

Pedagogies of Performance: The Leipzig Conservatory and the Production of *Werktreue*

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The rise of *Werktreue* as a discourse and practice of music performance remains hotly debated in the history and historiography of nineteenth-century music.¹ Musicologists tend to agree that *Werktreue* developed its normative power alongside other well-studied practices such as silent listening and the development of musical

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¹ Borrowing from Lydia Goehr's succinct phrasing, I define *Werktreue* in this article as the presupposition that "performances and their performers [are] respectively subservient to works and their composers," and that "to be true to a work is to be true to its score." Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 231.

canons.² But it is now abundantly clear that this model of performance rose in a piecemeal rather than revolutionary fashion. Analyzing its beginnings around the turn of the nineteenth century, Mary Hunter has shown that aesthetic theorists, musicians, music critics, and music pedagogues subjected *Werktreue* to significant contestation.³ Further, both Kenneth Hamilton and Jim Samson have documented the coexistence of varying principles and styles of performance among elite classical musicians well into the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁴ These pluralities visible in the historical record point toward multiple, overlapping chronologies rather than a sudden transformation. And yet, even if music historians now view *Werktreue* as arising out of long-standing struggles within the field of classical music, the fact remains that *Werktreue* has functioned as a “dominant paradigm for performance” for well over a century.⁵

This article explores how we can account for the continued resonance of *Werktreue*. It addresses this question not by relying on notions of historical inertia presumed to accompany conservative ideologies of tradition, but by approaching it from a pedagogical perspective. *Werktreue*, I argue, owes its prominence to a historically specific educational regime in which performing musicians learned their expertise: an ensemble of musical skills, sensibilities, and knowledge. By employing the term “regime,” I gesture toward Michel Foucault’s pedagogically resonant description of what comprises a “regime of practices”: “programmes of conduct which have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done . . . and codifying effects regarding what is to be known.”⁶ Attending to the transmission of *Werktreue* as a form of musical expertise also carries with it a certain historiographical stance, foregrounding the pedagogies responsible for producing this expertise as sites of historical inquiry. As historians of science such as Andrew

² For authoritative studies on the development of silent listening and other canonical practices in European concert life, see, respectively, James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³ Mary Hunter, “‘To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer’: The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58 (2005): 357–98.

⁴ Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Jim Samson, *Virtuosity and the Musical Work: The Transcendental Studies of Liszt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵ Karen Leistra-Jones, “Staging Authenticity: Joachim, Brahms, and the Politics of *Werktreue* Performance,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66 (2013): 397–436, at 399.

⁶ Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 73–86, at 75.

Warwick have demonstrated, changes in the pedagogical makeup of an expert field can, under the right circumstances, generate much broader shifts in that field as a whole.⁷ Pedagogy, in other words, can function as “a powerful means of historical change in its own right,” not least because of the “profound relationship between the history of training and the level and scale of agreement achievable in a technical discipline.”⁸ Given the remarkable growth of music conservatories during the nineteenth century, ones quite distinct from earlier Italian models of institutionalized musical training, the impact of these institutions on the wider development of musical expertise might well give music historians serious cause for reflection.

Regarding shifting cultures of musical performance, some scholars have already perceived the more or less simultaneous ascension of *Werktreue* and music conservatories, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as far from mere historical coincidence. Hunter, for example, writes pithily that “*pedagogical structures*” disseminated these “attitudes and practices” to musicians, generation after generation.⁹ Useful as this formulation is, it nevertheless stops short of illuminating both what these “pedagogical structures” were and the kinds of musical expertise they produced. To illustrate what was transmitted and how, this article provides a detailed analysis of styles of training instituted at the Leipzig conservatory during the nineteenth century after its founding in 1843. Focusing especially on performance and music theory—two dominant subjects of conservatory pedagogy, then as now—I draw from a variety of archival and primary sources to assess a set of musical pedagogies before they had gained such widespread, tacit acceptance.

Leipzig and the Conservatory as Center of Practical Training

From the perspective of a longer history of institutionalized training in classical music, the Leipzig conservatory undoubtedly consolidated shifts away from the pedagogical models established in the Italian *conservatorio*, and toward the development and international ascendance of a different conservatory structure first crystallized at the Paris Conservatoire in

⁷ Andrew Warwick, *Masters of Theory: Cambridge and the Rise of Mathematical Physics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), esp. chap. 1, “Writing a Pedagogical History of Mathematical Physics.”

⁸ Andrew Warwick and David Kaiser, “Conclusion: Kuhn, Foucault, and the Power of Pedagogy,” in *Pedagogy and the Practice of Science: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. David Kaiser (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 393–410, at 403.

⁹ Hunter, “The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” 391. Emphasis in original.

the 1790s.¹⁰ As Douglas Bomberger, Yvonne Wasserloos, and others have noted, Leipzig's status as the first German conservatory, as well as its large intake of international students, helped catalyze the rapid spread of similar conservatories and models of training in musical performance throughout much of Europe and the United States.¹¹

For purposes of historical contrast with earlier pedagogical models, Robert Gjerdingen's work on the galant style is especially suggestive, not least because of his analogous explorations of the tight-knit relations between distinct styles of music pedagogy and particular kinds of musicking.¹² As he shows in his discussion of the *partimenti* exercises set for students at the Neapolitan *conservatorio* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this kind of music education did not easily distinguish between performance, composition, and improvisation.¹³ Conversely, the Paris Conservatoire's curricula strictly partitioned these subjects (or, in the case of improvisation, largely eschewed it), with other conservatories subsequently following suit. Indeed, the separation of performance and composition as abstracted forms of musical production is an essential precondition of *Werktreue*. We will return later to more specific differences between these models of music education, but for now it suffices to emphasize, along with Gjerdingen, that galant "musical behaviors" are barely comprehensible when assessed from the standpoint of later composer- and work-centered musical cultures—and vice versa.¹⁴ This historical incommensurability, as Gjerdingen's focus on the Italian *conservatorio* implies, resulted in no small part from transformations in the pedagogies practiced at European conservatories, starting with the Paris Conservatoire in the 1790s and continuing throughout the nineteenth century.

Warwick and David Kaiser's reformulation of Thomas Kuhn's now-classic notion of incommensurable forms of "normal-scientific activity"

¹⁰ For an overview of the Paris Conservatoire's early history and the development of its curriculum, see Cynthia Marie Gessele, "The French National Conservatory and Musical Pedagogy," chap. 5 in "The Institutionalization of Music Theory in France: 1764–1802" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1989).

¹¹ Elam Douglas Bomberger, "The German Musical Training of American Students, 1850–1900" (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1991); and Yvonne Wasserloos, *Das Leipziger Konservatorium der Musik im 19. Jahrhundert: Anziehungs- und Ausstrahlungskraft eines musikpädagogischen Modells auf das internationale Musikleben* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2004).

¹² For Gjerdingen, pedagogies practiced at the Neapolitan conservatories instituted both "a code of conduct" and "a carefully taught set of musical behaviors." See Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

¹³ Robert Gjerdingen, "Partimenti Written to Impart a Knowledge of Counterpoint and Composition," in *Partimento and Continuo Playing in Theory and in Practice*, ed. Dirk Moelants and Kathleen Snyers (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 43–70.

¹⁴ Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, esp. 16–19.

has particular resonances here.¹⁵ In their view, two of Kuhn's interventions within the history and philosophy of science can profitably contribute to pedagogical understandings of scientific practice. First is Kuhn's suggestion that science functions primarily as a craft rather than an organized collection of formal propositions. From this perspective, scientific fields are held together not only by the circulation of abstract knowledge, but also by a set of learned technical skills through which that knowledge is acquired, internalized, and subsequently developed—what Kuhn called a “disciplinary matrix.” Second is Kuhn's concept of “normal science,” which highlighted that most scientists are not involved with inventing or testing major new theories, but rather with “expanding the explanatory power of those theories enshrined in the current paradigm or disciplinary matrix.”¹⁶ Revolutions in scientific practice occur only when disciplinary paradigms, and the craft-like knowledge that undergirds their circulation, shift irrevocably. It is in this sense that Kuhn speaks of the incommensurability of distinct forms of normal science.

Despite recognizing the importance of Kuhn's work, Warwick and Kaiser assert that his formulation of how normal science is generated and sustained was far too thin. Whereas Kuhn limited his analysis primarily to the distribution of canonical texts (such as Isaac Newton's *Principia*), Warwick and Kaiser suggest looking toward a much richer array of pedagogical resources in order to understand how institutionalized training structures expert practice.¹⁷ And in his historical study of undergraduate training in mathematical physics at Cambridge University, Warwick also inverts Kuhn's conception of historical change in scientific fields: novel pedagogical arrangements can themselves generate, rather than merely follow, attendant shifts in disciplinary paradigms. Indeed, Warwick's comparative historical study of contemporaneous but distinct mathematical pedagogies led him to conclude that “the problem of incommensurability is therefore best construed by the historian not so much as one of time in the form of sequential theories as one of space in the form of pedagogical geography.”¹⁸ Following Warwick in this regard, I claim that what might be called normal-musical activity—such as the faithful execution of musical works—is “the product not of a ubiquitous paradigm originating in a canonical text, but of specific and localized pedagogical regimes.”¹⁹

¹⁵ For Kuhn's seminal text, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

¹⁶ Warwick and Kaiser, “Conclusion: Kuhn, Foucault, and the Power of Pedagogy,” 396.

