

British Forum for Ethnomusicology

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Reviewed work(s):
Source: *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Vol. 15, No. 1, The Past in Music (Jun., 2006), pp. 87-111
Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20184541
Accessed: 05/06/2012 12:55

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Ethnomusicology Forum
Vol. 15, No. 1, June 2006, pp. 87–111

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Locating the Past in the Present: Living Traditions and the Performance of Early Music

Jonathan Shull

This study examines the philosophies, values and ethics of Early Music performers who use living musics to inform and enhance their performance styles and techniques. Early Music performers seek to revive lost traditions of performance, relying on spare descriptions and fragmentary evidence. Since the 1950s, several generations of visionary performers have turned to living musical traditions for inspiration and collaboration in the recreation of earlier European repertoires. Early Music specialists who follow this path hold their informants and collaborators in high esteem and treat their beliefs with respect. They often avoid surface aspects of the musics on which they draw, instead favouring large-scale structural features and performance techniques from which they can develop models for their own work. While many have criticized this approach as an appeal to the exotic and as an extension of 19th-century orientalizing projects, few scholarly studies have sought to understand it from the point of view of the musicians themselves. Ethnography in the field of Early Music – in conjunction with the published writings of the musicians – provides a valuable perspective on this living art. Western classical music in general is under-represented in ethnomusicological research and deserves sympathetic, though not necessarily uncritical, ethnographies. Collaborative projects between historical musicologists and ethnomusicologists on the place of past music in the present would benefit both fields.

Keywords: Early Music; Historically Informed Performance; Performance Practice; Thomas Binkley; Altramar; Benjamin Bagby; Joel Cohen

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ISSN 1741-1912 (print)/ISSN 1741-1920 (online) © 2006 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/17411910600634361

The study of historical performance practice maintains as one of its fundamental principles the recreation or revival of lost traditions. Few living European musical cultures can claim direct lineage to medieval practice and ritual. Although editions of certain bodies of medieval music – especially vernacular lyric poetry – were made available as early as the late 18th century, unmediated access to original modes of musical performance and expression remains elusive and the conclusions drawn controversial. Still, in spite of the vagaries and inadequacies of the surviving written evidence, intrepid performers of these repertoires have, over the course of more than a century, established a vital and confident, if not always consistent, approach to the realization of these musics, the residues of which survive only in spare descriptive notations and fleeting literary references.[1] Ethnography in the field of Early Music performance presents an opportunity to explore Early Music as a creative living tradition rather than as an inevitably imperfect mirror of lost cultures.[2] Furthermore, greater attention to the philosophies and methodologies of Early Music performers – both through ethnography and closer scrutiny of their own published writings and interviews – exposes gaps and misunderstandings in the literature, both scholarly and popular, on the motivations behind the use of living traditions for informing Early Music performance.

While the processes, methodologies and values of reproduction of medieval music have varied according to time and place, venue and audience, modern performers of this music have turned frequently to living oral traditions as a sonic, as well as technical, resource for the (re)establishment of new "old" practices. Performers and ensembles such as David Munroe, Musica Reservata and the Studio der frühen Musik, among others, have actively engaged musical cultures perceived by Western performers to have links to musical traditions otherwise unavailable to them. This is true especially for conservative traditions held to possess a certain longevity – or at least a continuity with past traditions.[3] The invocation of these various traditions by early pioneers of medieval music performance provided a precedent or model for the recreation and revitalization of medieval music performance, thus establishing a modern tradition of medieval music performance.

The Binkley Legacy

> In January of 1995, I arrived in Bloomington, Indiana to begin studies for a master's degree in Early Music performance. Only four months later, the director, founder and guiding light of the Early Music Institute, Professor Thomas Binkley, passed away.[4] Shortly after his death, his students and colleagues sat in a circle in a small house near the university to tell stories about Binkley, whom they affectionately referred to as "The Bink". I was honoured and surprised to have been invited to this gathering. After all, I had only met the man twice, once for an impromptu pre-admission interview and later for an audition for his programme early one Saturday morning. Binkley's only reply, or at least the only one I can recall after I had sung my mediocre renditions of Dowland and Handel, was, "Do you always sound like that?" I stammered and hemmed and hawed, sheepishly

> muttering something about it being rather early in the morning to sing Handel arias. But it was too late. I had been Binked!
>
> *Binked*: To have encountered Thomas Binkley in such a way as to be left stammering and muttering things sheepishly.

As I later discovered, a personal "Binking", though potentially embarrassing, nevertheless carried with it certain benefits, bestowing upon its hapless recipient a badge of honour, however dubious or humiliating. In fact, such occurrences were so cherished that tales of Binkings constituted the entirety of that contemplative evening some ten years ago.

One story in particular caught my attention at the time and has periodically revisited my thoughts, long after the completion of my master's degree and well into my ever more obscure musicological work in medieval music and music theory, and even more often of late as I return to active performance of medieval song. To refresh my memory, I turned to the person from whom I first heard the tale, my friend and colleague Catherine Hawkes, a doctoral student studying recorder performance and collegium directing at the Early Music Institute. She relates that, shortly after her arrival at the Institute, in Binkley's medieval performance practice seminar – a venue that seems to have generated a number of infamous Binkings – the students anxiously asked him to discuss his use of contemporary Middle Eastern and North African music or musical techniques and ideas in the performance of medieval music, a process Binkley had made famous in his work with the Studio der frühen Musik in the 1960s and 1970s. Binkley replied curtly, "I'm not interested in that any more", leaving the students flummoxed and disappointed (Hawkes interview 2003).[5]

In spite of Binkley's casual dismissal on this occasion, the use of various contemporary traditional and classical musics – and even musicians – to inform and enhance the performance of centuries-old Early Music repertoires continues in earnest. If anything, it appears to have gained in prominence over the last two decades, paralleling the similar (and surely not coincidental) increased visibility of "World Music" in popular and commercial spheres. It is nevertheless curious that in the face of a barrage of very public criticism regarding claims for authenticity and so-called authentic performance,[6] a number of Early Music performers – many of them former students of Thomas Binkley – turn time and again to living oral traditions as a resource to inform and inspire their interpretive decisions. Close scrutiny of writings by several of these performers, in conjunction with both published and personally conducted interviews, reveals not only musical but also philosophical and pragmatic motivations behind this approach to music making. Although the underlying criteria and methodologies vary among performers and ensembles, certain common concerns emerge from diverse media, publications and interviews ranging across several decades. Notable among these concerns are, first, a passionate interest in and dedication to past musics, coupled with a palpable sense of their ephemeral nature and awareness of their irretrievability; second, a firm conviction that living cultures offer a viable opportunity to fill the void left by the inevitable disruptions and discontinuities

of the passage of centuries; and, third, the ethical and pragmatic exigencies of making their philosophies readily available and as transparent as possible, both to audiences and listeners, as well as to future performers and scholars

Past Perfect: Authenticists, Historicists and the "Early Music Police"

External academic attention to the problems and methodologies of Early Music performance cannot be described as voluminous.[7] Nevertheless, important inroads have been made in recent years. In her article "Toward an ethnomusicology of the Early Music movement: Thoughts on bridging disciplines and musical worlds" (2001), Kay Kaufman Shelemay engages in a preliminary examination of the Early Music movement through the lens of the Early Music scene in Boston, one of the most well-established and vital Early Music communities in North America. This cross-section of Early Music reveals a number of important aspects of the field well known to many of its participants but infrequently voiced to the academic community at large, let alone to audiences, whose first priority rightly lies more with the musical experience than with the concerns of its practitioners.[8] While the issue at hand here does find a place in Shelemay's discussion, it plays but a small role in her expansive treatment of a much broader subject. Nevertheless, certain recurrent features of her larger argument bear directly upon this matter. First is the overt "historicist" awareness of the Early Music venture. Many performers of European classical music do in fact appreciate the historical nature and dimension of their work. Early Music performers often go further, embracing an ideal of the past, one that moulds and shapes their view of their vocation.

