Re-inventing the nineteenth-century tools of unprescribed modifications of rhythm and tempo in performances of Brahms's symphonies and concertos

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The following work presented for this dissertation contains, to the best of my knowledge, no material previously published or written by any other person, nor submitted for the award of any other degree at this or any other university, except where due reference is made in the text.

This dissertation is written in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the doctoral degree programme of Leiden University. It is presented together with and as an accompaniment to four films which serve as documentation of the work process with the project orchestra (duration 2 hours and 40 minutes), eight audio recordings which demonstrate the results (duration 5 hours and 30 minutes) and 14 films with examples of modifications in these recordings (duration 3 hours and 5 minutes).

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INTRODUCTION

As a teenager who was learning to play the violin in my native city of Groningen, I drove my teachers at the local music school to despair by refusing to apply a continuous vibrato and be accompanied by a grand piano. Not only did I feel that the vibrato did not improve the sound I managed to produce on my instrument, but the piano also, frankly, scared me. To my ear, the sounds coming out of this shiny black monster were of an abstract perfection – something I was unable to relate to with my efforts to produce an expressive sound on my violin.

A few years later, in the preparatory programme at the Conservatory in Groningen, I confessed to my teachers that I wanted to become a baroque violinist and a conductor. To this day, I am grateful for the advice that my chamber music teacher, Wim ten Have (principal violist in the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century at the time) gave me: learn to play the violin as best you can, and if your path leads you to baroque violin playing or even conducting, pursue it; if not, don't. I think what he was telling me implicitly was that there is no substitute for a broad musical training when it comes to developing ideas about what you want to hear, or how you want music to be played. Ten Have believed that one's choice of instrument and the role one can play in performance should be secondary considerations, not primary goals. In other words, it all begins with what one wants to hear. In my case, I have always wanted to hear a different Brahms. Above all, I thought that his music often sounded much too heavy. I do not want to pretend that I had a sharp vision of my ideal Brahms early on. The truth is that my answers to the "different, but how?" question have changed radically over time, most of all because of my research during these past four years.

In 1983, I decided to use the prize money I had won in the National Violin Competition Oscar Back to study with violinist Josef Suk (1929-2011) in Vienna and Prague. At a time when most other young violinists from the Netherlands were looking for opportunities elsewhere, particularly in New York, I wanted to learn how to play Brahms like Suk. I was, and still am, fascinated by Suk's beautiful singing style of playing in his recording of the

Violin Sonatas (Decca-466393-2) with pianist Julius Katchen (1926-1969). That was my first conscious effort to find a different Brahms, less dominated by a display of instrumental virtuosity and more vocal in nature. Though my playing at the time included none of the ingredients I later found to be particularly important, such as extensive use of portamento and limited use of vibrato, I did find what I was looking for: a singing way of playing Brahms.

My second attempt to work out a different way of playing Brahms came much later and it related to his orchestral music. With my period instrument orchestra called the Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht (NPhU), I performed a series of three programmes in the 2011-2012 season, in which I combined Brahms's *Tragic Overture, Three Hungarian Dances, First Piano Concerto,* and *First Symphony* with unknown works by nineteenth-century Dutch composers, such as Johannes Verhulst (1816-1891), Richard Hol (1825-1904), and Johan Wagenaar (1862-1941). I based my approach on the belief that Brahms would benefit from a more transparent orchestral sound, produced by using period instruments. I wanted to take the ideas regarding the Historically Informed Performance Practice (HIPP) of Beethoven symphonies that I had learned to work with as a guest player in the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, as concertmaster of Anima Eterna, Bruges, and as a conductor with the NPhU and other orchestras one step further and apply them to Brahms. I found the document *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition* – in which conductor Walter Blume (1883-1933) described in detail how Fritz Steinbach (1855-1916) performed Brahms's symphonies and *Haydn Variations* – to be a great help. Yet many questions still remained.[1]

"Taking the HIPP ideas regarding Beethoven one step further" meant little more than using a bit more vibrato and portamento than I would do in Beethoven. But where and why? My approach to these and other important issues such as tempo modification had no proper foundation, except in my personal aesthetic preferences. My Brahms with the NPhU at the time sounded significantly different from others, as the recordings prove, but I

[1] Blume, W. *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition, seine Sinfonien und Haydn-Variationen in der Bezeichnung von Fritz Steinbach*. Suhrkamp, Stuttgart, 1933.

