

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
Unit of Assessment: D35 Music, Drama and Performing Arts (Music)
Title of case study: Reshaping Concert Life: discovering a new concert protocol for romantic music
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Kenneth Hamilton's research on piano performance practices and concert history has had a significant role in "preserving, conserving and presenting cultural heritage" in music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has made a major cultural impact on public awareness and understanding of the original performance traditions of Romantic concert music. • It has influenced the concert approach to this repertory by a number of top-flight concert pianists. • Beyond the submitting HEI, it has informed teaching and students in the Higher Education sector through masterclasses, lectures, and lecture-recitals. <p>The book itself has achieved remarkably high international sales, widespread good reviews (in the general as well as specialist press), and associated interviews.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr Kenneth Hamilton's book (see R1 below) was the fruit of several years of research, carried out by the author, then a Senior Lecturer at Birmingham University Music Department, from 2000-2007.</p> <p>The book mounts a strong challenge to modern perceptions of classical music and concert-giving by means of an in-depth historical investigation into the evolving interrelations between performers and audiences, into approaches to programme-building, improvisational practices (particularly as they relate to the extempore performance of preludes and transitions), attitudes to fidelity to the score, and styles and techniques of playing in general over the last two centuries. It opens up to pianists and audiences many possibilities concerning the performance and reception of piano music, and its presentation in concert, that had to a large extent been lost in modern performance practice.</p> <p>Hamilton's research has, for example, demonstrated that improvisation -- particularly the custom of playing extempore 'preludes' and transitions between pieces -- was a vital part of classical concert giving well into the 20th century, and therefore for nearly one hundred years longer than was previously thought. Moreover, it shows that the interaction between performers and audiences remained unlike that prevalent today for much longer than previously assumed. For example, the customs of sitting in complete silence throughout a classical concert, and refraining from all applause except at the end of a piece, are proved (in contrast to hitherto received opinion) to be surprisingly late developments, dating in many countries from the 1930s or later.</p> <p><i>After the Golden Age</i> has therefore given a new historical foundation to the arguments of some musicians and cultural commentators in favour of a more liberated and accessible style of classical music making than is customary today. It has also (see below) prompted professional pianists to adopt a freer, more improvisatory, and less text-obsessed attitude to the performance of the standard repertoire. Evidence cited in the book includes contemporary treatises, early recordings and piano rolls, memoirs of masterclasses, and concert reviews. The monograph has, additionally, documented and discussed in detail the methodology and technique of several specific aspects of 19th and early 20th century piano playing, such as the role of arpeggiation of chords, asynchronisation of the hands, syncopated pedalling, and attitudes to tone production, all with a view to the judicious reintroduction of these to modern performance-practice.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>R1) <i>After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008 [2007]) ISBN 978-0-19-517826-5 [available from HEI on request]</p>
Evidence of quality:

Completion of this research was facilitated by an AHRC research leave award. The book was awarded a certificate of merit by the ARSC (Association for Recorded Sound Collections) in the USA, was a CHOICE “Outstanding Academic Title” for 2009, and included in the *Daily Telegraph* “Books of the Year” for 2008.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The concert protocols challenged by Hamilton’s research, though of comparatively recent vintage, are deeply engrained. Proof of their lack of historical foundation opened up possibilities for more interactive modes of engagement that have resonances also for modern society. The breadth and depth of engagement with Hamilton’s findings suggest that he has realised a widely felt need for a fresh approach to the repertory it addresses.

One significant area of impact has been the **changed approaches of concert pianists**. Between 2008 and July 2013 a number of top-flight pianists have taken on practices based on Hamilton’s research in their concert performances and writings. Prominent among these is Vladimir Feltsman, who, having read the book, began to introduce linking improvisations between conventionally discreet items of his concert programmes. It was reported to Hamilton that as a result of his book, Feltsman had been ‘been making a habit of precluding... [he] did so [at a Carnegie Hall concert in December, 2008], with no pause between the two Liszt-arranged Schubert songs or between [Schubert’s] *Wohin* and the [Liszt] Sonata’ (see source 1 below). Both Malcolm Bilson and Stephen Hough have referred to the book in their own writings (Hough example in source 2). Hough and Steven Osborne (both international concert artists) have also consulted Hamilton personally to discuss the direct application of his research to their playing, and have informed him of their application of it in their concerts since 2008.

Cultural impact on **public awareness and understanding of the original performance traditions** of Romantic concert music is indicated primarily by the book’s high level of sales, far beyond that normally expected for an academic work (source 1). Following an extensive leading feature in the Arts Section of *The New York Times* early in 2008, entitled “Concertgoers: Please Clap, Shout or Talk At Any Time”, *After the Golden Age* became for a period one of the best-selling music titles in the United States. According to Oxford University Press, it was in January 2008 selling around 64 copies per day on Amazon.com alone. Between January 2008 and July 2013 various music critics referred to Hamilton’s research in reference to the assessment of classical music performances (for example Martin Kettle reviewing Daniel Barenboim in *Prospect Magazine* in February 2008, and Alexandra Alter on new approaches to classical improvisation in the *Wall Street Journal* in November 2008, the latter written after a telephone interview with Hamilton - sources 3 and 4). Quotes from and references to *After the Golden Age* have featured on the websites of orchestras, festivals and piano competitions, including those of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Festival for Creative Pianists in the US, and the Portland International Piano Festival. Discussions of its conclusions have and continue to appear on websites devoted to classical music performance, including the *Classical Music Guide*, *The San Francisco Classical Voice*, *Piano Street* and *Stereophile* (examples sources 5 and 6 from 2008 and 2013 respectively).

