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### 'What's My Line?' Performing Meaning in Mozart's Chamber Music

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11 16 footnotes – copy on fos. 20–21

12 no music examples, no tables, no figures

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15 ‘What’s my Line?’ Performing Meaning in Mozart’s Chamber Music

16

17 JOHN IRVING

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20 Edward Klorman, *Mozart’s Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works*.

21 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xxxii + 325 pp. ISBN 978 1 107 09365

22 2. Companion website at [www.mozartsmusicoffriends.com](http://www.mozartsmusicoffriends.com).

23

24 EDWARD Klorman’s excellent study *Mozart’s Music of Friends* is a wide-ranging

25 interpretation of Mozart’s chamber music that draws together many strands of

26 scholarship primarily in order to nuance our understanding of these works as they

27 may exist in performance. Klorman offers much food for thought here, to both

28 scholars and performers. I hope his contribution will be digested and applied

29 especially by those who enact and appreciate Mozart’s chamber music primarily

30 within the sphere of performance. Indeed, in what follows, I write from the

31 perspective of a performer: one who has migrated from the world of academic

32 scholarship on Mozart specifically into the world of historically informed

1 performance (and for whom a book such as this is of immense value), though my  
2 contextual reflections on Klorman’s book are not to be read as the pursuit of a  
3 specifically HIP agenda for Mozart.

4 Klorman’s fundamental contention is that Mozart’s chamber music, like much  
5 chamber music of its time, existed at least in part as an act of sociability: music as  
6 *music-making* among friends. His work sensitively bridges the gap between music  
7 conceived as a representation (visually, in a score) and music as lived experience in  
8 performance – or in the act of listening – in real time. He offers numerous detailed  
9 applications of a principle that music *enacts*. In this respect, he draws upon writing by  
10 Nicholas Cook, who has repeatedly visited the capacity of music to be simultaneously  
11 both artefact and behaviour. A recurrent theme in Cook’s writing has been the notion  
12 of the musical score as a script (rather than a prescription). The dust jacket of one of  
13 his most recent books puts it as follows: ‘Cook supplants the traditional musicological  
14 notion of music as writing, asserting instead that it is as performance that music is  
15 loved, understood, and consumed. This book reconceives music as an activity through  
16 which meaning is generated in real time.’<sup>1</sup> Some years earlier, Cook had argued that  
17 performance could be viewed as a generator of social meaning, drawing in his thesis  
18 upon interdisciplinary performance theory (particularly theatre studies, poetry reading  
19 and ethnomusicology). Thus:

20

21 Whereas to think of a Mozart quartet as a ‘text’ is to construe it as a half-sonic,  
22 half-ideal object reproduced in performance, to think of it as a ‘script’ is to see it  
23 as choreographing a series of real-time, social interactions between players: a  
24 series of mutual acts of listening and communal gestures that enact a particular  
25 vision of human society, the communication of which to the audience is one of the  
26 special characteristics of chamber music.<sup>2</sup>

1

2 Later he contextualizes this thought more broadly:

3

4       Instead of seeing musical works as texts within which social structures are  
5       encoded we see them as scripts in response to which social relationships are  
6       enacted: the object of analysis is now present and self-evident in the interactions  
7       between performers, and in the acoustic trace that they leave. To call music a  
8       performing art, then, is not just to say that we perform it; it is to say that music  
9       performs meaning.<sup>3</sup>

10

11       The recognition that ‘music performs meaning’ is (or should be) of no small  
12       consequence to a performer of this repertory. After all, performers communicate. If  
13       what we communicate is *meaningless*, then we are clearly failing on some level:  
14       either we fail to understand the music or we fail to enact it with a vitality that  
15       responds to the narratives that unfold within it. What we communicate of those  
16       narratives is not necessarily what we believe the composer’s ‘intention’ to have been,  
17       but rather what we believe we can see within the music’s encoding on the page. This  
18       follows careful study of scores, frequently in relation to other contextual information,  
19       such as the understanding of form, harmony and counterpoint; of notational systems  
20       and what they may have meant at a particular time and in a particular place; and also  
21       of instruments of the period in which the work was composed (and of the settings in  
22       which those instruments were played) for what they might tell us about the nature of  
23       the music’s expressive potential. Somewhat serendipitously, our understanding of  
24       what we see in and through the musical text builds into something that may be likened  
25       to a picture that we form in our imagination (and which subtly alters over time, when  
26       we return to the performance of a particular piece again and again). Likewise

1 serendipitous is any given rendition of that picture in performance, which may change  
2 according to circumstance (for us, at least – and perhaps for the audience). For  
3 performers, the idea that the doing of all these things (whether in our rehearsal  
4 preparations or in concert) is actually the performing of our performer identities – in  
5 other words, one kind of ‘meaning’ that music performs through our behaviours – is a  
6 natural one and something to celebrate.

