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THE BRAHMS CELLO SONATAS: A MODERN CELLIST'S GUIDE TO AN HISTORICALLY-INFORMED INTERPRETATION

BY
KEEGAN O'DONALD

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Music
with a concentration in Performance and Literature
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Doctoral Committee:

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Professor Charlotte Mattax Moersch

ABSTRACT

The two Brahms cello sonatas are among the most popular works for the instrument. Unlike the cello works by Bach and Beethoven, whose performances even by modern cellists reveal the influence of the historical performance practice movement, historically-informed performances of Brahms's music are rare. This project investigates historically-informed performance practices for the cello sonatas and offers performance recommendations. The playing of musicians such as Joseph Joachim, Alfredo Piatti, Robert Hausmann, and David Popper indicate that continuous vibrato was not practiced by string players in Brahms's musical circle, but was instead applied as an expressive ornament. Conversely, string portamento was much more frequent in the nineteenth century, and the advent of recording technology is examined as a catalyst for portamento's decline in the twentieth century. Rubato was also an essential aspect of nineteenth-century performance practice. An analysis of a recording by cellist William Henry Squire confirms this usage of portamento and rubato, while also suggesting that a more liberal vibrato might sometimes be employed. A modern, HIP recording of the cello sonatas by cellist Kate Bennett Wadsworth reveals the contemporary re-emergence of historical practices. My own performance recommendations for the sonatas add to such new perspectives and are discussed and detailed in a performance practice commentary.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last half-century, the Early Music movement has revolutionized the performance of Bach, Beethoven and other composers. Even musicians and ensembles not overtly associated with Early Music show the influence of historically-informed performance (HIP) practices. However, one composer whose works have resisted this evolution of performance style is the third canonical "B," Johannes Brahms.

This lack of a historicizing trend with Brahms performance is not due to a lack research on appropriate performance practices; as we shall see, many scholars have examined the relevant sources on nineteenth-century performance practice such as treatises, contemporaneous performance descriptions like those from pianist Fanny Davies, and even some early recordings. But, with a few notable exceptions such as John Eliot Gardiner, Charles Mackerras, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, musicians have been unable or unwilling to fully embrace the HIP practices suggested by research, and the performance traditions of Brahms's music and in particular the two sonatas for cello and piano, Opp. 38 and 99, have largely remained unchanged. Despite the availability of articles and books on nineteenth-century historical performance practice, modern cellists have been reluctant to incorporate these practices into their performances of Brahms's cello sonatas. This project challenges this gap in research and examines the practical and aesthetic challenges of adopting historical practices for the Brahms sonatas and offer suggestions for a historically-informed performance of them. By demonstrating how performance practices can be applied in the cello sonatas, this project will hopefully inspire cellists to incorporate HIP practices into their interpretation of Brahms's music.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) was one of the most prominent German composers of the nineteenth century. His chamber music for strings became standards of the repertoire within the composer's lifetime. The first cello sonata, Op. 38, was published in 1866, and its composition coincided with other of his early chamber works, such as the string sextets, two piano quartets, and the piano quintet.[1] Originally written for an amateur cellist, the sonata did not achieve immediate success but gained recognition after an 1874 Vienna performance with the cellist David Popper (1843–1913) that was coached by the composer.[2] Another important champion of the work was the cellist Robert Hausmann (1852–1909), who performed the E minor sonata in Vienna in the 1880s and also privately with Brahms himself.[3] This collaboration led to the second cello sonata. Towards the end of his career, Brahms completed the Op. 99 sonata in the summer of 1886 while vacationing in Hofstetten.[4] Early performances with the composer were by Hausmann as well as the Italian virtuoso Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901).[5]

From reading the early performance history of these works, it becomes clear that studying the playing styles of the Hausmann, Popper, and Piatti is essential to developing a modern HIP performance. Although Popper and Piatti are familiar to cellists today as composers of etudes, there is much evidence to suggest these cellists approached their instrument and musicianship

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[1] George S. Bozarth, and Walter Frisch, "Brahms, Johannes," *Grove Music Online,* accessed 16 May 2022. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051879.

[2] Clive Brown, Neal Peres da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* by Johannes Brahms, edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), v.

[3] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, v.

[4] Clive Brown, Neal Peres da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata for Cello and Piano in F Major, Op. 99,* by Johannes Brahms, edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), iii.

[5] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 99,* by Brahms, vii.

differently from musicians today. Hausmann, for example, never performed with an endpin.[6] Violinist Joseph Joachim (1831–1907) is another instrumentalist to examine, not only for his relationship to Brahms but also because he is known to have collaborated with both Piatti and Hausmann.[7] We also have the privilege of being able to hear Joachim play on his 1903 recordings. These recordings are illuminating, but the poor sound quality and the fact they were made while Joachim was in his 70s should temper any conclusions drawn from them.[8]

When approaching Brahms as Early Music, one must justify the need for historical performance practice more so than for older composers. It is natural to assume that Brahms's performing style would be closer to our modern style than would be the case for Bach or Beethoven. Likewise, many musicians believe that recordings from the mid-twentieth century depict Romantic performance traditions. However, recent scholars have shown that numerous changes occurred in performing practices in the early-twentieth century, often in response to recording technology and the new need to create a satisfying performance that would be listened to repeatedly. According to Robert Philip, twentieth-century recordings both shaped and disseminated this new "modern style" and technical standards to musicians: "the change away from the freedoms of the past towards modern ideas of clean and tidy performance was encouraged by recordings themselves, with their steady influence on both performers and audiences…even period performance on 'original' instruments, cannot escape from this requirement of modern taste and expectations."[9]

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[6] Lynda MacGregor, "Hausmann, Robert," *Grove Music Online,* accessed February 8 2023. https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12566.

[7] Lynda MacGregor, "Piatti, Alfredo," *Grove Music Online,* accessed February 2 2023. https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.21652.

[8] Joachim's recordings can be accessed via https://josephjoachim.com/category/pages/works/recordings/.

[9] Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 234-5.

Philip's statement also touches upon another reason why understanding Romantic historical performance is important beyond being an exercise of historicism: challenging musical perfectionism. Classical musicians often complain about edited recordings warping expectations for live performances, and Philip suggests a tension between artistic freedom and technical perfection. HIP Brahms can encourage practices that not only challenge modern technical standards such as noncontinuous vibrato and portamento, but can also ask us to judge a performance with non-perfectionist criteria that encourage artistic freedom and spontaneity. Implementing these historical performance practices might encourage musicians and audiences to experience live performances more as spontaneous events and less like a live session of a recording.

This thesis will focus on reinterpreting the Brahms cello sonatas for a modern performance through a historically-informed lens. The deposited project materials include a recording that incorporates the performance practices explored in the thesis text. This work draws upon the research of nineteenth-century performance practice scholars such as Clive Brown, Kate Bennett Wadsworth, George Kennaway, David Milsom, and others. Additional perspectives from historical treatises, performance descriptions, and recordings, as well as performer editions of the sonatas are also brought into discussion with the modern research.

The first three chapters examine the particular historical string practices of vibrato, portamento, and rubato. Chapter 4 analyzes two recordings, a 1924 performance by English cellist William Henry Squire of the Brahms Clarinet Trio, Op. 114, and the 2017 HIP recording by Kate Bennett Wadsworth and Yi-heng Yang of the Brahms cello sonatas. Chapter 5 details my own historically-informed performance practice recommendations for the sonatas.

CHAPTER 1: VIBRATO

Vibrato in the nineteenth century varied by national tradition and evolved over the course of decades. Furthermore, violinists and cellists were also influenced by their teaching lineage and associated schools of playing, such as the Franco-Belgian School, the Classical German School, or the Dresden Cello School. While string players generally avoided continuous vibrato, musicians today looking for historical vibrato practices should research how vibrato was used by specific composers and their collaborative circle of musicians.[1] For performers interested in playing music by Johannes Brahms, a focused study of the vibrato technique of several string players of his time will be highly beneficial. The violinist Joseph Joachim was one of the composer's closest friends and most prominent collaborators. Among cellists, the vibrato practices of Alfredo Piatti, Robert Hausmann, and David Popper all merit examination for both their relationships to Brahms and Joachim and their influence as cello pedagogues.

Also of value for this study are the vibrato practices of cellists preceding those in Brahms's generation. Bernhard Romberg (1767–1841) and his student Friedrich Kummer (1797–1879) published their cello methods in 1840 and 1839, respectively. Kummer in particular would have been an important influence for Piatti and Popper; Piatti would revise Kummer's cello method in 1877 and Popper's teacher, Julius Goltermann, was also a student of Kummer.[2]

Both Romberg and Kummer describe an approach to vibrato that is completely different from modern practice. In the treatise published towards the end of his life, Bernhard Romberg viewed vibrato as an ornament not to be overused: "The close shake [vibrato], or Tremolo, is produced by a rapid lateral motion of the finger… When used with moderation, and executed

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[1] Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 521.

[2] Marc Moskovitz, "Popper, David" *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed February 8 2023. https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22113.

with great power of bow, it gives fire and animation to the Tone…"[3] He also describes how attitudes towards vibrato had evolved rapidly in his lifetime:

> It should be made only at the beginning of the note, and ought not to be continued throughout its whole duration. Formerly, the close shake was in such repute, that it was applied indiscriminately to every note of whatever duration… We cannot be too thankful that an improved taste has at length exploded the abuse of this embellishment.[4]

Evidently, Romberg was pleased to see vibrato become more restrained in his lifetime. Although outside the scope of this study, Romberg's description of vibrato's prevalence earlier in his career suggests that a greater amount of vibrato may be more appropriate for late Classical music than early Romantic music.

Friedrich Kummer's method likewise warns against continuous vibrato: "Sometimes a player can lend more brilliancy and expression to a tone by a certain oscillation produced by placing the finger firmly upon the string, and letting the hand make a tremulous motion... We would however, warn the pupil, not to let this practice become a fixed habit, and the leading style of his playing."[5] Besides the exhortations to avoid its abuse, these instructions also provide insight into the author's views of a tasteful vibrato. Romberg links the "close shake" with the "power of the bow" to create "fire and animation" in the tone, suggesting that vibrato should be used in more passionate moments. He continues that vibrato should not be used for the entire duration

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[3] Bernhard Romberg, *School for the Violoncello,* translated unknown (London: Boosey and Sons, not dated, German version 1840), 87. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violoncell_Schule_(Romberg,_Bernhard).

[4] Romberg, 87.

[5] Friedrich August Kummer, *Violoncell-Schule für den ersten Unterricht, Op.60,* edited By Leo Schulz (New York: G. Schirmer, 1900) 36-37. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violoncell-Schule_für_den_ersten_Unterricht%2C_Op.60_(Kummer%2C_Friedrich_August).

of the note, which helps with the transition from an oscillating tone to a pure one. Kummer likewise reserves vibrato for adding "brilliancy and expression" to the tone.

Alfredo Piatti

Known today primarily as the composer of twelve fiendishly difficult cello caprices, Italian cellist Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901) studied at the Milan Conservatory. He rose to prominence as a soloist after he was endorsed by the piano virtuoso Franz Liszt.[6] For historical Brahms practice, Piatti is of interest as the teacher of Robert Hausmann, for his frequent performances with Joseph Joachim, as well as for his successes performing the Op. 38 Sonata in the composer's lifetime. A significant portion of Piatti's career occurred in London, where he appeared with Joachim's London quartet and taught several students such as the aforementioned Hausmann as well as William Whitehouse, who would carry Piatti's legacy in the United Kingdom.

In both his teachings and performances, Piatti used vibrato sparingly. Critic Eduard Hanslick praised this restraint in an 1870 review: "His performance of Schubert's *Litanei*, for example, has a real depth of tender feeling without any of that sickly sweetness which is so generally heard on the cello... We found it just as invigorating in the adagio not to encounter that ongoing *vibrato* which so many cellists take as being the same as 'feeling.'"[7] Compared to modern practices that often equate more vibrato with more musical expression, Hanslick instead hears "tender feeling" in the other aspects of Piatti's playing. Performance practice students should observe that Piatti's vibrato was limited even in a slow lyrical piece. Hanslick's reference to the

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[6] Lynda MacGregor, "Piatti, Alfredo," *Grove Music Online,* accessed February 2 2023. https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.21652.

[7] Eduard Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien*, Vol. 2, 1870, 162. Translated Anna Lisa Barzano and Christian Bellisario. Quoted in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 137.

"many cellists" using more vibrato than he found tasteful also suggests a widening gulf between theoretical aesthetics and actual practice during the period. Piatti was notable for avoiding this continuous-vibrato trend.

In the nineteenth century, imitating a great artist's vibrato was a recommended method for learning how to apply it tastefully. Both Friedrich Kummer and Alfredo Piatti suggest imitation as a form of learning. The original 1839 edition of Kummer's cello method proposes that cellists imitate the vibrato of a singer or instrumentalist. In his own 1877 revision of Kummer's method, Piatti adds a footnote that points to evolving vibrato practices: "Since this method was composed, things have changed, and I think the student would do better to imitate the phrasing of a good instrument-player."[8] Besides implying that appropriate vibrato was difficult to find among singers, this addendum's recommendation to only imitate a "good" instrumentalist also hints at diverging views.

In his cello method book, written with assistance from his student William Whitehouse, Piatti provides little additional insight into the appropriate use of vibrato. This description of vibrato mechanics, however, offers an idea of its execution:

> [Vibrato], though rarely written in music, is essentially a feature of artistic interpretation. The use of it vitalizes the tone and increases the power of expression. It consists of a wide movement of the left hand... By this means the finger will alternately sharpen and flatten the note, thereby creating 'vibrato.'[9]

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[8] Friedrich August Kummer, rev. Alfredo Piatti, *Violoncello school for preliminary instruction* (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, 1877, 30. Quoted in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 137.

[9] Alfredo Piatti, *Violoncello-Schule*, edited by William Whitehouse and Richard Tabb (London: Augener, 1911), 48. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violoncello-Schule_(Piatti%2C_Alfredo_Carlo). According to cellist Job ter Haar, this description was written by Piatti's student and editor William Whitehouse.

He continues, connecting this description of vibrato to Joachim's own approach, and also recommending to release the thumb from the cello neck for fourth finger vibrato.[10] Almost all cellists can attest to the difficulty of getting the fourth finger to vibrate as widely as the other fingers. Piatti's and Whitehouse's specification to release the thumb suggests that an even vibrato across the fingers was desirable and that the vibrato was wide enough to warrant the modification of technique. The direction that vibrato is wide enough to both sharpen and flatten the note is another indication of a decently wide cello vibrato.

Unfortunately for performance practice researchers, Piatti's learning-through-imitation method for vibrato, while likely effective in the nineteenth century, leaves modern performers without important details to work from. While historical recordings provide some aural clues, the vast majority of the musical context for nineteenth-century vibrato is lost to history. With the capital-A 'Authenticity' of musical resurrection unattainable for historically-informed performers today, it is up to musicians to take these clues and apply our imaginations to create a performance we find compelling. The question thus shifts from whether Brahms, Joachim, or Piatti would approve of our playing style to whether our music-making today evokes a Romantic spirit and is meaningfully expressive to our present audience.

Robert Hausmann

One of Piatti's most prominent students was German cellist Robert Hausmann (1852–1909). Hausmann was thoroughly enmeshed in the German School of Violin-playing, studying under the supervision of Joachim at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, and having coachings with

[10] Piatti, *Violoncello-Schule*, 48.

Kummer.[11] Hausmann would also be appointed teacher at the Berlin Hochschule and perform in Joachim's famed quartet. Like his teacher, Hausmann performed without an endpin, but this did not limit his "trombone-like" volume of sound.[12]

Hausmann was one of Brahms's most important collaborators in the latter part of the composer's career. The cellist premiered the Op. 99 Sonata and also the Double Concerto Op. 102 with Joachim. Brahms and Hausmann's relationship partly came about when Hausmann championed the earlier E minor Sonata Op. 98. He played it with Brahms privately in 1883, and publicly in Vienna in 1885. Like Brahms and Joachim, Hausmann had an interest in earlier music, learning the bass viol and publishing an edition of the Bach Cello Suites before Casals's revival of them.

Unfortunately, despite his prominence as a performer, we know very little about Hausmann's approach to Brahms's music. Kate Bennett Wadsworth notes that unlike other nineteenth-century musicians who liberally marked up scores with their own fingerings and bowings, Hausmann made few indications in his performance parts.[13] Considering his close working relationship to Piatti and Joachim, Hausmann likely approached vibrato in a way that was in agreement to their playing.

David Popper

One of the most famous names for cellists is the Hungarian David Popper (1843–1913). David Popper played a pivotal role in establishing Brahms's cello music. Early performances of

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[11] Lynda MacGregor, "Hausmann, Robert," *Grove Music Online,* accessed February 8 2023. https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12566.

[12] MacGregor, "Hausmann, Robert."

[13] Kate Bennett Wadsworth, "Brahms and the Cello," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* Edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth(Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 28.

the Op. 38 sonata in 1867 and 1871 received a subdued response.[14] However, a Viennese performance by Popper and pianist Anton Door in 1874 was highly regarded, and the sonata was thereby praised by Eduard Hanslick as a "masterpiece."[15]

Popper's biographer, Steven De'ak, was one of the cellist's last students, De'ak being a teenager at the time of his studies. De'ak describes an 1863 press spat over Popper's vibrato which he claims demonstrates Popper's gradual adoption of continuous vibrato. However, a critical reading of the 1863 Leipzig concert review questions the assertion that Popper was an early proponent of continuous vibrato.

In February 1863, Popper performed the Goltermann Cello Concerto in Leipzig with the Musikverein Euterp, and his performance was praised by the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* [*NZfM*] in Leipzig. This praise prompted a letter to the editor which complained about Popper's vibrato. The *NZfM*'s critic responded to the letter:

> The Leipzig musicians who were present at the concert... attest to Mr. Popper that none of the expressed criticism had any real foundation. His tone is excellent, and one could not discover any trace of the intolerable 'vibrating' of some virtuosos; the manner of presentation which he applied and which is necessary for the required warmth of the tone was only shaking (or oscillating) vibrato movement as it is legitimately taught.[16]

The complainant sent an additional response:

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[14] Clive Brown, Neal Peres da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* by Johannes Brahms, edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), iv.

[15] *Neue Freie Presse* (4 March 1874), 1. Quoted in Johannes Brahms, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), v.

[16] *NZfM* Leipzig, March 1863. Quoted in Stephen De'ak, *David Popper* (Neptune City, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, 1980), 61.

> We did not, thus, perceive a single tone from Mr. D. Popper to which—the tempo permitting—he did not apply his 'legitimately taught vibrato movement;' if the critic of the 'Neue Zeitschrift für Musik' found this to his liking it only proves that he no longer has any sense for a natural homogeneous tone and that his hearing organs have been infected by a sickness of taste which at the moment is indeed the fashion…[17]

This press exchange has several implications for a study of nineteenth-century cello vibrato. First, one must consider the possibility that one of the accounts was factually wrong about Popper's vibrato, although it is impossible to determine the facts of the case either way. The real debate, however, is whether Popper was using vibrato according to his taste and general convention, with the *NZfM* critic and Leipzig musicians assenting to Popper's taste, and the complainant dissenting.

The critic and musicians themselves did not approve of continuous vibrato, lamenting the "intolerable 'vibrating' of some virtuosos," and Popper's vibrato was presented as "legitimately taught." The complainant noted that Popper's vibrato was dependent on the tempo, presumably with short notes unadorned. The fact that both groups in this argument disapproved of constant vibrato suggests that even within the German School there was disagreement over the degree of vibrato considered appropriate.

De'ak presents this episode as revealing Popper as a continuous-vibrato trailblazer, but within the context of nineteenth-century vibrato practice this view seems unlikely to be accurate. With Popper having trained with German School cellists, he likely used vibrato ornamentally in

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[17] *NZfM* Leipzig, March 1863. Quoted in Stephen De'ak, *David Popper* (Neptune City, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, 1980), 61.

accordance with nineteenth-century taste. Other critics throughout his career make little mention of his vibrato, instead focusing on his warm and pure tone.[18]

De'ak sought to positively portray his beloved teacher in his biography, so at the time of his writing later in the twentieth century, De'ak likely would have wanted to connect Popper's vibrato practices with his modern continuous vibrato. He doesn't precisely describe Popper's use of vibrato at the time of his studies in the 1910s, but notes that Popper's vibrato "which had previously been sparingly employed […] was in a process of evolution and being cultivated increasingly by cellists."[19] Popper's increased "cultivation" of vibrato would correspond with the ascendancy of the Franco-Belgian School of Violin-playing and its more generous vibrato usage, and his approach to vibrato may have evolved with the times. De'ak's observations of Popper may not have been representative of his entire career, and thus his description of Popper's playing style should be measured against the bulk of performance practice evidence.

However, even if we reject the notion of Popper-as-early-Heifetz, the letter-to-the-editor incident still shows that Popper's vibrato was objectionable to the most conservative tastes of the 1860s.[20] It is possible that Popper was using more vibrato than the stylistically conservative Joachim, Piatti, and Hausmann while nonetheless being acceptable to them. Eduard Hanslick praised both cellists, admiring Piatti's restrained vibrato in the aforementioned review, as well as Popper's performance of the Brahms E minor sonata.[21] Popper's success performing Brahms's

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[18] Moskovitz, "Popper, David."

[19] Stephen De'ak, *David Popper* (Neptune City, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, 1980), 61.

[20] As discussed in the "Violinists" section, Jascha Heifetz employed continuous vibrato against his teacher's, Leopold Auer, wishes.

