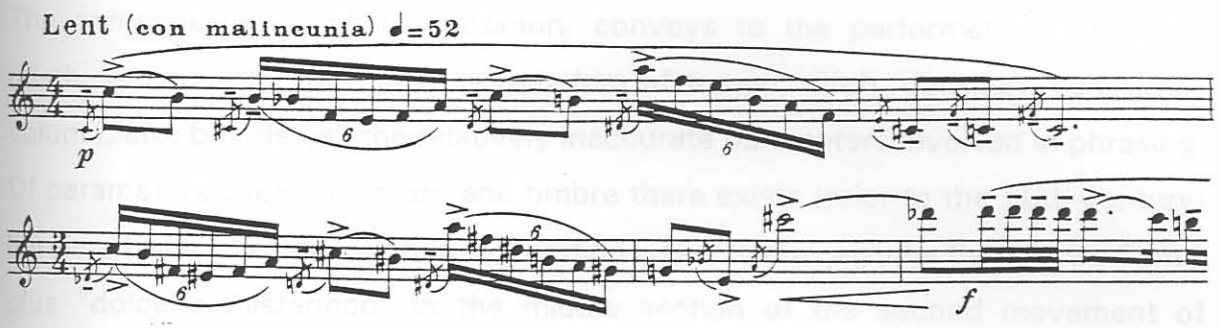
CHAPTER 4

NOTATION

4.1 The role of notation

Notation is the composer's only means of conveying his inner musical ideas to performing musicians who, in turn, actualise and make audible the composer's ideas by translating the notation into sound. But notation is an inexact device - just as written language can be. Performances of the following phrase (Ex. 4-1) with its numerous slurs and articulations can result in as many interpretations from different performers as there are possible pronunciations of a word such as "aprophemeiticelaicete" (especially if different dialects and nationalities are taken into account):

Example 4-1: Tomasi, Sonatine for solo flute, mm. 1-5



Although the Western music tradition is not essentially an oral one (in the sense that it is not entirely handed down from generation to generation by means of the spoken word or the performed sound) it nevertheless requires that both the composer and the performer share, to a greater or lesser degree, the same cultural heritage and environment. This environment includes not only music but also exposure to other art forms (like dance and sculpture) and quasi-art forms (like architecture and, even, flower arranging). In as much as the total cultural environment is a reflection of human values, ethics, morals, religious beliefs etc, and art is by definition a reflection of man's environment in all its multifarious

forms, the two, environment and art, are inseparably entwined - each influencing the other. (The differing degrees of inter-dependence and influence will not be addressed here.) The composer has to rely on the interpreter of his notation (i.e. the performing artist, the musician) having shared, again to a greater or lesser degree, a common cultural heritage and environment, or the music produced will merely be the result of the performer systematically making the notation audible, and the inner meaning of the composer's art will be either misrepresented or entirely lost.

Thus a music student is required to acquire a knowledge of, and feeling for, 'style': style in an historical context (e.g. Classical style), style in a national context (e.g. Italian as opposed to French) and the style of particular composers (e.g. Bach as opposed to Handel). This sense of style will allow the performer to fill in the notational 'gaps' - those areas where no accurate notational aids have developed, or where notation is not definitive.

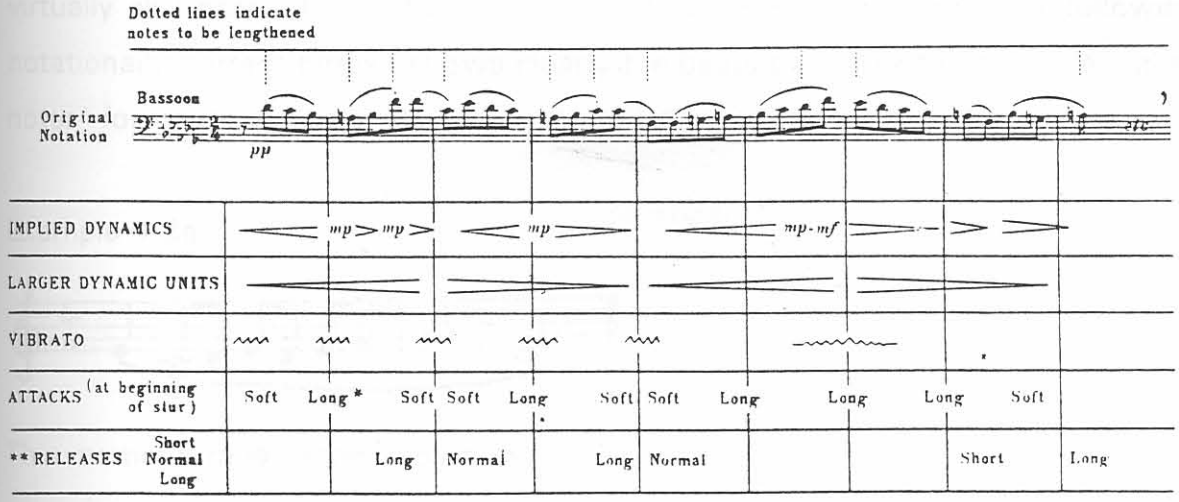
The composer, through his notation, conveys to the performer not only the relatively accurate and stable parameters of tempo, pitch, duration, contextual volume, etc, but also all the relatively inaccurate parameters involved in phrasing. Of parameters such as vibrato and timbre there exists (prior to the 20th-century) hardly a trace - besides written instructions, like "Ohne jegliche Bebung im Tone" plus "dolce e misterioso" in the middle section of the second movement of Reinecke's *Undine* Sonata. The transference of the notated musical text into audible sound requires, on the part of the performer, the acquisition not only of a certain degree of technical expertise, but also of insight into the composer's thoughts and feelings. It requires, on the part of the composer, trust that the performer has acquired (usually by being taught) these skills and insights. Nevertheless there is inevitably some form of 'gap' in this insight/trust relationship between the composer's 'style' and the performer's sense of style.