7         An attempt to get ‘under the skin’ of the kind of relationship that we  
8 performers have with Mozart’s chamber music, one that reflects the kind of  
9 discussions and debates that we have with the music and with ourselves in the  
10 forming of that picture and – perhaps – the creation of meaning, is therefore welcome:  
11 all the more so when it comes from the pen of an academic who understands Mozart’s  
12 music both as a theorist and as a player. Klorman requires of us a substantial leap  
13 beyond the signifying musical text: not so much *what* the music is, as *where it might*  
14 *be*. For performers, it is the *where* that normally counts for most: music exists in the  
15 making of it (Cook’s ‘choreographing a series of real-time, social interactions  
16 between players’). This implies a central place for sociability within music-making, a  
17 concept that dominates Klorman’s approach to Mozart’s chamber music, whether  
18 from the historical or the analytical perspective.

19

20

21 <A>Exploring ‘the music of friends’

22

23 Part 1 of Klorman’s exploration addresses the historical dimension of musical  
24 sociability, seen through three important historical perspectives: ‘the music of  
25 friends’, ‘chamber music and the metaphor of conversation’ and ‘private, public, and

1 playing in the present tense'. Klorman reveals a great deal about the nature of a  
2 concert experience for Mozart and his listeners. On some occasions, it was a less  
3 formal kind of event than today's public rituals, freely flowing between different  
4 musical genres, between professionals and amateur players (sometimes side by side),  
5 and between musical performances and other forms of social activity. While such a  
6 context for the music-making was rather different from the more reverential  
7 expectations of present-day concert halls, it should be noted (as Klorman does) that  
8 respectful silence of the auditors was frequently expected within these settings, for  
9 instance in the salons of Baron Gottfried van Swieten, which Klorman references (p.  
10 11 n. 15); indeed, Mozart, according to Michael Kelly, insisted on silence while he  
11 played, breaking off if it was disturbed.<sup>4</sup> Each of these early contextual chapters is  
12 richly grounded in literature from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as  
13 well as a host of recent literature – all sensitively applied. While Klorman's prefatory  
14 note to the reader advises that his (extensive) footnotes are not necessary to a  
15 satisfactory appreciation of the main narrative text on the page, they repay close study  
16 on several levels – most notably, perhaps, for the reader who is keen to approach the  
17 writings of Sulzer, Koch, Reicha, Baillot, Momigny and a host of others in the  
18 original languages. Nuanced discussions of terminology also appear here, along with  
19 some of the nitty-gritty of interpretative action, for instance on the tendency within  
20 the Franco-Italian tradition between *c.*1770 and *c.*1830 to evaluate music primarily in  
21 melodic terms (p. 46 n. 54 records Berlioz's somewhat dismissive report of his  
22 father's evaluation of one of his early flute quartets). Fascinating use is made of  
23 iconographical evidence of chamber-music playing (supplemented further within the  
24 associated web resource), with all due caution given about regarding iconography as  
25 an ideological rather than realistic frame of reference.

1 Performers should be especially attentive to a point that Klorman explores at  
2 length (principally in Chapter 3: ‘Private, public, and playing in the present tense’)  
3 regarding the contrast of the fully rehearsed public presentation of a chamber work by  
4 a professional quartet and the more serendipitous event of ‘present-tense’ reading  
5 through (basically, endeavouring to get through it without too many mistakes, purely  
6 for private enjoyment). These are, and probably always were, two extremes, and the  
7 sophistication of the spectrum of possibilities lying in between is painstakingly  
8 unpicked, revealing en route a broad historical and generic panorama, taking in early  
9 nineteenth-century public subscription concerts, the professionalization of the string  
10 quartet, generic cross references with the symphonic (late Haydn and Beethoven) and  
11 an extended and insightful reading of Carpani’s 1804 essay ‘On the Performance of  
12 Instrumental Quartets’. Socially, it is possible to discern a trend whereby the amateur  
13 player (sometimes of aristocratic pedigree) tastefully withdrew to the sidelines,  
14 vicariously enjoying the intimate conversational pleasures of a chamber-music piece  
15 from a seat on the front row of his salon, rather than gamely (perhaps excruciatingly?)  
16 trying to hold his part among professionals. Carpani has much advice to offer in his  
17 account of chamber-music performance (‘the perfect execution of this genre of music  
18 is as difficult as it is rare’; ‘someone who sight-reads very well is often bad at  
19 expression’; ‘[players] will not penetrate all the meaning in all the separate sections of  
20 such good works at once’). The gist of all this is that there was an increasing need to  
21 rehearse string quartets thoroughly for the performance to be satisfactory. This was  
22 especially true of the performances of the Schuppanzigh Quartet, noted for their  
23 relationship with Beethoven. Within chamber music, musical complexity was making  
24 new and challenging demands: technically for the performers, and intellectually for  
25 the audience. There was still a conversation, but it was no longer something