[21] Popper: *Neue Freie Presse* (4 March 1874), 1. Quoted in Johannes Brahms, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), v.
Piatti: Eduard Hanslick, *Geschichte des Concertwesens in Wien*, Vol. 2, 1870, 162. Translated Anna Lisa Barzano and Christian Bellisario. Quoted in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 137.

sonatas also indicates that different playing styles and a more liberal vibrato could win approval during the period. For students of Brahms performance practice, accounts of Popper's vibrato suggest that varying degrees of vibrato usage were acceptable for solo performance in the late-nineteenth century. This is not to argue for an entirely different conception of ornamental vibrato in the German School, but to expand the range of taste and approaches beyond Joachim's influence.

Violinists

Violinist Leopold Auer (1845–1930), a student of Joseph Joachim, taught that "As a rule I forbid my students using the vibrato at all on notes which are not sustained, and I earnestly advise them not to abuse it even in the case of sustained notes which succeed each other in a phrase."[22] Brown notes that Auer was usually not successful at enforcing this rule with his students, particularly a violinist named Jascha Heifetz (1901–1987).[23] Auer's teaching that vibrato could be applied on sustained, non-successively occurring notes opens the possibility that at certain times vibrato could be employed frequently. A slower, lyrical phrase could be played with close to half of its notes vibrated.

Brahms Performing Practice: How current research suggests performers might play with historical practices

Besides accounts of how prominent cellists of the late-nineteenth century may have employed vibrato, musicians should also draw upon the work of performance practice scholars

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[22] Leopold Auer, *Violin Playing as I Teach It* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1921), 62-63. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044043879436&view=1up&seq=87.

[23] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 523.

when developing their approach to vibrato. Sometimes, however, extra skepticism should be employed when reading modern writers on historical vibrato. Musicians seeking to learn more about Brahms performance practices will likely come across an anthology edited by Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman titled *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style.* This collection features articles on several aspects of Brahms performance practice.

Styra Avins's article in this anthology on performance practice as documented in Brahms's letters exemplifies the vibrato controversy. Avins quotes Brahms in a letter to Joachim, "But a few open strings here and there, they delight my eye and calm my spirit."[24] Avins then claims that this small comment by the composer reveals his support for continuous vibrato in his music: "The only way to mimic the harmonic richness of an open string is to use some vibrato... the back-and-forth of the vibrato will provide a rich mix of harmonics that approximates the sound of an open string."[25]

Avins does acknowledge that Brahms's remark on open strings had more to do with the playability of his string-writing than vibrato, but this equating of open strings and continuous vibrato deserves scrutiny. Even if we accept Avins's claim that Brahms enjoyed the vibrancy of the open string sound, any vibrato imitating that vibrancy would need to be narrow enough to avoid the pitch oscillation that is certainly not part of the open string sound. Despite the numerous sources indicating that our modern conception of continuous vibrato was not found in Brahms' day, Avins has forced an interpretation of Brahms's letter to argue continuous vibrato in Brahms as historically-informed. This article's appearance in a performance practice anthology

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[24] Styra Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music: Clues From His Letters," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style,* ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26.

[25] Avins, 26.

provides detractors of the HIP Brahms movement with an authoritative source they can cite to avoid changing how they perform a popular composer.

One of the most prominent scholars in the field of nineteenth-century string performance practice is the British musicologist and violinist Clive Brown. In his authoritative book on performance practice, he summarized the evolution of vibrato over the Classical and Romantic periods:

> During the period from 1750 to about 1900 the various types of vibrato then in use were regarded almost exclusively as ornamental. Approaches to their execution and artistic function varied from school to school, individual to individual, and instrument to instrument, yet there seems to have been a broad consensus among the great majority of musical authorities that the basic sound should be a steady one and that vibrato, along with other ornamental techniques, should occur as an incidental colouring or embellishment on particular notes.[26]

Brown traces the development of modern continuous vibrato to non-German School violinists. In particular, the Franco-Belgian School of Violin-playing had a pivotal role in expanding vibrato during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[27]

Besides detailing the multi-faceted history of vibrato, Brown has suggestions for modern string players on when to employ vibrato in Brahms's music, and these suggestions draw upon Marion Ranken's descriptions of Joachim's vibrato. Ranken studied violin at the Berlin Hochschule from 1902 to 1909, and recounted vivid descriptions of Joachim's playing. Vibrato could be employed in both loud and soft passages, and was often used in conjunction with

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[26] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 521.

[27] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 521.

sforzando articulation and passages marked *dolce*. Its sparing use gave vibrato's eventual appearance greater impact.[28]

Brown notes that in contrast to modern practices where *espressivo* passages are often performed with a more prominent vibrato, nineteenth-century players would instead take a sparing approach.[29] Ranken's description of *espressivo* explains Joachim's practice: "In piano espressivo sections, the *vibrato* (if used at all) was used sparingly and not in a way to interfere with the intensity of the tone… The bow in the meantime moved slowly with a concentrated pressure of the first finger on the stick and with an even grip of the string."[30] Reimagining *espressivo* phrases with a concentrated but un-vibrated sound represents another departure of historically-informed practices from their modern counterparts. Evidence for the expectation for non-continuous vibrato is also found in string-part fingerings that employ harmonics and open strings, inherently non-vibrated notes.[31]

A student of Clive Brown, violinist David Milsom has extensively studied the playing style of the German Violin School. Milsom succinctly summarizes German School vibrato: "Generally only to be found on long and particularly expressive notes, indicated perhaps by the messa-di-voce sign (<>) or more generally on chromatic notes or more 'expressive' harmony notes.[32]" For a cello-specific perspective, George Kennaway's book on cello playing during the nineteenth century dives into details of cello technique that will fascinate cellists. His findings on

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[28] Clive Brown, "String Performing Practice," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 10.

[29] Brown, "String Performing Practice," 10.

[30] Marion Ranken, *Some Points of Violin Playing and Musical Performance as learnt in the Hochschule für Musik (Joachim School) in Berlin during the time I was a student there, 1902-1909* (Edinburgh, privately printed, 1939), 19. https://josephjoachim.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/ranken-some-points.pdf.

[31] Brown, "String Performing Practice," 11.

[32] David Milsom, "Practice and Principle: Perspectives upon the German 'Classical' School of Violin Playing in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 9, no. 1 (2012): 37.

vibrato largely agree with Brown and Milsom, suggesting that vibrato could be employed on accented notes (>).[33] Kennaway also addresses *messa di voce* and vibrato:

> It is hard to make a clear case for any fixed or consistent relationship between the *messa di voice* marking and vibrato. Combining the two is clearly historically admissible, especially in the wider context of restrained vibrato use, but passages that use the *messa di voice* with harmonics are unlikely to imply vibrato.[34]

Brown, Milsom, and Kennaway's vibrato recommendations amount to reinterpreting expressive markings in the score as possible indications for employing vibrato. This approach certainly fits our modern inclination to be faithful to the composer's intentions, but it might fall short of performing "beyond the score" as nineteenth-century players did. While many modern string players certainly vary their vibrato according to textual markings in Brahms's music, the recommendations of performance practice research still present a fundamentally different approach to vibrato.

While text-based recommendations are an important starting point, nineteenth-century vibrato also had an un-notated element to it, hence the need to listen to a great player to learn it, as Piatti reminded us. Many expressive markings more explicitly denote particular articulations, dynamics, and tone color devices. It is likely that the same expressive marking for a nineteenth-century musician would sometimes call for vibrato and sometimes not, such as a fingering with harmonics as Kennaway suggests. This complete musical context is difficult for us to reconstruct. Milsom alludes to adding vibrato on a note without any expressive marking such as "chromatic notes or more 'expressive' harmony."

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[33] George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780 - 1930* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 136.

[34] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello*, 135.

Still, even a harmonically-based approach to vibrato would run into context-dependent questions of taste. A contemporary reimagining of German School string playing will thus require many musicians to experiment with these performance practices and develop a new collective taste that is based both on research and analysis as well as intuition and feeling. The cellist and practice-scholar Kate Bennett Wadsworth alluded to this collective taste-making filling in the gaps of our historical knowledge: "We need lots of people's instincts to fuse together and create a new language."[35]

[35] Kate Bennett Wadsworth, in discussion with the author, February 3 2023.

CHAPTER 2: PORTAMENTO

In many ways, the story of the German School of Violin-playing and portamento follows the opposite trajectory of vibrato. Nineteenth-century violinists such as Joachim viewed portamento as an even more expressive tool than vibrato. Today however, audible slides are rare and are typically reserved for exceptional moments, or eschewed entirely in some repertoire.

The story is similar for cellists, who must, on account of the larger size of the instrument, shift more frequently than violinists. Modern cello shifting technique emphasizes "cleanness," and has successfully reduced the sounds from the necessary traveling around the instrument. This technical facility, while eliminating the need for musically undesirable shifts that may have occurred in the past, also corresponds with twentieth-century cellists finding portamento less musically desirable in general. While modern cellists are often more willing to use more portamento in nineteenth-century repertoire than in music from other time periods, performance practice research suggests that a far greater amount of portamento than would be currently used in modern cello playing is stylistically appropriate for the music of Brahms.

As with the application of vibrato, while we can generalize that string players in Brahms's circle played with more frequent portamento, reconstructing their taste for when to use a slide (and when not) is more elusive. Clive Brown noted this difficulty in his performance practice book:

> While there can be no doubt about the extensive use of portamento by performers throughout the period, there is greater difficulty in determining how much and in what sort of places composers themselves might have considered it appropriate in their music.[1]

[1] Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 580.

Despite this uncertainty, cellists can employ many resources, including historical written descriptions and nineteenth-century performer-edited music, as well as early recordings, to inform their approach to portamento in Brahms's cello sonatas. As with vibrato, our goal isn't necessarily to try to be historically accurate in the sense of aiming to reproduce a performance exactly as it might have sounded, or creating a reenactment of the past. Instead, our goal should be using the past to assist in the creation of a new, historically-engaged performing style that is challenging yet acceptable to contemporary musical tastes.

The Decline of Portamento

Cellists who have been habituated to shift cleanly may require convincing that the frequent slides heard on early recordings are worth imitating. Understanding some history on how portamento went out of style may allay these concerns. Musicologist Mark Katz has documented how portamento usage declined in the twentieth century, counting the number of audible slides in recordings of the Brahms Hungarian Dance No. 1 for violin from 1903 to 1994. He partially attributes this trailing off in portamento usage to the unintended consequences of technological developments: "The decline in portamento was closely tied to the rise of a technology that was intended to preserve—not change—musical performance: sound recording."[2]

In the age of streaming music, it is difficult for us to imagine experiencing music in the pre-recorded world. Recordings not only created the possibility of listening to music outside of a live performance, but also the ability to listen to the same performance repeatedly. While most music experienced today is done so through a familiar recording, such repeated listening

[2] Mark Katz, "Portamento and the Phonograph Effect," *Journal of Musicological Research* 25 (2006): 212.

experiences had a profound impact on musicians trained in the context of the pre-recording world. Imperfect tuning or un-synchronized ensemble that, in the past, would have been a fleeting moment were now preserved on record. Katz dubs all of these resulting behavioral changes a "phonograph effect," or "any change in musical behavior or activity that is in some way a response to the distinctive characteristics of sound recording technology."[3]

One of the first phonograph effects was the replacement of much live performance with mechanical reproduction. This shift to recorded music removed both the visual and communal aspect of a performance, and these missing stimuli, such as the physical demeanor of the performer, altered the perception of the aural experience. With sound now capable of being reproduced at the listener's whim, the momentary excitement of a live performance also lessened during the listening experience. Repeated listenability emerged as a metric to judge a performance by, and repeatability did not favor portamento. As Katz notes, "while portamento may create a sense of impulsiveness or spontaneity in concert, sudden upward swoops or slow dragging slides may sound calculated or contrived when heard repeatedly on record."[4]

Another phonograph effect would be a new self-consciousness for musicians. While recording one's playing has become a standard practice technique today, musicians before the early-twentieth century would not have heard themselves perform until entering the recording studio. Katz's quotation of Carl Flesch explicitly shows that portamento was a performance idiosyncrasy that violinists were embarrassed by:

> The relative uncertainty of subjective criticism is brought home to every artist when he hears himself for the first time on the gramophone. Here, to his horror, he becomes

[3] Katz, 225.

[4] Katz, 225.

> suddenly and disagreeably aware of certain peculiarities of his playing (i.e., unintentional portamenti), peculiarities whose existence he previously had not suspected.[5]

If the present author is frequently aghast at what his own practice recordings sound like, the shock would have been worse for musicians who had made music for decades without recording technology.

Even today with our more advanced technology, musicians observe that recordings pick up sound differently than how a listener in a concert hall hears them. The microphone's ability to record close sounds, in a way not perceived by a live listener thus constitutes another phonograph effect. Again, portamento in particular was a sound with a wide gulf between its live perception and recorded reproduction. Katz states that "portamento[…] could easily be exaggerated to an unacceptable degree when mediated by the microphone."[6] Unsurprisingly, all of these factors, as well as a rise in musical objectivism, led string players to reduce their usage of portamento in the first half of the twentieth century. Cellists interested in nineteenth-century portamento should bear these phonograph effects in mind. Musicians often discuss how a musical gesture that sounds exaggerated close to the performers sounds appropriate to a listener seated distantly in the hall. Similarly, one might consider how the portamento will sound for the audience and not just for the practice room mic.

Written Descriptions of Nineteenth-Century Portamento

While increasing the amount of portamento used may be a change for a modern musician exploring HIP practices, the mechanics of its execution should be familiar to modern

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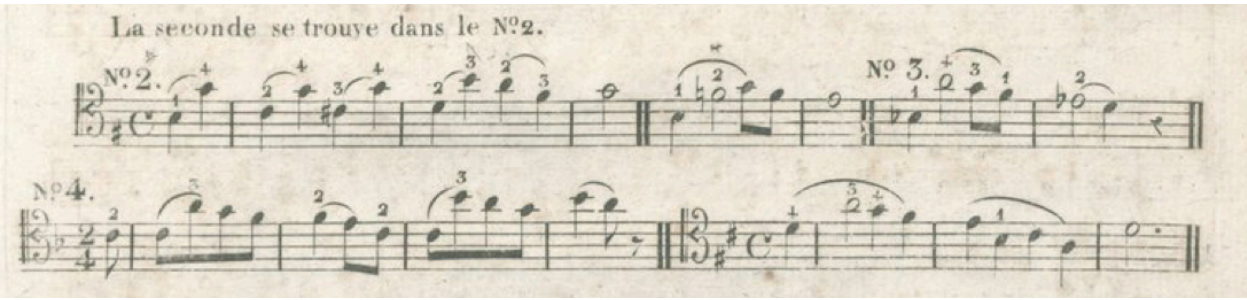
[5] Katz, 225-226.

[6] Katz, 225-226.

cellists. Friedrich Dotzauer's cello method of 1825 provides a musical example with descriptions of the kinds of slides to be employed. The first type of portamento described is also the most obvious, a single finger sliding from note to note. Dotzauer then describes a mid-shift finger substitution:

> In [Example 2.1], the portamento [Ziehen] is introduced four times with different fingers. From B to G the first finger remains firmly down on the string during the slide approximately until E, and since the slide cannot continue from the E to the G the fourth finger must come down on the G so much the faster after this E. ... [I]n the second bar the first finger slides from E downwards to B…[7]

Example 2.1: Dotzauer, *Methode de Violoncelle,* p. 39.



The ascending slide described (B-G) is sometimes called a beginning- or B-shift because it employs the finger stopped before the shift. Because the slide isn't continuous and the arriving note is articulated with a new finger, this shift can produce a subtle portamento. In fact, cellists commonly employ this "old-finger" shift in conjunction with a reduced bow pressure to make the shift inaudible. A modern historically-informed performance will therefore require breaking the force of habit more than just making a major technical adjustment. Also notice Dotzauer's

[7] Friedrich Dotzauer, *Méthode de Violoncelle* (Mainz: B. Schott, 1825), 38-39. https://imslp.org/wiki/Metodo_per_Violoncello_(Dotzauer,_Friedrich).

endorsement of descending slides in the quotation. These are frequently heard in early cello recordings, such as those by cellist William Henry Squire and are discussed in Chapter 4.

Violinists Joseph Joachim and his pupil Johannes Moser wrote about portamento's expressive capabilities. Given Joachim's importance to Brahms performance practice, his views carry significance. In his eyes, portamento was "the most important means of expression within the power of the left hand," and he even placed it ahead of vibrato.[8]

For Joachim, portamento was an essential means of maintaining legato phrasing, along with the bow. He modeled its use on the violin to its natural counterpart in the voice: "As a means borrowed from the human voice... the use and manner of executing the portamento must come naturally under the same rules as those which hold good in vocal art."[9] Joachim also notes that the execution of portamento depends on the music's character, and should be done "with tenderness or with passion."[10]

Joachim's direction that portamento can express tenderness as well as passion bears significance. Clive Brown also echoes Joachim's sentiment on tender portamento: "Portamento was used, therefore, either unobtrusively as an emotionally neutral, but stylistically appropriate adjunct of seamless legato, or more prominently as an expressive gesture at all levels of intensity from the delicate to the emphatic."[11] As a generalization, current HIP portamento practice reserves a melodic slide for more passionate passages, and often only for a larger intervallic leap that necessitates a shift regardless. In modern (non-HIP) practice, a slide in a soft phrase would

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[8] Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Violinschule* (Berlin: Simrock, 1905), 2: 96. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violin_School_(Joachim,_Joseph).

[9] Joachim and Moser, *Violinschule* 2: 92.

[10] Joachim and Moser, *Violinschule* 2: 92.

[11] Clive Brown, "String Performing Practice," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 14.

often be felt to be too conspicuous. A challenge for the Brahms performance practice movement is to reintroduce these tender portamenti that were an essential component of Joachim's aesthetic.

As with vibrato, nineteenth-century authors such as Dotzauer and Joachim and others caution against abusing portamento. But as Clive Brown notes, "their notion of abuse is directly dependent on what they considered to be the norm."[12] He continues "there is every reason to believe that [portamento] was often meant to be a distinctly audible effect, not merely a by-product of singing distant intervals to the same syllable or shifting position on a single string."[13] Taken as a whole, evidence suggests a great deal more portamento would have been heard by string players in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today's cellists, conditioned into making their shifts as inconspicuous as possible, are unlikely to use too much portamento for the taste of a nineteenth-century cellist.

Performer Editions and Portamento

A resource for cellists interested in particular ways to employ portamento in music can be found by studying the sheet music edited by nineteenth-century cellists. Cellist George Kennaway conducted his own survey of the fingerings of cello parts edited by nineteenth-century cellists such as Friedrich Grützmacher and David Popper, and he concluded that cellists often employed fingerings that purposefully created portamento.[14] Kennaway's view is that "Portamento, then, was a normal part of the cellist's expressive repertoire throughout the nineteenth century, and

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[12] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 587.

[13] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 587.

[14] George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780 - 1930* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 122.

was probably used increasingly through that period."[15] As with vibrato, David Popper's penchant for sliding carries importance for Brahms musical practice. German cellist Friedrich Grützmacher, a student of the aforementioned Dotzauer, heavily edited his performance parts for a wide range of repertoire, and these indicate a large number of slides and provide a view into nineteenth-century cello-playing.

For the Brahms cello sonatas, we can study editions by Julius Klengel (1859–1933) and Hugo Becker (1863–1941) of both works. These editions were published towards the end of both cellists' lives. Both cellists were relatively restrained in their editorial additions to Brahms's score (especially compared to the aforementioned Grützmacher, who often gets credited as a co-composer in his editions). Although they may be sound from a modern editorial viewpoint, the performance practice scholar can't help but wish the editors had marked up their versions more heavily.

A few qualifiers should be kept in mind when examining these performer editions. The editorial suggestions are comprised of fingerings and bowings, with expressive details such as portamento or vibrato left unmarked. Portamenti are most easily inferred by fingerings that indicate a position shift under a slur, especially when the shift uses the same finger or implies the B-shift earlier described. However, Brown also states that for this time period "portamento occurred not only within slurs, but also between notes that were separated by a change of bow."[16] It should be noted that the timing of the portamento between separate bow-strokes will determine its musical effect, with an early shift on the "old-bow" sounding more subtle than a

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[15] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello*, 122.

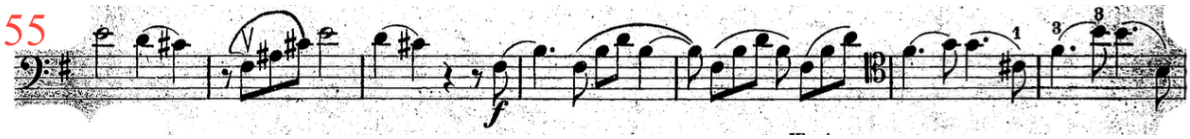
[16] Brown, "String Performing Practice," 12.

slide that occurs on the "new-bow." Although some of the portamento is indirectly inferred, these editions still reveal a portamento practice quite different from our own.

Julius Klengel

The first movement of Julius Klengel's edition of the Brahms E minor sonata indicates possible portamento in a few unexpected places. The first example from the second theme shows a portamento that cellists still employ, a same-finger slide up to the high B (see Example 2.2).[17] This is a very clear indication for portamento with the fingering marked on both notes.

Example 2.2: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 (Edited by Julius Klengel), I. *Allegro non troppo,* mm. 55-61.



