

## CHAPTER 11

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 11.1 Conclusions

The meaningful performance of music, especially in the subtle areas of interpretation, demands that the performer understand the precise implication of every note, motive, sub-phrase and phrase. Each note must be played not merely with good tone and articulation, but with due regard for its place in the harmonic structure and its contribution to the overall form. The amount of tension or release given to it, the dynamic, the type of attack, the tonecolour, etc, must always be contextual: contextual in the sense that individual notes are combined to build motives or sub-phrases, which in turn form melodies or phrases. The performer's interpretation of, or manner of shaping, a phrase is called 'phrasing'. This term, together with ten others critical to a detailed discussion of these subtle areas of interpretation, has been defined in Chapter 3.

## 11.1.1 Notation

The author has attempted to show that a performer's own sense of phrasing is often at odds with the printed indications. These include written indications (like *dolce*, *cantabile*), dynamics, articulations and, most critically, slurs. In these areas music notation is an imprecise communication method.

Imprecise notation has the advantage of allowing the performer enough leeway to sculpt his own individual interpretations. The disadvantage occurs when composers, editors and/or arrangers confuse matters by incorrectly notating their intentions, being inconsistent, or actually writing or printing mistakes. It is mainly in the area of slurs that problems arise.

### 11.1.2 Printed music - the ideal situation

While the performer realises (releases) one version of the possibilities that imprecise notation contains, the composer should initially make his intentions as clear as possible - through as precise a use of legible notation as possible. The editor should advise the performer, who probably does not possess the editor's knowledge and insight, and who probably does not have access to original scores and historical manuscripts and documents, on the composer's intention *where these are not entirely clear*. But the editor should leave the originally notated intentions where these are unambiguous.

The performer should attempt to understand the composer's intentions through attaining a practical knowledge of style. He should follow the composer's and editor's suggestions (where applicable) and then translate these intentions, using his interpretational insight, into meaningful sound.

### 11.1.3 Printed music - the actual situation

The inexactitudes of notation in respect of the subtle areas of interpretation is compounded, the author has contended, by composers often not using the standard notational system precisely enough. This is usually on account of composers' limited intimate knowledge of the peculiarities of wind instruments and wind playing. The situation is further exacerbated by editors not always advising performers with due insight. This latter is inexcusable when, as usually happens, the editor is actually a performer himself.

### 11.1.4 The performer's role

As has been demonstrated by the results of the test sent out to twenty performing/teaching wind players (see Chapter 6) it is not necessarily always the composer or editor who knows best. An expert on a wind instrument who is also a sensitive musician can, it has been shown, phrase a piece of music better than

most composers and editors with their limited knowledge. Performers seem to be able to sense the character of the music, as it is being played; they instinctively feel the need to both delineate intrinsic note groupings and provide phrases with additional impulses by means of phrasing techniques. Many composers and editors too often phrase, it seems, according to visual groupings.

Wind performers, as the results of the test show, tend to use more and shorter slurs than composers and editors. Also, they do not appear to be in favour of phrase-slurs.

It is contended that the responsibilities of the performer intrinsically demand that he both rectify the inexactitudes, ambiguities and mistakes made by editors and composers due to their limited knowledge of the peculiarities of wind-playing, and utilize more meaningful phrasing.

#### 11.1.5 Slurs

Slurs are notational devices used by composers to signify that the notes delineated by each slur should be played as a single group; slurs thus help suggest the various characters inherent in the music.

Slurs are omnipresent and, theoretically, utterly precise in their intention. To a wind player a slur over a group of notes indicates that the first note is to be articulated in some way and the rest of the notes played legato within the outblown airstream. To this rule is added the rider that no note under a slur is articulated.

But opposing this rider are a number of notational symbols which suggest otherwise. Thus the concept of tonguing-under-a-slur exists - with notes being articulated within the basic legato line (see Chapter 7.1.4). By its very nature this is an imprecise concept which is both misunderstood and ambiguously notated. The author has contended that many composers tend to use the notation of

tongued-under-a-slur in cases where there is no precise way of notating exactly what they mentally hear. This presents the performer with many interpretational dilemmas; the performer having to carefully decide how to perform these notes, wherever they occur, using a rich palette of articulations.

The relatively precise nature of normal slurs is completely overthrown when phrase-slurs (see Chapter 3.2.11) are added. Some composers and editors use phrase-slurs to indicate the extent of a phrase; some to show the sub-phrases; and some to show that the notes are not to be articulated (tongued) separately (thus breaking the airstream), but articulated within the continuously outblown airstream.

