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THE RECORDED HERITAGE OF WILLEM MENGELBERG AND ITS AESTHETIC RELEVANCE

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the art and interpretative aesthetics of the Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg (1871-1951), as preserved in his sound recordings and, subsidiarily, in his writings. Emphasis is given to issues pertaining to 19th century performance practice, as well as to historical connections between Mengelberg and compositional/interpretative trends in Europe at the time. Mengelberg's impact on musical life in Amsterdam, New York, and beyond will be considered. The relevance of Mengelberg's recordings is assessed from both a documentary and aesthetic point of view. The quasi-entirety of Mengelberg's rich body of recordings has been consulted, yet a few dozens of them have been chosen for an in-depth study meant to illuminate both their historical context and their contemporary relevance.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Chapter I. Tchaikovsky's Translator 16
Chapter II. Mengelberg's Brahms 50
Chapter III. Piano Concertos 79
Chapter IV. Amsterdam's Own Beethoven 105
Chapter V. Objectivity and Subjectivity in Interpretation 129
Willem Mengelberg: a Discography 148
Bibliography 179

INTRODUCTION

The Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg (1871-1951) is an important and provocative yet underestimated figure in the history of musical interpretation. He was a pianist and composer, but it was his work as a symphonic conductor *par excellence* that channeled an overwhelming percentage of his creative energies, and consequently his legacy as conductor that looms largest for us today. While having a sizable non-Dutch conducting career – with partial tenures in Frankfurt and New York and a plethora of guest conducting concerts all over the European music world – Mengelberg's main claim to aesthetic importance, if not immortality, derives from his having overseen the creation of one of the great orchestras of the world (the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam), and having led it in a tenure of almost unparalleled length and perhaps unmatched brilliance.[1] These high technical standards coexisted with a vivid interest in repertoire of various styles and times, as well as with an ability to communicate detailed, highly personalized interpretative insights which is rare among conductors.

During his pre-World War II musical and social life, Mengelberg was incomparably more celebrated than criticized, was known as the most popular figure in Holland after the Queen, and

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[1] Mengelberg didn't literally establish the orchestra himself. Its first conductor for seven years (1888-1895) was Willem Kes. Mengelberg was barely 20 years of age when appointed as General Music Director in Lucerne, Switzerland. Starting at the age of 24, he became the one responsible for moving the Amsterdam premier symphonic orchestra from something marginal in European music life to star status, equal in professionalism and prestige to ensembles such as Berliner Philharmoniker, Gewandhaus Leipzig, Dresden Staatskapelle, and the Wiener Philharmoniker.
Mengelberg led the Concertgebouw Orchestra for nearly fifty years, **1895-1944**. Ernest Ansermet with Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Zubin Mehta with Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Evgeny Mravinsky in Leningrad, Takashi Asahina in Osaka, and Eugene Ormandy in Philadelphia are among the very few well-known conductors challenging or barely surpassing Mengelberg's record in Amsterdam. By coincidence, Sir Henry Wood's tenure with the BBC Prom concerts, lasted from… 1895 to 1944.

invested himself in a bouquet of close friendships with many great musicians of the time. His post-WWII and posthumous fortunes declined on two accounts: the perceptions of his art as old-fashioned, overly Romantic and subjective, on the one hand, and accusations of his having collaborated with the Nazi occupiers of Holland, on the other. Sometimes these two reasons were mixed in a pernicious confusion, blending the notion of conservative musical tastes with fascist, if not downright Nazi, politics. It is misleading, however, to regard Mengelberg as overly conservative, since he was quite involved with the music of his own time.[2] We shall deal with the first issues in detail. Regarding the accusations of collaborationism, this is not our focus. Nevertheless, let us consider this issue succinctly before we turn to the main subjects of this dissertation.

That there are questionable things about Mengelberg's activities during the Nazi occupation cannot be denied. He was never a dissident, rather someone reflexively used to not challenge government, or administrative authorities in general. He did not seek or accept political positions during the Nazi occupation.[3] It is not known that Mengelberg would have benefitted from the Nazi occupiers or would have ever attempted to harm anybody on the basis of their ethnicity or political fragility; on the contrary.[4] As in Furtwängler's case, his prodigious career hardly needed politically-motivated enhancement.[5] Unlike Furtwängler though,

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[2] There is no other conductor born as early as Mengelberg or earlier to have conducted as much 20th century music as Mengelberg did. While Mengelberg could overestimate the gift of some composers (Ernest Schelling, for instance), his taste was nevertheless visionary. Among composers stubbornly promoted by him, if not always commercially recorded, one counts not only Mahler and R. Strauss, but also young Dutch composers, Ravel, Bartok, Stravinsky, Enescu, Hindemith, even Krenek, all of whom were born after Mengelberg. Considering his generational placement, Mengelberg was at the same time a "guardian of tradition" and a pioneer of modernist taste.

[3] As, regrettably, a musician as talented as Alfred Cortot did, in France.

[4] One uncorroborated exception among many sources we've consulted is Igor Markevitch's memoir, where he conveys allegations which don't go beyond simple gossip. (*Être et avoir été*, pp. 270-272)

[5] A young Austrian conductor, Herbert von Karajan, who voluntarily joined the Nazi Party, long before the *Anschluss* - not once but twice - comes to mind.

Mengelberg never protested publicly Nazi abuses.[6] He did assist though not only famous Jewish musicians asking for his help, such as the professor and violinist Carl Flesch,[7] but also at least some of the anonymous, ostracized Jewish members of his Amsterdam orchestra, the ensemble he dedicated his life to. He did treat occupying authorities with deferent, submissive manners of communications. Outwardly, Mengelberg displayed scant signs of distress in response to virulent German expansionism. He continued to conduct consistently, perhaps enthusiastically, in Germany, in countries allied with Germany, and even in countries occupied by the Nazis (which Furtwängler refused to do). He was photographed, in a seemingly friendly context, with Arthur Seyss-Inquart, Holland's Reichskommissar. At the very least, Mengelberg could be suspected of a certain degree of opportunism, political naïveté, cowardice or some combination of the three.

On the other hand, the profound image of Mengelberg before World War II is anything but that of a far right sympathizer. Suggestions to the contrary, unless thoroughly substantiated, would be deeply unfair. There are not documented instances of Mengelberg showing anti-Semitism, but very much the opposite. Mengelberg was not only Mahler's close and faithful friend, but also Mahler's most fervent early proponent as an interpreter, at a time when such advocacy was neither easy nor popular. For his Silver Jubilee of 1920 (celebrating 25 years of leading the Concertgebouw Orchestra), instead of a safe, comfortable repertoire choice, Mengelberg chose to present in a single festival something approaching the totality of Mahler's oeuvre. This was the first time in history that such a monumental celebration of Mahler's music had taken place. The festival was organized in a spirit of reconciliation, two short years after the

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[6] We have to be reminded though of Furtwängler's protests having taken part during the early years of the Nazi reign – 1933-1934 – when, risky as such actions may have been, they were less likely to be conducive to a death sentence than in the 1940s.

[7] On May 14th 1943, Flesch wrote a beautiful letter to Mengelberg, thanking him for having helped the hounded professor to reach safe haven, even saving his life.

carnage of the World War I, with guests from the participating countries, enemies not long before, being invited in an avowed internationalist atmosphere. The non-nationalist symbolism was intended, not coincidental.

This was not a proverbial case of “some of my best friends are Jewish,” nor a self-serving enterprise laced by hypocrisy. The Mahler performances continued unabated in Amsterdam after 1933 and until the Nazi invasion (in fact, until a little later[8]). During the advent of Nazi power, as long as he had a choice, there was no change in Mengelberg’s attitudes towards – or the inviting of – either Jewish musicians, or of musicians known as being “friends of the Jews” (which in the Nazi book was almost as bad as being Jewish), or of musicians known to be, if not Jewish, despised by the Nazis because of their political and/or aesthetical leanings. In one or another of these different categories, we must mention Joseph Szigeti, Adolf Busch, Yehudi Menuhin, Ernest Bloch, Béla Bartók, and Paul Hindemith[9] (stridently attacked by the Nazi press for his “decadent” music, abhorred by Hitler himself, and defended in 1934 by Furtwängler in *The Hindemith Case*,[10] Furtwängler’s naïve yet valiant attempt at a “J’accuse” type of progressive pamphlet). We should also mention Bruno Walter, who found a job in Amsterdam between 1934 and 1939, after being shamefully expelled from Berlin’s musical life in 1933, when the same Furtwängler was among the few who protested it. Then, for the history aficionado, there was Mengelberg’s curious programming of Tchaikovsky’s music in occupied Paris, in January 1944.

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[8] Mengelberg asked the occupying authorities for an exemption, so he could conduct Mahler’s First Symphony, which he did, in 1940.

[9] Hindemith, shaken by the Berlinese *Mathis der Mahler* scandal, found a hospitable, if short-lived refuge in Amsterdam, where Mengelberg received him with open arms and had Hindemith both premiere his Viola Concerto (*Der Schwanendreher*) under Mengelberg's baton and conduct himself Concertgebouworkest in the first Dutch performance of his *Philharmonisches Konzert*. (Mengelberg will perform – Germany-forbidden – Hindemith music as late as 1940. The recording of the premiere of the *Violin Concerto*, with the Concertgebouw concertmaster Ferdinand Helman, survives.)

[10] The article was published in *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 25, 1934.

Politically speaking, performing Tchaikovsky was not unheard of in 1940, when Mengelberg recorded, for Telefunken, the *Piano Concerto* with Conrad Hansen, and the *Fifth Symphony*,[11] both with Berliner Philharmoniker. This was after the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty and before the June 1941 attack on the Soviet Union. By 1944, after Stalingrad, one of the bloodiest battles history, with Nazi power on the wane, with the Nazi power circle prey to paranoia and lashing out at "saboteurs," the Russians were demonized in Nazi propaganda. It would be excessive to claim an act of political courage on Mengelberg's behalf, regarding his bizarre (in context) 1944 programming of Tchaikovsky's music. This is though one more indirect piece of evidence that the conductor's conservative German education and upbringing were not documented to devolve into cultural hatred or intolerance. In his shaken, inconsistent (for reasons beyond his choosing) musical inner sanctum, he remained, not unlike Furtwängler, an idealist and a *de facto*, if not an ideological outsider, dedicated to music not politics.

At the end of the war, Mengelberg was publicly humiliated in Holland, summarily tried outside the judicial system and found culpable of a non-criminal form of collaborationism. He ended his life in exile, in Switzerland, dying before his 80th birthday, shortly before the ban on his professional activities in Holland was slated to expire. Opinions differ on his degree of culpability and likely these issues will continue to remain controversial for decades to come. On a musical level, posterity was deprived of the chance of a recorded Mahler symphonic cycle from a conductor whose musical closeness to Mahler couldn't be overstated. On a human level, it is relevant to quote Max Tak, one of many Jewish members of Concertgebouw Orchestra, who lost

[11] Another famous Tchaikovsky recording of the time was Georg Kulenkampff's estimable 1939 traversal of the Violin Concerto, meant presumably to substitute in the catalog the best-selling recordings by Jewish violinists such as Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, and especially Bronislaw Huberman's hugely successful (in Europe) recording with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra and a conductor named Wilhelm Steinberg, who was to become "William" Steinberg of Pittsburg fame.

his family in the Holocaust. He wrote after the war, to an embittered and lonely Mengelberg, as follows:

> You once said during a rehearsal of Mahler's First Symphony that the composer could feel in that music (especially the last movement) the misery into which the world was to be dumped. In that misery I lost my whole family, murdered in German concentration camps, except for my sister Mary, who was kept hidden by Alex Wunnink of the Carre Theatre and thus saved, not without danger for Wunnink's own safety.
>
> I have wanted to let you know at this time that your name has stayed alive for those who have so much to thank you for. May the New Year bring you whatever you desire from it and may you be persuaded that there are many whose thoughts still go out to you. And to those many belongs yours Max Tak, who was once distinguished by Willem Mengelberg with the permission to be allowed to play in his orchestra.[12]

To close a controversial subject: our goal should not be the whitewashing of any collaborators, or the claim that Mengelberg would have been entirely a victim of circumstances. He exposed himself to some of the allegations leveled against him. On the other hand, one should look at Mengelberg's life and legacy as a whole, not to the lack of political defiance or of immaculate ethical antennae of a man in his 70s. Future research might bring more evidence one way or the other regarding Mengelberg's position in occupied Holland. The extenuating aspects presented above are meant to inspire the listener to look at Mengelberg's recorded legacy not with a political eye, but with an open mind and ear, focused on musical values, without prejudice. Seeing Mengelberg's personal and cultural legacy in the context of his whole career creates a cognitive dissonance when reflexive extreme right allegations are thrown at him. More significantly, ignoring what Mengelberg's artistic heritage has to impart would represent a grievous cultural and musical loss.

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[12] Letter from Max Tak to Willem Mengelberg, 20th December, 1948. This letter, like other documents of the time, was included in the invaluable 1995 Haags Gemeentemuseum exhibition brochure *Willem Mengelberg – Dirigent,* from now on referred simply as *Gemeentemuseum*. Mengelberg's biographer, Fritz Zwart, has important merits regarding the preservation of Mengelberg's legacy.

With the advent of recording devices at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the art of the great interpreters didn't vanish with their last breath or public appearance. Wax cylinders were followed by discs of varying design. Interpreters could now have their sound engraved and survive, in a fashion. Singers were the first to take full advantage of the new technologies, with their inherent initial imperfections. The human voice – one person singing into the recording horn – fared best on primitive recorded devices. Enrico Caruso's 1902 recordings, his earliest, render justice to many of the vocal and musical qualities of the tenor. He was the first major classical performer whose career went from successful discs to an international opera hall presence, not the other way. Recorded barely one year later, Francesco Tamagno's heroic tenor voice, still impressive today, takes us back to the 1888 premiere of Verdi's *Otello*, with its title role composed by with Tamagno's specific qualities in mind.

Solo violinists or pianists were reproduced less well on acoustic discs, at least when the repertoire involved, such as with Pablo de Sarasate's recordings, sounds so high that the high frequency-impaired technology could barely contain them. Nevertheless Mischa Elman, the quintessential child-prodigy of the violin from the Ukrainian ghetto who inspired the Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem in writing his novel *Wandering Stars*,[13] produced a rich and beautiful violin tone, which early acoustic recordings captured rather well, especially in the G and D strings range. By comparison, early attempts at recording an entire orchestra were woefully unsatisfactory. Little of the sonorities a symphonic orchestra could produce was able to pass

[13] Even the name of the character of the itinerant child-prodigy of the violin, "Grisha Stelmach," was based on Misha Elman.

through the technological limitations of the equipment.[14] It was only with the advent of electrical recording in 1925-1926 that orchestral music-making started being recorded in ways in which technical limitations, still present, were not as marked as to drastically distort the experience of the listener. The relevance of these contextual considerations to the subject of recorded interpretive styles is colossal. At this point the extensive recorded heritage of Willem Mengelberg – born 1871, started making recordings in 1922, in New York, and in 1926, in Amsterdam – makes itself felt.

A brilliant pianist, a talented composer in a (Richard) Straussian vein (as his 1906 symphonic poem *Etchings by Rembrandt* shows), Mengelberg had been offered the leadership of Concertgebouworkest in Amsterdam, in 1895. There are few conductors to gain access to a post of such responsibility before they are 25. This, as well as the consideration offered almost unanimously by contemporary composers – from Grieg[15] to Mahler, from Richard Strauss[16] to Bartók – bespeaks Mengelberg's being a highly musically gifted individual. On the other hand, Mengelberg obviously benefited from his historical placement in the heart of a living interpretative tradition. In simple terms, he was born early enough to be unaffected by more-or-less standard(ized) recordings, but he also lived long enough to see his music-making richly immortalized on disc.

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[14] When we believe we listen to, for instance, "London Symphony Orchestra" in Nikisch's recordings, we hear in fact a few selected members of the orchestra, tuba players substituting the acoustic recording-unfriendly double-basses, and violinists being forced to use inferior instruments, such as the notorious Stroh violins.

[15] "Grieg was invited to supervise a Festival of Norwegian Music to be held in one of the larger Norwegian cities. He accepted the invitation on the condition that the Amsterdam Concertgebouw would be the orchestra employed, with Willem Mengelberg (just then rising into fame) as the conductor. This raised a storm of protest from some Norwegian musicians who wanted to know why a foreign conductor must be engaged to carry out a festival of Norwegian music. Grieg's reply was typical: 'Because there is in Norway no conductor or orchestra worthy of the task, and because I consider the best service we can do for Norwegian music is to let a Norwegian audience hear it, for once, as it ought to sound'." (Percy Grainger, *Grainger on Music*, p. 321)

[16] Strauss dedicated his *Ein Heldenleben* to 27-year-old Mengelberg and his Amsterdam Orchestra.

While Mengelberg's recordings did not retain his repertoire in its enormous entirety, there are more than 230 entries in his discography, covering the traditional core of Mengelberg's repertoire (such as symphonies by Schubert, Franck, Brahms, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky), and also some of his expeditions in new (for his time) repertoire, ranging from Debussy and Ravel to Pfitzner and Trapp, to Bartók and Kodaly, to Bloch and Wagenaar. Nevertheless, the *recorded* legacy is heavily tilted towards the core repertoire and, inevitably, this writing will reflect that. We will therefore focus on a number of representative Mengelberg recordings. Other recordings would certainly be worthy of comment, but the idea is to offer a substantial and representative sample of what makes Mengelberg's readings of mostly familiar works significant, even today, both in terms of aesthetic inspiration and specific ways of articulating, phrasing, and shaping music.

Important as Mengelberg's connection with Mahler is, we address it summarily because it has been carefully covered in already existing literature, from Klaus Kropfinger[17] (with an essay focused on the only Mahler symphony recorded by Mengelberg, the *Fourth*) and Henry Louis de la Grange (whose monumental Mahler biography, especially volumes 3 and 4, is peppered with illuminating references to how important Mengelberg was in the life of Mahler) to William Kinderman (whose Mengelberg-relevant writing focuses on different poetic interpretations of the *Adagietto* from the *Fifth Symphony*).[18]

Mengelberg did neither live nor create in a vacuum, so many other interpreters – conductors, pianists, violinists among others – are being mentioned throughout this text, as the

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[17] Klaus Kropfinger, *Gerettete Herausforderung: Mahlers 4. Symphonie - Mengelbergs Interpretation* in "Mahler-Interpretation. Aspekte zum Werk und Wirken von Gustav Mahler" (Mainz: Schott, 1985).
[18] William Kinderman, "Aesthetics of Integration in Mahler's Fifth Symphony," in *The Creative Process in Music*, pp. 102-137.

context in which to understand what makes Mengelberg's recorded heritage unique. That the most frequently mentioned *other* conductor is Wilhelm Furtwängler is no coincidence. Despite being fifteen years Mengelberg's junior, despite having different rehearsal methods and often diverging interpretative options, they nevertheless shared a burden and a blessing. They represented – moreover, **embodied** – precious analytical traditions, brought to life through integrated – new in a substantial sense – interpretative visions.

Wilhelm Furtwängler left behind a fair amount of writings, nowadays published in many languages, in which he explained his views on the responsibilities of the interpreter. These views were as far from the eccentric and the whimsical as they were from the pedantic and the literalist. Compared to the wealth of texts, either aesthetic or professional, left by near-contemporaries such as Ansermet, Scherchen, or Furtwängler – who was as coherent as an aesthetician as he was as a conductor – Mengelberg's written legacy is scarce. Besides the essay quoted at length at the end of this introduction, also briefly elsewhere, we could find a short one-page article, about the communal significance of masterpieces such as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. We therefore take the liberty of letting Furtwängler speak of some of the aesthetic concepts that Mengelberg wrote little about. We base this on what they have in common not only generationally but also in the flexible, non-literalist recorded evidence of their music-making.

Within chapters I to IV, numerous examples of controversial – illuminating to some, irritating to others – Mengelberg textual liberties will be pointed out and analyzed. Nevertheless, it is essential that these liberties, fascinating as they are, would not be understood as the single major component of what made Mengelberg's art distinctive. He could be perceived as eccentric,

sometimes with good reason, but much of what singled him out in the context of his time was simply the fruit of striving for quality and of hard work. In much of the recorded repertoire Mengelberg's ideals of accuracy, clarity, simplicity, and integrity are what comes through first and foremost. This was a conductor who didn't mind presiding over a perfection-seeking tuning of the orchestra, an entire ceremony which could take up to half an hour. There was scarcely anything too minute to escape Mengelberg's attention, to be considered beneath him. The idiosyncratic rhythmic nuance in one passage was just as important to Mengelberg as the severe, polished straight-forwardness expressed in other musical passages. **Part of the appeal of Mengelberg's recordings comes precisely from the interplay between *tempo giusto* and *tempo rubato*. While the *tempo rubato* elements of execution lend themselves to a more exciting post factum analysis, the sheer *tempo giusto* accuracy extolled by Mengelberg as his fundamental "mode" in musical performance is just as impressive.**

In the decades immediately following Mengelberg's death, his legacy fell out of fashion to the extent that his recordings, when remembered at all, were offered as examples of what was wrong with Romantic subjectivism and excess left behind in the name of "progress". In 1967, the *New York Times* critic Harold C. Schonberg included a short Mengelberg chapter in his book dedicated to conductors. Schonberg, against the trends of the 1960s, included a surprisingly fair assessment of Mengelberg's legacy:

> Mengelberg's reputation fast dissipated after his death. That often happens to virtuosos, and Mengelberg was unfortunate enough to die in a period that looked down at his two greatest assets – virtuosity and romanticism. Posterity has been unkind to him; he deserves more. His music making may have been mannered by present standards, but it always had life, drive, excitement, exuberance, its own kind of conviction. As a colorist he was excelled by none, not even

> Koussevitzky or Stokowski. The little man was an authentic force, one of the great individualists, and one of the authentic masters of the orchestra.[19]

Schonberg's take had a visionary quality to it. While not yet accepted in the contemporary "great conductors canon" to the extent Toscanini or Furtwängler were, Mengelberg's recordings are indeed more widely available and cherished today than at any time since he was alive and active. We hope that this writing will bring a modest contribution to a cogent revisitation of Willem Mengelberg's place in the history of interpretation.

While quotes of excessive length are avoided in other chapters, here's a legitimate place to make one exception and insert a significant extract from Mengelberg's only elaborate written offering. It offers a precious window in the "verbalized" mind of the conductor beyond the recurring anecdotes in the existing literature which emphasize, in a sarcastic form, the idiomatic limits of Mengelberg's spoken English, rather than the profounder content of his communications. It is relevant, vague in a slightly Romantic style as Mengelberg's writing may appear to the modern eye, to sample the conductor's own thoughts regarding interpretative aesthetics. The "spacing out" of certain words mirrors the original publication – we preserved it because in a way it reflects Mengelberg's tendency to also underline, to strongly project his musical thoughts. It is not different in spirit from how he used to annotate his own scores, in which the interplay between what needs to be interpretatively emphasized and what does not became so important. When it came to eloquently "italicizing" and "capitalizing" a musical text in performance, Mengelberg's skill was exemplary.

> T H E E S S E N C E A N D E F F E C T O F M U S I C

[19] Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Conductors*, p. 269.

Music was chosen by science comparatively late as a subject of study. The cause of this lies in the fact that the *nature* of music is of a *very peculiar character.*

The art of musical composition is the *most abstract* of all arts. She is less bound than any of her sisters to tangible reality.

In contrast with the plastic arts or with poetry, music originates *neither* from the concrete *nor* from the material *nor* from the intellectually comprehensible; but it is generated in the *mystery of sound.*

Painting and *sculpture* represent the material, visible world; *poetry* arises from abstract, imaginative conceptions. These arts spring from reality, and through their embodiment of that reality attain to the manifestation of beauty.

Music, on the other hand, reveals a world that cannot be built up of material objects or be encompassed or shaped by abstract, imaginative conceptions. The material part of the music lies outside the domain of human perception, and, at the same time, beyond that of abstract, ideal conception.

The deep realization of this truth brought Ludwig van Beethoven to the statement:

"Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy."

***

While the philosopher tries logically to evolve *out of himself* a higher law of life, music reveals this law *in its own nature.*

Music, then, gives man a *perfect* picture of what he tries to reach with his intellectual power.

While philosophy seeks to solve the higher law *from and by means of life*, music reveals the law *in life itself.* (…)

***

Whenever one perceives the *nature* of music in this manner, one grasps its *significance* and its *effect*, and understands the *role* that it plays in our cultural life.

The nature and effect of music are, alas, often judged very one-sidedly.

The layman often perceives *sense impressions* exclusively and recognizes the effect simply as one of "feeling".

Proceeding from this premise many people have underrated music, and – from a religious point of view – have abhorred and attacked it.

On the other hand, there have been opinions that music must be understood merely as a *mathematical science.*

Both points of view are very one-sided and fail to do justice to the significance of music.

One needs to consider only superficially the history of the last two centuries to see that the *nature* of music embraces *much more.*

A lively contact has always existed between the cultural and social development on one hand and the evolution of musical form on the other.

It appears clearly that the musical form is influenced and defined by that for which men are striving at a certain time. (…)

***

When you follow the history of music in this manner and recognize that it moves parallel with the cultural development of the time while it yields a perfectly harmonious picture of that development, then you will agree with me that one cannot be content with calling music sheer sensuous expression or sheer science.

It is more correct to seek the nature of music in the union of these two factors, in the spirit of history.

And just that mysterious union of severe, abstract logic and human sentiment, grown out of the nature of the period, is the marvelous secret of music, the art I consider as the most human revelation of God.

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The proclaiming of this revelation, then, is the artistic task of the musician.

This high mission is sharply defined by the peculiar nature of his art.

The artist may just as little give his feelings free reign without control or reflection as he may represent the elementary, technical side of the music to the exclusion of inspiration.

Art demands duality of the artist also; through the organism of his personality he must unite technique and spirit.

Only when the reproducing, interpretive musician takes up his task in this way, when he consecrates himself with all his powers and all his feeling to music, only then does he deserve the name, yes, the title of honor – "artist".

For then only is he able to give out that in the music which is more than science, more also than mere human expression of feelings. Then only the musician reveals to us the nature of his art and through it becomes an artist himself.

To attain this end the mechanical side of music must be closely studied first of all, from the very beginning, even to the smallest detail.

Every note and every sign must be produced with technical perfection; the different notes must be tuned in exact relationship to each other; in brief: the graphic picture of a score must be entirely and perfectly transposed into sound.

So every musician must study the mechanical technique of his instrument over and over again. Even the master in his branch must turn back again and again to purely mechanical exercise.

With that, the foundation is laid for truly artistic activity. Technique is a matter of course. Technical difficulties as such may no longer exist. The ordering mind shapes everything and deep human feeling gives it life.

However, technique must be under perfect control in order to allow spirit and deep human feeling free reign; all technical difficulties must be overcome with playful ease.

With this great goal before him, the young artist must work technically for years. The more clearly, the more vividly, the goal stands before him, the more intensive will be his work.

The simple recognition of the nature of art is in itself unproductive. Only the effect of this insight upon energy, the transmutation of mental recognition into mechanical productivity means: genius.

That is the sense in which one must understand Goethe's words: "Genius is industry."

An artist is great in so far as he is filled with the spirit of music and in so far as he derives from it more powers wherewith to perfect his technique mechanically. The higher he develops technique, the more clearly can he express by its means the spiritual side of a work of art.

Therefore bohemianism in music, considered from an artistic standpoint, ranks low.

Here mechanical technique is not sufficiently developed as an independent factor, being scarcely more than the reflex of fleeting emotion.

Such technique is superficial and inaccurate; it can bring out only a sort of entertainment.

Yet as soon as it lays hands on truly great works of art it goes arbitrarily to work, changes and deforms the written picture of a partitur, and, from false notions and impotence in the presence of great art, violates its spirit.

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Therefore the musician bears a d o u b l e r e s p o n s i b i l i t y : responsibility toward the w o r k and toward the p u b l i c . For the interpreting artist is the m e d i u m between the work and the audience; he is p r i e s t and e d u c a t o r at the same time. [20](…)

[20] Willem Mengelberg, *The essence and the effect of music: address on the occasion of receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Music from Columbia University*, 1928.

CHAPTER I. TCHAIKOVSKY'S TRANSLATOR

Mengelberg was perhaps the first major conductor in Western Europe to take Tchaikovsky's symphonic creations as seriously as one would take Mozart's or Beethoven's.[21] While not benefitting from a direct idiomatic connection comparable to that of the older generation Russian/Slavic conductors, Mengelberg sought to ensure that his Tchaikovsky wouldn't sound like a foreign language, skillfully parroted. He dug into the roots of the language, while absorbing in mediated form the distinctive ethnic element which is sublimated in Tchaikovsky's musical style.[22] For instance, the way Mengelberg phrases the folk song Tchaikovsky uses in the fourth movement of the *Fourth Symphony* (*In the Field Stood a Birch Tree*), is idiosyncratic rather than literalistic. People who didn't grow up listening to luminaries of Russian song have few options to absorb idiomatic Slavic inflections other than by paying attention to how autochthonous singers phrase, pronounce, and modulate their voices. In various generations there were such idiomatic Slavic singers who walked a fine line between art song and folk song, not unlike the Russian composers themselves in their reinterpretation of Germanic symphonic concepts.

At the same time, having easy access to the idiomatic roots of a composer does not guarantee an insightful interpretation. There are many ways of looking at Tchaikovsky. It is

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[21] With the possible exception of Artur Nikisch, whose Tchaikovsky interpretations, like Mengelberg's, were also highly praised in pre-Bolshevik Russia.

[22] Rachmaninoff, who paid a great amount of attention to Russian and Russian Gypsy singers – and even recorded an ethnically charged trifle with Nadejda Plevitskaya, improvising his accompaniment – understood that well. Piero Rattalino, Italian musicologist and specialist in piano history, also speaks about how important it is for non-German/Austrian pianists to listen to the likes of Edwin Fischer (Swiss by birth, but German by education), in order to steal the idiom they haven't gotten with their mothers' milk, as Rattalino picturesquely puts it. It is possible to observe everything in a score and to nevertheless make it sound like Esperanto. See Chapter V for more on the subject.

unlikely that Mengelberg, who programmed their music so frequently, would have missed the commonalities between two of his favorite composers, Tchaikovsky and Mahler. Despite different backgrounds and a not negligible generational gap, they had in common the goal of broadening preexisting concepts of the symphony, as form and as genre. Both composers developed and changed traditional structures in ways which allowed for an increased incorporation of the confessional, entropic element within a tight sonata form structure. The same way a pianist who studies Shostakovich's fugues will return to Bach's fugues with a different perspective, Mengelberg's intimacy with Mahler's music colored the way he approached Tchaikovsky. Where other conductors, more naturally steeped in the ethnic element through birth, could inadvertently underline the populism, the dance rhythms, the vulgar appeal in Tchaikovsky's music, Mengelberg went for the subtle formal details, but also for the personal statement of utmost sincerity.

One of the conductor's most accomplished recordings is the two discs set of the *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy* from 1930, a recording that features a myriad details scarcely found in other versions. For instance, Mengelberg understands the thematic/developmental primacy of the bassoon phrase in bars 163-168:

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 1

He also comprehends the importance of observing Tchaikovsky's caesuras in the "love theme." This theme is exquisitely scored for clarinet and violas and contains an essential caesura in bar 87. Most conductors permit a legato connection between the pitches A and F at this point, but Mengelberg detaches the two pitches dividing the theme just as Tchaikovsky suggests, thereby making transparent the structural moment (the intervallic and metrical parallelism between its two halves).

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 2

Other elements of Mengelberg's interpretative approach will come readily to light in his Tchaikovsky recordings. Compared to conductors of his generation, Mengelberg controls and forcefully projects the contrasts of sonority between brass and strings. It could be argued that the brass and string instruments sound quite distinctive in any event. What we are attempting to define is the difference between conductors who attempt to melt the brass (and the wind) sound into the predominant string sonority (seen as the core of the nobility of orchestral sound) on the one hand, and the purposeful projection of instrumental characteristics in a divergent manner, on the other. Many conductors born before 1900 could be included into the “converging colors” school, while many conductors born after 1900 pay more attention to the individuality, brightness, and competitive balancing of the wind and, especially, brass instruments. There are exceptions, no doubt. For instance, Carlos Kleiber, Herbert von Karajan, Sergiu Celibidache, Kirill Kondrashin or Georges Prêtre among others, all 20th century born, were/are known for their 19th century-like, “strings first” approach, not less so than Erich Kleiber or Wilhelm Furtwängler. However, the concept is useful, insofar it corresponds to an undeniable stylistic

trend to be identified therewith.

Mengelberg fits within this context as a rare, golden medium. He seems to approach the core identity of "his" orchestral sound while avoiding false dichotomies. Mengelberg's strings project the warmth the listener came to associate with Furtwängler[23] or, in a different cultural milieu, Stokowski, while the clarity of articulation, the individuality, the dynamic presence of the brass and/or wind instruments even allow comparison to the extreme approach of a George Solti, as evident for instance in his Decca *Der Ring des Nibelungen* recording. (At the same time, Mengelberg successfully avoids over-projection of the brass presence from either forced podium decisions or from recording cabin manipulation, in the way Solti or, more recently, Riccardo Chailly[24] were sometimes prone to do.)

Part of Furtwängler's gift was to have the entire orchestra emulate the strings, when it came to orchestral colors or musical phrasing. In some ways, even Furtwängler's trombones or percussion represented a reverberation of the *Klangideal* embodied in the best of string playing. It is hard to imagine a timpani sonority which sounds more like "melos", not sheer aggressive rhythmical impact, than the sonority Furtwängler was able to obtain. Even at the onset of the recapitulation of the first movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Furtwängler strives to

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[23] However, the technical means used to obtain the "warm string sound" could be quite different – a sophisticatedly limited, differentiated use of the bow combined with scarce vibrato in Mengelberg's case. The more intuitive Furtwängler was more often going all out, all the time. He privileged his orchestral musicians playing like a coherent group of soloists giving the most intense sound/vibrato they could muster, in any climax, be it in music composed by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms or Tchaikovsky.

[24] In an interview with the Italian journal *La Repubblica* from March 22nd 2001, right before a Concertgebouw concert commemorating fifty years since Mengelberg's passing, the conductor Riccardo Chailly commented unkindly on Mengelberg's legacy, calling him a "tyrant, ideologically ambiguous and politically dangerous" (quoted in the liner notes to *Willem Mengelberg – Archives inédites III*, Tahra, Paris, 2001). It is disappointing that, fifty years after Mengelberg's death, such clichés could still be used by someone of Chailly's prominence, moreover, someone inheriting the highest orchestral standards of the 20th century, made possible by pioneers such as Mengelberg.

integrate the powerful timpani sound into the overall orchestral sonority. From the point of view of the interpretation, Furtwängler's ideal sound had its own distinctive virtues, but also inherent limits. An example is Furtwängler’s balancing approach as applied to the second variation of the slow movement of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, in which the thematic identity expressed in the winds finds itself inordinately overwhelmed by the variational development in the strings.

