



Bernard Labadie (seated) conducts a performance by the period string ensemble Les Violons du Roy, which he founded in 1984. He begins as principal conductor of New York's modern-instrument Orchestra of St. Luke's this season.

Marc Cigliare

by Donald Rosenberg

Period Crossing

Musicians and orchestras are bridging formerly exclusive worlds, as they increasingly embrace early music, Baroque, Classical, and modern sounds.



Steve J. Sherman

Bernard Labadie conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's, where he begins as principal conductor this season. For many years, Labadie was music director of the Canadian period ensemble Les Violons du Roy.

Until recent decades, modern players tended to view period instruments with suspicion: the equipment was widely considered unreliable. And specialized period players weren't too sure about the stylistic accuracy of modern orchestras. But the borders between these camps have opened to healthy effect. More and more professional musicians juggle dissimilar instruments as they perform with both types of ensembles. Conductors who previously devoted themselves to period orchestras are now welcome presences with modern symphony and opera orchestras, which in turn have become increasingly amenable to the stylistic wisdom of playing Baroque and Classical repertoire differently from music of later eras.

These changes reflect, more broadly, the fact that an entire generation of musicians has grown up with technically superb and musically exciting early-music performances. Acceptance of historically informed performance (HIP) at orchestras and conservatories around the country is a triumph for the movement, which

began in the late nineteenth century and, especially since the 1950s, has championed performance practices of the periods when the music was written.

Opposition to HIP ideas has ebbed as musicians have made more journeys between the period and modern worlds. British conductor Jonathan Cohen, founder and artistic director of the early-music ensemble Arcangelo and music director of Canada's Les Violons du Roy period string ensemble, is an artistic partner at the St.

An entire generation of musicians has grown up with technically superb and musically exciting early-music performances, with musicians today making more journeys between the period and modern worlds.

Paul Chamber Orchestra in Minnesota. Québécois conductor Bernard Labadie, who founded Les Violons du Roy and was its music director for three decades, begins this fall as principal conductor of New York's Orchestra of St. Luke's. Even the Juilliard School, whose orchestral program traditionally focused on the meat-and-potatoes Classical and Romantic periods, established a graduate-level historical performance program in 2008.

British conductor Nicholas McGegan, music director of San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, has been playing with or conducting period and modern orchestras for nearly half a century, and he believes things have changed enormously. "Modern and period-instrument musicians have learned from each other," he observes. "Modern orchestras now have a good way of playing Classical music—they've moderated their vibrato. Period orchestras have stopped being fixated about style and become more interested in making music.

"People no longer talk about the 'hazardous instruments' in period-instrument orchestras. That sort of 'we're playing it on period instruments, so we can't do it very well,' doesn't go anymore. Both sets of musicians play to very high levels, and they are influenced by each other. That's not to say there isn't early music that isn't special-

Miho Hashizume has played violin in the Cleveland Orchestra since 1995 and performs from time to time on Baroque violin with Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra.

ized. Medieval music is very specialized—I don't understand it, and so I don't do it."

In the best hands and embouchures, historically informed artistry once perceived as out of tune or thin or even ungainly today stands on par with the most sophisticated modern-orchestra virtuosity. "When I was playing flute in modern orchestras in the 1970s," McGegan recalls, "we played more or less everything in the same way. Obviously, things like string vibrato didn't change very much whether it was the B minor Mass or modern music. It was like buying gloves: one size fits all. As a result, the period-instrument people, when they came along, were fixated on style, because modern orchestras didn't really care about period style to the same degree."

Period Jamming

McGegan has conducted many of America's major symphony orchestras, and he doesn't find rehearsing them too different from working with his own band, Philharmonia Baroque—for a specific reason. "If I'm with, say, the Cleveland Orchestra, a modern orchestra, as far as possible I'm bringing my own materials for them to



play on so that it comes with all the dynamics, articulations, and bowings," he says. "Particularly for a modern orchestra, say I come in on a Tuesday. On the preceding Saturday night they might have just played a Mahler symphony or Tchaikovsky or Shostakovich. They've got a stylistic gear change which is pretty big, so it's good if I've got camera-ready music. They don't have to wonder if a note is long or short or a downbow. For period-instrument orchestras, I'm less organized, partly because the musicians don't always want it. They want some help, but a period-instrument orchestra is sort of like a jazz orchestra. They pride themselves on their ability to jam."



