

Ways of knowing and making early music today

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Introduction

Let us indeed try out everything we may learn about in every treatise, every archival document, every picture, every literary description, and the more adventurously the better. But let us not do it in a spirit of dutiful self-denial or with illusions that the more knowledge one garners, the fewer decisions one will have to make (Taruskin, 1995, p. 62).

Garnering knowledge about a culture of the past typifies the practice of what has been called, in its beginnings, the ‘early-music revival’ (Sherman, 1997). After being forgotten for a century at least, the sounds played in medieval, renaissance and baroque times have been methodically studied, particularly since the 1960s, by musicians, musicologists, instrument makers and the sort in light of re-performing past musical practices. These actors have been scrutinizing treatises, iconographical sources, archival material or even surviving instruments to accurately reproduce the sounds of the past (Lawson & Stowell, 1999). However, critics of this endeavor such as Taruskin (1995) or Haynes (2007) have pointed at the difficulties that this entails due to an ever-limited access to sources but also because of constantly changing socio-cultural paradigms which produce shifting perceptions of the past. Thus, critics claim that “a thin veneer of historicism clothes a performance style that is completely of our own time, and is in fact the most modern style around” (Taruskin, 1995, p. 155).

Today, the revival has turned into a full movement of musicologists, musicians, instrument builders and other actors whose practices are based on the study of a past musical culture. The particular performance of music within this movement has been called ‘Historically Informed or Inspired Practice’ (HIP) (Haynes, 2007; Lawson & Stowell, 1999). However, debates on what this practice should entail are still ongoing:

[W]hat might it mean for a performance to be historically informed? (...) it must mean a performance by a historically informed *performer*. In other words it is the performer that is informed and not the performance. For, after all, to be informed seems to be a mental state and a performance, needless to say, cannot be in a mental state (...) The obvious problem with this analysis of what might be meant by the historically informed performance is that it allows any actual performance to be historically informed just so long as the performer is historically informed (Kivy, 2002, p. 130).

While Kivy addresses the designation of particular practices to open a discussion on what they might in fact consist of, others focus on the actions of its practitioners to understand this culture. Irving (2013) makes use of the concept of ‘historicization’ to refer to “the act of making or representing something as historic” (p. 83), and argues that this act is what characterizes early musicians. He refers to the early music movement as “an entire culture, a mode of being, a veritable virtual Republic of Early Music where freedom of interpretation is enshrined in a set of aesthetic values that privilege innovation, the exploration of new sounds and a constant debate over interpretation” (p. 83).

From a Science and Technology (STS) perspective, such discussions are interesting in that they can serve as a starting point to explore the ways in which individuals within the musical culture give meaning to their practices. Because nowadays, it is fair to say that “research is so to speak what defines Early Music” (Boer, 2014, p. 1), this paper seeks to dive into individuals’ research practices in order to understand the ways in which they make sense of this musical culture and in turn compare this to the current body of literature on early music. The central question addressed in what follows is thus: How do contemporary early music practitioners garner knowledge about early music and how does this inform their current practice? Particular attention will be paid to the role of musical instruments, as material artefacts, within research practices. Additionally the place of innovation within such practices will be explored.

After delineating the method employed, the first section will outline a brief historical overview of the early music revival and the discords that have characterized it. The following part will depict and analyze the practices of four contemporary early music practitioners. A distinction based on the work of John Pickstone (2001, 2011) will then be made between their ways of *knowing* early music and their ways of *working* in it. By focusing on research practices based on material artefacts such as musical instruments, it will then be shown how the latter can produce both knowledge and sound. Understanding the use of instruments as epistemic artefacts to know the culture of early music contributes to the body of STS literature studying the appropriation of particular technologies within sound studies. By delving deeper into the mechanisms of innovation that practitioners exhibit today, the ‘early’ part of the culture will be questioned, opening a discussion on the future of early music.

