

## **The fabric of performance: values and social practices of classical music expressed through concert dress choice**

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**ABSTRACT:** Concert dress is a valuable visual cue to an individual's attitudes and through concert dress soloists can confirm or challenge generally accepted roles and statuses in the performance situation. This article discusses the implications of production- and reception-based models of classical performance for soloists. Female classical soloists' choice of concert dress is examined using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to investigate whether performers' sartorial decisions can provide insight into the social practices and underlying values associated with classical music performance. Six female solo instrumentalists of international standing were interviewed regarding factors affecting their choice of concert dress, how they felt their concert dress interacted with their ability to communicate in performance, and the image they intended to portray in performance. Emerging themes suggest that performers select dress which allows them physical freedom, the ability to signal their views of performance to their audience, and to display individual characteristics. These themes are discussed in relation to production- and reception-based theories of classical performance.

**KEYWORDS:** concert dress, gender, values, social expectations

Dress provides a valuable visual cue to an individual's attitudes (Tseëlon, 1995) and in the context of Western classical music performance, soloists can use their concert dress to confirm or challenge generally accepted roles and statuses. The significance of research in this area extends well beyond soloists' decorative considerations and can provide insight into the social practices and underlying values associated with classical music performance. Dress and appearance is of particular significance for women performers who have a less rigid code of dress than male performers and who face specific challenges in relation to display aspects of their appearance. The study reported below uses the testimonies of profes-

sional female soloists to examine the processes involved in selecting concert dress for classical performance and investigates what sartorial decisions reveal about soloists' approach to performance and their perceptions of social expectations of female soloists.

### **Emerging issues in music performance**

Soloists in performance communicate both visually and aurally with their audience and performers' choice of concert dress is one element of the visual code. However, the social construction of classical music and values attributed to it may determine the precise ways in which concert dress features in performance. It is necessary to examine the origins of the classical concert tradition in order to fully understand a soloist's role in performance and the influence that the concert tradition can have on performance practice; as Cook (1998) observes, it is merely because such processes are built into our language and culture that they are taken for granted and we forget that they are in fact a product of human construction.

Peter Kivy details the historical emergence of the concert tradition and the position of Immanuel Kant's work at the heart of the philosophical rationale surrounding this. According to Kivy (1995) an "aesthetic revolution" (p. 234) took place towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in which philosophical shifts surrounding attitudes to music and the arts in general occurred. Kivy (2002) describes how Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) proposed that universal definitions of beauty could be realised by achieving pure judgements of taste through a state of disinterestedness. This disinterestedness allowed a judgement to be made on an object's form and on its deep representational content, elements that Kant believed needed to be present for an object to be considered a work of 'fine' art. Kant's view of music was that it achieved beauty of form, but that its deep representational content operated on the body, not on the mind, and so could not be considered fine art in this respect. Kivy (1995) links the aesthetic revolution and Kant's role in this to the emergence of concert halls, which he, Kivy, calls 'sonic museums' or spaces designed to showcase musical sound. Performance practice therefore came to focus on the sonic or formal qualities of music rather than musical expression through the act of performance.

Lydia Goehr believes that the focus on musical form led to the development of what she terms the *Werktreue* or 'work-concept', which had a direct influence on the roles, behaviours and statuses of performers in Western classical music. Goehr (1992) shows that in order for music to be seen as a product, tangible and permanent, like other fine arts such as painting and sculpture, there developed a focus on the musical work that took precedence over the activity and occasion of performance itself. Musical works were embodied by their performers, and focus on the work was sharpened when the performer was a soloist. Yet for the prominence of the work itself to be maintained, reference to the human origins of performance had to be disguised. Goehr points out that this created a paradox for soloists, who were required to be simultaneously visible and hidden.

This production-based, or 'music-as-object' view of performance has obvious consequences for the status of performers. The authority attributed to the musical work as a source of musical meaning diminishes the status of soloists and leads to the value of performance being reduced to an imperfect and approximate representation of a work (Law-

son, 2002). The subordinate status of performers also lessens their claim to a work: traditionally, performers' rights to the music were won only by their specialist training in interpretation and not through the creation of musical meaning (Said, 1991).

A reception-based or 'music-as-action' view of classical performance gives more weight to the importance of the performer in constructing musical meaning. Both Cook (1998) and Small (1998) see meaning as being created by *all* individuals taking part in performance and Cook challenges the idea of the work-concept with the belief that "we can best understand music by being in the middle of it" (Cook, 1998, p. 80). The sight of the soloist in performance is crucial for both performer and audience in order to locate the music in culture and society (Leppert, 1993). A combination of socio-cultural practices are specific to a genre of music and the sight of a performer taking part in these practices signals to the audience the performance tradition within which the performer is operating. This can indicate to the audience a performer's engagement with the performance tradition and consequently its associated values. Small posits that it is only through activity that music comes into being and therefore the visual code, which functions through the performer's body, is vital in transforming music into an embodied experience for an audience. Audience members hear the music but they also witness the performer's appearance in terms of dress, movement style, gesture, and interaction with the audience and other performers. These visual features connect classical music to the values associated with it through a shared link with the body.