felt as if I was skating on very thin ice. My dissatisfaction with the foundations of this approach and its results when it came to Brahms made me wonder, in fact, whether the way the orchestral music of Beethoven (and others) was performed in HIPP might be equally flawed. I deliberately avoid using the word "illegitimate" to describe the foundations of various approaches to Beethoven, Brahms, and others. I believe that performers do not need to legitimise their way of performing music; for instance, a performance of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* on an accordion at half the speed of the composer's metronome markings can be perfectly legitimate. It is only when performers claim that their way of playing is based on historical evidence that the question whether they can legitimately make that claim becomes relevant. In my efforts to find a way to perform Brahms's orchestral music that was based on my accumulated experience with HIPP of baroque and classical music, I began to feel increasingly dissatisfied with the fact that I was failing to incorporate so much of what I had read about nineteenth-century performance practices in my approach to this repertoire.

I have documented my third attempt to develop an approach to Brahms in this dissertation and in the recordings, films, and articles on my website (brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl). In the spring of 2018, Okke Westdorp, at the time associate director and head of classical music at the Conservatory of Amsterdam (CvA), now its director, suggested that my ongoing search for a different Brahms should take the form of a PhD research project. The Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) offers a programme to support teachers who want to engage in such research with the purpose of continuously improving the quality of teaching at the schools that fall under its responsibility, of which the CvA is one. Having taught there for over thirty years, I had seen colleagues take this path before me. Some of them had been allowed to reduce their teaching obligations to spend a substantial amount of time on their research. After completing their research projects, some colleagues had expressed the view that it was not always easy to find a connection between their research findings and their teaching. I proposed to incorporate my research into the curriculum of the CvA, so that the return on investment by the AHK in my project should come not after

completion of the PhD project but rather while it was ongoing. To make this possible, I put together a special project orchestra in which professors, graduates, and students of the CvA played side by side. In each third week of September, for the duration of the project (2019-2022), this orchestra functioned as a laboratory in which I could try out, further develop, and share the findings of my research.

The relevance of my research project is primarily rooted in audible evidence of possibilities for implementing lost tools of nineteenth-century orchestral performance practices. I am convinced that applying the findings of the research should not come after the phase of researching the historical evidence. Instead, it should be an integral part of the research itself. One needs to work with lost techniques and tools and investigate them in practice to better understand their nature and expressive potential. In fact, I would go as far as to say that the experience of hearing what effect nineteenth-century expressive tools can have in an orchestra is a *sine qua non* when it comes to understanding what these tools are.

During my research, I re-examined the historical evidence relating to the nature of nineteenth-century orchestral performance practices and the ways in which performers had moved away from those practices throughout the twentieth century. This re-examination led me to see the HIPP, as it emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, as belonging, at least largely, to the modernistic rejection of nineteenth-century practices, which started at the end of the nineteenth century and progressed quickly in the first half of the twentieth century. It became clear to me that a fundamental change was needed to find an approach to Brahms, that took account of the historical evidence. If I wanted to be able to claim that my approach was historically informed, I would not only need to steer away from the Mainstream orchestral Performance Practice (MPP) but also from the HIPP. In no other area did this become more obvious to me than in the modification of rhythm and tempo in orchestral performance, which appears to have remained largely unexplored in the majority of HIPP and MPP until recently.[2]

[2] I am referring specifically to orchestral performance. I know a lot of important work has been done and still is being done in the field of solo and chamber music playing.

As a performer and teacher, my personal golden rule regarding tempo had always been "not to change the tempo unless you have to." Throughout my career as a performing musician, tempo modification had always been a last resort. I would only consider changing the tempo if I found myself still dissatisfied after trying all other available means to bring out the full character of a theme or a passage as I understood it, such as modification of sound colour, dynamics, or phrasing.