Method

This study was majorly conducted by gathering empirical material during three in-depth, qualitative interviews. The first interviewee was Christine Ballman, a professional lute player and musicologist who has recently published a book on renaissance transcriptions of vocal polyphony for lute (Ballman, 2011). She has taught early music at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) for a number of years and is also the president of the Belgian Lute Academy. She introduced me to my second interviewee: Ariane Renel, a lute player and musicologist today working at the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) in Brussels. My third interviewee was Johannes Boer, currently coordinator of the Early Music department at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague and viola de gamba specialist. Additionally, I attended both a lute concert by Caius Hera (a Romanian lute player and musicologist), as well as a lecture by Renzo Salvador (a renowned Belgian lute maker) in Edgem during a ‘lute afternoon’ organised by the Belgian Lute Academy and the Music Academy Wilrijk. Finally, I attended the International Symposium ‘Bending Baroque’, organised in Amsterdam at the Orgelpark, in which experts from the fields of musicology, organology, artistic research and STS discussed the most recent developments in contemporary practices of early music. Even though my interviewees’ contributions are not meant to be representative of the community of contemporary early music practitioners as a whole, they do say something about today’s practices from an insider perspective (similar to what Sherman, 1997 offers). This can serve as a basis for discussion and/or revision of the body of literature on current cultures of early music.

All in-depth interviews as well as the recorded lecture were transcribed, coded and analysed; and the relevant quotes from the material in French were translated to English. Initially, open codes were used to stay close to literal material (Rivas, 2012). After open coding all transcripts, a few themes were delineated and used to structure the data. Consequently, a number of deductive codes from the literature served to contextualize the data. The analysis was based on the theoretical framework of ‘ways of knowing’ and ‘ways of working’ (Pickstone, 2001, 2011). Historian of science John Pickstone (2001) delineated different ways of knowing the world, each of them typifying (although not unique to) the epistemic endeavours of a particular area of study and time in history. In later work, Pickstone (2011), correlated each of the outlined ways of knowing to one or several ways of working in the world. Even though his framework was

constructed for the study of science, technology and medicine, I found it particularly helpful to approach the two-fold nature of early music practice, which consists of researching (or ‘knowing’) the past, and consequently performing (or ‘working’) in the present. All in all, this paper “combines a systematic orientation and a thorough empirical interest in observation with a humanities’ concern for the social and cultural context of music” (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010, p. 107).

Finally, the empirical activities were conditioned by the demands of the platform in which this paper is meant to be published: the Research Catalogue, an international database for artistic research¹. Artistic research is an emerging field of study seeking to combine artistic practices with theoretical research and written endeavors; and which is divulged, among others, through expositions on the Research Catalogue: “With the notion of ‘exposition’, we wish to suggest an operator *between* art and writing (...) it should not be taken to suggest the external exposure of practice to the light of rationality; rather, it is meant as the re-doubling of practice in order to artistically move from artistic ideas to epistemic claims” (Schwab & Borgdorff, 2014, p. 15). Within this framework, apart from sound recording, I also took photographs and filmed the interviewees and their practices when possible, as well as the material objects they used to explicate their practices. This audio-visual material is featured on the Research Catalogue, together with edited pieces of this paper as well as its full version, under the exposition “Recreating musical cultures of the past for the 21st century”², in an attempt to “trace the non-linear, relational, and heterogeneous character of this gathering” and attempt to both represent *and* perform this research by “[bringing] about the responsibility of the reader to be active in the process of discovery” (Benschop, Peters, & Lemmens, 2014, pp. 13-14).

¹ <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/>

² <http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/147144/147145>

A glimpse into the revival of early music and its discords

The practice of attempting to re-create early music performances originated in the first half of the nineteenth century, marking the beginning of what has been referred to as the ‘early-music revival’ (Sherman, 1997). By the 1960s, an ever-growing number of musicians, musicologists, instrument makers and other actors part of the movement methodically studied primary sources in the hope to recreate as accurately as possible the sounds of medieval, renaissance and baroque music (Sherman, 1997). Primary sources consisted of historical archives, iconographical evidence, literary sources, practical and theoretical treatises, philosophical texts and surviving instruments, which are said to “offer much tangible help in forging historically aware performances” (Lawson & Stowell, 1999, p. 18). In this search for accuracy in reproducing a past musical culture, particular attention was paid to a composer’s intentions, a composer’s performance practice and the actual sound of a given performance in the composer’s time (Kivy, 1995).