¹⁷ Warwick and Kaiser, “Conclusion: Kuhn, Foucault, and the Power of Pedagogy,” 396–97.

¹⁸ Warwick, *Masters of Theory*, 43.

¹⁹ Warwick, *Masters of Theory*, 174.

During the late nineteenth century, musicians and music critics often spoke of the Leipzig conservatory as synonymous with “a dry, pedantic, and conservative approach” to performance, manifesting a notably extreme application of *Werktreue*.²⁰ Franz Liszt, in one of his own masterclasses, warned a student against performing his *Liebstraum* no. 1 in a “Leipzigerisch” manner: “You must play that totally carried away as if you were not even seated at the piano, completely lost to the world, not 1, 2, 3, 4 as in the Leipzig Conservatory.”²¹ Hamilton attributes this reputation of Leipzig largely to the legacy of Felix Mendelssohn, an instrumental figure in the school’s founding, noting that Mendelssohn performed with “what was then regarded as a highly strict adherence to the letter of the score.”²² Mendelssohn, however, seemed to grasp that his own influence as a teacher paled in comparison to the potential power of an enduring educational institution. He wrote to a senior Saxon civil servant in his call for establishing the conservatory in 1840: “as the extension of sound instruction is the best mode of promoting every species of moral improvement, so it is with music also.”²³ Here it is instructive to recall that before the conservatory’s founding, the broader institutional milieu out of which it grew—namely the Gewandhaus Orchestra, with Mendelssohn as its conductor—helped pioneer modern programming practices and discourses of “classical music.”²⁴ The principal movers in founding the conservatory were Mendelssohn and members of the Gewandhaus governing body—itsself made up exclusively of Leipzig’s bourgeois elite of bankers, lawyers, businessmen, and civil servants.²⁵ As William Weber perceptively notes, creating the conservatory thus served as a strategic move, extending the hegemony of the Gewandhaus over the city’s elite musical scene.²⁶

²⁰ Hamilton, *After the Golden Age*, 190.

²¹ August Göllerich, *The Piano Master Classes of Franz Liszt, 1884–1886: Diary Notes of August Göllerich*, ed. Wilhelm Jerger and Richard Louis Zimdars, trans. Richard Louis Zimdars (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 47.

²² Hamilton, *After the Golden Age*, 189.

²³ Letter from Felix Mendelssohn to the Kreis-Director von Falkenstein of Dresden, April 8, 1840, in *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, from 1833 to 1847*, ed. Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt, 1865), 185.

²⁴ For Peter Mercer-Taylor, it was under Mendelssohn’s guidance that the Gewandhaus Orchestra became “one of the early nineteenth century’s clearest models for the modern professional symphony orchestra.” See Peter Mercer-Taylor, “Mendelssohn and the Institution(s) of German Art Music,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mendelssohn*, ed. Peter Mercer-Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11–25, at 20.

²⁵ Margaret Eleanor Menninger, “Art and Civic Patronage in Leipzig, 1848–1914” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1998), 238–39.

²⁶ William Weber, “The Great Orchestras: Institutions of Monopoly and Hegemony,” in *Les sociétés de musique en Europe, 1700–1920: Structures, pratiques musicales, sociabilités*, ed. Hans Erich Bódeker and Patrice Veit (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2007), 243–65, at 254.

If the Leipzig approach to performance formed only one among several practiced in the 1840s and 1850s, it would not be long before similar institutions were, in Hugo Riemann's words, "shooting out of the earth like mushrooms."²⁷ What had before been exceptional to conservatories like Paris and Leipzig rapidly became the norm, not least in Germany.²⁸ By the turn of the twentieth century, musicologists such as Riemann and Hermann Kretzschmar—both of whom had studied at the Leipzig conservatory and taught at other similar institutions—were producing substantive pieces of writing in which they outlined and critiqued the enormous changes wrought by these institutions over the course of their lifetimes. They argued that a narrow focus on performance had become conservatory training's defining feature and, since this focus squeezed out other subjects of learning, its primary problem.²⁹

Comments made by Mendelssohn just a month after the conservatory's opening suggest that early efforts were made to steer students toward focusing on music performance. Writing to Ignaz Moscheles—his former teacher and eventual longtime instructor in the conservatory's piano department—he argued that the penchant for composing and theorizing among students had to be countered: "it is my belief that practical work, thorough steady practicing, and strict time, a solid knowledge of all solid works, etc., etc., are the chief things which can and must be taught."³⁰ From a twenty-first-century perspective, it is rather difficult to see anything but a decisive victory for Mendelssohn's vision of what the purpose and content of conservatory pedagogy should be. In light of his struggle against students' wishes "to compose and to theorize,"³¹ this victory should be read less as the inevitable result of music education's institutionalization in conservatories, and more as the assertion of one pedagogical style over several alternatives. The curriculum at Leipzig reflected a specific vision of the field, and a very successful one at that.

²⁷ Hugo Riemann, "Unsere Konservatorien," in *Präludien und Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Aesthetik, Theorie und Geschichte der Musik* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann, 1895), 1:22–33, at 25. Translation from E. Douglas Bomberger, "'Our Conservatories' from *Präludien und Studien* (1895) by Hugo Riemann," *Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education* 15 (1994): 220–35, at 226.

²⁸ Hermann Kretzschmar, for example, declared in 1903 that "a thick network of conservatories" had spread over all of Germany in the six decades following the founding of the Leipzig conservatory. See Hermann Kretzschmar, "Die Ausbildung der Fachmusiker," in *Musikalische Zeitfragen: Zehn Vorträge* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1903), 53–67, at 58.

²⁹ See Riemann, "Unsere Konservatorien"; and Kretzschmar, "Die Ausbildung der Fachmusiker."

³⁰ Letter from Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz Moscheles, April 30, 1843, in Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, 301.

³¹ Letter from Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz Moscheles, April 30, 1843, in Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, 301.

Technik, Vortrag, Fortschritte: *The Assessment of Performance*

Central aspects of the Leipzig institution's makeup in its early decades can be found in many conservatories even now, not least the three-year curriculum, the required courses in both piano and music theory, and the promise of performing and composing opportunities. Two things, however, jump out as unusual, at least from a twenty-first-century standpoint. The first is simply the limited number of instruments taught: organ, piano, violin, voice, and occasionally the cello.³² It was only in 1883, four decades after its opening, that the conservatory began to offer instruction in most contemporaneous orchestral instruments.³³ This is especially surprising given the close-knit professional and administrative relationship with the Gewandhaus Orchestra that the conservatory had enjoyed since its inception.³⁴ Although Mendelssohn clearly saw the conservatory as having the training of musicians for his orchestra as its most immediate purpose,³⁵ this was thwarted for the most part by a lack of funds and the small space offered by the conservatory's first building, limited as it was to two rooms in the courtyard of the Gewandhaus concert hall. While these early limitations would appear to contradict Weber's suggestion that the conservatory helped further the musical hegemony of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, they created the conditions for the conservatory's central role in extending discourses of *Werktreue* and canonizing practices beyond orchestral institutions, where they first became dominant, and into the realms of chamber, solo, and even amateur performance.³⁶

Still more curious, however, was the practice of assigning students *two* simultaneous teachers for their piano studies (along with classes in music theory, piano was the only subject required of all students, making this arrangement consistent and widespread throughout the institution's early history). Although this two-teacher system often resulted in contradictory instructions given to students, there was a distinctive reasoning behind it.³⁷ As William Rockstro, an English student at the

³² Karl W. Whistling, ed., *Statistik des Königl. Conservatoriums der Musik zu Leipzig 1843–1883: Aus Anlass des vierzigjährigen Jubiläums der Anstalt* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1883), 2–3.

³³ Whistling, *Statistik des Königl. Conservatoriums der Musik zu Leipzig 1843–1883*, 3–4.

³⁴ Menninger, "Art and Civic Patronage in Leipzig," 238–39.

³⁵ Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Entwurf eines Briefes an den sächsischen König Friedrich August II. zur Gründung des Leipziger Conservatoriums: Faksimile und Transkription*, ed. Barbara Wiermann and Ulrike Gessendorfer (Leipzig: Fischer Druck, 2011), 28–29.

³⁶ For an exploration of the discursive and professional contexts in which "the symphony and its attendant musical values" were promoted in Germany at the expense of other performing traditions, see Dana Gooley, "The Battle against Instrumental Virtuosity in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Franz Liszt and His World*, ed. Christopher H. Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 75–112, at 77.