These gaps are virtually unavoidable unless the composer resorts to loading his score with copious written and/or diagrammatic instructions (as in many avant

garde scores) or provides a definitive recording of his music for all to copy. Both these solutions (neither would be foolproof) would prove inhibiting, especially for the mainstream of classical music here under discussion, and stifle the performer's role as an interpreter. Copious instructions would clutter the page beyond reason and certainly make accurate sight-reading impossible.

Weisberg (1975:137) presents the following detailed analysis of part of the bassoon solo from the second movement of the Symphony No. 4 by Tchaikovsky:

Example 4-2:



* LONG - as little space as possible between notes

** REFERS TO TYPES OF RESONANCE

It is not suggested that this notation be used by composers, although such detailed instructions would certainly contain some merit. Such instructions might help mitigate, as Pleeth (1982:74) warns, against performers indiscriminately copying other performer's interpretations:

> There is so much 'playing by hearsay' these days that a great masterpiece often ends up like a 'rumour' which is passed so much by word of mouth that it eventually loses all relation to the original truth. Sadly, in the world of performance, there is often such an unquestioned acceptance of these 'hearsay' distortions that the

players go on repeating every mannerism, every cliché without ever noticing that the composer never put it there.

The performer's musical responsibility, and here there is a large area of contentiousness, will be to add subtleties to the composer's score according to his own musical insight. This will result in an interpretation which differs from that initially intended by the composer. The added subtleties must fully complement the initial ingredients at all times.

4.2 Notational shortcomings

One can question the effectiveness and accuracy of our notational system on virtually all fronts. For instance, as Berr (1990:20) rightly avers, the following notationally correct phrase shows clearly the beats but "fails to show the eighth notes' forward momentum":

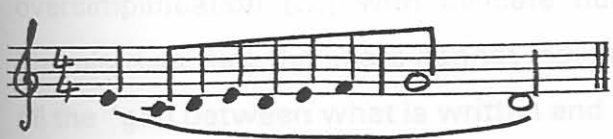
Example 4-3a:

This momentum is better shown in:

Example 4-3b:

He then suggests that the phrase and its momentum are better visually represented by:

Example 4-3c:



Harnoncourt (1982:39) sums up one of the basic difficulties of our notational system. He states that "articulation signs have remained the same for centuries, although their meaning has often changed, and radically, after 1800". To emphasise the vast differences, he likens the Baroque musical art to speaking, as opposed to the 19th-century musical art which he likens to painting. Obviously the same limited number of symbols cannot accurately notate musics based on such widely different premises.

As early as 1791 Tromlitz (1991:164) bemoaned the fact that composers expect the performer to have full knowledge of style, and do not exactly notate their intentions. Apparently the knowledge of, and feeling for, style was certainly not guaranteed, as he states that "frequently many things are spoiled because an individual does not have the correct feeling". He writes sarcastically that "it would be best and most reliable if Gentlemen Composers would put two dots in those places where they would have the short notes after the dot very short, in contrast to only one dot, and then the player would know where he was":

Maconie (1990:120), on the other hand, notes that the "imprecisions of standard notation need not be despised. They are human and therefore expressive". Although there is, then, an apparently unavoidable gap between the composer's notation and the performer's interpretation thereof, it is, he suggests, this very 'gap' that provides each new performance with the possibility of meaningful renewal - as the spark is produced in the gap in the spark-plugs of a car's engine. He is suggesting that the dynamic element of performance is made possible by acknowledging this 'gap', and allowing the conditions to provide the vital spark.

Goll-Wilson (1992a:1) writes that musical notation is "an unavoidable oversimplification [...] with delicate nuances, subtle inflections and rhythmic irregularities that the score cannot indicate". The performer's responsibility is to fill the "gap between what is written and the sound the composer intended [...] by

using insight, taste and imagination".

Cook (1990:222) states, somewhat obliquely, that notation is not "simply a technology for communicating musical sounds or ideas: from a productional point of view, musical sounds and ideas are only constituted as such by virtue of a cognition in which means of notation play a predominant role". Halbwachs (quoted in Cook 1990:222) reverses the chicken and egg position and states unequivocally that musical notation (he calls it "language") "is not some instrument invented after the fact to fix and communicate to musicians what certain among them have spontaneously imagined. On the contrary, it is this language that has created music." This concept that the medium is in control of the message is surely an intellectual (not even philosophical) card trick, with little or no reality. And it can be summarily dismissed.

At the other end of the spectrum Campbell (1991:287) states bluntly that notation is "an efficient learning device, but one to be relegated to its proper place in the teaching of an aural art". The importance here lies in the suggestion that once the notes, rhythms, etc. are learnt (memorized?), there need be no further reliance on the printed page, and the performer's own interpretative powers take over and mould the final interpretation.