In 2017, San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale staged Rameau's opera *La Temple de la Gloire*. Pictured with the cast are Music Director Nicholas McGegan (center) and Catherine Turocy (next to McGegan) of New York Baroque Dance, who directed the production.



Members of San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra with Music Director Nicholas McGegan

British conductor Nicholas McGegan, music director of San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale, has been playing with or conducting period and modern orchestras for nearly half a century.



Randi Beach

Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

While in Toronto, Hashizume discussed playing in Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra with then-music director Jeanne Lamon but opted to join the Cleveland Orchestra. Although Hashizume doesn't play baroque violin much these days, she still has "to make the adjustment to that modern idea, which is very much sound-oriented as op-

McGegan's point about period musicians not always wanting everything spelled out defines how much players and conductors must contribute when facing music from distant eras that might contain little more information than instrumentation, key signatures, time signatures, and notes—with few tempo markings, articulations, or expressive guidance. In many respects, these works require a kind of interpretive imagination that period musicians find liberating.

Miho Hashizume, a violinist in the Cleveland Orchestra since 1995, has savored the chance to return occasionally to the baroque violin and play—sometimes as

soloist—with Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra, whose music director, Jeannette Sorrell, is admired for her ability to lead modern orchestras with HIP panache. Hashizume started on modern violin in her native Japan and discovered its predecessor in college, when she became enamored of French Baroque composers Jean-Philippe Rameau and Marin Marais—"precious music that you could only be able to express by baroque instruments. I thought that was my thing," she recalls. Her journey took her to Wyoming and then to Cleveland, where she studied modern violin at the Cleveland Institute of Music before winning a position in the

"Modern and period-instrument musicians have learned from each other," says Nicholas McGegan, music director of San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale.

posed to harmony-oriented," she points out. "In Baroque, you don't have to force your sound, and you play with delicate nuances rather than projection. Modern is more about sound and projection. I feel modern to be more physical, almost like a sporting event. Baroque is more about the emotion of the music."

Crossing Over

British horn player Andrew Clark spent more than two decades taking the train back and forth between Sussex and London, where his professional life was a sprint of performances with the city's leading period-instrument and modern orchestras. He played with a great variety of prominent period and modern ensembles: from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, English Concert, and English Baroque Soloists to the Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic, and Eng-



Miho Hashizume (pictured center in the violin section of the Cleveland Orchestra), also performs occasionally on Baroque violin with Apollo's Fire, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra.

Roger Mestrom



British horn player Andrew Clark is currently based in the Pacific Northwest, where he crosses from historical to modern horns and back again with multiple ensembles.

lish Chamber Orchestra. Today, based in the Pacific Northwest, he crosses from historical to modern horns and back again to play with such ensembles as the Vancouver Island Symphony Orchestra, Victoria Baroque Players, Oregon Bach Festival, Portland Baroque Orchestra, and Seattle's Pacific MusicWorks. He sees significant differences in the way they operate. "Your typical modern instrument in a symphony orchestra is rather like offering the conductor the blank slate for him to shape according to his inspiration," says Clark, who lives about 60 miles north of Victoria, British Columbia, where he makes and repairs horns and trumpets when he's not leading his double musical life.

"With period ensembles, there tends to be a more recognized way of playing you start with, which is making an interpretation and then the director will modify to their will. This is only a question of degree. Many modern-instrument performers are imaginative in their interpretations. But you wait for the conductor to tell you how to do it, where that's not the way with period-instrument performers. They play the music the way they've been trained to do it and researched through historically informed practice."

For musicians rooted in the HIP movement, crossing over to mainstream performance often is a matter of practicality: North America possesses fewer than two dozen full-time professional period orchestras, requiring many musicians to

spend significant time on the road. Indiana-born, Austrian- and German-raised cellist Paul Dwyer, who holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory, University of Michigan, and Juilliard Historical Performance, makes most of his living as assistant principal cello of Chicago's Lyric Opera Orchestra. But since the company's season runs essentially September through March, he has the rest of the year to perform, on baroque cello, with the Diderot String Quartet, the string ensemble AC-RONYM, and at music festivals. His mailing address is Brooklyn, New York, where he lives with his wife, baroque violinist Adriane Post, when they have the rare privilege of being at home.