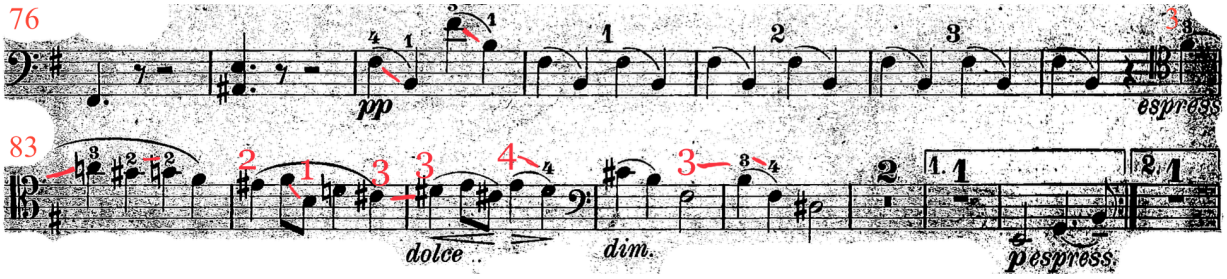
In the next example (Ex. 2.3), the passage from measure 78 indicates two B-shifts in a row, but its degree of audibility would have been up to the discretion of the performer.[18] Non-HIP cellists today often play these sets of fifths with one shift and one string crossing, but rarely two shifts as indicated by Klengel. It is remarkable within this tender *pianissimo* passage that Klengel possibly chose to perform two slides in a row and is another indication that portamento was employed to convey a variety of musical characters.

Klengel indicates more possible portamenti when the cellist takes up the chromatic melody first heard in the piano. The upbeat into measure 83 (Ex. 2.3) employs another 3-3 slide into the A (with no harmonic indicated). This is followed by the 2-2 shift for the descending G#

[17] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38, edited by Julius Klengel (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1925) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.1,_Op.38_(Brahms,_Johannes).

[18] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38, edited by Julius Klengel (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1925) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.1,_Op.38_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Example 2.3: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 (Edited by Julius Klengel), I. *Allegro non troppo,* mm. 76-90



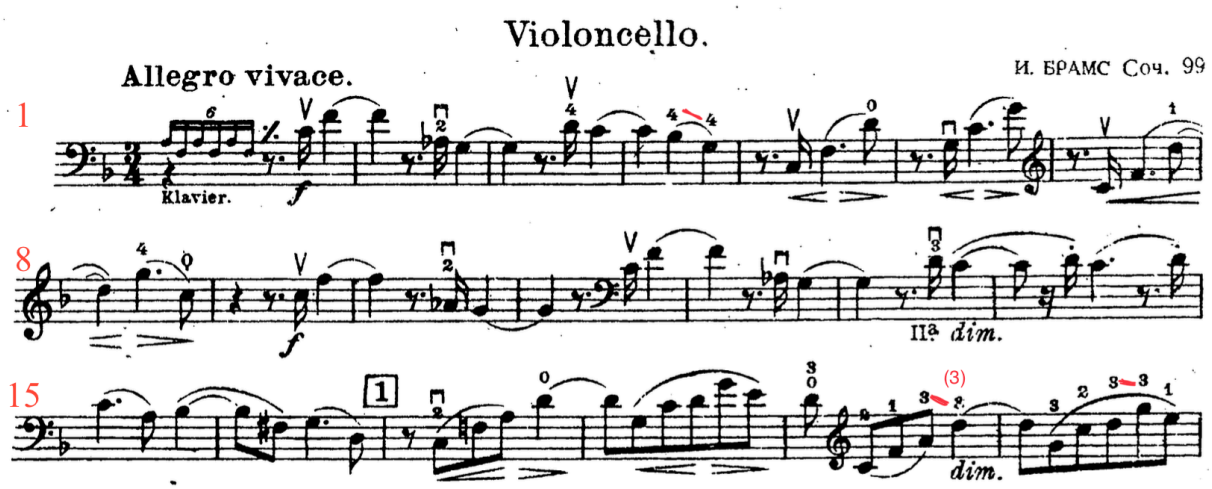
to G-natural. There are fewer fingerings after this measure, so I have added in red what I believe are Klengel's implied fingerings, along with places where portamento is possible. Again, while the ultimate audibility of portamento depends on how the shifts are executed, these are not fingerings cellists would choose if they were trying to play cleanly and avoid portamento. The fingering in measures 86-87 seems especially risky, with unnecessary additional shifts that seem intended to create multiple portamenti on a single string. Again, with the *pianissimo* dynamic and alternating *espressivo* and *dolce* character markings, Klengel possibly viewed portamento as a means to enhance this tender passage.

The placements of Klengel's portamenti are also unique, and are not spots where I would instinctively slide. A shift on a weak beat or a simple descending whole-step might not have a theoretical justification, but its effect can create a certain human quality if performed sincerely.

Klengel's edition of the second sonata also contains informative fingerings. In the first movement, measure 4, Klengel suggests a 4-4 shift that likely implies portamento (Example 2.4).[19] This fourth-finger shift is somewhat idiosyncratic, so cellists today, who almost always avoid a weak-finger shift unless absolutely necessary, might wish to replicate the portamento with

[19] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99, edited by Julius Klengel (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1925) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.2,_Op.99_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Example 2.4: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 2 (Edited by Julius Klengel), I. *Allegro Vivace*, mm. 1-20

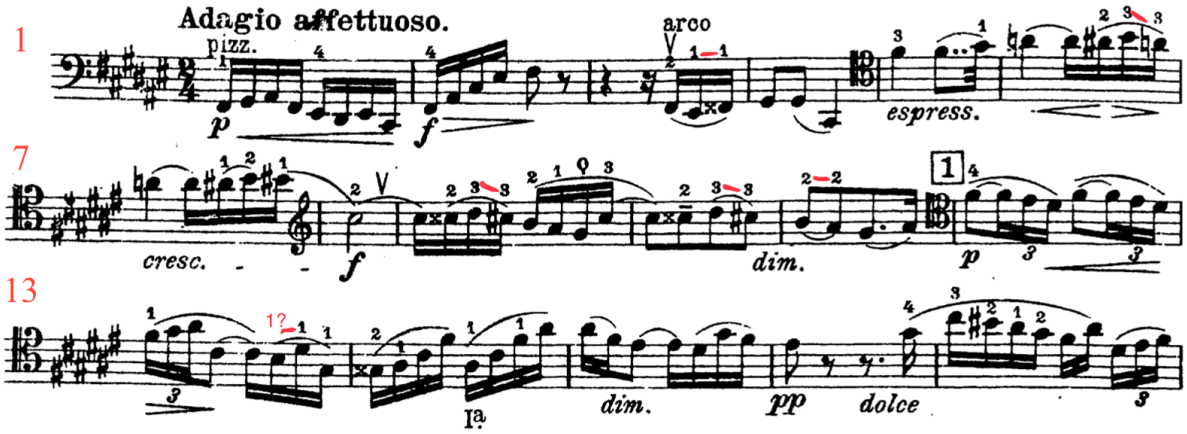


a different fingering. A few other portamenti, spanning the interval of the fourth are also found in example 4.

Klengel's version of the second movement shows how portamenti might be applied in an adagio movement (Example 2.5).[20] Unlike other portamenti examples that span intervals larger than a third, example 5 features several half- and whole-step slides. Although the indicated shifts in measures 9-11 (3 measures before rehearsal 1) could be executed without portamenti, Klengel's indication for the same finger (i.e. 3-3, 2-2) would be redundant unless he was implying audible shifts. This passage is yet another indication that *espressivo* playing had connotations with portamenti.

[20] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99, edited by Julius Klengel (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1925) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.2,_Op.99_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Example 2.5: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 2 (Edited by Julius Klengel), II. *Adagio Affettuoso,* mm. 1-17



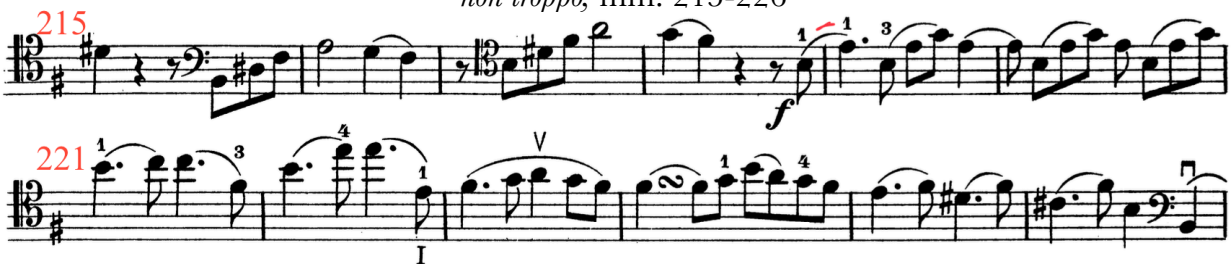
Hugo Becker

Unfortunately, Hugo Becker's edition is not quite as clearly marked for portamenti as Klengel's. Examining his version is still useful because it corroborates Klengel's fingerings, suggesting the existence of a portamenti performing tradition for these works among late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cellists.

One of the more clear indications for portamento in the first movement of the E minor sonata comes for the upbeat into measure 219 (Example 2.6).[21] This is one of the few places where Becker clearly indicates a slurred 1-1 shift. This emphatic gesture to begin the recapitulation's second theme is effective, so I have gladly borrowed it for my own performance of this work.

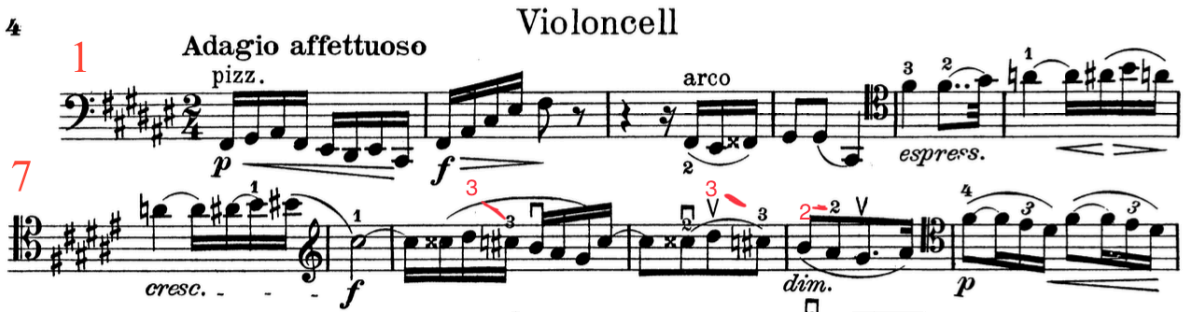
[21] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38, edited by Hugo Becker (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1922) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.1,_Op.38_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Example 2.6: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 (Edited by Hugo Becker), I. *Allegro non troppo,* mm. 215-226



Becker also recommends the same fingering as Klengel in measures 9-11 of the Op. 99 sonata Adagio (Example 2.7).[22] Implied fingerings implied are again marked in red, so this passage displays the same potential for half- and whole-step portamenti as in Klengel's version. Given that Becker's editing is generally lighter than Klengel's, it's not clear if Becker wished for cellists to play with less portamenti or if he wished to leave this matter up to the performer. Of course, as previously mentioned, the finger-numbers alone do not indicate portamento. With many fingerings and shifts, not just the slurred same-finger shifts, it is possible to either hide or exaggerate the sound of the shift. Still, the similarity between the two editors suggests Klengel's more obvious portamenti may have been part of a shared practice. Of course, with all of these performer editions, we are missing a large amount of the musical context in which they were

Example 2.7: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 2 (Edited by Hugo Becker), II. *Adagio Affettuoso,* mm. 1-12



[22] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99, edited by Hugo Becker (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1922) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.2,_Op.99_(Brahms,_Johannes).

made. Taken together, these two performer-edited versions of the sonatas support the prominence of portamenti as an expressive device among Brahms circle cellists.

Portamento and Recordings

Although editions with their historical fingerings and slurring can give some indication into the type of portamento intended, the editorial marks don't account for all the subtlety and variety that musicians would have employed. For this section, it was useful to draw upon the conclusions of Mark Katz and George Kennaway, who surveyed a large number of violin and cello recordings for their portamento. My own study of selected recordings comes in a later chapter.

Katz remarked upon the variety of expressive effects portamento had in his studied recordings of violinists.[23] Portamento "shapes the character of a passage, whether to create a sobbing sound or to make a large leap more dramatic…"[24] Portamento was also a tool for musicians to elucidate their interpretation of a work's key features by drawing "attention to a significant melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic event..."[25] Violinists also employed a slide to demarcate musical cadences, and Katz notes that their frequency increased around cadences.[26] Portamento thus also served as a rhetorical device, employed to "intensify a suspension, to signal

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[23] Violin pieces and recordings studied by Katz included Schubert *Ave Maria,* Brahms *Hungarian Dance No. 1,* Bach Solo Sonata No. 1 - *Adagio,* Beethoven Violin Concerto - *Larghetto,* and Gluck *Melodie.*

[24] Katz, "Portamento," 214.

[25] Katz, 214.

[26] Katz, 218.

the arrival of a cadence (or heighten the surprise of a deceptive cadence), begin a ritard, or introduce a tempo change."[27]

On the portamento displayed in Joseph Joachim's recordings, Katz noted the subtlety in execution. The slides "vary a great deal—some are quick and slight, others are slow and heavily accented. Several of the slides affect the tempo and rhythm of the passage."[28] Katz also pushes back against the preconception that early recordings simply reveal low standards in string playing. He notes that "the decision when and when not to slide is often clearly conscious, for there are times when the violinists avoid portamento even when there is a perfect opportunity for it, and times when they change positions for the sole purpose of sliding."[29] These purposeful fingering choices suggest that there were aesthetic principles behind the violinist's choices, and portamento was not simply used as a convenience for shifting.

Katz also remarked upon the correspondence of rubato with portamento: "[The pre-1940 violinists] use of portamento, furthermore, introduces a rhythmic effect as well as a melodic one, often creating momentary ritenutos, or slight anticipations or suspensions."[30] This remark indicates that portamento could be brought out with timing as well as by increasing finger pressure on the bow. On vibrato, he observes that "when one note is connected to another by a strong, slow slide (especially downward), the second note tends to receive little or no vibrato."[31]

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[27] Katz, 214.

[28] Katz, 220.

[29] Katz, 218.

[30] Katz, 219.

[31] Katz, 228.

Kennaway's survey of early cello recordings also finds that portamento was used quite liberally by cellists before 1930 and with a great variety in its application.[32] He draws attention to portamento's effect on vibrato and the fact that the two techniques mostly appear independently of one another. In comparing recordings of Schumann's *Träumerei* between 1903 and 1930, Kennaway notes that early cellists, such as Hans Kronold, Josef Hollmann, and Victor Sorlin, used nearly twice as much portamento (approximately two per bar) as another cellist, Pablo Casals.[33] Given Casals's role in revolutionizing left hand cello technique to eliminate unnecessary slides, it is unsurprising he exercised relative restraint with portamento and perhaps sought to highlight his technical facility in recording instead.

Although Kennaway points to the general trend of declining portamento in recordings in the period between 1900 and 1930, he also notes that usage and application of the technique varied considerably from cellist to cellist. For musicians today, Kennaway warns that "those who wish to recreate nineteenth-century portamento need to decide whether the historical models they choose to follow represent a personal idiosyncrasy, a consensus view, or a style extrapolated from a variety of sources…"[34] The opportunity here, however, is for each cellist to employ portamento according to their own individual style and taste. Indeed, the consistent theme of nineteenth-century portamento usage, besides its frequency, is that its successful application and execution is literally in the hands of the performers. This artistic license means historical-performance practitioners will not be able to rely upon codified portamento norms, and instead will need to evaluate each particular instance of portamento for its ability to enhance a performance. Ideally, portamento employed individually and even idiosyncratically would vary by

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[32] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello*, 170.

[33] Kennaway, 159.

[34] Kennaway, 122.

performer and performance. Portamento could thus be a means for musicians to recapture some of the spontaneity and excitement that the phonograph robbed from us.

CHAPTER 3: PHRASING: RUBATO AND BOWING

Due to how these practices connect and inform one another, historically-informed conventions for phrasing, rubato, and string bowings are examined together. While many modern musicians would agree that rubato is appropriate for the performance of Brahms's music, they might be surprised by the degree and kind of rubato that performance practice research suggests was employed by musicians in his circle and by the composer himself. Likewise with string bowing: although modern players will be familiar with many of the bowing techniques, concepts, and ideals of German School of Violin-playing, an understanding of nineteenth-century performing traditions and how they relate to the music of Johannes Brahms can be illuminating.

Rubato

Some clarification of the terminology used for expressive rhythmic alterations is in order. Clive Brown identifies two definitions of rubato for the Classical and Romantic eras:

1. Tempo modification: A change in the basic pulse of the music, either momentarily or for a more extended period, can occur in different ways and for dramatic, expressive or structural purposes.
2. The classic *tempo rubato* occurs when the accompaniment (or, in the case of a keyboard instrument, usually the left hand) remains steady, while the melodic line is modified for a more or less extended passage.[1]

[1] Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 377-378.

We will continue with these terms: in the discussion that follows, "tempo modification" refers specifically to a change in pulse; "tempo rubato" refers to a deviation from the notated rhythm within the pulse; and "rubato" alone can refer to either type of rhythmic flexibility.

Tempo

A first concern for understanding rhythmic and tempo flexibility in Brahms's music is what tempi Brahms had in mind for his compositions. The evidence for tempo practices in the late-nineteenth century is contradictory, with some indications that faster tempi were employed by German School string players but other signs that Brahms himself favored slower tempi. As we shall see, Brahms may have had a flexible view on performance tempo, wishing to leave such matters to the discretion of performers.

David Milsom cites the influence of Felix Mendelssohn on Joseph Joachim as evidence that faster tempi were used in the German Classical school. He summarizes the tempo practices as follows: "General tendency towards faster tempi, possibly influenced by Mendelssohn's preference for fast speeds; slow movements often not as slow as more modern renditions."[2]

Another indication for brisk tempi among nineteenth-century cellists comes later. Brown, Peres da Costa, and Wadsworth in their Performance Commentary for the Bärenreiter edition of the E minor sonata suggest brisk metronome markings for each movement of the Opus 38, citing a 1927 recording of the sonata by Beatrice Harrison.[3] Although influenced by the more modern Pablo Casals, Harrison studied with Hugo Becker, a cellist whom Brahms admired. Although

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[2] David Milsom, "Practice and Principle: Perspectives upon the German 'Classical' School of Violin Playing in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 9, no. 1 (2012): 37.

[3] Clive Brown, Neal Peres da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* by Johannes Brahms, edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), vii.

these recorded tempi are informative, they should not be the only consideration for performance tempo.

When looking at Brahms's music specifically, one gets the impression that the composer tended to avoid particularly fast or slow tempi. Brown cites the memoirs of pianist Willy Rehberg wherein he describes a performance of Brahms playing the piano for the Op. 101 trio that was consistently "slower than one hears now."[4] His expansive approach to musical timing as detailed by pianist Fanny Davies will also be examined later.

Deciphering what Brahms intended by the Italian *Vivace, Allegro,* or *Andante* markings can be difficult to pin down. If fast tempi were not as fast as we might expect, there are also signs that slower movements were not as slow. Brown observes, however, that "Brahms may have inclined to a somewhat brisker notion of 'andante' than some of his contemporaries."[5] Brahms also had the tendency to moderate his tempi with Italian modifiers such as *ma non troppo*, *più*, and *poco*.

Part of the confusion in regards to tempo could be attributed to the composer's intentional coyness with assigning metronome markings to his music. One only has to look at the controversy of Beethoven's metronome markings to understand why Brahms may have felt printing a marking would send too exact of a message to the performer.[6] Indeed, Brahms said of the metronome, "I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go

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[4] Clive Brown, "General Issues of Performing Practice," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 3.

[5] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 358.

[6] David Fallows, "Tempo and expression marks," *Grove Music Online* 2001, accessed 14 Apr. 2023. https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027650.

well together."[7] Combined with his famous elasticity of tempo, it's possible that Brahms felt a single number was too constraining for his music.

A performer's choice of tempo can also be influenced by practical as well as aesthetic concerns. The technical demands of a movement, or the acoustics of the performance venue, are also major considerations. Brahms's preference for flexibly changing tempi may have also informed his decision to not assign a single metronome marking to an entire movement. For historically-informed performance, flexibility of tempo may ultimately be the more salient practice than determining an overarching performance tempo.

Tempo Modification

Tempo flexibility was also a point of contention in the nineteenth-century rivalry between Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner. Clive Brown describes nineteenth-century musicians who "believed that this expressive resource should be used sparingly and with extreme subtlety, while at the other [end of the scale] were those who introduced frequent and obvious tempo modifications" and notes that, "both these extremes could have been heard in professional performances throughout the period."[8] While Brahms would have been in the more conservative rubato camp, his and his followers' rubato was more extreme than musicians today are accustomed to.

Part of the reason Brahms's rubato would sound extreme to us today is the fact that musicians for the last century have been influenced by recordings that were being made at a time when a musical modernism that favored "objective" interpretations took hold. Brown also

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[7] Clive Brown, "General Issues of Performing Practice," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 3.

[8] Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 376.

concludes that "[t]he Brahmsian approach to tempo and rhythmic flexibility, therefore, though restrained in comparison with the Wagnerian extreme, might well have seemed unrestrained to modern ears, conditioned by a style of performance in Classical music that, in opposition to what 'modernists' regarded as 'Romantic excess,' began to take hold during the 1920s and 30s."[9] Ironically, many classical musicians today assume that the performances heard in recordings from the 1930s, 40s and 50s represent a "Romantic style" of playing due to their temporal proximity to the nineteenth century. This view has perpetuated a cycle of anachronistic understanding whereby these recordings reinforce misguided twentieth-century practices and attitudes towards nineteenth-century music.