Mengelberg does not follow this path. With the older (and in some surprising ways more modern-minded) Mengelberg, string sonorities don't lose their inherent characteristics or noble predominance. What we perceive is a “give and take” between instrumental compartments – not unlike a subtle chamber-music approach amplified to grandiose orchestral dimensions yet never vulgarized as a result of the amplification. A quality suggesting chamber music is projected to larger symphonic dimensions.

At a time when Tchaikovsky's works were still seen as peripheral, in a highly nationalistic and German/Austrian-centric world, Mengelberg, as early as in the years before 1900, placed a high emphasis on programming the works of the Russian composer in Concertgebouw concerts. Mengelberg saw no contradiction between his allegiance to a German tradition and his openness towards different musical worlds. Also, Mengelberg took pride in having personally met Modest Tchaikovsky, the composer’s brother, and having discussed Piotr’s music with Modest. According to the conductor, Tchaikovsky's oral wishes, as remembered by Modest and related to Mengelberg, were at the origin of some of the liberties he took in his approach to Tchaikovsky's works. Such liberties could range from small details of interpretation to huge cuts, as for example in the last movement of the *Fifth Symphony*. (The degree of veracity of Mengelberg’s claims is uncertain, however some witty Concertgebouw

orchestra members are supposed to have said, when the maestro was introducing some changes in one of Bach's scores that it must have been the "Modest Bach"-imparted tradition).

Changes in the fourth movement of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* included, first and foremost, two (one major and one minor) excisions of musical text: bars 210-316 (!) and 472-473. A smaller change was adding an A (the seventh of the B Major dominant chord) in the prolonged chord (bar 470-471) before the triumphant E Major coda, combined with the canceling of the ties between bars 470 and 471. Finally, an unwritten cymbal intervention in bar 502, two bars before the beginning of "the coda of the Coda." Regarding the modification in bars 470-471, it frequently happens in the concert hall that people unfamiliar with the symphony start applauding during the rest with fermata in bar 471. Mengelberg may have changed the "pure" B Major chord into a seventh chord in order to create a harmonic instability which would discourage the audience from applauding. Among the spoken documents featuring Mengelberg, such as interviews and speeches, a relevant one is the February 8 1938 interview in Munich, published by the *Tahra* label. We can hear Mengelberg himself explain, in his own words, the rationale behind the changes he brings to Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. It is to the reader to decide how convincing Mengelberg's verbalized reasoning seems. In this author's opinion, the immediate impact of the resulting music-making *is* convincing, with the exception of the huge excision of musical material in the fourth movement, which seems an unjustifiable loss:

> **Interviewer:** Professor, tonight you are going to conduct Tchaikovsky. I'm not saying this as a compliment, but you are considered to be "the interpreter" of Tchaikovsky and I was told that you had known him personally.
>
> **Willem Mengelberg:** Oh, the term "interpreter" is somewhat exaggerated… Interpreter, interpret, they are just words. But it's true that I knew him and I was a good friend of his brother Modest, a very good man and an enthusiastic supporter of music, of beautiful music and above all of the music of his brother. When I first conducted his music in Moscow, forty years ago, he attended the concert and was delighted… we've been good friends ever since and he gave me many scores with the markings made by his brother. The markings are very interesting. There is no great composer

who after his or her publication didn't make some changes in his works, once he has conducted them or heard them… and Tchaikovsky was no exception.

I: What do these markings entail? I'd like to explain this to our listeners.

WM: Small changes: for example in a *tutti*, he now has two wind instruments play the same passage. Other times, he substituted a *forte* where he'd previously written *piano*, or *crescendo* where we usually expect a *diminuendo*. Or he eliminated some notes… but all composers do this.

I: Whilst you were rehearsing the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, we checked with the score and discovered that you played some notes that don't exist in the original score, that's to say that you added them.

WM: Yes, Tchaikovsky added them personally in the score that Modest gave me. The last two times he played this symphony in Moscow, he made some changes, mainly in the finale. In fact, the structure of the finale was a bit of an anti-climax, in its architecture. Tchaikovsky realised he had a problem, so he shortened this section and therefore strengthened it; it is much more beautiful now. Modest asked me to play it the same way, because his brother attached a great deal of importance to the changes he had made.

I: Professor, are you playing the middle movement as it is written or are you making some changes there too?

WM: No, no, there will be no changes, I don't make any changes within a movement. I only make some adjustments; in other words I make some small improvements and only where the composer himself has made them to his own score.[25]

Mengelberg's Tchaikovsky recordings include the following: the last three symphonies (*4th*, *5th*, and *6th*), two overtures (*1812* and the above-mentioned *Romeo and Juliet*), the *Serenade for Strings*, the *First Piano Concerto* (with the German pianist Conrad Hansen as a soloist), and an early acoustic recording of *Marche Slave*. In a few cases we have more than one version of the same music. Such is the *Fifth Symphony* (recorded both in 1928,[26] with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and in 1940, with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra) and the *Serenade for Strings*. A special case is the *Sixth Symphony*, which was recorded in both 1937 and 1941,[27] with Concertgebouw Orchestra, as well as with New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. However, the early NYPSO acoustic recording includes just two of the movements (even those

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[25] This excerpt is part of the 1938, February 8th Mengelberg radio interview in Munich unearthed by the Tahra label (Myriam Scherchen and René Trémine).

[26] That is besides an earlier 1927 attempt at two of the movements, not too different in conception from the complete 1928 78 set, and published only in France, as well as a close-to-complete live recording made in 1939.

[27] Both the 1937 and the 1941 recordings of the *Pathétique* were made for *Telefunken*.

are abridged). The existence of multiple recordings offers insights regarding the way Mengelberg's interpretative conceptions and treatment of orchestral playing evolved over time; these recordings also show how a roughly similar interpretative plan could be projected differently at the level of details, and to which extent a specific orchestra affected the interpretation or, in turn, was molded by the conductor's own conception.[28]

Let us turn to Mengelberg's recordings of the *Pathétique*. There was no drastic advance in terms of recording technology from 1937 to 1941, so we surmise that Mengelberg was not happy with either technical or interpretative aspects of the 1937 recording.[29] We couldn't detect anything unsatisfactory technically in the 1937 recording, so the interpretative hypothesis would have to be endorsed. Nevertheless, the two recordings are mostly similar in terms of interpretative choices. The 1941 recording has slightly improved recorded sound, the bass has more presence, but the one sizable difference between the two versions consists in the fact that the later version of the fourth movement, *Adagio lamentoso*, lasts one full minute longer (circa nine minutes versus circa eight[30]). This is one of only a couple of times, during Mengelberg's contract with *Telefunken,* that a work was recorded twice, with both versions sent into the record stores.[31] In absence of other documentation (such as correspondence with Telefunken producers), it appears that Mengelberg may have felt the fourth movement in the ~8 minute 1937 recording was too "rushed through."

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[28] I elaborate on this latter aspect in Chapter IV, when discussing Mengelberg's recordings of *Egmont.*
[29] Ironically, the 1937 recording was much more widely available in Mengelberg's posterity than the 1941 one, the latter first acquired by the author in the late 1980s, on an expensive black, out-of-print Telefunken LP.
[30] In assessing the exact timing of a recording, a particular transfer and pitch reference can cause slight variations in the total timing.
[31] Telefunken also recorded Mengelberg's Beethoven *Fifth Symphony* and one Berlioz overture twice – see attached discography.

After the year 2000, the French label *Tahra* has published three volumes of hitherto unavailable Mengelberg recordings. They are referred to in the discography. In more recent years (2009), the last so far hitherto unpublished Mengelberg recordings surfaced and were published by *Malibran Music*: a couple of Salzburg Festival recordings with Wiener Philharmoniker discussed in Chapter IV, as well as substantial works recorded live during Mengelberg's 1944 concerts with *Le Grand Orchestre de Radio-Paris*[32]. Among these recordings, a third – unhoped for – quasi-complete[33] Mengelberg *Pathétique* was included. The duration of the *Adagio Lamentoso* exceeds twelve minutes. We are not yet in Celibidache or late Bernstein[34] territory, in slowness, but compared to the earlier version(s) the timing is 40-50% longer. A quite significant change.

One is reminded of young Karajan's observation inspired by Mengelberg's guest-conducting the Aachen orchestra: "Karajan also noted Mengelberg's trick of using slightly quicker tempi in rehearsal so as to give his players the sense of having more time 'live' in concert". [35] It could be argued that fitting the movement on two 78 sides, in the case of the commercial recordings, may have involved faster tempi but, had Mengelberg considered twelve

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[32] Later that year, Soulima Stravinsky was among the soloists of Mengelberg's Beethoven cycle in Paris, participating in the performance of the Triple Concerto.

[33] A few bars are missing, likely due to clumsy acetate disc switching.

[34] Bernstein's view of the *Pathétique* exhibits a longer than 17 minutes *Adagio Lamentoso*, in the last, New York Philharmonic recording. By comparison the earlier Bernstein commercial version, also with New York Philharmonic, should be considered short, at less than 12 minutes. Curiously, the first halves of the two versions are mostly phrased, voiced, and colored similarly, beyond the issue of tempo. At the end of the later, 1987 version though, during the final "requiem"-rendition of the second theme (B Minor instead of D Major, with lowered second degrees in the harmony) Bernstein goes though from a truly slow tempo to an "impossibly" slow one. It devolves to a tempo of ♩ = 20, then even slower! Whether the effect is overwhelming, like being embraced by the "breath of death," or just exaggerated is not to this writer to decide. It is an interesting interpretative experiment, worth hearing once in any event.

[35] Richard Osborne, *Herbert von Karajan – a Life in Music*, p. 104.

minutes as necessary to do justice to the movement at the time, he would have likely demanded three 78 sides from the Telefunken producers.[36]

Mengelberg's studio recordings were excellent, rivalling (and chronologically sandwiching between them) Furtwängler's classic recording with Berliner Philharmoniker, made for HMV in 1938. The live Mengelberg recording (made as a guest conductor, in 1944) is though extraordinary, with huge and meaningful tempo modifications, dark sonorities[37] which seem to come from a time machine having recorded some 19th century orchestral concert. One hears a type of heart-on-sleeve, sincere emotionalism, unique within the extensive discography of the work, not in lack of memorable recordings. Based on Bruno Walter's descriptions,[38] we can imagine this is how Gustav Mahler was rehearsing and conducting.

There is a characteristic form of rhythmic flexibility Mengelberg used, which could be called "structural *rubato*." Rather vague descriptions of *rubato* in past decades have given way to more systematic approaches in recent years. One of the articulate pioneers in these regards has been William Heiles,[39] who talks about structural implications in micro-*rubato* – or "rhythmic

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[36] This is one of few instances in which the assertion of Giorgio Graziosi, according to whom Mengelberg was taking more time in live concerts than on recordings, verify. (Graziosi heard Mengelberg live on multiple occasions.) "Mengelberg (…) in esecuzioni in pubblico era molto piu lento e scandito di quanto si riveli nelle incisioni: almeno per quanto ci consta personalmente." (Giorgio Graziosi, *L'Interpretazione Musicale*, p. 177)

[37] While not equally accomplished, the 1932 version of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Oskar Fried (the forgotten Mahler collaborator driven away by the Nazis and shipwrecked in Moscow, where he died in 1941), and the Nikolai Golovanov version with the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra are among few recordings which have something in common with these rarely heard orchestral colors. As a curiosity worthy of being mentioned in a writing about the "master of 'changements' ", among Stokowski's many versions of the work, the July 1945 version made with Hollywood Bowl Orchestra exhibits some interesting rewritings in the *Adagio lamentoso,* such as iterating the main theme for the last time, on the F# pedal point, with strings re-written *ottava alta* by Stokowski himself.

[38] Descriptions can be read in Bruno Walter's ample memoir *Theme and Variations* (pp. 76-79) as well as in his smaller book *Gustav Mahler* (Dover Publications, sl, 2013).

[39] William Hunter Heiles, *Rhythmic nuance in Chopin performances recorded by Moriz Rosenthal, Ignaz Friedman, and Ignaz Jan Paderewski,* DMA dissertation, University of Illinois, 1964.

nuance," as he called it[40] – detectable in the performances of great Romantic pianists (this, in modernist times, when "old-fashioned" *rubato* was frequently dismissed as a merely emotional, skin-deep flourish.) By structural *rubato* we mean a rhythmic/agogic modification which works both in the "now" and in the grand image. It sounds expressive in an immediate manner, yet it also clarifies interpretatively elements of structure which would otherwise remain obscure.

Listening to Mengelberg's rendition of the second theme in the first movement of Tchaikovsky's *Sixth* – the (melodically, not harmonically) pentatonic D Major melody – one notices some phrasing never heard before or after. Invariably, the first three pitches (**F# E D**) are emphatically lingered upon. On first hearing it sounds like expressive hesitations on the three eighth notes on the upbeat. More significantly, Mengelberg's rubato helps establishing a complicated net of motivic connections between the "thematic head" of the D Major theme on one hand and various other sections of the whole symphony**.** Would it be possible to establish the said thematic affinities without Mengelberg's "structural *rubato*"? It would likely be, but in his way both the layman and the musician will feel the connection rather than analyze it. Below we underline some instances in which that motif appears, in either obvious ways or somewhat veiled, in movements one, two, and four.

[40] More recent scholars refer to it as "metrical rubato," in opposition and/or complementarity with tempo modifications.

Musical Example 3

Musical Example 3, cont.

IV. (Finale.)

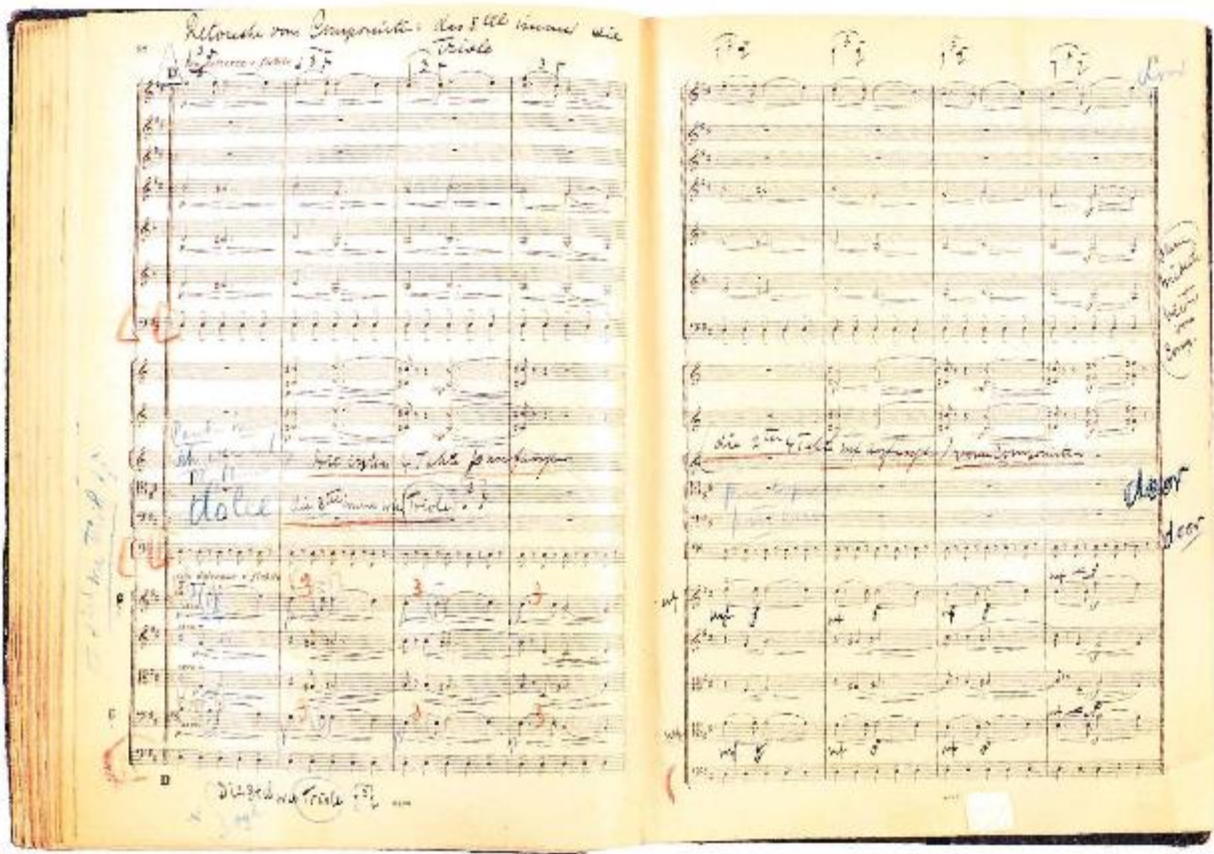
P. Tschaikowsky, Op.74.

Adagio lamentoso

Andante giusto.

Also earning a note is the amount of flexibility Mengelberg applies in the trio of the second movement, the *con dolcezza e flebile* section of the 5/4 waltz. Even for Mengelberg's standards, the amount of *rubato* and tempo changes borders on inordinate. His score bears a note about the eight-notes in the trio theme – "modification from the composer: play as triplet ('triole' in the facsimile)." The eight note which appears on the second half of the second beat over and over is started earlier in the bar and therefore expressively elongated. Whether coming from Tchaikovsky himself or not – given how close to death the composer was when the symphony was finished and performed, we find it less than likely that he had time for the claimed "retouches" – it is an endearing detail. It sounds "flebile" indeed, and quite Tchaikovsky-like in its bitter-sweetness, more on the bitter side, on this modal, exquisitely obsessive pedal point on D.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 4



The trio is not played just in a different mood, but also in a different tempo, much slower than the main waltz theme (which is itself performed on the slow side, compared to other recordings). When the music transitions back towards the waltz (rehearsal letters *G* to *H*), Tchaikovsky places two musical realities in opposition. The plaintive trio theme and the insinuating waltz theme alternate for a while, bar after bar, until the waltz becomes predominant and the reprise ensues (rehearsal letter *H*). Mengelberg uses a blatant *tempo zigzag* in all his *Pathétique* recordings, but most prominently so in 1944. The bars "still in the trio" are played **more than twice** slower than the waltz-anticipating bars. When the waltz-anticipating bars take over, they experience a

rallentando of their own, a huge one, ending in an approximate 4:1 tempo ratio before the actual waltz theme comes back for real at rehearsal letter *H*.

Tchaikovsky didn't write any of these tempo changes. This seems to be one of those instances, a rare one in my experience, in which the accusations of arbitrariness and exaggeration against Mengelberg seem justified. It is possible, on the other hand, to perceive these radical tempo shifts – opposing "blocks of time" more than seamless tempo modifications – as having an unintended modernist bent to them. They sound neither over-Romantic nor sentimental, despite a blatant lack of concern for fidelity to the text. They project something unsettling, bringing out a demonic potential in the graceful piece, which merely lovely and fluent versions wouldn't. The "parallel tempos" device (blocks of tempos alternating and therefore helping in defining opposing thematic entities) we attempted to describe above is used by Mengelberg in more than one recording, but seldom as radically employed. We can't be sure Tchaikovsky ever thought about that when he wrote this elegiac movement, but one can file the radical approach as an interpretation which brings out possible meanings not even the composer could have envisioned.[41]

The rest of this chapter will discuss minutiae of Mengelberg's approach to one of Tchaikovsky's symphonies, more precisely the first movement of the *Fourth Symphony in F Minor*, opus 36. The "fate motto" working as the dramatic overture – and the underlying thematic mortar – of this work has one of the most characteristic, memorable rhythmic profiles imaginable. While not Beethovenian *in spirit*, it could be argued that this theme is one of

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[41] Without forcing an analogy, one is distantly reminded of this description: "In [Stockhausen's] *Zeitmasse* from 1955-6 for five woodwinds, one instrument sometimes retards while another accelerates; still another may at the same time be playing as fast as possible. In some places each player has a different metronome mark. (…)" (Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato*, pp. 426-427)

Tchaikovsky's closest to Beethoven themes in *compositional craft*. Beethoven made a simple repeated pitch, within the main theme of the Scherzo of his Fifth Symphony, memorable through its rhythmical profile. Tchaikovsky does something similar, with the increased complexity of the rhythmical proportions compensating for the lack of explicit (rather than implied) harmonic context. The conductor needs therefore to let the rhythmical specificity speak for itself, which Mengelberg does.

Two immensely gifted conductors, Leopold Stokowski and Constantin Silvestri, saw fit to unnecessarily distort, in our opinion, this beginning in different ways. Silvestri's His Master Voice version, while amazing in most respects, distorts the initial sixteens triplet[s] into three thirty-seconds followed by a thirty-second rest. Apparently Silvestri believed in the judiciousness of his reading, and even had some – possibly apocryphal – substantiating anecdote to account for it, but this one listener can’t see the musical benefit of this decision. Stokowski, in his earliest Philadelphia version, substitutes two sixteenth-notes instead of Tchaikovsky's triplet. One can imagine some subjective logic for Stokowski's choice. Later on in the movement, Stokowski reverts to the composer’s original triplets, so the “fresh” triplets sound like a variational development of the initial group of two notes. However, rather than an imaginative interpretive/phrasing detail, this amounts to a re-writing of Tchaikovsky's music which, while not irredeemably absurd, borders on vulgar. (Both Stokowski's and Silvestri's readings of Tchaikovsky’s *Fourth Symphony* are otherwise among the best on record, in this writer's estimation.)

Mengelberg's reading of the beginning is, by comparison, uneventful. However, the conductor does underline the intervallic “reaching” within the theme – the “stuck” third in the

first three measures, the interval of a fourth in the fourth measure, the fifth in the fifth measure. Mengelberg also projects well the orchestrating detail in measure seven – Tchaikovsky's adding (further) trombones and a tuba, little by little, to the already playing instruments (mainly the bulk of horns, with some color support from bassoons).

Bar 17: within the strings chord, Mengelberg does not bring out the B in the violins, as most conductors would, but the pitch E in the violas, common in the two chords at bars 17 and 19. First within an E Major chord (bar 15), and in bar 17 within an augmented chord in which the pitch E becomes, from a "stable" pitch, the leading tone to the inexorable F Minor chord. Not an earth-shattering detail, but rather characteristic of Mengelberg's uncanny eye for overlooked details.

Moderato with anima (bar 27): Mengelberg phrases this theme in a somewhat simple way, without a lot of *rubato*, but he also makes a point of phrasing beyond Tchaikovsky's relatively fragmented slurs (which could be interpreted anyway as bowing, rather than phrasing), grouping his phrasing impulses on three [compounded] beats patterns, following [beats] 2/3/1, 2/3/1, 2/3/1 etc. patterns. From bar 48 to [upbeat of] bar 53, the listener witnesses a carefully judged *ritenuto*, in which the "one by one" articulation of the descending scale from bar 50 to 53 is being integrated within the cadential slowing down pattern. The teacher in Mengelberg tells us: now something else starts. Not in a pedantic way, though, but with enough fluidity as to redeem the, here, predictable rhetoric.

During the transitional fugato between bars 53 and 70, Mengelberg shows interest in balancing the orchestral compartments, not only according to Tchaikovsky's stated dynamics, but in relation to the projection of polyphonic clarity. E.g.: in bars 60-63 Tchaikovsky writes

crescendo, reaching a general *mezzo forte* in bar 63. Mengelberg shapes that slightly differently. In bar 64 he instills an unwritten diminuendo in the strings, allowing for the wind instruments' entrance to capture the listener's attention. Not only that but, in bars 62-63, Mengelberg has the lower strings play louder than the second violins, despite Tchaikovsky's written dynamics suggesting that the lower strings reach a *mezzo forte* within *crescendo* later than the violins (second part of bar 63).

We've already mentioned the sense of chamber-music collaboration Mengelberg could instill in his hundred-some musicians. That skill was involved evidently in passages which were already written in a chamber-music-like style – transparent orchestration, little wind solos responding to each other on an (amplified) string quartet background – such as the transition towards the second thematic group, and the second thematic group itself (bars 104 to 116, and then bar 116 and after). It would be a stretch to claim that the application of chamber music skills to such musical passages would be characteristic of Willem Mengelberg alone. A considerable number of conductors, from his generation and others accomplish that to various degrees. What is peculiar to Mengelberg is the application of similar skills to passages which are extremely densely orchestrated, often sounding like scarcely differentiated, generic tuttis. We are talking about subtle dynamic differentiation *within the loudest, thickest tuttis*, one of the hardest things to do for a conductor.

Discussing these skills would be germane to Mengelberg's two recordings (1928, New York; 1941, Amsterdam) of Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* – an epitome of the conductor's skill in clarifying dense textures through unwritten, pragmatic rhythmical and dynamic

nuances.[42] Nevertheless, a good example of it can be found in the recording under discussion, between [upbeat of] bar 82 and bar 104. For three pages of the general score, Tchaikovsky wrote down a couple of accents, a couple of fortes in horns and trumpets (only in the first ten bars), and a good number of reiterated fortissimos for all the other parts, for the entire twenty+ bars. No wonder some recordings sound bland here, with the uninflected strength of the orchestral tuttis losing perceptional interest through dynamic inflation. It's not happening in this version. The complexity of the interpretative decisions he makes is remarkable.

Musical Example 5

[42] Mengelberg's detailed work on *Ein Heldenleben* is being cogently described by Bernard Shore, in *The Orchestra Speaks*, pp. 118-124.

Musical Example 5, cont.

Bar 82: the interplay between winds and lower strings is clarified by asking the cellos to play softer in the beginning, when they double the secondary ("filling") sixteenths of the viola, and louder when they shift gears into doubling the thematic material in the double basses. The violins, which expose a scalar counterpoint in bars 82-86, are also shaped, starting their pattern in a softer dynamic, perhaps *mezzo forte*, following a strong accent followed by sudden diminuendo and becoming more present at the end, with an accent on the highest note, without surpassing a *forte*. Not only that, but the long notes by horns and trumpets, notated by Tchaikovsky as *forte*, are being granted by the conductor an initial accent with *subito diminuendo* as well, followed by a *crescendo*. Therefore, through means of unwritten interpretive articulation, even within these secondary, non-thematic elements, an aesthetical correspondence between the long notes in the violins (bars 82 and 84) and the long notes in the trumpets and horns (bars 83 and 85) is being created, contributing to the meaningful complexity of the musical experience. Further down, in bars 86-92: Tchaikovsky takes the characteristic uneven triplet from the opening "motto" theme and repeats it obsessively, with no other rhythmic event happening, fifteen times! A challenge inherent in the orchestration is that the switch back and forth from the strings to winds and vice versa does not happen on the "strong" note of the triplet, but after it. As a result, in many performances, the listener may be confused about the metrical identity of the music. An unaccented, generic *fortissimo* performance nourishes the erroneous perception of the second note of the triplet being the first, especially if the music is experienced without a score. Metrical structure becomes clear again in bar 92, with the familiar downbeat of the theme in its original, F Minor key. Mindful of that, Mengelberg asks both strings and winds to accentuate the third note of each of their groups – which "third note" is the first note of each triplet! Any confusion is avoided in a way which will be "instinctive" to the audience, but highly

cerebral from the point of view of the conductor's decisions involved. Last but not least, Mengelberg instills an unwritten *diminuendo* between bar 87 and the upbeat of bar 92. (Let's remember Tchaikovsky only wrote a *fortissimo* for the whole section.)

It could be argued that Mengelberg's reasoning may have followed the rhetorical question: if indeed bar 91 is (still) in *fortissimo*, why writing another one? It has to be softer. Another – second – possibility is that Mengelberg took Tchaikovsky's dynamic indications to have more of a "*loco* effect," à la Schumann. Thirdly, on an emotional level, one needs to ponder the significance of the return to F Minor, here and later, within this specific composition. After exposing the theme (bar 27 et seq.) in f minor, after modulatory inflections within this thematic group (F Minor/ [dominant-focused]B Flat Minor/ [dominant-focused] E Flat Minor/ chromatic passage/ A Minor / d minor / g minor / e minor / a minor), Tchaikovsky uses (bars 87 to 92) a (chromatically embellished) Italian augmented sixth chord (not coincidentally, the same chord first enunciated in bar 15 of the introductory, "motto" theme), in which chord the obsessive fundamental (D Flat) "brings back to memory" the pressure of the "Db C" musical gesture – the "sigh" which starts the theme in bar 27 and is first exposed in the transition (bars 23-26).

(Tchaikovsky confessed to having been inspired by Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Without doubting the weight of that first-hand testimony, one has to wonder whether some piano music didn't haunt Tchaikovsky's memory as well. The obsessive way in which Beethoven uses the "Db C" semitone gesture in his *Sonata opus 57 in F Minor* comes to mind, as well as Chopin's *Fourth Ballade* does. I find a comparison between the final page of the Coda in Tchaikovsky's *Fourth* – bars 412–end) and the last descending run in the coda of Chopin's F Minor (F Minor again) *Ballade* most instructive, in terms of both harmonic and figurative

approach. Also, read below the references to Beethoven's *Sonata opus 13*.)

Let's return to Mengelberg's decision to use that unusual, unwritten *diminuendo* in bars 87-92. To our understanding, his interpretative touch projects the complexity and the significance of the harmonic/thematic events succinctly described above, more satisfactorily than a mere linear fortissimo. Second (A Flat Minor) theme (bar 116 et seq.): this is orchestral chamber music at its finest. As Mengelberg is concerned, it is to be noted, within the delicate string accompaniment, the characteristic attention granted to the bass, as well as the agogic (rather than dynamic) interpretation of the accents on each the first note in the group of four thirty-seconds – a slight prolongation of that first note, which, to our judgment, works better than more direct, dynamics-based accents would.

The unwritten "echo" effect in the new strings figure (bar 134 vs. 133, 138 vs. 137, etc.), one of the few (and deliberately weak, transient) musical motifs in this movement written in the major mode, is lovely but traditional, meaning one can find it in a good number of recordings. The "sneaking in" of an ambiguously quasi-major/chromatic/modal version of the first theme, as an unsuspected counterpoint to the new theme, is being delicately underlined by Mengelberg through a fermata on the first note in the upper strings in both bars 147 and 151. Bar 165 et seq.: the already commented-upon metrical/rhythmical clarity – as respects the uneven, potentially metrically ambiguous triplets – is being reiterated. In this case, the conductor's intervention and right accents are being called upon even more strongly, insofar the emphasis on second-eighth-note-syncopation is being accentuated within Tchaikovsky's orchestration, through the trombone/clarinet/bassoon's reinforcing the referred syncopation.

Once the development starts, Mengelberg's artful pacing and especially voicing expose

some of the qualities we have commented upon already. Tchaikovsky starts (bar 211 et seq.) to willfully emphasize in his writing, with explicit accents, the by-now-notorious second eight-note in the uneven triplets but, on a perception level, Mengelberg's having already rendered the baseline so clear within the exposition provides the perfect background for "against-the-grain" accentuations to occur, with no loss in clarity. At bar 237 a moment of peculiar compositional mastery occurs. One witnesses (bars 237-254) a memorably long sequence. The specialness of this sequence is due to the composer more than to any interpreter. It is a moment which risks to either sound trite, parodically so, or to impress through the composer's ability to animate a potentially enervated, repetitious sequence with harmonic brilliance, with a sense of cumulative detail which redeems it into an ample arch of sustainable dramatic insistence.

Musical Example 6

Mengelberg's self-conscious, yet fluid art of agogics (micro-*rubato*), combined with skillful tempo modifications, is in full play here. The "pay attention, something special is about to happen" moment is being interpretively signaled through the conspicuous slowing down (almost doubling) of the two pick-up eight-notes in the violins and violas preceding bar 237. The tentative *a tempo* following is necessarily faster than the pick-up, but not yet as fast as the "main tempo" preceding them. Between bars 237 and 254 the conductor speeds up quite gradually, reaching again and then surpassing bar 235's tempo. By the time bar 254, after an apt on the bar-line *Luftpause*, a point within the musical form is being reached - a false recapitulation in Beethovenian vein, the "wrong key" and the "motto" theme of the introduction, rather than the "legitimate" first theme being used). The initial sense of tempo seems to take over, but with a more alert pacing, given the pre-climactic character of the moment.

After one more false (tentative) recap, bar 264, moved half-step up from A Minor to B Flat Minor, Tchaikovsky finally lands on the "right" key, at bar 278, with trumpets playing (originally in the horns) the motto theme with the same pitches as in the original utterance. Only that, instead of the original unison, one hears simultaneously the exact moving harmonic sands I have referred to in a paragraph above, i.e., the characteristic "Db C" bass-line (here in contrabasses, tubas, and bassoons), superposing Italian augmented sixth chords over the already familiar motto theme. Tchaikovsky marks the moment as *fff*, which with him might mean "really loud," as opposed to f or ff – "merely/somewhat loud". (Not unlike Beethoven's use of *f* versus *ff*. Beethoven used *fff* extremely sparingly, in places such as the recapitulation of the first movement of his *Eighth Symphony*.)

Late in his life, particularly in his *Sixth Symphony*, Tchaikovsky used dynamics such as

pppppp or *fffff*, Ligeti-like in their apparent excess, which asks the performer to create more subtle, intermediate levels of dynamics, for dynamics such as single *forte* or single *piano*, rather than a level of softness or loudness exceeding either the limits of the audible range or those of producible decibels still qualifying as music[43]. On an interpretative level, Mengelberg does not use any striking devices in this passage, allowing the music to speak for itself to an extent. As always in such sections, he does make a point of balancing the orchestral compartments in ways which go beyond the generic *fff* suggested by the score itself.

This writer is certainly not the first to notice a tendency within Romantic sonata form to compress the recapitulation, often as a compensation to the expanding of the coda. It could be that composers became gradually fonder of the idea of avoiding sheer repetition, with the mere switching of some tonal centers, in favor of creating even more developmental material in an expanded coda, which becomes a second quasi-development, occasionally rivaling the "legitimate" development in both size and dramatic import. (The first movement in Beethoven's *Third Symphony* might be epitomic to such a train of symphonic thought.) Chopin pushed things even further, in a somewhat odd way, excising in the first movement of both his later piano sonatas the first theme from the recapitulation altogether, and going back directly to the second thematic group in way of "aborted" recapitulation. No wonder Chopin's most organic and original formal accomplishments survive in Ballades, not in the sonatas.

In Tchaikovsky's *Fourth*, the problematic denouement of the first movement's recap is

[43] Insofar there is a limit to how loud and how soft an instrument can reasonably play, one should look for more intermediate nuances, rather than for more extreme… extremes, as Schuller observes. When Tchaikovsky writes during the last eight bars of the exposition, in his Sixth Symphony, *ppp*, then *pppp*, then *ppppp*, then (for the last four notes, given to the bassoon) *pppppp*, the only way of projecting that is by having the *ppp* played like a regular *piano*. Toscanini intimidating his poor bassoon player (regarding those notes apparently never being soft enough) is an example of literalism gone bad.

accentuated by the ambiguity of the role the “motto” theme (bar 1) plays versus the traditional “first theme” (bar 27), within the thematic economy of the section. Tchaikovsky was perhaps influenced – while he hadn’t imitated it at all – by the initial movement of Beethoven’s *Sonata opus 13*, rather than, for instance, by Beethoven’s *First Symphony*. In the latter (in other works as well), the introduction is a true introduction, with little claims to the developmental identity of the main sonata form. In the *Sonata opus 13* instead, Beethoven seems to be undecided, to experiment, and it is this experimental quality which renders the form both ambiguous and challenging. The introduction is so weighty, so thematically charged and full of potential, that it appears, in highly concentrated/concise shapes, both at the beginning of the development and at the end – (*not*) at the beginning, though – of the recap. Not only that, but the “*Pathétique*” motif (incidentally but not coincidentally used, pitch-wise, by Tchaikovsky in the main theme of his Sixth Symphony – C D [Eb] Eb D in Beethoven versus B C# D C# in Tchaikovsky) even provides some hidden thematic counterweight at the beginning of the development in Beethoven’s *Sonata Pathétique* (octaves in E Minor – bars 139-140 and in G Minor – bars 145-146).

