# Introduction: Agency and Musical Performance 

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ABSTRACT: This essay provides an introduction to the essays collected here, giving a historical context to the collection, providing a short summary of each one, and a conclusion.

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[1] The papers that follow began their existence together as part of a special session on Agency and Musical Performance at the Eighth European Conference on Musical Analysis in September 2014. In that session, scholars from a range of specialties, including musical analysis, empirical musicology, performance, and cognitive studies provided insights into a broad spectrum of approaches to the topic of musical agency. The subsequent discussions raised many central topics, including the extent to which a performer can be considered an independent agent; the problems of theorizing performative agency; the concept of performers sharing agency with other forces, such as the composer, the audience, and the sound itself; and the question of constraints, physical or other, that may limit the control of the performer over the music she plays. Informed and enthused by these discussions, the participants revisited their conference papers, sharing insights and arguments as the talks grew into written texts. The resulting papers have in many ways grown up together, each influencing the others both directly and indirectly. Altogether, they develop considerably their original presentations.
[2] As a group, these papers on agency and performance represent an original contribution to the study of musical agency. Over the last four decades, as the academic study of music has broadened its purview to include concerns beyond composer and score, the subject of agency has generated much interest. Edward Cone's The Composer's Voice (1974), a ground-breaking and subtle study of the ways composers, performers, and listeners create musical meaning, gave rise to much debate on narrativity, metaphor, and univocal intention in music (Guck 1989; Maus 1989; Monahan 2013). Scholars such as Carolyn Abbate (1991) and Lori Burns (2002) have celebrated the agentive power of musical performers, while philosopher Stan Godlovitch (1998) has carefully outlined the limits of such power within the traditional view of the composer-performer relationship. Reflecting this diversity in the study of agency, the papers that follow are far from unitary in their understanding of the topic, and vary in their individual approaches. What brings these essays together, however, is a shared focus on agency in the context of musical performance. The emphasis on performative agency as a direct consequence of playing music sets this collection apart from studies that treat musical agency as a metaphorical quality produced by analytical interpretation or compositional act. The pragmatic, messy, and sometimes momentary agency-or, better, agencies-of live musical performance forms the nucleus of the papers that follow.
[3] If this nucleus does not lead to a unitary understanding of what performative agency is, this only befits a complex and multi-faceted topic. Each author explores a particular approach to the agency of performance. In the first essay, Edward Klorman explores the interpretive space between the active decisions of the performer and the communicative potential of the music. The decisions of performers, Klorman argues, should be recognized as important-and fun-elements in creating musical meaning. Drawing on the fascinating and little-known history of the 1980's pop song by Cyndi Lauper, which is referenced in his title, Klorman