Key to this historical approach was the focus on ‘producing a good sound’, that is, the one produced by ‘original instruments’, whose materiality corresponded to information retrieved from primary sources (Boer, 2014). This tendency was influenced by the ‘polished’ sounds published in records at the time: “It all contributed to an exploding market of new instruments, editions of sheet music called *Urtext*, (expensive) facsimiles, reference books, specialized magazines, societies, concerts, festivals, broadcasting and finally as absolute winner the record industry” (Boer, 2014, p. 1). Additionally, a number of performers started to become specialized in what would result in the professionalization of performance practice. An instance of this tendency was the opening of a new department of baroque music in the Royal Conservatory of The Hague in 1969 by the soon-to-be-director Jan van Vlijmen (Boer, 2014).

In the 1980s however, such revival became the object of a series of heated debates centered on notions of authenticity. Critics of the revived musical culture argued for the impossibility of accurately recreating past performances for mainly two reasons: first, access to historical evidence is always limited; and second, even if most material conditions were to be reproduced in contemporary performances, music would inevitably be perceived differently today than it would have been centuries ago. Richard Taruskin (1995) argued that “even at their best and most successful (...) historical reconstructionist performances are in no sense re-creations of the past. They are quintessentially modern performances, modernist performances in fact, the product of an

esthetic wholly of our own era, no less time-bound than the performance styles they would supplant” (p. 60). Similarly, Sherman (1997) pointed at the fact that “our musical aesthetics reflect our emotional, intellectual, and spiritual lives, which differ from those of past eras” (p. 9). As a performer himself, Taruskin did not wish to oppose the practice of historical performance; rather, he argued for a ‘de-mystification’ of original sounds produced by ‘authentic period instruments’: “The object is not to duplicate the sounds of the past (...) What we are aiming at, rather, is the startling shock of newness, of immediacy, the sense of rightness that occurs when after countless frustrating experiments we feel as though we have achieved the identification of performance style with the demands of music” (Taruskin, 1995, p. 79). Similarly, Lawson & Stowell (1995) point at “the revised operations in the minds of the players, reconstructing the musical object in the here and now” as the central tenet of authenticity in today’s practice of early music (p. 153).

By the 1990s, historical performance practice was “a recognized subdiscipline both in academic musicology and of conservatory curricula” (Taruskin, 1995, p. 51). However, questions of performance were still ongoing. This was partly due to the frequent deficiency of notational signs in original scores, notably in regards to articulation and phrasing, making ambiguous the degree of expression considered adequate during a performance: “Those elements of style which a composer found it unnecessary to notate will always remain for us a foreign language, but eventually we may be able to converse freely within it as musicians, and so bring a greater range of expression to our interpretations, rather than merely pursuing some kind of unattainable ‘authenticity’ ” (Lawson & Stowell, 1999, p. 2). Before the eighteenth century, performance rules are thought to have been “dictated by the ear and designated by the players”; and this tacit dimension is nowadays reflected on the relatively empty scores (Boer, 2014, p. 3). Early music ‘empty scores’ have also been referred to as ‘thin’ writing, which “was not thin because “thick” writing hadn’t been invented yet; it was deliberate. It accommodated spontaneous input from the performers (...) This created an ad hoc environment that was reinforced by other elements: rehearsal was minimal, the leader played in the group, and the media (such as playing styles and instruments) were constantly changing” (Haynes, 2007, p. 4). By the end of the eighteenth century, articulation signs became more frequent, but “their application was inconsistent and their meaning often ambiguous” (Lawson & Stowell, 1999, p. 47).

Given the difficulties in knowing early playing styles, Sherman (1997) contends that “We must fill in the gaps with our imaginations, and we have twentieth-century imaginations” (p. 8).

Boer (2014) even speaks of a “movement of expressive liberation” (p. 4) when it comes to contemporary early music performance. Today, the impact of such debates can be observed in practices of early music that indeed comprise a dimension that is not dictated by historical sources. Similar to Taruskin (1995), who “[feels] not only free but duty-bound to invent an approach” (p. 58) in his practice of early music, many others exhibit the same attitude. In what follows, the practices of four individuals part of the contemporary culture of early music are depicted and analyzed in light of exploring their dealing with the limitations of historical material.