Tchaikovsky makes more of the return of the motto theme than of that of the “first” theme, and he concentrates (shortens) the latter within a pedal point, second inversion D Minor-based, within the space of a mere 8 measures (284-292). Mengelberg chooses to underline the “new” trombones-placed counterpoint, which seems to contain in it (bars 287-288 especially) the many-times-augmented profile of the descending chromatic figure pertaining to the secondary theme (see bar 296).

We will not dilute this analysis by commenting upon similar elements of interpretation,

due to the similar nature of reiterated musical material. About the coda: compositional magic is being exercised in the phrase between bars 365 and 377.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 7

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 7, CONT.

The bass-line (a simple scalar descending figure, from Db to F) seems to have an existence of its own, a modicum of “parallel music” (not anywhere near Ives’ concept of such). Tchaikovsky builds up an enormous musical parenthesis (bars 365-373), in which the D Flat Major universe seems to have its own existence and stability, due to the complexity of the musical events above the bass-line – the flutes theme, the first theme-derived inner voices, and more. However, in bar 374, it all seems to be a last illusion crumbling again. The stable, static bass-D Flat (the falsely bucolic beginning of Mahler’s *First Symphony* comes to mind, rather than the beginning of Wagner’s *Ring*, in terms of analogical “static major” moments) slides down into the fatal C. Not only is the moment a compositionally and emotionally augmented reiteration of the already mentioned, emblematic “Db C” sigh first exposed in bars 23-26[44] but, considering the whole Db C Bb Ab G F line of the bass, it also represents an Urlinie-reduced, a hypostasis of the first theme (see bars 27-30 in the example below), “hidden” in the bass (see the second score of the example above), like a fateful grinder of all hope and illusion.

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[44] Similarities with modulational relationships in Beethoven’s *Appassionata* and Chopin’s *F Minor Ballade* would be worthy of a separate study.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 8

Mengelberg projects this imagery (bars 365-373) as if conducting with three hands. The tension inherent in the static D Flat pedal point is neither impeded nor interrupted by the necessity to actually beat the relatively complicated musical events built upon it. Neither is the flutes' phrase interrupted or affected by the rhythmical counterpoint in the higher strings.

Some of the imagery we've alluded to may seem a tad overblown or unduly programmatic. Let's not forget though that, in a letter to Taneyev, who had expressed critical reservations towards the *Fourth Symphony*, Tchaikovsky himself defended his approach to the symphony genre with a *cri de cœur* of Mahlerian intensity: "Ought not a symphony, which is the most lyrical of all musical forms, express everything for which there are no words, but which the soul wishes to express and cries out to be expressed?"

CHAPTER II. MENGELBERG'S BRAHMS

One of Willem Mengelberg's revered teachers was Franz Wüllner (1830-1902), himself an influential musical figure during the second half of the 19th century. Wüllner counted among his mentors Anton Schindler, the somewhat controversial (testimonial credibility partially restored today) "private secretary" and devoted disciple of Beethoven. Mengelberg wasn't shy about explaining some of his "changements"[45] (sic) in Beethoven's music he was conducting through a direct Beethoven lineage.

Bernard Shore, principal viola in BBC Symphony at the time, left a portrait of Mengelberg in rehearsals, mostly positive, anecdotal quirks apart: "His interpretations, intensely personal and vivid, have his great conviction behind them. Though he may depart from the directions of the composer, audience and orchestra alike are carried away by the grip and mastery of it all. He holds everyone close, and a whole department of strings will think that his eye is compelling each man individually."[46] In the following passage, the idiosyncratic claims are already hinted at (Bernard Shore attempts to imitate Mengelberg's own English. The subsistent spoken documents have Mengelberg speak in Dutch or German. It is difficult to evaluate whether his English accent was really that strong or Shore exaggerates for comic effect.):

> Beethoven, like many other composers, sometimes made changements in his scores, even after publication, and then he also was deaf. So vy not the conductor also, who often knows mooch better than the composer? I vos de best pupil of Svhidler [note the license here, in fact Mengelberg was at most the pupil of a pupil of "Svhidler"], who vos the best pupil of Beethoven, zo I know vat Beethoven meant. Zo, in dis verk of Strauss [Ein Heldenleben]; I haf been great friend of

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[45] "Changements" is being quoted by Shore as the French-English "word" Mengelberg used to describe his score alterations.
[46] Bernard Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, p. 125.

> Richard Strauss since I vos a boy, and I know joost what he wants, and ve vill make some changements also!"[47]

Wüllner, as a conductor and musical friend of Mengelberg, was strongly connected to both Wagner and Brahms: "(…) Mengelberg also went to his former teacher for advice on Bach interpretation. Wüllner could advise on tempos in such works as the *Missa Solemnis* of Beethoven, practical solutions for instrumentation in Bach's cantatas and for soloists for the *St. Matthew Passion*".[48]

Recorded evidence of Mengelberg's adventuring into Wagnerian territory is scarce. These include an early acoustic disc of *Flying Dutchman*, as well as an electric 78 of *Meistersinger Prelude*, played with less elemental darkness-in-light, but with more transparency than the famous Furtwängler recording made during World War II in Berlin. A few other small extracts, arguably chosen for the reason of fitting so well gramophone discs rather than as choices of musical favorites per se. A recurring choice seems to have been the *Tannhäuser Overture* (the Dresden version), which, in itself, is more of an orchestral showpiece than an expression of a commitment to the Wagnerian cause.

Mengelberg, alone among the most famous conductors of the time, was not an opera conductor. He defined himself as a symphonic conductor. The one biography published during his lifetime was called *Mengelberg and the* ***Symphonic*** *Epoch*. Towards the end of his doctoral presentation in 1928 mentioned at length in the introductory chapter, the conductor wrote: "Every age creates its ideals, its own forms in the cosmos. Our age has found the deepest, most endurable, most comprehensive expression in the **symphony**. The whole social life of the

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[47]Bernard Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, p. 119.
[48] *Gemeentemuseum*, pp. 20-21.

last century has become, as it were, transcendental reality in **symphonic art**. Here is a spiritual, a rich possession!"

Brahms was second only to Beethoven and Tchaikovsky in Mengelberg's preferred 19th century repertoire. His recordings show an affinity with his music based on decades of patient study. (During the second half of his career, Mengelberg did not often conduct Bruckner and no known recording has surfaced. Yet he remained an active proponent of Bruckner's music at the threshold of the twentieth century. According to the biographer Fritz Zwart, the conductor programmed in Amsterdam all of Bruckner's symphonies except no. 5, which seems odd, inasmuch as its finale contains a monumental fugue, a feature that should have attracted Mengelberg. Mengelberg's favorites among these symphonies were the two works in D minor (nos. 3 and 9), a circumstance perhaps linked in turn to Mengelberg's great esteem of Beethoven's final symphony in the same key.)

Mengelberg's recorded Brahms legacy reads as follows:

- *Symphony no. 1*
  - the third movement (Columbia studio recording, 1930);
  - a complete live recording (1940), which was part of the Philips label's legacy of live Mengelberg;
  - another complete live recording (1943, discovered posthumously, and published for the first time in 2000, on the Tahra label, at the initiative of Myriam Scherchen);
- *Symphony no. 2* – one recording (Telefunken studio recording, 1940)
- *Symphony no. 3*

- a studio recording (Columbia 1932, observes the repeat of the exposition in the first movement);
- a live recording (February 1944; as far as known, it might be part of the last recorded concert of Mengelberg with the Concertgebouw Orchestra[49]; it skips the repeat of the exposition);

- *Symphony no. 4* – one recording (Telefunken studio recording, 1938);
- *Academic Overture* – one recording (Columbia studio recording, 1930);
- *Tragic Overture* – one recording (Telefunken studio recording, 1942);
- *Ein deutsches Requiem* – one live recording, 1940.
- *Violin Concerto* – one live recording (1943, soloist being the young Herman Krebbers, later to become Concertgebouw Orchestra's esteemed concertmaster).

All cited recordings were made with Concertgebouworkest Amsterdam. While these recordings have been, for decades, esoteric "collector items," Mengelberg's Brahms recordings are easier to find nowadays, in decent-to-excellent CD transfers. Listening to them reveals both general characteristics pertaining to the interpretive trends of the era, and extremely individualized performance decisions, allocable to Mengelberg only.

We mentioned Mengelberg claiming a lineage to Brahms through Franz Wüllner (1832-1902). The latter was a friend and collaborator of Brahms; they published together, in 1891, an edition of Schumann's *Fourth Symphony*. His compositions mostly forgotten, Wüllner was nevertheless a strong influence in the German musical life, towards the end of his life in a

[49] Mengelberg's truly last concert with Concertgebouw, and of his entire career, which went unrecorded, took place on June 18th, 1944, and featured, appropriately, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. It wasn't long after Mengelberg came back from his last international tour.

pedagogic way, in his elected residence, Köln. While it is possible that his professor gave Mengelberg first-hand details pertaining to a genuine oral "Brahms tradition," this kind of claims would be often debatable (to be taken *cum grano salis*), unless corroborating evidence exists. The connection Mengelberg-Wüllner is nevertheless well established and Mengelberg writes in his own score comments coming from Wüllner.

> Of those conductors who modified tempo in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly Willem Mengelberg (pupil of Franz Wüllner), Herman Abendroth, and Wilhelm Furtwängler (pupils of Felix Mottl, himself a pupil of Otto Dessoff), may well have retained vestiges of the Brahmsian ideal, and passed these on to us through their important legacy of orchestral recordings. But, as may be readily deduced from all the evidence in this study, individual conducting personalities and capabilities were (as they indubitably are also today) sui generis (…)[50]

What interests even more though is what Mengelberg himself saw in (and conveyed in his interpretations of) Brahms's symphonies. In *The Essence and Effect of Music*, Mengelberg asserted: "Dreamy, romantic accents (Mendelssohn, Schumann) arose in it [the 19th century individualism], followed by contemplative and finally melancholy, pessimistic moods (Brahms, Tchaikovsky). Then there grew out of pessimism a great longing and the striving toward a n e w i d e a l: toward a community transcending the individual."

Even if one might wish he developed his written ideas on Brahms more than that, there may be a key to the aesthetic placement of Mengelberg in relation with Brahms. After all, the conductor wrote in the same address [capitals in the original]: "PHILOSOPHY IS THE HIGHEST ASPIRATION OF MAN; MUSIC IS THE MOST HUMAN REVELATION OF GOD." He couldn't be far away from Brahms's own understanding of music as a spiritual, consoling force.

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[50] *Flexible tempo and nuancing in orchestral music*, in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performing Style*, p. 237.

Mengelberg exhibited a protean musical adaptability. He was true to himself, but different in each performance, fundamentally free – ironically, given some of the criticism – of inchoate mannerisms.[51] Mengelberg evidenced non-continuous use of vibrato, rich *portamento*s (an important aspect that shall be discussed in detail), predilection for *ritenuto*s at the end of the "crucial" phrases, due emphasis on secondary elements of the score (e.g., a viola figuration or a flute-staccato "subsidiary line") and, last not least, what we called structural *rubato*. These are unpredictably and discriminately involved, as per the specific musical work they are used in.

Emotional complexity and wholeness coexist with an eagle eye for the intricacies of the textural details. We suggested Mengelberg could afford more rhythmic and agogic license than other conductors because he could also be indelibly precise, when desirable. Mengelberg employs various unwritten interpretative inflections in Brahms's *Fourth Symphony*. We note a suddenly slower tempo (approximately sixteen metronome-points) as soon as bars 13-14. (Effect: the first motive within the first theme, the descending third, here diminished in half when compared to the initial values, becomes recognizable.) The movement is slightly sped up in bars 15-16. (Effect: the A-A#-B motif, latent in the violins in bars 15-16, motif which will be, much later, part of the *Passacaglia* theme, is brought out.) A new *ritenuto* in bars 17-18 clarifies the double-octave-registered response (w. first violins, then oboe on beats 3 and 4, in bar 17). In the cello-horn theme (bars 57 et seq.), Mengelberg seems unhappy with the degree to which the successive syncopations (bars 59, 61, 63, 67, 69, 71) are naturally heard, so he "helps" them, by introducing idiosyncratic "Luftpausen" (i.e., by shortening the value of each note that precedes a syncopation). In bar 73, Mengelberg is keen to observe with utmost exactitude the placement of

[51] Mengelberg certainly employed consistently some manners of articulation, but not thoughtlessly, rather in relation with the individual interpretative challenges of the specific work.

the fourth beat (in the strings, flutes) in the middle of the other winds' triplet (as opposed to the wrong rendition of that rhythm – having the fourth beat played simultaneously with the last note of the triplet). In this way, a less than obvious Brahmsian "2 against 3" does not pass unnoticed, nor its rhythmical/metrical potential wasted. In bar 80, Mengelberg "corrects" (better said, puts in perspective) Brahms's balance, by asking the winds to play *mf*, not *forte*, in order to match the dynamic level of the string *pizzicato*. A new *ritenuto*, in bar 94, is attracting attention to the fact that, after bars 91-92-93 (in which first and second violins played, synchronized but at the distance of an octave, the same melody), in bar 94 the first and second violins start dialoguing lovingly, in an intimate *intermezzo* manner.

Mengelberg brings out the celli divisi and the basses, in bars 155-156, because the bulk of harmonic events happens in that section of the orchestra, and because Mengelberg is aware that the development started in the same way as the exposition. Only in bars 155-156 cellos and basses bring the modulation to the new key, G Minor. (On a compositional level, this is also a delicate Brahmsian homage to the way Mozart modulates from G Minor to F Sharp Minor at the beginning of the development in his 40th Symphony, first movement, and also at the beginning of the finale's development.) Moreover, that procedure is repeated on a (dynamics-wise) greater scale, in bars 167-168, this time from G Minor to B Flat Minor (which gives a development's harmonic scheme of E Minor-G Minor-B Flat Minor, in thirds again). One rarely hears the eighth note-two sixteenth notes rhythm rendered so perfectly (in *Allegro giocoso*), or the articulation of the accentuated quarter notes followed by staccato triplets (bars 258-275 of the same, third movement) so properly proportioned.

Ingenious interpretative options are reserved for the final Passacaglia, besides the expected high-quality articulation and clarity. (As an example of the latter, in the strings sixteenths variation, bar 65 et seq., Mengelberg registers a sudden tempo decrease, avoiding an aberrantly fast tempo for those technically awkward string figurations. A technique-motivated decision corroborating a mood/character element of diversity, within the variational development.) A more substantial challenge with the fourth movement is the Passacaglia theme being frequently inaudible in many variations, due to it being hidden in an orchestration which doesn't always make it obvious, or to insufficiently clear balances imposed by conductors. However, Mengelberg does indeed bring out the Passacaglia theme even in demanding parts of the score.

For instance, Brahms placed the theme of the Passacaglia in the violas' and cellos' pizzicato (bar 17 et seq.). Due to frequent neglecting of viola material in orchestral balances, as well a trend towards an excessive smoothness of pizzicatos (they are frequently as well blended as to be inaudible), also due to the fact that the cellos have relatively complicated chords to play pizzicato, finally due to the fact that horns are only playing the first three pitches of the Passacaglia theme, the listener seldom perceives the underlying thematic material "happening" under the winds. Mengelberg notices that Brahms doubles the violas with the upper part of the cellos' pizzicato chords, so he asks for an assertive sound from the violas themselves. Thus the theme is presented with clarity and eloquence, not covered up by the "solo" winds. In bars 81-86, Mengelberg privileges the cello pitches in the bars 81-85 (E F# G A), with molto vibrato applied to the violins on their A# in bar 85. This way, Mengelberg reconstitutes the mosaic of the "encrypted" Passacaglia theme, out of disparate cello and violin pitches, a **Klangfarbenmelodie** *avant la lettre*.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 9

In bars 89-92, Mengelberg asks for an unwritten *crescendo-decrescendo*, in the cello-viola octaves, again redeeming on a perceptual level an otherwise inaudible theme. The flute variation, an epitomical example of Brahms's reimagining the ancient art of recitativo, is shaped with well-judged *rubato*, taking advantage of a texture which lends itself to flexibility, in its chamber-music like transparency (*piano dolce* in strings and Horns in E).

A structural element in the "second climax" of the first movement in Brahms' *Fourth Symphony* shouldn't be overlooked. It is the climax that takes place within the Coda, which,

rather than a Coda, becomes a second development. (Not unlike in works such as Beethoven's *Eroica*, *Waldstein*, *Appassionata*, the *Ninth Symphony*. This Brahms movement is, not coincidentally, the only among four of its kind not to have the exposition repeated, as in Beethoven's opera 57, 110, and 125 among others.) The structural element mentioned above is more a compositional than an interpretative one. An element which in older recordings (admittedly, not only in Mengelberg's, but also in versions left by Furtwängler, Walter, Klemperer, the younger yet traditionalist in his aesthetics Carlos Kleiber) is being emphasized with particular vividness.

Our conjecture is that Brahms was fascinated with the extraordinarily dramatic enharmonic modulation used by Schubert in his own *Erlkönig*, in a concentrated form, in the climax of the piece. For the sake of drawing the harmonic parallel more clearly, let's assess Schubert's lied as being written in E Minor, not in G Minor. What is needed to substantiate this conjecture is simply to compare the harmonic procedure used by Schubert in the climax of his own Erlkönig (on the words "Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an! Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan") with what Brahms does in bars [with upbeat] 381 - 394.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 10

The similarity is striking, not only in the structural harmonic outlook (E Flat as the ninth of a clashy D chord, becoming the leading tone D Sharp bringing the impeding tragedy to its closure), but also in the emotional projection as well. A musical metaphor of “passing the River Styx,” succinctly created. In Schubert’s song, based on Goethe’s ballad, the moment has a story-telling quality to it. Brahms seems to project it as an existential assumption of the inevitability of death. (The avoidance of death is also expressed in an attempt to digress harmonically by drawing for a moment a “false cadence,” in a diversionary and short-lived F Major, bar 384, before being chained by the gravitational force of the E Minor tonic.)

Musical Example 11

Mengelberg's recording, while not unique in this regard, projects all that as well as any and better than most.

Similarly perspicacious interpretive options inform all Brahms recordings left by Mengelberg. They will not be discussed at the same level of detail, yet some aspects need to be

mentioned. A Brahms recording which is of historical importance but, as an accomplishment in itself, disappoints in part is Mengelberg's live 1940 version of the *German Requiem*. While this musician obviously admires Mengelberg, pointing out objective limitations is part of what assessment of an artist's legacy should be. In order to place in context Mengelberg's vision, we've listened to most of the commercially available recordings of Brahms' *German Requiem*, score and text in hand. Both the orchestral score and Brahms' own four hands piano version have been consulted.

It would be banal to assert this is not a facile piece. Not easy to play or to listen to, not even today. 140 years ago it was challenging for a choir to get the mere pitches right. Brahms' harmonization, far from the conservative stereotypes (especially in this work), was quasi-avant-garde. Contemporary responses to the German Requiem reveal a strange mixture of awe-filled praise and distinct lack of comprehension. In part, misunderstanding may be attributed to balance problems such as the timpani pedal point on D drowning out the fugal section closing the third movement. Brahms had to revise his markings at this point, in order to discourage the timpanist from seizing this as their shining moment, mainly by indicating more *piano* in the timpani part. At any time, the Requiem can suffer from inadequate and dreary performance, if given inadequate shaping from the podium and insufficient vocal preparation on behalf of the soloists and chorus.

There are a number of versions which are expectedly professional yet, at a high level of exigency, can err on the side of blandness, such as the Karajan versions. Thoughtful choral conductors like Robert Shaw have the inherent advantage of not delegating the painstaking choral preparation which is essential to a well-considered performance of the work. The idea of a

choral conductor doing preparatory work while the orchestral conductor comes in at the last moment may be logistically necessary in the context of modern musical life. It won't lead to an ideal cohesion between the minutiae of phrasing as shaped in the orchestral and in the choral parts, in a piece so difficult in that respect. We won't insist on "historically informed [period] performances" which sound inappropriately light and happy. Within the classic interpretative canon, we found rewarding, on the slow side (especially slow in the first movement), the underrated Fritz Lehmann version (better than Celibidache's or Tennstedt's, within a compatible interpretative paradigm imposing an extremely slow tempo, particularly on the first movement). Whether in the Amsterdam or the Stockholm versions, both live, this is one of Furtwängler's least focused, technically prepared interpretations, despite the conductor's signature depth of sonority. Some moments are hauntingly expressive indeed, but the ethos of the whole seems to be more inadvertently lugubrious than cathartically consoling.

Toscanini's versions from 1937 (in poorly recorded sound but exhibiting a more flexible Toscanini, in London) and 1943 (with NBC orchestra) are better than predicted. A lack of transcendental insights is compensated by a moving sincerity, a lack of pretension, as well as a well-paced fluency which helps the musical experience. Elements of grandeur, nobility, and (sixth movement, with its defiance of death C Minor theme) apocalypse can be found in Klemperer's approach to the *Requiem* (Klemperer's live version in Köln exhibits a more exciting spontaneity than the better known EMI reference recorded in studio). Rudolf Kempe offers a central, slightly generic version which is nevertheless solid, a good starting point to get acquainted with the work. A fluent, visionary, and unexpectedly youthful Bruno Walter in New York is arguably the most accomplished of the historic versions, especially in the soloist-less fourth movement, with its promise of paradisiac happiness. Among more recent, yet already

accepted as reference versions, Giulini/Wiener Philharmoniker and Raphael Kubelik/Bavarian Radio Orchestra are among the best balanced and most thoughtfully phrased versions.

Which would be then a truly excellent recommendation? The Herbert Kegel (1920-1990) studio version from 1985, with the Radio Leipzig Orchestra and Choir. (There exists one other Kegel version, live in Japan with Japanese forces, which shows a remarkable ability to not only transplant unadulterated his musical vision to a "foreign land," but even the subtlest elements of German diction. Corresponding with some German and French archivists led to the realization that the Requiem was somewhat an obsession for Kegel, as multiple other versions, recorded between ~1960 and the end of his life, exist, unpublished.) With the risk of sounding encomiastic: the two soloists may be "merely" good to excellent. The Leipzig Radio orchestra is impeccable. (Kegel may have achieved even more memorable marvels of profundity and flexibility with the Dresden Philharmonic he led during his last years, before committing suicide.) The Leipzig Radio choir though is extraordinary. It was built almost from scratch by Kegel, the way Mengelberg built the Concertgebouw Orchestra into what it became. The immense thoughtfulness that went into this recording is the qualitative equivalent of what Mengelberg did for *Matthäus Passion* or Furtwängler for Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. Kegel's approach to music is different to an extent – more modern, introverted, sometimes more calculated – yet not at all emotion-lacking – but the result is the same: illuminating from within a musical work with an intensity one didn't think possible hitherto. There's more meaning and artisanal perfection in a consonant of the choir (the "sch" in Fleisch and the "s" in Gras – "Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras" – for example, in the second movement) than in hours of generic music-making. The detailing of articulation, the intonational perfection, the creative listening

between choir and orchestra the immaculate balancing of notoriously "impossible" to balance passages are exemplary.[52]

We are purposefully avoiding excessive interpretive comparisons between many versions of all pieces in relation with Mengelberg's legacy. An exception has been made above, and the insistence on the merits of the Herbert Kegel version of the *German Requiem* can be explained as follows: the Requiem is, its pietistic spiritual content notwithstanding, a musically avant-garde work, which fits admirably Kegel's résumé[53]; even admirers of historical recordings have to accept that some visionary works in the repertoire were done true interpretative justice later in their recorded history rather than earlier. More relevant to this writing, because Kegel, among the many sources of learning and inspiration he absorbed, learned from Mengelberg's recordings, *portamento* concepts, rehearsal methods, and even the manner of annotating scores. (Compare below a page of music annotated by Kegel, from the first movement of the *Pathétique*, as reproduced in Kuschmitz's biography of Kegel[54] , with a page of music annotated by Mengelberg – the first page of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.)

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[52] A good example is the two choral chords in the first movement, bars 100-101, which end the "false recap" in D Flat Major (bars 96-102). Not only is the choir, with part of the voices singing in a disadvantageous register, immaculately tuned in this version. The moment appropriately exhibits the softest *pianissimo* in the whole movement, an unwritten *pppp.* While Brahms confined himself to traditional Beethovenian dynamic marks (no more than three *fortes* or *pianos* in his music), Kegel understands the distinction between absolute dynamics and relative dynamics according to the formal requirements of the musical work.

[53] A specialist in post-World War II avant-garde music, among others.

[54] Helga Kuschmitz, *Herbert Kegel – Legende ohne Tabu*, p. 122.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 12

Partiturseite Peter Tschaikowski
„Sinfonie Nr. 6 h-Moll“ in Herbert Kegels Einrichtung

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 12, CONT.

We mentioned that Mengelberg's version of the *Requiem*, despite soloists and the choir showing some flaws, is still significant as a document. It's one of few major vocal-symphonic works we have on record with Mengelberg. It is also one of the earliest complete recordings of the Requiem. (Among the recordings which so far didn't go beyond a rumor stage, one has to count, aside Mahler's *First Symphony,*[55] a reportedly recorded version of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. However, we do have multiple versions of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and a deliberately abridged – from Mengelberg's perspective, "complete" – Bach *Matthäus Passion* from 1939, as well as some excerpts from 1936; for Bach's masterpiece the choir, while not necessarily impeccably prepared, is nevertheless well-rehearsed and, on an expressive level, deeply insightful.)

During the first orchestral phrase of the *Requiem*, Brahms leaves out the violins from the orchestration. (In a way reflecting perhaps, *à rebours*, the way Beethoven doesn't include the double-bass at the beginning of the orchestral exposition of the *Fourth Piano Concerto*, until the tonic is being first "recaptured" by the orchestra, which started their theme in B Major rather than in G. The first double-bass note therefore reinforces the missing tonic, a detail which the conductor should emphasize.[56]) Once the intonation-wise risky horn F octave is being not impeccably disposed of, Mengelberg imbues the music with idiosyncratic articulations. In bars 10 and 11 the upper violas play almost the same three pitches (G E F, Gb E F). Nevertheless the

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[55] Mengelberg loved this symphony – it was the last Mahler work to be performed under the Nazi occupation, at Mengelberg's personal exhortations to the occupying authority, as mentioned once before. Bruno Walter, who resented on some level the disputation of the "authorized Mahler discipleship" mantle by anybody other than himself, was rather critical with Mengelberg's Mahler ways, unlike the composer himself: "Willem Mengelberg was a great admirer of Gustav Mahler's works, but with all his strong talent as a conductor, one could not say that he strove to satisfy the intentions of the composer. I remember having found in Amsterdam, when I conducted Mahler's First Symphony… the printed score full of red corrections from Mengelberg's hand – all pointing to a tendency for exaggeration." (Erik Ryding and Rebecca Pechefsky, *Bruno Walter: a World Elsewhere,* p.404.)

[56] Piano introduction – bars 1-5; first orchestral phrase bars 6-13; double-bass comes in at bar 14.

harmonic function underneath the viola is not similar. In bar 10 we witness the first breaking of the F pedal point, the shift to D Flat happens in the inner voices (lower cellos), the bass-line is still F for two beats; only two beats later, in bar 11, the change to D Flat being also propagated into the bass-line. The upper violas slide between G and E in bar 10, but not between Gb and E in bar 11, when the listener's attention is adequately shifted towards the bass/horn F-Db "bass" gesture.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 13

I.

Johannes Brahms, Op.45.

Ziemlich langsam und mit Ausdruck.

2 Flöten.

2 Oboen.

2 Fagotte.

2 Hörner in F.

pp

3 Posaunen.

Harfe.
(Wenigstens doppelt besetzt.)

Sopran.

Alt.

Tenor.

Baß.

Ziemlich langsam und mit Ausdruck.

Viola

p legato

Violoncello I. II.

p legato

p legato

Violoncello III.

p

Kontrabaß.

p

Org. c. B. tenuto sempre

No. 969

E.E. 6054

Ernst Eulenburg Ltd.,
London - Zurich - Stuttgart

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 13, CONT.

Mengelberg uses *portamento* not only as sonorous embellishment or as a means of establishing a microclimate of sentimentality, but also as a structure-reinforcing mode of articulation. The element of *portamento* is also memorable in the B Major/E Major theme of the second movement of the *First Symphony* (consistently so in both 1940 and 1943 recordings), which will be discussed later.

Throughout the 20th century, few conductors on record (Stokowski comes to mind) used deliberate *portamento* on a scale as large as Mengelberg. String *portamento* is omnipresent in Mengelberg's recordings. The history and semantics of string *portamento* are crucial in what regards the evolution of the musical arts and of musical interpretation in particular. Few performance practice means are more exciting or controversial than this one. *Portamento* is, or can be, a technical device as well as an expressive one. During the last hundred years it became

gradually less fashionable to employ it at all in classical music performance, when not specified in the score. Even where required by the composer, there are Mahler performances which exclude *portamento*s altogether. The controversial aspect of *portamento* may be due to the fact that, at an indiscriminate level of employment, it proves faulty technique, not expressive playing. (Imagine a singer gliding annoyingly from one pitch to the next. It is the first mannerism a parody of poor opera singing would employ.) At its best, sliding in strings playing isn't a technical necessity but the aural projection of an aesthetic intention to tame down the fragmented extemporization of a melody. Perhaps traditional Western music notation[57] conditions us to see the "becoming" (with a word dear to Furtwängler) of a melody merely as a combinatorial, interruptible, pitch by pitch process. Ernst Kurth had a different take on it: "Psychic energies [which] pass over into sensually perceivable wonder of sound as does the Life-Will into worldly images. (…) The boundary where the creative will and its reflection in sonorous expression make contact lies in the melodic line... The melodic line is the first projection of the will unto 'matter'." [58]

To the modern eye such pronunciamentos, rooted as they are in German Romantic philosophy, seem vague (perhaps "intuitionist") but one is entitled to wonder: who was more intimate with the universe of Brahms, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and Mahler than the luminaries close to that time and culture? In terms compatible with the idealist aesthetics of that world, one can see in Mengelberg's use of *portamento* a way of expressing nostalgia for a state of grace of the melody. A state in which the melody's unified essence, with the end in its beginning, is part

[57] I am thinking of the inescapable reality of pitches being represented in writing through dots rather than, for instance, lines "walking through" specific pitches.
[58] Lee A. Rothfarb, *Ernst Kurth as Theorist and Analyst*, p. 15.

of the inner creative process (Kurth talks about "inside" [inner] and "outside music"). It is at a time when the melody wasn't yet sent out of the proverbial Platonic *cave of essences*, in the fallen world of real time, of graphic and aural clarity and separateness. A world which is inevitably in opposition with the oneness the melody once existed in, (if only) in its nascent state.

> When unhideness occurs, hideness and concealing are overcome and removed. The removal of concealment, that which acts against concealing, we shall henceforth call de-concealing [Ent-bergen].The characteristic perceiving of the idea, this projecting, is deconcealing [ist entbergend]. (...) Deconcealing is the innermost nature of looking-into-the-light.[59]

Applying the Platonic meaning to music, the coherence of pitches has aesthetic meaning to the extent it emerges from their interrelationship, from their collective message. They do "yearn to be together" and that requires understanding and also the practical conducting ability in conveying the appropriate effect. *Portamento* is a suggestive manner through which this striving for an impossible unity is being emphasized.

Not only string players but also many singers in various traditions, including Ponselle, Caruso, Schipa, Tauber, Slezak, Supervia, Koshetz, Callas, Olivero, used *vocal portamento* with deliberate artistic consciousness, as an expressive element of their technical apparatus. *String portamento* use and misuse was theorized by string instruments' masters, even before Carl Flesch and Leopold Auer, major violin pedagogues at the turn of the 20th century. Nevertheless, until the end of the 19th century, the use of *portamento* was an obvious element of standard performance practice. Generally speaking, no notating was thought to be needed. Composers considered these decisions an optional and flexible task of the interpreters themselves. *Portamento* was fundamentally an unthinking, acculturated performance habit. On the other

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[59] Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth - On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, p. 54.

hand, even then distinctions were made between sloppy shifts due to insufficient technique[60] and deliberate, controlled, significant use of *portamento*. Anne Mischakoff-Heiles (the author of the reference research on American concertmasters and the daughter of Mischa Mischakoff, prestigious concertmaster) writes:

> My generation of string players has venerated Heifetz for his tasteful use of portamento, as it has Kreisler for the warmth and tasteful slides he used. My father's fingerings early in his career (…) show same-finger shifting to nearby notes (one position away), what I regard as a typically Russian slide. I'm hearing increasing numbers of long upward slides from younger players (…) and find them tiresome. I think the critical factor is combining the portamento with a lighter bow pressure (more effective) vs. a heavy-handed pressure that 'grows old fast.' [61]

When Mahler or Elgar indicate specifically *portamento*, it's similar to Beethoven's special pedal indications in the first movements of the *Sonata opus 31 no. 2 and opus 57,* or the slow movements of the *Second* and *Third Piano Concertos*. It doesn't mean that pedal has to be used only where indicated. Pedal should be imperatively used in those places, as specifically indicated by the composer, in addition to the implied use of pedal, left to the taste of the performer himself. Realizations of *portamento* should be seen in a similar vein. Mahler narrowed down the timing and manner in which it *should* be employed. One way to read between lines, regarding the *portamento* practice of the time, is to corroborate the surviving recordings of artists born and/or trained in the 19th century with editions cured by them. In some fingerings, the use of *portamento*, if not overtly specified, was nonetheless implied. The use of skillful *portamento* in orchestral playing is difficult because of the needed combination of excellent baton technique and abundant rehearsal time, were such technique to be employed at all. There are multitudes of

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[60] As early a figure as Leopold Auer, the father of the modern Russian violin school, commented both on the necessity to emulate good singers when it comes to sliding, and on the annoyance sloppy, badly realized *portamento* can easily become – the imagery he used succeeded in insulting both poorly prepared violinists and the feline world to which they were compared.

[61] Anne Mischakoff-Heiles, in a letter to the author, March 10, 2006.

micro-decisions to be taken, inscribed uniformly in the scores, and rehearsed until an ensemble of dozens of string players can slide as synchronously as a human voice would.