It is a curious irony that the historicist mindset of the Early Music movement was in part responsible for the authenticist philosophy that nearly tore it apart.[9] This concern for historical awareness, propriety and consequent responsibility, which initially spawned the much maligned authenticity movement in Early Music, has been tempered and mollified and now manifests itself in the guise of what is generally referred to as "historically informed performance" (glibly abbreviated as HIP).[10] While this may appear to be a hair-splitting semantic distinction, it in fact highlights a subtle and nuanced approach to conceiving and preparing a performance of musics whose traditions are all but lost to us.[11]

The backlash against the "authenticists" found its first stirrings in the early 1970s but came to full fruition in the following decade with a series of penetrating essays, articles and critiques by a number of prominent scholars, as well as performers, most notably Richard Taruskin, himself an occasional performer of Early Music. Nevertheless, claims for authenticity in performance persisted into the 1990s and many performers who did not adhere to received norms – such as vibrato-less singing[12] – bemoaned their persecution at the hands of the so-called "Early Music Police", the last bastion of authenticists (more likely to be critics and fans accustomed to certain standards than performers). In the end, though, Taruskin's incisive and compelling critique of Early Music performance and its ostensible grounding in historical

authenticity – though dismissed in some circles as curmudgeonly rhetoric – did not go unheeded. His assertions regarding the utter modernity of the practice of "historical performance", with its attempted reification of the past, brought about not only considerable breast-beating and gnashing of teeth but also a healthy dose of reality and self-reflection on the part of many an Early Music performer, whose penchant for authenticity – however elusive or illusory – was then and remains now far outstripped by a sincere dedication to history and especially to high-quality performance (see especially Kenyon 1988, Taruskin 1995).

Yet it was this very commitment to, and firm grounding in, historicism that served as an anchor in the unruly seas of critical scrutiny and emerged as the foundation of a battered but equally determined and arguably stronger discipline. If performers of Early Music – and most especially medieval music – could no longer appeal to an unattainable authenticity, they could nevertheless adhere unabashedly and tenaciously to the values and precepts that spawned authenticism in the first place, namely a comprehension of, and a stalwart respect for, the historical place of their repertoire and the empowerment which accompanies such knowledge. This conviction, coupled with an increasingly prevalent professionalism, prompted a redoubling of efforts to engage the past in both meaningful and pragmatic ways.

Pragmatism and the Search for Lost Sounds

> Singer and medieval harpist Angela Mariani, a member of the medieval music ensemble Altramar, tells the tale of a coaching session with Thomas Binkley in the early 1990s.[13] The students presented Binkley with their rendition of a medieval monophonic song, Binkley's particular area of specialization. The professor tugged thoughtfully at his beard and delivered a typically sage yet opaque critique: "I don't really want to hear the most *authentic* performance of this piece that ever existed, but I would like to hear the *best* one." (Mariani interview 2003)

The enigmatic and oracular nature of Binkley's remarks notwithstanding, they nevertheless betray a renewed emphasis on quality and personal investment.[14] To be sure, Binkley always gave priority to polished excellence in performance – such accomplished and refined music-making brought considerable esteem to Binkley and his profession ensemble, the Studio der frühen Musik, in their early years. Moreover, there has always been a contingent within the professional Early Music community who have mitigated their historicist tendencies with a generous helping of pragmatism. Nevertheless, Binkley's comment reveals an increasingly prevalent trend in the world of Early Music: a move away from a dogmatic tenacity for authenticity.

But what then of historicism? It was this very element of the philosophical system of Early Music that paved the way for current directions in Early Music performance. Although this historicist mindset plays a vital role in many aspects of the Early Music world, I wish to focus here on one particular facet: the appeal to living cultures for inspiration, methodology and collaboration. This process has been the source of some considerable critique and even ridicule from both outside and within the field

of Early Music.[15] I would argue, however, that, regardless of the actual validity of the performer's recourse to the sound and practice of a *present* "other" to inform a *past* "other", this conception of establishing performance practice for past repertoires is firmly rooted in historicist predilections and values and is heavily influenced by ethical as well as pragmatic concerns for the listener and the music itself. Moreover, the Early Music performers who follow this path hold in high regard the music, musicians and traditions from which they cull their ideas, in some cases participating in these other traditions themselves or inviting their counterparts to perform with them in a collaborative process.[16]

Performers who turn to living traditions offer a variety of justifications – historical, cultural, musical and even geographical, among others – in support of their approach.[17] Among their diverse reasons, the notion of linguistic similarity or continuity looms large. In writings and interviews, several prominent performers have expressed anxiety about their own disjunction from their chosen repertoires on account of language barriers. In the article "Reconstructing the music of medieval Ireland: Altramar's *Crossroads of the Celts*", members of Altramar discuss their approach to the performance of a repertoire for which no music had been believed extant. Recent research shows this to be a misconception. Nevertheless, the surviving body of texts far exceeds that of the music, which is limited largely to scraps and fragments of chant. Such a state of affairs creates a double problem for the performer wishing to engage with this material. Whereas issues surrounding the scarcity and even lack of music are immediately evident, the linguistic challenges are more subtle. It is true that classically trained singers frequently perform in languages other than their own and in which they often have negligible fluency. Nevertheless, the Early Music performer's concern for historical verisimilitude and inherent dedication to the original generating context of the work place an additional burden upon the musician. Many performers of Early Music – both singers and instrumentalists – feel that they cannot meaningfully engage the music of another culture, whether past or present, without at least a basic facility or familiarity with the language. Altramar writes:

> Neither of Altramar's singers had any previous familiarity with medieval Celtic languages. We knew that we could rely on our colleagues in the worlds of historical linguistics and literature to help us with pronunciations and translations, but expert coaching regarding historical context would not of itself address all the questions raised. (Altramar 2000, 275)

Although such problems as these generate a variety of solutions – depending on the performer, the repertoire and the context – Altramar shares with a number of performers of medieval music a particular concern for memory. While the reasons for this concern are manifold, central to the principles of all of the performers with whom I spoke and whose writings I examined is a scepticism about or even distrust of the prescriptive value of written sources of evidence in favour of performance practices and processes associated with oral cultures.[18] In this case, Altramar's particular response to issues of language, memory[19] and rhetoric involved a sort of

layered textuality, comprising not only the original text but also accompanying International Phonetic Alphabet transcriptions of the text, along with word-for-word translations and freer idiomatic English translations. So far, this corresponds closely to practices employed by many singers of classical music. But to this add extensive glossing of individual words of the text by a scholar of medieval Celtic languages. Moreover, the final stage in the preparation process entailed practice with a recording of the text made by a native Irish speaker, also a scholar of medieval Celtic languages. Thus, for Altramar, internalization of the language to the point considered sufficient for performance involves a complex engagement with information extending far beyond the text itself. Only at that stage do the members of the ensemble feel prepared to move to issues of specifically musical concern (Altramar 2000, 275–6).