³⁷ John Francis Barnett, an English student at the conservatory in the late 1850s, recalled how contradictions could arise when being taught by two professors: "[Louis] Plaidy

conservatory in the 1840s, recalled, it enabled the pedagogical separation of “questions of simple *technique*” and the actual playing of pieces of music.³⁸ For the former, students “were expected to study these matters” with either Louis Plaidy or Ernst Wenzel, both of whom had “made the training of the fingers, and wrist, their specialty.”³⁹ The value of this arrangement was that, in Rockstro’s words, “it left Mendelssohn free to direct the undivided attention of his pupils to the higher branches of Art,” taken to be synonymous with interpreting prized musical works.⁴⁰ To be sure, the line between teachers’ roles as instructors in either technique or the interpretation of works could be and often was blurred. But as a general way of dividing piano-teaching responsibilities, the practice persisted for at least thirty-five years.⁴¹

The dual organization of piano classes forms a somewhat extreme (and, as it turns out, relatively short-lived) example of a much broader and longer-lasting aspect of this pedagogical style: the division between *Technik* and *Vortrag* in the realm of music performance. For the purposes of this article as well as for its historical actors, *Technik* denoted the repertoire of bodily capacities required of musicians to perform any given piece of music. *Vortrag*, meanwhile, encompassed a student’s ability to successfully interpret musical works. Simply put, this conception of musical capacity in performance as essentially twofold—bodily on the one hand and mental on the other—led to these two domains becoming distinct targets of conservatory pedagogy. If, as Hunter describes, “the *rhetoric* about the separation of technique from expression” had become “strikingly and newly emphatic at the turn of the [nineteenth] century,” these dual piano classes marked a practical instantiation of a conceptual division that had been circulating for decades.⁴²

The distinction between *Technik* and *Vortrag* was further underlined by the primary medium of assessment undertaken at the institution: performance examinations, in which students played pieces of music to faculty once a semester. Therefore, as the primary musical act in training and assessment for performance, the interpretation and faithful execution of musical works became isolated both as a discrete subject

initiated us into the mysteries of staccato from the loose wrist, whilst [Ignaz] Moscheles advocated octaves from the arm. The student, therefore, had to exercise his discretion as to which theory to accept in this, as in some other matters.” See John Francis Barnett, *Musical Reminiscences and Impressions* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), 41–42.

³⁸ W. S. Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 4th ed. (London: S. Low, Marston, 1895), 107.

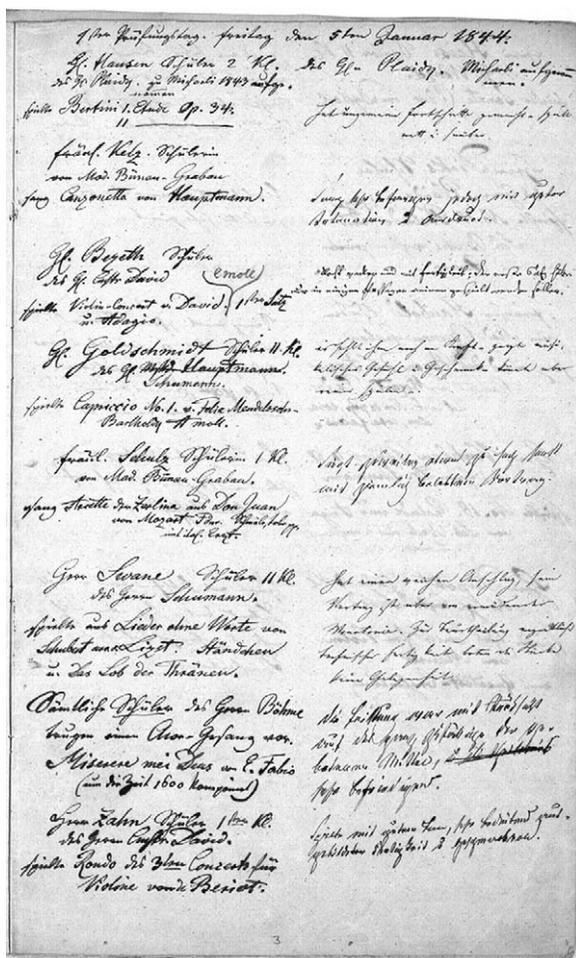
³⁹ Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 108.

⁴⁰ Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 108.

⁴¹ In a letter from Leipzig to Zdenka Schulzová, Leoš Janáček wrote that “for technique in piano playing I’ve been given Mr. Wenzel.” Leoš Janáček, “*Intime Briefe*” 1879/80 aus *Leipzig und Wien*, ed. Jakob Knaus (Zürich: Leoš Janáček-Gesellschaft, 1985), 37.

⁴² Hunter, “The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,” 389.

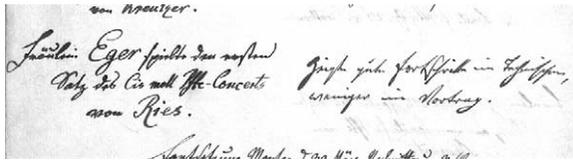
FIGURE 1. Opening folio of the first private examinations held at the conservatory (January 1844).⁴³



of learning and as the ultimate, and highly pressurized, goal of pupils' studies. In the conservatory's examination records, spanning thirty-seven years' worth of exams starting from 1844, the terms *Technik* and *Vortrag* saturate discourses employed in assessing student performers at the institution (fig. 1). These documents show that examiners

⁴³ Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 5. Januar 1844 – 29. September 1848; Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig, Bibliothek/Archiv (hereafter HMT-Archiv), A, II.1/1, 3r.

FIGURE 2. Record of Ida Eger's performance examination from Easter 1863.⁴⁴



frequently judged student performances as technically competent but interpretively lacking. In one of hundreds of examples, an examiner responded to a student's performance of Ferdinand Ries's C minor piano concerto, writing only that she "shows good progress in technique, but less so in interpretation" (fig. 2).⁴⁵ Ida Leopoldine Eger, a native of Leipzig who had entered the conservatory in 1861, had already received two years of instruction by the time of this exam.⁴⁶ As such, the examiner felt able to assess her progress along the parallel lines of *Technik* and *Vortrag*.

This specific discourse of assessment—tying together comments on students' progress, technique, and interpretive skills—was not limited to the adjudication of single performances, but functioned as a more general schema for classifying any given student's instrumental or vocal abilities as a whole, and indicating how those abilities could best be developed over time. In Ethel Smyth's first teacher's report (*Lehrer-Zeugnis*) of 1878, for example, her piano teacher Louis Maas wrote that she "has a decided talent for piano playing, although she is still quite far behind and therefore must dedicate herself to working twice as hard, especially in her technical studies" (fig. 3).⁴⁷ Like Maas, other instructors invariably conflated terms like "musicality," "musical feeling," or "talent" with positive assessments of a student's ability in *Vortrag*, even (and perhaps especially) when these students' *Technik* was deemed by contrast to be underdeveloped. The conservatory's faculty, by elevating expertise in interpreting musical works as the most highly prized virtue in performance, instituted a clear hierarchy of appraisal: for a student

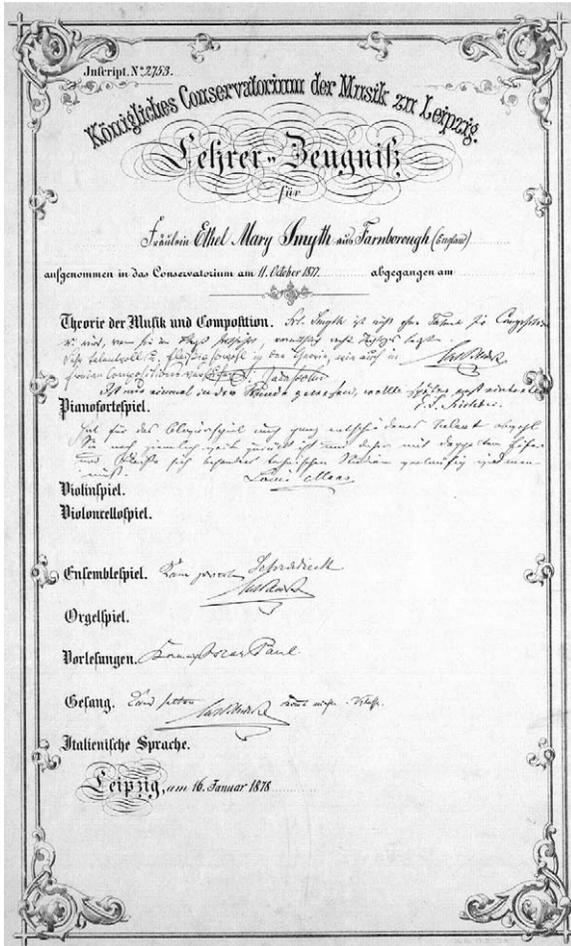
⁴⁴ Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 30. März 1863 – Michaelis 1876; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/3, lv.

⁴⁵ Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 30. März 1863 – Michaelis 1876; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/3, lv.

⁴⁶ Whistling, *Statistik des Königl. Conservatoriums der Musik zu Leipzig 1843–1883*, 18.

⁴⁷ Maas's assessment of Smyth reads as follows: "Hat für das Clavierspiel auch ganz entschiedenes Talent obwohl sie noch ziemlich weit zurück ist und daher mit doppeltem Eifer und Fleiß sich besonders technischen Studien vorläufig widmen muß." See the first *Lehrer-Zeugnis* of Ethel Smyth; HMT-Archiv A, I.3, 2753/1.