Robert Philip is among the scholars who studied these aspects as relating to Mengelberg's art, with insights to share. He makes a distinction between sloppy, disorganized sliding (such as that present in early orchestral recordings from England[62]) and systematic, deliberate use. He also comments in some detail about the differences between the placement and frequency of *portamento* in the Mengelberg recordings of the same work – Tchaikovsky's *Symphony no. 5* – by Concertgebouw Orchestra (1928) and by Berliner Philharmoniker (1940).[63] (In the literature of the field the same examples and analytical paradigms were used by Clemens Romijn, in a short but substantial essay: "The Performer must help the Creator"[64])

Robert Philip hypothesizes regarding the reasons for those differences (less frequent *portamento* in the Berliner Philharmoniker recording than in the earlier Amsterdam recording):

> Did Mengelberg leave the Berlin orchestra to play in the style they were used to under Furtwängler? Did he attempt to persuade them to play in the Concertgebouw's style and fail? Without other evidence one can only guess, but this example suggests that the characteristic sliding of the Concertgebouw was something that Mengelberg cultivated over years, and that he could not just apply it when visiting other orchestras.[65]

The following is not meant to question Robert Philip's merits in the Romantic performance practice scholarship. He may have just missed that Mengelberg used to travel on tour with his own scores and carefully annotated orchestral parts and, as a result, one can detect similar choices of *portamento*-placement in the same work interpreted with various orchestras – e.g., the

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[62] We could add an over-thick, over-sweet usage in certain styles of pop music.
[63] Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 100-101.
[64] Clemens Romijn, "Der Interpret müss dem Schopfer helfen," in *Willem Mengelberg 1871-1951, Niedelande-Studien*, pp. 51-68.
[65] Philip, *ibid*.

sublime recordings of the Bach-Mahler *Air from the Third Suite*, made in Amsterdam (1938 or 1942, discographic source differ) and New York (1929). In the absence of these parts, teaching specific *portamento* placement in a symphony, from scratch, would necessitate dozens of rehearsals. For some reason Mengelberg's own parts (exhibiting similar *portamento*s in the various Concertgebouw recordings) were not used in the Berlin recording. Whether he was reluctant to impose his own parts to an(other) illustrious orchestra, as if their own fingerings were not good enough, or whether the concertmaster refused to adopt them would be a matter of speculation at best.

Mengelberg brought, more than any other conductor in the 20th century,[66] the use of the *portamento* (fundamentally a pre-20th century mannerism) to a modern degree of conceptualization and aesthetical use. One of Mengelberg's main concerns while preparing the orchestral parts (to the last minutiae, as testified by Hermann Scherchen in an aside in his treatise on conducting[67]) was how often and between which pitches *portamento*s were to take place. At the beginning of the 20th century, the use of *portamento* "by default" started to come under criticism. The score of Mahler's *Adagietto* from the *Fifth Symphony* includes many written-out *portamento*s, some of them on unprecedented big intervals (as between a sound on the G string and one on the E string, which involves particular techniques of "*portamento* distribution" between strings). Mengelberg's 1926 recording of this Adagietto uses authentic Mahlerian *portamento*s, avoided or mishandled by some conductors in later recordings and performances:

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[66] I am making this distinction (20th century) because *written* sources, such as Alan Walker's invaluable *Hans von Bülow: A Life and Times* (Oxford University Press, 2009) suggest that Bülow in Meiningen may have achieved a comparable degree of orchestral coordination within the legendary Meiningen string section. It is highly unlikely any of the missing Bülow cylinders - including, tantalizingly so, a complete *Eroica* reported by Alan Walker to have been recorded in New York – would ever surface.

[67] Herman Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, p. 150.

> Many, certainly not all, conductors speak privately with concertmasters about small points, as far as what concertmasters have told me. Sam Magad in Chicago emphasized that these matters go beyond bow directions. I know that my father [Mischa Mischakoff] and Toscanini often consulted over finer points in the score. So it would not surprise me that Mengelberg, who was fastidious about details (the Mengelberg exhibit book shows that through the markings in his scores!), would make suggestions or requests about fingerings. (…)
>
> By and large *portamento* does seem a lost art among orchestra players. I think all the professional orchestras I've played in have attempted *portamento* in Mahler's Adagietto, but it looks to string players like a "glissando," and unless the conductor works, as Mengelberg did, on the timing – specifying it and rehearsing it – the section smears rather at random.[68]

In Brahms' First Symphony, *Andante sostenuto*, Mengelberg prescribes *portamento*s, for instance: in bars 13 and 14, between the pitches C# and F# of the first violins (bar 13) and cellos + basses (bar 14), making more eloquent the voice leading, the contrapuntal imitation. In bar 15, *portamento* is being drawn between G and E in the first violins, emphasizing the seventh diminished chord that supports that segment of melody. How a *portamento* changes the way one perceives a theme is best heard at bar 91. Mengelberg asks his concertmaster (who could have been either Ferdinand Helman or Louis Zimmermann – they were for a long time Concertgebouworkest's trusted concertmasters; the Arnold Rosé's of Amsterdam, so to speak[69]) to play a descending *portamento* between the pitches E and B, in the violin solo (doubled by horn and oboe). It is a detail so seamlessly accomplished that, in this listener's perception, becomes part of the "music itself" to the extent that performances which don't employ it sound poorer, if not "objectively wrong."

The concept of structural *rubato* is also discussed in other chapters, but there is an example to point out here: the phrasing of the third movement of the *Third Symphony* opus 90. As mentioned, we have two recordings, 1932 (studio) and 1944 (live). They exhibit the same

[68] Anne Mischakoff-Heiles, in a letter to the author, March 10, 2006.
[69] Arnold Rosé was yet another one of Mengelberg's many close musical friends who suggest an incompatibility with the tenets of Nazism.

abstract "planning" in terms of phrasing, but the differences in realization show how Mengelberg could be more extreme in live recordings, and how his conceptions could evolve over time.[70]

The main theme in the *Poco Allegretto* movement is tuneful in a rarefied "sentimental waltz" mode, which makes it easily memorable, not always so with Brahms' themes.[71] This may distract attention from the elegant, skillful phrase structure. It is a twelve-bar phrase instead of the instinctively predicted eight-bar phrase. Bars 2 and 4 see the pitches G and then B Flat reached in an ascensional, aspirational manner. Bars 8-12 consist of an amplified, reiterated in augmentation mode reaching of the "high-point" B Flat, with the consequent, "depressed" falling in thirds (B Flat in bar 9, G in bar 10, E Flat in bar 11).[72] Mengelberg emphasizes the structure of the extended phrase by employing a particular *rubato* in bar 9, a slide between F and B Flat being combined with an agogic accent obtained through the delaying of B Flat. By doing so every time the phrase appears,[73] yet to different degrees, Mengelberg makes the structure of the whole first section of the movement clearer than straightforward phrasing might.

Mengelberg's Brahms recordings remain relevant today, on both an immediate illumination/enjoyment level and in what regards their connection with 19th century performance practice aspects, applied by the conductor not only judiciously, creatively as well.

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[70] This is an issue already mentioned and discussed in Chapter I, in relation with different versions of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*.

[71] No wonder that this was *the* theme used obsessively by Georges Auric in his soundtrack for the Françoise Sagan-based, 1961 movie *Aimez-vous Brahms*, both in its original instrumentation (the horn iteration at bar 98) and in modernized variations.

[72] Also to be compared with bars 156-158, where the essence of the ascensional gestures of the main theme is being marvelously condensed in one last gesture, a scale on the surface, in reality one last time the third-based melodic points of reference (C E Flat G B Flat) are being launched in the movement, blended within the innocuous scale.

[73] For rather obvious instrumental reasons, when the theme is exposed in the winds + horn (bar 41 et seq.), Mengelberg doesn't use a slide, only the rubato.

CHAPTER III. PIANO CONCERTOS

> "I liked Mengelberg. Him I played with many times. He was crazy. In the Chopin E-Minor Concerto, he followed beautifully. All the rubatos. And when I changed something, he was always there." – Claudio Arrau [74]

Mengelberg's abilities as an accompanist were legendary. Performing with him was an experience cherished by soloists, some of them speaking highly of him in their interviews or memoirs. That doesn't mean that accidents didn't happen. Yehudi Menuhin as a child had an unpleasant episode, insofar there were errors in the orchestral parts, Mengelberg took tempi quicker than those the soloist wanted, and there was too little rehearsal time. As a result the concert featuring Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* didn't show the kind of polish Mengelberg was famous for.[75] A caricatural description of both Mengelberg's rehearsal mannerisms and of his claims of authenticity comes from Gregor Piatigorsky's memoir (this happens in New York, Carnegie Hall, 1930):

> I discreetly asked him to take a faster tempo. (Mengelberg) responded loudly, "I studied this concerto with the composer himself, and the tempo I am taking is the right one." (…) Judson said smilingly that Mengelberg's musical information came semidirect, from a grand-grandnephew of Beethoven, or grandaunt of a grand-grandson of Bach. "You see, he has made it clear that while all others seek guidance from printed scores alone, he, having known Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, Dvorak, and others in person, has weightier shoulders of authority to lean on." [76]

The place of the concerto genre is solidly established today. We take for granted that we will likely hear a concerto in a typical symphonic program. In the late classical/early Romantic world, programs tended to be either conductor-centric, or meant to expose an aspiring composer, or to

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[74] Joseph Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau*, p. 86.
[75] Humphrey Burton, *Yehudi Menuhin: A Life*, pp. 83-85.
[76] Gregor Piatigorsky, *The Cellist*, pp. 190-191.

be soloist-focused, or on occasion a chaotic combination of the above. The ambitious *Theater an der Wien* 1808 Beethoven concert, including among other "numbers" the *Fourth Concerto*, parts of the *C Major Mass*, the *Fifth* and *Sixth* symphonies, as well as the *Choral Fantasy*, is still a matter of legend, as a composer/performer marathon of both exhausting length and exhaustive substance. Chopin, in Vienna (on his way to Paris), then later on in Paris and London as well, used recitals – with the odd concerto thrown in – as a vehicle of making his own music better known. Conductors ranging from Berlioz to Wagner, Hans von Bülow and Mahler often conducted all-symphonic programs, with a virtuoso soloist not required to attract an audience. Such concerto-less programming was emulated within 20th century programming by conductors relying on their box-office attraction, or making symphonic programing varied enough to allow for the absence of the solo virtuoso. While collaborations such as Rachmaninoff-Stokowski or Edwin Fischer-Furtwängler couldn't be ignored, Stokowski, Koussevitzky, Furtwängler, Scherchen, Klemperer were among the conductors able to fill a concert hall through their presence alone. To Mengelberg conducting a concerto was not a secondary challenge. He invested much effort into concertos. As a young pianist of great promise, Mengelberg performed as a soloist Liszt's *Concerto no. 1* [77] and Beethoven's *Concerto no. 5*. (We know that pre-World War I Mengelberg conducted in Liszt's *E Flat Major Concerto* soloists as different as Artur Schnabel[78] and, in St. Petersburg, Ignaz Friedman[79]). We possess live recordings of both concertos conducted by an older Mengelberg, with less famous soloists.

[77] In Utrecht, January 4 1890.

[78] "In Moscow I played – don't be shocked – Liszt's E Flat Major Concerto, Mr. Mengelberg from Amsterdam conducting." (Artur Schnabel, *My Life and Music*, p. 59)

[79] Allan Evans, *Ignaz Friedman: Romantic Master Pianist*, p. 71.

Edna Richolson Sollitt's biography of Mengelberg was published in 1929, in New York. Sollitt's writing may be long on encomia and short on musical detail. Nevertheless, she remains the biographer with unimpeded access to her close friend Mengelberg. Her account of his piano debut, based on the conductor's own recollection, is worth quoting:

> He studied conducting with Wüllner, piano with Isidor Seiss, and composition with Jensen, and received the highest honors and distinctions possible for the Conservatory to bestow. Three first prizes: an unequaled record there. Just after leaving the Conservatory he was invited to play with orchestra at Utrecht during a festival of the Toonkunst under the direction of Richard Hol. Although only seventeen, he displayed technique and musicianship of a superlative order. And an incident of this concert revealed this lad as the possessor, also, of poise and self-control astounding in one so young. His piano-chair had been damaged in delivery, but the fact did not become known until well into the concerto, when it began to give trouble. The Concerto being the Liszt E flat, there was no pause when a change might have been made; once embarked upon this work, one either goes to the end or suffers shipwreck. Mengelberg went through, playing magnificently, ignoring with imperturbable calm such creakings and wobblings as might well have ruined the performance of a routined artist. The quality of his work and his courageous self-command gained him an ovation remembered to this day. His Utrecht success was the beginning of a period of touring, interspersed with teaching at the Conservatory, a period which lasted until his twentieth year. A notable career as pianist seemed certain. But greater things were destined.[80]

From Bruno Walter we have the recording of Mozart's *D Minor Concerto*, conducted from the keyboard. From Furtwängler we have some of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, as well as a Hugo Wolf lieder recital, in a Salzburg performance in which he accompanied his protégé Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. From Mengelberg, the only trace of piano playing left is an improvisation recorded in private at his Swiss villa, during his last years of life. That also represents the only recorded trace of music-making of Mengelberg in exile, when his career was finished, between 1945 and 1951.[81] Wandering around in nostalgic, Tristanesque chromaticisms, Mengelberg's piano sonority is distinctive indeed.

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[80] Edna Richolson Sollitt*: Mengelberg and the Symphonic Epoch*, p. 24.

[81] Never made available commercially, the recording was generously put to our disposal by the French organist and collector Hubert Wendel, one of the world's few Mengelberg experts.

The Liszt *First Concerto* features the Dutch pianist Marinus Flipse (1908-1997), recorded in concert, 2/27/1944. Not a particularly polished performance, by Mengelberg's standards. The pianist seems nervous and technically challenged by the work, the ensemble under-rehearsed, the orchestral playing suffering from a number of inexactitudes. By 1944, due to the exclusion of Jewish members from the orchestra, other vicissitudes of occupation, Concertgebouw Orchestra wasn't at the level of 1940 or even 1942.[82] Even so, the performers seem to have had a bad evening. Nevertheless, this remains a pertinent document, given that Mengelberg, born in 1871, is generationally close to Emil von Sauer (1862-1942) and Sauer's almost precisely coetaneous Felix Weingartner (1863-1942) - a link to the Liszt tradition in the interpretation of the concerto.[83] In the Flipse version, one notes the overdotting of the already double-dotted initial rhythm, as well as the two fermatas which interrupt the initial chromatic motifs. Wagner's concept of dramatic fermatas (while talking about the beginning of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*) being held "firmly and unyieldingly"[84] is being applied here by Mengelberg (and also by Weingartner, in the Sauer-Weingartner version).

There are similarities in pacing, as well as in the mentioned use of overdotting. With exceptions – such as Mengelberg's quasi-perfect 1929 version of *Les Préludes* recorded for Columbia – Liszt's more modern orchestration aspects, taking over from where Berlioz left, were seldom rendered justice by older generation conductors. It is difficult to quote a "Liszt specialist," similar to known "Beethoven specialists" such as Nikisch,[85] Weingartner,

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[82] The last Telefunken recordings made by Mengelberg, in best sound for the time, show that the standards of the orchestra have not been weakened by 1942.
[83] Sauer and Weingartner have also recorded together Liszt's *Second Piano Concerto*.
[84] Richard Wagner, *Uber das dirigieren*, quoted in *The Conductor's Art*, p. 80.
[85] Incidentally, the Nikisch recording which gives an even remotely enticing approximation of the conductor's flair and sense of color is not the 1913 *Fifth Symphony* by Beethoven, but Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 1*.

Mengelberg, and Furtwangler. As late as the 1950s, Nikolai Golovanov (1891-1953), the Bolshoi Theater conductor who left a pioneering set of Liszt's symphonic poems – in which passion, drama and vivid color cannot be denied – also evidenced some technical negligence in the details. Regarding the scherzo of the *E Flat Major Concerto*, both Mengelberg and Weingartner do not pay enough attention to the "novel" use of the triangle. A mushy, over-reverberating use renders rhythms indistinguishable. The gradual improvements in the use of triangle in the last two "movements-within-the-movement" of the *E Flat Major Concerto* can be observed in the history of recordings, to such a predictable rate that one has to wonder to which extent conductors become better with it, or it rather was the increase of its use in 20th century repertoire which made the percussionists themselves able to deal with its subtleties of articulation. The triangle players of Mengelberg's Amsterdam orchestra or Weingartner's Paris Conservatoire Orchestra are already superseded by the Philadelphia Orchestra player in the Cliburn/Ormandy recording or the Moscow Philharmonic one in the Richter/Kondrashin's version. By the time of the Katchen/Argenta recording with London Philharmonic, the listener can almost believe the part is written differently, in terms of prominence and clarity. This is one of few instances in which Mengelberg's conceit that there's nothing about orchestral playing he wouldn't know doesn't measure up to recorded evidence. [86] Even in this recording, certain touches make up for flaws – the lyrical cellos in Quasi Adagio expose a dreamy quality of sound, a smooth yet sober phrasing which was not heard again until post-WWII recordings of Eastern German orchestras, from Leipzig and Dresden.

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[86] "Mengelberg inspires an orchestra to its utmost power, and to sit under him is to sit at the feet of a great virtuoso. As he says, and it is most true, '*There ees nothing I do not know about der orchester*'." (Bernard Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, p. 125)

The earlier mention of Emil von Sauer was not coincidental. There is only one other concerto recording left by this impeccable Lisztian credentials veteran.[87] It is the live 1940 Schumann's *Piano Concerto* in Amsterdam. While also not perfect (the pianist was seventy-eight), there are interpretative insights, more than in the Liszt recording. Sauer, the old lion at the piano, if we may indulge once in that cliché, had lost some of the steel in his fingers, but little of the silk. The tricky third movement arpeggios and runs are not played perfectly but the pianist acquits himself well overall. The concerto starts with a piano mini-cadenza following one note from the orchestra establishing the dominant function. Sauer surprises through a rare, for the time, under-dotting of the piano rhythm. (Robert Philip in his writings, as well as recorded evidence, suggest that the rule of the day, going back centuries in fact, was overdotting, rather.[88]) Sauer's playing sounds like a triplet. His being unaware of it seems out of the question. It is plausible that Sauer aims for a thoughtful, searching (as opposed to heroic) ethos for the first few bars of the music. The slightly over-dotted utterance of dotted rhythms at the end of the first movement – after the cadenza – suggests the opposed concepts of songfulness (at the beginning) vs. volitional energy (at the end).

(On the subject of overdotting in musical practice, rather than in theory, we find it useful to connect what we have in way of old treatises with recorded performances of artists born as early as ~1830. They are not Baroque-old, due to the lack of the technology necessary to record actual Baroque artists at the time. The specific amount and style of overdotting, as expressed in very early recordings, is more relevant as a bridge to an *even* older past than sheer words on

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[87] Two notes: Sauer was also a representative of the Nikolai Rubinstein school of teaching, Liszt was a "maturity mentor" to him; secondly, late in Liszt's life and especially after Liszt's death there was an epidemics of people who claimed the Liszt mantle with less than sufficient justification.

[88] Robert Philip, *Early recordings and musical style*, the whole Chapter 3 (*Long and short notes*), pp. 70-94.

paper. There are minute, infinitesimal nuances words cannot transmit. One (sound) image is indeed worth a thousand words. In the long-going debate over overdotting, we would have to go with Stephen Hefling: "Overdotting is not a delusion, as Neumann has claimed. But neither is the 'French Overture style one of our best-attested conventions of baroque interpretation,' as Donington would have it; and Dart's sweeping advocacy of overdotting from Monteverdi through Beethoven extends well beyond what the sources support."[89])

The main A Minor theme featured by Schumann in the winds exhibits distinctive phrasing, to the extent that we couldn't mistake this recording for any other. Often the conceptual coherence of a lyrical musical phrase is mistaken in interpretation with the physical connectedness of the component pitches. (The two concepts can coexist but there's no inherent causality linking them.) It seems that, according to this misconception, the more uninterrupted legato there is the more "expressive" the phrase becomes, as a matter of course. Research such as Neal Peres da Costa's shows this not to be the case: "(…) early in the nineteenth century, certain pianists, evidently aware of the effect of *portato* on the clavichord, assigned an alternative though not less expressive articulation for the *portato* sign in piano playing." (…)[90] Among the elements of articulation distinguishing pianists like Pachmann, Rosenthal, Hofmann, and Friedman is that, instead of employing an uninterrupted legato, they studied and projected Chopin's subtly notated shades of staccato-legato and *portato*. There is a parallelism with Mengelberg's rejection of continuous all-bow usage in string instruments[91]: "It ees no goot, dhat

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[89] Stephen E. Hefling, *Rhythmic alteration in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music: notes inégales and overdotting*, p. 145.
[90] Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing,* p. 70.
[91] Carl Flesch and George Enescu made also a point, as professors/soloists, not to allow for continuous all-out use of the bow. An exemplary use of economical bowing was left to us by the sophisticated Hungarian violinist Joseph Szigeti, at least in his pre-World War Two recordings, which represent him at his considerable best.

long bow in de orchester, it looks well, yes in der front, but de notes are not dhere! A soloist may do it perhaps, but eet es no goot in der orchester."[92]

Asking for physical legato in performance confuses the conceptual arching of a musical phrase (the "legato of the mind") with its specific articulation – including smaller slurs, caesuras and such. Beyond Baroque composers (for whom such practice was a matter of course), composers from Mozart and Beethoven to Schumann, Brahms,[93] Tchaikovsky, Bartók and Enescu continued to use small slurs in order to suggest a varied articulation *within* the long phrase. Schumann, in bars 4-11 of the concerto, is equally detailed and explicit in the articulation of the oboe theme. There are two dangers in the realization of small-scale slurring. The first is to overlook it altogether, generating an amorphous, predictably over-blended lyricism with any particular phrase. We dealt with it in the paragraphs above. Important post-Romantic conductors, such as Karajan or Bernstein, could do that on occasion. The music sounds therefore "nice" but much alike, various compositional styles and phrasal structures becoming undifferentiated in execution.

The other danger is to over-project the slurred/detached detail to the extent that the lyrical phrase becomes separated in small units detached by some unmusical manner of hiccupping. A

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[92] Bernard Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, p. 122.

[93] Brahms is the only of these composers who left a couple of recordings, a few minutes of recorded music in all. Extremely poor in sonic terms, these cylinders nevertheless offer at least a limited opportunity for interpretative analysis. We can also compare Brahms' phrasing in the *Hungarian Dance no. 1* to violin versions signed by people from his circle, such as Joseph Joachim and the much younger Bronislaw Huberman, whom Brahms heard as a child prodigy in his own concerto and praised his playing to the sky. (See liner notes to the *Arbiter Records* editions of Huberman's recordings, notes signed by the Huberman specialist Allan Evans.) We also have a surprisingly ample recorded heritage left by Clara Schumann's disciples. Recent years have uncovered some recordings from Tchaikovsky's circle, hidden for more than one century. Published by Marston Records, they include gems such as Mozart's *C Minor Fantasy* played by Sergei Taneyev *as early as 1891* – the earliest Mozart recording by a major musician – as well as recordings by Pabst and Arensky, all preserved on cylinders of unexpectedly clear, for their age, sonic quality (superior to the worn-out Brahms cylinders).

number of performers who study diligently the old treatises regarding articulation use over-distinctive articulation as a goal in itself, not as a means to a convincing aesthetic reality. Paying *too* much attention to generic slurring can entail not paying enough attention to the specific harmonic realities encapsulated *under* the indications of articulation.[94] Mengelberg's golden medium seems to navigate between these extremes convincingly, even if it's not the only possible way to read a score. In the oboe theme (accompanied by other winds and horns) Mengelberg uses Schumann's own articulation, except for bars 8-9, where he moves the breath two notes later (after "G F" instead of before). This is how Mengelberg combined thoughtful license with thoroughness. The latter is evident in the violins' phrase following the oboe theme. In bars 19-23, Schumann's slurring can seem a little odd or unexpected. Because of the quasi-improvisational aspect of the preceding solo (piano) exposition of the first theme, the scoreless listener could perceive the last beat of bar 19 as a downbeat instead of an upbeat. The mental grouping of the pitches will follow in a similar misleading, erroneous pattern: E F E / D C B A / E F E / D C B A. That leads to a rhythmical/metrical displacement which, based on the score, was not desired by Schumann. Besides the metrical disposition of the material, we have the indicated slurring that follows the bar-line pattern (E) E F E D / C B A E / F E D / C B A, as suggested by the metrical placement. Not only is Mengelberg one of few conductors who make the distinction intended by Schumann, he also makes it sound justified.

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[94] As a concrete example, the opening chorus in *Matthäus Passion* experiences, in some versions, repetitious exaggerations of the slurring, detrimental to the other elements of the language. The vision of Via Dolorosa charged with horror and collective guilt ("auf unsre Schuld") – reinforced by Bach through long pedal points and other means of creating harmonic tension – is being substituted by an inappropriately light, dance-like approach. The contrast between such approaches and Mengelberg's well-architected musical cathedral, impressive 75 years after that 1939 concert, could be neither more striking nor more epitomical as regards interpretation being essential in the understanding of a composition.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 14

The dialogue oboe-piano in bars 102-111 is truly a chamber-music moment, the oboe playing with an auburn tone-quality, while the experienced Sauer adapts to the flexibility of Mengelberg's beat. This is a prefiguration of the longer, memorable A Flat Major piano-clarinet

duet (bars 162-185), where Schumann created perhaps the most lyrical development section in a sonata Allegro, between Schubert and Mahler. The playing is admirable in its rhythmic nuance and calculated spontaneity.

One "Mengelberg-like" feature missing in this version is Alfred Cortot's manner of emphasizing an overlooked structural element at the beginning of the finale (third movement, bars 1-8).[95]

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[95] Until 2009 there was no Mengelberg-Cortot recording available to the public. It is then that the January 20, 1944 version of Chopin's *F Minor Concerto* was published. Regrettable historical circumstances apart, the performance is marvelous and it includes Cortot's own changes in orchestration, as well as his "new" ending to the first movement.

Musical Example 15

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III

Allegro vivace.

Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Fa.
Hn.
Tr.
Timp.

Piano

Allegro vivace.

Vln I
Vln II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

Allegro vivace.

10

Piano

Vln I
Vln II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

This is the only time in the whole movement when the theme is started twice. The second time (bar 9 et seq.) the rondo theme is exposed the normal way, as it returns later. It's the first eight bars which stand apart. The theme is finally announced but as a concise overture – grand entrance, gates opening. The first motif of the main rondo theme, then a formal harmonic cadence, the flowing theme itself doesn't "happen" yet. Ignoring this singular formal crevice can create the inadvertent effect of a botched start followed by another try, not unlike a musical stutter or an LP disc getting stuck. Cortot must have been aware of this risk, as all his four known recordings exhibit a far-from-subtle *ritardando* in bars 4-8. (Cortot's last concerto recording – 1951, live, Ferenc Fricsay conducting Berliner Philharmoniker[96] – inflates the *rallentando* to arguably excessive levels.) Cortot's agogic rhetoric at the beginning of this movement is an example of possibly objectionable means being employed to solve an objective structural challenge. Slowing down a lot may not be the only way to solve that challenge, but just "passing it by" doesn't seem a worthy solution either. One has to agree with Karen Taylor, who writes:

> A style analysis can scarcely dispense with some amount of critical assessment, but the objective here is not to offer a final judgment of Cortot's art, much less to rate Cortot's interpretations vis-à-vis those of other performers. Rather, it is to identify within Cortot's art those procedures and understandings which may be of practical value to the contemporary performer or teacher. Cortot's recordings, examined in depth, furnish many important lessons in musical interpretation. His Chopin and Schumann playing in particular has influenced the thinking of countless pianists who had no personal contact with him. The performances of these "disciples in spirit" prove time and again that it is possible to recover from Cortot's recorded legacy some of the insights into sonority, rhythm and character projection which he communicated to his own pupils.[97]

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[96] This is a consolation prize for the World War Two concert with Cortot conducted by Furtwängler not being among the radio tapes confiscated after the war by the Soviet victors. (They did perform it together.) We do have a Gieseking/ Furtwängler/Berliner Philharmoniker version from the same period, less memorable than the Gieseking/Mengelberg collaborations in Franck, Debussy, and especially Rachmaninoff.

[97] Karen Taylor, *Alfred Cortot: his interpretive art and teachings*, (Indiana University, Bloomington:1988, p. 266)

In the second movement of the Schumann concerto (*Andantino*), the middle section is the most unbalanced-in-favor-of-the-orchestra section of the piece. This is an evocative sketch which could be part of the Schumann's *Third Symphony (Rhenish)*, the *Nicht Schnell* movement. (An analyst could explore the thematic similarities between bars 10-11 in that movement and the main theme in opus 54's *Andantino*.) The pianist is almost optional, with a few comments in the beginning and soft, not particularly imaginative accompanying arpeggios exhausting what he has to do. This (bars 29-68) is the orchestra's lyrical moment. We mentioned earlier how thoughtless legato can be employed in places where more distinctive articulation is required. Here the challenge is different. Despite the generous tune being distributed to different instruments, despite the secondary "sub-slurs" within the articulation, as written down by Schumann, there has to be a "one breath" feel to the musical phrases, in the grand image. The conductor also has to be aware of the difference in lyrical ambition between the four bar phrases and the eight bar phrases – bars 37-44 and especially 61-68. Claims that only Mengelberg phrases this section appropriately would be excessive, but he does offer a particularly well-arched shaping of the C Major section, flexible in rhythmic nuance and structurally aware.

Rachmaninoff's *Concertos no. 2 and 3,* recorded live with Walter Gieseking in 1940, present important disparities with the composer's own versions, recorded with Philadelphia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski and Eugene Ormandy. Rachmaninoff was not shy about passing judgment on other conductors, as an experienced one himself.[98] He kept a sharp eye on fellow conductors, especially when entrusting them with his compositions, all the while his own

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[98] When young, Rachmaninoff exhibited himself more as a "composer-pianist" and as a conductor (he even conducted at Bolshoi Theatre for two years) than as the virtuoso pianist of the later American years. By the time the Soviet Revolution compelled him to look for a new life in the United States, after a short Scandinavian interlude, he was already 45 year old.

opportunities to conduct in the United States were on the scarce side. On his coming to the United States, Rachmaninoff refused to lead Boston Symphony Orchestra, preferring the solitude of a soloist's career. (Thus Boston Symphony Orchestra holds the distinction of having sought with no success as leaders, at different times, three of the greatest musician-conductors in history: Gustav Mahler, Willem Mengelberg, and Sergei Rachmaninoff. There is correspondence between Mahler and Mengelberg on the subject, in 1908. Mengelberg didn't pursue the Boston opportunity when Mahler suggested it. [99] The older Max Fiedler[100] led the orchestra until Karl Muck took it over. Mengelberg did negotiate taking the position later on, in 1919 but he finally chose New York as the center of his American activities. The Boston job went to Monteux and, in 1924, to Koussevitzky.)

The Victor Company accepted to record a couple of orchestral works under Rachmaninoff baton more because he was one of their glamorous, money-making "house pianists."[101] Among the few conductors Rachmaninoff appreciated when it came to conducting his own concerts three names shone – Nikisch, Max Fiedler, Mahler (who conducted the composer in 1909 in New York, in a second performance after the American premiere[102] of the *Third Concerto*[103]), then Stokowski, Mengelberg, Mitroupoulos, Walter, Cortot.[104] If we are to

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[99] Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 580.

[100] Max Fiedler (1859-1939, twelve years Mengelberg's senior) is to our knowledge the earliest born conductor to have made electric recordings of Brahms' symphonies – the *Second* and the *Fourth* – and possibly the only one to have conducted these symphonies in the presence of Brahms himself.

[101] Even so they committed the gaffe of refusing Rachmaninoff's offer to record Liszt's *Piano Sonata*, among other substantial works.

[102] Mengelberg conducted Rachmaninoff's *Third Concerto* with the composer at the piano for the London premiere of the work.

[103] One has to bring in Gregor Piatigorsky's recollection of the Berlin premiere (1929) of the same Third Concerto, with Rachmaninoff at the piano and no other than Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting: "Not paying attention to Furtwängler, who was rehearsing a symphony, Rachmaninoff sat down at the piano, looked at his watch, and thunderously struck a few chords. Perplexed, Furtwängler stopped. He looked at Rachmaninoff, who showed his watch and said, 'My rehearsal time was ten-thirty.' With no further exchange the rehearsal of the concerto

judge by the fact that Rachmaninoff was willing to perform in Amsterdam, and by his dedicating a favorite orchestral work, *The Bells*, to Mengelberg, he cherished him as a conductor as well.[105] During the first decade of the 20th century, Mengelberg and Rachmaninoff did tour together and had a rewarding professional and personal relationship, as witnessed by Rachmaninoff's correspondence.

That Rachmaninoff enjoyed Gieseking's interpretations of his concertos, despite them being so different from the composer's expressed view, is better documented: "It was not until the 1930s that the extraordinary mastery of piano-playing (…) found adequate representation in such pianists as Vladimir Horowitz, the short-lived Alexander Helman, Walter Gieseking (*whose amazing performance of the concerto Rachmaninov admired more than any others*), and later some of the younger pianists of the British and Soviet schools."[106] Piggott refers to Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto no.* 3, which was rarely performed during Rachmaninoff's lifetime[107], yet Gieseking made a point of programming both in the United States and Europe. The piece was considered then to be one of insurmountable technical difficulty. (That today

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commenced. After five minutes or so, Rachmaninoff walked to the conductor's stand and began to conduct. The orchestra had two conductors – Furtwängler, bewildered, and Rachmaninoff, swearing in Russian. (…) Still at odds at the concert, the two extraordinary artists nevertheless brought fourth an exciting performance of a peculiar unity." (Gregor Piatigorsky, *The Cellist*, p. 151)

[104] This may be surprising to those familiar with Cortot's technical limitations as a pianist, but he indeed performed the work both as a pianist and as a conductor, with young Horowitz as a soloist. No recorded documents survive.

[105] I am grateful to Rachmaninoff scholar Francis Crociata for having shared some of this information with me.

[106] Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov's Orchestral Music*, p. 49. One can add Francis Crociata's personal corroboration. "I can confirm from a primary source, his wife's sister and lifelong confidant Dr. Sophie Satin, that Rachmaninoff was enthusiastic publicly and privately about Gieseking's performances of the Second and Third Concertos with Barbirolli in New York". (Crociata has written, among other things, the liner notes for *The Complete Rachmaninoff Recordings* CD set published by RCA Victor.)

[107] Not even Josef Hofmann, the dedicatee of the work, ever performed it. The reasons seem to be complex, as Gregor Benko, former director of International Piano Archives and the world's foremost specialist in Josef Hofmann, explained to me on request. Benko plans to present the issue in detail in his upcoming Hofmann biography. Benno Moiseiwitsch apparently did perform the Concerto no. 3 but – unlike with the First, Second Concertos, the Rhapsody, and a handful of miniatures, all engraved in glorious recordings – no document seems to either have been made or to have survived.

thousands of Conservatory-graduating pianists can mostly deal with the purely mechanical difficulties of the work is not a sign of progress on *all* levels.) It is therefore fortunate that we have these concert recordings.[108] The historical significance of the recording of the *Third Concerto* may be superior, due to the scarcity of historic recordings of the piece but also to the fact that, unlike the composer and his emulators, Gieseking used the extended, "loud" cadenza in the first movement (to my knowledge the first pianist on record to do so). [109] Gieseking's extremely slow rendition of the initial theme in the *D Minor Concerto* is also noteworthy.[110] No other pianist had played it even remotely as slow as that before Van Cliburn's path-opening recording from 1958, not many after either. Gieseking starts it at ♩ = 86. The Rachmaninoff/Ormandy version starts at a radically faster pace, ♩ = 134![111] Van Cliburn, in the official RCA Victor recording starts it at ♩ = 110.[112] When Van Cliburn's recording came out, it was perceived as much slower than the norm.[113] We know that the choice of tempi could be

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[108] Gieseking and Mengelberg were also recorded together in concert in Debussy's *Fantasie* for piano and orchestra and in Franck's *Symphonic Variations*.