Modifying rhythm was even more alien to the expressive tools I worked with. In my lessons with Josef Suk, I learnt to exaggerate certain rhythms incidentally. Yet my training prohibited me from exploring the idea that the rhythms on the page might be interpreted more freely in order to bring out the character of themes or passages more fully. Only in fermatas and dotted rhythms did I feel that a certain degree of interpretation of the printed rhythm was inevitable. In conclusion I would say that I had been trained to make sense of the notation as best as I could without addressing the fundamental issue of its inaccuracy. It became clear to me that my training and accumulated experience as a classical musician in the latter decades of the twentieth century, including my experience as a member of a number of ensembles and orchestras specialising in the historically informed performance practice of baroque and classical music, had conditioned me in such a way that pursuing a style of performance based on the available evidence of nineteenth-century practices had become impossible without a profound reassessment of my understanding of the identity of the compositions I wished to perform in relation to even the most faithfully researched printed versions of them. I would not only have to learn to read the score in a different way, which would include interpreting markings such as crescendo and diminuendo and hairpins as relating to modification of rhythm and tempo. I would also need to start understanding the expectations a composer might have had about what the performer might bring to the performance of their own, as an integral part of the composition.

In the words of my supervisor Clive Brown, "I would need to develop a new persona as a performing musician."[3]

Even before the start of this project, I knew that I had no ambition whatsoever to write a book about interpreting Brahms, nor did I have any interest in coming up with a new set of rules for the interpretation of Brahms's music.[4] To be clear, I have great respect and admiration for the authors of many books on these subjects, and I feel grateful for their efforts to make so much scholarly knowledge so easily accessible to anyone who might care to read about it. I simply did not feel that this was a field in which I could make a significant contribution. When it came to audible results however, the situation was different; in my opinion, none of the existing recordings reflected what I had read about nineteenth-century performance practices. I felt that modern-day rules about supposedly good musicianship, particularly regarding evenness of sound production and tempo in combination with a general and demonstrable tendency to ignore the historical evidence of nineteenth-century practices, had resulted in increasingly neutral performances of music of the romantic era. These are the results of an approach where the performer refrains from doing things not printed in the score. The path forward for my research became clear for me: I wanted to demonstrate that some of the expressive tools of the nineteenth century could be reinvented and implemented in performances of Brahms's orchestral music today to help expand the range of expressive possibilities.

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[3] Brown, C. "Interview at the start of the project." Interview by author. Filmed in August 2019. https://vimeo.com/357370790/c6e120e223.

[4] Having worked as a violin teacher and a conductor at the Conservatory of Amsterdam and elsewhere for more than three decades, I have accumulated ample experience as a jury member. As such I played the role of what Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, for example in *Challenging Performance*, calls 'a gatekeeper', by judging the performances of students and others based on sets of rules that had been communicated implicitly or explicitly. I really want to make every effort I can to avoid a situation in which the results of my research might be understood as providing further rules for the 'correct' performance of Brahms. I am only interested in expanding the range of expressive possibilities, not limiting it. At the same time, I want to make a case that this expansion can successfully be achieved by the use of expressive tools that were familiar to the composer. Tools that he would have expected performers to use in building their narrative and realising their performance.

Any meaningful new perspective on the ways of performing this repertoire would need to do two things. First of all, it would have to offer a significantly different result than those hitherto produced by both MPP and HIPP. Secondly, it would have to demonstrate that the basis of the approach leading to these results was grounded in my understanding of the historical evidence. The Academy of Creative and Performing Arts at Leiden University prides itself on the fact that a performance can be an important part of the materials presented to obtain a doctorate in the arts. In line with university policy, I wish to present my recordings of the four Brahms *Symphonies* and the four *Concertos* not only as an integral part of my research, but as the very core of it. From that point of view, this written part of my dissertation can be seen as accompanying the recordings, rather than the other way around.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I explain the historical evidence I have used as a foundation for my approach to modifications of rhythm and tempo in orchestral performance. I demonstrate that a constantly subtly changing tempo was something Brahms would have expected of musicians, including when performing his own orchestral works. Through my research, particularly through the work with the project orchestra, I discarded my old belief that the tempo had to be maintained quite rigidly throughout a piece or a movement and replaced it with the new concept of a tempo susceptible to constant change.

In the second chapter, I describe the process of re-inventing and implementing this new concept into the performance style of the project orchestra and provide examples of modifications in our recordings. In the third chapter, I give a brief overview of other characteristics of the project orchestra and its playing, and I present its recordings in the fourth chapter. The last, fifth chapter contains my conclusions.

I would like to suggest to the reader that, although I am presenting my material in this order, which I believe has a certain logic to it in the context of this text, listening to the audio recordings and watching the films that include examples of modifications may be the best starting point for someone who wants to understand what this project is about. In order to

facilitate access to the films and audio, I have added QR-codes to the links, that will lead the reader to these materials.