FIGURE 3. First teacher's report (*Lehrer-Zeugnis*) of Ethel Smyth, October 11, 1877.



performer, to be judged as “musical” or “talented” meant demonstrating an implicit understanding of *how* specific works were to be performed. However undetermined the term “musical” can be in conservatory contexts, as Henry Kingsbury documents in his seminal ethnography, at Leipzig there was no mistaking that “musicality” was conceived as an intellectual, spiritual, or even ethical quality, *not* a bodily one.⁴⁸ It is also

⁴⁸ For Kingsbury, the term “musical” derives much of its pervasive power in conservatory culture from the very fact that it is undetermined, with authority figures mysteriously

clear that students learned to conceive of their (and others') expertise in performance in this two-pronged fashion. Smyth, for example, noted in a letter to her mother that, at the conservatory, *Technik* meant "execution" while *Vortrag* functioned as a "special reference to the interpretation you give of a piece."⁴⁹ As Pierre Bourdieu observed in his analyses of assessment practices in university contexts, similar structures of thought endure precisely because students accept, internalize, and eventually disseminate the classifications to which they themselves were subjected.⁵⁰

Anthropologist Charles Goodwin has explored another dimension of how what he calls "professional vision" is transmitted to students. He emphasizes that pedagogies employed within expert disciplines succeed by teaching not only definitions of or rhetoric about a practice, but also "a mode of practice" itself.⁵¹ Indeed, the Leipzig curriculum in its practical organization was designed to develop *Technik* and *Vortrag* along parallel lines. With *Technik*, students were encouraged to dedicate themselves to transforming their own bodies, while also being taught to treat that process as just a means to an end—their bodies were, in essence, things to be overcome. Once a student had acquired sufficient *Technik*, their body could act as a kind of transparent medium, offering no resistance when called upon to realize their conception of a musical work in sound.⁵² This perspective further justified the ascendant value of *Vortrag* over *Technik*. Additionally, knowledge of music theory would ensure that a student's interpretation of a work, rather than relying on pure instinct, was built upon recognizing (*erkennen*) the musical laws (*musikalische Gesetze*) employed by the work's author.⁵³ In his harmony textbook written for the conservatory, Ernst Friedrich Richter likened this kind of educated discernment to the anatomical practice of dissection.⁵⁴ Together, these two forms of expertise—*Technik* and the ability to recognize compositional principles latent in a score—were thought to

bestowing it upon some students but not others. See Henry Kingsbury, *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

⁴⁹ Letter from Ethel Smyth to Nina Smyth, December 16, 1877; HMT-Archiv, A, VI.5/17, 20.

⁵⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "Postscript: The Categories of Professorial Judgment," in Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), 194–225.

⁵¹ Charles Goodwin, "Professional Vision," *American Anthropologist* 96 (1994): 606–33, at 614.

⁵² As Elizabeth Grosz and many other feminist writers have noted, this idea of the body "as a source of interference in, and a danger to, the operations of reason" has a history of at least several millennia in Western thought. See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 5.

⁵³ Ernst Friedrich Richter, *Lehrbuch der Harmonie: Praktische Anleitung zu den Studien in derselben, zunächst für das Conservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1853), vi.

⁵⁴ Richter, *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*, iv.

provide students with the foundational skills required to perform musical works in ways deemed competent, knowledgeable, and musical. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, as this style of training spread throughout German-speaking Europe, this dualistic conception of performing expertise was increasingly articulated in music-pedagogical discourse.⁵⁵

Teaching Technik

At first blush, the fact that *Technik* occupied a lower rung on the ladder of values in performance pedagogy fits neatly with Leipzig's reputation as a stronghold for proponents of anti-virtuosic sentiment, which was common among German music professionals of the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁶ This did not, however, signal a shunning of technical virtuosity per se. On the contrary, enormous amounts of labor, on the part of both students and teachers, were dedicated to raising the individual and collective standards of instrumental technique. In one of his many letters sent to his friend and director of the Munich conservatory, Franz Hauser, Moritz Hauptmann noted the remarkable rise of technical capacities among student violinists:

First-rate violinists are far more common now than formerly. In my young days, [Louis] Spohr was the only man who could play one of his own Concertos, but now the pupils of the Conservatoire play the most difficult. We used to think that the second, in D minor, was the highest flight, but it was never any pleasure to listen to it; sometimes a man would dash at the third in C major, but he never failed to come to grief. Now, we never have an Examination Concert [without hearing] one or other of Spohr's hardest Concertos, played with faultless technique; yet every pupil is forced to [start] from the beginning, just as we had to, thirty or forty years ago. The standard must be higher than it was then.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Several articles laid out the essentially twofold nature of these conceptions. See, for example, Selmar Bagge, "Musikalisch Wissen und technisch Können," in *Allgemeine Musikschule Basel: Jahresbericht über den sechsundzwanzigsten Kurs 1892–1893* (Basel: M. Werner-Riehm, 1893), 16–20; Flodoard Geyer, "Wissen und Können," *Der Klavier-Lehrer* 3 (1880): 101–3; and R. L. Schneider, "Musikverständnis und Technik," *Der Klavier-Lehrer* 16 (1893): 297–301.

⁵⁶ Dana Gooley has aptly described these discourses as a "battle against virtuosity." See Gooley, "Battle against Instrumental Virtuosity in the Early Nineteenth Century."

⁵⁷ Moritz Hauptmann, *Briefe von Moritz Hauptmann, Kantor und Musikdirektor an der Thomasschule zu Leipzig, an Franz Hauser*, vol. 2, ed. Alfred Schöne (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1871), 225; translation from Moritz Hauptmann, *The Letters of a Leipzig Cantor: Being the Letters of Moritz Hauptmann to Franz Hauser, Ludwig Spohr, and Other Musicians*, Edited by Prof. Dr. Alfred Schöne and Ferdinand Hiller, vol. 2, ed. and trans. A. D. Coleridge (London and New York: Novello, Ewer, 1892), 152–53.

Written in 1861, these observations were made eighteen years into Hauptmann's tenure as a teacher in the conservatory's theory and composition departments. As well as highlighting the mere fact of rising technical standards, Hauptmann's comments, in positioning *musical works* as the yardstick of proficiency, also draw attention to the canonic implications of increasing technical proficiencies. Hauptmann witnessed firsthand the emergence of a spiraling pedagogical dynamic, one which engendered increasingly large numbers of students to have more and more pieces of music within their technical grasp. And he did so with what Bourdieu called "the lucidity of beginnings"—a historical perspective that enabled Hauptmann to grasp conservatory practices as novel, not self-evident, and worthy of comment.⁵⁸ As the first organizers of the Leipzig conservatory evidently realized in their hiring of Plaidy and other renowned musical technicians, transmitting *Technik* was an essential first step in generating the kinds of musical expertise they most valued. Far from being ancillary or opposed to the entrenchment of *Werktreue* as a dominant force in professional musical practice, the development of *Technik* throughout large communities of students actively contributed to its spread.

Hauptmann's remarks about the increasing frequency with which students performed Spohr's concertos raise the question of how a highly esoteric skill set, limited previously to a handful of extraordinary instrumentalists, became common so rapidly. Almost as if he were attempting to understand students' initial encounters with conservatory culture from a phenomenological perspective, Riemann hit on a few key factors that go some way toward answering this question:

The conservatory novices experience in the first weeks the happiness of budding artistry. They participate in animated music-making, hear daily, even hourly, an overwhelming quantity of good music, make friendships with male and female classmates, admire the more advanced, and feel the wholesome spur of competition. It is naturally the technical proficiency that impresses them first, and they now devote themselves with all energy to practicing.⁵⁹

As Riemann himself realized, if somewhat obliquely, the introduction of institutionalized training in music—and specifically, classroom-based teaching—created a ubiquitous visibility among students. This presents a stark contrast to the previously dominant pedagogical model

⁵⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Conquest of Autonomy: The Critical Phase in the Emergence of the Field," in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 64.

⁵⁹ Riemann, "Unsere Konservatorien," 28; translation from Bomberger, "Our Conservatories," 229–30.

in Germany of musical apprenticeship. Woven throughout the fabric of students' everyday lives, collegial intimacy tended to generate intense competition—a state of affairs frequently referenced by nineteenth-century pedagogues as a positive, and supposedly inevitable, byproduct of conservatory training.⁶⁰ In performance this led to inordinate amounts of practicing, a tendency that conservatory faculty were happy to reinforce by prescribing timetables of private study. When it came to students' piano studies, even those whose desired focus lay in another subject were told to play for at least four hours a day, the majority of which should be spent doing technical exercises.⁶¹

In addition to this pervasive competitive dynamic, the explosion of technical competencies was also made possible by the implantation of more specific pedagogical techniques. Instrumental textbooks were a particularly important tool in this regard. At Leipzig, much like at the Paris Conservatoire, some of the most noted technicians of their day fashioned methods of technical training, which were then distributed widely throughout the conservatory's classrooms. Textbooks produced by renowned teachers such as Ferdinand David and Plaidy disseminated pedagogical taxonomies of their instruments, isolating the myriad bodily techniques students could expect to encounter in contemporaneous repertoire.⁶² While these textbooks recorded important aspects of teaching methods employed at the conservatory, they also functioned as a vital practical tool for extending those methods, both temporally and geographically.