[109] Gieseking uses the same cadenza in his one other recording of the Third Concerto, similarly a live recording, in 1939, with John Barbirolli conducting the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

[110] On the recording itself, we can hear Mengelberg whispering "Bravo!" to the pianist, at the end of the first movement. While not polished, studio recording style, the first movement cadenza is indeed very intense and risqué in a way which in the concert hall might have made for quite an experience.

[111] Ian Hobson's live recording made with Chicago Symphony Orchestra shows that it is perfectly possible to emulate the composer's own understated approach and fluid tempi and still perform this concerto with impeccable elegance and lyricism, unmarred by the heavy athleticism and predictable, unstructured rubato which became the contemporary norm.

[112] The live recording made during the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow (with the same conductor, Kirill Kondrashin, 1958) is subtly slower, within the same tempo structure.

[113] The tempo parameters described apply mostly to the main theme only. Due to its wild tempo modifications and accelerandos, it cannot be asserted that the Gieseking/Mengelberg rendition of the first movement would be slower overall. The Van Cliburn/Kondrashin starts faster than Gieseking and slower than Rachmaninoff, but then the rest of it shows milder tempo modifications towards the fast side. That explains why the duration of the first movement is circa 16 minutes with Gieseking, as opposed to 17 ½ with Van Cliburn and 14 with the composer himself at the piano. A meaningful comparison has to also keep into account that, unlike Rachmaninoff, Van Cliburn and Gieseking used the longer cadenza and didn't introduce any cuts in the score.

attributed to Gieseking, not to Mengelberg, because the conductor commented on those tempi being different than those of the composer (see footnote 115).

The sound of the recording itself was striking on a first acquaintance. The impression was that the sound was occasionally strident. In fact we deal with a recording/transfer problem: the microphone placement and the sound levels create a fair amount of saturation and distortion, more similar to Boston Symphony Orchestra live recordings acetates during the Koussevitzky era than to the rest of the Amsterdam acetates of the period.[114] There is "creative chaos," risk-taking, and a lack of polish in these recordings, especially in the *Third Concerto*.[115] On a sheer music appreciation level, the interpretation of the *Second Concerto* is more integrated, technically and formally. It seems better rehearsed, more cogently voiced. In the *Second Concerto*, the chordal piano solo introduction leading from F Minor to C Minor[116] – a chromatic embellishment of a Slavic plagal cadence in minor – is performed with a rare impetus. Rachmaninoff and his inspired emulator, Moiseiwitsch,[117] don't strive for ceiling-shattering

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[114] It is not within the purpose of this thesis to discuss various CD embodiments of the same source recordings but, in this case, it has to be said that the Hubert Wendel Edition is noticeably better transferred to CD than the *Music & Arts* and other issues. The issues describe above don't disappear, but the sonic distortions are sensibly reduced and a more "natural" recorded sound emerges.

[115] We can go beyond speculation in this regard, as in the letter from Walter Gieseking, indicating to Mengelberg that because of engagements elsewhere, they wouldn't be able to discuss the tempi ahead of time as they usually did. Mengelberg commented in writing for himself, on the margin of the list of tempi he's been sent: "All different tempi to those played by the composer!!" *Gemeentemuseum*, exhibit 92.

[116] Rachmaninoff learned the skill of these deceptive introductions, which seem to start the work in one key while leading unexpectedly to the real main key from Tchaikovsky (e.g., the beginning of the *Pathétique Symphony*, which exposes the same plagal relationship). The beginning of the slow movement in the *Fifth Symphony*, transitioning from E Minor to D Major, inspired Rachmaninoff's own modulatory transition in the beginning of the second movement of the *Second Concerto*, from C Minor to E Major. Tchaikovsky himself used in a more "sophisticated" manner what Beethoven taught him in that respect, in the elemental yet incredibly influential initial cadence of the *Ninth Symphony*, which challenged and inspired innumerable composers for – going on two – centuries now.

[117] "The performance by Benno Moiseiwitsch [of the *Second Concerto*] occupies a special place among the seven representative performances I will discuss. We have here the one instance where Rachmaninoff actually made a remark concerning a performance of the concerto by someone other than himself – and for which we have a recording. Rachmaninoff felt a special admiration and sympathy for his younger colleague and friend. As Michael Stenberg wrote, he found Moiseiwitsch's performance colorful and close to the score". Natalya V. Lundtvedt,

climaxes, approaching this potentially sentimental work with aristocratic understatement and elegance. Nevertheless, even pianists who go for the monumental and the titanic – such as, in principle, the indomitable Sviatoslav Richter – sound domesticated by comparison.

Gieseking exhibits his own "changements" – which could be characterized as vulgar or exhilarating, according to the listener's taste and disposition – such as an unwritten ascending piano glissando in octaves, shot out at the end of the piano cadenza in the third movement, just before the climactic statement of the second theme. The section really standing out is the reprise of the main theme in the second movement (starting eight bars before rehearsal number 26, violins coming in four bars later). Stokowski, no stranger to luxurious, memorable legato string playing – and who recorded the work with the composer two times, in 1924 and 1929 – would have been proud. There is a remarkable balance element, starting at rehearsal number *27*. Besides the bass-line and the "resonating background" in the horns, the texture is basically tri-layered: the piano chords, the violins line, the triplets in the winds (flute + clarinet) taking over the arpeggiated figuration previously played by the piano. The initial balances suggested by Rachmaninoff in the score are *forte* for the piano, *piano* for the winds, *mezzo forte* for the strings, multiple dynamic "forks" nuancing that further. In many recordings, the two Rachmaninoff/Stokowski versions included, the generous amplitude of the violin theme (as close to a Russian infinite melody as the slow movement of Rachmaninoff's *Second Symphony*) is

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Rachmaninoff and Russian pianism: Performance issues in the Piano Concerto in C minor, Opus 18 (University of California dissertation, Los Angeles, 2009, p. 59.) In fact, as suggested, Rachmaninoff did comment admiratively on concerto performances not only by Moiseiwitsch but also by Horowitz and Gieseking. Also, Lundtvedt asserts that the first (1937) Moiseiwitsch recording of the Second Concerto "unfortunately has been lost" which is not the case. The 1937 HMV recording, conducted by Walter Goehr is not only not lost, but remains widely available.

being sectioned away by the winds triplets.[118] With Mengelberg we hear though the infinite melody of this whole reprise projected hauntingly and clearly (with the potentially choppy winds triplets aptly subdued to the long phrase, in a way which changes the character of the whole section). It is a moment of inspired phrasing and balancing, realized with a one of a kind sonority.

A stylistically exemplary document left by Mengelberg is that of Beethoven's *Fifth Concerto*, recorded live with the Dutch pianist Cor de Groot (1914-1993), during a November 9th 1942 concert. Multiple factors contribute to its relevance. Once again, it's a concerto Mengelberg was intimately familiar with, on both sides of the score, having performed it as a young pianist, even conducting it from the keyboard in a concert in Belgium, in 1900. (At those times such multitasking feats were not as common as today. Even later, Edwin Fischer recorded other Beethoven concertos conducting from the keyboard, but preferred a collaborating conductor when it came to the *Fifth*.) As opposed to Liszt's *First Concerto*, the soloist here, while young at the time, was indeed a performer worthy of collaborating with Mengelberg. (De Groot will become one of Holland's premier pianists.) The recording itself has a history. It was thought for a while to be incomplete, and it appeared as such on an old LP album published by the late British record dealer and Mengelberg collector Michael G. Thomas,[119] the first format this writer encountered it in. Meantime the missing source material on acetate discs was recovered and the entire performance has become available. It finds its worthy place in a generous discography, from Schnabel who said it took him many years to find the right sound for the first piano pitches

[118] Sergei Koussevitzky, in a little known live recording with Arthur Rubinstein (1949) does it with more of a "long arch" feel than Stokowski.
[119] Michael G. Thomas was among a handful of enthusiasts who published for the first time rare live Mengelberg recordings, at a time when it wasn't particularly lucrative to do so.

of the second movement of the *Emperor*, to Gould/Stokowski, to the argentine Gilels/Szell. Cherished by collectors are also the two Edwin Fischer versions, the early collaboration with Karl Böhm in Dresden, and the one Fischer recorded with Furtwängler for His Master's Voice in 1951. Even in exalted company, the Mengelberg/de Groot interpretation is worth a detailed look.

De Groot already had his own ideas of the work, meshing well with the older conductor's. One can compare this early (from de Groot's point of view) interpretation with the one recorded later, with Hague Philharmonic Orchestra under Willem van Otterloo. The comparison indicates that either much of what we hear in the 1942 Mengelberg recording was of the pianist's own imagining, or that details de Groot has learned from Mengelberg were thoroughly absorbed and re-employed later on. (A similar analysis can be made regarding what is common vs. different in the way a 19 years old Herman Krebbers, born 1923, performs Brahms' *Violin Concerto* in his live 1943 Concertgebouw debut, with Mengelberg, and the way he performs the same piece later, with Bernard Haitink, at a time when Krebbers was already the concertmaster of Concertgebouworkest. In this latter case, the violinist's conception of the work seems to be more influenced by the differences in conducting than in de Groot's *Emperor*.)

Notes on the recording: bar 6 [the last big, "unmeasured" bar before the orchestral exposition], the pianist starts the trill with an emphatic G, rather than either A flat or B flat. When the exposition starts, individual Mengelberg touches make their appearance right away. Bar 14 – Beethoven indicates *piano dolce* for the clarinet, but Mengelberg, aware of the balance problem in that place, has the clarinet play *mezzo forte*. Even without Mengelberg's annotated score (such as that of the Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* discussed in Chapter IV), the italicizing and shading of each part beyond Beethoven's bare indications can be pointed out on

aural bases alone. Anton Schindler's description of Beethoven's own playing – with unwritten inflections, accents, tempo modifications - inevitably comes to mind. In the timpani part, bars 15-35, we notice the composer's economy of means. Where the timpani are absent is as relevant as where they are involved. At the beginning of the tutti, Beethoven could have already reinforced the main theme in the strings with percussion, yet he chooses not to, starting to employ the timpani only in the sonorous block "commenting" on the clarinet solo. In bar 18 the timpani part starts with the *sforzando* indicated by the composer, followed by a sizeable *decrescendo*, the last note in bar 18 is altered from an E flat to an A flat (doubling as such the double basses), all played in *mezzo piano* rather than *forte*. This renders the richer rhythms (four sixteens followed by a quarter) in bars 21, 23, 24 more exciting, with Mengelberg asking the timpanist to employ some *crescendo*, with an accent on the quarter note. As soon as the music moves to the dominant, the timpanist employs another sizeable *decrescendo*, in bar 19.

Compared with the usage of triangle, described critically, Mengelberg's familiarity with the articulation and balancing potential of the timpani is in full evidence in this work in which Beethoven uses timpani creatively, on a par with – if more subtly than – his famous "timpani surprise" in the fifth bar of the *Scherzo* of the *Ninth Symphony*.[120] Mengelberg's treatment of the timpani is evident in the shading and timing of the timpani/piano duet towards the end of the third movement (bars 402—419). Beethoven indicates in the timpani part *pp* (bar 402), *sempre pp* (bar 404), *ritardando* (spread over bars 415-417) and *Adagio* (bar 418). The amount of nuance Mengelberg adds, without contradicting much Beethoven's indications, is thoughtful and appropriate. Especially bar 418 (the *Adagio* bar) has a continued *ritardando* combined with a

[120] In what regards both Beethoven and Mengelberg's use of timpani in Beethoven, please also refer to the Beethoven chapter (IV), the passage regarding the rewriting of the end of the Egmont Overture.

decrescendo from *pianissimo* to *ppp*, crowned with an unwritten *fermata* over the bar line which renders the following (last in the piece) dynamic shock more powerful. The aesthetic device of adding unwritten *fermatas*, sometimes huge, over bar lines, is something Mengelberg shared with Furtwängler, but Mengelberg employed it more rarely. (Furtwängler's most excessive fermata on silence must be the one in the Finale of the *Ninth Symphony*, separating the huge fermata on the F Major chord from the new B Flat Major fanfare section. A six to eight seconds pause in various post-WWII Furtwängler versions. A shorter *fermata* on the rest can be found in the March 1942 version, but only because preceded by a *fermata* on the *F Major chord* which must hold the world record – twelve full seconds.)

What distinguishes Mengelberg's contribution is that the dichotomy orchestral finesse versus orchestral presence isn't an issue. He knew how to seamlessly transition from delicacy to a heroic sonority and back. He also projects orchestral detail and long phrases by interpreting Beethoven's dynamics in context rather than literally. In the second movement a section challenging to balance is the reprise of the first theme (bars 60-70 and beyond). Beethoven writes for 8-9 bars *p* for the winds and the strings, and *dolce* for the pianist. Mengelberg employs more shadings than that. The listener hears how the thematic material travels from the flute to the clarinet, the temporary doublings, and the resulting unison in the mini-climax, between the three wind instruments (flute, clarinet, and bassoon). The piano itself sounds *dolce* indeed, not too prominent, as it is placed between the leading winds and the gently syncopated chords in the strings. (Too many recordings feature the piano's sixteen-notes with the agogic squareness of a Hanon exercise.)

In the third movement, the E Flat Major utterances of the rondo theme are being enunciated by Beethoven's pianist almost purely solo, if it weren't for the horns playing obsessively a B Flat octave (written as *sempre pp* by Beethoven, in the context of the pianist alternating between *ff* and *p*). The horn pitch, initially left over from the transitional last three bars of the slow movement, reinforces continuously the fifth of the tonic chord. As a result, one cannot ordinarily hear the horn pitch, especially while the pianist hammers out the *ff* sections of the theme. Mengelberg wouldn't condone this so he introduces his own dynamics in the horn part: a solid *mf* during the first two bars, piano during the next two bars. The B flat is actually re-attacked with a strong accent in the fifth bar, where Beethoven's scoring only indicates a tie, a prolongation of the same *sempre pp* B flat.[121]

One last comment on Mengelberg's phrasing in the *Fifth Concerto*. Sometimes he unexpectedly lingers on some notes. The manner he does that makes themes which are familiar to us, but in a classically distant way, instantly warmer, more "tuneful" – more alive. For instance, the first movement theme which appears in bar 75 et seq. contains four descending tetrachords, each starting one fourth or one third higher than the preceding one. How often do we hear them played like indifferent figuration? Mengelberg creates a quasi-vocal, "reaching for the high note" extra-space in the middle of bar 76 (between G and F) and in the middle of bar 80. It's not only that the moment he chooses to do so coincides with bass/harmonic movement. His eye must have caught that Beethoven phrases that moment with slurs which encompass four eighth notes, four eighth notes, then *eight* eighth notes. In most recordings one hears four groups of four notes, rather than two groups of four and one group of eight. Mengelberg's apparently

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[121] We've also mentioned Mengelberg's deliberate cancelling of ties (rearticulating tied pitches) when discussing the finale of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*.

sentimental lingering is his way of projecting the phrasing suggested by Beethoven himself. The musical phrase becomes thus both more tuneful, in the best sense, and structurally clearer.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 16

Besides routinely collaborating with internationally established soloists – *la crème de la crème*, including Gieseking, Sauer, Enescu, Kreisler, Busch, young Menuhin, and others – Mengelberg made it his responsibility to give talented young soloists (Dutch but not only, Guila Bustabo. Yehudi Menuhin and Conrad Hansen[122] come to mind) a chance to perform on the august

[122] To be fair, this is not meant to be in opposition to some imaginary Furtwängler ageism or anything of the kind. Furtwängler himself promoted young Conrad Hansen in concert, and a document attesting to their collaboration in Beethoven's Concerto opus 58 was recorded live, in 1943. An incandescent performance, with a hybrid cadenza in the first movement – Beethoven's longer and more popular one interspersed with an improvisation of the pianist's own device. Hansen (1906-2002) was one of Edwin Fischer's most gifted early students and Fischer's teaching assistant. While his post-World War II career did not earn the international prominence of the younger Alfred

Amsterdam stage. The musical confrerie of Edwin Fischer and Wilhelm Furtwängler had to come naturally, as they were born in the same year, 1886, and educated in similar traditions. The latter-mentioned couple performed often together, and we have three major works on record, witnessing their collaboration verging on miraculous affinity – the 1951 Beethoven *Fifth Concerto*, the risqué and inspired 1942 concert with Brahms' *Second Concerto*, as well as an interpretative (if perhaps not compositional) gem, Furtwängler's own *Piano Concerto* (one hour worth of complicated thematic elaborations which, within this writer's assumed limitations, delight the mind more than the ear or the soul).[123] For Mengelberg to have shown this level of compatibility with performers such as Herman Krebbers or Cor de Groot, four decades his juniors, bespeaks of an openness of mind and delight in encouraging the passing of the proverbial torch, musically speaking, to the generations to come.

Brendel, Hansen benefitted nevertheless from the respect and admiration of the German audiences until late in his fruitful concert life.

[123] A rather bad-sounding, qua recording, live version of the whole long concerto exists, as well as a sonically decent 78 set of the slow movement only.

CHAPTER IV. AMSTERDAM'S OWN BEETHOVEN

Besides discussing some of Mengelberg's interpretative strategies in approaching Beethoven's music, this chapter will make some reference to Furtwängler's parallel approaches. After all, in Berlin of the 1930s-1950s Furtwängler was "Mr. Beethoven," as Mengelberg was in Amsterdam.[124] Conductors such as Gustav Mahler, Felix Mottl or Arthur Nikisch lived into the 20th century, but they either died before being recorded at all, or left – as in Nikisch's case – only a handful of technologically primitive recordings, as mentioned in the *Introduction*, plus a limited number of piano rolls, a controversial technology. In Mahler's case we have piano rolls only. (Even those documents are by no means devoid of historical interest for the passionate researcher or the devoted connoisseur, while offering little in terms of immediate listening rewards. Discussing piano rolls is not a priority in our context, despite their underrated importance, in our opinion, as historical documents. As an example of how they fare in the skeptical estimation of some scholars, here's a quote from an excellent Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933) biography: "While there are a few successful piano rolls by famous performers of the past, Pachmann's are not among them. There is little in most of these rolls to suggest that it was Pachmann who was playing. With all their faults, his disc recordings capture at least at times some of the beauty of his playing, and are infinitely preferable to rolls."[125])

At this point the extensive recorded heritage of Willem Mengelberg – born 1871 – and Wilhelm Furtwängler – born 1886 – becomes of utmost relevance. This heritage is of

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[124] This is rather trivial, but Mengelberg joined in the superficial club of famous performers who showed an uncanny physiognomic similarity with Beethoven himself. Others before him were Anton Rubinstein and Liszt's disciple Frederic Lamond.
[125] Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko, *Chopin's Prophet: The Life of Pianist Vladimir de Pachmann*, p. 403.

significance insofar as both conductors possessed unique musical gifts, unexplainable through any historical or professional considerations alone. However, both conductors benefited from their historical placement in the heart of a living interpretive tradition. In simple terms, they were born early enough to be unaffected by more-or-less standardized recordings, but they also lived long enough to see their music-making richly immortalized on disc. Those recordings may be in mono sound, but they reproduce interpretative conceptions and dynamic range with enough fidelity as to be, more than documents, highly accomplished and directly overwhelming musical testimonies. Among the important conductors who preceded Mengelberg in their date of birth, at least two have recorded all of Beethoven's symphonies, some of them more than once, in acceptable mono sound – Felix Weingartner and Arturo Toscanini. However, the reputation of both these conductors in Beethoven was largely based, to different degrees, not on their embodying a specific interpretative tradition, but mainly on their critical challenge to interpretive concepts connected to such traditions.[126]

The recorded heritage of these conductors shows that reality was not encapsulated in a simplistic dichotomy. Neither Weingartner nor Toscanini chose to remove themselves entirely from the very interpretive concepts they rebelled against – such as tempo *rubato* or orchestral rescorings. Apart more or less exceptional occurrences, Toscanini and Weingartner (two rather different conductors to begin with) shared a certain faith in the preeminence of the score in front of any other source of authority. Moreover, Toscanini regarded the relative irrelevance of anything other than the fidelity to the score as the alpha and omega of his own interpretive credo.

[126] One can always speculate that Weingartner was representing alternatives to the powerful Wagner model – either the faster, stricter Mendelssohnian model which Wagner describes disparagingly, or the Lisztian one, as Liszt was an influential conductor in his own right.

The rejected alternative sources of information and, possibly, authority included: traditional accretion (a form of communitarian experience), assumption of the cultural context, and last but not least a highly individual reaction of the interpreter to the challenges posed by the musical work. We discuss this at length in Chapter V.

Weingartner was perhaps one Austro-German major conductor to take issue with Wagner's famous essay on conducting not only in practice – as in canceling (or rather narrowing down) Wagner's models of tempo modifications – but also in acid, articulate writing. Weingartner doesn't hesitate to call some (not all) of Wagner's "retouchings" and "emendations"[127] in Beethoven "purposeless and tasteless."[128] Even the title of Weingartner's best-known essay is a direct challenge to Wagner, not through being different, but through being purposely the same as Wagner's, while criticizing the former's content: "Über das Dirigieren". At the same time, placing Weingartner and Toscanini in the same proverbial boat on the subject of approaching Beethoven would be simplistic. An unlikely advocate for Weingartner's – and, for that matter, Mengelberg's – Beethoven approaches was Glenn Gould, with whose own interpretative renditions this author frequently takes issue, but whose inquisitive mind and fine ears make reading his opinions challenging and, at their best, illuminating.

In conversation with Bruno Monsaingeon, Glenn Gould, who delighted in debunking Romanticism (his description of how stale he sees second-rate Romantic piano concertos still makes for a hilarious read, even if one disagrees), praises Mengelberg in qualified yet no uncertain terms.

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[127] Mengelberg's "changements" come to mind.
[128] Felix Weingartner, *About Conducting*, in *The Conductor's Art*, p. 100.

> Glenn Gould: (...) I do find it upsetting, to put it mildly, to hear eighteenth- nineteenth-century music played on the piano with the kind of motoric license that has nothing at all to do with rubato.
>
> Bruno Monsaingeon: But surely this is a generational phenomenon? After all, some of the great virtuoso conductors from earlier in the [20th] century were very liberal tempo manipulators.
>
> G.G.: That's quite true, but not quite what I'm talking about. Let's take Willem Mengelberg, for example. I'm sure you'd agree that Mengelberg was one of the most formidable of orchestral technicians.
>
> B. M. Absolutely.
>
> G.G.: Personally, I think that, along with Stokowski, he was the greatest conductor I've ever heard on records – yet he certainly employed some strange, arbitrary (...), unnecessary tempo changes."

Getting over the irony of reading Gould complain about strangeness, arbitrariness, and even unnecessariness[129] (he talks in particular about some Mengelberg *ritardandos* in Beethoven's *First Symphony*), Gould makes some valid and valiant points, beyond the simplistic dichotomies deplored before:

> In the American context, Toscanini related to Stokowski music as Weingartner related to Mengelberg overseas. Toscanini was, or so it was said, a "literalist"; for him, the composer's instructions were gospel. (...) To my ears, it seems that the sound was edgy and unbalanced, that Toscanini's interpretations did not carry one forward with the visionary sweep of his fellow literalist Weingartner, and that the playing, by and large, born of terror rather than conviction, was sloppy. But the time was right for Toscanini.

Furtwängler and Mengelberg, in different ways, represented a diametrically opposite school of thought. By no means did they despise the singular significance of the composer's score as a main source for the interpreter. However, they deliberately and authoritatively refused to follow the interpretive indications contained in the score in a blind way.

How is that we place aesthetically Mengelberg and Furtwängler in a similar categorical space which, far from completely homogenous, is nevertheless coherent enough to justify the

[129] In fact it reminds us of the irony of Bernstein exhorting the performer "that he never interpose himself between the music and the audience." (Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, p. 151)

association? Mengelberg's and Furtwängler's interpretations of Beethoven are revelatory, exemplary, and, more than just comparable, compatible at an essential level of "musical orality." Revelatory insofar Beethoven's music itself becomes better projected into the reality of the concert/recording experience. Exemplary in a hard-to-emulate way – it would be wrong to believe that imitating this or that detail would inherently give, today, viable results. Exemplary still is the uninhibited, creative – never purely arbitrary – attitude in front of Beethoven's scores, the manifest conviction that Beethoven's music can never be a closed matter insofar, outside a particular realization, a musical score is neither self-sufficient nor finite. Listening to Mengelberg's recordings of the *Eroica* symphony represents a good opportunity to note how a creative interpreter can absorb analytical insight, projecting it then through specific means, in a way which makes immediate sense to the listener, whether he is familiar with the score or not.

Take for instance the harmonic correlation between the exposition and the recapitulation in *Eroica*'s first movement, correlation described by William Kinderman in his book about Beethoven as such:

> The immense scope of Beethoven's first movement is reflected in his open, continuously evolving treatment of the basic thematic material. Elements of dramatic tension are exposed from the outset. After the powerful opening chords and the following triadic turning figure, the melody descends to a mysterious, low C#, with syncopations heard above this pitch in the violins. The full implications of the mysterious C# are explored only at the beginning of the recapitulation, when Beethoven reinterprets this pitch as Db, with a new downward resolution leading to an extended solo for horn in F Major.[130]

Mengelberg applies specific agogic and dynamic devices – such as *ritenuto* and *decrescendo*, the *decrescendo* preceding the *crescendo* indicated by the composer – devices meant to emphasize the crucial C# (D Flat) pitch – in order to help the listener recall, while listening to the

[130] William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (second edition), pp. 96-97.

recapitulation, the corresponding passage in the exposition. Not only is the "harmonic bifurcation" thus rendered fully intelligible to the listener, but also the comprehension of further connections is assured. One aspect of this network of related pitches concerns the same chromatic gestures of three pitches, this time rising, from the Coda of the first movement or the same rising chromatic motif at the very end of the Scherzo – the motif labeled by Beethoven in manuscript with "eine fremde Stimme."

Furtwängler generally didn't operate with the kind of strongly projected, obvious micro-*rubato* Mengelberg was a specialist of. To Mengelberg's small and many "meaningful rhythmic distortions," Furtwängler preferred unwritten tempo modifications, broadly and over longer spans of musical time, as during the false transition (bars 248-284) in the development of the first movement. It is arguably the tensest part of the movement. The harmonic tension and use of rhythmic syncopation on a colossal scale in this section get this first movement closer to the ethos of the following Funeral March than it would otherwise be. (One should also not forget how prevalent the use of the major mode is throughout the exposition of the *Eroica*'s first movement, rendering as such the contrast with the troubled harmonic universe of the development more striking.)

Furtwängler employs a gradual but strongly noticeable *ritardando* throughout this section, accentuating as such the "depressing" accumulation of harmonic tension which will be temporarily solved only in the appearance of the new theme – the elegiac E Minor theme – the first and only theme in minor mode written by Beethoven in this movement. (Note: as distinct from major themes transposed in minor modes through developmental procedures.) The tempo Furtwängler reaches for the E Minor theme is much slower than the initial tempo. We would

rather not quote metronome marks, as the concrete parameters evolve between various readings by the same conductor, yet the conception – the **proportion** between tempi – stays fundamentally constant.

In our opinion Furtwängler did not offer always the clearest articulation of the foreground because he *chose* not to. An often-quoted case is the beginning of the Ninth, in which an assumedly foggy articulation of the initial sextuplets on the fifth E A seemed to reveal the elemental in that music, the primordial chaos. Judging by his already mentioned admiration for Schenker, Furtwängler apparently dealt with many "conflicting layers of clarity" – he was emphatic in his writing about instrumental clarity not being synonymous with conceptual, artistic clarity.

Regarding the relationship between Mengelberg and Furtwängler there isn't much to go by. Furtwängler mentions in his writings, with some hardly suppressed envy, the American-like luxury the Amsterdam orchestra could indulge in, when it came to practically unlimited rehearsal time.[131] While we have a complete Furtwängler essay musically dismantling Toscanini's tour in Germany with great acumen (especially his analysis of Toscanini's *Eroica* is worth reading), there are hardly any comments on Mengelberg himself, either positive or negative. The one we could find is on the critical and cryptic side, merely complaining about the way Mengelberg starts Beethoven's *Ninth*: "Mengelberg – beginning of the *Ninth Symphony*. Incomprehension of the background. But one might ask: in what way should Beethoven actually express the cryptic

[131] "Oddly, [Karajan] never seems to have coveted the Concertgebouw Orchestra as he later would the Berlin Philharmonic. It was Dutch, of course, not German. But was not Karajan perhaps concerned that, after Mengelberg, so perfectly honed a musical instrument had nowhere to go but down? (Which is where Karajan later came to believe it did go after Mengelberg and Van Beinum.)" (Richard Osborne, *Herbert von Karajan: a Life in Music*, p. 103)

sextole?"[132] Not only Furtwängler was not desirous of clarity in that passage, he attempted to achieve the "primordial waters" effect, color – rather than articulation-focused.

On Mengelberg's behalf, we know that he was in the audience during Furtwängler's 1925 New York debut, and there are reports that he gave the younger confrere a wild, generous standing ovation. The two conductors did invite each other in Amsterdam, Berlin respectively, but that might have been just as much a matter of convenience and mutual practical advantage as one of shared respect. On a human level Mengelberg had the reputation of being the more generous colleague. His own ego – or self-awareness – not exactly undersized, Mengelberg didn't hesitate to fully recognize meritorious comrades of the baton. Pierre Monteux testified to that rare quality:

> Willem Mengelberg himself came to the first rehearsal [of Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring," an Amsterdam 1924 concert] and asked Monteux if he could speak to the orchestra before it began. Monteux agreed. As he finished his remarks, Mengelberg came to Monteux, put his arm on his shoulder, and led the orchestra in a cheer for their French visitor. Only later did Monteux learn that Mengelberg, who had spoken in Dutch, has told the orchestra "in no uncertain terms that they all owed a debt of gratitude to Monteux for bringing this colossal work for the first time to Holland, and that if he, Mengelberg, had studied it for weeks and months himself, he would never have been able to conduct it!" (…) The success of "The Rite of Spring" prompted Willem Mengelberg to invite Monteux to share the season with him.[133]

Moreover, as Canarina relates, Monteux became co-conductor of Concertgebouw Orchestra for ten years, Mengelberg offering him first choice on repertoire matters with an impeccable collegial attitude.

It is true that Mengelberg liked to plan, interpretatively speaking, more than Furtwängler did. Even the licenses, the rhythmic nuance had to be thoroughly rehearsed with the orchestra,

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[132] Wilhelm Furtwängler, *Notebooks 1924-1954*, p. 174.
[133]John Canarina, *Pierre Monteux, Maître*, p. 84.

rather than inspired during the performance, as Furtwängler preferred. Nevertheless Mengelberg did not sacrifice much of what could be attributed to spontaneity. Rehearsed or not, the changes and the rhythmic nuance he applied in his performances seldom sound over-practiced, stale, or predictable. Somehow he succeeded, in performance after performance, to rekindle the re-creative enthusiasm he must have experienced while deciding for the first time on some detail. In 1943 he performed a legendary concert in Bucharest, with Dinu Lipatti, alas not recorded. Liszt's Piano Concerto no. 1 was followed by a Mengelberg *cheval de bataille*, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony no. 5*. Beethoven's *Eroica* has also been performed, in another concert. There are accounts in the Romanian press, particularly one signed by musicologist and folklorist George Breazul[134], which show how Mengelberg used very long sectional rehearsals, repeating sometimes one bar "up to 170 times," until, at the end of the proceedings, the not so stellar Romanian Radio orchestra sounded in a way which reminded everybody of… Concertgebouw Orchestra.[135]

Furtwängler admired Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* very much, wrote a whole analytical essay about it. He also felt, not uncharacteristically so for a world-famous conductor, that he performed it well. So felt a less subjective listener, Heinrich Schenker,[136] who commented on the young Furtwängler's rendition being superior to those of other great conductors of the time,

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[134] George Breazul, *Pagini din istoria muzicii româneşti*, vol. 4, pp. 195-197.
[135] The Romanian concert hasn't been recorded. However, we do possess now a recently uncovered two minutes *video* excerpt from the finale of the same Tchaikovsky symphony, performed in Budapest in January 1943. The same comments could apply there. In those times when conductors were orchestra-builders rather than jet-flying guest conductors, when average virtuosity of the orchestral musician was arguably less than what it is now, the orchestral *sound* was indeed as much the *sound of the conductor* as it was the sound of the individual musicians materially producing it.
[136] We could not find any document regarding Mengelberg's attitude towards, or even knowledge of Schenker's writings. It is known Furtwängler experienced Schenker's writings as an epiphany, as early as 1911. On the other hand, some concepts of the earlier analyst Hugo Riemann found their way in Mengelberg's interpretative treatment of musical time.

including even the older Nikisch and Richard Strauss, who recorded the symphony as well[137]. Furtwängler programmed Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* in his concerts with greater frequency than any other symphonic work. For the transition from the *Scherzo* to the Finale, Beethoven indicated that the last G Major seventh chord before the Finale be held through four "una battuta" bars (with no fermata), while Furtwängler conducted it in all but one of his Beethoven *Fifth Symphony* recorded readings[138], as much longer than written (between 7 and 8 bars). The most blatant prolongation was applied in the two May 1947 "comeback" Berlin concerts[139] preserved on record, but this is a feature present in all but one of Furtwängler's recordings of the *Fifth*.[140]

Furtwängler also took another meaningful (and easy to misinterpret) decision. In the long, mysterious transition from the *Scherzo* to the *Finale*, Beethoven employs long values in second violins and violas, as well as rhythmical and potentially percussive quarter notes in the timpani, later on in cellos and basses as well, mainly reproducing the elemental rhythm of the *Scherzo*'s main motif. Furtwängler unexpectedly melts down those rhythmic elements in the bass, in a deliberately rhythmically vague way, in a suspended A Flat Major harmony, with the violins' gaining height in a surreal, "undetermined" pianissimo. The feeling is that of a stasis. There are

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[137] Nikisch's recording – not the first in history of the work, as often presumed, but the second – cannot be assessed in full fairness, insofar the conditions in which it was recorded were far from giving a realistic image of what was billed as Berliner Philharmoniker. To begin with, a drastically reduced number of musicians fit into the recording studio. On the other hand the later Strauss' version, an early electrical 78 set, does offer an extremely energetic, unexpectedly youthful, subtly flexible vision of the work.
[138] The one among eleven versions which observes roughly the four bars duration of the G Major seventh dominant chord is the post-World War Two version studio recording for His Master's Voice, later EMI.
[139] … after a "denazification" process discussed not only in the Shirakawa and Gillis books mentioned in this writing, but also in Ronald Harwood's play – with the movie version directed by István Szábo – *Taking Sides*.
[140] The exception is the studio recording made for His Master's Voice.

no inadvertent *crescendo*s or accentuations.[141] The possible becoming of the musical thread seems undecided, anything could happen. What that moment loses (deliberately) in terms of rhythmic vigor and clarity it gains in metaphorical suggestiveness. The two elements we have commented upon – the peculiar, “masterfully unclear” way in which Furtwängler balances the texture and the prolonged dominant chord – make out of this transition, arguably, the most memorable happening of the entire symphony. We believe such licenses, deployed with conviction, illuminate the depths of the structure, rather than obscure them. That dominant chord leading into the C Major explosion – with the orchestral ensemble enriched by trombones exulting in the jubilant theme – is so crucial a moment in the structure of the whole work, that Furtwängler needed to renounce for a moment the letter of the score in order to project the structural and emotional weight of the moment in its entirety.