When slurs and phrase-slurs are combined, the performer needs to continually make decisions regarding which notes to articulate and how hard to articulate them.

Very often phrase-slurs, and sometimes slurs, are written over natural breathing places. Here the musical meaning must prevail and the slur or phrase-slur broken in order to accommodate a natural-sounding breath. Suggestions on where and how to breathe are provided in Chapter 7.3.

#### 11.1.6 Slur patterns

Composers should always have a reason for notating a slur. In writing for wind instruments, slur patterns very often help to bring out the various motives, two-part lines, interpolations and accompaniment figures in an otherwise single strand of sound. Discovering these intrinsic elements and slurring accordingly can often, if judiciously applied, improve the character and general interpretation of over-slurred music. Nevertheless, it is critically important to fully understand the phrase itself, and its context in the larger structure, before determining the most meaningful patterns of slurs.

Slurs should never be considered as separate entities to be performed either just

because they are written or just because they are 'stylistic'. The music itself can reveal to a performer its intrinsic patterns - either through investigation and analysis, or through conscious listening in practice and performance - and guide him as to the best phrasing to employ. This aspect is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Dynamics and slur patterns often exist in a symbiotic relationship, where the one influences the other. Thus, in searching for the best slur patterns, the printed, or even the implied, dynamics can provide the performer with important clues. To this end, the printed dynamics can sometimes be used to suggest better slurring than that printed - this must, at the very least, be taken under consideration in developing one's interpretation of a phrase.

The most musically effective manner of phrasing should usually be sought for, but the author suggests that teachers actively encourage beginner wind instrumentalists who have technical difficulties, to utilize technically easier phrasing where it enhances their performance. No plea is being made in this dissertation for leniency with regard to sloppy phrasing or lack of technical ability, but this approach will in many cases ease the technical difficulty of over-slurred (or, in some cases, under-slurred) passages; this will allow the performer, in turn, to most fully concentrate his attention on interpretative matters.

#### 11.1.7 In search of deeper insight

The printed word is rendered intelligible in speech (especially the meaningful recitation of poetry) through the speaker's utilization of inflection, nuance, pronunciation, pause and volume. Similarly in music, groups of notes are rendered 'intelligible' and meaningful through the performer's use of inflection (including tonecolour and vibrato - neither being discussed here), articulation, slur patterns, rubato and dynamics, while the notes are being joined up to make phrases.

In the search for the most meaningful way of phrasing a particular passage,

music's analogies with language can often be effectively explored (see Chapter 8). A consideration of the link between both the written and the spoken word and musical performance can reveal deeper insight as regards the structure of a phrase and the phrasing thereof.

Besides considering vocal analogies, all instrumentalists can learn from the strengths and tendencies of other instruments. A sense of bowing patterns and intensities can add to a wind player's interpretative palette, by suggesting how phrases, by means of slurs and articulations, can be given more meaningful direction. Especially, the kinaesthetic 'feel' of actually bowing a phrase can lead to it being given the right impetus.

#### 11.1.8 Historical perspective

A knowledge of the history of performance practice can provide important insight and should be acquired, through study, by all serious students and performers. Tendencies of any single era, if based on the music's intrinsic patterns, will very likely be relevant, and hence applicable, in music of other eras as well. To this end the author has provided a list of slurring tendencies from the Baroque and Classical periods (see Chapter 10.3.1).

#### 11.2 Recommendations

Printed slurs for wind instruments are often inconsistent, ambiguous and/or inaccurate; as such they can hinder a performer's inherent feel for phrasing if slavishly followed.

After years of learning, practising, listening and performing, performers are in a position to take decisions on phrasing matters in order to produce meaningful interpretations. Especially, slurs need to be, and indeed can be, chosen or re-evaluated by performers using their interpretative insight gained over the years.

Performers are encouraged, and indeed urged, to turn to the music itself, as a sounding art, with both intelligence and musical sensitivity whenever any discrepancy, inconsistency or ambiguity arises on the printed page. They are encouraged to both consider the phrasing (especially slurring) in the light of their musical knowledge and to sense the phrasing according to their musical impulse: that musical impulse which impelled each to become a practising musician, and which sustains each in the art of interpretation. The art of interpretation is thus enriched and refined by meaningful phrasing.

Appendix A2: Original slurs, as published

Appendix A3: With slurs, articulations and accents. Places as added by the testees. Only the most useful of the testees' patterns have been included.