While Altramar's approach may be the more common in Early Music performance – though their attention to detail is perhaps more acute than most – there is, nevertheless, an evident conviction on the part of many Early Music performers that a singer whose native language accords closely with the language of the work will have privileged access to a musically important linguistic/cultural substratum unavailable to singers of a contrasting linguistic background. Most notable among proponents of this position is Joel Cohen, director of the Boston Camerata and its southern French incarnation, Camerata Mediterranea. Whereas most performers must at best content themselves with deep study of the texts, Cohen chooses a less obvious yet perhaps equally direct route to the past. Because of the very flexible size and constitution of his ensembles, which he organizes to suit each project he undertakes, Cohen has the luxury of seeking out singers with linguistic and sometimes cultural affinities to the given programme. Indeed, he resists or rejects even the most enticing projects if he cannot assemble a group that he feels is properly suited to the programme. In a 2002 interview with *Early Music America,* he describes his reticence about engaging the body of songs known as the *Cantigas de Santa María*: "I was frustrated for a number of years – I wanted to do a *Cantigas* project, but for that specific repertoire I didn't have the musical talent I thought was appropriate to fill in the missing elements" (Cohen 2002, 26). In his work with the Boston Camerata and Camerata Mediterranea, Cohen has undertaken linguistically and culturally distinct projects, variously employing the resources of three singers of Provençal heritage, the only remaining Shaker community in the United States, New England college choirs and the Abdelkrim Rais Andalusian Orchestra of Fès (see discography). Cohen's determination to collaborate with the Provençal singers in particular stems from his fervent belief that, on account of their linguistic heritage, these singers possess, if not an innate bond to the music, at least a deep-seated cultural connection to underlying linguistic and rhetorical patterns, which, he says, "can help mightily to shape convincing performances" (private correspondence).[20] In the liner notes to Camerata Mediterranea's 1991 recording *Lo Gai Saber*, Cohen writes:

> Troubadour song was, and is, a performer's art. In recruiting singers for this project, our main criteria were two: first, the performer's instinct, and second, a living connection with modern Occitan/Provençal. Prior experience in medieval

> music *per se* was of only secondary importance. Only Anne Azéma has heretofore made a career as a specialist in early music singing styles; François Harismendy is active in opera; Jean-Luc Madier is a folksinger. All three heard Occitan in their families as children and interiorised the "music" of the modern dialects. (Cohen 1991)

Like Altramar, Cohen sought the assistance of an historical linguist, adding an historicist dimension to the project: "Our fourth 'singer' was the renowned scholar Pierre Bec, who helped us to reconstitute the sounds of the troubadours' tongue without ever divorcing our historical research from the essential, irreplaceable connection to a real, spoken language" (Cohen 1991). In discussion with me, Cohen is quick to note his satisfaction with the results obtained from such an approach; he finds these performances of troubadour song to be of a particularly high quality, at least in part because of the linguistic background of the singers:

> I wanted people who had contact with the language. Because you and I learn German or French or Spanish – and we get it – but there's always an edge when you have some contact with the real thing. It's to give an edge to the performance, and . . . it wasn't because it was exotic, or they wore funny clothes, or had another religion. It's just because you want to have some kind of close contact with the civilization.[21] (Cohen interview 2003)

Musical Genetic Codes and the Space-Time Continuum

> I tried an experiment: during a meeting of historical harpists at which I was scheduled to speak, I informed the audience that I had "discovered a book about the medieval harp" and, replacing the word "mbira" with "medieval harp," I read aloud several passages from Berliner's study. (Bagby 2000, 340–1, citing Berliner 1978)

Memory and internalization are important aspects of the work of all the performers considered here, ones which in their view derive from similar practices described in medieval literature and treatises and which can be observed in living orally based musical cultures. The care and attention lavished by both Cohen and Altramar on bringing the texts of the music to life is shared if not excelled by singer and harpist Benjamin Bagby. Bagby, long-time co-director (and now director) of the Paris-based medieval music ensemble Sequentia, and also a Binkley student, subjects texts to extraordinary philological and analytical scrutiny. And, like Altramar's singers, Bagby commits these texts – many of which are quite long – entirely to memory. Whereas all medieval music performers have to engage the music with a strong imagination in order to bring it to life, Bagby goes further than most – a response to the special requirements of the repertoire he favours: the narrative epic, virtually the entire corpus of which survives in late redactions and without music (though numerous literary accounts indicate that music played an important role in its performance).

In the course of his career, Bagby has developed a meticulous and idiosyncratic method for generating melodic material appropriate for certain kinds of formula-driven texts, especially of the epic tradition as exemplified by works like *Beowulf*, which survives only as text with no further performance indications whatsoever.[22] For medieval Continental literature, Bagby employs as a musical resource the abundantly available notated monophonic traditions of the Middle Ages, such as survive in numerous chant manuscripts, anthologies of troubadour and trouvère song, and the collections of the *Cantigas de Santa María*. By internalizing not only the modal scales and pitches but especially the intervallic gestures and melodic contours peculiar to each mode, Bagby has developed a fundamental vocabulary from which he can generate similar gestures, idiomatically modified to suit his instrument, the harp, with which he accompanies himself when performing medieval song.

The roots of Bagby's musical language for accompaniment may lie in medieval song manuscripts but he does not restrict his view to these resources. Lacking a model for medieval harp performance, Bagby looks to players outside the European tradition. He emphasizes, however, that he does not copy them:

> I was particularly inspired by *Biwa* [Japanese lute] player Kinshi Tsuruta, who used an astonishing variety of vocal and instrumental qualities to tell the story. I have also been inspired by central African harpers who find ways in which a harp having very few strings might be employed over a long period of time. But again, this was inspiration, not imitation, and you won't hear me playing pseudo-African licks in *Beowulf.* (quoted in Chancey 2001, 28)

After many years spent in the development of his accompaniment technique, Bagby eventually turned to the un-notated *terra incognita* of Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic epic and saga, desiring "to take these poems [the Icelandic *Edda*] off the printed page and back into the world of storytelling, where the human voice becomes an instrument of cultural identity and transformation" (Bagby 2002, 26). Drawing on the accompaniment technique he forged for notated literature, Bagby similarly generates a set of melodic formulas and gestures for each individual text.

For Continental musics he has recourse to a vast existing notated repertoire, but no comparable body of music exists for the Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic traditions. For want of an historical alternative – and as a foil for the temptation to wallow in modal possibilities – he turns to available living traditions as a resource, as with his recent project of the Icelandic *Edda*, in preparation for which he listened to hundreds of field recordings of Icelandic ballad singers:

> An examination of the practice of singing epic poetry as it still exists in various cultures will often show us how these performances can be given both a structure and a soul. Such a study can help to temper the seemingly limitless freedom of modal intoxication. (Bagby 2002, 28)

After engaging these materials, even the one dubious historical source of music for the *Edda* – a single strophe collected and published in an 18th-century encyclopaedia

of music – began to take on meaning and relevance. In this fragment, Bagby found that:

> the melody demonstrates characteristics that point to the use of a specific modal vocabulary consisting of a few limited elements that are constantly repeated and varied. An attentive listener might hear its "genetic code" echoed in some of our reconstructions, just as an experienced Icelandic *rímur*-singer hearing us sing these poems might find at times that some undefinable element makes him feel he actually knows the unknown piece being sung. (Bagby 2002, 28)

Nevertheless, Bagby is fully aware of the speculative nature of such a venture. In an eloquent apologia, he admits:

> We can never know if our performances precisely duplicate the art of a particular Medieval bard, in Iceland or elsewhere; nor can we ever rediscover the "original melody" to which any epic was sung in the early Middle Ages, since *the* original melody certainly never existed for any one story. In each local tradition, in each language and dialect, there were varieties of originals being passed along in their own oral traditions. Nonetheless, I am convinced that careful use of specific information and techniques, coupled with an intuitive spirit based on a working knowledge of both Medieval song and the essence of sung oral poetry, makes possible the reconstruction of highly plausible performance models, allowing our venerable ancestral stories to live again. (Bagby 2002, 29)

Bagby's philosophy corresponds to that of other performers in the field who use similar approaches. Both Joel Cohen and Angela Mariani have expressed similar views, but not one of these musicians suggests that old traditions survive fully intact in stasis or cultural suspended animation. Cohen, for instance, notes with regard to his project with the Abdelkrim Rais Andalusian Orchestra of Fès that his own comparison of contemporary performance techniques with recordings of the ensemble made early in the 20th century reveals a "marked evolution in performance practice" even among these musicians, who view themselves as being in a direct lineage with the music and performance practice of 13th-century Andalusian players (private correspondence). Nevertheless Cohen, like Bagby, appears to feel that the dangers inherent in these approaches are outweighed by the benefits and opportunities they afford (Cohen interview 2003).[23]

"Linguistic Contact" and "Cultural Ethos"

> You *have* to play *something*, or you'll just sit there on the stage ruminating! (Mariani interview 2003)

Scholars benefit from the luxury of uncertainty. Performers, on the other hand, must eventually make a choice. These shared philosophies must inevitably yield to the unique exigencies of a particular programme or the personalities and values of the individual performers. For instance, whereas Bagby seeks a culture's musical "genetic

code" but does not view living traditions as a vessel of earlier repertoires, Cohen holds greater confidence in the continuity of tradition, though he points out that his position does not depart markedly from Bagby's philosophy (private correspondence). Cohen's faith, however, is clearly born of the special circumstances and unique resources he calls upon for his particular projects. For several of his programmes – troubadour song, Shaker music and the *Cantigas de Santa María* – Cohen has turned to living traditions that have demonstrable continuities with past cultures and musics, albeit to differing degrees. For the two recordings of troubadour song, as described above, Cohen found linguistic heritage and experience to be a fruitful approach towards mitigating the problem of historical disjunction. The musical connection to the present is, of course, tenuous at best. Yet he expresses confidence in the efficacy of the shared linguistic background of the singers.

Cohen's singers for all three of these projects have a linguistic grounding appropriate to the repertoires at hand. But in the programmes devoted to the Shaker songs and the *Cantigas de Santa María* the cultural and musical background of the musicians was perhaps the more vital concern. Cohen himself distinguishes culture and language in his decision-making process: "Linguistic contact is one consideration. Contact with the cultural ethos is another" (Cohen interview 2003). For each of these programmes, Cohen turned to the undisputed living inheritors of these traditions. On the surface, the value of such a move is self-evident. The performers can claim direct connection – both historical and contemporary – with the repertoires at hand. For the historicist claims of Early Music, however, this in itself does not necessarily bear close scrutiny. Historical performance specialists eschew the playing techniques and styles of modern conservatory-trained players, even though the modern players can claim a similarly indisputable connection to the past (and many in fact celebrate their pedagogical heritage, tracing their lineage through their teachers well into the past, just as do the members of the Abdelkrim Rais Andalusian Orchestra of Fès). But Baroque performance specialists have access to materials of a kind unavailable to medievalists: scores and parts with relatively extensive and reliable markings and, perhaps more important, numerous didactic manuals with the express purpose of detailing the interpretation of those markings and of the music in general. No comparable resource survives for medieval song.[24]

Lacking extensive performance practice documentation, Cohen chooses to treat the claims of his collaborators with respect and deference.[25] With both the Shaker and *Cantigas* projects, Cohen sought active partnership with representatives of the cultures as they exist today. The Shakers thrived in 19th-century America but entered a period of steep decline in the 20th century. Cohen was fortunate to live near the last surviving Shaker community (Sabbathday Lake, in Poland Spring, Maine), whose members numbered fewer than ten at the time of the recording in 1995. It is important to stress that Cohen did not expect to find in the Shaker community a petrified or fossilized tradition, their practices frozen in time like a 19th-century daguerreotype. Yet, as with Bagby's musical "genetic code", Cohen holds outs for a connection with the past: "I don't know if the Shakers today sing the same way as the

Shakers one hundred years ago – but I'm sure there's *something* there. There's *some* continuity" (Cohen interview 2003).[26] Cohen also emphasizes his rejection of the notion that his approach might smack of exoticism or cultural appropriation. He contends instead that working directly with the Shakers enriches and enlivens the musical experience:

> We've done Shaker music, and the way I do it is to go to the Shakers and ask them to sing with us ... They live an hour-and-a-half drive from my house. So it isn't non-Western *per se*. But it's taking a musical tradition and somehow making the performance very vital and very filled up. (Cohen interview 2003)

If the time between the heyday of the Shakers and Cohen's project on their music is negligible, the same most surely cannot be said regarding the 13th-century *Cantigas de Santa María* and the modern tradition of Andalusian music performance as it survives in North Africa (particularly in Morocco and Algeria). It may seem counterintuitive to look to a modern Islamic African culture for clues to the performance of the music of 13th-century Christian Spain. Historical documents, however, appear to confirm the validity of this approach. Although Jews and Muslims alike were later persecuted and forced into exile from Spain, the 13th-century court of Alfonso X "El Sabio" (The Wise), the King of Christian Spain, can only be characterized as cosmopolitan. This hotbed of scholarly, literary and artistic activity attracted creative talent from across Europe and all around the Mediterranean basin. Cohen cites a 13th-century census of the court orchestra, which indicates that the orchestra comprised equal numbers of Christian and Muslim players, as well as one Jewish musician (Cohen 2002, 26, interview 2003). He also refers to the contemporary presence of Persian singers in Andalusia (Cohen interview 2003). Among the products of this rich musical culture is a notated body of songs to the Virgin Mary, the so-called *Cantigas de Santa María*. Illumination in surviving manuscripts of these songs shows dark and light-skinned musicians playing together, presumed by many to be depictions of Moors and Christians.[27] In addition, many of the instruments illustrated appear to be of Middle Eastern origin or design. While realistic readings of medieval iconography can be treacherous, the cultural milieu in which these manuscripts were produced offers a tantalizing and, for many performers of medieval music, irresistible picture of medieval musical life – one from which to draw inspiration and even ideas about performance.