The international reach of the research can be further demonstrated by the level of media attention attracted by *After the Golden Age*, in both the general and specialist press and broadcast media. In the UK, it was a *Daily Telegraph* ‘Book of the Year’ for 2008 (‘the most irresistible music book I read this year’, according to Damian Thompson). In 2008, reviews appeared in an extensive range of non-academic publications in addition to *The New York Times*, including the *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Birmingham Post*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Buffalo News*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *The Gramophone*, *Classic FM Magazine*, *Symphony Magazine*, *Chamber Music Magazine*, *The Oldie*, *Wholenote Magazine*, *La scena musicale*, *Piano Magazine*, *The Arts Journal*, *Netherlands Radio 4*, *Piano Journal* and *Commentary Magazine*. In July 2010, material from the book was extensively featured in a heated debate on the future of Classical Music between journalists Heather Macdonald and Greg Sandow, carried on in the pages of the New York *City Journal* and the US *Arts Journal*. Indeed, the initial *City Journal* article by Heather Macdonald (“Classical Music’s New Golden Age”) was partly catalysed by Hamilton’s book, which she called “a mesmerizing study”.

Impact case study (REF3b)

Hamilton was consulted by Macdonald before the publication of this article, and he gave her further supporting historical information (source 7).

Since the publication of the book, Hamilton has been interviewed about the significance of his work for the transformation of current concert-giving practices by radio stations in the UK (Radio 3), Canada (CBC), the US (WQXR: New York Public Radio), Singapore (Radio Singapore International) and Australia (ABC, repeated a year after its first airing). He has also himself appeared as a pianist and presenter on the *Deutsche Welle* television Channel (2009) in a broadcast syndicated in both Europe and the US, and on Turkish Television.

Cultural impact produced by Hamilton's book has thus been channelled through both print and broadcast media, aided by specific and directed knowledge-transfer activity when he was working in the University of Birmingham Music Department (until October 2012). Hamilton gave regular lecture-recitals in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts by means of which he presented his research to a broad public. He repeated some of these lecture-recitals at music festivals throughout the world. In the 2008-2013 period, these included the "Beethoven Unwrapped" Festival in London's King's Place Concert Hall and the International Chopin and Liszt Forums in London's Purcell Room (2010 and 2011). Hamilton has performed in the Esplanade, Singapore (the country's main concert venue), every year since 2005, which has led to repeated coverage in the Far East of both his academic and practical work, most notably in the Singapore *Straits Times*, on Singapore Radio, and even in the *China Times*. These concerts included practical demonstrations of the art of prelude and transitioning described in *After the Golden Age*—indeed, one of the *Straits Times* reviews drew specific attention to this. Hamilton additionally made a number of international appearances, for example: the world premieres (2009) of Hamilton's reconstructed edition of Liszt's *Hexameron* for piano and orchestra in Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Classical Symphony; and of the original (manuscript) version of Liszt's Sextet for Piano and Strings (2009). The versions of the pieces played in these concerts had been reconstructed in the light of the research in *After the Golden Age*.

The research has **informed teaching and students in the Higher Education sector** through Hamilton's invitations to give guest lectures, lecture-recitals and masterclasses since the publication of the book. Audiences on these occasions have comprised not only pianists, and indeed not only music students, but also a large cross-section of the substantial music-loving public familiar with the kind of repertoire on which Hamilton's research bears. Events of this nature took place at such institutions as the Royal Academy of Music in London (annually since 2010), The Royal Northern College of Music (29/2/12), Bath Spa University (1/12/10), Middlesex University (14/10/9), Goldsmiths' College, London (1/5/12), Royal Holloway, London (7/2/12), Kings College, London (18/1/12), Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea (15/11/11), the Singapore Teachers' Academy for the Arts (STAR) (4-5/4/12), the New England Conservatory, Boston, US (9/7/11), Brown University, Providence, US (4/11/11), the University of Minho, Portugal (26/3/12), Musikeon Conservatory, Valencia, Spain (12-14/5/10), and other institutions worldwide.

In summary, then, **Hamilton's** study and the events that have emerged from it have made, and continue to make, an impact across the HE sector, on professional practitioners and critics, and on general public awareness of a centrally popular sector of the classical concert repertoire. It has, consequently, had a significant role in "preserving, conserving and presenting cultural heritage" in music.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] Factual statement provided by Senior Music Editor at OUP
- [2] <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/stephenhough/100006153/depressed-again-the-not-so-soft-pedal/> - see comments section after the article
- [3] <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/10019-performancenotes/#.Um6kOFN8Cs8>
- [4] <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB122781195665062021>
- [5] <http://www.stereophile.com/asweseeit/408awsi/index.html>
- [6] <http://www.pianostreet.com/smf/index.php?topic=50223.0>
- [7] http://www.city-journal.org/2010/20_3_urb-classical-music.html