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Paper 1

There are many aspects of our culture that have changed over time; one of them is music. Song styles, rhythms, beats, and instruments have evolved in tangent with advances in creativity and technology. New developments in the world of music have modified the way music is composed and played. It poses a new challenge whether the new modernized instruments are contingent with the way the original composers had imagined their music to sound.

In the Montserrat musical presentation performed by Carol Lieberman and Mark Kroll, two different violins and two different keyboards were used. The Baroque violin and the harpsichord represented the more original sounding music relevant to the time period in which the pieces were composed. The contemporary violin and subsequent keyboard expressed a louder, and more modernized sound. In regards to sound quality, it was easier to hear the more current instruments; they provided a fuller and overall whole sound to the pieces. However, as far as expressive potential, I preferred the music performed with the older-style instruments from the Baroque era. I appreciate the piece in its original form because I feel it does credit to the composer in having the music performed as close to his or her instruction as possible. A composer does more than choose the order for notes to create a work of musical art. There are many notations on sheet music that indicate speed, tempo, length of notes, key changes, etc. The composer does his or her best to denote exactly what he or she wants for the music so that others may play it without the original composer conducting it. The problem is that the composer may or may not be happy with the results of others’ representation of his or her work.

It is difficult for a composer to trust another musician with his or her work. Something that could be very personal or personally inspired may be altered in an unfortunate way. In 2005, an Oscar-winning composer named Jorge Drexler was very upset with the portrayal of his song “Al Otro Lado Del Rio” at the Academy Awards[[1]](#footnote-2). The song was performed by the famed guitarist Carlos Santana. Drexler was disappointed in the way Santana arranged the tune of the song because he did not feel that it was as he wrote it[[2]](#footnote-3). Many composers feel the same way that Drexler did. A song means something very special and important to the composer. It takes great time and effort into creating such a complex form of art that can have a large impact on listeners. To hear one’s song revised and contorted is a form of an insult to some composers; a composer may think “what was wrong with it?” However, I think that there is a different way to look at a song being transformed.

Music has always been a long chain of inspiration. Almost every composer has found another artist whose music has touched them in some way and motivate d them to create their own. If I were to compose a song and witness it be altered in some way, I would be flattered that someone would want to spend their time making *my* song matter to *them*. In the case of Carol and Mark’s performance, I would like to hope that the composer would be touched by what other musicians could do with his or her music with newer instruments. Although the music itself may sound different, the base and the core that makes the song recognizable to the composer are still within the music. I think the composer would have preferred hearing their music done by the original instruments because that is what he is most comfortable with and can relate to the most. Also, the music was created using those type instruments of that time period so the composer would have been more familiar with that tone. In modern culture however, music can be altered in ways that may not be very familiar.

For more contemporary songs of the day, many disc jockeys make remixes and blend songs together. Some of the results are not as good as the original tune but some are largely improved! Even simply slowing down and speeding up the tempo of songs can give the songs new meaning. As accepted and popular as this trend may be, the modern idea is difficult to apply to music of the classical genre. With majority of songs lacking lyrics, classical music portrays emotion and drama solely through instruments. It is imperative then that the performer rely on the composer’s notes in regard to tempo and tone in order to describe the correct sensation to tell a story.

It is also difficult to say whether composers would have chosen to use modern instruments over the ones used to make the piece. I think that, given the choice, many composers would experiment and add modern instruments to their collections yet keep the original melody and thought to the music. I think composers would prefer that their songs be played with the instruments they were thought to be played with, however even old-style composers would probably have fun mixing in some modern technology! The debate at this point would be whether a song played not using the originally ideal instruments is in fact authentic.

Authenticity can be defined as having come from the origin verified by unquestionable evidence. In the sense of music, this means that the music must come from the composer and be verified by the composer. Essentially, no work performed without the composer’s permission and approval can be deemed authentic. This poses a considerable problem when most renowned classical artists are deceased! The best way to respect the creativity of a composer is to perform a musical piece to the best of one’s ability, following all written instruction as precisely as possible. In this way, a composer holds a sense of power over the performer or conductor who wishes to play his or her music. The maker of the song has control over how it is to be performed. I think that the original composer should approve a performance or rendition of a song. Live performances especially can poorly represent the underlying theme to a song; renditions likewise can overpower and revolutionize the originality of the composer’s ideas.

Some composers like to add chance to their musical works. By making a note incredibly long or increasing a tempo at an inopportune time, they can add to the adrenaline of a performance and give the audience a thrill when accomplished. Other composers even allow a certain amount of measures for a musician to improvise and have a solo. I think it is exciting for composers to challenge musicians and affect the probability of the success of a piece. It is thrilling to think of something that is very difficult be mastered with practice, performed with precision, and applauded outrageously by an audience! There is nothing more joyful for an artist than to see one’s work appreciated.

Despite all the controversy over originality of performances and authenticity, I think it is most important to least of all respect the effort, work, and creativity of a composer. There is a fine line between being a musician and being composer. For example, being a dancer is far different from being a choreographer. Being a dancer requires taking instruction and being able to move in a certain way. Likewise, a musician must be able to taking criticism and play an instrument a certain way. Choreographers need to visualize an entire routine: formations, music, movements. In the same sense, composers are creating an image through music. It takes intense levels of creativity to express one’s emotions and experiences through art and its takes greater courage to share that with others. I believe that it is fair to alter a piece of music to add one’s own style to it as long as the original artist is accredited to being your foundation and inspiration.

Source:

"Jorge Drexler - Composer Upset With Santana's Version Of Movie Hit." *contactmusic.com*. N.p., 22 June 2005. Web. 23 Feb. 2010. <http://www.contactmusic.com/new/xmlfeed.nsf/story/composer-upset-with-santanas- version-of-movie-hit>.

1. "Jorge Drexler - Composer Upset With Santana's Version Of Movie Hit." *contactmusic.com*. N.p., 22 June 2005. Web. 23 Feb. 2010. <http://www.contactmusic.com/new/xmlfeed.nsf/story/composer-upset-with-santanas-version-of-movie-hit>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. "Jorge Drexler - Composer Upset With Santana's Version Of Movie Hit." [↑](#footnote-ref-3)