Four practice portraits

Renzo Salvador or the art of lute-making

In May 2015, I had the chance to attend a lecture by Renzo Salvador, specialized in the making and restoration of period plucked string instruments such as lutes, guitars, and harps. During this ‘lute afternoon’ organized by the Belgian Lute Academy in Edegem (Belgium), Renzo Salvador detailed the intricacies of his profession. With a lute product of his craft in his hands, he explained how, in order to build the instrument, he had made use of knowledge gathered through the careful study of historical sources. This historical research then informed his practice in the selection of specific types of wood and in the craft of each part’s particular shape; because each one of the instrument’s parts had a particular history that explained its shape and function:

It is very hard to transmit a lot of energy to a lute chord because it is not tense in the first place (...) So because of this, you need to build a table for the lute’s belly that is very reactive, that is, a very thin table. It has to be very light and at the same time very rigid so it can indeed catch all the energy (...) This one (knocks on the lute) is 1,3mm thick, so you see it’s very light precisely to have this type of sound. Evidently, we are not aiming for a powerful sound here, this is not the goal. The point of a lute is not to perform in front of a lot of people, it rather serves to translate the intelligence of what has been composed. It’s a medium allowing the materialization of the tablature (Renzo Salvador, 2015).

Historian of science John Pickstone characterizes different ‘ways of knowing’ the world, each one characteristic of, but not exclusive to, a particular historical period. One example is the study of natural history, typical of the scientific developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which is characterized by ‘sorting kinds’ or “the activity of describing and classifying, along with

allied activities such as collecting, storing and displaying” (Pickstone, 2011, p. 237). I argue that the activity of collecting historical but also material information about each one of the different parts of an instrument in the process of building or restoring it can be associated to this particular way of knowing. Pickstone relates these ways of knowing the world to ‘ways of working’ in the world. He indicates that natural history is strongly related to medical processes such as prognosis or diagnosis. In more creative domains however, the activity of ‘sorting kinds’ corresponds to the way of working of ‘crafting’, which is central to occupations such as manufacture:

But in domains concerned with creation rather than maintenance, the recognition of suitable materials, data or methods are also basic to activities we might usefully call crafting, such as cooking, dressmaking, house-building or making war. Here recipes of various kinds tell us how to combine and treat materials so as to reach defined ends (...) if we are interested in the ways in which people operate in their material world, this simple level of sorting, prescribing and concocting is enormously important (Pickstone, 2011, p. 237).

Renzo Salvador’s professional practice within the culture of early music can be related to the one of ‘crafting’, in which historical sources such as treatises function as *recipes* informing his combination of different materials into the making of a lute. However, a creative dimension inherent to both his practice and the culture he works in is added to the manufacturing process:

A lute such as this one has history attached to it. I designed it by following the concepts of the time. This rosette for example has a whole story behind it. There is a reason why I carved such specific little shapes in it. But well you see, if I want to stay creative in my practice, I have to add my part of liberties to it... without committing historical mistakes! (Renzo Salvador, 2015).

Here we see how, in his way of *working*, a part of liberties is added, suggesting the introduction of new elements in the practice of building historically informed lutes. Renzo Salvador’s practice could then be related to what has been coined as a ‘retro-innovation’ or the “reconstruction of early musical instruments in today’s musical performance practices” (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010, pp. 107-108).

For Ariane Renel, a musicologist and lute player, period instruments guide contemporary performances. In describing her lute practice, she emphasized how, when playing with period instruments, she has to adapt to their materiality and be perceptive to how they react to embodied actions:

When you play on period instruments such as the lute, you have to adapt to the instrument so to speak. It's not like a nice modern piano in which you press a key and then 'clack' you have an automatically clear sound. With the lute you really have to try as the instrument is very ungrateful, you have to try and see how the instrument reacts, what it can give you... and then you have to be at its service and realise 'ok, this it can do, and this it cannot do'. It's a very tactile approach actually... You do not play with the sound that you want to have in mind, you play while trying to feel how your instrument reacts to what you ask from it, you see? And this is due to its construction... it's a very light instrument (...) and therefore you have to go find your sounds in its fineness... (Ariane Renel, 2015).

The fact that Ariane Renel focuses on one specific component of the performance, namely the materiality of the instrument, to find her way in performance practice could be related to the way of knowing Pickstone refers to as 'experimentalism'. Experimentalism is originally characteristic of the natural sciences and finds its beginnings in the nineteenth century. This way of knowing consists of deconstructing a certain area of study into particular elements, delving into those and experimenting with them in light of analyzing these different objects as 'compounds' (Pickstone, 2011, p. 239). The activity of deconstructing her performance into material and immaterial dimensions, focusing on the materiality of the instrument and experimenting with that, I argue, can be associated with 'experimentalism'.