However, certain issues arise from the historical performance practices of women that may have consequences for female instrumentalists' use of their bodies in performance today. DeNora (2002) describes how throughout 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe women were excluded from playing instruments that were considered incompatible with notions of bodily decorum and that failed to exhibit "a quiet body" (p. 28), that is a body not engaged in physical effort. As a result the choice of musical instruments available to women was severely limited. Specifically, DeNora cites women's avoidance of woodwind instruments, the cello and later, following the physicality required in the Beethovenian style, the piano<sup>1</sup>. Women refrained from playing these instruments so as not to display themselves in ways that might have appeared indecorous. In short, notions of appropriate display for women instrumentalists restricted their musical practices.

Although women's performance practices are less restricted today, notions of appropriate display may still encroach on their music making. Green (1997) proposes that display delineations are a form of musical meaning derived from the social context of display as it accompanies performance. In performances where women instrumentalists raise the level of display above that of inherent musical meanings, Green argues that these display elements retrieve and perpetuate patriarchal definitions of femininity. Further, she suggests that for a woman instrumentalist "the more overt and affirmative her bodily display, the more she signifies a lack of commitment to the music's inherent meanings, the less likely she is to be regarded as a serious musician, and the less seriously her music itself will be

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<sup>1</sup> The historical restriction of women's choice of musical instrument has been discussed by a number of theorists. See Bowers and Tick (1986), Green, (1997), Cook and Tsou (1994) and Korsmeyer (2004), among others, for further discussion.

taken" (1997, p. 81). However, Green also proposes that musical style has the propensity to affect the visibility of gender delineations and she believes that when the discourses surrounding a particular style place a greater value on musical autonomy, female display delineations are less salient. So, for women instrumentalists performing within the tradition of Western classical music, the high degree of autonomy associated with this genre may serve to minimise the salience of their gender, providing the display elements of their performance are not over-emphasised.

However, in an essay discussing the increasing dominance of beauty culture in Western classical music, Citron (2004) states that female sexuality and allure is placed front and centre in performance. Interestingly, this perspective is at odds with evidence from research on the performance of popular music showing that female instrumentalists use their concert dress to control the level of display in their performances in order to gain greater credibility. In interviews with female instrumentalists in popular music Bayton (1998) found that in order to be taken more seriously, women 'dressed down' in performance, that is wore less 'feminine' clothes such as jeans instead of skirts. Green's (1997) argument that a focus on display delineations of performance leads to a negative image of female instrumentalists is supported here by women musicians as they deliberately use their dress to minimise these delineations. Since Citron's observations centred mainly on young female instrumentalists and in popular music "the majority of players are under 30" (Bayton, 1998, p. viii) it is likely that valuable insights would be obtained through further examination of this demographic of instrumentalists.

Bayton goes on to state that women instrumentalists are forced to be self-conscious about their dress as the stage is "an extraordinary situation, where strong expectations exist of how women should appear and such norms regulate their appearance" (Bayton, 1998, p.108). To conform to these norms female musicians can control the display delineations of their performances through style of dress in order to meet perceived expectations of how they should look in performance. Embodied in the image of a performer's dress are the individual's ideas and beliefs (Rubenstein, 2001); it also indicates their attitudes (Tseilon, 1995), and therefore by wearing clothes that signify characteristics appropriate to the performance setting and the performer's role, performers can visually 'cement' their approach to their work. Barnard (2002) describes the types of meaning that can be inferred from dress and labels them denotational meaning and connotational meaning. Denotational meaning is read from the shapes, lines and patterns of clothing that imply a style of dress. The social implications of a style of dress provide an observer with connotational meaning. For example, the denotational meaning of blue denim trousers allows us to identify them as jeans, and one connotation of jeans is casualness. Barnard believes that there are multiple connotations associated with dress so there are multiple meanings that alter with wearer and situation. Performers can therefore broadly signal their attitudes to the music and the performance situation through the meaning residing in the combinations of clothes that they wear in musical situations.

Empirical work from the psychology of music confirms the importance of dress and appearance in musical performance and studies have shown that dress can significantly affect audience perceptions of performance. Wapnick, Mazza and Darrow (2000) investigated the effects of attractiveness, stage behaviour and concert dress on evaluations of performance quality and found that non-musical attributes did affect evaluations of musical crite-

ria. Specifically, musicians who were rated by observers as generically more attractive and more appropriately dressed achieved higher ratings of performance quality from observers. Particular styles of dress can also affect audience perceptions of performance. Griffiths (2010) investigated the effects of four dress conditions on audience ratings of performance quality and found that female soloists were perceived as less musical and less technically proficient when wearing body-focused dress than when wearing more formal dress. However, Griffiths (2009) found that body-focused dress may aid communication between performer and audience in circumstances where expressive body movement is not immediately apparent. She also found that a performer's happiness with her concert dress may affect her behaviour in performance in terms of her use of expressive gesture. One performer in this study was reluctant to perform in a body-focused style of dress and reported feeling "exposed". Griffiths observed her to use a more limited movement vocabulary in this style of dress and observers rated her body movement style as less appropriate than when she wore more traditional concert dress. Therefore, a performer's mental comfort may affect the visual performance she gives and this requires further investigation.