David Milsom also contrasts the Joachim approach to tempo modification to that of Wagner. Summarizing the Classical German approach, he writes of a:

> [t]endency to favour strict time, rather than more general applications of tempo flexibility (aggregate slowing down or speeding up), which are also hallmarks of Wagner's practice and not the 'Classical' German school… [T]empo and rhythm were seen as elements of music that could be adapted, relaxed, heightened and changed for expressive purposes as opposed to the twentieth-century trend of prizing textual 'accuracy' in this regard.[10]

Although at first reading, this passage suggests an inflexible tempo, Milsom makes clear that the tempi are only more strict in comparison to Wagner, and much more free in comparison to modern practice.

Tempo modification appears to have been used by Brahms in all instrumental genres and ensembles and for his own solo, chamber, and orchestral performances. On the topic of

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[9] Brown, "General Issues," 5.

[10] Milsom, "Practice and Principle," 37.

conducting new works for orchestra, Brahms wrote to Joachim, "In that case I often cannot do enough pushing forward and holding back, in order to produce more or less the passionate or calm expression I want."[11] This "pushing forward and holding back," however, was specific to individual performances, and it was not something to be officially entered into the published score. Brown suggests that Brahms also feared that being overly prescriptive with his notation could create exaggerated performances in the Wagnerian style.[12] In short, Brahms expected a degree of un-notated tempo flexibility, but knew that fastidious musicians might overemphasize tempo changes printed in the score beyond what the composer himself considered tasteful.

Still, there are clues in Brahms's notation as to places where he may have desired a change in tempo. Many of the expressive terms in Brahms's music which today are understood to only convey musical character, also carried implications for tempo as well as dynamic or timbre. Brown, Wadsworth, and Da Costa suggest that expressive terms such as *espressivo, dolce, sostenuto,* and *sotto voce,* carried tempo implications similar to *ritardando, meno mosso,* and *animato.*[13] Musicians studying performance practice should consider these terms when modifying tempi in Brahms.

Tempo Rubato

The other form of rubato was the pulse-steady but rhythmically free *tempo rubato.* In their performance practice commentary for the Bärenreiter edition of the sonatas, Brown, Wadsworth and Da Costa compare German nineteenth-century rhythm practice to jazz swing and Baroque *notes inégales*.[14] Passages of the "successive equal-length notes" were played unequally, with notes

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[11] Brown, "General Issues," 4.

[12] Brown, "General Issues," 4.

[13] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

[14] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

lengthened and shortened according to the taste of the performer.[15] Dotted rhythms were also treated freely, being both over- and under-dotted. Similarly, David Milsom describes the Classical German School approach to tempo rubato as "endemic use of small-scale rhythmic manipulations, including tendency to over-dot long and short notes."[16]

As with tempo modification, there are notational clues for where *tempo rubato* is appropriate. On slurred pairs of eighth notes, Brown states that Brahms "and his German contemporaries almost certainly expected some inequality in rhythm: the first lengthened at the expense of the second."[17] These instructions point to a *tempo rubato* that mostly occurs at the eighth-note subdivision level in most music, although it could appear at the quarter- or sixteenth-note level, depending on tempo and meter.

A final consideration is where *tempo rubato* may be inappropriate. Brown believes that "Staccato notes were usually played more strictly rhythmically than slurred ones…"[18] And as cellist and performance practice scholar George Kennaway put it to me, "Historical practices lessen when the music gets fast."[19] This of course has implications for *tempo rubato* in several movements of the cello sonatas.

Joachim's recordings are an instructive example of *tempo rubato* . For example, in his performance of Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No.1,* Joachim mostly tends to overdot rhythms, while leaving syncopations and faster runs unaltered. In Joachim's recording of his own composition the *Romance in C*, *tempo rubato* happens with a slightly "swinging" of eighth-notes (which tends to

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[15] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

[16] Milsom, "Practice and Principle," 37.

[17] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

[18] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

[19] George Kennaway, Conversation with the author, March 24, 2023.

occur near turns and grace notes), but there is also a complete alteration to the triplets in measure 52 that makes them sound more like duples. David Milsom's annotated version of the *Romance* with Joachim's *tempo rubato* alongside the original notation is instructive to examine. He notes that Joachim's performance might incorporate some "wrong" rhythms, that change the rhythmic character more than HIP musicians would likely want to do today.[20] These moments include Joachim's execution of the notated syncopations at m. 78 and mm. 82-83 where he played an unsyncopated rhythm. Otherwise, Joachim's recordings are an invaluable resource to understanding nineteenth-century *tempo rubato*.

Lastly, we might consider the implications rubato has for ensemble playing. Brahms's and Joachim's free approaches to rhythm caused difficulties for their collaborators. Brahms's friend and biographer Max Kalbeck recalled a rehearsal of the Op. 101 trio with Brahms on the piano that ended with the composer storming off because the string players could not follow the "inspired freedom of his playing."[21] A chamber music collaborator of Joachim's once remarked, "To play with the 'Old Man' is damned difficult. Always a different tempo, a different accent."[22] These quotations, besides confirming the rhythmic practices of Brahms and Joachim, also indicate that not every musician aspired to their level of rhythmic freedom. We can't discount that Brahms's and Joachim's musical stature afforded them the license to demand that their collaborators adapt to their playing. Musicians today should work in a more collaborative manner; correspondingly, rubato practices require the understanding and input of all performers involved.

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[20] Milsom, "Practice and Principle," 51-52.

[21] Brown, "General Issues," 4.

[22] Brown, "General Issues," 3. This quotation is attributed to have been told in confidence to Julius Levin.

Expressive Asynchrony

One area of current rubato research is expressive asynchrony, or a kind of rubato between musical voices such that they intentionally don't have a synchronized ensemble as is the norm for modern performance. Expressive asynchrony has been a major area of their research in an ongoing UK project, Transforming 19th-Century Historically-Informed Practice (TCHIP). Asynchrony as rhythmic practice is, of course, related to rubato and to the phenomenon of hand asynchrony in keyboard performance. TCHIP describes synchronized ensemble as "not a priority for nineteenth-century performers, and being 'untogether' was deliberately used as an expressive device…"[23] Part of their project was a concert and recording of the string serenades by Robert Fuchs and Tchaikovsky that were intentionally performed so as to encourage asynchrony. The researchers note that this "expressive approach is not likely to be achieved using exclusively modern rehearsal practices even if ensembles accept non-alignment as an artistic objective."[24] Part of the challenge with asynchrony is finding the balance between expressive disunity and just poor ensemble.

The TCHIP album, "Accordes!" imagines how expressive asynchrony might have sounded. The recording notes suggest that "[nineteenth-century] musicians would have regarded performances with exact alignment in ensemble, mathematically accurate realisation of rhythmic notation, and non-fluctuating tempi as strangely inexpressive."[25] A unique feature of orchestral

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[23] "About the Project, p. 2" Transforming C19 HIP, University of Oxford, accessed March 30, 2023, https://c19hip.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/c19hip/documents/media/tchip_info_pack_2.pdf.

[24] "About the Project" Transforming C19 HIP.

[25] Claire Holden, "The Accordes Recording," liner notes for Robert Fuchs, *Serenade no. 1, op. 9,* performed by Claire Holden and Accordes!, Recorded at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Oxford, September 2019. Apple Music. https://music.apple.com/us/album/serenade/1543462494.

asynchrony is having multiple players on each part, and asynchrony within each string section is heard in this recording. As individual players perform slightly apart from one another, an extra "reverberant" orchestral sound results. The effect is not dissimilar from a "live" venue acoustic or the reverb tool in a digital audio workstation. This particular expressive asynchrony effect, however, is limited to larger ensembles.

The other aspect of expressive asynchrony on this recording that chamber musicians can explore is where orchestral sections rhythmically separate from others. This type of asynchrony is more subtle and not constant. An example occurs in the Fuchs serenade Adagio (Track 4, 2'00").[26] Here, triplets in the violins don't exactly line-up with the quarter-notes in the celli. The effect is a subtle rhythmic "push-and-pull" that is somewhat like a "2-vs-3" cross rhythm, except that here it occurs between the pulse and its subdivision. Although these rhythmic effects are subtle, one can understand their expressive appeal when listening to this recording.

Although recorded well into the twentieth century, Pablo Casals's recording with pianist Mieczysław Horszowski of the second movement of Brahms's F major cello sonata displays expressive asynchrony practices. An examination by Ana Llorens shows through spectral analysis that "the temporal discrepancies between the cello and piano parts are neither the result of chance nor only local expressive devices."[27]

In this recording, asynchrony appears with Casals tending to play slightly before Horszowski. In Llorens's view, this isn't just about Horszowski being behind Casals's playing, because as she notes, this anticipating melody rubato may be an example of 'earlier rubato'

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[26] Robert Fuchs, *Serenade no. 1, op. 9, Adagio con molto espressione*, performed by Claire Holden and Accordes! Recorded at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Oxford, September 2019. Apple Music. https://music.apple.com/us/album/serenade/1543462494.

[27] Ana Llorens, "Recorded Asynchronies, Structural Dialogues: Brahms's Adagio Affetuoso, Op. 99ii, in the Hands of Casals and Horszowski," *Music Performance Research* 8 (2017): 1.

style."[28] In her survey of rubato practices, Sandra Rosenblum described an eighteenth-century rubato practice whereby a principal melody is played essentially in syncopation against a steady accompaniment. Rosenblum cites a passage from the Beethoven violin concerto's second movement (mm. 61-65) as a notated example of this practice.[29] This unsynchronized melody against a steady accompaniment may be the kind of rubato Llorens suggests Casals and Horszowski are using in their recording.

Another intriguing element of Casals's asynchrony is how its usage is limited to one theme in the second movement, specifically the cello statement of the chromatic theme that occurs at mm. 5-16 and mm. 48-60. Llorens concludes that these asynchronies reveal Casals's and Horszowski's formal conception of the movement, and "support[s] the understanding of those temporal disjunctions as serving very specific structural and expressive purposes."[30]

Given the difficulties of performing asynchronously convincingly, it might not be a rhythmic practice that is feasible or appropriate for just any moment of Brahms's music. The fugal finale of the Opus 38 sonata for example employs complex counterpoint, cross-rhythms and metrical displacement, so it is difficult to imagine performing this movement well with any sort of additional asynchrony. Its frequent staccato marks might also be an indication for less rubato. Still, asynchrony practices should be explored where appropriate, and a "Nocturne-esque" texture of a lyrical melody and accompaniment seem the most likely musical textures where it would be successful. Expressive asynchrony can also inform other rubato practices as well. Knowing that a unified ensemble might not have been the norm should encourage HIP

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[28] Llorens, 23.

[29] Sandra Rosenblum, "The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries," *Performance Practice Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): 39-40.

[30] Llorens, "Recorded Asynchronies," 26.

musicians today to employ individual rubato even if their subdivisions might not line up with their collaborators'. In the Brahms sonatas for example, cellists and pianists might accept some level of disunity for the purposes of *tempo rubato*.

Phrasing and Articulation

Phrasing and string bowing practices of the late-nineteenth century did not differ greatly from many modern practices, but understanding earlier string players' attitudes towards these practices can still inform modern historically-informed performances. Clive Brown, Kate Bennett Wadsworth and Neal Peres Da Costa cite *legato* phrasing as of primary importance: "The creation of a perfect legato lay at the heart of the mid to late 19th-century German approach to bowing. In cantabile melodies there was a strong preference for long, seamlessly connected phrases, which were shaped by dynamic nuance rather than the physical separation of phrase units."[31] David Milsom also compares Classical German violin phrasing to the human voice: "Predominantly legato, reflecting an overwhelming concentration on vocal style as the ideal for the violinist's tone; phrase lengths often conforming to sung phrases."[32]

In the case of Brahms, slurs were indications of phrasing and not necessarily of bowing. For particularly long slurs, "It was considered more effective sometimes … to break them up into shorter bow strokes…"[33] String interpreters of Brahms should carefully study his indicated slurring and experiment with bowings that are informed not only by the slurs but also by the particular melodic and harmonic context as well. Slur patterns could also be varied with

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[31] Clive Brown, "String Performing Practice," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 13.

[32] Milsom, "Practice and Principle," 36.

[33] Brown, "String Performing Practice," 14.

repetitions; indeed, Brown suggests "to vary the bowing pattern on the repetition of such figures."[34]

Finally, special care should be given to the beginning of slurs, because, as Brown notes, "it may be confidently stated that [Brahms] expected the notes within a slur (except where accent, articulation, or subsidiary slurs were marked within it) to be executed with uninterrupted legato."[35] In the case of Brahms, who had a proclivity to place slurs over barlines, slightly emphasizing the beginning of a slur is an essential practice that often highlights the complex, metrical displacements in his music.

Joachim and Moser also wrote about the rhythmical and melodic aspects of phrasing, whereby a rhythmic accent is given to metrically strong notes and a melodic accent given to the highest note in a phrase. Importantly, without any other indication from the composer, the two write that the rhythmic accent takes precedence over the melodic, and give the example of a hairpin crescendo to the middle of the bar as an exception to the rhythmic accent rule.[36]

Another peculiarity of Brahms's notational style was to use dots in place of dashes to indicate the *portato* bowstroke. Thus, dots under a slur "always indicate portato."[37] Given the Classical German School's reluctance towards virtuosic spiccato techniques, it is important to recognize that Brahms meant *portato* when writing dots under a slur. David Milsom also notes that there were "Fine gradations in the use of different accent and accentuation signs."[38] With Brahms's music, different accent signs also convey a range of strength, with *ffz* producing the

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[34] Brown, "String Performing Practice," 14.

[35] Brown, "General Issues," 7.

[36] Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Violinschule* (Berlin: Simrock, 1905), 1: 57-58. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violin_School_(Joachim,_Joseph).

[37] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

[38] Milsom, "Practice and Principle," 36.

most dramatic accent. For the the perpetually puzzling marking of *rinforzando*, the Bärenreiter editors suggest Brahms used it to imply a very strong hairpin pair (< >) over a single note.[39]

Bowing practices were also commonly employed to depict certain musical affects and characters. August Wilhelmj (a student of Ferdinand David, the German violinist who preceded Joachim in Leipzig) described a *flautando* technique to produce a *dolce* tone color: "If the Bow is placed at a great distance from the Bridge, ... while the bow moves at a considerable speed, so without pressure, the result is a tone of little intensity, but of clarinet like sweetness and much carrying power. This is known as Dolce."[40] The Berlin Hochschule violin student, Marion Ranken, also described vibrato being employed in *dolce* passages.[41]

Staccato dots can be performed with a variety of technical executions, but it should be noted that many flying spiccato bow strokes were associated more with the Franco-Belgian style of playing. On the execution of staccato notes, David Milsom concludes that the Classical German School employed: "Sparing use of very short (off the string) bowstrokes …in favour of a variety of species of on-string staccatos, often executed in the upper half of the bow... [and a] tendency to see generic dots above notes as 'separations' rather than short, sharp staccatos."[42]

Joachim seemed to have been flexible about the particular bowing technique employed. His *Violinschule* written with Moser details the various techniques that might be used to express a staccato dot:

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[39] Brown, Costa, and Wadsworth, preface to *Sonata Op. 38,* by Brahms, vii.

[40] August Wilhelmj and James Brown: *A Modern School for the Violin* IIb (London, 1899-1900), vii. Quoted in Clive Brown, "String Performing Practice," 14.

[41] Brown, "String Performing Practice," 14.

[42] Milsom, "Practice and Principle," 36.

> In most compositions for stringed instruments, particularly those by authors unacquainted with the technique of bowing, the performer is only rarely enlightened as to whether certain passages, provided with the usual staccato marks, should be played martele or spiccato. Even great artists differ on the point, some using the former where others prefer the latter. ... It is evident from this, that in discussing the matter, we must not look upon it as a definite musical point, but rather as a question of style and taste.[43]

Staccato dots might best be understood as usually conveying a separation but sometimes a short articulation, and their execution being dependent upon musical context and technical facility.

Hairpins

Tying together rubato, phrasing, bowing, as well as portamento and vibrato is the hairpin. Pianist David Hyun-Su Kim was prompted by the sometimes confusing or contradictory hairpins found in Brahms's music, such as a crescendo hairpin under a single piano chord or hairpins that contradict "crescendo" or "diminuendo" instructions, to examine the potential musical meanings of the symbol. Kim draws upon not only written descriptions of Brahms's and his musical circle's playing, but also analyzes recordings from Joachim, Ilona Eibenschutz and Fanny Davies (the last two were both pupils of Clara Schumann and had worked personally with the composer). His analysis demonstrates that hairpins conveyed a much wider range of musical meaning than we typically allow today.

For Brahms, Kim argues that hairpins should be conceived not as "well-defined prescriptive sonic commands but rather as descriptive markings connoting expressive

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[43] Joachim and Moser, *Violinschule*, 126.

meanings."[44] Hairpins instead could be thought of implying "'becoming more/less' rather than 'louder/quieter.'"[45] This conceptual shift has several implications, including making the interpretation of hairpins more contextual: "'"more" in a lyrical context is quite different from 'more' in an energetic one."[46] Finally, the "becoming more/less" framework can result in more variety of musical realizations in performance.

Kim identifies and labels four types of hairpins, and these terms should become useful nomenclature for performance practice musicians:

- Closing: "a diminuendo hairpin at the end of a section or phrase, and calls for slowing down and/or a slight pause before continuing"
- Accelerando: "A crescendo hairpin, commonly found in energetic passages, which is characterized by a local accelerando"
- Lingering: "A pair of hairpins, usually in a lyrical context, which indicates slowing at the expressive peak"
- Accent: "a diminuendo hairpin alone, or a pair of hairpins together, understood as an enlargement of a regular accent (>) or messa di voce (<>) sign."[47]

Kim notes that each of these hairpin types can be expressed in a variety of ways such as "dynamics, chord-rolling, hand-displacement, vibrato, portamento, and especially agogic inflections."[48] This more expansive view of hairpins is of particular interest for performance

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[44] David Hyun-Su Kim, "The Brahmsian Hairpin," *19th Century Music* 36, no. 1. (2012): 48.

[45] Kim, 48.

[46] Kim. 48.

[47] Kim, 48.

[48] Kim, 56.

practice cellists, and hairpins are perhaps the main notation that indicates vibrato in Brahms's music.

Descriptions of Brahms's piano playing support the notion of using rubato to express a hairpin. The English pianist Fanny Davies also performed with Joachim and Hausmann. Her observations of Brahms's playing depict his unique approach to tempo and rubato:

> Brahms's manner of interpretation was free, very elastic and expansive; but the balance was always there—one felt the fundamental rhythms underlying the surface rhythms. His phrasing was notable in lyric passages. In these a strictly metronomic Brahms is as unthinkable as a fussy or hurried Brahms in passages which must be presented with adamantine rhythm.... He belonged to that racial [sic] school of playing which begins its phrases well, ends them well, leaves plenty of space between the end of one and the beginning of another; and yet joins them without any hiatus.[49]

Davies makes a further, specific note on Brahms's performance of hairpins:

> The sign <>, as used by Brahms, often occurs when he wishes to express great sincerity and warmth, allied not only to the tone but to rhythm also. He would linger not on one note alone, but on a whole idea, as if unable to tear himself away from its beauty. He would prefer to lengthen a measure or phrase rather than spoil it by making up the time into a metronomic bar.[50]

These quotations have several implications for Brahms performance practice. Davies impresses upon the reader how unhurried Brahms could be during performance, and how,

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[49] Fanny Davies, "Some Personal Recollections of Brahms as Pianist and Interpreter," in "Brahms," in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, ed. W. W. Cobbett (London: Oxford University Press, 1929; 2nd edn. 1963), p. 182. Quoted in Kim, "Brahmsian Hairpin," 49.

[50] Davies, 184. Quoted from Kim, 49.

although phrase units are agogically separated, they are joined "without any hiatus." It describes an approach to phrasing that, although allowed to expand, also contains a "fundamental rhythm underlying the surface rhythms." These statements describe a balanced playing-style that maintained the larger view of the music while also embracing the smaller expressive moments. Davies also wonderfully conveys Brahms's performance attitude, where he expresses sincerity and warmth and is sometimes unable to "tear himself away" from musical beauty.

A fundamental idea at the core of Kim's argument is to move away from viewing notation as a sonic depiction: "Useful as these categories may be, a fuller understanding of hairpin markings hinges on viewing them as connotative, descriptive markings, indicating meaning rather than sound."[51] This approach is further reinforced by employing multiple expressive techniques besides dynamics to convey the hairpin marking.

Another implication of the "variegated performance techniques elicited by hairpin" is the emergence of more distinctly individual performances.[52] When musicians are free to employ a variety of techniques in the same score, a more diverse range of historically-informed interpretations would hopefully be the outcome.

In so many ways, the hairpin exemplifies an approach to music-making and notation that the historical performance practice movement now attempts to revive. It represents a shift away from notation being a specific sonic instruction to the performer to a description of a musical idea, open to a variety of interpretations. A persistent theme of my Brahms performance practice research has been trying to "read between the lines" of the musical score to understand the application of un-notated expressive devices.

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[51] Kim, "Brahmsian Hairpin," 56.

[52] Kim, 56.

CHAPTER 4: LESSONS FROM RECORDINGS: EARLY AND MODERN

An Historic Recording: The Brahms Clarinet Trio, Op. 114 by William Henry Squire, Haydn Paul Draper, and Hamilton Harty

Featured Recording: Johannes Brahms, Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, Performed by Haydn Paul Draper, William Henry Squire, and Hamilton Harty, Recorded on October 21, 1924, Columbia Masterworks 67101-D - 67103-D, 1925, Audio, 23:50. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roF1DecZlMI&t=353s.

In Chapters 2 and 3, surveys of early recordings by scholars were cited to help understand the evolution of string players' performance styles. One recording that has not received as much attention in prior surveys is the 1924 recording of Brahms's Clarinet Trio, Op. 114 by cellist William Henry Squire, clarinetist Haydn Paul Draper and pianist Hamilton Harty.[1] This recording is one of the earliest examples of a complete chamber music work by Brahms, and it merits special consideration.