1 happening just internally among the players *prima vista*: this was a staged debate,  
2 whose terms of reference had been carefully studied by the participants in advance, so  
3 that the serious business metaphorically encoded within the music might be  
4 represented with all due seriousness to the auditors in a communicative ritual of  
5 serious import.

6         Such seriousness of purpose sometimes called for explicatory reference that  
7 invoked textual analogy. Music as a form of ‘wordless rhetoric’ is something  
8 underlying the whole of Klorman’s scheme in *Mozart’s Music of Friends*. Yet  
9 sometimes words were felt to be a necessary scaffolding to the metaphor of chamber  
10 music as erudite conversation, and an extended treatment of Momigny’s famous  
11 analysis of the opening movement of Mozart’s D minor Quartet, K.421, coming as the  
12 culmination of Chapter 2 (‘Chamber music and the metaphor of conversation’),  
13 actually launches the crucial sense of interaction – role-playing – within Klorman’s  
14 model, underpinning the remainder of the book. Players as agents – and, as corollary,  
15 chamber-music playing as *multiple agency* – is at the core of his thesis, introduced in  
16 Chapter 4 (‘Analyzing from within: toward a theory of multiple agency’), devoted  
17 initially to sonata form (and subsequently metre) and set out at length in a series of  
18 case studies including movements from the G major String Quartet, K.387, the B ♭  
19 Duo for violin and viola, K.424, the E ♭ Piano Quartet, K.493, the E minor Violin  
20 and Piano Sonata, K.304, the C minor Wind Serenade, K.388, and the notoriously  
21 slippery Trio 1 from the Clarinet Quintet, K.581, in which the clarinet sits back and  
22 observes as the strings alone try to make sense of Mozart’s nit-pickingly precise  
23 slurrings and dynamics – never can there have been a marking more worthy of a  
24 player’s gratitude than ‘Clarinet: Tacet’ here!



1           The book culminates in a virtuoso exploration of Mozart's 'Kegelstatt' Trio  
2 for Clarinet, Viola (Klorman's own instrument) and Piano, K.498. The 'Kegelstatt' is  
3 a work I have performed many times, and which I have recorded twice: once on  
4 DVD, once on CD. In the DVD (subtitled 'An Eighteenth-Century Conversation'),<sup>5</sup> I  
5 attempted, with my fellow performers, Jane Booth (clarinet) and Peter Collyer (viola),  
6 to explore the Kegelstatt's inner world (both in rehearsal and in performance): how it  
7 functions from the perspective of the three players involved; how its narratives grow  
8 out of dialogues happening 'in the moment' across the ensemble; and how each of us  
9 adapts continually to the unfolding situation, now playing a leading role, now acting  
10 as a respondent, now providing a supportive background. We also experimented in  
11 rehearsal with what happens to the narrative (on the local level of a phrase or section)  
12 if we deliberately change our idea of who is 'leading' at that moment (for instance, if  
13 instead of regarding some of the viola's long held notes – such as bars 141–5 and  
14 163–7 – as harmonic 'filling', we viewed these as stable focal points around which  
15 the clarinet and piano construct their lines). We contrasted the intimate scale of our  
16 gestures with the rather different approach we took in a concert presentation of the  
17 piece (also included on the DVD). Reading Klorman's similarly intensive account of  
18 the performer's 'role-playing' that goes on in rehearsing and presenting this Trio was  
19 fascinating, and offers me food for thought in returning to the piece in future.<sup>6</sup>