The reluctance to perform in body-focused dress felt by the performer in Griffiths' (2009) study may be associated with conventions of concert dress for female classical soloists. In another study, Griffiths examined images of female soloists in promotional pictures and in performance and found that performers' dress in concert was much more conservative and old-fashioned than their dress in promotional material (Griffiths 2009). Although Griffiths (2010) found that wearing body-focused dress in performance led to lower observer ratings of performance quality, further research needs to be carried out into the image that soloists' actually project in performance in order to determine whether the issue of body-focused dress on perceptions of performance is relevant to classical soloists.

From this discussion of performers' role in performance and the role of their concert dress, a number of research questions have been generated.

1. Are performers' choices of dress indicative of the role they perceive they have in classical performance, and if so how does this role relate to production- and reception-based models of classical performance?
2. What factors affect female soloists' choice of concert dress?
3. What image do performers intend to project with their dress in performance?

In order to answer these questions, the study reported below used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to investigate six internationally performing soloists as case studies. A qualitative approach to data collection was taken, which allowed the subtleties and complexities of individual human behaviour to be captured (Robson, 2002). The data were gathered by means of individual semi-structured interviews, analysed in line with IPA and discussed in relation to key emerging themes.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were six professional solo female instrumentalists, ranging in age from 25 to 29 years ( $M = 27.17$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ). Their primary occupation was the performance of works of Western classical music and they were contacted via their agents. Between them, they had released a total of 45 CD and five DVD recordings, and all had extensive tour schedules with dates in the 2008-2009 season across North and South America, the UK and Europe, China, Japan and South Korea.

Jo, Jessica and Natalie are violinists, Rosie is a harpist, Elanor is a classical saxophonist and Chloe is a cellist (so as to maintain the participants' anonymity, all names are pseudonyms). Their performing careers are similar in that they all tour widely across the world, playing with major ensembles and in festivals such as the BBC Proms. Jo, Elanor, Chloe and Natalie make recordings for large classical recording labels and Jessica has set up her own recording company. Between them, they have won a number of prizes and competitions ranging from those won as students and BBC Young Musician of the Year to Grammy Awards.

The age of the participants was controlled in order to probe Citron's (2004) observations of young women instrumentalists' approach to display by seeking the perspectives of women under 30. Physical appearance was not controlled, but all the participants are slim with long or medium-length hair. It should be noted that participants' physical appearance in conjunction with their age may affect the dress they select and the way they present themselves visually.

### Materials

The interview schedule was devised to cover the range of topics identified in the research questions. Factual questions to establish what they wear, as soloists, in performance and their level of control over their dress were designed to ease participants into the interview. They were asked about representational aspects of their concert dress, such as what they think their dress says about them as individuals and their attitude to the music. They were then asked questions about the practicalities of their choice of dress in terms of their awareness of their dress as they perform and its effect on their expressive movement on stage. Finally, participants were asked their opinions of the reception of performers based on their choice of dress including how they thought style of dress could influence perceptions of musical ability and audience demographics. At the end of the interview participants were given the opportunity to make additional comments and revisit topics discussed earlier.

### Procedure

The data were collected via an individual semi-structured interview with each participant, who was encouraged to speak freely on the topics raised. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes in length; conversations took place over the telephone and were recorded using a Sanyo Talk Book VAS with telephone recording adaptor. Participants' heavy workloads and

their geographical locations due to tour commitments meant that face-to-face interviews were not feasible for this study. It is possible that the use of telephone interviews limited the richness of the data to some extent, although using this method ensured that the opinions of performers at the top of their profession were accessed and their experiences were recorded. Although the participants were previously unknown to the author, they were keen to discuss the topics raised; the tone was informal and the atmosphere relaxed. The interviews were subsequently transcribed and analysed by the author. Full transcripts are presented in Griffiths (2009).

Detailed analysis was carried out on each transcript in line with IPA, an approach in which emerging themes from the data are identified, interpreted and ordered hierarchically by the researcher. The use of IPA acknowledges the presence and experiences of the researcher in undertaking the analysis but recognises that the researcher's interpretative engagement is necessary in order to make sense of the personal accounts under examination (Smith, 1999). In the case of this investigation, the author's experience as a female performing flautist in traditional classical performance situations should be taken into account.