The quality of both the music and the poetry of the *Cantigas* as well as their rich history have made them a favourite of performers of medieval music. The multicultural nature of Alfonso's court, the mystical and visionary qualities of the some of the poetry, and the seeming otherness of Andalusian culture may well contribute to the popularity of the *Cantigas* among performers and audiences alike. Numerous recordings are devoted to the *Cantigas*, perhaps more than to any other single corpus of medieval music (with the possible exception of the works of Hildegard von Bingen). To be sure, not all these recordings or performers look to

other cultures for their *Cantigas* projects, but a number of musicians make an explicit point of the cross-cultural or cross-generic features in their work.[28]

The complex of information summarized above gives cause to speculate about the relationship of music making in Alfonso's court to the apparent inheritors of that tradition, the Andalusian orchestras of northern Africa. If there is reason to doubt the veracity of this proposed historical connection, the Andalusian orchestra musicians offer their own corroborating testimony. Cohen recalls his initial meeting with members of the Abdelkrim Rais Andalusian Orchestra of Fès: "when they asked me what I was doing, I said, 'I'm making a recording of medieval Spanish music,' and they said, 'Oh, well that's what we do.' No big deal" (Cohen interview 2003).[29] Their matter-of-fact reply is indicative of their strongly held conviction for and investment in their historical connection to a tradition that extends back some 800 years or more. Cohen regards them as serious informants whose beliefs need to be treated with respect: "The *nouba* music they play is, they claim, the court music of Medieval Islamic Spain," he reports, and immediately follows with, "By the way, I take that claim seriously" (Cohen 2002, 27).[30] He readily admits that the actual repertoire of the orchestra reflects their Muslim heritage and hence does not include the *Cantigas*. Nevertheless, all the performers found strong affinities between the two traditions on account of the music's shared diatonic underpinnings. According to Cohen, the microtones and temperaments prominent in some Middle Eastern and North African musics (the elements fundamental to Western clichés of Middle Eastern music) are all but absent from the modern Andalusian tradition.[31] He furthermore observes that the musicians distinguish the scalar content of their repertoire from that of other regional music. They view their scales to be of European origin, and, he reassures, "They're very proud of that" (Cohen 1999, interview 2003).

Cohen, then, finds great value in shared experience and musical commonalities. Throughout our conversation, none of his remarks reveal any interest in the wanton importation of qualities alien to the music he performs. In fact, he is suspicious of performances and recordings that employ non-Western instruments or vocal styles without what he perceives to be sufficient or evident cause: "I think you have to be fairly focused on the repertoire and what you can reasonably expect the cross-cultural influences to be. You can't just make it up." He then qualifies his remarks and suggests that each performance must stand on its own merits: "You know, every performance is a hypothesis. There's no such thing as a definitive performance of a *Cantiga* or troubadour song. I'm giving you *this* hypothesis about *this* piece, hoping that something will come across" (Cohen interview 2003).

"We Have No Models"

> I think what Binkley was saying was, "these musics have a long, unbroken tradition that reaches back into the Middle Ages." (Mariani interview 2003)

From the title alone of Altramar's two-volume recording *Iberian Garden: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Music in Medieval Spain*, it is evident that they share with Cohen an interest in cultural rapprochement through music. In their group writings and in my own interview with Angela Mariani, however, it becomes clear that a strong concern for developing a viable and appropriate methodology of musical performance lies at the foundation of their work. Central to their approach is the search for models. According to Mariani, the lack of musical models is the basic conundrum faced by the performer of medieval music. As an analogy, she offers the hypothetical case of a future culture trying to reconstruct or describe the work of Charlie Parker with only a lead sheet and no access to recorded performances or transcriptions. The challenges of such a task are obvious. Likewise for medieval music:

> This is the real problem. So I think that Tom Binkley explained really well in an interview he did with *Harmonia* once – I really have always liked the way he said this – he said the problem we had with medieval music is, we have no models.[32] (Mariani interview 2003)

Binkley's reference to models, it turns out, comes in the context of a discussion of improvisation in the performance of medieval music. He is, in fact, reticent about the very idea of improvisation in this idiom, for it implies a comprehension of the material that may not be warranted.[33] In his *Harmonia* interview, he states:

> Improvisation – it's a convenient word, but it's not the word that I like to use with regard to this music. Improvisation implies right off the top of the head – instant composition. That can occur if a musician is creative and has models to follow and has followed the models. In other words, you have a model, you imitate it, and gradually you impress upon that model your own deviation, your own musical personality, and that's pretty much how we [the Studio der frühen Musik] worked. Of course, getting the model, that's the thing. At the time we began doing this, there were no models to follow, and we had to search out models. We would make up models according to sort of rules – we would say, well alright, there are other places in the world where monophonic music is played, and so let's see how they work out accompaniments. (Binkley 1991)

Binkley, along with the core members of the Studio, Sterling Jones and Andrea von Ramm, pioneered this approach to working with medieval song repertoires, also the centre-piece of Altramar's work. Through his performances and recordings with the Studio, and later as a professor at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland and then at Indiana University, Binkley exerted a profound influence on performers of medieval music for more than three decades. The impact of that influence cannot be overstated, inasmuch as Binkley's former students (among them Altramar and Sequentia) continue not only to employ his techniques in their own processes of preparation and rehearsal but also to modify, develop and disseminate them to their own students in colleges, universities and especially Early Music workshops around the world.

The models Binkley sought were ultimately not to be found in historical documents (though he knew these intimately) but in various living traditional music cultures. In particular, he wanted to find techniques for managing small amounts of music and text over an extended period of time (a necessity for medieval monophonic song, much of which is strophic). In other words, he was looking for models of arrangement and, says Mariani, he saw continuity of tradition as offering an opportunity to understand techniques of arrangement. Mariani rejects the notion that Binkley's work featured superficial Arabisms – an accusation sometimes levelled at the Studio and which earned their sound the moniker "Radio Baghdad."[34] Instead she believes that the Studio's sound was an incidental product of the techniques of arrangement they culled from various cultures, some of which happened to have historical Arabic influences:

> I think what Binkley was saying was, "There are these techniques that are common to traditional music of Andalusia, of areas of southern France, of Northern Africa, of the Middle East, of all of these different places – *these* musics have a *long, unbroken* tradition that reaches back into the Middle Ages. And contemporary descriptions of this music then kind of proves that out." So, in other words... he was looking at things – especially things like techniques of arrangement – and combining that with types of instruments that were known to have existed, and how those types of arrangements related to rhetorical considerations. *Why* are there preludes to pieces in these kinds of cultures and so on? (Mariani interview 2003)

When I first presented on this topic at the British Forum for Ethnomusicology conference in Bangor, Wales in 2003, I played as an example of the "Arabic style" a recording of a prelude to an Italian *lauda* as played on medieval lute by Todd Field, one of Binkley's students (Early Music Institute 1991, track 1). Several respondents agreed that it certainly sounded "Middle Eastern", with the qualification that they were not specialists in Middle Eastern music. John Haines, in his article "The Arabic style of performing medieval music", reverses my tactic, playing a Studio rendition of the French song *A l'entrada del tens clar* to "Moroccan natives who had internalized Andalusian music from an early age" and who found that the "performance felt only 'slightly Arabic' because the necessary embellishments and correct feel were missing" (Haines 2001, 378, n. 39). That Binkley was influenced by the "Arabic hypothesis" and the Studio by the sonic qualities of Andalusian music is virtually indisputable, as Haines makes clear.[35] Nevertheless, as Haines notes elsewhere, Binkley was not trying to imitate Andalusian music (378, n. 38, *passim*). He also points out:

> In fact it would be difficult to characterize as specifically Andalusian or Arabic any of the Studio's performances... though a few features of their style are shared with Andalusian practice. Andalusian music played only a minor role in the creation of Binkley's Southern [i.e. "Arabic"] style, which was largely an eclectic fabrication, albeit an effective one. Binkley's ensemble chose a middle ground between accepted practice and innovative ideas, and successfully juggled the paradoxical modern demands for fashionable sounds and historical accuracy. (Haines 2001, 375)

Yet Haines chides them for their "inability to integrate the ornamentation so fundamental to Arabic music" (Haines 2001, 375). On the other hand, the reticence on the part of his "Moroccan natives" regarding the "Arabisms" in the Studio's recording, as well as Haines' own struggle to locate decisively the actual "Arabisms" of the Studio's sound, seems to stem from a focus on the surface elements of the performances: the instruments used and more importantly the ornamentation (or the lack thereof). These features are a red herring. It is clear from Binkley's own comments that these were not the elements that interested him. As he and Mariani alike point out, he was looking for models, and specifically models of arrangement. It was the structural elements of the Andalusian and other Arabic musics – preludes, postludes and interludes, as well as underlying accompaniment features and techniques (Binkley was an instrumentalist, not a singer) – that he sought and ultimately used in his performance of medieval music. He wanted to learn how to turn a six-verse troubadour *canso* or Spanish *cantiga* into a 10- or 20-minute performance. In the Andalusian tradition, he found his model.[36]

Cohen finds Binkley's approach problematic, albeit musically effective, and is sceptical about Binkley's own grounding in the traditions upon which he draws. "Binkley's experiments were riveting as performance art. I now believe them to derive from misunderstanding/misapprehension, perhaps willful, more probably simply insufficiently informed, of Moroccan practice" (private correspondence). Cohen specifically objects to Binkley's application of the *nouba* (*nūba*) structure (a suite of short poems with instrumental interludes) to a single strophic song.[37] Binkley, however, in his own retrospective account, seems to have considered his large-scale structures to be an abstraction of the *nouba* structure (Binkley 1991).