Pickstone refers to experimentalism as being strongly related to processes of re-describing, reclassifying or refining technical processes; and ultimately re-assembling the different re-worked elements in innovative reconstructions. Ariane Renel's approach in which performance is the product of refined technical processes obtained through experimentation can be typified as this particular way of working. Here, the lute can be seen both as "a musical instrument and as an experimental setting for acquiring knowledge" about early music performance (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010, p. 118). Similar to Renzo Salvador, Ariane's practice or way of *working* entails a dimension that is personal and to some extent, innovative. Again, this tension between historical

and innovative dynamics suggests that her practice be typified as a ‘retro-innovation’ or “the re-invention of techniques for playing such instruments” (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010, pp. 107-108).

Christine Ballman or the gift of research in lute practice

But you see, the fact that I am sort of sitting in between two chairs is nonetheless a strength. Because well, the scientific work I have done on the lute... Let’s say that I have been able to contribute certain things that someone who does not play couldn’t have found. So you see, I try [positions left hand on the neck of the lute] and then I tell myself: ‘But no, this is not possible! It’s unplayable! Why is this unplayable?’ (Christine Ballman, 2015).

The two chairs in between which Christine Ballman is sitting are on the one hand research in the field of musicology and on the other hand, the professional practice of the guitar, the vihuela and the lute. She has spent more than 30 years in between those two chairs, wrapped up in the world of early music. By studying renaissance scores transcribed from vocal polyphony to lute, she stumbled upon ‘unplayable’ parts which made her wonder about the intentions of its author. This triggered a research process in which she found out that, sometimes, in the renaissance, certain lute tablatures were composed by intellectuals who were not music practitioners, and who did not notice that their writing was sometimes not ideally adapted to the practice itself. Some other times, it appeared that composers purposely wrote in order to challenge players’ techniques and capabilities. Another possibility pointed at the pieces being written only to be read as part of a sort of anthology and not played, therefore the confusing fingering. Discovering the possible explanations for a particular musical writing made Christine Ballman take the liberty to modify her own tablature to her convenience:

But when you start studying many different sources, you see that you can have copies of a same piece in different sources but with changes, for example in fingering. And then well, you tell yourself that, after all, if that one did it like that, if that other one found the same note a little further... well actually I can maybe do the fingering that suits me, because probably others did what was convenient for them. And you see like this you have plenty of elements that you can retrieve from research for your practice and from your practice for your research. And I find this is the most fascinating (Christine Ballman, 2015).

Similar to Ariane Renel’s approach to performance practice, Christine Ballman’s could equally be typified as the one of experimentalism. In this case, the performance is informed by a two-fold

process of historical research and experimentation around one particular element of the performance: the lute tablature. Christine Ballman's approach of digging deeper into that element, experimenting with new findings and consequently producing an alternative fingering and way of performing, can be typified as the previously mentioned way of working of refining technical processes within an experimental setting. Once again, a dimension in which personal and innovative readings of the past culture of early music emerges, pointing at the generation a retro-innovation in performance. However, Christine Ballman's explicit acknowledgement of introducing a modification in performance practice as a result of research suggests that many other transformations might be occurring in a culture defined by research. This calls for a rethinking of the 'retro' and 'early' elements in relation to such dynamics of innovation.

Johannes Boer dwelling in

You can read but the moment you start doing, you discover that there is an actor thing to it; that you cannot find out other than by doing (...) Because we have this explicit knowledge which is the basis of early music as a movement, such as treatises... they give you indications how to play things (...) And then there is the other side of the performance: the practitioner, which of course was in those days the main thing. You were just doing things. And very little of these actions were written down. So it was the implicit or tacit knowledge, which was mostly guiding musical life in those days. What I'm trying to do now is connecting our tacit knowledge to the tacit knowledge of 400 years ago (Johannes Boer, 2015).