David, the leading violin professor at the conservatory from its inception and a long-standing concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, noted that his *Violinschule* was by no means a sufficient replacement for

⁶⁰ The opening remarks of the Dresden conservatory's 1872 yearly report, for example, noted that the student "enters early on into contact with other similarly capable, sensitive, and striving young individuals; diligence and capability are enhanced through friendly zeal and ambition." See *Bericht des Dresdener Konservatoriums für Musik, 1872* (Dresden: C. Richard Gärtner, 1872), 4.

⁶¹ There are numerous examples of this and similar prescriptions of practice time found across a variety of sources. For example, in the weeks preceding her enrollment at the conservatory in 1877, Smyth took several private piano lessons with Maas. Writing to her mother, she documented how "He makes me begin at the very beginning of "teknik" [*sic*] (it looks so odd in German!) and for 4 hours a day I do finger exercises and nothing else!! But a little sonata of Hummels [*sic*]!" Letter from Ethel Smyth to Nina Smyth, late August 1877; HMT-Archiv, A, VI.5/17, 5. Moreover, Plaidy wrote in his *Technische Studien* that it should be possible for all musicians to devote at least four to five hours of piano practice daily. See Louis Plaidy, *Technische Studien für das Pianofortespiel: Eingeführt in den Conservatorien der Musik zu Leipzig und München* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1853), 3.

⁶² Although David insisted in the book's preface that it was not written as an encyclopedia of violin playing, the contents pages of its two volumes together reveal a more or less exhaustive set of techniques for the time. See Ferdinand David, *Violinschule* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1863).

an effective teacher; his textbook was better understood as a technical aid to successful master-pupil relationships. And David deemed technical textbooks to be supplementary to oral instruction in another sense, for the reason that printed words and notated examples were inadequate for teaching the subtleties of *Vortrag*.⁶³ Describing David's particular skills and pedagogical eye, Wilhelm von Wasielewski recalled: "He had sublimely mastered certain techniques in fingering and bowing, and in this regard gave good advice; he knew how to guide and occupy every student according to each of their abilities."⁶⁴ A good teacher of technique in this way possessed three things: technical mastery, a thorough knowledge of their pupils, and the pedagogical sense required to transmit that mastery in a way that was individualized to each student's needs.⁶⁵ The teaching legacy of a conservatory teacher like David indicates that increasingly high standards of technical competence resulted from a variety of pedagogical developments, and not merely from a quantitative increase in the number of hours students spent practicing. Through a variety of educational media—especially classroom teaching and textbook use—esoteric technical knowledge was extended to new generations of musicians. These pedagogical practices, then, are better understood as the *means* of institutionalization rather than its endpoint. The conservatory's task of transmitting technical expertise has been, and will continue to be, an ongoing one.

The widespread obsession with practicing had an important consequence other than increasing the number of students capable of faithfully playing even the most technically challenging of works: students were pushed, whether intentionally or not, toward specializing early on in their studies. At the very least, these aspects of conservatory training accelerated the increasing differentiation between composers and performers. In a telling example of the pressures that catalyzed such specialization, Smyth was once told to suspend her composing studies by Carl Reinecke—her *composition* teacher—because she "should make the piano the first consideration (that is at least 4 hours of it per diem, more when I can)" until she had developed her *Technik*.⁶⁶ Convinced by the logic that a composer should be able to play their own compositions, she resolved to "only compose when I can, that is when by a lucky conjunction of musical planets I can sit down with 3 or 4 hours before me and say

⁶³ David, *Violinschule*, "Vorwort." See note 99.

⁶⁴ Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski, *Aus Siebzig Jahren* (Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1897), 37–38.

⁶⁵ For the seminal text on modern techniques used to individualize human beings as objects of knowledge and pedagogical intervention, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), esp. Part 3/I, "Docile Bodies."

⁶⁶ Letter from Ethel Smyth to Nina Smyth, November 1877; HMT-Archiv, A, VI.5/17, 16.

'I've nothing particular to do,' a thing that I assure you has not once happened since the Conserv. opened!"⁶⁷ Within a year, however, Smyth's dissatisfaction grew to the point where she decided to leave the conservatory, largely in order to concentrate on her composition studies with private teachers. And on the other side of this growing disciplinary divide between composers and performers, Wasielewski recounted that he chose not to attend Mendelssohn's composition lessons with any regularity, in part because he felt no strong desire toward creative work, but also because he had to dedicate most of his time while at the conservatory to his violin studies and Hauptmann's music theory exercises.⁶⁸

In an institution where the study of both performance and composition were highly compartmentalized, students often felt pressure to concentrate the majority of their efforts on one or the other. But even if the training and assessment of performers and composers were becoming ever more distinct, there is an important caveat, one crucial to grasping the overall setup of a conservatory like Leipzig: all students, regardless of their specialism, were required to take complete courses in music theory. As significant and increasingly ossified as the distinction between "composer" and "performer" was becoming in the late nineteenth century, these categories defined not a gulf between two unrelated kinds of musicking, but rather different positions in a common field of expertise. That field, crucially, was held together through the joint study of music theory and the networks of shared competencies that this study generated.

Teaching Vortrag, Part 1: Music Theory

At first glance, the teaching of music theory might appear tangential to this article's concern with the ascendance of *Werktreue*. Because music theory was taught separately from performance, it is fair to assume that its purpose was, as Alexander Rehding has recently put it, "to prepare students both for more complex composition tasks and for analysing pieces of music along the same lines."⁶⁹ In a conservatory such as Leipzig, pupils were taught how to abstract harmonic, contrapuntal, and formal rules from common practice repertoire (most typically Bach's four-part chorale harmonizations), and apply them in their own analysis and composition of musical works.⁷⁰ However, when taking into account the

⁶⁷ Letter from Ethel Smyth to Nina Smyth, November 1877; HMT-Archiv, A, VI.5/17, 16.

⁶⁸ Wasielewski, *Aus Siebzig Jahren*, 37.

⁶⁹ Alexander Rehding, "Three Music-Theory Lessons," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 141 (2016): 251–82, at 251.

⁷⁰ Rehding, "Three Music-Theory Lessons."

dominance of performance in the distribution of students' specializations, it becomes clear that theory pedagogy, which was relatively narrow and repertoire focused, functioned primarily as a means to cultivate knowledge deployable in *performing* works.⁷¹ Indeed, it is precisely this focus on extant repertoire that indicates music theory pedagogy's contribution to the rise of *Werktreue*: not only did it naturalize musical qualities of the canonical repertoires it sought to explain, it also, more fundamentally, helped instill analysis and understanding of musical works as prerequisites for performing them successfully.

The broader function of music theory pedagogy practiced at the conservatory was to provide students with the cognitive resources necessary for understanding musical compositions that one performs. Plaidy himself specified the nature of this link in his book of piano studies, suggesting that a certain amount of harmonic knowledge was "beneficial, if not indispensable" to "grasping" (*auffassen*) any given composition.⁷² For Mendelssohn, making music theory a requirement for all students formed part of a strategy to combat "the technical-mechanical leanings" of the time and, in so doing, to establish a permanent basis for "the true feeling for art and its propagation."⁷³ Mendelssohn's worries emerged out of a longer history of critiques, circulated by German professional musicians throughout the early nineteenth century, of those virtuoso performers who, as Gooley observes, "were springing up everywhere but possessed few traditional credentials, particularly in the area of music theory."⁷⁴ Later, in the 1870s and 1880s, several conservatory pedagogues would articulate this link between *Werktreue* and the study of music theory more directly.⁷⁵ In a telling example, the opening remarks of the first issue of *Der Klavier-Lehrer* (one of two significant German music education journals of the late nineteenth century) told readers to expect continued discussions on music theory pedagogy, because

⁷¹ Yearly reports of various nineteenth-century German conservatories show that performance (especially in keyboard, violin, and singing) was far and away the most common specialization. At Leipzig, a surviving report from the 1910/1911 school year records that, out of a total of 810 students, less than a tenth (74) specialized in theory and composition; out of 425 female students, only *two* did so (less than 0.5 percent). See *Jahres-Bericht des Königlichen Konservatoriums der Musik zu Leipzig: Für den Zeitraum vom 1. April 1910 bis zum 31. März 1911* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1911), 26. A copy of this report can be found in the Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Kap. 32, Nr. 4, Bd. 3, 23r–43r.

⁷² Plaidy, *Technische Studien für das Pianofortespiel*, 58.

⁷³ Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Entwurf eines Briefes an den sächsischen König Friedrich August II. zur Gründung des Leipziger Konservatoriums*, 8.