To a performer the music as pure notation may perhaps be equated to water prior to being brought to the boil; he plays his part (interprets) by energising, transforming and rarefying the water to miraculously produce the more ethereal steam (music as sound). An interpretative performer knows that one cannot force music into any unnatural pattern, yet each performance is beautifully unique. Or, as Sudnow (1979:37) poetically states, "the camera does not capture a movement - it furnishes one version of what a movement can mean". The performer, then, realises (releases) *one version of the possibilities* that imprecise notation contains.

The 'gap' is unavoidably there. But this is not essentially a disadvantage, and its exploitation by the interpretative performer leads to dynamic performances of

compositions - where the performer is not a mere mechanical sound-producer and one can aptly apply the term 'interpreter' to the performer. The general, commonly-accepted notational system for Western music is sufficient for most ends to be met.

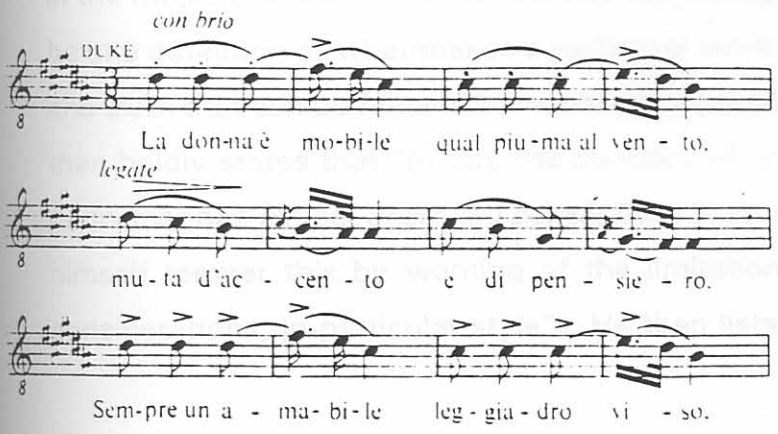
But there are areas of imprecision where this 'gap' exceeds the maximum limit, areas where the 'gap' is too large to accurately communicate the finer nuances of the composer's art to the performer. It is specifically in the area of phrasing that the largest gap exists.

So, given the inaccuracies of notation, both the performer and the composer/editor/publisher chain must play their part in minimalizing this gap.

4.3 The performer's role

Interestingly, the article on "Articulation" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Fallows et al 1980:644) discusses the following famous Verdi aria, saying that "[s]ome late 19th- and early 20th-century music is so laden with [...] articulation signs that a heroic effort would be required to interpret them precisely". The article even accuses the composer of trying to control his musicians. The reasonably complex articulations (and dynamics) may be unusual in a vocal part, but to a wind instrumentalist the notation portrays reasonably precisely the length, attack and relative strengths of the notes:

Example 4-4: Verdi, Rigoletto, "La donna è mobile"



Given the above notational imprecisions, the question arises whether or not the imprecisions are inevitably inherent in the notational system - or if not, where did they come from? Maconie (1990:120) states that "[t]he eighteenth century has left a legacy of signs designed to reintroduce a human dimension of error and ambiguity to notational objectivity". He lists grace-notes, tenuti, ritardandi and figured bass-lines as examples. Surely these are expressive elements that help performers to spark the 'gap' mentioned above?

The performing artist who 'interprets' a composer's work must inject a degree of his own spirit (experience, taste, feel, etc.) under the label of what is sometimes called "artistic licence". But how much artistic licence is the performing musician allowed before he goes *too far*? Goll-Wilson (1992a:1) warns against too little:

> Today's rote musicians, separated by centuries from experiencing early music first hand, misconstrue notation for strict norms, dies they must duplicate. This fatal misunderstanding results in a distorted picture by enthroning a rigid discipline that contradicts the very nature of spontaneous performance.

Of course, with a living composer the possibility exists of consulting with him regarding points of interpretation. As Brymer (1979:163) notes, "it is far from easy to know where to draw the line in this business of taking liberties with a composer's work. Living composers are usually most approachable in this matter, and are rarely dogmatic if there is a good reason for suggesting a change of phrasing."

Weisberg (1975:135) writes with insight that the performer "can even find things in the music that the composer did not even imagine". This he concludes "would be one definition of what makes a particular work of art valid: it contains meaning and truth that can be felt and transmitted by people other than the composer". He then boldly states that "[q]uite the contrary of 'playing what's on the page', the performer has almost *unlimited possibilities* [italics added] open to him". He does himself temper this by warning of the limitations dictated by "various musical considerations, in particular style". He then lists areas of interpretation wherein

choice may be exercised, including volume, vibrato and attack - but he does not include slurs.

There is also the question of the performer's responsibility with regard to his performance of works, whether unedited, lightly edited or heavily edited. A performer may complain about an editor having been irresponsible; but he may not, then, go out and perform his own equally (or more) irresponsibly 'edited version' - including new articulations and slurrings.

As quoted in Chapter 4.1, cellist William Pleeth (1982:74) warns against an unquestioning acceptance of the "hearsay" of well-known performers, whereby other performers "go on repeating every mannerism, every cliché, without ever noticing that the composer never put it there". These "mannerisms" and "clichés" include the addition and/or subtraction of slurs and articulations (together with parameters like tempo changes, rubato and dynamics). This is especially valid with regard to highly-respected recordings by famous performers. These can virtually become definitive performances. This is a healthy situation if the performer uses such aids to enrich his own interpretative resourses; unhealthy and limiting if slavishly copied without due consideration. A musician must expand, especially in the formative stages, his discriminatory powers. A fresh thought on phrasing as recorded by a respected performer is certainly as worthy of consideration as one that is printed.