Mengelberg’s approach to the *Fifth Symphony* is more special in the second movement than anywhere else. Mengelberg knew how to make the orchestra “sing out” a lyrical Beethoven theme, not as if it was some distant classical concept in need of respect, more like a savored tune he grew up with.[142] A detail that comes to mind in this respect is the last iteration (bars 223-229) of the motif which first appears in bars 10-15 and especially 15-19. Following the strong *ritenuto* in bar 220 (not a *Tempo I* as indicated by Beethoven), Mengelberg phrases the mentioned iteration with a substantial amount of *rubato* and a characteristic slide between the pitches C and G, emphasizing the new, more arched reaching of the seventh degree of the A Flat Major scale.

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[141] Wagner’s comment on a highly chromatic unison passage in the first movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony being performed satisfactorily for the first time by Habeneck, on the account of the lack of inadvertent accents and the linear simplicity of the execution, comes to mind.

[142] It is the kind of “familiarity without contempt” which is missing in today’s concert life, in which many “classical” works seem more like museum items than relevant, living musical entities. Part of the problem, if any, is the unavoidable generational/cultural increasing distance between composers and interpreters, factor for which nobody can be blamed.

The moment itself seems redolent, *avant la lettre*, of a Brahmsian nostalgia. Mengelberg's keen ear has noticed the harmonic/developmental parallelism between bars 223-229 in the Beethoven movement and bars 156-158 in Brahms' third movement of the *Third Symphony*, discussed in Chapter II.

Mengelberg's approach to Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony* is fundamentally similar in the two live and one studio recording: brisk tempos, skillfully varied articulation.[143] A comparison shows Furtwängler privileged slow tempi, ample phrasings, not-too-varied string articulation, a generally applicable – if dynamically modulated according to the musical context – expressive sonority, obtained by asking for generous vibrato in the strings and bowing on the long, uninhibited side. Mengelberg was adept at alternating non-vibrato, little vibrato and (as an exception) molto vibrato passages,[144] with emphasis on *portamento*, short bowings, varieties of accents, and species of *staccato* and *spiccato*.)

At the beginning of *Szene am Bach* in the *Pastoral Symphony*, Mengelberg substitutes the 4 sixteenth-notes rhythm, written by Beethoven to be played on the eighth-notes 11 and 12, with an unexpected quadruplet, to be played instead of the eight notes 10, 11 and 12. Never emulated on record, this is an idiosyncratic, not arbitrary interpretative decision. It bears witness to an interpretative effort to conciliate in performance score-projection and aural perception. The conductor faces a dilemma. If the Andante is indeed *molto moto*, as Beethoven requires, the music exhibits the expected fluency but at the cost of rushing the sixteenth notes theme in the

[143] As often when we compare studio versions and live versions of the same work, with the same orchestra, the studio recordings seem relatively tighter and more focused on accuracy, while the live recordings "breath" more freely. This observation doesn't apply to Mengelberg only, but to most conductors who left both studio recordings and live documents.

[144] As testified by Menuhin – and present in his earlier recordings, when his technique was still at his best – Enescu's violin playing was a lesson in infinite vibrato shadings. To either vibrate continuously or not to vibrate at all is a false dichotomy.

first violins. If the conductor, on the other hand, slows down at a pace which allows the sixteenth notes of the quoted theme to be "sung" according to the concept of melos brought forward by Wagner,[145] the eighth notes supporting motif in the second violin, viola, and cello could be perceived as static and repetitious, while the huge rests between the interventions of the first violin also risk to fragment the main theme. By spreading the sixteenth notes of the first violins over the last **dotted** quarter-note (rather than over the last quarter-note as written), Mengelberg succeeds in conciliating these musical elements in a way which has the appearance of spontaneity, all the while having been thought out, not to mention difficult to conduct. This is the agogic license an imaginative Romantic pianist would have thought of, rather than a typical conductor. Less drastic agogic adjustments are used by Mengelberg to group the lower strings' supporting theme, in order to observe Beethoven's own slurring around the beat, rather than on the beat.

Regarding this "changement" in Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, one needs to bring an homage to an almost forgotten Italian musicologist, Giorgio Graziosi. In a small book first published in 1952, *L'interpretazione musicale*, he became one of few pioneers of comparative interpretative analysis. The following graphic representation of Beethoven's rhythm versus

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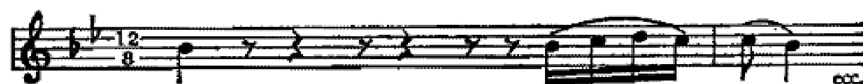
[145] A little known book looking into Beethoven's piano sonatas and more is University of Illinois Professor Emeritus Kenneth Drake's *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1994. Among many insights, we would quote this one, on pp. 33-34:
"We must be reminded that instruments of multiple pitches or variable pitch derive their expressive power from emulating the original instrument, the human voice. 'Why limit the piano to the limitations of the human voice?' a student once asked. The question illustrates the importance of teaching that the pacing of a phrase should be decided by imagining a singer's breath control, and that of leaps and intricate subdivisions by the time required to sing through the notes."

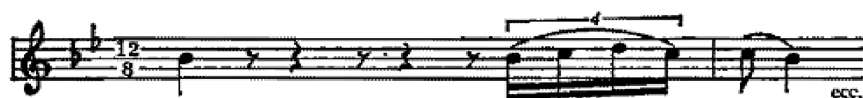
Mengelberg's interpretation pertains to Graziosi.[146] He says: "enough to notice this and to abstain from any comment." We haven't followed his exhortation.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 17

« Andante molto mosso ». Detto che Kubelik realizza un rarissimo equilibrio tra archi accompagnanti e melodia dei violini I, senza peraltro governare questa con il fraseggio lungo e denso proprio di Furtwaengler, veniamo a Mengelberg che lascia su questo inizio della « Scena al ruscello » uno dei suoi piú saporosi *souvenirs* ottocenteschi. Basti osservare e ci esimiamo da ogni commento.



Sopra è il testo beethoveniano; qui sotto l'interpretazione di Mengelberg.



While Graziosi speaks about this alteration in terms of 19th century "savory souvenir," he is also one of few commentators in the 1960s not to offer only warmed over clichés about how talkative and unpardonably old-fashioned Mengelberg was. On the contrary, he talks about Mengelberg's Beethoven as a model of rhythmic and interpretative freedom imbued with meaning. Regarding the bars 248-300 sequence in the first movement of *Eroica*, Graziosi asserts:

> Generalmente I direttori non riescono a rifornirla dell'impulso necessario: ne vien fuori un che di opaco e scarso di mordente. Soltanto Mengelberg e Furtwängler – di tutti quelli che abbiamo potuto ascoltare – riescono a 'cantare' portando le ultime battute (285-300) ad altissima temperatura (…)[147]

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[146] Giorgio Graziosi, *L'Interpretazione Musicale*, p. 172.
[147] Graziosi, *L'Interpretazione musicale*, p. 151.

> (In general conductors are incapable of charging [this section] with the necessary energy: what comes out is something opaque and lacking bite. Only Mengelberg and Furtwängler – of all we had the opportunity to listen to – succeed in "singing" out and bringing the last bars (285-300) to the highest incandescence.)

Another one of Mengelberg's "thoughtful distortions" is his *ritardando* at the end of the *Ninth Symphony*, a *ritardando* which came under criticism (e.g., from perceptive record reviewer and Mengelberg and Furtwängler aficionado Henry Fogel.)

Beethoven's last pages of the *Ninth Symphony*'s Finale only bear a *Prestissimo – Alla breve* indication. Furtwängler used, in all his recorded performances, from 1937 to 1954, a breathtaking *accelerando*, not unlike the same device used by him in the end of the *Fifth Symphony*. In both cases, far from a Rossini-like effect as it superficially seems, this expresses perhaps an irresistible augmentation of energy, at the exhaustion of which the only possible, organic consequence is absolute silence. (Also to be noted, Beethoven's unusual, not unique, use of a fermata on the rest after the last note of the Finale, in the score of the *Ninth Symphony*.) Was Mengelberg's huge – insofar we know, unprecedented and never emulated – final *ritardando* a simple effect-seeking mannerism? After all Mengelberg, seldom or never applied similarly over-projected *ritardando*s at the end of other symphonies, unless they were spelled out in the score.

To this author, with the big *ritardando* in the end of the *Ninth*, Mengelberg seems to declare, through the music itself, that the last measures of the Finale are not just the last exaltation of joy. The most emphasized musical gesture in the last bars becomes, through the magnifying lenses of the *ritardando*, the concluding fifth: A D. It is the answer, incredibly much belated, to the question contained in another fifth, in that primordial E A, the fifth which started, as an elemental existential challenge, the first movement, 70 minutes or so earlier. "E A?" "A D!" For the music of a composer who was keen on meaningful para-musical mottos (such as

"Muss es sein?" – "Es muss sein," or the one at the beginning of the *Piano Sonata* opus 81a), this should not be an excessively speculative connection. The end of the Finale, under Mengelberg's baton, is thus conceived as also the end of the entire symphony, as an organic entity. With that *ritardando*, Mengelberg seems to compel the listener to remember where and how the whole symphony started, seventy long minutes ago, offering an even more memorable sense of closure than simply observing Beethoven's interpretative indications would have offered.

Below we compare Mengelberg's idiomatic realization ("pathetisch Klagend" – lament pathetique - according to him) of the oboe recitative at the beginning of the reprise, in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* (bar 268), with Beethoven's own notation. While the result offers an impression of inspired improvisation, Mengelberg wrote his version of how the oboe recitative was to sound like,[148] with note values more precise than Beethoven's, and a specific metrical realization, including indications as to which beat to be held even longer, within the slow enunciation. Mengelberg takes considerably more time with the recitative than other conductors, being aware of the emotional and formal uniqueness of that single bar within the whole movement. More than a fleeting flourish, the recitative becomes the expression of a protracted nadir of existential loneliness in an otherwise relentless movement, driven by the exigencies of the mundane.

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[148] Mengelberg's recordings do project this realization quite strongly, with an unmistakable expressive effect.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 18

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 19

Studying Willem Mengelberg's annotated score of the second movement of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* and comparing it with Mengelberg's recordings (all three of them are live, the best being the earliest, 1936 in Amsterdam) is a rewarding exercise. The clarity of Mengelberg's interpretative thought as well as his capacity to project in performance whatever he wanted, once he decided it, are in my opinion second to no conductor of his own generation, not even Stokowski, and was only matched or rarely surpassed in the generation of "modern post-Romantics" such as Constantin Silvestri, Bruno Maderna,[149] or Herbert Kegel. (In a Silvestri biography, a Hungarian review of a Silvestri concert in Budapest after the war is being quoted: "Not since Willem Mengelberg have we heard a *Pathétique* like Silvestri's; since Nikisch, such a Dvorak; since Bruno Walter, such a Mozart; since Furtwängler, such a Brahms."[150] It shows how certain references still survived in the minds and in the critical apparatus of publicists lucky enough to have heard these luminaries and presumably to have understood their art.)

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[149] A distinction has to be made between the way Maderna is perceived as a composer, part of the Boulez/Stockhausen circle, and his transcending acumen as a conductor, able to perform music of many different styles without the hyper-modernist analytical dryness one could erroneously expect.
[150] John Gritten, *A Musician before His Time: Constantin Silvestri*, p.109.

In the *Allegretto* movement, Mengelberg interprets Beethoven's tenuto mark on the first (non-staccato) quarter note of the initial motif as being applicable on every initial quarter note of each apparition of the motif. He also adds a *decrescendo* in each of the two-bar motifs, creating as such an identifiable dynamic profile, which will later on serve to perceive the said motif as an autonomous reality, even when many other musical events are to be followed. Among them, the most important may be the melodicized, legato variation on the middle voice of the initially harmonic utterance (first appearing in bar 27, violas + cellos). Mengelberg's way of performing these overlapping materials in the most possibly distinct way, as parallel musical events, contributes to the listener's ability to follow further developments thoroughly.

In bar 75, Mengelberg shows sensitivity to the balance problem implied by Beethoven's general *fortissimo* indicated in the score. In fact the whole orchestra (initial theme in the winds plus two categories of secondary elements in the strings – an eighth notes motif in the second violins as well as a triplets dialogue between the viola & cello and the basses) plays against the melodic, continuous second theme, now in the first violins. Mengelberg dutifully asks the first violins to play *FFFF* and with "energische" tone, while reducing the dynamics of other parts to just *forte*.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 20

At bar 150, Beethoven's indication of *piano* (throughout all parts, with a *dolce* added for the winds), if taken literally, renders inaudible the presence of the initial theme in the pizzicatos of the lower strings. Mengelberg's dynamic adjustment to *forte* of that part clarifies the texture and grants a vivid presence to the usually neglected part. In addition to changing the *piano* to *forte* for double-bass and *piano* to *mezzo forte* for cellos, Mengelberg balances the texture further by asking the first violins, playing a relatively unimportant figuration, to perform *pianissimo*.

MUSICAL EXAMPLE 21

It is little wonder that the consummate professional and exigent conductor Hermann Scherchen comments laudatorily on Mengelberg's use of this professional device:

> When marking orchestral parts, it is needful to mark them all. Directions for execution are as important for the woodwind, brass, and percussion as for the strings. Hence, a conductor must have a thorough knowledge of every instrument in the orchestra, and of all the technical problems which the players may have to face. (…) Willem Mengelberg, the conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, uses such indications in exemplary fashion. I have seen string and choral parts used by him when conducting at the Frankfurter Museum Gesellschaft, which fulfil their purpose in every respect. They do not enslave the players' individuality, but show the way to the best technical solution among the several that may be possible in every one of the cases that crop up. [151]

[151] Hermann Scherchen, *Handbook of Conducting*, p. 150.

It is relevant to point here out one other, more exciting (or egregious, depending upon the perspective) Mengelberg's "changement" in the orchestration of a piece, where he felt he could improve the dramatic impact of the music, using the superior number of timpani of a post-Mahlerian orchestra. (This is even more interventionist than using four horns instead of one, at the C Major modulation in the introduction to the finale of Brahms' *First Symphony*, the way Mengelberg was known to do.) At the end of the *Egmont Overture*, Mengelberg added a whole mini-part for the timpani, including extra ones [a second, octave-tuned C one, and an A]. Moreover, precisely five bars before the end, the conductor-arranger has the timpani, instead of just playing (the one per measure) F indicated by Beethoven, double (using an F C C F C pattern) the rhythm of the brass and winds.

Studying the pattern of these changes is rendered more complicated as there are five complete recordings of the *Egmont Overture* left by Mengelberg. Three of them are studio recordings, two live. The Victor version was made in New York, during the last year of his tenure there (1930), between the two other studio discs made for Columbia, in 1926 and 1931. (Despite electrical 78 technology already existing in 1926, the progress made in the way it was used was considered substantial enough for new matrixes of existing catalogue items to be re-recorded. The same goes for other performers, e.g., Cortot re-recording within years sets of Chopin *Ballades* or Schumann's *Concerto*.)

Two Mengelberg *Egmont* versions were recorded live: one of them in 1943, in Amsterdam, plus a recently discovered Salzburg Festival version from 1942. (This is one of only two recordings in which Mengelberg conducts Wiener Philharmoniker, the other one being

Weber's *Euryanthe Overture*. Tapes of the rest of the two 1942 Salzburg concerts, including Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* and the *Fifth Concerto*, Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben* and Brahms' *Haydn Variations*, which Brahms work didn't survive in any Mengelberg interpretation, are believed to have been destroyed. We owe the first publication of the hitherto unknown Wiener Philharmoniker recordings to Myriam Scherchen and her record label, Tahra.)

The relevance of this discographic data is double-folded:

- that the aforementioned changes in the timpani score are present in all five versions under review; that corroborates what we know anecdotally, that Mengelberg was using his own annotated parts on tours, not only in Amsterdam;
- there is a colossal difference between the emphasis Mengelberg grants to the modified timpani part in all three studio recordings (CO, CO, NYPSO) versus the two live recordings (CO and VPO). A difference in the placement of the microphones could have explained that in part but, in our opinion, it is likely that Mengelberg was more reluctant to over-project his alterations in a disc sold all over the world, which means that the timpani part was more of a performance practice decision than a cold compositional modification for all times. The extra timpani part sounds rather shy in all three studio recordings of *Egmont*, while the two live recordings (not to mention the partial video footage of the finale, in occupied Amsterdam) expose the adjustment in a raw, uninhibited way. Whatever one would think about the appropriateness of the changes, the result is exhilarating.

It is in their consummate eloquence, based on a thorough knowledge of and intimacy with Beethoven's music, that Furtwängler's and Mengelberg's examples reside. Rather than doing justice to a score, they did justice to the music, which bears a relationship to the score that could be assimilated to the rapport between thought and words. These incomparable conductors' versions of Beethoven's music are not meant to be put in competition. They complementarily show how interpretation can be creative without being abusive.

CHAPTER V. OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN INTERPRETATION

In the field of interpretative aesthetics (it's tempting to say interpretative theology), two fundamental historical positions in what regards the rapport between composition and interpretation are often asserted: essentialist versus nominalist. Like all generalizations veering from the phenomenon to its classification, this too simplifies complex, irreducible issues.

The first, essentialist position will see the composition in its written form as something self-sufficient, or defined well enough for the interpreter to "realize" rather than "interpret". According to this paradigm, an interpreter can do everything the composer explicitly asked for and do nothing against what the composer wrote into the score. This position privileges ethically humility, aesthetically asceticism, existentially a cerebral approach, methodologically and behaviorally a scientific rapport with the work of art. The specific moniker is less important – it was called different things in different times: Werktreue, Neue Sachlichkeit, "letting the music speak for itself," self-effacingness, following the composer's wishes, bringing out the score, all that is in the score, and nothing but the score: "For if one begins by questioning the reliability of the composer's notation...and as a consequence suggests that one ought to permit musicians to take various liberties with the text, then where is one to stop compromising?... By what criteria is one to know how far away from the score one may or may not depart?"[152]

The second, nominalist position will see the composition more as an unfulfilled promise. A "copy of a non-existing original" (Adorno). "Virtual music vs. music in act" (Stravinsky,

[152] Gunther Schuller, *The Compleat Conductor*, p. 8.

whose modernist propensities didn't stop him from appreciating Mengelberg's versions of his works – none of which recorded –, and to declare his admiration for Josef Hofmann, as a pianist he, Stravinsky, tried his best to emulate: "In so far as school life permitted, I used to go to symphony concerts and to recitals by famous Russian or foreign pianists, and in this way I heard Josef Hofmann, whose serious, precise, and finished playing filled me with such enthusiasm that I redoubled my zeal in studying the piano"[153]).

This perspective sees the interpreter as a collaborator, re-creator, responsible for bringing music back to life in a way that makes sense through that given interpreter, in that given moment, and for that given audience, rather than as an inherent realization of an unchangeable compositional essence self-sufficiently contained in a text. This position privileges ethically creative adequacy (ability to decode interpretive challenges encrypted in the score), aesthetically imagination, existentially emotionalism and assumption of risks, methodologically synthesis, behaviorally the posture of the poet and of the philosopher. Furtwängler decried in passionate terms "the crabbed, soul-destroying demand for 'literal' interpretations. Those propounding this view would dearly love to pronounce sentence of death on anyone who departs one iota from the composer's written text, restricting performance to exactly what is recorded and thereby reducing any subjective freedom to the smallest degree imaginable."[154]

We should endeavor to show how and why this position does not have the anarchist implications suggested by the partisans of the opposite perspective:

> In appearance my performance instructions stand in contradiction TO BEETHOVEN'S OWN ORTHOGRAPHY [capitals in the original] – that is, to the way he has written down the content. But this apparent contradiction resolves itself as soon as I explain the nature of the orthography.

[153] Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*, p. 10.
[154] *Furtwängler on Music*, p. 10.

> Specifically, it is not the task of the orthography, as is generally believed and taught, to provide the player with perfectly definite means for achieving effects allegedly specified and attainable only through precisely these means, but rather to arouse in his mind, in an a priori manner, specific effects, LEAVING IT UP TO HIM to choose freely the appropriate means for their attainment. What is correct, rather, is that the orthography on the contrary allows the player free rein concerning the means to be employed, just so long as they actually do attain the effect which alone was meant to be expressed by the orthography. [155]

At the end of the day, the two positions mentioned are not as irreconcilable as they seem. No ideational intentionality, no matter how sound, how conservative or how daring, how humble or how proud, has ever produced beautiful music on its own. “The proof is in the pudding” some say, and the same would go for musical nourishment. At a more sophisticated level, Husserl would talk about the “intuited object” – something which is not exhaustible in an explanation, an abstract traversal, a radiography of the concrete phenomenon, but in the phenomenon itself.

Claudio Arrau was a literalist, at the intentional level. In his various readings of Beethoven’s *Fourth Piano Concerto*, which was dear to him, the pianist seems to have studied not only every note but also every word written by Beethoven, and tried to translate this in his playing. Arrau left models of inspired literalism, which does not mean that his way of reading the *opus 58 Concerto* – authoritative, thoughtful and intended-as-literal – should be construed as the one correct way of reading that score. The example of Arrau, a pianist, is chosen deliberately, rather than that of Toscanini – seventy years ago considered almost unanimously the golden standard of “purified” interpretation, objective approach, and respectful reading of a score. Not only because Arrau (see *Conversations with Arrau*[156]) highly admired Furtwängler, but also because the same Joseph Horowitz wrote a devastating debunking of the Toscanini myth, in his

[155] Heinrich Schenker, *Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony*, p. 8.
[156] “The first time I heard Furtwängler’s recordings, I [felt] that whatever nourishes this music making comes from someplace very deep. It can be a crushing emotional experience”. Arrau, in Joseph Horowitz, *Conversations with Arrau*, pp. 228-229.

Understanding Toscanini: how he became an American culture-god and helped create a new audience for old music.

Debunking the Toscanini myth does not entail denying the conductor's brilliant achievements, his long career. Neither does it entail denying Toscanini's merits in professionalizing the opera standards, by comparison with the loose Italian customs of his early career. Nor does it mean to question his merits in the popularization of classical music in American mass-culture, at the transition between the old ways and emergent technologies, including television. It means though dismantling simple dichotomies, in which aesthetical battles were combined with actual, personal conflicts, the reverberations of which went beyond the trivial and the biographical. Toscanini was routinely presented as the embodiment of progress, the apostle of pure, humble, objective interpretation, as opposed to the subjective, somehow less sound "distortions" of, at different points in time, Mahler, Mengelberg or Furtwängler.[157] These real – going beyond academic or aesthetic – struggles actually happened, and, by coincidence more than by design, they all happened in New York. Of course, a hundred years after the fact, it would be inconsequential, as regards the stated purpose of this writing, to fight old battles, to go back to the press statements which faded away in the bowels of anecdotal history. Aspects of that can be still found, if required, in research signed by Daniel Gillis, Fred Prieberg, Joseph Horowitz, and Sam Shirakawa (see bibliography). On the Toscanini "defense" team, not any less passionate, one has to count Harvey Sachs, with his *Reflections on Toscanini* attempting to debunk Horowitz's debunking. Richard Taruskin responded to Sachs' response, in

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[157] Bruno Walter didn't escape Toscanini's curt dismissal either – Menuhin tells us how Walter, in the Toscanini's understanding, was little more than a "sentimental fool."

The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays. I have my own opinions on all these historical matters, but this is not the place to fight World War II all over again.

What is still of interest today is the fact that Toscanini, one of the historically significant Italian conductors (in my opinion not as technically skillful and musically-rounded as Victor de Sabata, Inno Savini, Franco Ferrara, Tullio Serafin, or Carlo Maria Giulini, yet a conductor of effervescent temperament and intended integrity), partially by choice, partially by factors beyond his control, was used as a publicity counterweight, at different points in time, to three of the most inspired conductors in history: Gustav Mahler, Wilhelm Furtwängler, and Willem Mengelberg. In the mundane world, Toscanini and his adepts "won" in all three instances. Mahler, sick at heart in more than one way, didn't live much longer anyway, after the contentiousness regarding influence within the Metropolitan Opera. Furtwängler, after his phenomenal debut and a couple of NY Philharmonic seasons worth of presence in New York, left the U.S., never to return. (This happened in correlation with Furtwängler's American presence in 1925-1927, that is to say before the 1935 [New York] and 1949 [Chicago] political controversies associated, with more or less justification, with Furtwängler's decision to remain musically active in the Nazi Germany. For detailed information regarding the history of Furtwängler's three major attempts to penetrate American musical life – the 20's, 1935, and 1949, the classical source remains Daniel Gillis' *Furtwängler and America*. Apparently a 1955 American tour of Berliner Philharmoniker was meant to happen in 1955, but Furtwängler's death in November 1954 made the hiring of Karajan necessary for the event, and for Berliner Philharmoniker's future in general.)

Going back to the early 1920s, the duumvirate of Mengelberg and Toscanini at the head of the recently forged New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra[158] wasn't luckier. True, a huge ego and a gigantic one may have been clashing besides musical values. Also, Toscanini's laconic, less than articulate approach, was colored by rehearsal techniques involving notorious tantrums as *modus operandi,* in opera and in symphonic music alike. This approach corresponded, in superficial terms, to a ruthless CEO-like, mechanistic ideal of efficiency, more akin to the social ethos of the age (see Chaplin's *Modern Times*) than Mengelberg's or Furtwängler's somewhat vague concepts, steeped in the spiritual language of German philosophy. By 1930 – despite triumphant series of concerts, despite some exceedingly accomplished early electrical 78s, featuring Mengelberg in New York prior to 1930,[159] Mengelberg lost the background battle for musical influence in New York, and went back to Europe. As he had sworn, he never returned to a New World which discarded him when it found a "new" fashionable orchestral leader.

Even earlier in his career, aside innumerable triumphs, Mengelberg had to face some personal opposition in Europe, such as in Amsterdam when a faction of the orchestra tried to get him fired. (Later, given his prestige in Amsterdam, this would have been unconceivable, until the different kind of post-World War II imbroglio.) Also, during his tenure at the Frankfurt Museum Concerts (1907-1920), Mengelberg's supporters got involved into a bitter polemic with a particular critic. Not merely critical, the malicious reviews signed by Paul Bekker, during the

[158] created through the merger of the New York Philharmonic and of the Mengelberg-conducted National Symphony Orchestra
[159] 78s including the 1930 *Eroica Symphony* (the most accurate version until Koussevitzky's and Mengelberg's own later, 1940 version), despite the legendary 1928 Victor set of *Ein Heldenleben*[159], considered by most experts in recorded history *the* reference recording even today.

years before World War I, in *Frankfurter Zeitung*,[160] owe nothing in vitriolic excess to later reviews of the 1930s, by the powerful *New York Times* reviewer and Toscanini supporter Olin Downes, directed against Furtwängler. One particular Bekker review succeeds in embarrassing today not only on the account of its bashing the conductor, but also because of its tone-deaf description of repertoire Mengelberg chose to perform during that 1911 Frankfurt season.

> Three evenings have passed without as much as a single novelty on the program. Yes, yesterday the fourth Museum Concert did bring as novelties two Romanian Rhapsodies by Georges Enesco. But whoever had expected that the originality & significance of these pieces would compensate for the previous lack of new works was sorely disappointed. Enesco brings us a few national tunes in an operetta-like arrangement: a dance-music talent (sic) of which we have no lack, the discovery of whom scarcely belongs to the great tasks of our day.[161]

The relevance of this historical trivia emanates from such personal rivalries having not just limited, biographical consequences, but being extrapolated as far as to draw the descriptive battle lines of fundamental interpretative options for decades to come, with reverberations to this day. (Half a century later, one can read in *Gramophone* the allegation of "agogic posturing" being thrown at Mengelberg's Tchaikovsky by Robert Layton.) It would be simplistic to claim that it was all about Toscanini versus X, or America vs. Europe, or "transparent" Italianate ethos vs. "obscure" German mysticism. Competing concepts were less linear than that.[162] Even in Germany itself one could witness the tumultuous activities of a young Klemperer, a disciple of

[160] This is not a mistake, *Frankfurter Zeitung* was published between 1856 and 1943. The better known *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* was founded in 1949.
[161] As quoted in *The Willem Mengelberg Society's Newsletter no. 21*.
[162] For example, at some point both Mengelberg and Toscanini were used by some American critics in order to criticize Furtwängler. "Although he returned [to the U.S.] in 1926 and 1927 [after his initial success in 1925], he [Furtwängler] never regained the critical status that he had enjoyed during his first visit and was particularly distressed when the press compared him unfavorably with Willem Mengelberg and Arturo Toscanini. For a musician who was highly sensitive to criticism this was too much, and he departed at the end of his third visit feeling disillusioned and angry". (Raymond Holden, *The Virtuoso Conductors: The Central European Tradition from Wagner to Karajan*, p. 215.)

Mahler after all, opposing alleged Romantic excesses on the lines of a Toscanini-influenced aesthetics and of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

> Willem Mengelberg, who was conductor of the Amsterdam orchestra from 1895 until 1945, was responsible for raising it to the front rank of European orchestras. He was also one of Mahler's earliest champions. But after the performance of the Symphony no. 2 on 13 April 1929 De Courant Nieuws van de Dag commented that Klemperer's faster tempi (he apparently took 87 minutes as against Mengelberg's 110 minutes) were closer to Mahler's own. [163]

(Paradoxically, an aged Klemperer was perceived, during his Indian summer in London at the head of the New Philharmonia Orchestra, as the last preserver of the very traditions he, as a young man, fought against. His own position regarding Mengelberg is reflected in accepting to conduct the memorial Mengelberg Concertgebouw concert soon after the latter's death in 1951. More importantly, Klemperer acknowledged Mengelberg being not just instrumental, but decisive a factor in the early propagation of Mahler's music: "Willem Mengelberg was one of the first to champion Mahler as a composer. At the time, the beginning of the 20th century, he was hardly known. With unparalleled courage Mengelberg gave repeated performances of his Symphonies. His efforts came to a climax in the 1922 [sic; the correct year is 1920] Mahler Festival".[164])

By a more daring choice of repertoire and arguably modernized means of expression, Erich Kleiber, even more so Hermann Scherchen were offering different repertoire / interpretative views than Furtwängler (or friends and emulators of the latter, such as Abendroth). The earliest Furtwängler biography was authored by Richard Specht in 1922, when the conductor took over Berliner Philharmoniker after Nikisch's death, only 36 years old.[165] The author even

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[163] Peter Heyworth: *Otto Klemperer: his life and times*, vol. 1, p. 307.
[164] Otto Klemperer, *Klemperer on Music: Shavings from a Musician's Workbench*, p. 149.
[165] Richard Specht: *Wilhelm Furtwängler: Eine Studie über den Dirigenten,* Leipzig, 1922.

applied, somewhat rigidly, a dialectic triad of Hegelian roots to Furtwängler's perceived preeminence. Bülow was called the *thesis*, Nikisch the *antithesis*, Furtwängler the *synthesis*.) Some of these self-declared modern conductors may have been professing admiration for Toscanini as a model, but through their ability to absorb surface Toscanini-like elements (moderately fluctuating tempi, tighter rhythms, scarce *rubato*) within German/Middle European Romantic and post-Romantic concepts, they became *de facto* more organically integrated – able to synthesize and unify centrifugal notions – interpreters than Toscanini himself. Complex, non-linear historical trends and evolutions don't inhabit neat dichotomic categories.

Where does Mengelberg fit in this complicated mosaic? Few responsible performers would advocate anarchy – according to a straw man credo of "do whatever you want, if that's how you feel." Mengelberg definitely didn't. Liberty shouldn't even be assumed while the interpreter is professionally incapable of rendering notes and rhythms with scholastic rigor, if and when needed and wanted. Creativity doesn't mean negligence, even if sometimes it makes imperfections more palatable. (Heinrich Neuhaus made a distinction between conceptual/mental negligence and mechanical accidents, finger slips. Based on that distinction, one could say, Alfred Cortot was a less negligent pianist, where it counts, than legions of steel-fingered young pianists, because Cortot's approach to music was rarely *conceptually* haphazard.) However, between the anarchist stance and the potentially pedantic "the score, all the score, and nothing but the score" creed there are a good number of intermediate positions, as well as potentially infinite shades of interpretative realizations. Being an astute philosopher doesn't make anybody's playing cleaner. Ernest Ansermet's writings about music, interesting as they can be on a speculative level, don't make his sometimes unfocused, under-rehearsed recordings more accomplished. Professionalism – fundamental professional standards – should be maintained.

Perhaps some well-intended professionals, on the other hand, tend to misunderstand the nature of the "truth of perception" in artistic matters.

To use an analogy, a poet from ancient times had a different perception of the Moon than a 21st century astronomer. In our facts-trusting age, we tend to believe that the poet was wrong and the astronomer is right. In fact they were both "right", within different sets of truth-values. The discovery of the scientific, objective position of the moon in the universe does not preclude a poet from finding a different imagery, not in conflict with the knowledge of the facts. However, something can be lost in the process, even in the process of musical analysis. Transforming the factual data encrypted in a score into an absolute can become aesthetically crippling ("choking literalism" – to use a syntagm coached by the French critic Andre Tubeuf), as we hope was shown within this dissertation. To turn again to Heinrich Neuhaus (influential piano guru of 20th century Russia):

> It is not by accident that all outstanding musicians, composers, and performers, have always been noted for their broad spiritual outlook, and have shown a lively interest in all questions affecting the spiritual life of humanity. (…) What the musician acquires in knowledge he expresses in his compositions or performance. And hence I am entitled to express the following paradox: all knowledge is musical (…). Consequently, like every experience, it belongs to the sphere of music and inevitably enters its orbit. The absence of such experience, and still more of any experience whatsoever results in soulless, formalistic music and empty, uninteresting performance.[166]

There are some important distinctions in what regards one's understanding of what the score is, why it should be respected, and how. It is legitimate to point out that the interpreter's fields of choice are, in traditional repertoire, quantitatively small. The divergence in paths one can take interpretatively becomes narrow when compared to the composer's predominant contribution to the musical act. (Let's exclude experimental extremes in interpretation, such as choosing tempi

[166] Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art Of Piano Playing*, p. 37.

vastly at odds with what the score indicates – on occasion, Glenn Gould, Ivo Pogorelich and Sergiu Celibidache are known to have done just that. While it can be technically challenging, it is aesthetically facile to attempt originality based on a deliberate avoidance of previous interpretative parameters – i.e., should this version be faster or slower than all the others?) Indeed, in quantitative terms, the options of an interpreter seem especially small when compared to the immutable fact of most of the elements of the average musical happening being already decided by the composer. How is it possible that, among two interpretations which observe to a close degree the composer's text, one is perceived by many listeners as boring, while the other as revealing, eloquent, captivating?