⁷⁴ Gooley, "Battle against Instrumental Virtuosity in the Early Nineteenth Century," 82.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Flodoard Geyer, "Das theoretische Wissen ist dem Klavierspiel förderlich," *Der Klavier-Lehrer* 1 (1878): 4–5; and Selmar Bagge, "Ueber Werth und Nutzen: Theoretischen Studiums, namentlich der Harmonielehre," in *Allgemeine Musikschule Basel: Jahresbericht über den sechszehnten Kurs 1882–1883* (Basel: Ferd. Riehm, 1883), 20–24.

“instruction in harmony and form” constituted “the foundation for the understanding and corresponding interpretation of artworks.”⁷⁶ Learning music theory, then, would imbue students’ abilities in *Vortrag* with knowledge that otherwise would have been lacking, and perhaps even mitigate against “uneducated” interpretations, a criticism that one examiner made of a student performance in 1844.⁷⁷ To render a work faithfully was also to demonstrate, however implicitly, knowledge of that work’s form, harmonic structure, thematic development, and the like.

As with *Technik*, music theory was taught through a combination of group-based classroom teaching and private study, both of which relied increasingly on the distribution and ubiquitous use of conservatory-sanctioned textbooks. Although Hauptmann did produce the textbook-like work *Die Lehre von der Harmonik* to go along with his more speculative and better known *Die Natur der Harmonik und der Metrik*,⁷⁸ the textbook with the most lasting impact on conservatory pedagogy was Richter’s 1853 *Lehrbuch der Harmonie: Praktische Anleitung zu den Studien in derselben, zunächst für das Conservatorium der Musik Leipzig*, published after ten years of teaching in the conservatory’s classrooms.⁷⁹ Together with his later publications of the *Lehrbuch des einfachen und doppelten Contrapunkts* and the *Lehrbuch der Fuge*,⁸⁰ Richter’s textbooks serve as a map for the three-year course of study in music theory in which male students were taught harmony, counterpoint, and fugue in annual succession.⁸¹ And in a predictably gendered division, female students were only required to take a two-year course in harmony, a practice that formed one of many structural disadvantages faced by women in nineteenth-century conservatories.⁸²

⁷⁶ “Prospekt,” *Der Klavier-Lehrer* 1 (1878), 1–2, at 1.

⁷⁷ In the first-ever round of exams, Julius Heise played Jan Ladislav Dussek’s C major sonata. The teacher commented that he had “rather stiff hands and an uneducated interpretation.” See Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 5. Januar 1844 – 29. September 1848; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/1, 3v: “Eine etwas steife Hand u. einen ungebildeten Vortrag.”

⁷⁸ Moritz Hauptmann, *Die Lehre von der Harmonik: Mit beigegeführten Notenbeispielen*, ed. Oscar Paul (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1868); and Hauptmann, *Die Natur der Harmonik und der Metrik: Zur Theorie der Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1853).

⁷⁹ Ernst Friedrich Richter, *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*.

⁸⁰ Ernst Friedrich Richter, *Lehrbuch des einfachen und doppelten Contrapunkts: Praktische Anleitung zu dem Studium in desselben, zunächst für das Conservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1872); and Richter, *Lehrbuch der Fuge: Anleitung zur Composition derselben und zu den sie vorbereitenden Studien, in den Nachahmungen in dem Canon, zunächst für den Gebrauch am Conservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1859).

⁸¹ This tripartite division is made clear in the prospectuses of the conservatory, though it should also be noted that some students, after their music-theoretical knowledge had been assessed in the entrance examination, would be allowed to enter a higher theory class from the beginning of their studies. See Prospekte; HMT-Archiv, A, II.3/1.

⁸² See Nancy B. Reich, “Women as Musicians: A Question of Class,” in *Musiology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of

While music theory textbooks played a pivotal role in disseminating specific kinds of musical literacy, they did not supplant the teacher in the classroom—human instructors were not displaced by their own publishing endeavors.⁸³ The general setup of music theory lessons seems to have followed the format Hauptmann pursued during the institution's first few semesters, even though he himself admitted, just weeks before the conservatory's opening, that not a single instructor had any idea of how to go about teaching classes.⁸⁴ According to Wasielewski, Hauptmann would set a "harmonic exercise" for the six to eight students in his class to solve on the blackboard, during which time he would simultaneously correct the work students had completed outside of the class and lecture them on the mistakes they were making on the board.⁸⁵ Writing again to Hauser, Hauptmann noted that his harmony and counterpoint students "learn their drill like a company of soldiers; it is only the awkward squad that gets noticed."⁸⁶

To be a successful student in the realm of music theory at this conservatory, students had to master how to "solve" harmonic exercises in writing, a task that went hand in hand with avoiding the mistakes ascribed by rules of tonal grammar. Detailing his time as a young adolescent at the Leipzig conservatory, Edvard Grieg recounted that Richter cultivated this style of learning quite explicitly. Although he remembered disliking—and often even ignoring—Richter's guidelines during his studies, he stated that in retrospect he could appreciate the wisdom of Richter's intent to drill students in the fundamentals of common practice harmony and part-writing. Grieg recalled a specific instance in which he chose to write a fugue with a "mistake-laden" theme, simply because his desired focus lay in writing something that would sound beautiful—arranging a fugal theme that would abide by the rules was "not for him." But Richter disagreed, opining instead that what mattered was "the correct solution of the problem." Summing up their student-teacher relationship, Grieg recalled that "for my tomfoolery he had only

California Press, 1993), 125–48, esp. 134–38. At Leipzig, gendered divisions in music theory instruction continued at least until the turn of the twentieth century. See 1901 Prospekt; HMT-Archiv, A, II.3/1, 14.

⁸³ Richter, for example, can be thanked specifically for popularizing the use of roman numerals in notational analysis. For this insight and a broader consideration of Richter's textbook and the Leipzig conservatory in the history of music theory, see Robert W. Wason, "Musica Practica: Music Theory as Pedagogy," in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46–77, esp. 64.

⁸⁴ As Hauptmann wrote in a letter to Franz Hauser, "not one of [the professors] knows how to set about his work, for though we have all instructed single pupils in our time, we have no experience of classes." See Hauptmann, *Letters of a Leipzig Cantor*, 2:5.

⁸⁵ Wasielewski, *Aus Siebzig Jahren*, 38.

⁸⁶ Hauptmann, *Letters of a Leipzig Cantor*, 2:20.

a patient smile, and with a ‘No! False!’ he corrected it with thick strokes of his pencil.”⁸⁷

As with the teaching of performance, such methods and discourses of assessment are suggestive of important developments in the teaching of music theory. But in contrast to the assessment of performance discussed above, relatively little material survives in the conservatory’s examination records indicating exactly how students’ music-theoretical skills were examined or discussed by faculty. Dotted between records of performance exams are lists of the written work handed in by students each semester, which show that a fraction of students handed in compositions or analyses of canonic works, with most delivering exercise books in harmony and counterpoint (see, for example, fig. 4). More rare are records of on-the-spot examinations in harmony—a practice that appears to have existed only during the conservatory’s first few decades.⁸⁸ In most of these records, students are simply listed under headings such as “theoretical exercises solved on the spot” or similar, with no further comment. Considering that this practice seemed to span two decades’ worth of examinations, it is significant that, even though comments and critiques of student performances were consistently recorded, exams in music theory rarely engendered any recorded statements of qualitative assessment. And even when comments were left, they were mostly limited to single adjectives like “good” (*gut*), “excellent” (*ausgezeichnet*), “passable” (*leidlich*), or “weak” (*schwach*); the only marginally more substantive comment was “not free of mistakes” (*nicht fehlerlos*), reinforcing Hauptmann’s insight that, within these educational conditions, it was struggling students and their mistakes that proved most visible.⁸⁹

The relative absence of qualitative theory assessment in the conservatory’s archives echoes contemporaneous perceptions of music theory pedagogy at the conservatory as narrow, and perhaps even superficial. Smyth complained in a letter to her mother about the lack of feedback she received in classroom scenarios:

Ever since I really began to get forward in my studies and consequently to demand more attention and help from my masters I have also begun to be conscious of the fact that in the Conservatorium I can’t get that help and attention. . . . Imagine to yourself a class of 8 or 12 together with one master for an hour. There is of course no time to do the things

⁸⁷ *Edvard Grieg. Verzeichnis seiner Werke mit Einleitung: Mein Erster Erfolg* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1910), 16.

⁸⁸ Mentions of on-the-spot assessments in music theory stop after 1864 in the conservatory’s examination records. See Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 30. März 1863 – Michaelis 1876; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/3.

⁸⁹ See Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 2. April 1849 – 27. September 1862; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/2, 13r.