4.4 Tradition

In the light of the fact that so-called 'tradition' is a temporary and localised (time and space) acceptance of general taste or style, must the performer bow to tradition or stand squarely on his own two feet and incorporate his own interpretative innovations? Both historical perspective and logical reasoning will show that all traditions slowly evolve, gradually change and are then either watered down or violently overthrown and replaced in time by 'new' traditions.

Dalton (1988:196) quotes Landowska as saying that "there are a thousand different ways of interpreting a piece without ever getting away from its character". This, he surmises, is "extravagant" and concludes that "we must never deviate too far from what has come to be recognized over the years as a traditional course". (He then adds Toscanini's sarcastic, yet wonderfully cryptic and perspicacious, comment that "tradition" is the last bad performance.)

4.4.1 Tradition and historical changes

Over the centuries the performer's distance from the composer's intentions has obviously increased - leading to the situation where his knowledge of, and feel for, the 'style' of a period and/or a composer has to rely more and more on hearsay. This hearsay can come down to the performer by two different means; original writings of the composers and/or performers themselves (e.g. Quantz 1752, *On Playing the Flute*) or contemporary diarists, critics and historians (e.g. Burney 1776-1789, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* Vols. 1-4). But usually the descriptions of what is right and wrong in historically correct performances (and therefore 'stylistically correct') comes to our attention through our teachers (advice during lessons) and contemporaries (concerts, recordings, etc.). This is certainly true in the especially indefinite areas of timbre and vibrato; but equally so in all areas of phrasing.

Harnoncourt (1989:108) states quite unequivocally that in the 18th-century "articulation on an instrument was basically the responsibility of the interpreter. The composer had to mark only those passages in which he expressly desired an execution which deviated from tradition, from the established norm." And Solum (1992:127) corroborates this by describing this era as a "partnership" between player and composer as far as dynamics and articulations (and realising the figured bass) were concerned. Solum quotes Robert Donington as having written: "The baroque habit was few expression marks, but plenty of expression".

As Urtext editions (see Chapter 4.7) portray only what the composers wrote (i.e.

without extra hints as to the contemporary phrasing expectations, or modern conceptions thereof) the modern performer, having been brainwashed by the scientific and academic world into believing that the written word (notes) is necessarily more exact than some vague tradition or even vaguer 'feeling', has "grown accustomed to the error of omitting the slurs once taken for granted" (Harnoncourt 1989:109). For example Harnoncourt avers that the following slurs would have been automatically added by contemporary performers to bring out the natural patterns of the (Mozart's) music:

Example 4-5: Mozart, Symphony No. 35 K. 385, IV:20-21

The relationship between the composer and performer was (and still is) to a large degree based on trust. As Schocker says (in Goll-Wilson 1990:12):

> Composers and performers worked closely together during the baroque period; the composers trusted the performers to add the details of articulation, embellishment and even cadenzas, all of which were in the domain of the performer. The composer would not think of interfering. The performers were highly skilled and trusted by the composers.

Historically, Baroque composers did not often add anything except the occasional slur and/or dot above the written note; but with the dawning of the Classical era this situation began to change. As Harnoncourt (1989:110-1) elaborates:

> [...] it would be musically silly to believe that in the second half of the 18th century a constant rattling of eighth and sixteenth notes took the place of the Baroque "sewing machine rhythm", which we fortunately now realise to be an absurd notion because of our knowledge of the old principles of articulation. The old principles were not overthrown abruptly, as many treatises show clearly enough, but rather were gradually replaced as composers increasingly wrote out precisely what they wanted [...]. The more autobiographically (ie. drawing inspiration from his own life) a composer wrote, the more precisely he determined the interpretation and the further he removed himself from tradition.

Does Harnoncourt's reference to "old principles" imply that with the passing of time these principles of articulation inevitably became invalid? Or were they wrong in the first place? Or did the Classical composers deviate not only from tradition but also from some 'truth', in superseding the "old principles"? Or do traditions inevitably and inexorably change merely because time has marched on? Are the principles immutable and merely change clothing? Or do principles actually change from era to era? Perhaps it is merely the injudicious use of the word "principles" that causes this confusion? Perhaps the words 'expectations' or 'taste' should be substituted?

It is Harnoncourt's last sentence which provides the essential clue to circumventing these questions. The change, for whatever reason, from an objective art to a more subjective art (he calls it "autobiographical" writing) necessarily distanced composers from old traditions. It is certainly not simply that composer's "increasingly wrote out precisely what they wanted". The new musical style (Classical) necessitated new methods of interpretation - including different uses of articulation and slurring - *but using the same notational symbols*.

Harnoncourt (1989:111) relates that Beethoven and Schubert wrote out practically everything in the way of phrasing that they wanted, and implores a return, in the performing of Classical music, to "stylistic" articulation and slurring. As he says (1989:112) "we must reacquire this elementary traditional knowledge". But why? He must be implying that modern standards and taste are defective. Is it impossible to reconcile our late 20th-century position, with its own cultural heritage and environment, with that of the, in this case, late 18th-century? Is a return to 18th-century articulation and slurring advisable or necessary - or even possible?