Chapter 1, Some historical sources regarding modifications of rhythm and tempo, the application of modifications in the style of Bülow, Steinbach and Brahms, and my emerging approach

As failures go, attempting to recall the past is like trying to grasp the meaning of existence. Both make one feel like a baby clutching at a basketball: one's palms keep sliding off.[5]

Joseph Brodsky, opening line of *Less Than One* (1986)

On his (Brahms's) 100th birthday […] He is now regarded as "historical", he is categorised and classified; diligent people are capturing everything except for what is lively, vivid and eternally moving.[6]

Music critic and writer Alexander Berrsche (1883-1940), *Trösterin Musika* (1933)

1.1 Modifications of Rhythm and Tempo in the Nineteenth Century; Theory and Practice.

The modifications of tempo that I will discuss in this chapter are intentional deviations from the fundamental tempo that are not marked in the score by the composer.[7] Modifications of tempo can be divided into gradual ones,

[5] Brodsky, J. *Less than one, selected essays.* Penguin books, London, 1987, p. 3.
[6] Berrsche, A. *Musik und Betrachtung, Trösterin Musika.* Ellermann Verlag, München, 1964 (reprint) p. 239. (Translation by Viola Scheffel). *Zum 100. Geburtstag […] Man sieht ihn jetzt 'historisch,' man klassifiziert und rubriziert ihn, die fleißigen Leute erfassen alles, nur nicht das Lebendige und unaufhörlich Wirkende.*
[7] To be more precise: some of these deviations from the fundamental tempo are indeed unmarked by the composer, while others are based on an interpretation of the markings in the score, such as crescendo, diminuendo, and hairpins. More on this subject in Chapter 1.7.

such as accelerando and ritardando, and sudden ones, that are introduced without transition. Similarly, modifications of rhythm constitute deviations from a strict reading of the noted rhythm. In his 2020 edition of the Beethoven *Violin Sonatas*, Clive Brown notes three types of such deviations that relate to slurred figures, successive notes of the same length, and dotted figures.[8] The execution of all these figures and patterns was less literal than what was to become the norm in the twentieth century, and Brown argues that deviations from the notated rhythm in the score would have been expected from performers in the nineteenth century. Included in my discussion of modifications is the tempo rubato applied in hairpins, which can be understood as a kind of modification in which the stolen time is given back within a phrase or figure. In his dissertation on tempo rubato in the eighteenth century, Carl LeRoy Blake makes a distinction between tempo rubato and modification of tempo:

> In musical parlance, tempo rubato is a curious and fugitive expression, having caused a good deal of discussion and confusion throughout generations of music-making. Literally meaning "stolen time," tempo rubato is a performance practice which derived from the art of ornamentation of the Italian vocal tradition dominant in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Tempo rubato has both a general and a specific meaning. The general meaning of tempo rubato is inextricably tied to general ornamentation, that is, all ornamentation is to be realised within the strict time of the bass, or in the absence of the bass, within the strict time of the prescribed note that is being embellished. The specific meaning is that which eighteenth-century treatise writers advocated as one of the extraordinary means that singers and instrumentalists employed for the purpose of heightening expression of musical passages of a pathetic, cantabile, tender, languishing or melancholy nature. […] In addition to tempo rubato, eighteenth-century writers advocated another means of heightening expression by tempo modification (i.e., speeding or slowing the general tempo of the piece). This device required the acceleration or retardation of the entire fabric of a musical passage in order to reflect the meaning of the sung text or to highlight changing affect within a given musical section.[9]

Regarding the intentionality of the deviations, I would like to point out that I am referring to the intention of the performer to shape the music as they understand it, the intention is not necessarily to deviate from the notation.

[8] Brown, C. *Beethoven Sonatas for Pianoforte and Violin, Reading between the lines of Beethoven's notation.* Bärenreiter Verlag, Kassel, 2020, pp. XIV-XV.

[9] Blake, C. L. "Tempo Rubato in the Eighteenth Century", PhD diss., Cornell University, 1988.

Blake goes on to write that composers as early as in the sixteenth century encouraged performers to manipulate the tempo, giving numerous sources and examples, ranging from Luis de Milan (1535) to François Couperin (1716). Some eighteenth-century historical evidence in methods and treatises also clearly shows that modification constituted an integral part of high-level musical performance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Several eighteenth-century composers, theorists, and teachers, such as Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788), Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), Leopold Mozart (1719-1787), and Daniël Gottlob Türk (1750-1813), stressed the importance of such modifications for successful musical performance.