"Asking Some Questions" and "Ur-techniques"

The regional references in Mariani's comments above attest to another important aspect of Binkley's methodology, though Mariani points out that here she is blending her own thoughts with Binkley's teachings. She asserts that the value of examining traditional musics – especially with attention to regionalism – lies in the questions that are raised in the process and techniques employed by traditional musicians:

> Medieval music was tremendously regional, [like] traditional music. [Turning to particular regional musics and cultures] was a way of. . .asking some questions – and *maybe* getting some, if not some answers, then at least some information you could . . . use as a basis for *some* kind of musical activity. (Mariani interview 2003)

Mariani identifies three solutions offered by the regional parallels of medieval and traditional musics: modern traditional music from the region from which the medieval music derives; modern traditional music of former inhabitants of that region (diasporic traditions); and techniques common to several traditional cultures. On this last issue, she remarks:

> So you have these – I don't know if you'd exactly call them "ur-techniques" – but you have these kind of techniques that come up over and over and over again, whether they're in European traditional music, Middle-Eastern, African, whatever. (Mariani interview 2003)

Regionalism in this methodology, as in Joel Cohen's work, serves as justification as well as a point of departure for the performance of medieval music.

Binkley himself travelled to Spain and Morocco to spend time and to study with local musicians and, in Mariani's words, to investigate "the possibility of some kind of model" (interview 2003). Binkley's examination of what he considered to be shared techniques of musical arrangement led to the development of his own methodologies and procedures.[38] The actual sound product of the cultures he studied was incidental and in fact had little to do with his goals for medieval music performance. According to Mariani, "He was interested in – and this was a word he used constantly – he was interested in the *process* . . . because there seemed to be elements in their process that one could find in these musics around Europe that had a long tradition" (interview 2003). As with regional contiguity, the shared processes he observed across several cultures – Mariani's "ur-techniques" – then justify his appeal to the techniques of these cultures in establishing his own models of musical performance, but these same commonalities afforded him the latitude to move beyond immediate regional relationships and apply these models with greater freedom.

The aptness of a model to any given repertoire is not absolute. The degree to which Binkley modified his models to suit a given programme is not entirely clear, though he does distinguish between a "Northern" (European) style and "Southern" (Arabic or generally Mediterranean) style (Haines 2001, 372–3, *passim*). Like Binkley, Altramar too relies on a set of established models and processes in the preparation of a new programme. For Altramar, though, the models they use must be developed in accord with the music. The process is contingent upon the requirements of the programme. In their preparation for the *Iberian Garden* project, they followed Binkley's lead in many respects. For their three-volume medieval Celtic project, on the other hand, the state of the sources and diffusion of the cultures involved necessitated an entirely different set of procedures, many of which had to be crafted in response to each piece of music. Mariani's approach to the St Patrick responsory *Ductu angelico* is a case in point. Surviving music from the Celtic liturgy is scant and often fragmentary, and little is known about its performance and interpretation. For Mariani, her experience as a frequent listener to the Irish traditional singing style *sean-nós* offered her an aural perspective on the responsory she might not otherwise have had. As she sang through *Ductu angelico,* she found it to have an underlying pentatonicism similar to that which she had observed in some *sean-nós* songs. This similarity led her to experiment with the possibility of interpreting the ligatures of *Ductu angelico* with the rhythm and nuance of phrasing of *sean-nós*. She remarks, "I see the ways the ligatures are, and I see the way they join notes on the melisma, and I see all these little things like . . . the upper and lower neighbouring tones that are absolutely *characteristic* of ornament in Irish music" (interview 2003). She is wary of

the dangers of invoking what medieval Irish music scholar and project collaborator Ann Buckley calls "wishful Celticisms", but her choices, though inspired by momentary insight, are carefully considered and weighed. In the end, like Cohen, she takes the performers of the tradition at their word. Her justification for the potential validity of her approach lies in part with the testimony of the *sean-nós* singers themselves, who, she contends, claim a centuries' old heritage for the tradition (interview 2003).

Reflections on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Early Music Performance

> She came to be educated and clearly wasn't expecting to groove on the music. (Mariani interview 2003)

None of this, however, is to suggest that Early Music performers lack appreciation or sensitivity for the profound differences of context and meaning between and among these temporally and often geographically disparate cultures. All of the performers with whom I spoke express an awareness of the debt owed to the musicians of the cultures to which they look for inspiration. Nor is there any sense of cultural alchemy, of taking a living culture's traditional music dross and spinning it into the gold of "Art Music of the European Middle Ages". Instead there emerges profound respect.

As discussed above, the concerns and motivations of the artists differ in some regards, yet there was little indication of audience pandering[39] or lack of concern for musical and cultural propriety. Where others may see cultural opportunism and an appeal to the exotic – and I do not doubt that this happens in some circles – Cohen in fact seeks common ground, cross-cultural cooperation and broader understanding for musicians, audiences and scholars alike. The tenor of his comments is almost idealistically ambassadorial. He marvels:

> There's this huge disconnect, because you have people...at this time studying medieval Spanish music in conservatories and music history courses. And then you have literally hundreds of musicians in North Africa whose job it is to play what they understand to be medieval Spanish music. And there's hardly any dialogue among those two groups. And that seems totally weird ... I'm surprised I was the first one to do this. There have been people [who] bring in *darbouks* and *zarbs*, but I was the first person to try to work in their discipline with our discipline and make it go together. I'm surprised it hadn't happened earlier. (Cohen interview 2003)[40]

A number of his projects, then, serve as a cultural bridge, not only for the musicians but others as well. It is important to note, however, that Cohen's primary goal and motivation is artistic in nature:

> Early Music is a means, and the end is to take very important art and bring it into people's lives and make it alive. And all the techniques we use and all the research methods we use, that's the end of it. That's the goal. To make very good music and make it happen. I'm interested in history – I've spent all my life doing this stuff –

> but if it stays history, you've missed the boat, you've missed the point. And contemplating history can itself be an aesthetic experience. That certainly edges into it. But you know when we do the *Cantigas* concert, I want people to get. . .you know: there's some sick child, and the Virgin intercedes, and the child gets better and he stands up, and everybody whoops it up – you know, I want them to feel the message there. (Cohen interview 2003)