20           Klorman's multiple-agency model (clearly explicated in a series of extended  
21 annotated musical examples and substantial cross references within the book's  
22 associated web resource) allows a sophisticated approach to the real-time narrative  
23 qualities of Mozart's chamber music that will be of considerable value to players.  
24 Agency, for instance, is implied by the instrumental lines notated within a score  
25 (strands of texture suggestive of particular roles within a conversation: stating,

1 responding, interrupting, nuancing, undermining, challenging, confirming), but also  
2 refers to the players who are agents bringing this musical environment to life in  
3 sound. Klorman makes an important point (pp. 128–9) relating musical drama and  
4 instrumental performance, noting that whereas the *character* of Don Giovanni  
5 experiences the unfolding plot without foreknowledge of the events, the singer  
6 *playing the role* of Don Giovanni is, naturally, fully conscious not only of his own  
7 part throughout the drama, but also of all the other roles on stage. Similarly,

8

9         The real-life violinist [in a quartet] is aware that he is reading notes off a page that  
10         has been composed in advance, but within the quartet’s fictional frame the persona of  
11         the second violin engages in a present-tense exchange with the others, all of whom  
12         seem to create the piece, moment to moment, through their collective actions and  
13         interactions (p. 000).

14

15 Drawing on some recent work on agency by Fred Everett Maus and others, Klorman  
16 is able to interrogate chamber-music performance as an art whereby ‘individual real-  
17 world players [enact] sentient, fictional personas’ who invent their own parts; he  
18 views ‘each musical utterance as the volitional and (at least marginally) purposive  
19 action of a fictional persona, a role that is enacted in the real world by an  
20 instrumentalist’ (pp. 132–3). Thus he can recast an analytical concept such as a  
21 sequential progression that boldly forges the way for a modulation to the dominant as  
22 ‘the cellist boldly forges the way for a modulation to the dominant’ (p. 133),  
23 conflating real-world cellist and fictional character. The cellist within this model is  
24 regarded as simultaneously a fictional persona; a real-world instrumentalist; in a  
25 sense, the co-composer of the piece; and an analyst of the work (whose reading is  
26 expressed through the performance). Such a scheme will resonate strongly with

1 performers, who will no doubt also be grateful to Klorman for approaching his task  
2 with the inquisitive mindset of a player actually faced with making some sense of the  
3 peculiar world some of us inhabit whereby we daily torture ourselves with a  
4 coordinated succession of physical and mental gymnastics that generally lead only to  
5 the repeated and much-prolonged frustration (certainly in playing Mozart's music)  
6 that it could nevertheless have been better done.

7

8

9 <A>Some reflections and contexts

10

11 Klorman offers players of Mozart's music both a useful reminder and a theoretical  
12 framework for understanding our actions. When we perform (and listen to) Mozart's  
13 chamber music, we are simultaneously performing a complex network of  
14 interdependent roles. This is the core of Klorman's argument. Couched in language  
15 that is at once readable and erudite, it is supported by numerous extended musical  
16 examples, annotated in detail with plausible narratives through phrases and sections  
17 that performers might profitably construct and enact while rehearsing or playing. It is  
18 perhaps this aspect that will endear itself most strongly to players. It captures  
19 effectively the reality of our complex situation as chamber-music performers, within  
20 which the acuteness of our interrelations is intense. The principal challenge is perhaps  
21 that we do not all think in the same way or at the same rate. The translation of a  
22 musical thought or intention into physical activity and resulting sound does not  
23 happen identically among all four players of a string quartet, though rigorous training  
24 and years of experience certainly help in the achievement of that artificial goal of  
25 unity/uniformity so beloved of audiences. We may disagree in rehearsal on

1 fundamental issues of tempo, character, phrase-shaping; or on more subtle issues:  
2 how to express a dot over a crotchet at the end of a phrasing slur in early Beethoven,  
3 for instance; or whether or not a *subito piano* – Beethoven again – is most effectively  
4 represented in our performance by a tiny delay in the arrival of that note; or whether it  
5 is best expressed through textural balance. In a process involving multiple human  
6 personalities and the inevitable arrival of disagreement, this is *where* the music is.  
7 Music, both in performance and in its preparation, may be seen as an act of  
8 sociability. Social conventions of its public presentation (in the West, at least)  
9 nowadays require an intervening stage of agreement among the players (meaning,  
10 usually, compromise, and a consequent trace of frustration) between rehearsal and  
11 performance, so that the defining characteristics of a performance (from the  
12 perspective of the audience) suggest unity of presentation, rather than simmering  
13 discontent.