There are imponderables such as the interpreter's temperament,[167] which are not to be dismissed yet don't help in a discussion not focused on the psychological aspects of interpretation. Part of the answer consists in those elements of the performer's implicit baggage (and/or assets) which do not confirm or contradict, by themselves, the hegemony of the score: sonority (the interpreter's main imprint), dynamic range, quality of legato, science of articulation, acuity of hearing expressed in balancing chords, etc. The interpreter brings such assets to the stage or to the recording studio, regardless of the music to be performed. They will benefit – or not – the music to be performed. However, another part of the answer may consist in some interpreters' ability to differentiate between degrees of substantiality in a composer's text. The notes are projected details of a process of musical thinking which is *expressed through* notes, not *created by* notes. The composer isn't stuck to a note-by-note reading process. He thinks (in) melodic gestures, tonal contexts, modulations, rhythms, textures, registrations – all

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[167] *"There is no performance of genius possible without temperament."* Felix von Weingartner, *The Conductor's Art*, p. 101.

part of a creative process in which reason, instinct, and historical context contribute to giving (musical, not literary) meaning to a succession of notes. The notes contain a frozen concentrate of the music, not the irreducible musical phenomenon.

> (The performer) has to work backwards, as it were, not forwards, like the composer; contrary to the direction in which life evolves, he has to move from the outside to the inside, not vice versa, like the composer. His path is not one of improvisation, i.e. of natural growth, but one characterized by the painstaking assembly and arrangement of component parts. And whereas for the composer these parts, as in any organic process, merge naturally into his vision of the work as a whole, which gives them their individual life and meaning, the performer, for his part, has to laboriously reconstruct such a vision for himself out of the separate parts at his disposal. It is from such distinctions, both of the factual situation and of the challenges that flow from it, that the problems of interpretation and performance emerge.[168]

While finalizing his work, the composer usually writes interpretative indications last: tempi, dynamics, phrasing… At that moment the composer himself is only a virtual interpreter of his own music. A privileged one, because the newly-born music is his, in a proprietary and creative sense. He tried to convey in limited, conventional signs his inner vision. He succeeded to a certain extent, but to a certain extent only. (That depends from composer to composer, with extremes on either side being composers such as Bach – limited interpretative indications – and some recent composers who, based on new sound and recorded sound technologies, exclude the interpretational element altogether.) The degree of success-in-explicitness, when it comes to what a score may include, depends on where emphasis is being placed. Fundamentally modifying a harmonic development is not a license in the same league as making minor alterations in dynamics. The first would be a drastic change, potentially distorting the core of the composer's musical thinking, while the latter can, at best if not always, illuminate rather than distort the musical structures the composer had imagined and written down.

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[168] *Furtwängler on Music*, edited and translated by Ronald Taylor, pp. 11-12.

Even outside the aforementioned extremes, there are subtle differences between how thoroughly composers finesse their scores. There are Stravinsky, Bartok, Puccini, Enescu, among those who tried to write down (almost) everything, then there are Beethoven, Brahms and Chopin as central examples – not too much, not too little in the score (Brahms and Chopin being more specific than Beethoven). Interpretative indications are not as authoritative in a score as notes are. This is not a case of take it (all) or leave it (all). Taking a look at the score of Brahms' popular *Intermezzo opus 118 no. 2*, during the first section, there are four similar phrase initiations (c# b d, c# b a). Brahms writes *piano* for the first, *dolce* for the second, *pianissimo* for the third, *dolce* for the fourth. Does he want a *dolce within a piano* for the second, and *a dolce within a pianissimo* for the fourth? Does he want the same *dolce* for the second and fourth? *Piano* is a dynamic indication and *dolce* a color/mood indication. Perhaps *dolce* can be louder than *piano*, or softer. After a *pianissimo* or a *piano*, Beethoven often writes a *crescendo* which ends in a *piano*. Should that *crescendo* be big and followed by a *piano subito*, or just a shade of a *crescendo* smoothly resulting in the (new) *piano*?

That doesn't mean those indications are to be disregarded or seen as futile. It is fundamentally true – if potentially trite – that the score has to be examined with utmost attention. Brahms suggests at a minimum that he wants at least three different dynamic-color shadings and the interpreter should oblige. A good performer would avoid monotony in enunciating potentially repetitive material without the composer's prompting. (This seems to have been the optimist expectation J. S. Bach gambled upon.) Interpretative suggestions contained in the score, in a more or less traditional range of classical music, are supposed to emphasize elements of musical language already existent in the musical phenomenon itself. A conductor can emphasize an important modulation by a brusque accent as written, or by a sudden *pianissimo*, or by a

caesura. It doesn't always matter, as the modulation pertains to the deeper layer of the musical phenomenon, not to the verbalized layer of the music's graphic representation. (It is imbued in the score in an *immediate* way, without the *word* "modulation" spelled out in the score.) Small changes could be acceptable, as long as the modulation doesn't pass unnoticed (as it happens with interpreters who try to observe every word in a score yet disregard the subtleties of the non-verbal musical language itself). Different, even opposite interpretative gestures (*crescendo* and *decrescendo*, *accelerando* and *rallentando*) can serve equally well sometimes (not always) the musical purpose, the compositional gesture, as long as the reasoned interpretative motivation and the incandescence of rendition render one or the other interpretative options valid *in context*. Any individual effect in a given passage should be also judged in terms of appropriateness within the great form. Shorter than expected fermatas in the exposition of the first movement of Beethoven's *Sonata opus 31 no. 3* would *become* justified in retrospect when the gradually longer fermatas in the development and the recapitulation come into reality. The form, again, is encapsulated in the score, but playing the notes close to what's written, detail by detail, will not guarantee the clarity of the grand form. The inner logic of the form could even succumb under undiscriminating literalism.

"The score knows always better" – in translation "I feel inhabited by an unbounded confidence in my score-reading abilities" – may be a humble creed, but the *evolving* musical form asks for a deeper understanding. The performer should ideally judge every interpretative indication for himself, even when he ends by agreeing with most or, on the happy occasion, with all of them. He needs to recreate mentally that *first interpretation* stage, when the composer himself tried to project in performance his new work as well as he could – be that performance on an actual stage (as many composers did and do), or in his own imagination.

One shudders to think of all the performers who played Tchaikovsky's *Grand Sonata opus 37* observing monotonously the huge (about 2/3 of the entire first movement) amount of prescribed *ff* and *fff*. Cutting in half Tchaikovsky's *fortissimo*, in the appropriate places, and substituting smaller dynamics, except for the real climaxes, are actions which go against the indications inscribed in the score but, paradoxically or not, serve the musical structure the score is bearing. More so than a "democratic" approach in which all *fortissimos* are born equal. If the pianist will only use one level of *fortissimo* in the first movement of Beethoven's *opus 57*, using up all dynamic resources by bar 17, the complex architecture of this symphony-among-sonatas will be ruined, despite best intentions. I am also thinking of Enescu's *Third Violin Sonata* (recorded by the composer, with Lipatti on the piano, in 1943). Compared to the score, the interpretation reveals hundreds of small differences but stands out as one of the best *in toto*. In his own *Prelude in Unison* (from the *First Orchestral Suite*), Enescu indicated ♩=50, yet he conducted it at ♩=80. No wonder recorded performances are slower than Enescu's and some sound even disjointed. It's not the case with Constantin Silvestri in his rendition of the music, which follows Enescu's living example rather than his written indications. It is possible that Enescu the interpreter, after decades of conducting his own work, changed the mind of Enescu the composer. It is a notion Mengelberg would be delighted with.

> Beethoven himself grew disenchanted with the metronome's purely mechanical quality. We know that he metronomized his Ninth Symphony twice (one copy has been lost and he had to metronomize another one); the two sets of figures for the same music are different! In 1826, Beethoven wrote to his publisher, Schott and Schöne, in Mainz: "The metronome figures (the devil take all mechanization) will follow." (…) And he hit the nail on the head when he wrote on the manuscript of his song "So oder So": "100, according to Mälzel. But this must be understood only for the first measures, for feeling also has its tempo and this cannot be entirely expressed by this figure.[169]

[169] Kurt Adler, *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching*, p. 121.

Mengelberg had rather charming, sometimes apocryphal (disingenuous) ways of explaining why he knew what to do “better” than the score itself, and we discussed them quite some. Yet, Mengelberg wasn’t wrong when he suggested that the composer spends a limited time, perhaps months, with a work-in-progress, while the interpreter may live decades with the same creation, and may earn insights regarding the potential interpretations of a given work which the composer himself didn’t envisage.

The only mention of Mengelberg in Georg Solti’s *Memoirs* is one of those predictable anecdotes about Mengelberg as the over-talkative conductor insisting on his long-reaching-in-the-past credentials.

> The Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg once interrupted a rehearsal to give an oboist a long, profound lecture on the phrasing of that oboe cadenza. He said that he had learned the phrasing from a pupil of Liszt, who had in turn learned it from Schindler’s, Beethoven’s friend, who had learned it from the Master himself. When Mengelberg had finished talking, the oboist asked him, “Dr. Mengelberg, should I play it forte or piano?” There could not be a better lesson for a conductor: Do not talk too much.[170]

While it is documented that Mengelberg could liberally engage in digressions, noticing nothing else about his complex artistry would be just as superficial as quoting a couple of anecdotes regarding the ample behavioral eccentricities of the legendary pianist Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933), while disregarding the unique stylistic bridge to the past which represents Pachmann’s place in history (as documented, rather shabbily, in Mark Mitchell’s *A Piano Virtuoso’s Life and Art*, and much better in the already mentioned de Pachmann biography

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[170] Georg Solti, *Memoirs*, pp. 215-216.

Chopin's Prophet.[171]) As for music being all about *forte* or *piano*, as in practical decisions with no search for meaning, the kindest thing that can be said is that many interpreters live up to such aesthetics. Perhaps we should rather follow Bruno Walter's passionate words of wisdom, not distant at all from Furtwängler's or Mengelberg's:

> We realize that music is, in itself, spiritual. Is therefore, unspiritual music-making ever permissible, or must not every musical utterance be accorded expressiveness? Above all, let us not underrate the importance of personality in musical execution! Its life gives life to a musical performance, its fire glows in it; surely a performance will be blunted by a dull interpreter, chilled by his coolness? Even though music, by virtue of its inborn warmth, may not entirely freeze to death under the breath of a frosty interpretation, there is such thing as a virtually soulless performance, a virtually expressionless execution – as well as intentional, but misguided, objectivity in interpretation – particularly with regard to compositions of earlier periods. The plain truth is that a style of objectivity, a style of interpretation that is intentionally or unintentionally soulless, or even merely impersonal, must do an injustice to every piece of music, for there is none that has not sprung from some elevated state of the soul.[172]

Absorbing critically the composer's interpretative indications is as far from a gratuitously rebellious act as it is from burning scores in effigy. It is the duty of the interpreter to attempt to distill, through intuition, research, analysis, and integrated thoughtfulness, the likely motivation behind the words instilled in the score. To follow that elusive motivation more than the words themselves, making the score "his own". A word of homage to amateurs and what professionals can learn from them: at times, amateurs have the advantage of their limits. Not (usually) following recordings or concerts with a score, they are both ignorant of certain aspects of them, but also unprejudiced, at best, in judging the non-mediated emotional effect of a piece of music in performance. (Ignacy Jan Paderewski, asked once why he played something loudly instead of the *pp* in the sheet music, answered somewhat disarmingly that it's not about what is

[171] Edward Blickstein and Gregor Benko, *Chopin's Prophet: The Life of Pianist Vladimir de Pachmann*, The Scarecrow Press, 2013.
[172] Bruno Walter, *Of Music and Music-Making*, p. 78.

written but about what is heard.[173]) Professionals can do that too, when they try to also be "music lovers," which is not entirely a bad thing. So it happens that some of the freest (within reasoned, traditional interpretation[174]) score-readings are among the ones that have most to offer.

Difficult as it may be to quantify this, idiomatic freedom should be the result of a genuine interpretative need, not of a gratuitous appetite for eccentricity. Neither rigor nor freedom are values in themselves. They are more likely assumed and complementary boundaries which make meaningful choices and structured decisions possible. A gifted artist transcends his own assumed principles, no matter what they are. (It is the same with societal configurations, in which conceptual extremes such as *perfect* order or *complete* freedom inexorably lead to either anarchy or totalitarianism.) It is within the flexibility of ever-evolving concepts that an interpreter can find a meaningful niche in understanding – and further transmitting his understanding of – a musical work. Concrete instances of "licenses" adopted by Mengelberg in his recordings, together with attempted motivational explanations, appear discussed throughout this thesis but they are not everything that can be learned from his recorded heritage. They have to be seen as part of a whole. Many of these licenses are ingenious, clarifying, inspiring. Classical and unorthodox. Conservative and modern. Sometimes, rarely, bordering on inexcusable, which is a

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[173] No wonder Paderewski was occasionally accused of being an "advanced amateur," making up in stage presence and charisma for what was, by all accounts, a less than immaculate technical mechanism. "He's good but he's no Paderewski" – quipped coetaneous Moriz Rosenthal, arguably Liszt's most technically advanced disciple (after the pre-recording era, prematurely deceased Karl Tausig).

[174] A note has to be made here about phenomena which are simply not encapsulated in traditional concepts, either compositional or interpretative. The composer Frederic Rzewski for instance has been known to "perform" (re-compose?) Beethoven's *Sonata opus 57* using Beethoven's original text, while interpolating gigantic through-composed "parentheses" (cadenzas? developments?) of his own device, abruptly transitioning to his own compositional language, in the middle of each movement. A Calvinist judgment cannot be made on such attempts, having more to do with the post-modern art of collage than with either composition or interpretation in the traditional Western understanding of the terms. However, they remain literally marginal in our musical life.

good thing insofar otherwise – when concerned with infallibility, when avoiding any risks – an interpreter might become predictable to his audience.

With one eye on the past and the other into a world in which their vital force seems to take a life of their own, Mengelberg's convincing interpretations show an infinite suppleness, variety, and depth. I am enjoying his interpretations more than the standardized approaches which became the norm by the late 1950s. Nevertheless, little danger as there would be of that, I would not want to live in a world in which Mengelberg's dicta would be taken as the unchangeable, authoritative canon. A world in which the distinctive, sometimes idiosyncratic details of his interpretations would be endlessly imitated, to the small extent that that were possible. I see Mengelberg as an august, creative, yet not infallible figure of the past. More than that I see him as an older, greater colleague who, eternally young at heart, blissfully stirs our settled expectations, our petrified certitudes. His challenge to the modern interpreters is to find their own, personal yet thoroughly considered ways to interpret "old" music in new, revelatory ways, and to convey "new" music as clearly and significantly to contemporary audiences as he strived to convey the new music of his time.

To conclude: "**The interpreter must lead his fellow-men, his public, to a higher level and make their spiritual and emotional life deeper and richer thereby.**"

Willem Mengelberg

WILLEM MENGELBERG: A DISCOGRAPHY

This Mengelberg discography uses the work of René Trémine to an overwhelming degree; some corrections, updates, edits, and additions have been made. We are deeply indebted to Myriam Scherchen for granting us permission to use her late husband's valuable research in order to create a context for our own.

To keep this manageable, we have not listed all the publications of the various performances (78s/LP/CD). Mengelberg recorded for 5 labels:

- *Victor Talking Machine Co.* (1922-1930) – all recordings are with the New York Philharmonic and were released by the affiliated labels *His Master's Voice, Electrola, Voce del Padrone, Voix de son Maître*;
- *Brunswick* (1925) – ditto;
- *Columbia* (1926-1933) – recordings made in Amsterdam by the British label and simultaneously released on the *Odeon* label with their own matrix numbers;
- *Decca Holland* (1935) – recordings made by *Philips* for *Decca Record Company Ltd*;
- *Telefunken* (1937-1942) – all recordings are with the Concertgebouw, except for those with the Berlin Philharmonic (July 1940). After the war, many recordings were released in the US by *Capitol* as 78s, 45s and LPs.

The following list of recordings consists of:

- 179 with the Concertgebouw;
- 41 with the New York Philharmonic;
- 5 with the BBCSO;
- 2 with the Berlin Philharmonic;
- 2 with the Vienna Philharmonic;
- 1 with the Berlin RSO.

Various Dutch radio stations recorded an important number of Mengelberg's concerts between 1935 and 1944 on acetates of the best quality. These documents in fact represent about half of Mengelberg's legacy.

The question remains of the various Dutch Broadcasting houses, particularly during the German occupation. Between 1923 and 1941, Holland had five broadcasting houses, one of which (AVRO = Algemene Vereniging Radio Omroep) broadcast all concerts of the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam. In March 1941, i.e. one year after the Nazi occupation of Holland, AVRO and other broadcasting houses ("Vereinigungen") were closed down. The

occupying forces wanted a single and unique broadcasting house, on the same model as the German *Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft* (RRG). Thus a new national company was created and called "*Nationale Omroep*": it operated from March 9 1941 to May 1944.

Radio reviews continued to appear until January 1942. Starting with January 1st 1942 and until June-July 1943, the only published magazine was the *Nationale Omroep*, called "*Luistergids*" (the Listener's Guide). But from July 1943, the occupational forces decided that owning a radio was completely forbidden. So, the *Luistergids* was suppressed, and the only people allowed to legally listen to radio programs broadcast by the *Nationale Omroep*, were collaborators of the Nazis. A magazine listing the broadcasting programs was still published but only for the people who worked in this broadcasting house. This explains why so little is known about programs broadcast during this final period of the war. Even less is known about the broadcast concerts.

To summarize, all the live recordings made in Holland and particularly in Amsterdam with the Concertgebouw from 1942 to 1944, were made by the *Nationale Omroep* and not by AVRO, which had recorded a whole series of concerts conducted by Mengelberg from 1935 to 1941. All these archives belong today to NPS, who also own the recordings of NRU and NOS.

One must also mention briefly French Radio during the war. All the Mengelberg concerts with the Grand Orchestre de Radio Paris were broadcast live but it seems that no recording was made (the INA has no recordings of Mengelberg for the war years). Even though French Radio was under the supervision of the German occupational forces, it didn't own any tape recorders, unlike Berlin or Vienna. This strongly suggests that the Dvorak Cello concerto – which has been issued several times – is in fact a fake. Furthermore, according to the programs and the press of the time, the cello soloist was Paul Tortelier, not Maurice Gendron[175].

I. Acoustic recordings

11 April 1922 – Camden, New York Philharmonic Orchestra (NYPO)

1. Beethoven: **Coriolan**, overture
   78: Victor 74756/74757 (matrix C 26300-2/26301-1), HMV DB 369
   LP: Past Masters PM 6
   CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

11 and 14 April 1922 – Camden, NYPO

2. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 5**, 1st movement
   78: Victor 1069 (matrix B-26302-1/26305-1)
   LP: Past Masters PM 6
   CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

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[175] Since the valuable Trémine discography, the mystery of the Dvorak Cello Concerto seems to have been solved. A recording existed indeed, not with Maurice Gendron as a soloist, but with Paul Tortelier. That recording, of confirmed authenticity, was published by Malibran Music, together with other 1944 discs documenting Mengelberg's concerts in occupied Paris. (S.G.)

14 April 1922 – Camden, NYPO

3. Weber: **Oberon**, overture
78: Victor 74766/74767 (matrix C-26303-1/26304-1), HMV DB 370
LP: Past Masters PM 6
CD: Symposium 1078, Biddulph WHL 025/26

18 and 20 April 1922 – Camden, NYPO

4. Liszt: **Les Préludes**
78: Victor 74780/747881/747882/66131 (matrix C-26306-3/26307-2/26308-2/B-26309-3), HMV DB 371/852
LP: Past Masters PM 6
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

19 and 23 April 1923 – Camden, NYPO

5. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 6**, 2nd and 4th movements
78: Victor 74816/74817 (matrix C-27841-3/27842-3), HMV DB 465

23 April 1923 – Camden, NYPO

6. Saint-Saëns: **Le rouet d'Omphale**
78: Victor 66222/66223 (matrix B-27846-3, 27847-3), HMV DA 665
LP: Past Masters PM 6
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

23 April 1923 – Camden, NYPO

7. J. Strauss: **Tales from the Vienna woods**
78: Victor 74845 (matrix C-27848-2), HMV DB 805
LP: Past Masters PM 7
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

26 April 1923 – Camden, NYPO

8. Tchaikovsky: **Serenade for strings**, Waltz
78: Victor 74844 (matrix C-27853-5), HMV DB 805
LP: Past Masters PM 7
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

9. Schubert: **Rosamunde**, Entr'acte 3
78: Victor 6479 (matrix C-27854-2), HMV DB 857
LP: Past Masters 7
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

2 April 1924 – New York, NYPO

10. R. Strauss: **Death and Transfiguration** (2 excerpts)
CD: Special Editions NYP 9702/03

14 April 1924 – Camden, NYPO

11. Mengelberg: **Praeludium on the Dutch National anthem**
78: matrix C-29790
CD: Pearl 9922, Biddulph WHL 025/26

12. Wagner: **the Flying Dutchman**, overture
78: matrix C-29791

16 April 1924 – Camden, NYPO
13. Mendelssohn: **Athalia**, *War march of the Priests*
78: Victor 74904 (matrix C-29900-3), HMV DB 804
LP: Past Masters PM 7, M-1020 (Japan, private record)
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

14. Halvorsen: **Festival march of the Boyars**
78: Victor 74905 (matrix C-29901-2), HMV DB 804
LP: Past Masters PM 7
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

17 April 1924 – Camden, NYPO
15. Schubert: **Rosamunde**, overture
78: Victor 6479 (matrix C-29905-4), HMV DB 857
LP: Past Masters PM 7
CD: Biddulph WHL 025/26

I. Electrical recordings

6 October 1925 – New-York, NYPO
16. Wagner: **The Flying Dutchman**, overture
78: Victor 6547 (matrix CVE-29791-6/29922-7), HMV D 1056, HMV DB 905
CD: Pearl 9922, Biddulph WHL 025/026

9 October 1925 – New York, NYPO
17. Schelling: **A Victory Ball**
78: Victor 1127/1128 (matrix BVE-33554-3/33555-2/33556-4/33557-2)
LP: Thomas Clear TLC 2585
CD: Pearl 9922

5 December 1925 – New York, NYPO
18. Tchaikovsky: **Marche slave**
unissued matrix E 17049/17055

4 January 1926 – New York (Chapter Room, Carnegie Hall), NYPO
19. Tchaikovsky: **Marche slave**
78: Brunswick 50072 (matrix XE-17323/XE-17328), Polydor 595017

LP: M-1020 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Symposium 1078, Pearl 9922

20. Wagner: **Die Walküre**, *Ride of the Walkyries*
78: Brunswick 50096 (XE-17330* – another matrix XE 17329 was recorded)
LP: CBS 77224
CD: Pearl 9922

<u>May 1926</u> – Amsterdam, Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam (CGO)

21. Wagner: **Tannhäuser**, overture
78: Columbia L 1770/1771 (matrix WAX-1538-1/1539-3/1540-2/1541-3), Odeon O-8589/90 (matrix xxB-7482/7483-3/7484-2/7485-3)
LP: CDH 769956-2, Pearl 9070

22. Berlioz: **La Damnation de Faust** (*Marche hongroise, Danse des Sylphes*)
78: Columbia L 1810 (matrix WAX-1542/WAX 1543), Odeon O-8303 (matrix xxB-7486-2/xxB-7487-3)
LP: HMV 5C047-01297, Past Masters PM 27, Toshiba GR 2315
CD: EMI CDM 769956-2, Pearl 9018

23. Beethoven: **Egmont**, overture
78: Columbia L 1799 (matrix WAX-1544-3/1545-1), Odeon O-8300 (matrix xxB-7488-3/7489)
CD: Pearl 9070

24. Beethoven: **Coriolan**, overture
78: Columbia L 1848 (matrix WAX-1546-2/1547-2), Odeon O-8595 (matrix xxB-7490-2/7491-2)
LP: Past Masters PM 20
CD: Pearl 9070

25. Mahler: **Symphony No. 5**, *Adagietto*
78: Columbia L 1798 (matrix WAX-1548/1549), Odeon O-8591 (matrix xxB-7492-2/7493-2)
LP: HMV 5047-01297, Past Masters PM 35, MRF 74, Toshiba GR 2315
CD: EMI CDH 769956-2, Pearl 9070, Symposium 1078 (with the repetition of the last note of the first side)

<u>1 November 1926</u> – New York, NYPO

26. J. Strauss: **The Blue Danube**
Brunswick: unissued matrix XE 20604/20606

27. J. Strauss: **Viennese Blood**
Brunswick: unissued matrix XE 20601/20603

10 January 1927 – New York (Chapter Room, Carnegie Hall), NYPO

28. J. Strauss: **Artist's Life**
78: Brunswick 50096 (matrix XE 21159)
LP: M-1020 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Pearl 9922

29. J. Strauss: **Tales from the Vienna woods**
78: Brunswick 50096 (matrix XE 21163)
CD: Pearl 9922

30. J. Strauss: **The Blue Danube**
78: Brunswick (issued matrix XE 21157/21158)

10 June 1927 – Amsterdam, CGO

31. J. Chr. Bach: **Sinfonia opus 18 No. 2** (third movement omitted)
78: Columbia L 2047 (matrix WAX-2837-1/2838-1), Odeon O-8338 (matrix xxB-7861-2/7862)
CD: Pearl 9018

32. Wagner: **Lohengrin**, Prelude
78: Columbia L 1948 (matrix WAX-2839/2840), Odeon O-8330 (matrix xxB-7863/7864-2)
LP: Columbia KT 1/3
CD: Pearl 9018, Symposium 1078

33. Cherubini: **Anacreon**
78: Columbia L 1972 (matrix WAX-2841-2/2842-1/2843-1), Odeon O-8326-7 (matrix xxB-7865-2/7866-2/7867)
LP: HMV 5C047-01297, Past Masters PM 36
CD: EMI CDH 769956-2, Pearl 9018

34. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 8**, 2nd movement
78: Columbia L 1973 (matrix WAX-2844-1), Odeon O-8327 (matrix xxB-7868)
LP: HMV 5C047-01297, Toshiba GR 2315
CD: Pearl 9018

35. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 5**, 2nd and 3rd movements
78: matrix WAX-2831 to 2836 not issued by Columbia, Odeon 123533/5[176] (matrix xxB-7855-2/7856/7857-3/7858/7859/7860-2)
CD: Pearl 9070

10 May 1928 – Amsterdam, CGO

36. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 5**

[176] issued only in France

78: Columbia L 2176/2182 (matrix WAX-3629-3/3630-3/3631-3/3632-3/3633-2/3634-3/3635-2/3636-2/3637-4/3638-2/3639-/3640 -3/3641-3), Odeon O-8357/63 (matrix xxB-8239 to 8251)
LP: BWS RR 421, Pearl Gemm 213
CD: Pearl 9070, Music and Arts 809

12 May 1928 – Amsterdam, CGO

37. Weber: **Oberon**, overture
78: Columbia L 2312/2313 (matrix WAX-3642-3/3643-2/3644-2), Odeon O-8397/8 (matrix xxB-8362/8363/8364)
LP: BWS RR 443
CD: Pearl 9018

38. Mendelssohn: **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Scherzo
78: Columbia 67486 (WAX-3645-1)
LP: M-1004 (Japan, private LP)
CD: EMI CDH 769956-2 (matrix WAX-3645-2), Pearl 9018 (matrix WAX-3645-2), Pearl 9070 (matrix WAX-3645-1)

39. Tchaikovsky: **Serenade for strings opus 48**, Waltz
78: Columbia L 2182 (matrix WAX-3646-3), Odeon O-8363 (matrix xxB-8252)
LP: Columbia KT 1/3, BWS RR 421, Pearl Gemm 213, Past Masters PM 35
CD: Pearl 9070, Music and Arts 809

11 to 13 December 1928 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

40. Strauss: **Ein Heldenleben**
78: Victor 6982/6986, HMV 1711/1715 (matrix CVE-47925-1/47926-4/47927-2/47928-2/47929-1/47930-2/47931-3/47932-2/47934-2)
LP: RCA RED 2012, RCA SMA 7001
CD: Biddulph WHL 025-026 (this performance has been created by using previously unissued takes: 47925-2/47926-2/47927-1/47928-3/47929-2/47930-1/47931-1/47932-1/47933-1/47934-3), RCA/BMG 609292

14 December 1928 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

41. Wagner: **Forest Murmurs**
78: Victor 7192 (matrix CVE-47935-3/47936-2)
CD: Pearl 9474

15 January 1929 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

42. Meyerbeer: **Le Prophète**, Coronation March
78: Victor 7104 (matrix CVE-48903-1), HMV D 1716
LP: M-1020 (Japan, private record)
CD: Pearl 9474

43. Saint-Saëns: **Le rouet d'Omphale**

78: Victor 7006 (matrix CVE-48904-2/48905-1), HMV D 1704
LP: RCA CAL 347, RCA RED 2021
CD: Pearl 9474

16 January 1929 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

44. Mendelssohn: **Athalia**, War march of the Priests
78: Victor 7104 (matrix CVE-48906-1), HMV D 1716
CD: Pearl 9474

45. J. Chr. Bach: **Sinfonia opus 18 No. 2**
78: Victor 7483/7484 (matrix CVE-48907-3/48908-2/48909-1), HMV D 1988/1989
LP: RCA CAL 347, RCA RED 2021, M-1025 (Japan, private record)
CD: Pearl 9474

46. Haendel: **Alcina**
78: Victor 1435/1436 (matrix BVE-48910-2/48911-1/48912-2/48913-4), HMV E 548/549
LP: M-1020 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Pearl 9474

47. J. S. Bach: **Suite No. 3**, *Aria*
78: Victor 7484 (matrix CVE-48914-3), HMV D 1989
LP: M-1025 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Pearl 9474

June 1929 – Amsterdam, CGO

48. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 4**
Columbia L 2366/2370 (matrix AX-5034-5/5035-1/5036-2/5037-1/5038-2/5039-1/5040-3/5041-1/5042-2/5043-1), Odeon O-8404/ 8408 (matrix xxB 8427 to 8436)
LP: Toshiba GR 2191, Rococo 2030, Pearl Gemm 212, BWS RR 424
CD: Pearl 9070, Music and Arts 809

49. Liszt: **Les Préludes**
78: Columbia L 2362/2363 (matrix AX-5044-2/5045-2/5046-2/5047-2), Odeon O-8402/8403 (matrix xxB 8437 to 8440)
LP: HMV 5C047-01297, Rococo 2012, Toshiba GR 2315
CD: EMI CDH 769956-2, Pearl 9018

50. Bizet: **L'Arlésienne**, *Adagietto*
78: Columbia DX 6 (matrix AX-5048-3)
LP: Rococo 2012, Past Masters PM 22
CD: Pearl 9070

4 and 9 January 1930 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

51. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 3**

78: Victor 7439/7445 (matrix CVE-58152-3/58153-3/58154-3/58155-3/58156-3/58157-1/58158-2/58159-1/58160-2/58161-1/58162-1/58172-2/58173-2/58174-2), HMV DB 1599/1605
LP: RCA RED 2001, M-1025 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Biddulph WHL 020

9 January 1930 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

52. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 1**
78: Victor 7211/7214 (matrix CVE-58175-2/58176-1/58177-3/58178-1/58179-2/58180-2/58181-2/58182-1), HMV DB 1867/1870
LP: BWS RR 501
CD: Biddulph WHL 020

14 January 1930 – New York, Carnegie Hall – NYPO

53. Mozart: **Die Zauberflöte**, overture
78: Victor 1486 (matrix BVE-58189-2/58190-2), HMV E 564
LP: RCA CAL 347, RCA RED 2021
CD: Pearl 9474

54. Beethoven: **Egmont**, overture
78: Victor 7291 (matrix CVE-58191-2/58192-1), HMV D 1908
LP: RCA CAL 347, RCA RED 2021
CD: Pearl 9474, Symposium 1078

55. Humperdinck: **Hansel and Gretel**, overture
78: Victor 7436 (matrix CVE-58193-1/58194-2), HMV D 1950
LP: RCA CAL 347, RCA RED 2021
CD: Pearl 9474

May 1930 – London, BBCSO

56. Mussorgski: **A Night on the bare mountain**
57. R. Strauss: **Death and transfiguration**
58. Wagner: **Lohengrin**, Prelude from Act 3

30 May 1930 – Amsterdam, CGO

59. Beethoven: **Leonore III**, overture
78: Columbia LX 129/130 (matrix WAX 5593-2/5594-2/5595-2)
LP: Columbia KT 1/3, Past Masters PM 20
CD: Pearl CDS 9018, Refrain PMCD3

60. Brahms: **Academic overture**
78: Columbia LX 58/59 (matrix WAX 5596-1/5597-2/5598-2)
LP: EMI 1C053-01453
CD: EMI CDH 769956-2, Pearl CDS 9018

61. Tchaikovsky: **Romeo and Juliet**, overture
78: Columbia LX 55/56 (matrix WAX 5599-2/5600-2/5601-2/5602-2)

LP: HMV 5C047-01298, Rococo 2013, BWD RR 424
CD: Pearl CDS 9070, Music and Arts 809

31 May 1930 – Amsterdam, CGO

62. Ravel: **Boléro**
78: Columbia LX 48/49 (matrix WAX 5603-1/5604-1/5605-1/5606-2)
LP: Rococo 2012, BWS RR 443
CD: Pearl CDS 9070

63. Beethoven: **The Ruins of Athens**, *Turkish March*
78: Columbia LX 130 (matrix WAX 5607-2)
LP: Past Masters PM 20
CD: Pearl CDS 9018, Disques Refrain PMCD3

64. Brahms: **Symphony No. 1**, third movement
78: Columbia LX 59 (matrix WAX 5608-2)
LP: M-1004 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Pearl CDS 9018

1 June 1931 – Amsterdam (Town Hall), CGO

65. Weber: **Euryanthe**, overture
78: Columbia LX 157 (matrix 6124-2/6125-3)
LP: M-1004 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Pearl 9018

66. Weber: **Der Freischütz**, overture
78: Columbia LX 154 (matrix 6126-2/6127-3)
LP: Past Masters PM 4, M-1004 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Pearl 9018

67. Beethoven: **Coriolan**, overture
78: Columbia LX 167 (matrix 6128-2/6129-2)
LP: Past Masters PM 20, BWS RR 443
CD: Pearl 9018, Refrain PMCD3

2 June 1931 – Amsterdam, CGO

68. Beethoven: **Egmont**, overture
78: Columbia LX 161 (matrix 6130-2/6131-2)
LP: Past Masters PM 20
CD: Pearl 9018, Refrain PMCD3

69. Beethoven: **Leonore I**, overture
78: Columbia LX 160 (matrix 6132-1/6133-2)
LP: Past Masters PM 20
CD: Pearl 9018, Symposium 1078, Refrain PMCD3

70. J. S. Bach: **Suite No. 2, BWV 1067**
78: Columbia LX 134/136 (matrix 6134-2/6135-1/6136-2/6137-2/6138-1/6139-2)
LP: Columbia KT 1/3, BWS RR 443
CD: Pearl CDS 9018

3 June 1931 – Amsterdam, CGO
71. Grieg: **Elegiac melodies**
78: Columbia LX 168 (matrix 6140-2/6141-1)
LP: HMV 5C047-01297, Past Masters PM 35, Toshiba GR 2315
CD: Pearl 9070, EMI CDH 769956-2

9 May 1932 – Amsterdam, CGO
72. Wagner: **Tannhäuser**, overture
78: Columbia LX 170/171 (matrix 6413-3/6414-3/6415-2/6416-1)
LP: HMV 5C047-01298, Rococo 2012, BWS RR 443
CD: Pearl 9018

10 May 1932 – Amsterdam, CGO
73. Brahms: **Symphony No. 3**
78: Columbia LX 220/223 (matrix 6417-2/6418-1/6419-2/6420-1/6421-2/6422-2/6423-3/6424-2)
LP: HMV 1C053-01453, Rococo 2051
CD: Pearl 9018, Tahra Tah 274/5

11 May 1932 – Amsterdam, CGO
74. Suppé: **Poète et paysan**
78: Columbia LX 179 (matrix 6425-2/6426-2)
LP: Columbia KT 1/3, Past Masters PM 36, BWS RR 443
CD: Pearl 9070

75. J. Strauss: **Perpetuum mobile**
78: Columbia LX 240 (matrix 6428-1)
LP: Rococo 2012
CD: Pearl 9070, Preiser 90090

20 December 1934 (or 1936?) – Amsterdam, CGO
76. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 8**
AVRO

4 May 1935 – Amsterdam, CGO
77. Diepenbrock: **Elektra**

KRO (archive HA 2926 – timing: 16'56" – incomplete recording, several acetates missing)[177]

24 June 1935 – Amsterdam, CGO
78. Gluck: **Alceste**, overture
78: Decca K-771 (matrix AMA-168-II/169-II), Polydor 516688
LP: Rococo 2018, Past Masters PM 22
CD: Symposium 1078

79. J. S. Bach: **Concerto for two violins, BWV 1010**[178]
Louis Zimmermann, Ferdinand Helman
78: Decca K-20043/20044 (matrix AMA-170-I/171-I/172-II/173-I)
LP: Thomas Clear TLC 2584, BWS RR 501, M-1003 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Refrain PMCD2, Pearl 9154, Biddulph WHL 024

24 October 1935 – Amsterdam, CGO
80. Max Trapp: **Piano Concerto opus 26** (1931)[179]
Walter Gieseking
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402
AVRO

5 April 1936 – Amsterdam, CGO
81. J. S. Bach: **St. Matthew Passion** (excerpts)
Karl Erb, Willem Ravelli, Jo Vincent, Ilona Durigo
CD: Archive documents ADCD 109
AVRO

14 May 1936 – Amsterdam, CGO
82. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 2**
CD: Tahra
AVRO

17 May 1936 – Amsterdam, CGO
83. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 6**
AVRO

21 May 1936 – Amsterdam, CGO
84. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 7**

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[177] This performance took place at the Stadsschouwburg of Amsterdam, for the 40th anniversary of Mengelberg as musical director of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. The actors were: Mien Duymaer van Twist, Louis van Gasteren, Nell Knoop and Charlotte Köhler.
[178] This is not a Telefunken recording; it was recorded by *Philips* and issued by English *Decca.*
[179] This is the very first performance in the Netherlands. There is a silence in the second movement after 4'07" due to a defective acetate.