The appeal to other musical cultures serves an important role in Cohen's aesthetic philosophy, as well as in his quest to expand the aesthetic horizons of his listeners. On the value of the striking vocal qualities of his singers, many of whom are not a product of conservatory training, Cohen remarks, "You should be widening people's view of what musical beauty, and musical pleasure, is" (interview 2003). Mariani likewise expresses a concern for both edifying and entertaining the audience. She relates:

> [Altramar] did a concert of the *Iberian Garden* material in Philadelphia once and at the end of the concert . . . an elderly woman came up to me and said to me – these exact wonderful words – she said, "Well, I came here tonight to be educated, but I *enjoyed* myself." And it was one of the most precious things anyone's ever said to me after a concert. I've just always remembered it, because she came to be educated and clearly wasn't expecting to groove on the music. (Mariani interview 2003)

Binkley's Bequest

The field of historical musicology – even when focused on performance practice – has largely ignored the place of its subject in modern life, leaving the past in the past and the study of living musicians to ethnomusicologists. Ethnomusicology has rightly been critical of the hegemonic and elitist tendencies of Western classical music (including Early Music) and the scholarship surrounding it. An unfortunate result of this outlook, however, is the paucity of studies devoted to ethnography of Western classical music performance (though there are some important exceptions). Ethnomusicology has from its inception attended to musics and traditions of putatively great longevity. Yet the distaste experienced by many ethnomusicologists regarding the scholarship and discourse surrounding Western classical music has led to a failure to distinguish the music from the musicians and their culture, which, like any musical community, deserves sympathetic ethnography. Historical musicology and ethnomusicology alike might well benefit from a collaborative examination of the place of the past in the present and the interaction of old musics with living traditions.

I have purposely avoided criticism of the musicians in this study, preferring to allow their own voices and perspectives to come through. Critique of their approaches is common enough, even in their own literature, and their own participation in the scholarly discourse surrounding their activities complicates the ethnographer's project, especially if the ethnographer is an "insider", as I am. There

remains much work to be done in Early Music ethnography. The potential power differential between the Early Music performers and their "informants" needs to be addressed. Much could be learned from full-scale fieldwork projects to examine the interaction of all collaborators, as well as the processes involved in the creation of an Early Music programme. The ethnographer of Early Music musicians, particularly of those performers who seek out and employ techniques from traditional musics, should be cognizant of the potential value of their approaches. The appeal to these other musics often serves to open the minds of performers and audiences alike, not only to Early Music, but to the musics upon which the musicians draw. Were it not for performers such as Bagby, Binkley, Cohen and Mariani, my own exposure to medieval music and traditional musics alike would be sadly impoverished. Thomas Binkley's waning interest in the project of intercultural music-making should not discourage us from these scholarly and musical pursuits. If it does, then we have all been Binked.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was read at the May 2003 annual meeting of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology held at the University of Wales, Bangor. I would like to express my gratitude to those who provided encouragement, valuable criticism and feedback on this and other drafts, especially Wendy Gillespie and Jennifer Ryan. Benjamin Bagby offered helpful clarification of his own philosophical positions in private correspondence. Joel Cohen and Angela Mariani served the dual capacities of informants and respondents, graciously supplying extensive interviews at the beginning of the project and equally beneficial critique and feedback at the end.

Notes

[1] In 1895, Sir John Stainer presented a paper on DuFay songs in the important manuscript Ox. Bod. Canonici misc. 213. Finding the singers of his day ill-equipped to sing such music, he arranged to have some of the songs performed on violas (Leech-Wilkinson 2002, 23–6).

[2] The term "Early Music" is notoriously slippery and imprecise. For the purposes of this study, I use it broadly to refer to Western European musics before the Classic Era (roughly before 1750) and more particularly with respect to modern performance traditions that seek to recover and employ earlier modes of performance contemporaneous with, and appropriate to, the repertoires at hand. Furthermore, I contrast "Early Music" with "classical music", another problematic term but one which serves adequately to refer chronologically to Western "art" and elite sacred musics from roughly 1700 to the present and semantically to those repertoires stressed in the modern conservatory, music department and school of music, and which feature heavily in large-scale concert performance and public mass media programming.

[3] The origin of this belief in continuity and preservation in traditional musics is not always clear, yet it is a common trope among many performers of medieval music, as well as some practitioners of these traditional musics themselves.

[4] Thomas Binkley trained first as a guitarist and musicologist. With Sterling Jones, Andrea von Ramm and Nigel Rogers, he formed the Studio der frühen Musik – also known as the Early

Music Quartet – in the late 1950s to explore and perform medieval music. After more than a decade of performing and recording, he joined the faculty of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland, and in 1977 joined the choral department of the School of Music at Indiana University, where he eventually formed the Early Music Institute. For a survey of Binkley's career and an assessment of his impact on the world of Early Music, see Lasocki (1995; see also Cohen and Snitzer 1985). For Binkley's rather substantial discography, see Roberge (2003).

[5] In preparation for this study, I conducted telephone interviews in April 2003 with Joel Cohen, Catherine Hawkes and Angela Mariani, and I corresponded by email with Benjamin Bagby. In some cases these interviews were supplemented by more informal conversations and correspondence. Further exchanges followed as I prepared the material for publication.

[6] The literature on the subject of authenticity in performance is extensive and often heated. See especially Kenyon (1988) and Taruskin (1995). For a recent assessment and critique, especially with respect to the matter of "Arabisms" in Early Music, see Haines (2001) and Cohen (2000).

[7] Specialist literature within the field, however, is extensive and wide-ranging. See especially Chancey (2001) for a broad and useful overview of current approaches to Early Music by performers who employ contemporary musical traditions and practices to inform and complement period performance.

[8] Nevertheless, audience perceptions and expectations of the didactic function and value of Early Music concerts should not be discounted nor should the awareness by the performers of the role they play in this aspect of the listener's musical experience. (See further below.)

[9] This philosophy may also be a product of the truth-centred nature of historical studies in the days before postmodernist relativism. As one scholar-performer indicated to me, before the authenticity debates Early Music specialists, including himself, truly believed that the sound world of the past could and should be faithfully reproduced. See also Haines (2001).

[10] Sequentia director Benjamin Bagby provides a useful description of "historically informed performance", while at the same time laying bare the problem facing all performers of medieval music: "Regardless of the historical period that interests us, the concept of 'historically informed performance' thrives on the conviction that today's performers can find knowledge and instruction in the documentation that has survived from past musical practices: musical notation, descriptions of performance situations, treatises, methods, visual representations of music-making, playable instruments, etc. Unfortunately, all this documentation, which we performers assiduously devour and study, is still missing the one crucial element of musical performance that we most need and desire: the actual sound, the presence of a living master. Barring the discovery of time-travel, we shall never meet our master" (Bagby 2002).

[11] On the issue of the prescriptive value and reliability of the surviving musical documents and sources, see especially Binkley (1992). Benjamin Bagby, erstwhile Binkley protégé, has voiced similar reservations both in his teaching and in his published writings.

[12] The matter of vibrato-less singing emerged frequently in online discussions in the mid to late 1990s on the Usenet newsgroup rec.music.early (also known by its Listserv name "EarlyM-L"), generating much heat and no fewer than three large-scale debates, dubbed the "Wobble Wars" (WWI, WWII and so forth) by Joel Cohen.

[13] The students in the coaching session would later become the ensemble Altramar, which specializes in music of the later Middle Ages, especially monophonic song and dance music.

[14] Joel Cohen recalls that around 1975 Binkley told him "his goal was to reconstruct, as closely as possible, the first performance of a given piece" (private correspondence). Cohen suggests that Binkley appears then to have changed his perspective over the course of the intervening years, or else that he adopted this contrasting stance for strategic purposes, a defensive manoeuvre in response to criticism of his earlier authenticist position (see also Cohen and

Snitzer 1985). The nature of Binkley's reply to his students may also be a product of his role as teacher rather than performer.