14         When we play music (meaning here exclusively music of the Western art  
15 tradition) we engage in real-time activities requiring ultra-specific coordination,  
16 usually of physical activity in the moment. Shifting the focus from that real-time  
17 practical choreographing to the conceptual, synchronous gaze of the analyst  
18 (sacrificing music's 'where' for its 'what') is something that performers have all too  
19 often been reluctant to do, regarding deep, systematic analysis as somehow  
20 detrimental to the vital spark of the music. That reluctance is not without merit. Sadly,  
21 it is often in the knowing (by means of analysis and written report) of what something  
22 is, or purports to be, that confusion and frustration set in. Not for nothing did Plato  
23 characterize writing ambiguously as φάρμακον (*phármakon*).<sup>7</sup> Performers are  
24 typically as ambivalent as King Thamus regarding the benefits of analytical writing  
25 about music, instinctively responding more readily to pragmatic and flexible

1 metaphorical constructs than to systems. Above all, we performers prefer writers to  
2 engage with those real-time choreographies that we must enact. It is to Klorman's  
3 credit that he understands (as a performer himself) the vital synergies of intellect,  
4 technical command, convention, place, space, instrumental possibilities and their  
5 creative coordination. His sensitivity to space (in the first two chapters especially) is  
6 one that impinges fundamentally on Mozart performance, most importantly perhaps in  
7 relation to gesture.

8           Performers on modern instruments in large public concert halls engage with  
9 the music in ways rather different from those of Mozart's day. Gestures that were  
10 originally intended to be intimate and conversational are frequently and necessarily  
11 overdone in order to project satisfactorily into that cavernous landscape beyond the  
12 edge of the stage. Not for nothing are students trained in conservatoires to exaggerate  
13 every last nuance to the nth degree for fear that, at a distance of some 30 yards or  
14 more, carefully notated dynamic shadings and phrase-endings will dissolve into  
15 blandness or inaudibility (especially if those occupying the seats are members of a  
16 competition jury). An impressive arsenal of technical and mechanical tools has  
17 developed since the early nineteenth century to allow precisely this type of  
18 exaggerated communication to take place, among them string vibrato, legato phrasing  
19 and the generally more rugged construction of instruments of all types, allowing them  
20 to send a more piercing sound right to the back of the hall. As someone professing an  
21 HIP perspective, I naturally lament the negative consequences of these changed  
22 circumstances of communication for Mozart's chamber music, though this ethical  
23 dimension is not something to be pursued here. Close inspection of Klorman's  
24 historical situation of Mozart's chamber music within a space sympathetic to its  
25 conversational effects might encourage modern performers to think more broadly

1 about diverse styles of communication that might be applied according to different  
2 spatial opportunities, and to be less influenced by an idealized notion of ‘concert-hall  
3 sound’.

4 Related to this is the nature of the texts we perform. While this is not  
5 Klorman’s primary concern,<sup>8</sup> his understanding of Mozart’s chamber music as a  
6 conversational art invites readings of it as script, not prescription (to return to Cook’s  
7 claims, cited earlier). Teachers, performers and critics fret endlessly and  
8 anachronistically about the use of *Urtext* editions and the practice of *Texttreue*,  
9 removing to one side two significant historical contexts:

10

11 (1) The notion of an *Urtext* postdates Mozart by at least a century, and was a  
12 methodology applied to the systematic notation of *scores*, not the individual playing  
13 parts from which performers in Mozart’s day worked (and which are frequently –  
14 and, to a performer, delightfully, creatively – haphazard in matters of detail); playing  
15 parts force an experience of music that depends on musically intelligent *listening*;<sup>9</sup>  
16 scores, by contrast, regress to the merely visual.

17 <half-line space>

18 (2) By misrepresenting the scale of Mozart’s notated gestures to conform to concert-  
19 hall expectations, performers are already compromising with the text; for instance, if  
20 you begin Mozart’s G minor Piano Quartet, K.478, by deliberately exaggerating  
21 (dramatizing) the contrast between the ‘tragic’ unison opening figure (for instance, as  
22 if representing a crowd declaiming a verdict of ‘Guilty’) and the ‘pleading’ response  
23 of the condemned individual, breaking off, *piano*, in supplication, then you are  
24 ‘interpreting’ it, for sure, in order to perform it effectively in a physical space for  
25 which it was never intended – but can we claim our actions are True? Is such a  
26 performance social interplay or conversation at all? It would never have been  
27 addressed thus in a Viennese salon of the 1780s. For one thing, the instruments of