I have assembled a few examples of sources related to the theory and practice of modifications of rhythm and tempo to sketch the background against which modifications in orchestral settings were implemented, notably by Hans von Bülow and the Meiningen Orchestra.

In his 1759 *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach wrote about modifications in ensemble playing. He discussed some of the situations in which a soloist plays alone or is accompanied by an ensemble:

> Although, in order not to become unclear, one has to keep the appropriate lengths of all silences and notes within the confinement of a chosen tempo, with the exception of fermatas and cadenzas, one can often commit the most beautiful errors against it diligently, but with the clear distinction that, if one plays alone or with few accomplished players, this can be done in such a way that the whole of the flow of movement is somewhat violated; instead of getting lost, the accompanists will be all the more alert and able to join in our intentions; but if one plays with a larger accompanying ensemble, especially if it consists of unequally qualified persons, one can realise only in one's own part some alterations of rhythm, as the general flow of tempo should remain unchanged.[10]

[10] Bach, C. Ph. E. *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*, kritisch revidierter Neudruck der unveränderten, jedoch verbesserten zweiten Auflage des Originals, Berlin 1759 und 1762, C. P. Kahnt, Leipzig, 1965) vol. 1, part 3, §8, p. 84. (All translations by author unless otherwise specified). *Wiewohl man, um nicht undeutlich zu werden, alle Pausen sowohl als Noten nach der Stränge der erwehlten Bewegung halten muß, ausgenommen in Fermaten und Cadenzen: so kann man doch öfters die schönsten Fehler wider den Tackt mit Fleiß begehen,*

Bach identified deviations from the notated rhythm and tempo as contributions to expressive performance. The extent to which modifications could successfully be realised in performance, according to him, depended on the size of the ensemble and on the quality of the players involved. Bach's remark concerning the need to maintain the general flow of tempo in performances with larger ensembles and with groups consisting of unequally qualified persons represents not necessarily an artistic ideal but rather a necessary precaution. In other words, Bach's advice not to attempt modifications that would affect the general flow of the tempo when working with ensembles that did not have the qualities required to execute them successfully, does not mean that he would have eschewed the application of these modifications with larger ensembles of sufficient quality.

The art of modification has more often been discussed in solo playing than in the context of ensemble or orchestral performance. That is why the composer Carl Ludwig Junker (1748-1797), who pointed to the need for flexibility of tempo in orchestral performances and the role of the conductor/director in his book *Einige Der Vornehmsten Pflichten Eines Kapellmeisters Oder Musikdirektors*, constitutes a particularly valuable source:

> Now another interesting question arises. How? Is every piece, altogether, every Allegro, every Adagio, tied to a completely uniform tempo? Must every piece be performed in the same tempo right until the end, that never approaches a greater speed or a slowness? Or may this tempo even in the middle of the piece be modified somewhat, may it be accelerated or held back? To simply say yes to the first would mean as much as robbing music of often its most powerful means of emotion, and to think of it as not having any relation to all the various modifications of the current of passions. To say yes to the latter, would make the river flood its banks, create thousands of disruptions, and would take the veracity away from the music. But as soon as

doch mit diesem Unterschied, daß, wenn man alleine oder mit wenigen und zwar verständigen Personen spielt, solches dergestalt geschehen kann, daß man der ganzen Bewegung zuweilen einige Gewalt anthut; die Begleitenden werden darüber, anstatt sich irren zu lassen, vielmehr aufmercksam werden, und in unsere Absichten einschlagen; daß aber, wenn man mit starcker Begleitung, und zwar wenn selbige aus vermischten Personen von ungleicher Stärcke besteht, man bloß in seiner Stimme allein wider die Eintheilung des Tackts eine Aenderung vornehmen kann, indem die Hauptbewegung desselben genau gehalten werden muß.