The data collected from the participants are discussed below in relation to three key emerging themes, each with various sub-themes. These themes are headed Physical Freedom, Concert Dress as a Representational Tool, and Performer Characteristics. Physical Freedom addresses performers' concert dress choice under the sub-themes of Requirements of the Instrument, The Body as an Expressive Tool and Security of Dress. Concert Dress as a Representational Tool addresses performers' choice of dress under the sub-themes Creating a Sense of Occasion and Appropriateness of Dress. Performer Characteristics examines soloists' concert dress choice under the sub-themes Gender Delineations and Dress and Individuality. Each theme is discussed in relation to the music-as-object, music-as-action dichotomy central to this article.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Physical Freedom

#### *Requirements of the Instrument*

One of the main concerns of performers when choosing their concert dress is negotiating the physical requirements of their instruments. This is an explicit concern for Rosie, who, when asked what determines her choice of dress, replied:

It's more the actual practical side of "Can I play in this?" It's one thing to decide whether it looks good but the next thing to think about is actually is it possible to play in it.

As different instruments require varying levels of action from body parts, each instrumentalist will make specific demands of their concert dress in order that it does not impede their performance physically. Natalie discussed what she typically wears in performance and its effect on her body movement:

I don't have any straps you know that slip or make my violin slip on my shoulder. I kept noticing myself having to adjust the violin and not feeling quite as free to move because it would slip a little easier and that was the point at which I thought maybe I should just try strapless as long as I know that it's going to stay on.

By focusing on the physical requirements of their instrument when selecting concert dress, performers ensure that the quality of musical performance is not compromised by decorative aspects of dress. This prioritisation by performers of musical quality over display aspects of their performances is consistent with a production-based model of classical performance: the work-concept that Goehr (1992) describes places the musical work at the focal point of classical performance and occupies the position of highest status. Performers can reinforce this ideology with their choice of concert dress: selecting dress that meets the practical needs of performance allows their attention to focus on the musical work and sends a signal to audience members that they value musical aspects over display aspects of performance.

The performer's concert dress must interact with the requirements of the instrument in order to ensure that the performer is not physically restricted whilst playing. When discussing her requirements of her concert dress, Rosie commented "I couldn't wear very tight skirts because I play the harp and I have to have room to move." It appears that not only must concert dress allow a performer to have a secure hold of their instrument, but it must also allow them freedom to move.

### *The Body as an Expressive Tool*

All the participants reported the need for freedom of movement in their concert dress. The importance of flexibility and fit of concert dress was stressed by Chloe:

[It's] kind of like a sports person would choose clothes that would really fit them well. It's a very physical thing a concert, so for me the physicality... ultimately you don't want to be physically restricted, it's very important.

Natalie also emphasised the significance of her body in performance through a link with sport:

So for me when I look for a new outfit, if I were going to a ball and I were picking out my gown would this make me feel great? I try to find something that does that [with my concert dress] but also is athletic enough for me to be able to play without me having to think twice about it.

In both of these examples, Chloe and Natalie describe their bodies as valuable tools to be used in performance. The link with sport to demonstrate this is interesting. In sport, the body is the prime mechanism for performance and is given a position of high status, for example elite athletes follow strict diets and specialist clothing is developed to enhance performance. In classical music performance, there is no analogous specialist attention to the musician's body and indeed Rosset-Llobet and Odam (2007) list the situations frequently encountered by musicians that put their bodies at risk. This is congruent with the dominant production-based model of classical performance described by Goehr (1992), which places the performer and their body in an inferior position to the work, in that the final product is given precedence over the physical demands that playing places on performers. Furthermore, as we have seen, the work-concept requires that the human origins of performance are disguised. However, in the examples given above, Chloe and Natalie show that they consider their bodies and how their dress allows them to perform as aligned with the high value that is placed on the body in sport. They aim to make their bodies as free as possible and do not talk of hiding the body in performance. This undermines the work-concept by focusing

on the performer's body and its physicality as one of the prime factors of performance. Rather, it supports a reception-based model of performance, which gives credit to the musician in shaping the performance (e.g. Cook, 1998; Small, 1998). Both Chloe and Natalie place great value on being physically free in performance and use their concert dress as a method of achieving this freedom.

Although Jessica values physical freedom in her performances, she also values the visual effect that her concert dress and body movement together can create. Jessica discussed how her choice of concert dress affected her body movements in performance:

For me, at least, it [my concert dress] must be a sort of A-line cut and not on the bias. I know, only from video, that I tend to plant my feet wide apart at times, occasionally do knee bends and sometimes walk around a bit. I can't see this being attractive for me in a bias-cut dress.

Jessica uses her concert dress to work in tandem with her body movement to project a controlled image of herself in performance. Jessica chooses a particular style of concert dress to moderate her large movements, which she considers to be unattractive. The movements Jessica described above were not used for sound production, and it appears that performers also select dress based on the degree of physical freedom it affords them for expressive body movement. Natalie related her expressive movements to specific aspects of the music:

I think of my motion on stage [and how that] affects how people are hearing the music. I want to indicate the shape of the music, I want to show up where there are duets and trios within the orchestra, you know the chamber music aspect of the performance. I know that if I'm bound in a skirt I can't move my knees in, then I'm not going to be able to move around and interact with the other musicians in the same way, like I won't be able to shift my weight, I won't be able to walk freely on stage.