English cellist William Henry Squire (1871–1963) is an important figure for Brahms performance studies. Squire studied in London with Italian cellist Alfredo Piatti, and he also

[1] Johannes Brahms, Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114, Performed by Haydn Paul Draper, William Henry Squire, and Hamilton Harty, Recorded on October 21, 1924, Columbia Masterworks 67101-D - 67103-D, 1925, Audio, 23:50. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roF1DecZlMI&t=353s.

performed the Schubert cello quintet with Joseph Joachim in 1899.[2] Although he did not have a direct relationship with Brahms, his association with Piatti and Joachim formed a strong connection to the string-playing tradition associated with the composer. Squire seems to have continued the practices of his teachers and displayed a certain musical conservatism in his playing, and he maintained his prominent portamento into the 1930s, by which point it was viewed as a technical deficiency.[3] Given Squire's technical abilities, it seems unlikely that he was unable to adopt Casals's approach to shifting and portamento, but instead elected to continue in the older style.[4] This is evidenced in his recordings by the frequent clean shifts in some passages, as well as by position changes that seem to have been added for the purpose of sliding.

However, any examination of historical recordings requires particular caveats. Violinist and performance practice scholar David Milsom cautions that "It would be naïve, quite obviously, to consider recorded sound from the early years of the twentieth century as anything more than an indication of performing practices in the nineteenth century itself."[5] Although we can't be certain to what degree Squire's playing style continued to reflect the practices of Joachim and Piatti, Squire's performance style is worth examining because there is no other recording of Brahms's chamber music by a cellist so close to the composer's circle.

Besides the fact that it had been more than twenty years between Squire's association with Joachim and Piatti, there are also technological considerations that would have affected both the way Squire performed and how his sound was captured on recording. Listeners of early

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[2] David Johnstone, "The Late-Romantic English Cello School," *Johnstone Music*, https://johnstone-music.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/vlc010b-The_late_romantic_English_Cello_school.pdf.

[3] George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780 - 1930* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 154.

[4] Casals's shifting technique is described in chapter 2.

[5] David Milsom, *Romantic Violin Performing Practices: A Handbook* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 2020), 179.

recordings today immediately notice that the distorted sound quality makes it difficult to determine what exactly performers were doing. The problem extends further than sound quality however, since musicians in the recording studio had to adapt to the technology and could not play how they normally would. Robert Philip has detailed many of the difficulties of the recording process in the early twentieth century, noting, "The range of frequency and dynamics was still very restricted, and the peculiar response of the recording equipment meant that musicians could not just play as they normally did."[6] Besides needing to play loudly and with less dynamic nuance, recording musicians also needed to adapt their pedaling, seating arrangements, and orchestral forces to "appease" the equipment. For matters of dynamics, timbre, and ensemble balance, pre-electric recordings are an unreliable indication of contemporary practices. In the case of the dynamics in the Brahms trio recording, Squire fares surprisingly better than his colleagues. Squire's playing is heard quite clearly, and unfortunately for clarinetists and pianists studying this recording, is louder than the clarinet and piano. Considering that the balance of this piece usually disfavors the cello, one wonders if Squire was seated closer to the recording horn than his colleagues.

Timing and tempo were another major consideration for recording musicians and sound engineers. It is no coincidence that most pre-electric recordings before 1925 are of shorter "salon" pieces. Besides being marketable to a wide audience, the shorter compositions listed in early recording catalogs were those that fit within the 4- to 6-minute time limit of wax cylinders. Longer pieces would be recorded in sections, and/or cuts were made. According to Philip, these time limits had a profound effect upon musicians: "It is difficult to disentangle anxiety about the side-lengths from the general style of the time. One certainly cannot assume that all the tempi on

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[6] Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 27.

78 rpm records are the tempi of concert performance."[7] Several musicians also recounted that just the pressure of being "on-the-clock" caused them to play faster even if a slower tempo would fit within the time constraint.[8] The Brahms trio recording was made and issued in six parts, and judging by the timing and breaks in the sound, the first two movements were recorded in two sections, while the last two movements were done in one take each.

Despite these caveats, early recordings are still one of the best resources we have for understanding historical performing styles. For example, even if we know the musicians may be playing faster on record than they would have in concert, and especially if we hear significant changes in tempo or rubato, there is a strong likelihood that they would have done at least as much rubato in a different circumstance. Likewise with vibrato and portamento: while acknowledging that although many details of execution are hazy, hearing where slides and vibrato both occur and do not occur is highly informative.

Rubato

The rubato heard in the Squire-Draper-Harty trio recording provides a possible example of German school practices in action. All three performers employ both a localized *tempo rubato* within a steady pulse, and tempo modification. Even though the first two movements were recorded in sections, we can still hear evidence of nineteenth-century tempo practices across a large movement. Furthermore, the similarities between Squire's and Joachim's approaches to

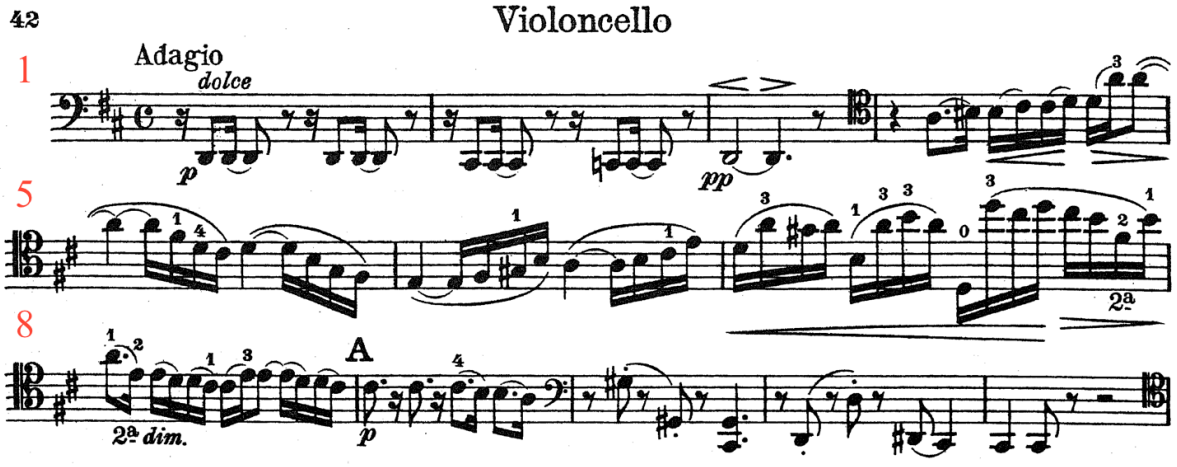
[7] Philip, 37.

[8] Philip, 37.

rubato lend credence to this recording's value in providing a useful insight into nineteenth-century rubato practices.

One of the questions arising when performing *tempo rubato* is to what extent players deviated rhythmically from the notation and at which subdivision(s) flexibility was employed. Generally, the *tempo rubato* heard in the Op. 114 occurs at smaller subdivisions (eighths and sixteenths) and its usage leaves the pulse undisrupted. Its effect gives a slight lilt to the rhythm as well as a speech-like quality to the themes. An early example of tempo rubato is heard at 0'37", with Squire playing each of the three eighth notes at the end of measure 17 with different durations. Both Squire and Draper demonstrate this rhythmic pattern in the second movement's sixteenths (7'42"; see Example 4.1).[9] Coming off of the tied quarters, the performers vary how they lengthen and shorten the three sixteenths and rarely play an even rhythm. In these examples, the alteration to the sixteenth isn't to the degree of "over-dotting" and it also isn't so regular as to become a "swing rhythm."

Example 4.1: Johannes Brahms, Clarinet Trio Op. 114, II. Adagio, mm. 1-12.



[9] Johannes Brahms, *Clarinet Trio, Op. 114,* edited by Georg Schumann (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1928) https://imslp.org/wiki/Clarinet_Trio,_Op.114_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Compared to modern performances where musicians often deliberately maintain a consistent tempo across a movement, the Squire-Draper-Harty trio is comfortable with allowing the tempo to fluctuate throughout. As previously mentioned, this recording gives listeners a view into tempo practices within large sections of chamber music works. The performers and recording engineers deserve special credit for the performance; although the movements were recorded in sections, when listening to the movements uninterrupted today it is difficult to tell where exactly the trio stopped and restarted.

Tempi are treated with flexibility but without disrupting the flow of the movement, and, uniquely to these two longer movements, tempo changes are also used to highlight the structural milestones of sonata form. An example of an unmarked *accelerando* occurs in the first movement at the 4'00" mark, where the trio regains momentum during the transition to the recapitulation. The preceding passage concludes at approximately 117BPM (3'40"), and the transition material from around 3'50" to 4'05" accelerates up to 140BPM before settling back at the recapitulation (4'08") to 120BPM. This is one of the more dramatic moments of the movement, and the *accelerando* serves to both build up the musical excitement and make audible the structural importance of the recapitulation in the movement. It should be noted that the acceleration is also executed in a way that is steady and proportional and avoids the impression of rushing.

The second movement is performed at a slightly faster tempo than is often heard today, while featuring its own share of expressive tempo modifications. Given the technological constraints, it is difficult to evaluate if this movement's tempo represents an early performing

tradition or was determined by the studio conditions. Still, the tempo varies noticeably, such as a slower tempo at 12'00" and a quicker tempo at 13'00".

How do the tempo changes in this recording vary from other possible historical practices? Squire's later recording of "*Le Cygne*" by Saint-Saëns displays an even more exaggerated version of tempo variance. At several cadences within the short piece, Squire slows the music to a near-stop.[10] Although the Brahms trio recording varies to a substantial degree in its tempo, it always keeps its fundamental motion maintained. A listener swept up in the experience of rising and ebbing musical energy may not even notice the accompanying change in pulse.

Even while bearing in mind Philip's caveats about tempo and rubato in early recordings, we may still conclude that these first two movements show a noticeable flexibility in tempo and rhythm. It is possible that, since the first two movements needed to be split and recorded in two sections each, the trio players were able to more readily relax into a more normal performance tempo in each take. This hypothesis is partially confirmed by the last two movements, which seem to have been performed as to fit into one take each. Both movements move at a brisker pace than is usually heard today, and with very little flexibility. Although it's possible the brisk tempi in these movements reflect performance traditions of the time, the lack of tempo flexibility, especially compared to the first two movements, is likely a consequence of the technological limitations. Given what we know, it seems probable that the tempo changes in this recording are less than what would have been employed by the same performers in a live concert, let alone what may have been used decades prior.

It should also be noted that the musicians generally sound as if they are deliberately playing together, so this recording does not display evidence of "expressive asynchrony."

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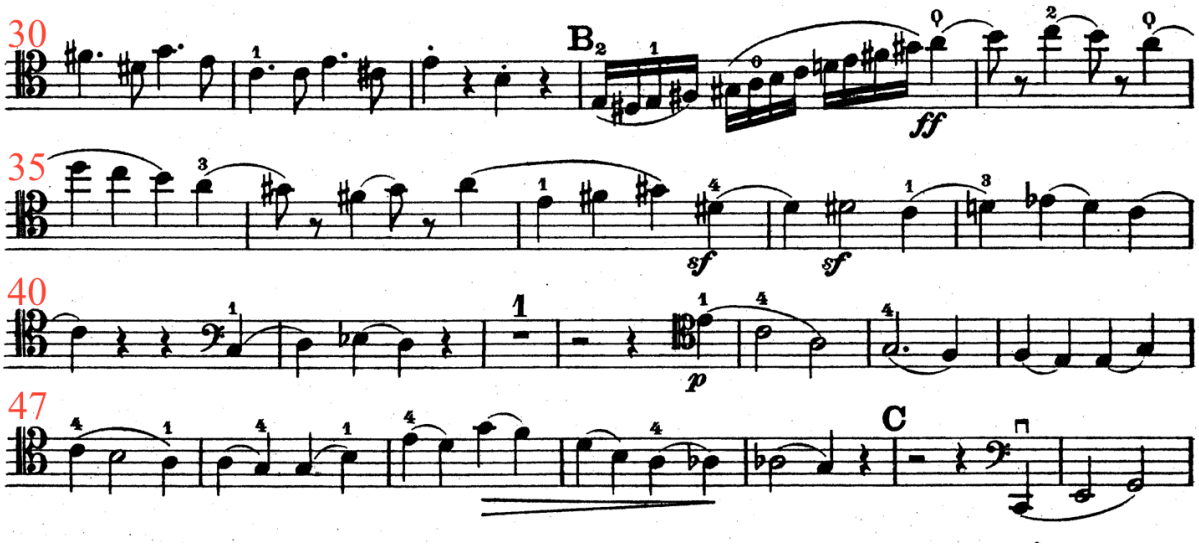
[10] Camille Saint-Saëns, *Le Cygne,* Performed by William Henry Squire, 1928, 0'27" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P80ja0YhcU.

However, the sound quality of the piano is not particularly clear, so it is possible that there were elements of asynchrony within the ensemble that are not audible today. Another feature of the trio's performance that stands out is the performers' articulation of two-note slurs. Several of these slurs occur in the first movement measures 34-40, where Squire slightly shortens and lifts the second note, even when both notes are quarters (1'12") (Example 4.2; mm. 34-40).[11]

Example 4.2: Johannes Brahms, Clarinet Trio Op. 114, I. Allegro, mm. 30-51.



Portamento

By the 1930's, the reception of Squire's playing had cooled, and his portamento was cited by one reviewer as the culprit.[12] Likewise, cellists trained in modern performance practice listening today might hear Squire's portamento as an example of Romantic excess at best or a

[11] Johannes Brahms, *Clarinet Trio, Op. 114,* edited by Georg Schumann (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1928) https://imslp.org/wiki/Clarinet_Trio,_Op.114_(Brahms,_Johannes).

[12] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 154.

technical deficiency at worst. Examination of Squire's performance in the Op. 114 trio, however, reveals that not only are Squire's slides a deliberate choice (revealed as such by their absence at technically demanding moments) but they are an essential expressive tool and even function as an analytical device in his interpretation.

Several generalizations can be made about Squire's portamento on this recording. He frequently employs slides for slurred notes, but usually doesn't slide both into and away from a single note, although there are exceptions such as in the first movement at 0'15". Portamento also tends to occur on weaker beats and unaccented notes, and while it is often used with intervallic leaps, it is also employed in stepwise music. Squire also slides to open strings, with falling portamento examples heard in the fourth movement at 21'45" and 22'46".

Squire's ability to shift without portamento is also heard on this recording, belying the notion that he didn't know how to shift without an audible slide. A "cleanly" played passage with many shifts is heard from 0'50" to 1'20", where musically, audible slides would have undermined the character of articulated triplets.

A lyrical example of portamento is heard at the first movement's second theme (1'27"), where Squire's performance features three prominent slides: the first occurring with the descending third to A in measure 44, the second with an ascending fourth to C in measure 47, and the last descending to the A in measure 50 (see Example 2, measures 44-51). Each slide adds to the musical expression and highlights a structural aspect of the theme. The first slide in measure 44 is perhaps unexpected, but it brings out the chain of descending thirds that undergird many of Brahms's themes in both this work and others.[13] The next portamento occurs between

[13] Perhaps the most famous thirds-based Brahms themes are found in the Fourth Symphony. The sequence of keys in the First Symphony's movements are also major thirds (C - E - A-flat - C).

slurred notes, and functions to accent the appoggiatura in measure 47. The final slide in measure 50 likewise occurs between slurs, but it highlights the quintessentially-Romantic chromatic descent to the dominant. Besides revealing aspects of Brahms's compositional craft to the listener, Squire's portamenti are evenly spaced, occurring about every three bars in this passage from measures 44 to 51. With the recapitulation of the second theme, Squire chooses to vary where to slide.

Thirds are often a melodic and harmonic building block in Brahms's music, appearing in hidden guises and revealing the composer's craftsmanship. Unsurprisingly, the descending third in particular plays an important role in multiple movements of the Op. 114 trio. Squire's portamento actually functions to highlight this interval and make its motivic significance more easily heard. One of the first descending-third slides appears in the aforementioned second theme of the opening movement. Later, during a sequential repetition of thirds during the development, Squire treats each descending third with portamento (2'55"). None of these portamenti are technically necessary, so hearing several slides in a row is notable and suggests he wanted to draw the listener's attention to this motive. It is in the last movement that Squire references the first movement by adding portamento to a similar series of descending thirds (21'36"). Although Squire shows no qualms about frequent use of portamento, the fact that he repeats each slide in the same way but does not slide in between each set of thirds is a strong indication that for Squire, portamento was a decision intended to reveal the motive's structural importance. The fourth movement's thirds are also marked with diminuendo hairpins, indicating that the hairpin could be accompanied by more than dynamic inflection (mm. 95-96).

Another important interval in Brahms's trio is the whole-step. Again, Squire highlights this interval with portamenti, to signal an internal musical connection for the listener. At

measures 207-8 in the first movement, an ascending line of B-C#-D is embellished with a slide between the first two notes (6'50"). Squire repeats this rising-step slide again in measure 210 (6'57"). Expressively, these portamenti add a speech-like quality to a poignant moment, as if the cello's rising voice is asking a question.

Near the end of the second movement, however, Squire performs glissandi on similar gestures. The slide in measure 41 (13'06") occurs over the same pitches as the first instance in first movement measures 207-8 (B-C#). The second portamento at measure 51 (14'39") occurs over the notes D-E and recalls the A-B slide of the first movement. By making such clear references across movements by means of a musical gesture, Squire weaves a story for his listener, suggesting that perhaps the question of the first movement is answered in the second. Squire's linking of particular motives through the use of portamento across movements makes the motivic unity of Brahms's composition more readily evident to listeners. While there are many other examples of portamento in the recording of each movement, these particular examples stood out to me for the depth they add to Squire's interpretation.

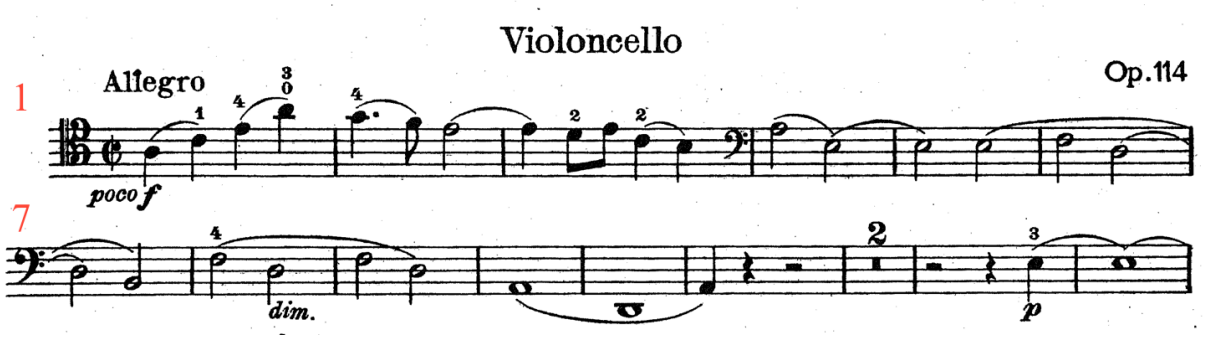
While more frequent use of portamento is one of the basic features of historically-informed Brahms performance practices (as compared to mainstream modern practice), there are still issues of taste and execution to resolve. Squire's refined handling of portamento shows that in addition to reinterpreting notation as a location for portamento (slurs, intervals, hairpins, etc.), we can also examine motivic content and musical form for opportunities to use it. Certainly, a more analytical approach to portamento is not the only way to create a compelling performance. Classical musicians, however, are trained to make and justify musical decisions by appealing to the score or the composer's known intentions for a work. Employing portamento in

the playing style of Squire presents an exciting opportunity for both musical spontaneity and layered interpretations.[14]

Vibrato

Although Squire employs more vibrato than we might expect, his approach to vibrato still seems substantially different from modern practices that value continuity of vibrato. His variable application of vibrato can be heard at the very beginning of the piece. In the first measure, Squire plays both an open A string and a harmonic, with only one quarter note (the G in measure 2) receiving slight vibrato (Example 4.3).[15] In contrast, modern performances avoid the open string and use vibrato on almost all of the quarter notes. However, the dotted quarter and half notes that follow in measures 2-9 almost all receive vibrato from Squire.

Example 4.3: Johannes Brahms, Clarinet Trio Op. 114, I. Allegro, mm. 1-12.



[14] I am reminded of attending a performance of Brahms's 3rd symphony, at which the concert patron next to me was reading the program notes before the concert. In regards to the F-A-F motto, she asked me if I could hear the difference between A-natural and A-flat, to which I responded, "Yes, but I'm studying classical music." I can imagine a similar scenario at a performance of the Op. 114 trio: "Can you hear how the players bring out the cyclical development of the descending thirds motive?" Perhaps motivic portamento would help more listeners answer affirmatively.

[15] Johannes Brahms, *Clarinet Trio, Op. 114*, edited by Georg Schumann (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1928) https://imslp.org/wiki/Clarinet_Trio,_Op.114_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Squire also uses vibrato uniquely in the second theme. The first two notes of the theme are vibrated, but many subsequent notes, especially those with a portamento, are left without vibrato. This choice is not due to Squire being unable to vibrate the shorter notes since some of them, such as the pickup into measure 44 and the downbeat of measure 49, have a clearly audible vibrato. One possible explanation for the intermittent vibrato is the presence of portamento, because the shifting and vibrato mechanic are closely related on cello, and their combined usage is rare and difficult to execute. It should also be noted that the quarter notes in this theme that have vibrato also tend to have a slight agogic accent. Another phrase that receives no vibrato occurs in the first movement around 1'08". This absence is notable due to the *fortissimo* dynamic and the use of the higher register of the instrument.