Like all musicians who alternate between historical and modern instruments, Dwyer says switching gears can be a challenge, both physically and artistically: "Often it depends on the repertoire. Just from a technical standpoint, I'm lucky that my two cellos have quite similar spacing so it doesn't take a large adjustment time. You have to be quick on your feet and flexible, not only

chestra, but he's gratified when conductors experienced in period performance team up with the ensemble's modern players. "People are very much open to it, and they really like it when [Baroque and Classical specialist] Harry Bicket comes in. He's amazing at addressing stylistic ideas without making it be about historical performance or some kind of dogma. He gets people to want to play with him musically. People are on board with him."

New Music for Old Instruments

Players and conductors aren't the only ones crossing over from period to modern orchestras, or vice versa; so are administrators. David Snead was vice president of marketing for the New York Philharmonic until he became president and chief executive

Cellist Paul Dwyer alternates between historical and modern instruments.



Above: Paul Dwyer (second from left) performs with fellow members of the period-instrument Diderot String Quartet (left to right) Johanna Novom, Kyle Miller, and Adriane Post, January 2018.

in playing different instruments but also the style. It certainly takes compromise."

In other words, musicians versed in performance practice often find themselves collaborating with colleagues familiar mostly with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century proclivities of most music schools. Dwyer says he has ideas about Mozart style he wouldn't think of imposing as a member of the Lyric Opera Or-

chestra of Boston's Handel and Haydn Society in 2015, joining forces with Baroque expert and artistic director Harry Christophers. One of the oldest music ensembles in the country—founded in 1815—the Handel and Haydn Society embraces historically informed performance; after all, it was organized when the ink wasn't dry on what are now canonic works. Snead had been introduced to HIP insights when the New



Artistic Director Harry Christophers conducts Boston's Handel and Haydn Society orchestra and chorus. The Handel and Haydn Society is one of the oldest ensembles in the country, established in 1815.

York Philharmonic performed Handel's *Messiah* led by period conductors McGeegan, Labadie, and Andrew Manz. "Those guys were really showing me something in the music I hadn't heard before," Snead says, noting how "light and effervescent" he found these interpretations.

Now that he is overseeing the Handel and Haydn Society in a city that is also home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Snead is more convinced than ever that there's ample room for both approaches. "Obviously, we have another band in town here," he says. "They are world-famous and formidable. We have to create our own niche in this marketplace. What we're all trying to promote is the experience of hearing the music performed the way we do it, not better or worse, just a different take from a symphony orchestra. Otherwise, we wouldn't survive."

Dominic Teresi, principal bassoon of Tafelmusik and a faculty member in the Juilliard Historical Performance Program and at the University of Toronto, was a modern bassoonist at Yale University when he met the eminent Dutch baroque violinist and conductor Jaap Schröder, a visiting professor. "I didn't know who he was, and I had no Baroque-music experi-

ence," says Teresi. "But I really loved the things he was telling me to do. I was naturally attracted to earlier music. It made a lot of sense to me, and I enjoyed the rhetoric and the approach to music he was advocating."

The experience inspired Teresi to pursue a doctorate in early music at Indiana University. During those studies, he abandoned his modern bassoon for two years and won the principal post with Tafelmusik—and realized something he tells his baroque bassoon students: "It's very difficult to not only learn the instrument, but to unlearn things that are so habitual to you on a modern instrument. I needed



Straddling both worlds: David Snead, president and chief executive of Boston's Handel and Haydn Society since 2015, was previously vice president of marketing for the New York Philharmonic.

to put the modern instrument away for a couple of years." He took up modern bassoon again while in Toronto and has spent summers performing on both modern and period instruments—including dulcian, a predecessor of the bassoon—at the Carmel Bach Festival in California.

The festival's 2018 season contained such varied fare as the opening program's pairing of Bach's First Orchestral Suite and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, prompting Teresi to switch stylistic gears while only playing modern bassoon. "That was challenging," he says, "because when I play Baroque music using the modern bassoon, I come to it with a different approach that suits the music. I'm blowing in a different way, not vibrating, and those things are very linked on the baroque bassoon. When switching over to the Orff, it requires almost a complete rejig of the way you play. Your air is more focused, and there's more intensity in the support."

There are crossing-over pluses, too. Mc-



Sean Richards



Richard Timmins

Bassoonist Dominic Teresi performs at the Juilliard School of Music's Paul Hall with violinist Robert Mealy, director of the Juilliard Historical Performance Program. Teresi is principal bassoon of Tafelmusik and a faculty member at the Juilliard Historical Performance Program and the University of Toronto.