The fact that performers choose dress that allows them to create expressive gestures supports the reception-based model of musical performance. Frith (1996) asserts that the body, as well as the score, is an expressive site and musical meaning is created as the performer's internal state is externalised as a body shape or movement. Both Jessica and Natalie described choosing dress that allows them the physical freedom to use their bodies in this way. However, Natalie specifically mentioned using her body to indicate formal aspects of the music such as the interplay between parts. As such, she can be seen to highlight the music's inherent meanings and therefore creates a focus on the work. In this way, by choosing dress that allows expressive movement performers can be seen to represent both music-as-object *and* music-as-action models of performance.

### *Security of Dress*

All the participants said that it was important to them that their concert dress gives them physical freedom in performance; however, in order for performers to feel sufficiently confident to make expressive body movements they need to feel that their dress is secure. A number of participants gave examples of past problems with the security of their concert dress and the impact that this had on their ability to perform. Jo stated:

My first time in Sydney, in Australia at the Opera House, I had on this completely brand new Valentino gorgeous, gorgeous sky blue dress... but I hadn't tried bowing in it, and I went on and I took my first bow and the side of the dress just completely unsnapped...

and I was trying to stop the conductor, but the entire cello section to my left were trying not to smile, not to laugh at me but I had the violin in one hand and I was desperately trying to do as many of the buttons with my right hand. Oh! It was a nightmare! But anyway, that's why I don't wear snap buttons anymore!

Secure concert dress is vital for performers to be able to play at their best. Major problems such as those described above cannot fail to have an impact on performance, restricting the performer both mentally and physically. Jo went on to state that, "unless something goes drastically wrong like that, I don't think you notice what you're wearing once you get on stage." Even without such a major incident several participants reported that they also aimed to forget about their dress on stage. When Chloe was asked how aware of her dress she was when performing, she replied:

I don't want to be aware of it at all. That's my wish that I completely forget about it, so I don't think about it...the moment I'm aware of something visual or something that's bothering me then my concentration is taken away.

By selecting particular types of dress, performers are able to achieve peace of mind in this respect. Natalie described this when asked what she would typically wear when in concert:

I typically wear something that enables me ...not [to] have to worry about the clothing shifting or falling down, so spaghetti straps are out of the question unless they are firmly in place like in a harness.

The aim of performers to wear secure concert dress that allows them to disregard it whilst playing suggests that they also aim for the focus of their performances to rest more on the music than on their appearance. The ideology of musical autonomy, which accompanies the work-based theory of musical reception (Goehr, 1992), attributes intrinsic value to musical works. This implies that musical works can be wholly understood without reference to socially constructed aspects of performance such as concert dress. By placing importance on the musical properties of the work rather than non-musical aspects of performance, performers reinforce views of musical autonomy.

Although performers aim to select clothing that allows them confidence in the security of their dress, performers appear to have learned from experience. In a discussion of how aware of her concert dress she was when playing, Jessica said:

I began wearing cross-back only in 2002 after I wore a slightly off the shoulder dress which somehow got lower and lower, into near danger zone I believe, but there was nothing I could do except go on. Naturally, I lost a bit of concentration. Somehow we all made it to the end, but I had learned my lesson.

Both Jessica and Jo went through a process of trial and error in selecting their concert dress and now forgo styles of dress that they consider insecure. In both cases, the display aspect of their dress now comes secondary to considerations of the music and the performance. Again, this can be interpreted as reinforcing a production-based model of performance as the performers' motives in selecting more secure dress are to focus their concentration on the musical work.

### **Concert Dress as a Representational Tool**

#### *Creating a Sense of Occasion*

Jo was asked what her concert dress says about her attitude to performance and she commented “I think that by the time you step on stage, from the time your foot steps on stage, it’s already a part of the whole performance.” Jo sees her dress as an integral part of the performance situation that is significant not only when she is playing, but the entire time she is visible on stage. Brownmiller shares this perspective in her witty text, *Femininity*, as she writes “Who said that clothes make a statement? What an understatement that was. Clothes never shut up. They gabble on endlessly, making their intentional and unintentional points” (Brownmiller, 1994, p. 56). The importance Jo places on her dress throughout her performance shows that she is aware that her choice of dress is a constant signal to observers of her attitudes to performance. The idea that concert dress can function as a sign to observers provides evidence of music-as-action in that the sight of the performer is contributing to constructing meaning in performance.

Performers do not think of concert dress solely as a passive element of performance. Elanor said:

When you put it [your concert dress] on, you feel like you’re putting your costume on, it is something you don’t wear every day... it does make you feel like it’s a special occasion, I think it just makes a sense of occasion.

In this instance concert dress is actively shaping the performance situation. However, the visual symbolism, or connotational meaning of concert dress, to use Barnard’s (2002) term, does not relate to specific musical features of performance, as in the previous examples of dress and expressive movement. Rather, concert dress has a wider role in creating the environment in which music is performed and received, and performers use their dress to emphasise their own approach to performance as consistent with a reception-based model of classical performance.

One way that performers develop a sense of occasion with their dress is by demonstrating effort. Jessica was asked what she thought her dress said about her to her audience and she commented:

When I am giving a performance I feel that there is a respect due the audience. It would be a disappointing thing for them, I believe, were I to walk out in some drab number.