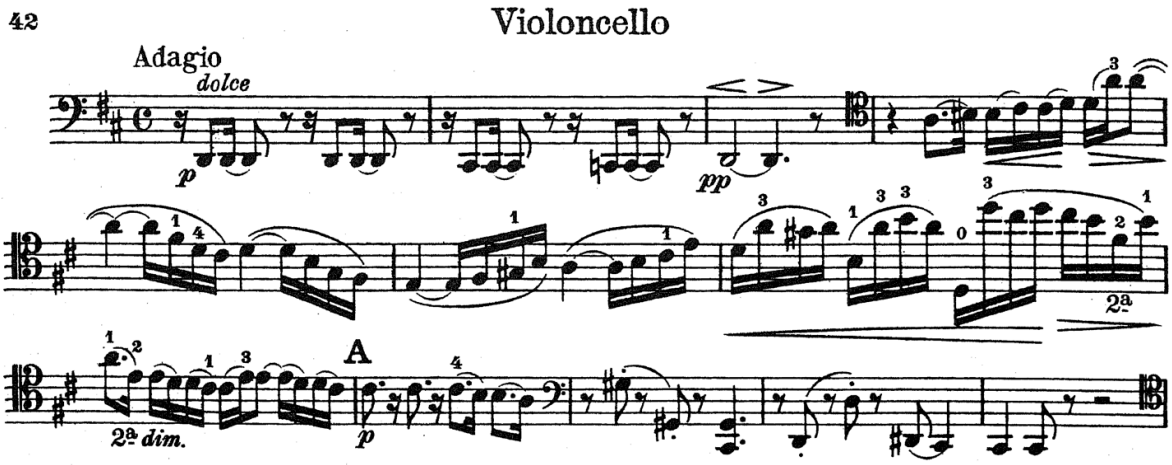
An example of uneven vibrato usage is heard in first cello statement of the theme in the second movement (8'15"). Squire employs a full vibrato on the quarter notes but does not use a (perceivable) vibrato on the sixteenth notes, despite there being time to employ it (Example 4.4).[16] Squire instead adds portamento and some *tempo rubato,* further suggesting the independence of vibrato and portamento. Later in the phrase, however, some of the sixteenths receive vibrato.

In general, vibrato is employed by Squire most commonly in solo themes and on notes of longer duration. It is notably less present during accompanied passages. Squire is unafraid to use vibrato in unison with the clarinet. Compared to modern cello practices, which often employ specific fingerings in order to vibrate as continuously as possible in such a passage, Squire seems comfortable leaving plenty of notes un-vibrated for a variety of reasons, such as around a portamento or for open strings and harmonics. Musically, Squire's vibrato adds to both accented and passionate phrases as well as *dolce* ones. Still, the fact that so many of the longer notes are

[16] Johannes Brahms, *Clarinet Trio, Op. 114,* edited by Georg Schumann (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1928) https://imslp.org/wiki/Clarinet_Trio,_Op.114_(Brahms,_Johannes).

treated to vibrato is somewhat surprising based on our understanding of nineteenth-century German practices.

Example 4.4: Johannes Brahms, Clarinet Trio Op. 114, II. Adagio, mm. 1-12.



How might Squire's 1924 performance inform "historical" Brahms performance practice? As examined in the previous chapter, written descriptions of German School vibrato frequently warn against its abuse, and performers such as Piatti were praised for their restraint in its application. Although Squire's vibrato is distinct from current mainstream practices, its usage also exceeds the German School ideal, described by Milsom as, "generally only to be found on long and particularly expressive notes."[17] Given the overall trend in the early-twentieth century towards more vibrato, we can likely assume that Squire was employing more vibrato in 1924 than he did at the time of his association with Piatti and Joachim in the 1890s. However, it is also possible that Squire drew upon these earlier experiences when playing Brahms in the recording studio, and chose to restrict his vibrato for German repertoire. Kennaway has observed that Squire's recordings indicate he often adjusted his playing to fit the music's style, being noticeably

[17] David Milsom, "Practice and Principle: Perspectives upon the German 'Classical' School of Violin Playing in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 9, no. 1 (2012): 37.

more restrained with portamento in Brahms than other works.[18] Indeed, Squire's later recording of Saint-Saëns *Le Cygne* features a nearly continuous vibrato not dissimilar from what happens in modern performances.[19]

Squire is also not the only early recorded cellist who uses vibrato more than we might expect. Kennaway examined several cello recordings from 1903 to 1930 (including ten of Schumann's *Träumerei*). Although he observed a gradual evolution towards our modern conception of vibrato, there was much noticeable variation in practices between cellists recording in the same year.[20] Kennaway believes that nineteenth-century cellists' playing styles may not have fit as neatly into schools as violinists did, concluding, "A diachronic analysis in terms of 'schools' of playing, through which influences are transmitted, may have a more limited application."[21] For Kennaway, the variance found in early recorded cello vibrato suggests that any historically-informed performance today can only "occupy a point on the spectrum between the restraint of Joachim or Auer and the apparent excess of Hans Kronold."[22]

Squire's connection to Joachim and Piatti is one justification for taking his performance of Brahms seriously. In terms of the historical vibrato spectrum, we might place Squire's 1924 trio performance at the more indulgent end. All of this is to say that, although historical performance practitioners might not want to completely imitate Squire's vibrato, it can still be informative.

There are other indications of recordings changing our understanding of German School vibrato. Besides Kennaway's frequently vibrating cellists, Clive Brown and David Milsom have

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[18] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 153.

[19] Camille Saint-Saëns, *Le Cygne,* Performed by William Henry Squire, 1928, 0'27" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P80ja0YhcU.

[20] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 165.

[21] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 166.

[22] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 170.

more recently observed a "hidden vibrato" in Joachim's recordings that has become more audible through digital restorations.[23] These restored and other early recordings such as Squire's that feature more frequent vibrato are indications that German School string players employed more vibrato than the written sources alone would suggest. We shouldn't necessarily be surprised by this, as historical recordings provide some insight into the musical context that nineteenth-century treatise writers experienced. The nineteenth-century diatribes against continuous vibrato may have been warning against it becoming a completely continuous feature of string tone (as it is for modern performers), even while performers employed it with some frequency. Teachers such as Joachim, Auer, and Becker may have been deeply concerned about keeping enough notes un-vibrated, while leaving their students (and us) to infer how often to use vibrato.

Again, this is not to argue for modern, continuous vibrato in historically-informed performances of Brahms. Rather, Squire's recordings suggest we might move away from the total non-vibrato aesthetic advocated for twenty years ago by conductor Roger Norrington.[24] We might treat vibrato as a frequent rather than a seldom feature of expression. In the debate about vibrato use among string players in Brahms's circle, we should no longer consider it a binary choice between no vibrato and continuous vibrato. On the question of the amount of vibrato to be used by modern HIP performers, while Brown's earlier work would suggest a seldomly occurring vibrato, Squire's recording and Kennaway's research suggest a more frequent (but not continuous) vibrato may be historically appropriate for Brahms's cello music. The precise amount of vibrato will surely continue to be debated and remain a matter of taste. However, the evidence

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[23] Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 10.
David Milsom, *Romantic Violin Performing Practices*, 23.

[24] Roger Norrington, "The Sound Orchestras Make," *Early Music* 32, no. 1 (February 2004): 2-5.

discussed above indicates that a more frequent vibrato in historical performance may be desirable, and could promote the acceptance of historical practices among musicians and audiences.

A Modern, Historically-Informed Recording: The Brahms Cello Sonatas, Opp. 38 and 99 by Kate Bennett Wadsworth and Yi-heng Yang

Featured Recording: Johannes Brahms, Sonatas for Cello and Piano Op. 38 and Op. 99, Performed by Kate Bennett Wadsworth and Yi-heng Yang, Deux-Elles Limited, 2017. Apple Music, https://music.apple.com/us/album/brahms-cello-sonatas/1443621126.

A consistent theme of this study has been the need for historically-informed Brahms performance to create a new musical aesthetic that, while informed of and deeply-rooted in historical examples, also appeals to contemporary listeners and fills in the gaps of historical knowledge. To that end, I now examine a recent historically-informed performance of the Brahms cello sonatas by cellist Kate Bennett Wadsworth and pianist Yi-heng Yang.[25] This trailblazing recording is the culmination of turning performance practice research into a complete performance. Besides the application of practices such as vibrato, portamento, and rubato, this recording also highlights how these musicians have filled gaps in performance practice knowledge. Wadsworth's and Yang's recording employs period instruments, with

[25] Johannes Brahms, Sonatas for Cello and Piano Op. 38 and Op. 99 Performed by Kate Bennett Wadsworth and Yi-heng Yang, Deux-Elles Limited, 2017. Apple Music, https://music.apple.com/us/album/brahms-cello-sonatas/1443621126.

Wadsworth playing a cello with gut strings and no endpin, and Yang using an 1875 Streicher piano that was similar to Brahms's own instrument. Questions raised of their performance are not intended as criticism, but as a starting point for additional historically-informed interpretations.

Rubato

Kate Bennett Wadsworth has discussed the challenge of playing freely in the rhythmically complex music of Brahms. In her recording of both sonatas, we hear examples of both *tempo rubato* and tempo modification.

A general trend in Wadsworth and Yang's playing is to allow the music to speed up and slow down according to the energy of the moment. This happens several times in the first movement of the Op. 38 sonata (Track 1, 30"-50"; 1'30" - 2'04"). For example, the first theme begins at approximately 110BPM before speeding up to 122BPM around measure 21. This acceleration is followed by another at measure 42, which takes us to the second theme (m. 58) performed at approximately 130BPM. These tempo changes are further exaggerated by frequent relaxing of the tempo at cadences before hurrying on.

None of their tempo modifications are unusual in their placement; rubato at similar moments can be heard in mainstream performances. However, the degree and frequency of tempo changes employed by Wadsworth and Yang is not found in modern recordings. Another sampled recording by cellist Paul Watkins and pianist Ian Brown for example stayed within 10 BPMs for the first and second theme in the same movement.[26]

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[26] Johannes Brahms, Sonatas for Cello and Piano Op. 38 and Op. 99, Performed by Paul Watkins and Ian Brown, Chandos Records, 2014. Apple Music, https://music.apple.com/us/album/brahms-cello-sonatas-clarinet-trio/1615671375.

Examples of *tempo rubato* are also found in Wadsworth's playing. The rhythm of measures 9-12 in the first movement is treated with slight agogic inflections by over-dotting the D-E in measure 9 and lengthening the E in measure 12. Similarly, the quarter-note triplets of measures 22 and 24 are played unevenly, with slight lengthening and subsequent shortening of notes. Similarly, the eighth notes of measures 68 through 71 are performed with slight freedom (Track 1, 2'17"). A more striking example of *tempo rubato* can be heard in the eighth notes of the second movement minuet (Track 2, 0'00" - 0'51"). Wadsworth often stretches the tempo at the beginning of the bar before scurrying at the end to make up for lost time. In the brisk tempo, one doesn't notice that the cello and piano eighths don't always line up perfectly, and this is an intentional act of "expressive asynchrony."

One area where Wadsworth and Yang conform more to modern convention is in the trio of the second movement (Track 2, 1'45"). The trio passage employs a sixteenth-note octave doubling of the cello by the pianist's right hand throughout. The duo phrase and employ rubato together, but they do so to a lesser degree than has been heard thus far in the sonata. Because this trio, with its octave doubling, may not be an appropriate place for "expressive asynchrony," or at least not one that a modern listener would accept, Wadsworth and Yang seem prepared to sacrifice rubato for unified ensemble in this passage.

The fugal third movement presents its own challenges for rubato and ensemble. The two performers keep the opening of the fugue fairly strict rhythmically, albeit with an occasional slight unevenness of the triplets (Track 3 0'00' - 1'38"). The primary type of rubato used is tempo fluctuation in the *tranquillo* section, where they allow the music to slow down from the fugue episodes and relax further at cadences. This multifaceted approach to rubato feels appropriate for

this movement and heightens the movement's musical characters, which alternate between "intellectual" fugues and lyrical episodes.

As in the first movement, what separates Wadsworth's and Yang's performance from mainstream performances is the degree of tempo variance. The lyrical passages often fall to about 100 BPM, while the triplets move along at 140BPM, and most of this tempo fluctuation is unmarked in Brahms's original score (Track 3 2'35" - 3'51"). While the speeds employed are dramatic, in Wadsworth and Yang's capable hands these tempo changes come across seamlessly and naturally.

In their recording of the first Brahms cello sonata, we see the duo's approach to rubato favoring tempo modification over *tempo rubato*. The quickening and slackening of the beat is employed to highlight the musical characters Yang and Wadsworth seek to portray. While I personally enjoy the amount of tempo variance, I likely wouldn't choose to exceed the amount heard in Wadsworth's and Yang's performance. I would instead focus on ways to place rubato and its pacing that are unique to my own performance. My own approach to rubato is detailed in Chapter 5.

A similar approach to rubato is also present in the Op. 99 sonata recording. A "textbook" example of *tempo rubato* occurs in the first movement where two measures of cello eighth-notes are played with an agogic inflection that accentuates the melodic contour (Track 9, 0'42"). Overall, the duo's tempo modification in the first movement is fairly similar to mainstream performances of this piece.

For the second movement, Wadsworth and Yang employ a brisker tempo than is conventionally heard but still allow the lyrical phrases to breathe. This movement mostly features tempo modification rubato, such as dramatic acceleration from 2'40" to 3'10". In the case of the

third and fourth movements, while the duo certainly play with slight tempo modifications and allow for a breath between phrases, they do not significantly exceed the rubato heard in mainstream performances as much as they do in other movements. This could be due to the rapid tempi of both movements practically limiting the degree of rubato. Although this paper has argued for more pronounced rubato in the historically-informed performance of Brahms, limited rubato in fast tempi might not be undesirable for today's HIP performances. Part of the excitement when listening to a complete sonata could come from experiencing the contrast between slower and rhythmically-free movements with faster, more straightforward music.

Portamento

The portamenti heard on Wadsworth's and Yang's recording challenge the mainstream approach to audible shifts. They are both more frequent and unapologetic in their execution, with Wadsworth maintaining her bow pressure to not hide the slide between notes. Although some of the places Wadsworth chooses to slide afford technical convenience, at other times she will go out of her way, adding shifts not required by technique, in order to produce an additional portamento.

The first movement of the Op. 38 sonata provides many natural opportunities for portamenti. In contrast to conventional taste which favors ascending slides, Wadsworth employs many descending portamenti. Early examples occur in measures 17-18 on the descending-thirds C-A and then A-F# (Track 1, 0'40"). A descending-fifth slide happens in measure 78 (Track 1, 2'45"). This descending-fifth gesture's later appearance in the development at measures 93-100 is then treated with several portamenti by Wadsworth (Track 1, 6'32"). This passage is notable

because there is a slide in almost every measure, and Wadsworth connects the slurred pairs of quarter-notes with much variety and subtlety. Wadsworth adds a portamento in measures 193-194 that cellists would never do in conventional practice unless notated by the composer, sliding down a major third to the open C-string (Track 1, 9'55"). Besides being expressive, this dramatic portamento also has a theoretical purpose because it highlights the new modulation that occurs in the recapitulation (modulating to F major instead of the C major that occurs in the exposition). It should be noted that Wadsworth uses an ascending portamento at the parallel passage in measures 32-33 (Track 1, 1'07").

Wadsworth uses portamenti in a few places that offer technical as well as musical merit. For the tenths in measures 26 and 28, Wadsworth slides into the ascending leap (Track 1, 0'57"). She employs a portamento to reach the high B in measure 61 (Track 1, 2'00"). Lest there be any doubt, these portamenti assisting with the difficult shifts does not mean their musical validity should be dismissed. They all add to the lyrical drama by bringing out both the large intervals and melodic high-points of their respective phrases. While many of the described portamenti in Wadsworth's performance of this movement have been for larger intervals, she employs them for smaller ones as well. Several portamenti are heard in measures 82-83, with Wadsworth sliding up the first minor third and later down the half-step to E# (Track 1, 2'55"). Another falling half-step portamento occurs in measure 104 (Track 1, 6'52").

Due to its frequent staccato bowing, Wadsworth employs less portamenti in the second movement of Op. 38. In general, Wadsworth will slide to connect slurred intervals such as a fourth or fifth. The tritone in measure 5 is brought out with an ascending portamenti (Track 2, 0'05"). Other slurred portamenti include the descending fourths in measures 35 and 37 (Track 2, 0'45"), and the descending fifths in measures 41 and 45 (Track 2, 0'55"). It should also be noted

that all of these portamenti coincide with a diminuendo hairpin as well as a slur. The trio of this movement also has less portamenti compared to the first movement. The slides that do occur are subtle, embodying quick shifts for some of the larger leaps, such as at measure 82 and 93 (Track 2, 1'50").

The last movement Allegro with its contrapuntal texture and frequent staccato dots is also performed by Wadsworth with less portamenti than the first movement. However, when the musical texture and character allow, Wadsworth then employs portamento. She slides into the higher accented notes in measures 40 through 42 for example (Track 3, 1'10"). Wadsworth brings out the more legato lyricism of the *tranquillo* passage (mm. 53-75) with several shifts that are more audible than usual. These portamenti are subtle, so the entire passage is worth listening to in order to understand them (Track 3, 1'35" - 2'35"). A playful falling portamento in measure 74 connects the E to the open A string, and this slide could be viewed as expressing a "closing" hairpin in that measure (term as described by David Kim; Track 3, 2'25").

In Wadsworth's and Yang's recording of the F major sonata Op. 99, portamenti tend to be used around hairpins and for larger slurred intervals. In the first movement, early notable hairpin portamenti occur for leaps at the end of each bar for measures 5-7 (Track 9, 0'07"). These portamenti are repeated at each instance of this phrase during the expositional repeat and during the recapitulation. Portamenti are heard in measures 24-25 for each rise to the harmonic C, and these measures are both slurred and have a hairpin (Track 9, 0'43"). In the coda of this movement, Wadsworth slides up to the *espressivo* F in measure 187 (Track 9, 7'40"). This phrase is significant because it is an example of Brahms's "developing variation" technique whereby the notes of the principal theme are heard in a new rhythm and new musical character (slurred and *espressivo* in m. 187; articulated and *forte* at the beginning). Wadsworth's addition of portamento

heightens the contrast of this melody from its previous versions. While Wadsworth employs more portamenti than most modern cellists would use, I believe there were a few phrases where portamenti could have been added. The passage from measures 51-55 is played by Wadsworth without portamenti, but the numerous leaps and slurring suggest that a few slides might be effective in this phrase. Similarly, the legato chromatic line at measures 75-83 is also performed cleanly by Wadsworth, and this seems like a phrase that might have been played with portamenti by nineteenth-century cellists.

Frequent portamenti appear in the *Adagio affetuoso*. A descending-fifth slide is heard in measure 4 (Track 10, 0'13"). Subtle portamenti are employed by Wadsworth in measures 9-11, while more prominent portamenti are used for the ascending thirds in measures 13-14 (Track 10, 1'00"). Each of the above portamenti make an appearance at their respective parallel phrases at the end of the movement. Wadsworth slides for the ascending sixth in measures 19-20, and this portamento brings out the modulation to F minor as well as the *espressivo* marking (Track 10, 1'30"). An unexpected but welcome portamento from Wadsworth occurs in measure 48 from the F# to G# (Track 10, 3'35"). Given that the G# is only a 32nd-note, Wadsworth slightly anticipates the slide with *tempo rubato.* This combination of rubato and portamenti reminds me of Joachim's recordings, so its performance by Wadsworth is apt.

As in the other staccato movements, Wadsworth's performance of the third movement of Op. 99 has more limited usage of portamenti. Unsurprisingly, most of the portamenti are heard in the trio section. Wadsworth's shifts become more audible in the phrase of measures 129-132, and these subtle slides bring out the legato phrasing and *dolce espressivo* markings (Track 11, 2'26"). Several descending fifths in the trio are also imbued with portamenti. A melodic example of this is heard between measures 146 and 147, where this portamento occurs between separate slurs

(Track 11, 3'05"). The cello takes a more accompanimental role in the second part of the trio, and Wadsworth brings out one of the descending-fifth gestures with a slide in measures 174-175 (Track 11, 3'37"). Wadsworth keeps portamenti the same for the trio's repeats as well.

The last movement, Allegro molto, opens with an ascending-sixth slide from Wadsworth (Track 12, 0'00"). Additional portamenti occur in measures 6 and 7, with the ascending perfect fourth to F. All of these portamenti are repeated at the phrase's return at measure 44 (Track 12, 1'17"). Wadsworth unabashedly slides into the two harmonic A's at measures 108 and 110, bringing out the accent and high points of the phrase. An area that I was surprised to not hear prominent portamenti occurs at measures 57-81. This section, with its slurs, hairpins, *sforzandi,* and melodic leaps, seems like an ideal area for portamenti.

Wadsworth's portamenti in her Brahms recording is not only more frequent than mainstream cellists, but is also executed with subtlety and variety of expression. Her portamenti technique, which sometimes requires additional shifts, reveal a mastery of the instrument. Cellists interested in nineteenth-century performance practices would do well to study her recording and emulate her approach to portamenti.

