione dei più puri ideali artistici nutrendo insieme il sentimento di riconoscenza e di vero affetto che sempre avrà nei tuoi confronti, È quasi lacerante; e ho passato anni ruminando questi due opposti.” July 19, 2017 (my emphasis).

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Online semi-directed interview.

[39] Online semi-directed interview.