FIGURE 4. "Register of written work handed in during the Easter semester, 1867."⁹⁰

Verzeichnis der zu Ostern 1867 eingelebten schriftlichen Arbeiten

Herr Eckert.	2 Hefte. Harmonie- Arbeiten, fig. Chorale.
Fraülein Demel I	1 " " " " " "
Fraülein Demel II	1 " " " " " "
Herr Wolfram	2 " " " " " "
	1, Composition für Pianoforte
Fraülein Ebeling.	1, Aufgabearbeiten.
Fraülein Theilkuhl.	1, " " " " " "
Herr Hodorowski.	1, Harmonie- Arbeiten, fig. Chorale.
Herr Marter.	1, Harmonie- Arbeiten.
Fraülein Babrit.	1, Harmonie- Arbeiten, fig. Chorale.
Herr Munzinger.	1, Harmonie- Arbeiten, Canons und Fugen in 2, 3 und 4 Stimmen.
Herr Selhaar.	1, vier Pianoforte- Sonate und Canons und Fugen aufstehend.
Fraülein Wiedemann	2, Aufgabearbeiten.

properly. The exercises you have worked are just glanced through and there is hardly time to explain why this or that is wrong, still less to go through the various ways of correcting it and then choose the best. In my private lessons under Herzogenberg I am sometimes $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour over one example, and work with him looking on and pulling me up with "that's wrong! Find something else" whenever occasion requires. All this one cannot expect in a Conserv.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 30. März 1863 – Michaelis 1876; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/3, 58r.

⁹¹ Letter from Ethel Smyth to Nina Smyth, April 1878; HMT-Archiv, A, VI.5/17, 39.

Here, Smyth indicates that students' lack of one-on-one engagement with music theory teachers encouraged a kind of rote learning of concepts and their rules of application, with next to no guidance given as to the reasoning behind them, or even to how these rules might be more creatively and reflexively deployed. Her statements on this topic indicate that she experienced this style of theory instruction as something akin to the "banking" model of education critiqued by Paulo Freire, in which students are regarded as vessels to be filled with institutionally sanctioned knowledge.⁹² And as her enthusiastic underlining suggests, she further understood that a particular nexus of interaction in music theory classrooms, one where each student received very little direct attention from the instructor, lay at the root of the problem.

Given Richter's emphatic explanation of why his *Lehrbuch der Harmonie* was conceived as a practical guide—that students, in the early stages of musical development, should be engaged not with questions of *why*, but of *how*—Smyth's remarks appear to have been uttered in response to a culture of music theory teaching already decades in the making.⁹³ Approaching these lessons from the viewpoint of an aspiring composer, Smyth clearly viewed this pedagogical model as inadequate for her needs, especially when compared to her private lessons with Heinrich von Herzogenberg, Johannes Brahms's close friend and professional ally. Riemann, in typically strident fashion, offered his thoughts on this state of affairs from an instructor's perspective:

Look at this bent old man, who for more than three decades now, day after day, four, five, six hours long has sat at the same table, correcting the theory homework of his students—always the same kind of homework, always the same kind of mistakes. Do you wonder that years ago he stopped talking, that he silently and without batting an eye strikes out the parallel octaves and fifths and leaves it up to his pupils to think over his improvements at home?⁹⁴

Painting a picture of a discipline in a state of seeming unending circularity, Riemann's remarks call attention to a teaching practice in which assessing students' music-theoretical abilities was more or less limited to highlighting errors in students' written work. As such, conservatory training instituted pens, pencils, and notebooks (and sometimes chalk and blackboards) as the dominant media of assessment in music theory. In an ironic turn of events, a system so focused on the "practical" aspects of music education actually encouraged students to consider

⁹² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

⁹³ Richter, *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*, v: "Here it is a question not of *why*, but of *how*."

⁹⁴ Riemann, "Unsere Konservatorien," 26; translation from Bomberger, "Our Conservatories," 227.

musical *writing* rather than their musical instrument(s) as the medium through which they should develop their music-theoretical knowledge and demonstrate it most directly to their teachers. Contrastingly, the *partimenti* used at the Italian *conservatorio* in earlier centuries were designed to develop students' contrapuntal expertise through highly regulated improvisational exercises at the keyboard, allowing those students to internalize and flexibly deploy various compositional schemata.⁹⁵ At Leipzig, where these exercises were replaced by extended regimes of written work, music theory became a tool primarily of analysis, not composition or improvisation.

Teaching Vortrag, Part 2: The Masterclass

Beyond music theory, how did students learn the art of analyzing and interpreting musical works? Outside of the conservatory, the aural milieu provided by Leipzig's concert scene was certainly thought to benefit student performers; Plaidy suggested that students should never miss an opportunity to hear "good" concerts because "assiduous observation of great masters" and "well-performed orchestral and choral works" would "profoundly encourage the player's musical sense."⁹⁶ Indeed, in Mendelssohn's initial calls for a conservatory of music to be located in Leipzig and not just any German city, he cited its rich performance culture as his primary justification, insisting that the high quality of both the performances and the works performed would serve as an "educational tool" (*Bildungsmittel*) for young musicians.⁹⁷ Such an idea even shaped the conservatory's timetable: in order to expose students to the center of this concert culture, no classes were scheduled on Wednesday mornings, allowing students to attend the Gewandhaus Orchestra's rehearsals free of charge.⁹⁸

It was in classroom settings, however, that students received their most direct training in performing pieces of music. Because, as David noted, teaching *Vortrag* superseded the capabilities of written discourse, and was therefore better left to the oral instruction of teachers, there is comparatively little surviving evidence as to how these performance

⁹⁵ Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, Appendix B: Partimenti.

⁹⁶ Plaidy, *Technische Studien für das Pianofortespiel*, 60.

⁹⁷ Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Entwurf eines Briefes an den sächsischen König Friedrich August II. zur Gründung des Leipziger Konservatoriums*, 8–9.

⁹⁸ For a representative timetable of the conservatory's early years, see Acta, das von dem verstorbenen Oberhofgerichtsrat Dr. Blümner zu Leipzig Sr. Majestät dem König ausgesetzte Legat von 20000 Talern und die Begründung einer Lehranstalt für Musik in Leipzig betr: bis mit März 1850. Vol. 1. Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Ministerium des Kultus und öffentlichen Unterrichts, Nr. 19478, 204r.

classes were structured at Leipzig.⁹⁹ One especially rich source is found in Rockstro's account of his conservatory experiences, where he discusses Mendelssohn's piano teaching in some detail. Rockstro recounted that Mendelssohn's piano class, which had eight pupils, took place once a week.¹⁰⁰ In it, each student would take their turn performing a piece that had been assigned to the entire group. Remembering how the class spent over two months working together on a single movement of Johann Nepomuk Hummel's Septet in D Minor, op. 74, it was clear to Rockstro that Mendelssohn "never left a piece until he was satisfied that the majority of the class understood it thoroughly."¹⁰¹

This practice, in which a class collectively studied a single piece of music, underlines how teaching *Vortrag* was a matter of transforming aspiring performers into analyzers and interpreters of musical works. On occasion, Mendelssohn could be obsessive in his attention to musical minutiae, resulting in one instance where every pupil, after sounding the opening chord of Hummel's Septet, "was invited to resign his seat in favour of an equally unfortunate successor" due to the chord's "want of sonority."¹⁰² Borrowing Richter's terminology, it might be said that Mendelssohn led his students through a "dissection" of the musical material, making thorough study of a work's musical content foundational to the practice of performance. Moreover, Mendelssohn's pedantry over a single chord suggests that *Technik* was by no means entirely separated out from questions of interpretation. Rather, *Technik* became an object of Mendelssohn's teaching precisely when he addressed how specific passages of the work at hand might be rendered.

As Rockstro was evidently aware, there was much more to Mendelssohn's pedagogic strategy than the sometimes "microscopic minuteness" of his critiques: "he wished his pupils to understand the principles by which he himself was guided in his interpretation of the works of the great masters, and at the same time to discourage servile imitation of his own rendering of any individual composition."¹⁰³ For one thing, "he never played through the piece which formed the subject of the lesson in a connected form."¹⁰⁴ And when students heard Mendelssohn play an entire piece during gatherings at his own home, he made sure never to

⁹⁹ David, *Violinschule*, "Vorwort": "The assistance of the teacher will be needed wherever the textbook does not suffice. This applies especially to style and *Vortrag*, which cannot easily be taught through printed words and notated examples."

¹⁰⁰ Rockstro's recollection of the size and frequency of his piano class with Mendelssohn is confirmed by a timetable in the school's archives. See Prüfungsprotokolle, Zeitraum: 5. Januar 1844 – 29. September 1848; HMT-Archiv, A, II.1/1, 44r. and 45r.

¹⁰¹ Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 106.

¹⁰² Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 105.

¹⁰³ Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 106–7.

¹⁰⁴ Rockstro, *Mendelssohn*, 107.

play a piece that the class was studying. Indeed, the purpose of these classes was not to promulgate single, immovable interpretations of pieces of music, but rather to instill more general analytical—and one might even say ethical—dispositions in the performance of classical music.¹⁰⁵

Through this proto-masterclass, Mendelssohn was able to engage personally with one pupil at a time, while the rest continued to learn through observation. Students could transpose Mendelssohn's analysis of a work—and demonstrations of how that analysis could be transmuted into the practice of performance—onto their own approach toward the work at hand, as well as others they would subsequently encounter. As one later author wrote, students could greatly enrich their knowledge of canonic literature (*Literaturkenntnis*) by observing both performances by other students and the critique to which these performances were subjected by the teacher.¹⁰⁶ Crucially, such an arrangement afforded conservatory teachers the ability to train groups of students without sacrificing the individualized back-and-forth process of criticism, suggestion, and emulation so fundamental to transmitting highly subtle and technical styles of musicking. It also ensured that students were made aware—often painfully aware—of each other's relative abilities and status in the eyes of their teacher. And first and foremost, students were incited to accept *Werktreue* as the tacit body of principles that gave their work meaning as nascent professionals within the field.