Style, tradition, taste and standards certainly change from era to era, but writers and critics may not always be correct in blaming only the performer for an unstylistic or less than meaningful performance.

4.5 The composer's responsibility

William Primrose, the famous viola player, discusses (Dalton 1988:197) the relationship between himself and the composer Sir William Walton in connection with the latter's Viola Concerto. Primrose relates how he himself "contrived to rewrite some passages [...] not without full approval of the composer - or so it seemed to me". Primrose's revisions included octave transpositions and rewriting passages - including articulation and slurring. He thenceforth, for the next thirty-five years, not only gave many performances of the same work with these 'revisions' - some even under the composer's baton or with the composer in attendance - but also made recordings of the work.

Apparently Primrose later had occasion to peruse a newly-published edition of the work and noted that not one of the supposedly sanctioned 'revisions' that he had incorporated for the past thirty five years had been included. Primrose later learned that the composer had told a certain young performer that he would prefer the artist to play what was written - i.e. the original. One wonders what would have happened if Primrose had been asked to edit a version for publication. Surely then the seal would have been set and a 'tradition' established by means of Primrose's (then) definitive recording plus the printed edition? How often does this actually occur?

In this particular case the composer's attitude would appear ambiguous; but other factors may have influenced the scenario.

4.5.1 Understanding instruments

Clarinettist Jack Brymer (1979:162) calls the interpretation of a composer's phrasings a "vexed question". Having played certain works, each under the direction of that work's composer, he is led to conclude that "what they want may not be very similar to what [the performer] can see in the part". He suggests that this may come about because the composer of woodwind music has "phrased

subconsciously in the manner of a string-melody to accommodate bowing and other aspects of string technique".

Most composers usually have a working knowledge of a keyboard instrument and/or a string instrument, are probably able to sing a musical phrase in an acceptable fashion, but very seldom have much experience of a wind instrument. Their feel for writing for wind instruments, and hence their feel for wind phrasing, must necessarily be coloured by their aforementioned practical experience. George (1993:10), in an article on the need to revise Chaminade's Concertino for Flute and Orchestra, states that "like other fine pianist/composers, [she] was probably not fully aware of the resulting expressive nuances that slurs and articulations produce on other instruments".

4.5.2 Deeper insight - contemporary composers

This may have been the case in previous eras; but do contemporary composers have greater insight, and treat their responsibility differently from those of old? Apparently some do.

Composer Michael Daugherty writes about how he worked together with flutists while writing his *Mxyzptlk* for two flutes and chamber orchestra (Debost 1992:14):

> This was the first work I wrote using instrumentalists so carefully, and I've continued this method for subsequent pieces, bringing in players to read through the parts. This is something most composition teachers don't talk about; composers generally do not know instruments very well. Each instrument has its own characteristics to learn, and a player may spend a lifetime learning the flute. A composer cannot spend a lifetime learning each instrument, but should spend a considerable time on each. I took a six-month crash course on flute to let me learn how players think and work with fingerings, for example. Many composers don't write idiomatically. As a composition student I often heard that doing so would make music sound academic, but this is not the case.

Presuming the "crash course" to be effective and stimulating, and that it does not

lead to the situation where the composer thus thinks he 'knows it all'; presuming that the advice given to the composer by the players while "reading through the parts" is sound, then this would appear to be closest to the ideal player/composer situation - for example Chopin or Paganini both composing and playing their own works.

4.5.3 The time factor

Situations undoubtedly arise where, for whatever reason, the composer imprecisely notates his intentions. One needs only to study for a short while some pages of manuscript by Handel, Bach or Beethoven to realise that publishers and/or editors are sometimes left in a dilemma as to the composer's exact intentions. For example, as Harnoncourt relates (1989:112), "a hastily written dot may look like a vertical line".

On the other hand, may not a composer, in the moment of inspiration, be excused from producing a totally accurate, functional document? There may not be time (nor, perhaps, the motivation) to retrace every step and nuance to check for mistakes and ambiguities. Equally, the composer may not realise that any problems could arise; knowing one's own intentions, one can always read one's own writing.

Further, as Dalley (in Blum 1986:62) puts it, "when composers write in the white heat of inspiration, they don't always foresee the problems of performance".

Interrogating the Baroque composer's methods of notation Harnoncourt (1989:112) relates the following:

> Finely drawn vertical lines usually have a different meaning [to] powerful lines written with a splayed quill pen. The quill portrays the emotion behind the writing more precisely than a printed edition can. Most printed editions ignore the dash or line and use dots exclusively.

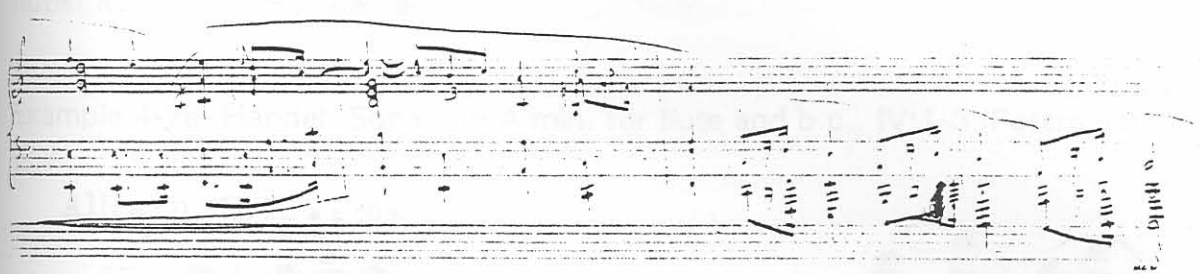
This is an interesting point, that further bears out the problems of publishers and their printed editions.

