



Association Européenne des
Conservatoires, Académies de
Musique et Musikhochschulen

AEC Artistic Training Panel - Early Music Summit 2020

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Questions addressed in this statement

- 1. What is the importance of being historically informed in live and recorded performance?*
- 2. How does EM/HiP/HP contribute in a meaningful way to society*
- 3. What is the relationship between the subjective and objective aspects of music, research and the actual performance? Is there a dichotomy between theory and artistic practice?*

First of all, I would like to point out that I don't use the term HIP anymore; I prefer the term CIP. Two reasons:

- a) the component 'historically' in HIP is actually self-evident and therefore redundant, since we deal with historical music anyway, and
- b) the component 'culturally' in CIP underlines the fact that music, i.e. both composition *and* performance, always manifests itself within and is also a reflection of a specific stylistic and cultural context. The advantage of using the term CIP, furthermore, is that it underlines the fact that this approach is not exclusive to historical music, but that it applies to music from all cultures that can be perceived as being different or 'other'. In this I fully subscribe to the ideas of the so-called "new musicology" and especially of authors such as Susan McClary.

Secondly, it is important to define what the questions precisely are that CIP seeks to answer. Applied to historical music alone, I believe the main questions are:

1. What could the 'aural image' have been that the composer had in mind?
2. What are the stylistic and cultural conventions that pertained at the moment of the work's creation, and what was the original social function of that composition?
3. What was the role of the performers who first performed it; what kind and amount of personal input would have been expected or at least accepted from them?

Having carried out this type of research myself for the better part of my life, I must say that what it did for me is that it primarily led to a deeper understanding

- of historical serendipities
- of the endless variety of possibilities
- and of the many lacunae in our knowledge.

And it is in this context that I have problems with what I believe to be a general tendency in today's Early Music world: being historically, or culturally informed and to engage in the critical study of historical sources is being increasingly associated with tedious, uninteresting, museum-oriented, and purely reproductive

music-making. It has also been considered to be unreconcilable with such important modern imperatives as originality, innovation, and character. In essence, however, this opposition is non-existent and its problematization false. Indeed, it is precisely the critical study of historical sources, within a framework of, and with an attitude of enlightened cultural literacy, inspired perhaps by the concept of *Bildung*, that will inevitably lead to the insight how necessary and even imperative it is to make personal, original, contextual, and creative artistic choices, free of random impositions. It even often leads to subversive opinions and visions, which is definitely always refreshing in cultural life.

Thirdly, and in view of this last remark, I want to point out that CIP, since it clearly constitutes a process-oriented method rather than a goal-oriented one, cannot longer be considered the sole province of Early Music musicians. I know many Early Music musicians, and sometimes even very famous ones, who are very poorly or not informed at all, whereas I encounter an increasing number of very curious and culturally highly informed modern classical musicians whose main questions are: what does that cultural-historical information (or lack thereof) imply for me? How can I benefit from it for my own performance? What would be, in accordance with the circumstances in which I have to perform this work, the most adequate, effective and convincing way to transplant an artwork from the past into modern cultural life? What artistic decisions do I need to take in order to successfully reconcile my interpretation of the past with modern realities?

So, in conclusion: for me, CIP constitutes the touchstone for intelligent and interesting music making. CIP reconciles the value of caring for our cultural heritage with the importance of a vibrant, rich and diversified modern cultural life. It also completely dissolves the supposed dichotomy between scientific objectivity and artistic subjectivity, because cultural historical research is per definition already subjective to a certain extent, and because artistic research is imperative for any effective and convincing performance. In conclusion, I would eventually not mind the loss of Early Music, but I would definitely deeply deplore the loss of CIP.

Questions not addressed in the statement above

4. What is the role of vocation in music and how can or should we be encouraging and nurturing this?

I don't like the term vocation; I prefer passion. For me, passion is the essential flame of life, both in music and elsewhere. As a teacher it is not the transfer of knowledge and know how that is my prime concern, but rather to ignite passion in my students and to continuously feed that flame until it becomes an unquenchable fire. As a performer I try to achieve the same. And there is only one way of achieving this, I believe: by being passionate yourself, both as a performer and as a teacher.

5. "Keeping it live" - are we currently experiencing the death of live music? Will the consumer miss the live experience if they've never had it? Can the current digital world enhance our experience in EM/HiP/HP?

-Death of live music: difficult to predict. I hope not. However, for me personally, as for many colleagues, I presume, things look pretty grim at the moment.

-Miss the live experience: It is too early and therefore too hypothetical to imagine people who have never had the experience of the live experience. I cannot answer that question.

-Digital world: yes, I believe it can, since the digital world opens the possibility to perform in more adequate and fitting venues.