Due to a lack of source materials, it is difficult to establish the exact extent to which the specifics of Mendelssohn's teaching strategies were adopted by other instructors: the precedent of having an entire class play the same piece was certainly not always followed, and maybe some instructors did in fact give demonstrations of how they would perform an entire movement. Nevertheless, the central purpose of these classes—to guide students in the art of interpreting musical works—remained intact. Even Liszt, apparently fully opposed to the Leipzig culture of performance, used his masterclasses to this end.¹⁰⁷ In classes, just like in exams,

¹⁰⁵ In using the term “ethical” in this context, I follow Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's discussion of what they call “epistemic virtues,” in which they posit that the mastery of expert practices “is inevitably linked to self-mastery, to the assiduous cultivation of a certain kind of self.” See Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 40.

¹⁰⁶ The yearly report produced by the Kiel conservatory in 1910 contains a short section discussing methods of classroom teaching. See *Conservatorium der Musik in Kiel: Bericht über die Tätigkeit des Instituts im Studienjahr 1909–1910* (Kiel: Schmidt und Klaunig, 1910), 3–4.

¹⁰⁷ Amy Fay recalled a student playing Beethoven's Piano Sonata no. 23 in F minor, op. 57 (*Appassionata*) in one of Liszt's masterclasses at Weimar, and Liszt's reaction being less than complimentary. For Fay, the student “had a good deal of technique, and a moderately good conception of it, but still he was totally inadequate to the work.” Even in the case of Liszt's less literalistic approach to interpreting works in performance, *Werktreue* was

teachers judged students as most competent when their playing demonstrated technical facility in combination with an implicit understanding of a piece's musical content. Grieg, in a telling example, recalled Moscheles's reaction to his performance of one of Moscheles's own études in front of the class: "look here, boys, *that* is what I call musical playing."¹⁰⁸ This weighty adjective, "musical," connoted the ability to translate a knowledgeable conception of a work into one's performance of it.

Conclusions

This article investigates *Werktreue* through the historical and conceptual lens of expertise and its pedagogical production. My primary concern, therefore, has been to examine what Warwick has dubbed "the relationship between [a] complex pedagogical economy and the specific range of skills, competencies, and attitudes that it produced."¹⁰⁹ Just like any other ideal that appears to govern a field, *Werktreue's* "specificity—and its strangeness—is most clearly seen in the everyday work of its practitioners."¹¹⁰ The kinds of everyday work considered above possess a special quality by virtue of having been pedagogical in nature, shaping practitioners' most fundamental competencies and sensibilities. From this perspective, the ascension of *Werktreue* as a dominant practice among performing musicians was made possible by a whole host of pedagogical developments observable at, though not necessarily originating from, the Leipzig conservatory during the nineteenth century.

Through a close analysis of the pedagogies employed at Leipzig, this article challenges prior conceptions of the roles conservatories have played in the continuation of classical music practices, not least that of *Werktreue*, over the past 150 years or so. Consider, for example, Richard Taruskin's seemingly commonsense statement that "conservatories are preservative institutions, both by etymology and by ideology."¹¹¹ The historical analysis of conservatories presented above reveals this to be, at best, an incomplete picture. For one thing, it avoids taking conservatories as objects of historical inquiry in their own right. As Weber has

still tacitly woven into the pedagogical foundations of his masterclasses. See Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany, from the Home Correspondence of Amy Fay*, 9th ed. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1886), 229.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Grieg, *Verzeichnis seiner Werke mit Einleitung: Mein Erster Erfolg*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Warwick, *Masters of Theory*, 172.

¹¹⁰ Daston and Galison have emphasized the role of scientists' everyday practices—in their case, "the essential practice of scientific image-making"—in forming "objectivity" as a scientific ideal in the nineteenth century. See Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 17.

¹¹¹ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 286.

similarly pointed out regarding the very notion of “classical music,” “the concept of classical music should be seen as pioneering rather than conservative during the first half of the nineteenth century. Endowing older works with canonic authority took two generations to accomplish because it made a fundamental break with musical tradition.”¹¹² Very much the same could be said of conservatories: it is all too easy to view such institutions anachronistically as essentially conservative. Instead, following Weber, it is important to note that, at the time of their emergence, they formed an important transformation in musical life—a fact that historical actors like Hauptmann, Mendelssohn, and Riemann understood all too well.

This is not to say that conservatories have not had “conserving” or reproductive effects within classical music cultures more broadly. Indeed, this article poses the question of exactly *how* conservatory training has reproduced, for well over a century, similar performance practices. Here, I follow authors in science and technology studies who have long argued that the extension or reproduction of states of affairs cannot be explained away through historical inertia or ideologies of tradition. Rather, it is a matter of tracing how phenomena are “taught, practiced, kept up, made to sink in.”¹¹³ This article analyzes a variety of materials and practices to show how conservatories achieve this, including discourses of assessment, classroom teaching, textbooks, and patterns of student interaction. In other words, it is precisely the heterogeneity of conservatory training that explains the long-standing hegemony of *Werk-treue* among classical musicians. If disciplines function not as monoliths, as Timothy Lenoir has suggested, but as ensembles of “packaged and coadapted practices assembled in diverse local settings,” this article turns to questions of pedagogy to understand how these practices come to be arranged in more or less coherent ways.¹¹⁴

To those who have witnessed elite performance pedagogies in classical music, many of the educational ideas and practices discussed above will sound familiar, perhaps uncomfortably so. To be sure, many important continuities can be drawn between the pedagogies of the Leipzig conservatory and those employed at similar institutions today, not least the overriding focus on performing canonical works. But significant differences are visible as well, several of which arose as responses to the

¹¹² Weber, *Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, 122.

¹¹³ Bruno Latour, “The Historicity of Things,” in Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 145–73, at 155.

¹¹⁴ Timothy Lenoir, “The Discipline of Nature and the Nature of Disciplines,” in Timothy Lenoir, *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of Scientific Disciplines* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 45–74, at 71.

perceived inadequacies of conservatory training itself. Ear training, for example, became a common subject within German conservatory curricula in the decades surrounding 1900, precisely when music teachers began to discuss the limitations of written methods of music theory instruction for developing students' aural capacities.¹¹⁵ And, in a similar way to the explorations of many contemporary music education scholars, music pedagogues at the turn of the twentieth century challenged the mind/body distinction presupposed by the Leipzig model of conservatory training, borrowing heavily from psychophysiological discourses to posit decidedly different conceptions of human musicality.¹¹⁶ However tempting it might be to paint conservatories as homogenous educational cultures immune to change, the historical record instead makes clear that the pedagogies discussed in this article have been added to and contested since their inception—less a sign of weakness than of their enduring relevance for classical musicians.

ABSTRACT

The development of modern styles of elite music education played a crucial role in entrenching *Werktreue* as the dominant practice within classical music performance. Focusing on Germany's first conservatory, the Leipzig conservatory, which was founded in 1843, this article analyzes how *Werktreue*, understood as a set of tacit competencies and sensibilities that must be learned by musicians, was produced at a single historical site. Archival documents of the institution, as well as the correspondence and writings of teachers and students like Felix Mendelssohn, William Rockstro, and Ethel Smyth, show that the central objective of musical pedagogy was the faithful interpretation of musical works. Isolated as a discrete subject of training, performing musical works also functioned as the principal mode of student assessment through semesterly examinations. To transmit the necessary skills for

¹¹⁵ Max Arend, for example, put it in rather extreme terms: "All theory for the eye is dead, is nothing, if it isn't used as a vehicle for the ear." See Max Arend, "Wie wird man musikalisch?," *Der Klavier-Lehrer* 16 (1893): 149–52, at 150. See also Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, "The Place of Ear Training in Musical Education (1898)," in *Rhythm, Music and Education*, trans. Harold F. Rubinstein (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), 3–12.

¹¹⁶ The most visible proponent of these interventions was Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, although he was only one among many European conservatory professors engaged with these questions. For an emblematic example of how these educational ideas and methods attempted to bridge the divide between musical mind and musical body, see Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, "The Initiation into Rhythm (1907)," in *Rhythm, Music and Education*, trans. Harold F. Rubinstein (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), 77–92.

this paradigm of performance, pupils' bodily capacities (*Technik*) and ability to understand and interpret canonic compositions (*Vortrag*) became essential targets of conservatory pedagogy. Ubiquitous visibility among students, and the intense competition that this visibility engendered, went hand in hand with institutionalizing styles of musical expertise that continue to this day. In exploring these developments, this article asks how the productive power of modern conservatory training contributed not only to *Werktreue's* rise over a wide geography, but also to the remarkable stability with which it has pervaded performance practice across multiple generations.

Keywords: Felix Mendelssohn, music conservatory, pedagogy, performance, Ethel Smyth, *Werktreue*