But the chain involved in publishing music can be complex. Editors, arrangers and publishers are all in a position to revise the score received from the composer, and 'correct' any mistakes or ambiguities wherever they occur.

4.6 The editor's responsibility

Basically an editor (and hence publisher) must print, as clearly and accurately as possible, the composer's intentions. (The position is not quite the same as in the case of book publishing where the editor is often expected to suggest revisions/changes/cuts to the author.) The music editor is dependent upon receiving from the composer his intentions in as unambiguous a form as possible, i.e. they must be both legible and complete. As mentioned in Chapter 4.5, this is certainly not always the case, as the following hand-written score attests:

Example 4-6: Chopin, Fantaisie in F minor Op. 49, mm. 9-12



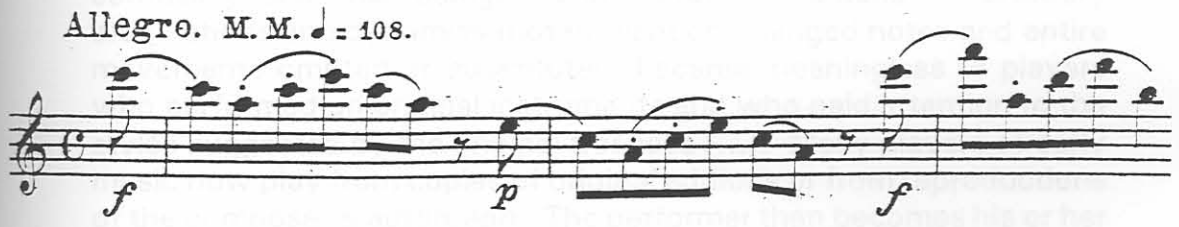
Should there be any ambiguities then the editor should, where possible, clarify these with the composer before printing. This close co-operation is the ideal scenario, but for reprintings of music by deceased composers this is obviously not possible. Here one can equate the situation to a reprinting of a Dickens novel. A modern editor, considering there to be too much verbiage, cannot request the author's authority to make deletions and must, hence, reprint exactly Dickens' text. 'Abridged', 'condensed', or 'expurgated' editions certainly exist, but they must be described as such; and they are not considered to be an improvement on the writer's artistic product, merely an attempt to make the novel more accessible to

the modern reader. It is a brave musicologist or conductor who abridges, condenses or expurgates a Beethoven symphony or Verdi opera.

The publishers and/or editors should be responsible for checking every ambiguity with either the composer, the autograph score, an earlier Urtext edition, or the earliest and/or most scholarly (meaning as objectively accurate as possible) source available before committing the finished product to print. Ideally this should be the case. How, then, is it possible that heinous atrocities are perpetrated upon a composer's music, and then published under his name, with merely the addition, in small print, "Edited by A. Smith"?

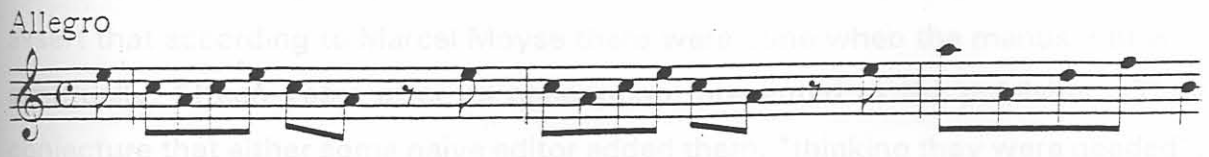
Discussing what he calls "clean" editions of early music Solum (1992:127) says that many of today's readily-available editions are "so unscholarly, so arbitrarily edited with the personal interpretive markings of the editor, that it is impossible to ascertain what the composer might have originally written." A gross example would be the following edition of a Handel Sonata as edited by the 19th-century flutist Maximilian Schwedler:

Example 4-7a: Handel, Sonata in A min. for flute and b.c., IV:1-3 (Peters edition)



Compare this to what Handel actually wrote:

Example 4-7b: ditto (Urtext edition)



In the absence of articulations, slurs and breathing places in Handel's manuscript, the publishers obviously approached a renowned practising performer to add these, ostensibly to assist the buyers of the publication who presumably require expert assistance. The responsibility for the, in this case, octave transpositions of passages, additions of inappropriate cadenzas and general travesty of phrasing, lies at the feet of both the performer/editor Mr Schwedler and the publishers. The editor should have shown at least some respect for, and knowledge of, historical style; and the publishers should have shown both circumspection in whom they approached for this important task, and used integrity as to whether or not they accepted the recommendations of their chosen 'authority'. Maximilian Schwedler has transposed Handel's music into a Romantic setting, substituting Romantic 'principles' for Baroque 'principles'. Surely one cannot simply publish this edited version under the composer's name and purport that it is what the composer intended? It appears that in this case there was a blind acceptance on the part of the publishers of Mr Schwedler's additions and changes.