Johannes Boer makes a clear distinction between what he considers an explicit and an implicit dimensions in performance practice. During our interview, he explained how he approaches early music through artistic research, both by playing and writing about it. He uses the concept of 'dwelling in' or trial and error (Polanyi, 1967) to make sense of what happens today when music practitioners are confronted with so-to-speak incomplete scores, missing some articulation signs. He argues that it is by a process of playing, once and again the same piece, trying different options, changing it, that a performer will understand how to play it, as eventually he will find *his own* articulation signs, his own relation to it. He speaks of 'surrendering' to the work of art and 'living in it':

The discovery of the instruments' possibilities went along side with discovering contexts of their functioning. By thus 'feeling' oneself into the unknown the image was gradually completed. Knowledge obtained in this way is basically personal and so is its application. Somehow the described process has kinship with the creative processes in composition, because a great deal of imagination is required to put things in its place convincingly (Boer, 2014, p. 4).

At first, Johannes Boer's approach to early music appeared to me as what Pickstone (2001) refers to as 'world readings' or hermeneutics, which consists of understanding the world by attributing certain meanings to it and therefore interpreting it. However, soon a different underlying process was suggested:

Because everybody is unique, has its own unique experience, which is introducing something which was not there before... I wouldn't call it interpretation because it implies that there is a fixed shape in the first place, whereas it should be alive. The artificial thing is that we think that we can have a sort of stable image of the past... whereas it was as lively as it is now probably! (Johannes Boer, 2015).

By pointing at the liveliness of such practice through time, Johannes Boer implied that there is no 'right or wrong' way of playing early music today, that is, within the boundaries of basic performance rules, because, after all, "A dissonant is a dissonant, because it has this specific frequency (...) Things like the overtones, spectrum... These things were known back then, and they were working with it" (Johannes Boer, 2015). Rather than world-reading or interpreting early music, Johannes Boer, similar to Ariane Renel, focuses on the materiality of the instrument to explore and in turn perform a musical culture of the past, referring to the instrument as a 'bridge to the past':

[T]he knowledge is indeed in the instrument, in the physical eh... substance of the instrument. It came from perfecting knowledge. So they have been inventing instruments, trying out, changing them... until they had this sort of... stable form. And the experiences of the past players are actually in this form, since they decided that it would be the best. And now if you can't play you're just confronted with the instrument... and you start playing, you sort of re-construct the body activity of that time. That's why it's sort of key to open... you see? (Johannes Boer, 2015).

The activity of focusing on one element of the performance, namely the tacit dimension, to experiment with the material affordances of the instrument can again be associated to the way of knowing that Pickstone (2011) outlined as experimentalism. Johannes Boer's approach of dwelling into this tacit dimension, experimenting with it and consequently producing a personal (therefore

new) way of performing a particular piece can be typified as the corresponding way of working. Here again, the instrument becomes an “experimental setting for acquiring knowledge” about early music performance (Bijsterveld & Peters, 2010, p. 118). Again, an explicit acknowledgement of having to find a personal connection to the music points at a dynamics of transformation occurring in the culture of early music, calling for a rethinking of its very definition, meaning and significance.

Discussion and further study

As an outsider to the world of early music, I have sought, with this paper, to approach this musical culture from an STS perspective. Following the indication that today, “research is so to speak what defines Early Music” (Boer, 2014, p. 1), I have explored the research practices of individuals part of this culture. More concretely, I have focused on the materiality of such research practices, namely the role of the instrument in the two-fold process of studying the past and creating a present. By using John Pickstone’s theoretical framework of ways of knowing the world and its corresponding ways of working in the world, I have typified the practices of four individuals part of the contemporary culture of early music. Although Pickstone outlined this framework within “the general area of science, technology and medicine (STM)” (Pickstone, 2011, p. 235), it has proved to be a particularly suitable approach to the study of the two-fold nature of contemporary practices of early music: looking back, or knowing the past; and looking forward, or working in the present. I was particularly interested in exploring the relation between historical accuracy in research practices and creative and/or innovative processes in performance practices; and in this way explore what is really still ‘early’ about this musical culture.