[15] See, for instance, Leech-Wilkinson (2002, 64–6 on "The Oriental Hypothesis", *passim*; Haines 2001).

[16] For instance, Chris Norman, who played Renaissance flute with the Baltimore Consort for many years, maintained a parallel career (which continues) playing traditional Celtic, Appalachian and Cape Breton music, especially with the ensemble Helicon, and he played flute for the ceilidh scene in the movie *Titanic*. See also his liner notes to the Baltimore Consort's *The Mad Buckgoat: Ancient Music of Ireland*. David Greenberg, a former Early Music Institute student and Baroque violinist with Tafelmusik and his own ensemble Brandywine Baroque, plays traditional fiddle music from Cape Breton (Greenberg 2002). Joel Cohen's collaborative projects are discussed later in this paper.

[17] See Chancey (2001) for a survey of some of these groups and a sampling of their approaches, which sometimes involve generic collaboration and crossover.

[18] Patricia O'Scannell of the Terra Nova Consort takes perhaps the most extreme stance: "I know there are still those who feel that traditional music has only a limited benefit in the interpretation of early music, but I would posit that it is the only source available to modern musicians that can actually be relied upon. Traditional music is the most conservative and unchanging music on the planet" (quoted in Chancey 2001, 25).

[19] Discussions of medieval music often turn to the reportedly capacious memories of medieval performers and the role memory played in the construction and reconstruction of large-scale lyric genres, such as the epic, romance and lai. On memory in the Middle Ages, see Yates (1964, 1966), Carruthers (1990) and Carruthers and Ziolkowski (2002). For issues of music and memory, see Benjamin Bagby's comments on his performance of *Beowulf* in Chancey (2001, 27–8).

[20] Note, however, in the quotation that follows the priority given to quality ("the performer's instinct") over linguistic and cultural concerns. Note also Cohen's attention to interiorization of the language ("'music' of modern dialects"). Such linguistic internalization (and subsequent characterization of language as music) will play an important role in Benjamin Bagby's approach to the narrative epic.

[21] See also Cohen's remarks on his four trips to Morocco for his *Cantigas de Santa María* project: "To my initial surprise, I felt like I was coming home to a part of myself" (Cohen 2002, 27). Geographic place, then, also plays a role in the preparation process. See below on the importance of regionalism in establishing performance criteria.

[22] Bagby is a prolific commentator on his own work and has on a number of occasions and in various sources provided a detailed account of his unique approach. See in particular Bagby (1999, 2000, 2002). Altramar singer and harpist Angela Mariani, who has studied with Bagby and Thornton, praises Sequentia's technique and credits Bagby and Thornton with having had an influence on her work comparable to that of Binkley (personal conversations and interview 2003).

[23] He also notes that the melodies themselves are little changed over this span of time, indicating an element of conservatism to this aspect of their performance.

[24] With the very important exception of Gregorian chant. In a groundbreaking study, *The sound of medieval song: Ornamentation and vocal style according to the treatises* (1998), Timothy J. McGee makes the convincing argument that medieval music treatises are a treasure trove of interpretative description and, read with care, can yield detailed directions for singing chant.

[25] The Shakers with whom Cohen collaborated even supplied a brief history of their community for the liner notes to the recording *Simple Gifts: Shaker Chants and Spirituals* (Cohen 1995, 9–10). Cohen notes, however, that the claims of his collaborators "are not generally verifiable or falsifiable on purely scientific grounds. They do however have some

degree of plausibility, and they do generate useful hypotheses for contemporary performance practice" (private correspondence).

[26] Italics indicate Cohen's vocal emphasis.

[27] The liner notes to Cohen's *Cantigas* recording with Camerata Mediterranea feature a perhaps ironically intended photograph (1999, 46) of Rachid Lebbar and Joel Cohen playing together much in the manner of the musicians in the manuscript illuminations (a detail of which appears on p. 2 of the liner notes).

[28] See, for example, Altramar's *Iberian Garden: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Music in Medieval Spain* (1997–8), Ensemble Alcatraz's *Cantigas de Amigo – Songs for a Friend: 13th-Century Galician-Portuguese Songs & Dances of Love, Longing & Devotion* (2000), Alla Francesca's *Cantigas: Chants à la Vièrge d'Alfonso X "El Sabio" XIIIe Siècle* (2000) and Sinfonye's *Poder á Santa María: Andalucía in the "Cantigas de Santa María" of King Alfonso X "el Sabio" (1221–1284)* (1994).

[29] See also Cohen (2002, 27, 40), where he relays the same story.

[30] It is outside the scope of this study to examine the views and perspectives of those who collaborate with or serve as inspiration for Early Music performers. Such studies would be a valuable contribution to new global perspectives in the field of ethnomusicology.

[31] Haines, however, discerns the use of microtonal modes on recordings of the Abdelkrim Orchestra (Haines 2001, 371–2).

[32] *Harmonia* is Mariani's own syndicated Early Music programme, produced at WFIU in Bloomington, Indiana, and distributed by National Public Radio.

[33] Cf. Harry Haskell's assessment that the Studio had "revolutionized the interpretation of medieval monophonic music . . . by applying improvisatory techniques derived from Middle Eastern folk music" (Haskell 1988, 165, quoted in Haines 2001, 371). Binkley's rejection of the term "improvisation" raises questions about the standard view of the Studio's use of the techniques they developed as a consequence of their visit to Morocco. Also, the characterization of the Andalusian music as "folk music" is inappropriate. It is court music and, though traditional in a certain sense, would better be understood as classical (as Haines himself accurately refers to it in the subsequent paragraph).

[34] Mariani insists that the term "Radio Baghdad" was used affectionately rather than derisively and she is not certain whether Binkley ever heard it. She also believes that the term is indicative of the inability of Western listeners to distinguish among various types of Middle Eastern and North African music (Mariani interview 2003).

[35] On the other hand, his assertion that for the Studio "Arabic music was used . . . as a pretext to revive orientalism" (Haines 2001, 375) seems unfair and perhaps unwarranted. Binkley's goal was to make good music, as he demonstrated in his comments to Altramar (above).

[36] Haines in fact addresses the structural aspects of the Studio's performances, highlighting the increasing importance of preludes, interludes and postludes over the course of their recording career (Haines 2001, 374–5), but then he dismisses these fundamental features as "Arabic graftings" (ibid., 375). Note Binkley's comments above about personalizing the adopted models.

[37] It is important to remember here that Cohen, like Binkley, worked and studied with Moroccan musicians, so his assessment is based on personal experience. See Cohen (2002).

[38] Whether or not these techniques share a common foundation or only feature surface similarities is well beyond the scope of this study and ultimately of little relevance to an examination of the performers' motives and justification.

[39] Some do, however, express a concern for accessibility. Altramar, according to Mariani (interview 2003), employs staging in their concerts that has no foundation in medieval practice. The notion of a concert itself is an anachronism, as is the sort of groupings of pieces used in many programmes (juxtapositions of sacred and secular musics, for instance).

[40] In fact, such collaboration had happened earlier – albeit in the context of a 1977 academic symposium – and between none other than the Studio der frühen Musik and the Abdelkrim Rais Orchestra of Fès (Haines 2001, 377, n. 31). Cohen, however, does appear to be the first to attempt a coherent, holistic blend of the traditions.

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