Vibrato

Wadsworth does not use continuous vibrato and instead faithfully treats it as an ornament of expression. While I appreciate Wadsworth's commitment to restrained vibrato and believe it lays an important milestone for historically-informed Brahms playing, I would choose a different approach to vibrato in my own performances. First, there are some passages (such as in the second movement of Op. 99) where I would simply use more vibrato without crossing the

threshold of continuous oscillation. If we follow Squire's example for more vibrato, particularly in main themes, then we may arrive at a middle point between modern continuous vibrato and infrequent HIP vibrato. Wadsworth also employs a vibrato that sounds, at least through the microphone, somewhat narrower than modern vibrato. From the Piatti-Whitehouse treatise, we know that vibrato could be somewhat wide.[27] I would personally choose to use a wider-sounding vibrato, both out of the convenience of not modifying my cello technique and because I find the wider vibrato more striking and impactful, especially within the context of many non-vibrato notes. While my vibrato would be more conspicuous than Wadsworth's, my goal is to employ it according to my understanding of German Violin School conventions. Again, the goal shouldn't be to decipher a single correct mode of playing, but rather to contribute to the creation of a multiplicity of performing styles that fall within the taste of Brahms's circle.

In the opening of the second movement of the Op. 99 sonata, Wadsworth is remarkably restrained in her vibrato. The opening 14 bars have only a few, barely perceptible oscillations. Wadsworth's phrasing instead comes from the bow and her rubato and is very expressive and compelling. Still, in a movement marked *affettuoso*, I believe there is room for more vibrato without it becoming continuous. I would also argue that, although Joachim used a narrow vibrato, cellists today should employ a vibrato that is readily perceptible to the listener. Wadsworth does become more liberal with vibrato at times, such as in the *dolce* passage at measures 38-39 in the second movement of Op. 99 (Track 10, 1'45"). Similarly, the closing phrase receives vibrato (5'00").

Despite the above reservations, Wadsworth's primarily non-vibrato sound is highly effective, and consequently, the notes that do receive vibrato are extra expressive because of it.

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[27] Alfredo Piatti, *Violoncello-Schule*, edited by William Whitehouse and Richard Tabb (London: Augener, 1911), 48. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violoncello-Schule_(Piatti%2C_Alfredo_Carlo).

The opening theme of the first movement of Op. 38 played without vibrato by Wadsworth has a haunting beauty. The E major coda of this movement is also played with a mix of vibrato and non-vibrato, and Wadsworth's subtle usage colors the lush harmonies of this section (Track 1, 12'18"). In the *tranquillo* section of the last movement, vibrato is often added to the peak of the hairpin pairs (Track 3, 1'45").

Wadsworth will also vibrate a note to give fire to its tone. The opening gesture of the first movement of the F major sonata is played with vibrato on the longer notes, and its effect is to energize the declamatory melody (Track 9, 0'00"). Similarly, in the Op. 99 Scherzo, Wadsworth often adds vibrato to notes marked *sf* (Track 11, 0'15").

Wadsworth's and Yang's performances of the Brahms cello sonatas are beautiful and thought-provoking to HIP instrumentalists interested in performing these works. While researching performance practices is one thing, implementing these practices into a performance, and confronting the realities of technical difficulties, musical habits, and personal taste, is another. The duo met this challenge and produced a recording with a distinctive sound that I am continually inspired by for my own performances of these sonatas.

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CELLO SONATAS

The 2015 Bärenreiter editions of the sonatas were employed for this project.[1] There are several good editions of the sonatas available, but the Bärenreiter editions are of interest to HIP musicians for the performance practice information (including discussion of sources and editorial decisions) available in their prefaces. Appendix 1 presents my own performance practice commentary of the sonatas with a bar by bar description of suggested practices. For legibility and ease of use, a color-coded system is employed to quickly identify different practices. Color coding annotations in the performance parts was useful for this project because differently colored lines could succinctly convey vibrato, portamento, or rubato.

Vibrato is indicated with yellow text, with indications for vibrato over a single note or a "non-vibrato" reminder for a longer phrase. Portamento is shown in green and the slide occurs between the two indicated notes. The precise execution of portamento is left to the performer's discretion since it is dependent upon their fingering and bowings. The prominence of the slide is also left to the performer, with my accompanying performance recording offering suggestions. When multiple portamenti are performed in quick succession, variation is recommended.

Rubato is indicated with blue text, and standard tempi terms are employed (Accelerando, ritardando, meno mosso, etc.). Phrases with a more general rhythmic flexibility are indicated with just "Rubato," while individual notes that might stretched within *tempo rubato* are marked with "Tenuto."Rubato practices are of course a collaborative process. While working with pianists for

[1] Johannes Brahms, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015).
Johannes Brahms, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in F Major, Op. 99,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015).

this project, I encouraged them to be as rhythmically free as they wished, and to also inform me if I was unclear with my timing. Cellists should be flexible in passages with a more accompanimental function. Most rehearsal time is spent coordinating rhythm, tempo, and rubato. My pianists often had excellent ideas for rubato, or pushed me to go further with rhythmic flexibility. Their contribution to this process is deeply appreciated.[2]

Notes on Instruments used for this Project

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the cello gradually became more like the instrument we know today. The endpin was adopted during this period, with French cellist Adrien-François Servais (1807–1866) among the first to employ it.[3] Kennaway notes that it was only in the final quarter of the century before a majority of professional cellists adopted the endpin, and the impetus for doing so was an improved tone and not for the change of posture.[4] Another consequence of the endpin was making cello-playing more socially-acceptable for women. Kennaway details how women sometimes adopted a "side-saddle" playing posture with an endpin before the modern posture became socially-acceptable.[5] Cellists David Popper, Alfredo Piatti, and Robert Hausmann, however, all played without an endpin.[6] Among cellists specializing in nineteenth-century performance practice, the consensus seems to be that playing

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[2] Pianists Esther Lee and Jooae Cheon brought their wonderful insights and playing to this project's recording.

[3] George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780 - 1930* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 7.

[4] Kennaway, 16.

[5] Kennaway, 192.

[6] Kate Bennett Wadsworth, "Brahms and the Cello," in *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015), 30.

with or without an endpin today is up to the cellist's discretion.[7] For this project, I have chosen to perform with an endpin, which provides some stability for executing technical challenges in both sonatas. The extra projection from the endpin was also desirable for a duo.

My cello is a 2010 instrument, made by Gary Garavaglia in Chicago. For its set-up, I have switched to gut strings (unwound, plain gut A/D; silver-wound G/C). According to gut string historian Daniela Gaidano, plain gut upper strings would have been employed by string players until the first World War, at which point steel strings began to be adopted.[8] The wound-gut upper strings used by many players today were not introduced until the 1950s.[9] Besides giving a wonderfully dark and round sound to my instrument, using gut strings has mainly informed my performance practices in the area of vibrato. The occasionally harsh sound of steel strings can be softened by continuous vibrato. Gut strings, whose unvibrated sound is more palatable, enable me to play with a more ornamental approach to vibrato.

The bow is a part of the instrument that does not require historically-informed adaptation from modern set-ups. The bow as we know it today was invented by François Tourte (1747–1835) around 1785.[10] His innovative design became the standard within his lifetime, so the Tourte bow would have been used, possibly exclusively, by Joachim, Piatti, Popper, and Hausmann.

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[7] George Kennaway, in conversation with the author. Kate Bennett Wadsworth, in conversation with the author. Several relevant discussions are also on the Facebook group "JUST SAY 'NO' TO ENDPINS! THE BAROQUE CELLO GROUP." https://www.facebook.com/groups/6390012842/.

[8] Daniela Gaidano, "Tables on Evolution of Strings in the Violin Family," *Daniela Gaidano Gut String Expert,* https://www.danielagaidano.com/resources/.

[9] Daniela Gaidano, "Tables."

[10] Werner Bachmann, Robert E. Seletsky, David D. Boyden, Jaak Liivoja-Lorius, Peter Walls, and Peter Cooke, "Bow," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, accessed April 20 2023. https://doi-org.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03753.

The piano of Brahms's day was, like the cello, similar to the modern instrument with some important differences. George Bozarth and Stephen Brady conclude that although the keyboard of Brahms's childhood would have been the *fortepiano* of Beethoven's era, by the end of his career, the "piano had evolved to a state of construction… virtually identical with the modern instrument."[11] Brahms's personal instrument was a Viennese-style Streicher piano gifted by the manufacturer. These instruments are characterized by "lightness of touch, bright tone quality, rapid repetition, and swift, efficient damping," and they are considered ideal for modern historically-informed performances of Brahms.[12] However, Brahms showed flexibility in his choice of instrument, and he requested American Steinways for the concert tour premiering the Second Piano Concerto in 1882.[13] Although the action mechanism of a period Steinway and modern Steinways is nearly identical (and distinct from the Viennese-action), one of the main differences of the older instruments was a softer hammer felt, which resulted in a more delicate sound.[14] As Wadsworth's and Yang's recording demonstrates, employing a period keyboard opens additional timbral possibilities for an historically-informed performance. Period instruments play an important role in shaping performance practices, but unlike with the baroque bow, harpsichord, or fortepiano, Bozarth's and Brady's research suggests that Brahms's piano might not inform historical practices to the same extent.

Although period instruments are ideal, logistical considerations might preclude their usage. For this project, various period instrument possibilities were investigated, but a practical

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[11] George S. Bozarth and Stephen H. Brady, "The Pianos of Johannes Brahms," in *Brahms and His World,* ed. Walter Frisch and Kevin C. Karnes (Princeton University Press, 2009), 73.

[12] Bozarth and Brady, 73.

[13] Bozarth and Brady, 86.

[14] Bozarth and Brady, 87.

option could not be secured. At the suggestion of George Kennaway and Kate Bennett Wadsworth, a smaller Steinway was employed for the project's performance (Steinway Model B, 2018). Given that this project is focused specifically on historical cello practices, this compromise may draw more attention to that focus.

Finally, restricting HIP Brahms solely to period instruments could be counterproductive to the further propagation of historically-informed practices and performances. If my experience attempting to locate an historically-appropriate piano is indicative of anything, then most musicians will need to compromise on a Brahms period piano. Although outside the scope of this project, further research into late-nineteenth century pianos and how historically-minded pianists could adapt their playing to better imitate the nineteenth-century instrument could also be of value to the HIP Brahms movement.

Cello Sonata No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38 - I. Allegro non troppo

The first movement of the Brahms E minor cello sonata is an excellent piece for exploring the historical performance practices examined thus far.[15] The lyrical themes present challenges for modern cellists who aim to reinterpret with less vibrato and more portamento than they are accustomed to. The dramatic contrasts of the movement also provide an opportunity to heighten the character of musical phrases through varied tempi and approaches to tonal color. Finally, as a sonata-form movement, musical pacing and finding variation within repetitions of themes is another important consideration.

[15]Johannes Brahms, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015).

Vibrato is advised in this movement following the general rule that *dolce* implies vibrato while *espressivo* does not. This suggestion derives from Marion Ranken's description of vibrato-less *espressivo,* and is examined in Chapter 1.[16] A juxtaposition of these markings occurs within the first two phrases of the piece. The commentary recommends the opening measures be performed "non vibrato," while the subsequent *dolce* phrase in bar 9 indicates vibrato. Playing the famous opening theme without vibrato has several merits. First, it announces to the listener that they are going to hear an unconventional performance of Brahms's music. It also draws more attention to the expressive potential of the bow for the shaping of the musical line. The non-vibrato sound also adds a certain melancholy to the theme, and cellists should aim to play this theme as expressively without vibrato as they can.

An early example of *tempo rubato* occurs at the quarter-note triplets in measures 22 and 24. A possible execution of rubato here could be a slight lengthening of each first note under a slur, followed by a proportional quickening in measures 23 and 25. Different tempi are also recommended for each theme in the exposition. An accelerando is suggested beginning in measure 47 so that the theme at measure 58 can be faster (*animato*) than the one at the beginning of the movement. A faster tempo brings out the theme's increased energy, which results from the *forte* dynamic as well as the imitative texture between cello and piano. It is recommended that the tempo slows back around measure 66.

Additional *tempo rubato* is suggested in measures 72-73. Between the repetition of the single measure, a simple rhythm, and the hairpin pairs, these measures call for rhythmic inflection. Performers should also consider varying their rubato and dynamic level for the

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[16] Marion Ranken, *Some Points of Violin Playing and Musical Performance as learnt in the Hochschule für Musik (Joachim School) in Berlin during the time I was a student there, 1902-1909* (Edinburgh, privately printed, 1939), 19. https://josephjoachim.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/ranken-some-points.pdf.

repeated measure according to their taste and imagination. For example, the notated rhythm could be performed in measure 72 with a dynamic hairpin only, while measure 73 might be softer dynamically but with a freer rhythm.

There are also several recommendations for portamento in the exposition. For example, portamento is suggested in measures 26-29, with the first slide connecting the E to B-flat and the second slide connecting the descending octave. These particular slides were chosen both to technically aid the shifts and to create variety in the rising harmonic sequence. Although a change in position is not required, another portamento is added in measure 33 because of the presence of both the slur and the hairpin.

Frequently, vibrato and portamento intersect and should inform one another. The closing theme of measures 83-87 is an area where expressive portamento can compensate for less vibrato. A challenge of playing this phrase in modern style is differentiating between the *espressivo* and *dolce* characters while still vibrating every note; however, these characters become more readily discernible when using historic performance practices.

A pick-up portamento is suggested into measure 83, and the following *espressivo* measures are suggested to be without vibrato. The descending *Dur-moll* slide from the G# to G natural in measure 83 is also marked for portamento. The use of several portamenti close together highlights the melody's chromaticism, and cellists should also consider finding an *espressivo* sound color without vibrato as they do in the first theme. Creating the feeling of *espressivo* without vibrato allows it to be saved until the *dolce* in bar 85. A sweet vibrato in bar 85 also accentuates the change to the major mode. In this register of the cello, I find a narrow and faster vibrato conveys more *dolce* character as well. Such judicious usage of portamento and vibrato brings stark relief to the music's changing characters; combining all of these performance practice techniques

highlights Brahms's chromatic harmonies too. For the expositional repeat, an alternative fingering was employed for the opening theme. An effort was also made to vary the execution of vibrato, portamento, and rubato to be more emphatic and dramatic.

Suggestions for performing hairpins with either portamento or vibrato continue in the development section. Portamento hairpins include measures 97-98 and 99-100 for the falling gesture, while vibrato is suggested for the single, repeated-note hairpins in measures 102 and 108-109. The beginning of the development could potentially have room for more vibrato and portamento, but those additions are up to the performer's preference.

The development is also an area where the tempo might be varied to match the music. Brahms only writes *fortissimo* in this movement at measures 114, 118, and 126, so matching the tempo employed for the second theme (on which this passage is based) may be an effective means of enhancing the musical drama. A faster tempo here, however, will necessitate slowing again before the recapitulation, so a slightly slower tempo at measure 145 is suggested with a final *ritardando* before the recapitulation around measure 159.

The recapitulation is another chance for cellists to explore the performance possibilities of the exposition. In the performance commentary, some alternative locations for portamento and vibrato are suggested. It is also recommended that *tempo rubato* and tempo modifications be varied from their counterparts in the exposition, possibly by becoming more extreme.

After the recapitulation, non-vibrato is recommended for another *espressivo* passage again at measure 256. The concluding measures present many opportunities for portamento. The fifths in bar 260 and 269 are excellent places to slide, as is the 10th in bar 271.Vibrato in the coda might be used to bring out the lush harmonies. Although vibrato can both bring out a harmonic dissonance and sweeten a resolution, it is helpful to use vibrato in the coda to bring out

dissonances and chromatic harmonies. Harmonically dissonant notes that could be vibrated include the D# in 266, C natural in 275 and A# in 276. This selection allows for generous usage of vibrato, while still being fairly restrained in comparison to modern norms.

II. Allegro quasi Menuetto

Due to the more articulated character of the minuet, there are fewer obvious opportunities for portamento in this movement. Still, there are a number of larger slurred intervals where a slide is recommended. Several portamenti are suggested at the *grazioso* from measures 38 to 46, where the descending chromatic melody and descending fifths recall similar gestures in the first movement.

Rubato can also be handled differently in the minuet from the first movement. The eighth notes in both cello and piano can be treated with slight unevenness so long as the main beats line up. For example, the cello eighths in measure 2 might begin slightly lengthened before hurrying to make up the time at the end of measure. This pattern could be varied and repeated in the following measures. Alternately, the arpeggios in measure 16 might rush to the quarter note, but with distinct care to place the following downbeat in time. It is up to the performer's discretion how far to push the *tempo rubato* to be noticeable but without damaging ensemble.

Tempo modifications are also recommended in the minuet. An effective practice heard on Wadsworth's and Yang's recording is to slow the tempo at cadences. For this reason, cadential stretching is suggested at measures 13 and 27. In other spots, the tempo might also get slightly faster to create increased energy, and the *poco a poco crescendo* at measures 50-57 is one suggested

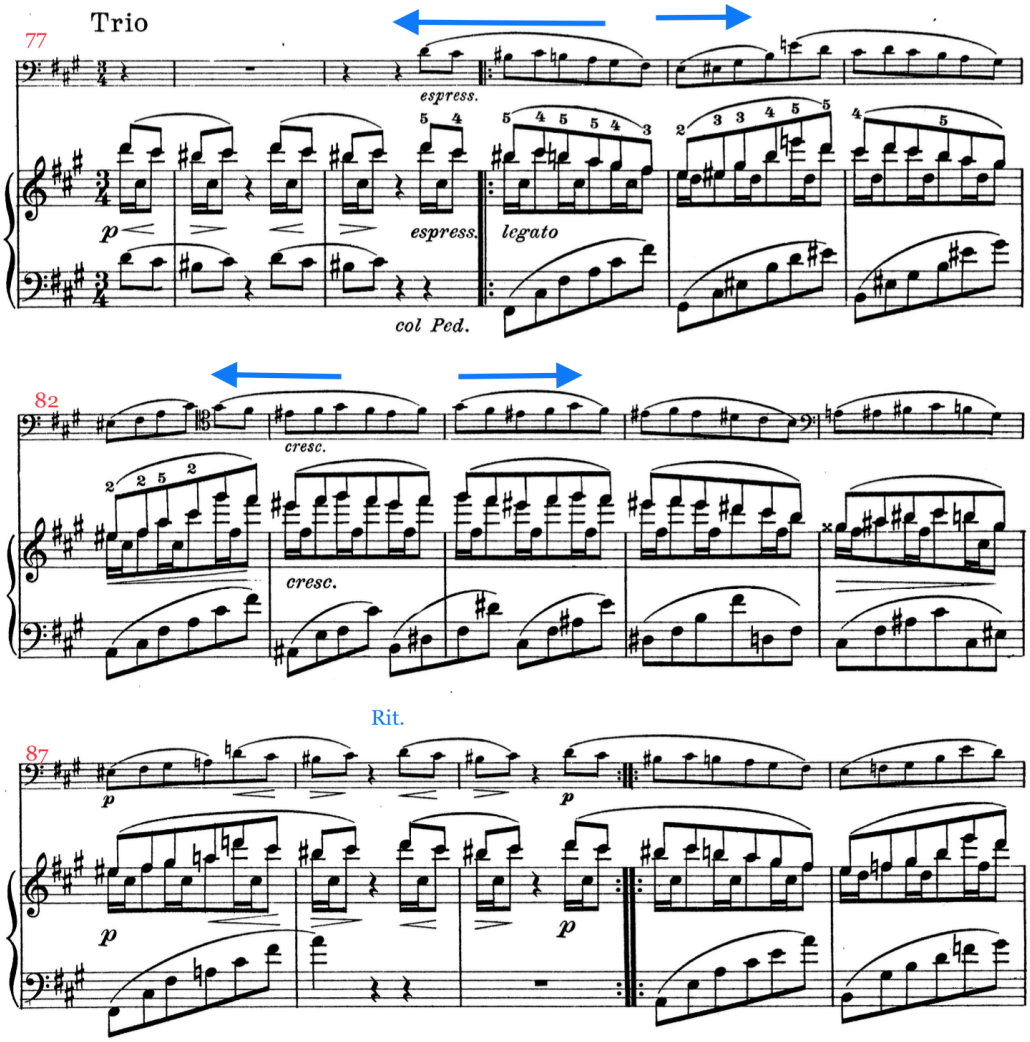
accelerando. A quickening tempo is also implied here by the faster harmonic rhythm beginning in measure 54.

The Trio presents a different challenge for rubato and ensemble. The melody is doubled throughout between the cello and arpeggiated octaves in the piano. Even considering the aesthetic of expressive asynchrony, where an ensemble intentionally avoids "lining up," it is difficult to imagine this subdivided doubling performed asynchronously in a satisfactory manner. Indeed, Wadsworth's and Yang's recording displays a modern standard for ensemble synchronization. It is therefore suggested that the Trio's rubato comes in the form of coordinated flexibility between the cello and piano, or possibly with the pianist's left hand asynchronous against the unified melody (Example 5.1).[17] Synchronized rubato is actually fairly standard in modern performances of the trio, so historically-informed performances should maintain at least that level of tempo flexibility, pushing it further if possible.

The predominantly legato phrasing of this section does lend itself to more frequent use of portamento, however. Several of my recommended portamenti in this section occur between slurs, where they serve to connect a larger shift on a single string. Rubato can also dictate the approach to vibrato in the trio. With a relatively fast-moving rhythm, there is not a lot of time to vibrate. However, vibrato could be employed on notes that are stretched rhythmically, such as at measures 101-102 and 106-107. Vibrato could also be used to elucidate hairpins, with measures 87-88 as an example. The Da Capo repeat presents an opportunity to exaggerate previous instances of rubato and to nuance the color and execution of vibrato and portamenti.

[17] Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38, edited by Hugo Becker (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1922) https://imslp.org/wiki/Cello_Sonata_No.1,_Op.38_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Example 5.1: Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata No. 1, II. Allegretto quasi Menuetto, mm. 77-91.