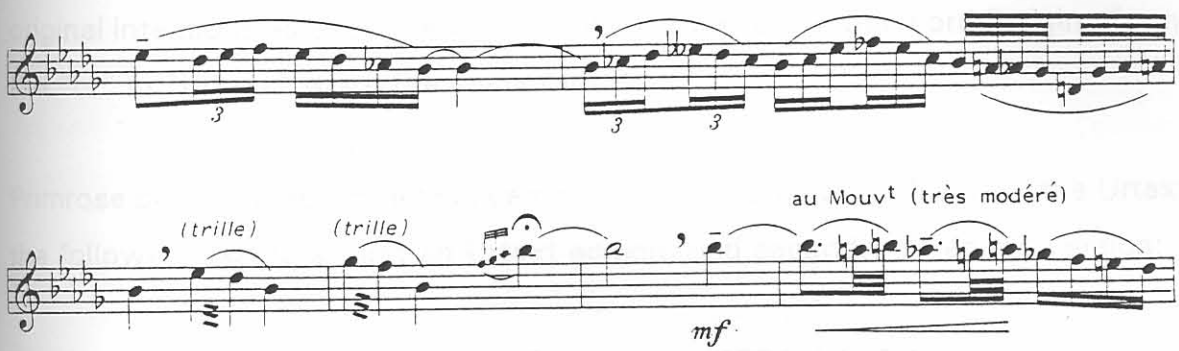
John Solum (1992:9) puts forward the performer's perspective well:

> Most editions of music published in the first half of the twentieth century were quickly recognized by early-music players as being confusing and misleading. The editorial additions of arbitrary articulations and dynamics (not to mention changed notes and entire movements omitted or substituted) became meaningless to players who performed on original instruments and who paid attention to the styles suggested by the original treatises [...]. Many players of early music now play from copies of original editions or from reproductions of the composer's autograph. The performer then becomes his or her own 'editor', readily making the many decisions that are necessary to prepare a performance.

The tampering with the composer's intentions during editing can involve many parameters. For instance it is often said that the much-loved and oft-played *Syrinx* by Debussy was originally written without bar lines. Ernst and Green (1991a:15) assert that according to Marcel Moyse there were none when the manuscript was eventually, fifteen years after its conception, presented to the publisher. They conjecture that either some naive editor added them, "thinking they were needed",

or Fleury or Moyse (the flutists first associated with the work) had added them at some time. The piece was, and still is, printed in triple metre, whereas it is full of rhythmic ambiguities that could much better be served by a fantasie-like approach. This would be visually enhanced by omitting the time-signature and bar lines. It would also free the interpretative spirit of the performer from the stricture placed upon it by some naive editor.

Example 4-8: Debussy, Syrinx, mm. 21-26



This may be an extreme case, but Primrose makes the following, rather damning statement (Dalton 1988:194):

> I have long had a healthy disdain for some editors whose names one sees over and over on front pages of editions, usually by German publishers who flourished before World War II [...]. Whenever a group of students come to me with string quartet parts edited by so-and-so, I say, 'Suspect everything you see.' This for a simple reason: in many instances, if an editor is asked by a publisher to make an edition of a standard work, he has to do something different from a previous editor, or he can't claim copyright.

Not all editors, whether musicologists or performers, are of this inclination, and many these days desperately try to provide accurate publications, whether of the Urtext variety or of the 'performing editions' variety. Nevertheless the trend continues, partly due to the public's gullibility in these matters, for publishers to try to get a big name on their publications. It is a sad fact that a publication with the announcement "A James Galway Edition" will sell better than one edited by A. Smith. It is a little-known fact that James Galway may have had nothing to do

with the editing; which may have actually been done by A. Smith after all. This particular aspect is not necessarily a bad thing, for A. Smith may be equally adept at introducing musically meaningful phrasing into the manuscript as any famous name - and he may even be more assiduous in his task.

4.7 Urtext

An Urtext edition is quite simply a publisher's attempt to reproduce the composer's original intentions as accurately as possible. (The "or" in the word "original", and the "ur" in "Urtext" share the same root.)

Primrose presents, as a practical demonstration of the need to refer to the Urtext, the following example, first an Urtext edition, and secondly an edited version:

Example 4-9a: Mozart, Symphonie Concertante K364, I:138-140 (Urtext edition)

Example 4-9b: Mozart, Symphonie Concertante K364, I:138-140 (Peters edition)

The differences here exist on four levels: not only is the Urtext written for scordatura viola, but the phrasing is 'edited' and dynamics are added in the Peters edition. Primrose (Dalton 1988:195) advises students to "[g]o to the Urtext! You don't have to abide exactly by what it shows, but it is your book of reference."

These days, the Urtext edition of (principally) Baroque and Classical works are readily available and are guaranteed better sales than was the case a few years

