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***Expressive gesture and style in Schubert song performance:
Discussion of benefits and drawbacks of the studies***

The strength of the first two studies was to examine vocal style and interpretation, and how these changed during the 20th century in a systematic and objective manner. The inclusion of both performing style and the microstructure of performance gave the unexpected insight that the microstructures of performances have been much more stable over time than performing styles. This suggests relative generality of the generative processes responsible for expressive performance of music (Sloboda, 1983; Clarke, 1988) as well as cultural constraints on performing style.

Although the measurements included considerable detail about the microstructure of performances, they were restricted to variations at the bar level and above. The result was most likely an increase in the comparability and similarity between singers. To specify the vocal style of specific singers, it is probably necessary to include details below the bar level.

The interpretation of the microstructure of performances was done using a model of the structure and emotion of the music. This model was fitted to the measurements of performance variations in order to account for (explain) the variations. The fit of the model to the data was much better for some of the performance parameters than others. It could account well for variations in tempo and dynamics, medium well for variations in vibrato, and not well for variations in the position of pitch glides. A good fit might mean that the model is indeed appropriate. However, the study is only explorative and it is possible that a different model could account for the observed variations equally well.

For example, the model does account well for the position of downward pitch glides in *Du bist die Ruh*. This is probably due to the coincidence of the position of downward melodic leaps and structural aspects of the music included in the model. To include the position of melodic leaps into the model would probably have increased the fit of the model to the pitch glides data. This was not done, because it would have meant an ad-hoc adaptation of the model.

The strength of the study on the perception of performance on record was its inclusion of multiple aspects of perception as well as the systematic variation of reproduction quality (effect of version). By using original recordings, flat transfers and commercial reissues of recordings, it could limit the use of artificial material and artificial manipulations to a minimum and ensure ecological validity of the material.

This procedure did mean that it was not possible to strictly separate between the effect of familiarity with performing style on the perception of performance on record and the effect of recording conditions. The two generally varied together: listeners were less familiar with the style of early performances and these early performances were differently recorded. In the interpretation of the results, this

connection between familiarity with recording and performing style should be taken into account.

The use of ratings to assess listeners' perception of music is an often-used procedure. It is powerful in highlighting general trends among participants and can be used to test the influence of hypothesised effects.

Nevertheless the use of ratings has its drawbacks. First of all, it does not allow listeners to give a free response. Secondly, it demands a conscious judgment from listeners for responses that may generally be subconscious. And, finally, it may ask listeners to listen in ways that are unnatural for them. The result might be that listeners do not know what to do and inconsistency between them is high. On the other hand, the result might also be that listeners develop a strategy for doing the task that is initial and little developed, with the likely result that consistency is high. Concerning the experiments reported in the study, most participants seemed to have little difficulties in understanding the tasks with the exception of the ratings of tension and emotional valence. The result was that consistency in ratings of tension and emotional valence was low.

References

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- Clarke, E.F. (1988). Generative principles in music performance. In J. A. Sloboda (Ed.), *Generative processes in music. The psychology of performance, improvisation and composition* (pp. 1-26). Oxford: Clarendon Press.