Tseëlon (1995) believes that on important occasions and when engaging with people that one wishes to impress, an individual makes a visible effort with their appearance. By demonstrating effort in her appearance, Jessica aims to communicate to the audience that they are an important part of the concert situation. Jessica suggests that she has considered her audience in her choice of dress and shows them respect by implying that they are worth the effort she has taken. In addition, Jessica shows that she believes that performance is about more than inherent musical meanings and she demonstrates a link between herself and her audience. This position is concordant with that of Small (1998), who believes that musical meaning does not only reside within the musical work but that all individuals taking part in performance are involved in the creation of musical meaning.

Performers also rotate outfits of concert dress to create a sense of occasion. According to Jo:

My tours tend to get really long so there are times when I’m not back home for about 6 weeks and sometimes we’ve got 5 or 6 shows in that city, you know like New York Phil-

harmonic, State Opera, LA all do 5 shows per week and that's OK, 5 different dresses I take one for every show that means also 5-7 pairs of concert shoes.

Jo's testimony suggests that she wears different concert dress on consecutive performing occasions in one location. Natalie also supports this idea:

There was one point I was shown a picture of the last time I was there [at a concert hall] someone wanted me to sign a picture they'd taken with me last time I was there, and in it I was wearing the same dress that I wore that night but three years later! And I thought "Uh oh! I need to come up with a better system."

Jo's rotation of concert dress makes her repeated performances in one location visually distinct. Natalie's approach is similar in that she ensures that she appears visually distinct in a particular location across concert seasons. By rotating their concert dress, performers ensure that they look different every time an audience member sees them perform. This creates a sense of occasion by signifying visually that every performance is unique, even if the same musical material is being performed. These methods of selecting concert dress embrace a production-based model of performance, which celebrates the differences that occur between performances and draws attention to the fact that each concert is not an identical repetition of the score.

### *Appropriateness of Dress*

The classical tradition operates within a set of cultural rules and performers interviewed for this study believe that it is important to dress in line with these expectations. Elanor was asked to describe what she typically wears in performance:

I play in a very classical context and I think it's important to dress accordingly. I always wear something below the knee and usually something all the way to the floor. If it's a recital then it'll be something simpler.

It is clear that Elanor's perceived requirements of classical performance have an impact on the concert dress that she selects to wear. The dress she described is formal and she believes that this dress reflects the performance context. Natalie echoed these sentiments and also aims to dress in a formal manner to match the social context:

[My concert dress should be] appropriate for the level of formality and I like showing the respect for the music that that level of formality requires, and also the respect for the audience and respect for the tradition that is passed down from generation to generation.

The production-based model of classical performance places value on formality and Frith (1996) captures this in his description of performance as a serious, mental activity. Formality of performance etiquette removes distractions and allows a focus to be maintained on the musical work in performance. All six participants described wearing formal concert dress, the connotational meaning of which will reinforce the formality of the performance situation. Through her dress, Natalie is able to emphasize traditional performance values and therefore maintain a focus on the musical work. However, in addition to reinforcing music-as-object notions of classical performance, this soloist defines the terms of her performance. By selecting traditionally appropriate dress for a classical performance she encourages the perception of herself as a traditional classical soloist with traditional classical values of performance. Natalie's aim to communicate her respect for the audience and the

performance tradition through a choice of formal dress highlights the ability of soloists to shape the meaning of performance with their dress. This is typical of a music-as-action view of creating musical meaning.

Natalie discussed the extent to which she believes her dress and image to affect the makeup of her audience and described wanting to make a personal connection with her audience:

I want people to feel like I'm a normal person you know, I don't want to put myself up on a pedestal, I don't want to be a fashion model, or dress like someone unobtainable, I very much connect with my audiences so I have different criteria from my concert gowns than some other people might.

Natalie believes that by dressing in a manner with which her audience is familiar, she is making herself and her music more accessible to them. This could also be seen as reflective of the relationship she believes she already has with her audience; if she feels that she has a rapport with her audience then she may be able to maintain this through her dress. Natalie's attitude to dress appears to be one of a number of ways that she tries to maintain a connection with her audience as her website has a blog that she regularly updates and a section for drawings that young audience members have handed to her in person after her concerts. Natalie's perspective shows the belief she has in her ability to shape her audience's experience. This idea supports reception theory by crediting the performer with the power to affect musical meaning. This gives status to the soloist and contradicts the traditional view of performance described by Said (1991) whereby performers are seen as interpreters rather than creators of musical meaning.

The participants feel that what constitutes appropriate dress is determined in part by audience demographics and social aspects of the performance situation. As Rosie said:

I suppose at the moment classical audiences are generally old so because of that you need to be a little bit careful of how you dress.

However, demographics of classical audiences such as age will influence what is considered appropriate concert dress. Natalie observed:

It's very hard these days to find something in a store that's formal enough for a concert because it's really not in our culture anymore.