1 Mozart's day were far lighter in construction, better suited to intimate conversation  
2 than declamation; both the tonal mechanics of a Viennese fortepiano (such as  
3 Mozart's Walter) and the variety of (probably) pre-Tourte bows common in Vienna  
4 in the mid-1780s led naturally to a rapid decay of sound away from the initial minim  
5 G, so that even though the dynamic for the remainder of the phrase is still *forte*, the  
6 quality of sound on the second note will lack the intensity of that of the first. This is  
7 followed by a leap into a much higher piano register, utterly different in tone colour  
8 on a Viennese instrument from that produced in bars 1–2. So there is in-built variety  
9 that is given to this passage by the instruments themselves, which Mozart knew and  
10 understood intimately, and for which he expressly designed his music. Its linguistic  
11 character is of intimate, conversational rhetoric, in which ever so subtle shades of  
12 intensity (for instance, the dissonances on the first quavers of bars 2 and 4) were  
13 audible within the close-knit gathering and metaphorically acquired a level of micro-  
14 meaning so typical of Mozart's chamber music: intimate speech rather than a soapbox  
15 and a megaphone. It is this more intimate story that Klorman encourages us to read:  
16 'How chamber musicians understand and experience their *musical* interactions in  
17 *social* terms, in time, as they play [... examining] a conversation *in* music that is also  
18 *about* music' (p. 297).

19

20 Klorman's integration of the disciplines of *reading*, *understanding* and *acting* this  
21 repertory reclaims a central place for performers of Mozart's music. It encourages us, as  
22 performers, to rationalize our inevitably subjective engagement with Mozart's chamber  
23 music: because this music is conversation, performers are vital. His view stands in sharp  
24 contrast to that of some previous writers, for whom performers are hardly central. A  
25 prominent example is Schoenberg, for whom Mozart's chamber music was an object of  
26 the deepest reverence. Writing generally of music in 1940, Schoenberg noted that:

27

1 Music need not be performed, any more than books need to be read aloud, for its logic  
2 is perfectly represented on the printed page; and the performer, for all his intolerable  
3 arrogance, is totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music  
4 understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print.<sup>10</sup>  
5

6 This does not exactly invite a conversational theory of music! Schoenberg implies  
7 that performers were usurping their function by intervening creatively, daring to make  
8 decisions on tempo; the particular intensity of a crotchet with a tenuto marking; the  
9 grading of a crescendo; subtly determining relative dynamic levels between the parts  
10 necessary to foreground a *Hauptstimme*. If they did not ‘interpret’, but instead merely  
11 played what was notated on the page, might performers have escaped Schoenberg’s  
12 ire? Or would he ideally have expelled performers altogether? (Comically, one might  
13 imagine an audience fortunate enough to be able to read music in print coming  
14 together in a concert hall; taking out their scores of Schoenberg’s Fourth String  
15 Quartet before a stage empty of any performers; sharing that silent experience of  
16 communally reading and wholly understanding its logic so perfectly represented on  
17 the printed page; and then going home again, their lives aesthetically enriched – and  
18 all the more so for there never having been a single note played!)

19 Simultaneously (and reluctantly), Schoenberg seems to be acknowledging that  
20 ‘interpretation’ from performers is, after all, necessary (because not all listeners are  
21 fortunate enough to be able to read his music straight off the score), and that his  
22 notation alone is insufficient. He was surely not the first composer to experience  
23 frustration in being caught up in that conundrum. There is no conversational element  
24 involved in Schoenberg’s idealized cerebral encounter: the composer expresses the  
25 logic of his musical thought through the medium of the printed score and the reader  
26 (or audience, should the unwelcome element of a performer need to be involved)



1 passively receives the message from on high. For all that Schoenberg likens his  
2 performerless process to an encounter with a book, that experience is unlike, say, the  
3 reading of a novel (in one's mind). Here, an essential ingredient is the capacity of our  
4 imaginations to bring alive the characters described in the text; we create narratives  
5 (of character, time and place) through the power of our memory. We are not simply  
6 passive readers but performers (of a narrative). Unintentionally, Schoenberg's  
7 remarks help bring into focus for us the artificiality of demarcating roles of composer,  
8 performer, listener along the chain of supposed communication. Historically, these  
9 categories have been subject to remarkable change. The semaphore-like hierarchy of  
10 the composer, served in turn by the performer, communicating in turn to the audience,  
11 made sense for Schoenberg and his pupils in 1940. But that did not always hold true:  
12 understanding chamber music as a performance of sociability (as Klorman proposes)  
13 reveals that fact very clearly, providing a valuable challenge to an ideological strand  
14 that is remarkably persistent.<sup>11</sup>