Shari Richards

Dominic Teresi (back row, third from right) is principal bassoon of Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, pictured above.

Gegan, in addition to animating Baroque and Classical repertoire, relishes mixing old and the new with his Philharmonia Baroque: He commissions such composers as Jake Heggie, Caroline Shaw, and Matthew Aucoin to write works featuring period instruments. “If you must play Telemann concertos all day, you’re not challenging the musicians to get any better or the audience to hear things that have never been played before,” says McGegan. “So for us here particularly—we’re leaders on this, doing new music for old instruments—I find it tremendously exciting.”

Period Bows, Modern Instruments

Bernard Labadie is another conductor who has developed a thriving musical life with both period and modern orchestras. The founder and former music director of Les Violons du Roy makes his debut as principal conductor of New York’s modern-instrument Orchestra of St. Luke’s during the 2018-19 season, starting with an October program at Carnegie Hall “mixing my two families,” he says, referring to St. Luke’s and the choir he created more than three

decades ago, La Chapelle de Québec. The concert will pair Haydn’s *Nelson* Mass with Mozart’s *Requiem*, in the completion by musicologist and composer Robert Levin.

A self-described “very ordinary recorder player turned horrible singer,” Labadie

Dominic Teresi, principal bassoon of Tafelmusik and a faculty member in the Juilliard Historical Performance Program and at the University of Toronto, says he was “naturally attracted to earlier music. It made a lot of sense to me.”

realized early in his career that, as he recalls with a laugh, he “was better making other people play and sing than doing it myself.” In college, he created La Chapelle de Québec and then, in 1984, Les Violons du Roy. But he didn’t go whole-hog HIP with the latter, whose musicians have al-

ways played modern instruments, but with period bows since 1989. “At that time, using period bows was still seen as a bridge to switching to period instruments,” he says. “However, that combination of period bows and modern instruments created a distinctive sound. Les Violons stands out as an example really of building bridges between the modern orchestra and the period orchestra. Because of that experience of the 30-some years I spent working with these people, I kind of turned into a specialist helping modern orchestras speak the language of performance practice. I’ve been walking that thin line between those two for my whole career. I’m still a fan of period instruments. But they’re not the only ones.”

Labadie flexed his artistic muscles by appearing as a guest with symphony orchestras and serving as artistic director of Opéra de Québec and Opéra de Montréal. Not that the road was easy at first. “I remember a few gigs with an orchestra that will remain nameless where there was actually a lot of resistance to my interpretive ideas,” he recalls. “The first years were pretty rocky.



Chris Lee



Michael DeVito



Michael DeVito

In recent years, the New York Philharmonic has performed Handel's *Messiah* using a smaller-than-usual orchestra playing modern instruments and incorporating historically informed performance practices. Left: a 2007 *Messiah* performance led by Nicholas McGegan; above: a 2010 performance led by Bernard Labadie; top: a 2013 performance led by Andrew Manze.

Of course, I did not have the experience I have now. I often say in conducting, it's 25 percent competence and 75 percent psychology. When you're in your 20s and 30s, the psychology side is not very developed. So I had to learn."

Bassoonist Teresi observes that antagonism toward period instruments and style has diminished greatly as new generations of performers have emerged. Young musicians "are kind of growing up with it and not even questioning it," he says. "Students in music schools now understand that historical performance is something you need to know about be-

cause the conductors—even those who don't have a background in HIP—are interested in this and want these orchestras to do it. People are still perfectly capable of hearing Bach in a completely modern style. But I think musicians are coming around." **S**

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Carnegie Hall.....	9
Cherish the Ladies	61
Columbia Artists	5
Comedy Concertos.....	11
Concept Tours	39
Greenberg Artists	c2
Harmony Artists	47
Intermusica.....	31
International Music Network.....	46
International Violin Competition of Indianapolis	c4
Jaume Serra Cristalino Winery	13
League of American Orchestras.....	20, 32, 68, C3
Marilyn Rosen Presents.....	49
Onstage Publications.....	15
TRIO: A Novel Biography of the Schumanns and Brahms	24
UIA Presents	38
Under The Baton, LLC	14
Video Ideas Productions.....	41
Wallace Foundation.....	1
Word Pros, Inc.....	25
Yamaha Corporation of America	3