CD: Tahra
AVRO

23 June 1936 – Amsterdam, CGO

85. Puccini: **Madame Butterfly**, "*Un bel di vedremo*"
Grace Moore
CD: Archive documents ADCD 109

86. Pestalozza: **Ciribiribin**
Grace Moore (with piano accompaniment not played by Mengelberg)
CD: Archive Documents ADCD 109
AVRO

22 November 1936 – Amsterdam, CGO

87. Pijper: **Cello Concerto** (1936)[180]
Marix Loevensohn
CD: Tahra

20 December 1936 (or 1934?) – Amsterdam, CGO

88. **Wilhelmus van Nassouwe**, Dutch national anthem
AVRO

3 and 4 May 1937 – Amsterdam, CGO (First Telefunken recording)

89. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 6**, *Pathétique*
78: SK 2214/2218 (unissued matrix 022100 to 022109)

4 May 1937 – Amsterdam, CGO

90. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 5** [181]
78: Telefunken SK 2210/2213 (matrix 022110-I/022111-I/022112-I/022113/022114/022115-I/022116/022117), Ultraphon G-14712/ 14715
LP: Capitol P 8110, Telefunken MH 5244
CD: Teldec 3984-28408-2, Pearl GEMS 0074

20 and 22 December 1937 – Amsterdam, CGA

91. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 6**, *Pathétique*
78: Telefunken SK 2214/2218 (matrix 022666 to 022675), Ultraphon G 14214/14218
LP: Telefunken MH 5242, Telefunken K 11010/1-2 (+), K17C9513
CD: Teldec 243.730.2, Music and Arts 809
(+) Recording made from matrixes of 1937 and 1941 - Sides 1/2/5/6/9/10 = 1937, sides 3/4/7/8 = 1941

92. Berlioz: **Le Carnaval romain**
78: SK 2489 (matrix 022676/022677 = 22 December), Telefunken-Pacific SK 2489-103
LP: Rococo 2011, BWS RR 443

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[180] World premiere. This work is dedicated to Loevensohn who gives his farewell concert AVRO

[181] Another set of takes 022110-II/022111-II/022112-II/022113-I/022114-I and VII/022115-II and VI/022116-I and X/022117-I and III was made on 15 April 1942. See 192

CD: Symposium 1078, Biddulph WHL 023

22 and 23 December 1937 – Amsterdam, CGO (recorded in the Great Hall of the Concertgebouw)

93. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 6**, *Pastorale*
78: Telefunken SK 2424/2428 (matrix 022708/ 022709/022710/ 022711/022712-I/022713/022714 = 22 December; 022715-I/022716/022717 = 23 December), Ultraphon G 14716/ 14720, Telefunken-Pacific SK 2424-49 to SK 2428-53
LP: Telefunken SLC 2326, K17C9404
CD: Teldec 243.728.2, Teldec 3984-28408-2

23 December 1937 – Amsterdam, CGO

94. Franck: **Psyché et Eros**
78: SK 2463 (matrix 022718/022719), Ultraphon G 14279, Telefunken-Pacific SK 2463-111
LP: Rococo 2011
CD: Biddulph WHL 023

18 January 1938 – London, BBCSO

95. Berlioz: **Symphonie fantastique**, *un Bal* (only an excerpt is surviving)

96. Mendelssohn: **a Midsummer Night's dream**, Overture, Scherzo and Notturno
CD: Archive documents ADCD 111

7 May 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

97. Haendel: **Messiah**, *Alleluia*
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2056
AVRO and NRU

15 May 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

98. Beethoven: **Violin Concerto opus 21**
Louis Zimmermann
AVRO

22 May 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

99. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 6 opus 68**, *Pastorale*
CD: Tahra
AVRO

31 May 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

100. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 9 opus 125** [182]
To van der Sluys, Suze Luger, Louis van Tulder, Willem Ravelli
CD: Archive documents ADCD 113 (incorrectly labelled 1 May)
AVRO

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[182] The Dutch Mengelberg Society owns a tape of this concert, which is different from the CD released by Michael Thomas. In 1971 the live recording of 31 May 1938 was broadcast but it was not the performance released by Archive Documents, with part of the fourth movement missing.

6 October 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

101. Debussy: **Fantasy for piano and orchestra**
Walter Gieseking
CD: Music and Arts 270, Music and Arts 780

102. Ravel: **Daphnis and Chloé**, Suite II
LP: MRF 74, Rococo 2066, BWS RR 506
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2061
AVRO

9 October 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

103. Tchaikovsky: **Serenade for strings opus 48** (not complete)
LP: BWS RR 425
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2059
AVRO

7 November 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

104. Tchaikovsky: **Serenade for strings opus 48**
78: Telefunken SK 2901/2903 (matrix 023643 to 023648), Ultraphon G 14219/14221
LP: Capitol P 8060, Rococo 2018, K17C9405
CD: Teldec 243.726.2, Biddulph WHL 024

8 November 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

105. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 1**
78: Telefunken SK 2770/2772 (matrix 023649 to 023654), Ultraphon G 14701/14703
LP: Capitol P 8079, Telefunken MH 5241, K17C9508
CD: Pearl GEMS 0074

8 November 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

106. R. Strauss: **Don Juan**
78: Telefunken SK 2743/2744 (matrix 023659 to 023662), Ultraphon G 22481/22482, Telefunken-Pacific SK 2743-140 and 2744-141 (France)
LP: Rococo 2018, Past Masters PM 27, K17C9404
CD: Teldec 243.724.2, 9031-76441, Teldec 3984-28409-2, Pearl GEM 0008, Dutton CDEA 5025

9 November 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

107. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 8**
78: Telefunken SK 2760/2762 (matrix 023663 to 023668), Ultraphon G 14721/14723
LP: Capitol P 8079, Telefunken MH 5244, K17C9507
CD: Teldec 243.725.2, Teldec 4509 955152, Pearl GEMS 0074

29 and 30 November 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO

108. Brahms: **Symphony No. 4**

78: Telefunken SK 2773/2777 (matrix 023703/023705 = 29 November; 023706/023712 = 30 November)
LP: Past Masters PM 5, K17C9510
CD: Teldec 243.724.2, Tahra Tah 274/5, Biddulph WHL 057

30 November 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO
109. Schubert: **Rosamunde**, overture
78: Telefunken SK 3008 (matrix 023713/023714)
LP: Past Masters PM 27
CD: Symposium 1078

1 December 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO
110. Vivaldi: **Concerto No. 8**, from **L'Estro Armonico** (1st, 2nd and 3rd movements) – soloists: *Louis Zimmermann*, *Ferdinand Helman*, violins and *Henk van Wezel*, cello
78: SK 2401/2402 (matrix 022616-I/022617-I/022618-I), Telefunken-Pacific SK 2401-14 and 2402-15
LP: Capitol P 1001, M-1003 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Biddulph WHL 024

1 December 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO
111. J. S. Bach: **Suite No. 3 for orchestra BWV 1068**, Aria[183]
78: Telefunken SK 2402 (matrix 022665-I), Telefunken-Pacific SK 2402-15 (France)
CD: Refrain PMCD2, Biddulph WHL 024

1 December 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO
112. Debussy: **Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune**
78: SK 2955 (matrix 023715/023716), Ultraphon G 14208
LP: Past Masters PM 22, K17C9405
CD: Biddulph WHL 023

113. **Wilhelmus van Nassouwe (Dutch national anthem, orchestrated by Wagenaar)**
78: Telefunken A 2899 (matrix 023717-I), U 55220 (Nederland only)
LP: MRF 74
CD: Teldec 243.723.2

114. Valerius: **Niederländisches Dankgebet**
78: Telefunken A 2899 (matrix 023718)
CD: Teldec 243.723.2

1 and 2 December 1938 – Amsterdam, CGO
115. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 4**

[183] The Biddulph CD issue gives a different date (April 1942) and different matrix references. (S.G.)

78: Telefunken SK 2794/2797 (matrix 023719/023721 = 1 December, 023722/023726 = 2 December), Ultraphon G 14708/14711
LP: Telefunken SLC 2327, Rococo 2011, K17C9405
CD: Pearl GEMS 0074

23 March 1939 – Amsterdam, CGO

116. Bartok: **Violin Concerto No. 2**
Zoltan Szekely
LP: Hungaroton LFX 11573
CD: Philips 426104-2

2 April 1939 – Amsterdam, CGO

117. J. S. Bach: **St. Matthew Passion**
Karl Erb, Willem Ravelli, Jo Vincent, Ilona Durigo
LP: Philips 00150/53L, Philips 00320/22L, W 09912/3, Turnabout TV 4445/46
CD: Philips 416206-2, Philips 462092-2
This item was recorded on sound film.

17 April 1939 – CGO (recorded in the AVRO Studio of Hilversum)

118. J. S. Bach: **Cantata No. 202** (*Wedding Cantata*)
To van der Sluys
LP: BWS CC 234
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2056

119. J. S. Bach: **Piano Concerto No. 5, BWV 1056**
Agi Jambor
CD: M. Thomas ADCD 112

120. J. S. Bach: **Suite No. 2 for flute and orchestra**
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2056, Archive documents ADCD 112, AVRO

9 November 1939 – Amsterdam, CGO

121. Bloch: **Concerto for violin and orchestra**
Joseph Szigeti
CD: Music and Arts 270

122. Mahler: **Symphony No. 4**
Jo Vincent
LP: Philips W09911, BWS RR 506
CD: Philips 416211-2, Philips 426108, Philips 46296-2
AVRO

23 November 1939 – Amsterdam, CGO

123. Mahler: **Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen**
Hermann Schey

LP: MRF 74, BWS RR 506
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2063, Luister CD 95-5

124. Kodaly: **Variations on a Hungarian folksong**
LP: MRF 74, Rococo 2059, Past Masters PM 37
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2062
AVRO

26 November 1939 – Amsterdam, CGO
125. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 5**
LP: BWS RR 425
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2059

27 November 1939 – Hilversum, CGO (recorded in the AVRO Studio)
126. Schubert: **Rosamunde**, Entracte 3 and Ballet Music No. 2
LP: Philips W 09910, Pearl HE 301
CD: Philips 416212-2, Philips 462105-2 (Ballet Music)

127. Schubert: **Symphony No. 8**, *Unfinished*[184]
CD: Philips 416212-2, Philips 468099-2
AVRO

14 March 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
128. Hindemith: **Concerto for violin and orchestra**
Ferdinand Helman
CD: Archive Documents ADCD 110
AVRO

28 March 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
129. Rachmaninoff: **Piano Concerto No. 3**
Walter Gieseking
LP: BWS IGI 358
CD: Music and Arts 250
AVRO

9, 10 and 11 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
130. Brahms: **Symphony No. 2**
78: Telefunken SK 3075/3079 (matrix 024858/024861 = 9 April, 024862/024865 = 10 April, 024866/024867 = 11 April)
LP: Capitol P 8070, Telefunken MZ 5103, K17C9509
CD: Teldec 243722-2, Tahra Tah 274/5, Biddulph WHL 057

[184] A number of publications claim that this recording was made on 27 November 1941, but on that day E. Van Beinum conducted a concert in Amsterdam.

11 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

131. Tchaikovsky: **Overture 1812**
78: Telefunken SK 3080/3081 (matrix 024872 to 024875), Ultraphon G 14271/14272
LP: Capitol L 8127, Mercury MG 15000, BWS RR 443
CD: Teldec 243730-2

12 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

132. Dopper: **Ciaconna gotica**
78: Telefunken SK 3155/3157 (matrix 024876 to 024880), Telefunken-Pacific SK 3135-121 to 3137-123[185]
LP: Capitol P 8037, Past Masters PM 9
CD: Teldec 243723-2

133. R. Mengelberg: **Salve Regina**
Jo Vincent
78: Telefunken SK 3084/3085 (matrix 024882 to 024884)
LP: Past Masters PM 9
CD: Teldec 243723-2, Philips 464385-2

134. Andriessen: **Magna res est amor**
Jo Vincent
78: Telefunken SK 3085 (matrix 024885)
LP: Past Masters PM 9
CD: Teldec 243723-2, Philips 464385-2

14 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

135. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 1**
LP: Philips W 09900, Pearl HE 301
CD: Philips 416200-2, Philips 462526-2

136. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 3**, *Eroica*
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402
NRU
First movement missing

18 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

137. Beethoven: **Violin Concerto opus 61**
Louis Zimmermann
CD: Tahra

138. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 5**
LP: Philips W 09905/6, 6701031
CD: Philips 416202-2, Philips 462526-2

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[185] 024878-V and 024878-VI are dubbings made 14 June 1941.

139. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 8**
LP: Philips W 09900
CD: Philips 416204-2, Philips 462526-2
AVRO

21 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
140. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 2**
LP: Philips W 09901
CD: Philips 416200-2, Philips 462526-2

141. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 6**
LP: Philips W 09903
CD: Philips 416203-2, Philips 462526-2
AVRO

25 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
142. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 4**
LP: Philips W 09902
CD: Philips 416202-2, Philips 462526-2

143. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 7**
LP: Philips W 09904, Rococo 2058
CD: Philips 416204-2, Philips 462526-2
AVRO

28 Avril 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
144. Beethoven: **Fidelio**, overture
LP: Philips W 09901
CD: Philips 416203-2, Philips 462526-2
AVRO

2 May 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
145. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 9**
To van der Sluys, Suze Luger, Louis van Tulder, Willem Ravelli
LP: Philips W 09905/6, 6701031
CD: Philips 416205-2, Philips 462526-2
AVRO

8, 10 and 11 July 1940 – Berlin, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
146. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 5**
78: Telefunken SK 3086/3091 (matrix 025071-I, 025072-I/II/III/IV, 025073, 025074 = 8 July, 025075, 025076, 025077 = 10 July, 025078, 025079-I, 025080, 025081, 025082 = 11 July), Ultraphon G 14214/14218
LP: Telefunken MH 5242, MZ 5106, K 11010/1, K17C9512
CD: Teldec 243727-2

9 July 1940 – Berlin, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

147. Tchaikovsky: **Piano Concerto No. 1**
Conrad Hansen
78: Telefunken SK 3092/3095 (matrix 025083 to 025090), Ultraphon G 14273/14276, Telefunken-Pacific SK 3092-76 to 3095-79
LP: Capitol P 8097, M-1003 (Japan, private LP), Past Masters PM 18
CD: Teldec 243726-2

3 October 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
148. Franck: **Symphony in D minor**
LP: Philips W 09908
CD: Philips 416214-2, Philips 468099-2
AVRO

10 October 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
149. Schumann: **Piano Concerto opus 54**
Emil von Sauer
LP: MRF 74, M-1004 (Japan, private LP)
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2061

150. Wagenaar: **De Getemde Feeks**, overture
LP: MRF 74
CD: BFO A4
AVRO (This concert included Mahler's First Symphony)

13 October 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
151. Brahms: **Symphony No. 1**
LP: Philips W 09907
CD: Philips 416210-2

152. Mozart: **Piano Concerto No. 19, K 459**
Willem Andriessen
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2057
AVRO

27 October 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO
153. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 1**
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402

154. Bruch: **Violin Concerto No. 1 opus 26**
Giula Bustabo
LP: BWS RR 506, Rococo 2029,
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2060

155. Wagner: **Tannhäuser**, overture
LP: BWS CC 234
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2055

AVRO

31 October 1940 – Amsterdam

156. Franck: **Symphonic Variations for piano and orchestra**
Walter Gieseking
LP: MRF 74, Past Masters PM 34, IGI 358
CD: Archive documents ADCD 114, Seven Seas KICC 2061

157. Voormolen: **Sinfonia**
LP: Past Masters PM 16
CD: Archive Documents ADCD 119

158. Rachmaninoff: **Piano Concerto No. 2**
Walter Gieseking
LP: IPL 506, MRF 74, Rococo 2029, BWS CC 234, IGI 353
CD: Music and Arts 250
AVRO

7 November 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

159. J. S. Bach: **Cantata No. 57**
Jo Vincent
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2063

160. Brahms: **A German Requiem**
Jo Vincent
LP: Philips W 09912/3, Turnabout 4445/6
CD: Philips 416213-2, Philips 468099-2
AVRO

10 November 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

161. Röntgen: **Old Dutch dances**
45: Philips DE 99273
LP: MRF 74, Past Masters PM 9
CD: Colofon CVCD 7/10, BFO A4
AVRO

11 November 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

162. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 3**
78: Telefunken SK 3117/3122 (matrix 025350 to 025361)
LP: Capitol P 8002, Telefunken MH 5241, MZ 5100, Rococo 2003, K17C9506
CD: Philips 416201-2, Philips 462526-2

163. Röntgen: **Old Dutch Dances** (*Bergerette, Pavane*)
78: Telefunken SK 3157 (matrix 025362)
LP: Rococo 2004

CD: Teldec 243723-2

164. Mozart: **Flute Concerto No. 2, K 314**
Hubert Barwahser, flute
78: unissued matrix 025363/025366

<u>12 and 13 November 1940</u> – Amsterdam, CGO
165. Franck: **Symphony in D minor**
78: Telefunken SK 3145/3149 (matrix 025367/025373 = 12 November, 025374/025376 = 13 November)
LP: Capitol P 8023, Telefunken MH 5245, MZ 5105, Past Masters PM 34
CD: Biddulph WHL 023

<u>13 November 1940</u> – Amsterdam, CGO
166. Wagner: **Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg**, Prelude Act I
78: Telefunken SK 3137 (matrix 025377/025378), Telefunken-Pacific SK 3137-18
LP: Rococo 2012, BWS RR 443, Past Masters PM 27
CD: Teldec 243728-2

167. Franck: **Symphonic Variations**
Theo van der Pas, piano
78: unissued matrix 025379 to 025382

<u>8 December 1940</u> – Amsterdam, CGO
168. Dopper: **Symphony No. 7** (*Zuiderzee Symphony*)
LP: Past Masters PM 16
CD: Archive Documents ADCD119
AVRO

<u>12 December 1940</u> – Amsterdam, CGO
169. Kodaly: **Harry Janos**
LP: MRF 74, Rococo 2059
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2062

170. Pfitzner: **Cello Concerto opus 42**
Gaspar Cassado
LP: Rococo 2058, Past Masters PM 33
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2062

171. R. Strauss: **Don Juan**
LP: Philips W 09908, Rococo 2066
CD: Philips 416214-2, Philips 468099-2

172. Schubert: **Sonata for Arpeggione, D 821**
Gaspar Cassado
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2063, Tahra Tah 231
AVRO

19 December 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

173. Schubert: **Claudine von Villa Bella, D 239**
Betty van den Bosch-Schmidt
CD: Archive documents ADCD 109

174. Schubert: **Vedi, quanto adora... Ah, non lasciarmi, D 510**
Betty van den Bosch-Schmidt
CD: Archive documents ADCD 109

175. Schubert: **Der Vollmond strahlt** (Romanze from *Rosamunde*)
CD: Archive documents ADCD 109

176. Schubert: **Ständchen, D 921**
Betty van den Bosch-Schmidt

177. Schubert: **Symphony No. 9**
LP: Philips W 09909
CD: Philips 416212-2, Philips 468099-2

178. Schubert: **Rosamunde**, excerpts
AVRO

21 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

179. R. Strauss: **Ein Heldenleben**
78: Telefunken SK 3181/3185 (matrix 025639 to 025648)
LP: Capitol P 8013
CD: Teldec 243729-2, 9031-76441, Teldec 3984-28409-2, Dutton CDEA 5025

22 April 1941 – Amsterdam, CGO

180. Tchaikovsky: **Symphony No. 6**, *Pathétique*
78: Telefunken SK 3176/3180 (matrix 022666-IV, 022667-III, 022668-III, 022669-II, 022670-II, 022671-III, 022672-IV, 022673-III, 022674-II, 022675-III)
LP: Capitol P 8103
CD: Archive documents ADCD 108

23 and 24 April 1940 – Amsterdam, CGO

181. Dvorak: **Symphony No. 9**
78: Telefunken SK 3190/3194 (matrix 025649/025653 = 23 April, 025654/025658 = 24 April), Ultraphon G 14280/4
LP: Past Masters PM 4
CD: Teldec 243731-2

24 April 1941 – Amsterdam, CGO

182. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 2**
unissued matrix 025659 to 025666

25 April 1941 – Amsterdam, CGO

183. Borodin: **In the steppes of Central Asia**
78: Telefunken SK 3198 (matrix 025667-I/025668), Telefunken-Pacific SL 3198-119
LP: Past Masters PM 4
CD: Pearl 9154

184. Sibelius: **Finlandia**
unissued matrix 025669/025670

28 January 1942 – Berlin, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra

185. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 7**
CD: Archive Documents ADCD 111 (incorrectly labelled 1939)
NRU

5 March 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO

186. Mozart: **Resta o cara… Bella mia Fiamma..., K 528**[186]
Ria Ginster
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402

187. Mozart: **Esultate Jubilate, K 165**
Ria Ginster
CD: Archive documents ADCD 109, Seven Seas KICC 2057

188. Mozart: **Concerto for flute and orchestra No. 2**
Hubert Barwahser
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2057

189. Mozart: **Die Zauberflöte**, overture

190. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 3**
CD: Tahra Tah 391/393
Nationale Omroep

14 April 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO

191. R. Strauss: **Tod und Verklärung**
78: Telefunken SK 3738/3740 (matrix 026403 to 026408)
LP: Capitol P 8100, Telefunken MH 5245, MZ 5102, K17C9508, Telefunken LGX 66032 (GB)
CD: Refrain PMCD 2, Archive Documents ADCD 118

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[186] The Archives Document ADCD 109 listed this work on its cover, but in reality the track contains the following recording: Schubert: *Vedi quanto adora*, sung by Betty van den Bosch-Schmidt and performed on 19 December 1940.

15 April 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
192. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 5** (see No. 90)
CD: Teldec 243725-2, Teldec 4509-955152

16 April 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
193. Berlioz: **La Damnation de Faust** (*Marche hongroise, Danse des Sylphes, Menuet des Follets*)
78: Telefunken SK 3243/3244 (matrix 026409 to 026411)
LP: Capitol L 8127
CD: Refrain PMCD 2, Pearl 9154, Biddulph WHL 023

194. Wagenaar: **Cyrano de Bergerac**, Overture
78: Telefunken SK 3744/3745 (matrix 026412 to 026415)
LP: Past Masters PM 9
CD: Teldec 243723-2, Pearl GEM 0008

17 April 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
195. Schubert: **Marche militaire No. 1, D 733**
78: Telefunken SK 3244 (matrix 026416)
CD: Pearl 9154

196. Brahms: **Tragic Overture**
78: Telefunken SK 3327/3328 (matrix 026417 to 026420)
Lp: Capitol P 8070, Rococo 2051, BWS RR 443
CD: Teldec 243722-2, Tahra Tah 274/5

9 May 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
197. Beethoven: **Piano Concerto No. 5**
Cor de Groot

198. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 7**[187]

15 May 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
199. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 9 opus 125**
Corry Bijster, Suze Luger, Frans Vroons, Willem Ravelli
NRU (not complete)

13 August 1942 – Salzburg Festival, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
200. Weber: **Euryanthe**, overture
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402
Deutsches Rundfunk Archiv

16 August 1942 – Salzburg Festival, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

[187] This recording does not exist anymore.

201. Beethoven: **Egmont**, overture
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402
Deutsches Rundfunk Archiv

1 November 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
202. Beethoven: **Prometheus** (*Overture, Allegretto, Finale*)
78: not issued by Telefunken (matrix 027008/027009)
LP: Capitol P 8078, Past Masters PM 20
CD: Refrain PMCD 3, Archive Documents ADCD 118

203. Beethoven: **The Ruins of Athens**, *Turkish March*
78: Telefunken SK 3713 (matrix 027010)
LP: Capitol P 8078
CD: Refrain PMCD 3

5 November 1942 – Amsterdam, CGO
204. Mozart: **Eine kleine Nachtmusik, K 525**
78: Telefunken SK 3750/3751 (matrix 027011 to 027014)
LP: Thomas Clear TLC 2584, BWS RR 501, Past Masters PM 35
CD: Pearl 9154, Refrain PMCD 2, Biddulph WHL 024

18 March 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
205. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 1**

206. Wagner: **Prelude and Isolde Death**[188]
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2054

207. Weber: **Ozean, du Ungeheuer** (from *Oberon*)
Ruth Horna
LP: BWS CC 234
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2056, Archive Documents ADCD 109
Nationale Omroep

21 March 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
208. J. S. Bach: **Piano Concerto opus 13 No. 4**
Marinus Flipse
CD: Archive documents ADCD 112

209. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 2**
CD: Tahra Tah 391/3

210. Berlioz: **La Damnation de Faust** (*Marche hongroise, Danse des Sylphes, Danse des Follets*)

[188] According to other sources, Pierre Monteux is conducting, on 19 February 1953

LP: BWS CC 234
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2055
Nationale Omroep

25 March 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
211. Dopper: **Ciaconna Gotica**

212. Dvorak: **Violin Concerto opus 53**
Maria Neuss
LP: BWS CC 234
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2058
Nationale Omroep

9 April 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
213. Chopin: **Piano Concerto No. 2**
Theo van der Pas
CD: Archive documents ADCD 114, Theo van der Pas Stichting TPSCD 9601/3, Arkadia HP6271
Nationale Omroep

15 April 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
214. Brahms: **Violin Concerto, opus 77**
Hermann Krebbers
LP: BWS CC234
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2055

215. Brahms: **Symphony No. 1, opus 68**
CD: Tahra Tah 391/3
Nationale Omroep

19 April 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
216. Cherubini: **Anacreon**
CD: Archive documents ADCD 111

217. Grieg: **Peer Gynt**
LP: Rococo 2066
CD: Archive documents ADCD 108

218. Röntgen: **Old Dutch Dances**
Nationale Omroep

29 April 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO
219. Beethoven: **Egmont**, overture
CD: Music and Arts 780, Seven Seas KICC 2054
Nationale Omroep

6 May 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO

220. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 3**, *Eroica*
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2054, Music and Arts 780 (incorrectly labelled 14 April 1940)

221. Beethoven: **Violin Concerto, opus 61**
Guila Bustabo
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2060
NRU

13 May 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO

222. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 8**
CD: Tahra Tah 391/3

223. Beethoven: **Symphony No. 9**
Corry Bijster, Suze Luger, Louis van Tulder, Willem Ravelli
NRU

16 and 17 June 1943 – Amsterdam, CGO

224. Schubert: **Symphony No. 9**
78: Telefunken SK 3341/3346 (matrix 026989 to 027001, except 026998)
LP: Capitol P 8040
CD: Refrain PMCD 1, Biddulph WHL 39, Tahra Tah 231

17 June 1943[189] – Amsterdam, CGO

225. Schubert: **Symphony No. 8**, "*Unfinished*"
78: Telefunken SK 3352/3354 (matrix 027002 to 027007)
LP: Past Masters PM 22
CD: Refrain PMCD 1, Pearl 9154, Biddulph WHL 39

16 January 1944 – Paris, Grand Orchestre de Radio-Paris (Théâtre des Champs-Elysées)[190]

226. Dvorak: **Cello Concerto**
Maurice Gendron
LP: Past Masters PM 33
CD: Seven Seas KICC 2058, Arkadia HP 6271

26 February 1944 – Amsterdam, CGO

227. Voormolen: **Concerto for two oboes**
Jaap and *Hakon Stotyjn*
CD: Tahra Tah 401/402
Deutsches Rundfunk Archiv

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[189] Items 224 and 225 are Mengelberg's last Telefunken recordings.
[190] This recording is certainly a fake. In fact, the newspapers and the programs quote Paul Tortelier as soloist. Moreover, the French Radio did not record on magnetic tape in those days.

27 February 1944 – Amsterdam, CGO

228. Brahms: **Symphony No. 3**
CD: Music and Arts 780, Archive documents ADCD 103

229. Liszt: **Piano Concerto No. 1**
Marinus Flipse
CD: Archive documents ADCD 114
Nationale Omroep

23 April 1944[191] – Amsterdam, CGO

230. . Beethoven: **Egmont**, overture[192]
Nationale Omroep

To this list of recordings, one has to add the recordings of two complete January 1944 concerts, both recorded with Le Grand Orchestre de Radio-Paris in Théâtre des Champs-Elysées and first published in 2009, by *Malibran Music* [193]:

16 January 1944

231. Cherubini : **Anacreon**, overture
232. Dvorak : **Concerto for cello and orchestra** (soloist Paul Tortelier)
233. Franck : **Symphony in D Minor**

20 January 1944

234. Berlioz : **Carnaval Romain**, overture
235. Chopin : **Piano Concerto** no. 2 in F Minor,
(soloist Alfred Cortot, who also re-orchestrated and rewrote parts of the work)
236. Tchaikovsky : **Symphony no. 6**, *Pathétique*

Documents

A) The Dutch radio archives own a number of interviews:
- 9 May 1935: Mengelberg speaks on his 40th year at the head of the Concertgebouw;
- 14 October 1935: interview of Mengelberg on his birthday (duration: 6 minutes);
- 22 November 1936: Mengelberg thanks the violoncellist M. Loevenson who plays the Pijper concerto at his farewell concert;

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[191] This date is doubtful.
[192] Mengelberg conducted his very last concert in Amsterdam on May 14 (*St. Matthew Passion*), then he went to Paris for 9 concerts with "le Grand Orchestre de Radio-Paris" (18, 21, 25, 28 May and 1, 8, 11, 15 and 18 June). The concert of June 18 (Beethoven's Choral Symphony in Paris) was the very last one of his long career.
[193] Added by S.G.

- 7 May 1938: Mengelberg speaks on the orchestra's 50th birthday;
- 6 September 1938: Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw at the Nieuwe Kerk d'Amsterdam to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Queen Wilhelmine's accession to the Dutch throne;
- 20 December 1938: Mengelberg and the Toonkunstkoor.
- 16 February 1939: Mengelberg speaks on the occasion of a concert held for the pension fund of the Concertgebouw.

Another interview was recorded on 8 February 1938 in Munich (released by Tahra – TAH 401/402)[194].

B) Mengelberg appears in a number of filmed documents, the most important of which are:
- "Dood water" (Dead Water): documentary by G. & F. Rutten on a piece of music by Walter Gronostay. Mengelberg conducts the Amsterdam Concertgebouw but doesn't appear in this film, which was premiered on 15 August 1934 in Venice, during the 19th International Biennale of Film.
- Film studios in Epinay-sur-Seine, 30 April and 1 May 1931. Film produced by Tobis Klangfilm, showing Mengelberg conducting the Concertgebouw in three works: Bizet, *Arlésienne* (adagietto) – Berlioz, *Damnation de Faust* (Marche Hongroise) and Weber's *Oberon*. The designer Lazare Meerson rebuilt a replica of the interior of the Concertgebouw hall in the studio. Before conducting Mengelberg says a few words in Dutch.
- 2 May 1935: Mengelberg rehearses with the Concertgebouw Henk Badings' Third Symphony and says a few words.

A number of private films were made during the 1930s, showing Mengelberg and his guests at his Chasa in Switzerland (Richard Strauss, Pierre Monteux, etc.).

In 1976, the Dutch television made a documentary with the participation of several artists who worked with Mengelberg in Amsterdam, particularly the singer Jo Vincent and Yehudi Menuhin. This film includes several documents (Epinay-sur-Seine, private films, a concert at the Olympic stadium of Amsterdam in 1934).

Since the writing of this discography, a film fragment of Willem Mengelberg conducting in concert, in Budapest, the fourth movement of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* has been uncovered. Also, Hubert Wendel put to our disposal a film fragment of Mengelberg rehearsing the third movement of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*, Berlin, in July 1940.[195]

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[194] Added by S.G.
[195] Added by S.G.

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