Goehr (1992) suggests that musical works transcend temporal barriers, allowing them to be performed years after their composition. Temporal transcendence is reflected in performers' choice of concert dress. For example, Natalie chooses dress that reflects the formality of the concert situation but which cannot reflect fashions present in wider society as the two are incompatible. The fact that performers select dress that is very formal over dress representing contemporary fashion can be seen to embody a temporal transcendence that is present and valued in the works they perform.

The participants believe that display elements of their dress could have an impact on the way their performance is perceived. Natalie was asked what she thinks her dress says about her to her audience. She replied:

I try to apply that concept of not distracting the audience with the clothes that I wear... I basically don't want people to be thinking of the outfit more than the music.

Selecting appropriate concert dress allows the dress to blend into the social schema of musical performance to such an extent that audience members will become unaware of it. In the examples above, the participants reported that they choose non-restrictive dress to allow them to forget about their dress in performance. In addition, Natalie chooses dress that she believes will allow her audience to focus on the music itself. Again, this supports a production-based model of performance as described by Goehr (1992): dress should not distract from focus on the musical work itself.

Chloe believes there to be a potential impact on her audience's experience based on her choice of dress:

The most important thing for me about the performing experience for them [the audience] as far as they see it is the music, me and the cello and the communication there and it's not about me prancing on a bit like a peacock and saying "everybody look at me and I'm not interested how it sounds"... I wouldn't want to sell myself off as a dolly that just plays the cello.

Chloe's statement supports a reception-based model of performance as she recognises that she, as the soloist, has the capacity to shape the performance that the audience receives. However, she believes that interference in communication would be caused if she were to highlight display aspects of her appearance through her choice of concert dress. This is consistent with the perspective of Green (1997), who believes that a strong focus on the display elements of female instrumentalists' performance is read by observers as a lack of commitment to the music's inherent meanings and makes the musician's work less likely to be regarded seriously and with respect. Natalie can be seen to try to avoid this perception of her performing ability and her statement suggests that, musically, she wishes to be taken seriously. She indicates this through selecting dress that does not raise display elements of her appearance above those of inherent musical meaning.

### **Performer Characteristics**

#### *Gender Delineations*

Issues of gender and display in performance were raised and discussed explicitly by the participants. As young female performers they feel that they should neither try to play down the visual indications of this aspect of their identity, nor to emphasise them. Chloe was asked what she hoped to portray about herself to the audience through her choice of concert dress, and she responded:

I think that I'm taken seriously firstly as a musician and secondly or not at all even, as a woman.

Chloe's view can be understood in terms of Green's (1997) discussion of the effect of gender delineations on performance. Green states that when a woman instrumentalist shows a commitment to the music's inherent meanings the salience of bodily display and gender are reduced. In turn, this increases the likelihood that she, and her music, will be taken seriously. By contrast, Natalie said:

I want them [the audience] to enjoy the music and be able to relax into that experience, which is what I've worked very hard for, but at the same time I want people to really enjoy what they're looking at.

Jo's view is similar to Natalie's:

You know I am a girl and I love shopping, I love shoes, I love the whole thing, I love that part of being a girl and I have fun with it. I mean ultimately at the end of the day it's something that's beautiful and elegant and there's nothing wrong with being sexy on stage, as long as you do it with taste.

Natalie is confident of her musical ability and confident that the audience will appreciate her talent; she shows no fear of recognising that a musician in performance can be a visual as well as an aural spectacle. Jo takes this view to the extreme and exalts stereotypically feminine pursuits such as shopping for concert dress. Not only does she not fear the impact of display delineations on perceptions of her performances, but for her they are enjoyable aspects of the performance situation. From Natalie and Jo's previous comments, it is clear that when selecting concert dress they are focused on dress that allows them to concentrate on their performances; it is possible that they are content with the level of consideration they have given to the musical work when selecting their concert dress, but also wish to use their appearance to further communicate with their audience.

Chloe, Natalie and Jo all recognise the significance of gender and display delineations in how they present themselves as performers. This highlights the performer's ability to raise or lower the significance of display in their performances and therefore affect the generation of meaning. The power that this affords the soloist is concurrent with a reception-based model of classical performance.

### *Dress and Individuality*

Both Jo and Natalie mentioned that their concert dress has affected their attitude to performance. Jo said:

It might sound a little silly but I think there are days when you're not...you're not feeling so great, you've had a bad day, you've had a fight with someone and you put on something nice and it makes you feel a bit better and it's the same thing when you go on stage.

As Jo puts on her concert dress she achieves the right frame of mind for performing; carrying out the rituals associated with classical performance incrementally prepares the soloist for performance. By the same token, happiness with concert dress can be affected by performers' feelings of themselves on a particular occasion. According to Natalie:

There have been times that I haven't been comfortable in what I was wearing just because that day I was feeling finicky or something.