The main finding of this empirical study is the fact that an innovative dimension seems to permeate contemporary practices of early music, questioning indeed the ‘earlyness’ of the culture. Whereas the four actors hereby portrayed exemplify a meticulous reading of historical sources, it is in their *ways of working* that creative, imaginative or innovative elements are added to their practice. In fact, one of them, Christine Ballman, is explicit in that, the more research she does, the more liberties she takes in her musical practice. Thus, we are reminded of Taruskin’s (1995) cautionary quote in that, it is only an illusion that “the more knowledge one garners, the fewer decisions one will have to make (p. 62). It seems indeed as, the more research is done, the more

innovative processes permeate contemporary practices, shaping a sort of renewal of the early music culture. It could be argued that, ever since the 1960s' 'revival' (Sherman, 1997), this culture has been in a constant state of renewal. We must be reminded however, that roughly until the 'authenticity debates' of the 1980s, historical performance practice focused on 'producing a good sound' (Boer, 2014), that is, faithfulness to historical sources was the priority, suppressing any liberties that might deviate from them. Thus, innovative processes are only a recent phenomenon, suggesting that different stages within modern practices of early music exist, and that currently, instead of a revival, a dynamic of renewal is taking place.

Concretely, this renewal was exemplified in this paper by Renzo Salvador's acknowledgement of the creative nature of his work, which requires him to add his "part of liberties to it". It was illustrated by Ariane Renel's performance guided by the material characteristics of the instrument, instead of attempting to copy or reproduce past performances. Christine Ballman explicated how, through her musicological research, she found variations in fingering in particular pieces; and this informed her decision to also modify the original fingering to her preference. Coinciding with such personal readings and practices of early music, Johannes Boer elaborated on his focus on the implicit or tacit dimension of historical performance, and that connecting today's tacit dimension to the past's requires 'dwelling in', finding a personal connection to each piece and making use of imagination in order to put things into place convincingly in contemporary performances. Johannes Boer moreover highlighted the need to continuously search for and re-read historical sources, and experiment with instruments in order to keep early music alive; because the alternative of systematically copying illusively authentic performances will signify a stagnation of historical performance.

Contemporary practices point thus at a renewal within the culture of early music. As opposed to the revival of the 1960s in which the priority was producing a historically accurate sound; today the epistemic authority of historical sources seems to be complemented by a form of aesthetic authority emerging from personal practices. Taruskin (1995) already highlighted that performance practice is indeed "completely of our time, and is in fact the most modern style around" (p. 155). Similarly, Johannes Boer stated that each historical period will always have a different reading of the past due to ever-changing socio-cultural contexts. But it is precisely because of this constant state of change that performance practice always needs to keep experimenting and re-reading the past. Moreover, early musical scores have the particularity of

being relatively ‘empty’, or exempt of articulation signs (Boer, 2014; Lawson & Stowell, 1999); and it is known that improvisation was an inherent element of past performances (Haynes, 2007). It is because of the *intangible* components of a performance practice defined by research (as a culture that is musical and that is based on ‘bare’ scores written for improvisation) that I argue for the integration of artistic research as a necessary component of historically informed performance and, in a broader sense, of the contemporary culture of early music. Artistic research can indeed complement the epistemic authority of historical sources by connecting to the past through personal practices such as the ones described in the four portraits of this paper. It can provide for the type of organic and experimental research framework that a historically informed performance demands according to changing socio-cultural trends, and thus readings of the past.

As we have seen, an STS perspective can allow the study of a particular musical culture by exploring the uses of material artefacts such as musical instruments within the research practices defining it. This opens a discussion on the tension between old and new dimensions in early music. For further study, it might be interesting to take a closer look at today’s inherent dynamics of innovation and what this means for its significance, meaning and definition. Additionally, developing a vocabulary to pinpoint the different types or ways of innovation within this musical culture would be useful; for example, in order to better differentiate between terms such as an innovation and a retro-innovation. Finally, artistic research endeavors in the field of early music appear as a promising set of practices to complement strictly musicological or historical readings of the past and to bridge research and practice. It can allow contemporary performers “to know... in the first place ask themselves the question: where am I standing, what am I doing... in relation to other things... other people... and then the past of course” (Johannes Boer, 2015).

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Interviews

- Interview with Christine Ballman, April 22, 2015. Uccle, Brussels.
- Interview with Johannes Boer, May 7, 2015. Royal Conservatory, The Hague.
- Interview with Ariane Renel, May 10, 2015, Muziekacademie Wilrijk, Edegem.
- Interview with Michael Schwab, May 11, 2015 (via Skype).

Lectures

- Lecture by Renzo Salvador, May 10, 2015, Muziekacademie Wilrijk, Edegem.