15         To be fair, it is doubtful that Schoenberg really did not appreciate the difference  
16 between simply playing the notes and *performing* them. He regularly engaged in string  
17 chamber-music playing in his youth, after all. But his writings establish the primacy of the  
18 musical text, its logic (like that of a book) 'perfectly represented on the printed page'.  
19 This approach lies behind many of his observations on the language of music, especially  
20 that of the Classical era, examples of which abound in the chapters of his *Fundamentals*  
21 *of Musical Composition*.<sup>12</sup> Logic is writ large here, for instance in his analysis of the  
22 Menuetto of Mozart's A major String Quartet, K.464.<sup>13</sup> Mozart's 'logic' comprises three  
23 motifs (A, B and C), each concerning the interval of a fourth and subjected variously to  
24 canonic treatment and intervallic inversion involving various intervals and time-delays,  
25 and the possibility of contrapuntal combinations among them. Schoenberg annotates the

1 whole of the Menuetto in an extended musical example, tracing the complexity of  
2 Mozart's logic; there is scarcely a bar that is not somehow circumscribed by  
3 Schoenberg's motifs A, B or C.

4         Understanding these motivic interrelations and the technical procedures that  
5 underlie them naturally has great potential value to performers. For instance, a quartet of  
6 players might try to construct a narrative built on the concept of Schoenberg's motif A  
7 (bars 1–2, in unison) as statement (repeated sequentially one step higher in bars 3–4) and  
8 motif B (the descending violin 1 line in bars 5–6) as a response, cadentially supported by  
9 motif C (the rising steps in thirds in the violin 2 and viola). While C only ever appears in  
10 this cadential context, the functions of A and B vary during the movement, including  
11 acting as simultaneous counterpoints to each other, or else to themselves individually  
12 (canonically, and sometimes in intervallic inversion). A and B also migrate throughout the  
13 quartet texture, so each player can engage in this play of imagined 'roles', contributing, as  
14 it were, to a lively developing exchange between four personalities stating, restating and  
15 responding – the particular pitches, registers, articulations, dynamics, contrasts of texture  
16 and phrase-shaping being analogous to contrasting inflections of voice in speech.

17         It is telling that Schoenberg's annotated musical example includes not a single  
18 dynamic marking. The vast majority of Mozart's articulations are likewise absent: the  
19 repeated crotchets at the start of motif B, for instance, are marked with three staccato dots  
20 under a phrase slur; they later become staccato strokes without any slur (bars 21, 42, 51,  
21 59). Mozart's quite consistent slurring of motif A into two groups each of two notes is  
22 retained by Schoenberg, however, and he also slurs the first appearance of motif C.<sup>14</sup> The  
23 reasons for Schoenberg's selectivity in this respect remain unclear. His motifs A and B  
24 might each be thought of as subdividing into two components (represented in Mozart's  
25 articulations), but he chose not to include Mozart's original slurrings of B even though

1 Schoenberg himself clearly regarded that motif as comprising two components (he  
2 annotates bar 6 with a ‘motif D’ – not mentioned in his prose description on p. 142 – to  
3 which he refers subsequently in his example at bars 22–4). Probably he felt that from a  
4 pedagogical perspective his demonstration of how the Menuetto’s ‘logic’ worked  
5 conceptually did not require fuller annotation of articulations.

6 Dynamics, however, are another question – certainly for performers. If our  
7 quartet players were to construct their narration of Mozart’s ‘logic’ from the basis of  
8 Schoenberg’s motivic annotations, enjoining in playful interaction across the  
9 ensemble, then they would surely want to note the fact that Mozart presents motif A  
10 according to a different concept: the opening minim is *forte*, and the remainder of the  
11 motif *piano*. Moreover, the slurring (probably here also indicating bowing) is such  
12 that the crotchet – *piano* – at the end of bar 1 is contained within the first slur, rather  
13 than initiating a *piano* group of crotchets in response to the *forte* minim. The effect of  
14 this dynamic notation is, as any historically informed string player will tell you, quite  
15 normal for Mozart’s time, especially in Vienna (where this quartet was completed in  
16 January 1785), because Tourte bows were not in wide circulation at that date, and  
17 most Classical bows (without the hatchet-shaped tip) still had relatively less power at  
18 the point. On a down-bow, therefore, the tone would naturally fade in intensity. What  
19 Mozart’s *piano* might mean to the player is that in bar 2 the upbow stroke should  
20 consciously aim not to increase in intensity (volume) as it reaches the more powerful  
21 heel once more). The characterization of motif A is therefore of a rather special kind,  
22 and for its expression a particular technical realization is needed. And here is the gulf  
23 between Schoenberg’s concept of the score as ‘perfectly represented on the printed  
24 page’ and the reality of musical expression. What the members of that imaginary  
25 ‘audience fortunate enough to be able to read music in print’ could not grasp from