While Natalie reports wearing the same concert dress for an entire tour, she would have checked it to ensure that it allowed expressive movement and was appropriate for every occasion. In this case, fluctuation in mood can be seen as the cause of differing feelings for the same dress between performances. Thus there appears to be a relationship between performers' state of mind for performing and their feelings towards their concert dress. Although their moods may affect their feelings towards their bodies, the concert dress may be the catalyst they need to put them in the optimum frame of mind for performing. Performers recognise that concert dress can be related to their individual approach to performance. This recognition and its effect on performance supports the music-as-action theory, by

showing that the soloist as an individual with thoughts and feelings unrelated to the musical work is capable of shaping musical performance.

Although participants are keen for display delineations to be less prominent than inherent musical meanings in their performances, three of the soloists identified a wish to make their appearance individual. Jo was asked what she thought her dress said about her as a person to her audience:

I try to find that whole balance to make it appropriate but also to put a little bit of my own twist on it.

Chloe was asked to describe what she typically wears in concert and said:

I wear red shoes 'cause I like to have colour and actually I'm looking for more colourful stuff at the moment 'cause I think for a lot of performers it gets pretty boring just wearing black

Here, Chloe is introducing an element of personal taste and demonstrating that there are also less practical dimensions to her choice of dress. Although performers do not wish to be distinguished visually because of inappropriate dress, by creating a unique image they will be remembered by the audience, who may return to future concerts. It is also likely that, in so structured an environment as classical performance, a personal slant on concert dress may give performers a sense of ownership over the social situation, including their interpretation of the musical work, which is so closely replicated in each performance irrespective of the musician and the occasion. This idea of an individual visual style, created by the soloist's concert dress choice, highlights their individuality and is a visual symbol of their unique approach to performance. This is a way in which soloists are able to create meaning in performance and provides evidence in support of a reception-based model of classical performance.

### CONCLUSIONS

The introduction to this paper highlighted tensions between perceptions of music-as-object and perceptions of music-as-action, and revealed the impact that applying these differing ideologies could have on performance practice. Through their concert dress, performers are able to signal their attitudes to their audience. In addition, their choice of concert dress can be used to examine how they see their role in performance in relation to these theories. Examining female soloists' choice of concert dress found evidence that performers' rationales for selecting dress support both production- and reception-based models of performance.

Evidence to support the view of music-as-object was found on a number of occasions. Participants aim to prioritise the quality of their performance and select dress that allows them the necessary freedom of movement to achieve this. Participants also select secure dress to this end. Both of these factors allow performers unrestricted movement in performance, which in turn, allows them to devote their attention to the musical work. Participants carefully select dress that they consider to be appropriate for performance. This dress is formal in style to reflect their perception of a formal performance occasion, in which the focus is on the musical work. These behaviours are all consistent with a production-based view of classical performance.

Examples were also found to support the view of music-as-action. Participants select dress that allows them to use their body as an expressive tool. In this way, performers add a layer of musical meaning through the use of their bodies that is additional to the meaning residing within the score. Participants use their dress to create a sense of occasion in performance, which highlights the uniqueness of each performance and sends a signal of respect and engagement with the performance situation to the audience. Gender delineations of performance are deliberately moderated by participants' choice of dress. In doing so, performers show an awareness that highlighting this aspect of performance may affect musical meaning. Participants also discussed making themselves visually distinct through their choice of dress, which highlights their individuality and their contribution to performance. These behaviours all support a reception-based view of classical performance.

Evidence from this study suggests that performers select dress to meet the dual necessities of the physical requirements of performance and the socio-communicative aspects of appearance. These demands map onto music-as-object and music-as-action respectively. It should, however, be noted that evidence of both music-as-object and music-as-action was found to function through the body of the soloist in the form of their concert dress choice. This is perhaps unsurprising in the case of evidence supporting a reception-based model of performance, as this view credits the performer with a share of creating musical meaning. However, it is more unexpected to find evidence that a production-based model of performance also functions through the body, as this perspective assumes that musical meaning resides overwhelmingly within the musical work. The findings of this paper suggest that an object-based view of performance relies, in part, on the body of the performer to become salient in performance. The requirement of the performer to reinforce the importance of the musical work somewhat undermines the view of classical works as entirely autonomous.

Performers select dress that both highlights the musical work and shapes their performances. This suggests that they see their role as a combination of facilitating audience access to the musical work and creating an individual interpretation.

### **Future research**

Participants reported being conscious of audience members' expectations of their concert dress and further investigation into the extent to which performers' choices about their appearance are governed by perceived social expectations and by individual differences would be valuable. The dress that participants described wearing is formal and they are keen to find dress that shows respect for the classical tradition and that is appropriate. This supports Griffiths' (2009) observations of female soloists' dress, but further investigation is required into the differences between how female soloists present themselves in concert and are represented in promotional materials to gain a complete picture. Finally, this investigation has highlighted the ways in which performers believe audience members to make judgements based on performers' dress and appearance. A qualitative investigation of audience reactions to female performers would provide valuable insights, revealing how audience members react to performers' appearance and why they react as they do. This would evaluate the views expressed by the musicians in this study and confirm whether or not audience members also make judgements about performance in the same ways as these soloists.

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