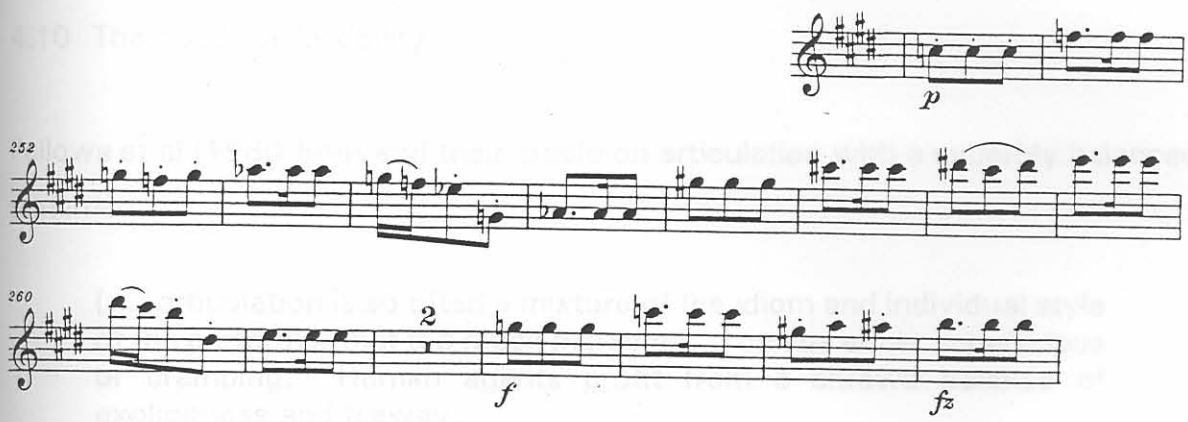
ago. Nevertheless certain contemporary editors such as Harnoncourt or, in the flute world, Wye have achieved such an aura of respectability that their editions, which include well-researched editings of articulations and slurrings, are presumed to be reasonable facsimiles of the performing practices of previous eras. This situation is a definite advance on previous more subjective editions - but they are "edited" nonetheless.

4.8 Who knows best?

Rothstein (1989:11) accuses 19th-century editors of using slurs to indicate phrases (phrase-slurs), thereby obliterating the composer's legato slurs, "apparently reasoning that they, the editors, understood musical notation better than did the composers".

In an article on Schubert's *Trockne Blumen* variations Barcellona (1991:11) discusses the following passage in Variation 6:

Example 4-10: Schubert, Introduktion und Variationen über ein Thema Op.160, mm. 250-267



Barcellona enumerates the inconsistencies in the staccato marking in both the flute and piano parts. "Many argue that Schubert intended the entire section to be staccato, and editions have been published correcting this presumably obvious mistake (Bärenreiter 1970). If this was Schubert's oversight, however, why were staccato marks used intermittently?" He argues that the inconsistencies were

intended by Schubert, in order to portray an appropriate "erratic and inconsistent feel". In this particular case there can be no definitive answer and each performing artist must decide for himself: Did Schubert intend an erratic feel - or did he intend a consistent staccato character? If, instead, some editor decides, however well-intentioned, then the performer's interpretative potential is thereby limited.

4.9 Summary: the respective roles of composer, editor and performer

The composer must make his intentions clear through precise use of legible notation. The editor must advise the performer, who probably does not possess the editor's knowledge and insight, and who probably does not have access to historical manuscripts and documents, on the composer's probable intentions *where these are not entirely clear*, but leave the originally notated intentions in place where these are unambiguous. Finally, the performer must attempt to understand the composer's intentions through attaining a sense of, and feel for, style, following the composer's and editor's suggestions (where applicable) and then translating these intentions, using his interpretational insight, into meaningful sound.

4.10 The need for flexibility

Fallows et al (1980:644) end their article on articulation with a superbly balanced statement:

> [...] articulation is so often a mixture of the idiom and individual style of the performer that too much marking [...] can be either superfluous or cramping. Human agents profit from a shrewd balance of explicitness and leeway.

This is equally true of slurring. But composers, most editors, teachers, and the imprecise shackles of tradition, style and taste virtually disallow the performing wind player any leeway with regard to slurring. The rule that printed slurs are to have their first notes tongued and all further notes under the slur must be played legato often cramps the performer's interpretation.

Orlando (1992:26-28), a clarinettist, adds to the argument for more freedom for the performer, by questioning not only the editor's, but also the composer's knowledge of the peculiarities of various instruments. A lack of insight necessarily limits their ability to write the most suitable phrasing for each instrument. He argues for freeing the performer "to choose the forms of articulation which best suit the music, rather than feeling forced to follow literally the markings of the printed edition made by this or that editor, or even (occasionally) by the composer, who often may not have been aware of the difficulties peculiar to [that instrument]."

Weisberg (1975:98) makes the sweeping statement that "[m]ost great composers of the past were also practical musicians who were able to perform the works they wrote". This is certainly not true outside the field of keyboard and, to a lesser extent, string works. Composers certainly did on occasion turn to professional performers for advice, but one wonders to what extent phrasing was addressed. Mainwaring, a contemporary of Handel (Neubauer 1986:72), speaking of Handel's vocal works, accused him of missing the meaning of a sentence by paying too much attention to particular words (in his word painting and melismatic passages). In instrumental works one sometimes gets the feeling that composers do the exact opposite, by paying too much attention to the sentence (i.e. the phrase) and not enough to particular words.

If this is the case - and it is contended that it is - then the responsibilities of the performer intrinsically demand that he rectify the inexactness and 'mistakes' made by editors and composers due to their limited intimate knowledge of the peculiarities of wind-playing. The case for more leeway with regard to phrasing, and hence less cramping of the human agent (i.e. the performer) in his musical quest for meaningful performances will be laid down and explored in the following chapters. Brymer carefully states (1979:163), regarding the possibility of altering the composer's written phrasings, that the intention is to try to "see behind the notes to the mind of the composer - not to be sensational in one's alteration of his intentions, but rather to be more true to his feelings".

If the performer discriminates thus, there will be no need to speak of authentic or Urtext or researched phrasing, he will be 'feeling' or 'sensing' that which is most appropriate and meaningful.