III. Allegro

The fugal finale presents several interpretative challenges. Regarding any *tempo rubato* in the fugue, it is again difficult to balance rhythmic freedom with unity of ensemble. With Brahms clearly writing an homage to Bach, one also wonders if the composer would have expected performers to approach his movement more like Baroque music. Nineteenth-century performance practices of eighteenth-century music is of course a vast topic outside the scope of this project. Part of the difficulty of rubato in this music is the frequent cross rhythm. While cross

rhythms in Brahms often have a lyrical character that might call for rubato, the effect of the "2-against-3" in this movement is more angular. Thus, although *tempo rubato* should certainly be explored by performers in the fugal sections of the finale, rhythmic flexibility may more practically appear in other parts of this movement.

Instead of employing *tempo rubato* in the fugue, Wadsworth's and Yang's performance opts for dramatic changes in tempo between sections. There is good reason for these tempo and character shifts; Brahms writes *tranquillo* in bar 53, and *animato* in 76. However, Wadsworth and Yang continue to change tempo for repetitions of the corresponding *tranquillo* and *fugue* themes, even though Brahms does not explicitly mark further tempo changes in the score. This means that on their recording the slurred *piano* phrases of measures 95-99 and 105-111—as well as the repeat of the lyrical theme in 124—are slower than the statements of the fugue subjects in between them. This kind of tempo flexibility certainly seems appropriate and matches the movement's varied characters well.

The degree of tempo modification is of course up to the performers. While Wadsworth's and Yang's tempi contrast dramatically, I have chosen to not slow the tempo as much (marked *poco meno mosso* in the commentary) in measure 95, followed by a more prolonged *meno mosso* in measure 105. Playing measures 115-122 in the quick fugue tempo allows slowing again at the *tranquillo* theme in 123. These tempo relations were chosen for the purpose of highlighting the developmental aspect of measures 95-122, and to make the full statement of the *tranquillo* theme more significant.

Unsurprisingly, the opportunities for vibrato and portamento in this movement occur in its more Romantic and lyrical sections at measures 53-75, and 123-132. Portamenti are unabashedly recommended for several of the larger intervals, even if they could be avoided with

a finger extension or string crossing. Structurally important intervals such as the half-step and the fifth were also chosen to be highlighted with portamento. Examples include the A# marked *dolce* in bar 70, as well as the falling fifth in 74.

Vibrato is suggested in this section to bring out Brahms's original slurring, even where the latter doesn't match my proposed bowing. The beginning of slurs are important to articulate, so the slurs that are broken are instead given vibrato to articulate Brahms's original notation. This kind of compensatory vibrato occurs in measures 56 and 64-66.

Brahms's first cello sonata is a fascinating piece to study from a performance practice perspective, in part because the work itself is inspired by earlier music styles, as seen by the Classical minuet and Baroque fugue finale. Importantly, Brahms interrupts the historically anachronistic music with his own lyrical voice in the second and third movements.

Cello Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99 - I. Allegro Vivace

Compared to the first sonata, the second is far more technically demanding for cellists.[18] There are numerous opportunities for Brahmsian lyricism that can be approached with historically-informed practices. Robert Hausmann's abilities as a cellist are evidenced by this difficult sonata that Brahms composed for him. Fortunately, historically-informed performance practices can actually help with the execution of some of these challenges. Part of the challenge of the large leaps in measures 7-8 is in trying to play them accurately without audible shifts. However, in this slurred passage marked with a pair of hairpins, it seems likely that one or more portamenti would have been employed in Brahms's day. The suggested fingering uses a slide up

[18] Johannes Brahms, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in F Major, Op. 99,* edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015).

to the D, with an extension for the high G. Although this leap is the most dramatic in the movement, several other shifts are also marked with portamento for both their musical merit and their ability to provide the player with technical security. Several of the portamento intervals span a perfect fourth or fifth, and so, like Squire, the player can highlight an important motive of the sonata with portamento.[19]

Vibrato can also be used in the sonata's opening phrase. Recall that Romberg recommended using vibrato to add "fire and animation to the tone," and certainly the higher register of the cello could use some additional warmth in this lively music.[20] Vibrato is also recommended on the very first F in order to declaim the entrance of the cello. Other recommended notes for vibrato in the exposition are those marked in the edition with hairpins (m. 26) or accent marks (mm. 40-41).

Also, some flexibility in rhythm and rubato is desirable in the exposition. Beginning in measure 17, moderate *tempo rubato* is suggested to match the hairpin gestures. Similarly, the unaccompanied cello line in measures 24-25 is an opportunity to "play with" the notated rhythm without disrupting the ensemble. The passage in measures 26-33 is also a place where performers might slow slightly before resuming the tempo at the second theme in measure 34. Repeating the exposition is recommended, and I chose to vary the execution of *tempo rubato* passages for the repeat.

The development is another area for tempo fluctuations to be used effectively. The slithering cello melody at measure 75 might be played a little slower and without vibrato. Taking care to slightly articulate each slur can also bring out the metric displacement in this phrase.

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[19] See Chapter 4 for a description of "motivic portamento" in Squire's playing.

[20] Bernhard Romberg, *School for the Violoncello,* translated unknown (London: Boosey and Sons, not dated, German version 1840), 87. https://imslp.org/wiki/Violoncell_Schule_(Romberg,_Bernhard).

Vibrato is also suggested on several notes in measures 83-84 in order to bring out the hairpin pairs and *portato* bowing on each note. Here, starting and stopping the vibrato on each note will be more successful than continuously vibrating.

The cello tremolo beginning at measure 92 also bears special consideration. Cellists should encourage the pianist to be free in regards to tempo and rhythm, and follow their lead in this passage. A stretching of tempo at the peak of the crescendo in measure 107 is suggested. The recapitulation is mostly a straightforward repetition of the exposition, so the suggested practices can be reapplied with variation as desired. A significant moment occurs in measures 187-188, with the cello stating the primary theme in sustained quarter notes over a C pedal. As these motives have been previously presented with portamento, sliding to and from the F is an opportunity to highlight the foundational intervals once more.

II. Adagio affettuoso

For this project's performance, a more frequent vibrato has been chosen for the slow movement. Although Wadsworth is very restrained with vibrato in her recording of this movement, the highly chromatic melody, the *espressivo* and *affettuoso* character indications, as well as the sustained higher cello register, all seem to justify a more generous (albeit not indiscriminately continuous) vibrato for several themes.

Care should be taken to vary the speed and width of vibrato, while also considering the duration of vibrato on longer notes. I found it effective to use non-vibrato to create harmonic tension on non-chord tones and then use vibrato to sweeten the resolving note. An important aspect of this method is to also color the sound with the bow by adding a little more bow pressure on "tense" notes. Measures 9-11 are an excellent area to practice this harmonically-informed

approach to vibrato. In modern performances, the phrases marked *dolce* in this movement are usually treated with ample vibrato. My goal has been to perform this movement with far less vibrato than is heard in modern performances, yet with still enough vibrato to be musically compelling to musicians trained in modern conventions.

Because vibrato is relatively unrestrained in conventional performances of the second movement, reminders to use non-vibrato are also more frequently indicated in the performance commentary. More calm or accompanimental figures are marked "n.v.": such as at measures 14-15, and at measure 20, where the F minor theme derives its "*espressivo*" marking from portamento and tone color, not vibrato.

The player's choice of tempo and their feeling of the meter will influence how to use rubato in this movement. *Tempo rubato* is suggested for notes faster than a sixteenth, such as the sixteenth-triplets in measure 12. Plenty of time should also be given in between phrases, such as between the piano and cello statements of the theme in measures 4 and 5, or at the end of bar 11.

III. Allegro passionato

Like the minuet in the first sonata, the more articulated scherzo of the second sonata doesn't immediately lend itself to frequent portamento. Subtle portamenti are suggested in measures 13, 27, and 54, but the quick tempo will limit their audibility. Brahms's articulations were a major consideration in selecting notes for vibrato. The *sforzando* notes with a diminuendo are often treated with an accented vibrato at the front of the note, before lessening the volume. These occur at measures 11, 37, 39, and elsewhere.

The lyrical trio, however, is an opportunity to employ more portamento. Slides are suggested to connect slurred fourths (m. 131), as well as to bring out hairpins and *sforzandi* (m. 138, 189). Given the steady dotted quarter-note rhythm, this section doesn't give the cellist many chances to use *tempo rubato*. However, stretching and flexibility of tempo is recommended. There is also no need to perform the trio at the same tempo as the scherzo, because of the massive shift in character. As in the first movement, cellists should follow pianist's lead in rubato at the passage beginning in measure 159, and an *accelerando* for the crescendo around measure 168 could be effective.

IV. Allegro molto

The last movement begins with a suggested portamento. The pick-up gesture, though spanning a sixth, is reminiscent of the first movement's perfect fourth gesture, so it is recommended to connect the two pitches with portamento. Hausmann's fingering (printed in the Bärenreiter edition in italics) implies portamento to the E-flat in measure 3, so it is suggested there in the commentary. Portamento is also added to the grace note in measure 31 for an emphatic gesture.

Rubato should also be employed throughout the movement. The first theme has two markings for individual eighth notes to be played in *tempo rubato*, before stretching the tempo slightly at the cadence in measure 8. A slower tempo is suggested for the B-flat minor section at measure 57. The slower pace allows for more time to bring out the frequent hairpins. Recalling Kim's "Brahmsian Hairpin," I suggest each of these hairpin pairs might be performed with rubato, portamento, or vibrato. The performance commentary proposes vibrato on *sforzandi* in

this section (m. 52, 62, 66) and rubato for the longer hairpin at bar 67. Portamento should also be used frequently in this passionate *legato* section, and a number of important notes such as the C-flat in bar 70 and the high B-flat in 76 are embellished with a slide.

In the recapitulation, additional expressive suggestions are offered. The second theme is further embellished in measure 108 with portamento that employs a descending slide. Brahms's own markings for the final *ritardando* and *vivace* in measures 137-139 should of course be observed.

I believe the project recital demonstrates both the unique challenges and benefits of an historically-informed Brahms performance. My pianists, Esther Lee and Jooae Cheon, were wonderful collaborators, and particularly with rubato, helped bring the performance practices to life. Tempo changes and rubato were discussed and coordinated in rehearsals, but, and this may be my own limitations as a modern cellist, I found it difficult to exceed the amount of rubato used by some modern cellists. Still, considering that many musicians today perform Brahms without unmarked tempo changes and minimal rubato, presenting the sonatas with rubato is an essential aspect of historical performance practice. Fortunately, playing with rubato was fun for my collaborators as well, who remarked that they wished they could always perform Brahms that way.

Besides their unique timbre, gut strings also affected the performance in several other ways. First, the dark and rich sound of gut strings is, in my opinion, more appealing than steel strings, and thus it was more natural to leave notes without vibrato when using gut. Gut strings also required adjustments on my part for bowing technique and articulation as well as shifting and portamento. Each cellist (and cello) will react differently to gut strings, so allowing plenty of time to adjust to the strings in preparation for a HIP performance is advisable. One important

consideration to Brahms performance practice is that I felt I needed to make an extra effort to sustain the sound with gut strings and this can affect the phrasing.

One consistent theme from my performance practice research was the spontaneity with which these practices may have been applied. In the recording of my own performance, one can find examples where I used vibrato, portamento, and rubato spontaneously where I had not previously suggested these practices in the commentary. Certainly, for a modern performer trying to reimagine a historical playing style, study and experimentation are an essential aspect of this creative process, and the performance commentary and recording are means to convey the results of this research. However, cellists employing this thesis as a resource for their own performances are encouraged to adapt and modify my suggestions to make them their own.

CONCLUSIONS

By studying late-nineteenth century German string playing, and in particular the practices for vibrato, portamento, and rubato, a framework has been established for how modern cellists could adapt their playing for an historically-informed performance. Understanding why certain practices fell out of favor, such as with portamento and phonograph-effects, can also assist with adopting these practices once more.

An examination of recordings by William Henry Squire provided additional context to understanding late nineteenth-century performance practices. Although often dismissed as a saccharine cellist, this study showed that Squire's usage of rubato, portamento, and vibrato reveals a layered musical interpretation in the Classical German School tradition. Major conclusions from my study of his playing include the usage of portamenti for highlighting particular motives and a more liberal application of vibrato than written sources alone would suggest.

My own performance suggestions are a culmination of my research into performance practices and Squire's recording, and also a response to Kate Bennett Wadsworth's and Yi-heng Yang's recording of the Brahms cello sonatas. I hope my own performance might be compared favorably to Wadsworth's and that our two approaches to these sonatas, where they both concur and diverge, might contribute to a reemerging German Classical style of cello playing. I would also welcome cellists not interested in going "full-HIP" borrowing and adapting these practices to fit their modern performances. This project has shown that historically-informed Brahms performance practices can bring a fresh vitality to these beloved masterpieces.

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APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

COMMENTARY

Brahms, Johannes. *Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Op. 38.* Edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015.

Brahms, Johannes. *Sonata for Cello and Piano in F Major, Op. 99.* Edited by Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015.

For legibility and ease of use, a color-coded system is employed to quickly identify different historical performance practices.

Vibrato
Portamento
Rubato

Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38
Allegro Non Troppo

1-8	Non-vibrato
6-7	Portamento F#2 — G3
9	Vibrato C4
10	Vib. D4
12	Vib. and Tenuto E4
14	Accelerando
16-17	Vib. C5
19	Ritardando
22	Ten. A3 and 2nd G3
24	Ten C3; Port. B2—F#2
26	Port. E3—B-flat4
29	Port. C5—C4
31	Vib. B2
32-33	Port. E2—G2
35	Vib. A-flat2
40-41	Rubato
43	Vib. A3
45-46	Vib. E4; Port. G3—G4
48	Accel.
58	Animato
61	Port. F#4—B4
63	Port. D4—F#4
66	Rit.
72	Vib. 2nd C#2
73	Ten. 2nd C#2
75	Rit.
78	A tempo (meno mosso); Port. both F#—B
82-83	Port. F#4—A4; non. vibrato
83	Port. G#4—G nat.4
84	Port. F#4—B3
85	Vib. 1st D#4 and 2nd E4
86-87	Port. F#3—B3
91	Port. G3—B3
97-98	Port. C3—F2
99-100	F3—A2
102	Vib. D-flat3
102-103	Port. F4—B-flat4
104	Port. G4—G-flat4
105	Ten. 1st F4

108-109	Vib. D-flat2
110-111	Port. D-flat4—B-flat4
112-113	Port. F4—D5
128	Port. A-flat2—C3
134	Port. C3—E-flat3
136	Port. E-flat3—E-flat4
138	Ten. D3
139	Ten. D3
148-149	Port. F#3—B3
150	Port. C#3—E3
151	Port. E3—B2
156	Port. B2—B3
159	Rit.
162	A Tempo; Non vib.
170	Vib. ad lib.
172	Port. C4—D4
174	Accel.
179	Rit.
187	Port. E3—B-flat4
190	Port. C5—C4
192	Vib. B2
193-194	Port. E2—C2
195	Overdot A2
203	Ten. B-flat3
211	Accel.
218-219	Port. B3—E4
222	Port. B4—E5
224	Port. G4—B4
233	Non vibrato
237-238	Vib. C3 with hairpin
239	Port. B3—E3
243-244	Port. B3—D4
244	Port. C#4—C4
246	Vib. 1st G#4, 2nd A4
253	A tempo (piu mosso)
254-255	B2—E2
256	Non vib.
258	Vib.
258-259	Port. A3—G#3
260	Port. F#3—C#4
264-265	Port. E2—E3
266	Vib. D#3
268	Vib. C3
269	Port. F#3—C#4; Vib. C#4
271	Port. G#3—B4
275	Vib. C4
276	Vib. A#3
275-291	Rubato (Rit.)

Allegretto quasi Menuetto

5	Port. B3—F4
7	Vib. 1st G4
12	Rallentando
13	A tempo (beat 3)
27	Rall.
29-30	Port. E3—G3
39	Port. F#4—F4
41	Port. D4—G3
42	Port. G3—C5
45	Port. G4—C4
50	Accel.
60	A tempo
70	Port. A3—A4
72	Port. B-flat3—D4

Trio

Coordinated tempo flexibility is highly recommended in the trio. A common approach is to begin phrases slowly before getting faster (musical example on page 88).

80	Port. E3-E#3
82	C#4—G#4
88	Vib. B#3
88-89	Rit.
93	Port. E4—B4
99	Rit.
100	Accel.
101	Vib. 1st D4, E4 (Ten. as well)
102-103	Port. F4—A4
106-107	Rubato
111	Rit.

Allegro

9-10	Vib. E4
18	Port. E3—F#4
18-19	D#3—E4
34-35	Port. B2—E2
40	C#2—G4
50-51	C4—B-flat3
51	Rit.
53	Meno mosso
55	B3—G4; Vib. G4
56	Vib. G4
57	Vib. 1st D4
63	D4—B4
64	Vib. E4
65	Vib. 1st B3
66	Vib. 1st D4
67	G3—B3
68	B3—D4
68-69	Rubato
70	A tempo
71	Port. A3—E3
74	Port. E4—A3
75	Vib. D4; Rit.
76	A tempo
95	Poco meno mosso
97-99	Accel. to Animato
105	Meno mosso
105	E#3—C#4
106	E3—C#4
107	D#3—B3
109	D#3—B3
112	Accel.
115	Vib. C5
119	Vib. C5
123	Meno mosso
123-124	Vib. B4
125	Port. F#4—D#5
126	Vib. G#4; Port. F#4—B3
128	D#4—F#4
129	2nd D#4
130	D#4—F#4; Vib. 2nd F#4
132	A tempo
167	C#2—G4
171-172	Port. E4—B4
173-174	Port. E3—B3
185	Accel.
185-187	Non vib.
187-188	Port. C4—A4
188	Vib. 2nd A4

Cello Sonata No. 2 in F Major, Op. 99
Allegro vivace

1	Vib. F4
5	Port. F3—D4
6	Port. C4—G4
7	Port. F4—D5
8	Vib. G5
17	Ten. C3; Port. A3—D4
18	Ten. G3; Port. D4—G4
24-25	*Tempo Rubato*
24	Port. G2—C3
26	Vib.
27	Non vib.
40	Vib. E4
42-43	Port. E4—B4
46	Accel.
53	Port. E4—C5
66	Vib. F#4
74	Meno mosso
77	Vib. E#3, D#3
80	Port. D#3—D#2
81	Vib. D#2
83-84	Vib. ad lib.
92-117	Rubato led by pianist
125	Port. C3—G3
128	Vib. F4
132	Port. F3—D4
133	Port. C4—G4
134	Port. F4—D5
135	Vib. G5
162	Vib. B4
164	Vib. F5

187 Port. C3—F3—A-flat2
195-196 Port. F4—F4
196 Vib. D4
197 Vib. F3
198 Vib. 1st F4
202 Rubato

Adagio affettuoso

4 Port. G#2—C#2
5-8 Poco vib. ad lib
9 Vib. Cx5, C#5
9 Port. G#4—C#5
10 Vib. Cx5
11-12 Port. A#4—F#4
12-15 Non. vib
12-13 Port. D#4—F#4
13 Port. D#4—G#3
15 Port. A#4—F#4
16-17 Port. G#4—C#5
17 Vib. C#5; Port. A#4—D#4
19-20 Port. F3—D-flat4 (Non vib.)
22 Vib. 2nd E4
25 Accel.
28-29 Port. F2—D-flat3
29 Vib. ad lib.
30 Non vib.
31 Port. A-flat2—D-flat2
37-39 Vib. ad lib. at *Dolce*
47 Port. G#2—C#2
50-52 Vib. ad lib.
53 Non vib. at 2nd C#5
54 Vib.
56 Vib.
57 Port. B3—E3
60-61 Port. C#3—F#3
61 Port. G#2—B2
62 Port. D#3—G#2
66 Vib.
67 Non vib.
69 Vib. E#4 (Rit.)
71 Vib. to non vib.

Allegro passionato

11 Vib. A-flat4
13 Port. G4—C5
25 Vib. E-flat4
27 Port. F3—F4
31-32 Rubato
37 Vib. D-flat4
39 Vib. F4
41 Vib. D-flat4
54-55 Port. C#4—A4
71 Vib. G-flat4
73 Vib. B-flat4
106 Port. F2—C3
108 Port. D-flat2—F2
109 Vib. A-flat4
111 Vib. G4
113 Vib. F4
130-131 Port. F4—B-flat4
131 Vib. B-flat4
133 Vib. B-flat4
135 Non vib.
138-139 Port. A-flat4—B4
139 Vib. B4
144 Poco rit.
148 Vib. D-flat4
159 Rubato
169 Accel.
171 Port. D3—G2
177 Port. C3—G3
178 Port. C4—C5
178-179 Rit.
189 Port. B-flat4—D-flat5
190 Vib. E4

Allegro molto

1 C4—A4
2 Ten. B-flat4
2-3 Port. C4—E-flat4
8 Rubato

29 Vib. E4
31 Port. C4—E4
44-45 C4—A4
57 Meno mosso
58 Vib. D-flat4
62 Vib. D-flat4
62-63 Port. C4—F4
66 Vib. C-flat3
68 Rubato with hairpin
69-70 Port. A-flat3—C-flat3
76 Port. F4—B-flat4; Vib. B-flat4;
Rubato
80 Non vib.
83 Vib.
99 Port. G2—C2
100 Port. A2—D2
101-102 Port. E3—A2, A2—D2
108 Port. A4—B-flat3
110 Port. F4—A4
118 Vib. 1st F4, E-flat4
122 Vib. A-flat4
123 Vib. G-flat4
135 Port. F4—C4
136 Port. E-flat4—B-flat3
137 Vib. A-flat4