1 their scores is the performer's embodied knowledge of how a particular phrase might  
2 be (not 'must be') characterized in the process of bringing it to life. Schoenberg's  
3 formulation misses the essential quality of *vitality* that those pesky performers bring  
4 to the party. Consequential upon this fixation upon the conceptual 'work' conveyed  
5 by a score is the ritual of the concert and the expected roles of its sundry participants  
6 variously representing and assimilating that musical 'work', rather like visitors to a  
7 shrine experiencing the manifestation of that contained within it. In an alternative  
8 scenario, we might imagine, as Christopher Small put it, 'no such thing as a musical  
9 work, [but] only the activities of singing, playing, listening'.<sup>15</sup> Small regarded  
10 classical concerts in the Western tradition as embodying 'a kind of society that does  
11 not allow for mutual participation of all peoples because it is based upon works, not  
12 interactions [...]. Performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but  
13 rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform.'<sup>16</sup> The  
14 sociability of music-making is one of its most highly desirable (and oft-forgotten)  
15 attributes, one that musicology has steadily begun to address (and long may that  
16 continue). Klorman's *Mozart's Music of Friends* is a prominent and very welcome  
17 landmark in this progress.

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1 <Footnotes>

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Cook, 'Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance', *Music Theory Online*, 7/2 (April 2001), <[www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html)>, ¶ [15].

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ¶ [29].

<sup>4</sup> *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, ed. Otto Erich Deutsch (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), 530.

<sup>5</sup> *Mozart 'Kegelstatt' Trio, K.498: An Eighteenth-Century Conversation*, Ensemble DeNOTE (Optic Nerve films, 2012). Also viewable on iTunes U through the Institute of Musical Research, University of London: <<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/denote/id650744083?mt=10>>.

<sup>6</sup> I understand that Klorman became aware of my 'Kegelstatt' DVD only at a very late stage in the production of his book; while it is referenced there, his exploration of multiple agency and my own similar explorations on film are independent. Our physical disposition in the DVD closely resembles, however, the picture represented in Klorman's Fig. 1.3 (on p. 8), facing inwards and conversing with each other, rather than declaiming into a concert hall.

<sup>7</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge: Hackett, 1995), 274e–275b. The most influential of modern philosophical treatments of *phármakon*'s ambiguous boundaries is of course Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 63–171.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, his musical examples do not deal with variant readings of dynamics and articulations between different early sources (which might suggest to performers contrasting ways of imagining and subsequently creating a conversational narrative in rehearsal or

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performance), but takes a single authoritative source (for example, from the Neue Mozart Ausgabe) as a single conceptual reference.

<sup>9</sup> This is especially the case if the parts have no rehearsal letters or bar numbers, in which case musically sensible reference points (cadences, a change of key, the recapitulation of a significant theme and so on) become the only usable landmarks.

<sup>10</sup> Reported in Dika Newlin, *Schoenberg Remembered: Diaries and Recollections (1938–76)* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1980), 164. Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 226–7, contextualizes Schoenberg’s statement against some of his earlier writings.

<sup>11</sup> Ironically, perhaps, the notion that a piece of music exists absolutely, in and of itself, is encountered routinely in programme notes and CD sleeve notes – two circumstances in which the sound of the music, created by performers performing meaning in real time, is paramount.

<sup>12</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London: Faber & Faber, 1967).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Exx. 116 and 117 (on pp. 146–8), with supporting prose commentary on p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> Schoenberg’s example connects the phrase through to the first crotchet of bar 8, probably following the text of *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Werke: Kritisch durchgesehene Gesamtausgabe*, series 14: *Quartette für Streichinstrumente* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel 1881–2), 000–00 (p. 000); in the autograph, Mozart connects the three dotted minims, and separates the final crotchet in the violin 2 part, but connects through to the end of the phrase in the viola.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.