> the last sentence is somewhat restricted, we can say yes to it; the performer, the solo singer will limit it. There is no passion whose tempo should be so calibrated as to be absolutely regular; it constantly moves through various modifications of tempo. It may be true that the composer himself can express these modifications better and more fully through his setting and the various artful ways of colouring than the director, but it remains equally true that both composer and performer [director] need to work hand in hand, and that the modifications of tempo as a re-creative art remain necessary.[11]

Junker's concept of the composer and the director working hand in hand to realise effective modifications, characterised as "often its most powerful means of emotion" in music, is highly significant as it specifically points to the importance of the conductor's/director's role in this process. The Italian composer, violinist and author Francesco Galeazzi (1758-1819) gives a rule for orchestral musicians to follow that includes fluctuation of tempo:

> Rule IV. 320 May any orchestra player always use their ears to unify the performance, to play legato, if others do, to separate notes if the others separate, to speed up, or slow down the tempo if others (and especially the First Violin) do so.[12]

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[11] Junker, C. J. *Einige Der Vornehmsten Pflichten Eines Kapellmeisters Oder Musikdirektors…* H. Steiner und comp., Winterthur, 1782, pp. 36-37. *Nun entsteht noch eine interessante Frage? "Wie? Ist jedes Stück durchaus, jedes Allegro, jedes Adagio, an eine völlig gleichförmige Bewegung gebunden? Muss jedes Stück, ganz bis zu Ende, in der nehmlichen Bewegung, die sich niemahls, weder einer grössern Geschwindigkeit noch Langsamkeit nähert, vorgetragen werden? Oder darf diese Bewegung, selbst in der Mitte des Tonstücks, etwas abgeändert werden, darf sie beschleunigt, darf sie zurückgehalten werden?" Das Erste überhaupt bejahen, würde eben so viel heißen, als der Tonkunst, oft das kräftigste Mittel der Rührung benehmen, und sie, ausser aller Beziehung, auf die verschiedenen Modifikationen, der leidenschaftliche Bewegung gedenken. Das letzte überhaupt bejahen, würde den Strom aus seinen Ufern reißen, tausend Unordnungen verursachen, und der Tonkunst, ihre Wahrheit, benehmen heißen. Sobald der letzte Satz eingeschränkt wird, so lässt er sich bejahen; der Konzertist, der Solo-Sänger schränken ihn ein. Es gibt keine Leidenschaft, deren Bewegung, sich selbst immer gleichartig, abgezirkelt seyn sollte; Sie wälzt sich durch verschiedene Modifikationen der Bewegung hindurch. Das diese Modifikationen, der Komponist, durch seinen Satz selbst, durch die verschiedenen Arten der Kolorierung, besser und vollständiger ausdrücken könne, als der Direktor, durch die Veränderung der musikalischen Zeitfolge, bleibt richtig; aber ebenso richtig bleibt es, das beyde, Sezer und Ausführer, einander in die Hände arbeiten müssen, und dass die Veränderungen der Zeitfolge, als unterordnete Kunst, nothwendig bleibe.*

[12] Galeazzi, F. *Elementi teoretico-practici di musica.* Second edition, Presso Francesco Cardi, Ascoli, 1817, p. 143. Regola IV. 320 *Abbia qualunque Suonator d'orchestra sempre l'orecchio teso all'unione per legare, se gli altri legano, sciogliere se gli altri sciolgono, stringere, o rallentare il tempo; se gli altri (e specialmente il Primo Violino), cosi fanno.*

Though Galeazzi is not writing here about artistic motivation for the speeding up and slowing down of the tempo, one can safely conclude that he expected these fluctuations to be part of orchestral performance.

It may be clear that the importance of modifications is emphasised in multiple sources, but it is less clear how widespread this high art of performance practice was, and to what extent it was part of orchestral performance practices before pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow (1830-1894) changed the landscape profoundly by setting a new standard regarding orchestral discipline in general, and tempo flexibility in particular, with his Meiningen Orchestra (see chapter 1.4).

A description of modifications of tempo in orchestral performance can be found in an account of Beethoven's *Große musikalische Akademie* of 13 December 1813, in which a writer in the *Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* expressed admiration for the way in which the orchestral musicians collaborated with Beethoven to bring out all the accelerandi and rallentandi.

> The performance of both compositions [*The Seventh Symphony* and *Wellington's Victory*] was realised by the best musicians in Vienna (almost 100 of them) under the general direction of Mr. Beethoven, and with Mr. Schuppanzigh leading as concertmaster with such expression, power and precision, that the first mentioned, profoundly moved, confessed that it represented the summit of the arts, and he knew of no challenge to the orchestra in his compositions that had not been met to his complete satisfaction. Really the greatest praise ever received by any orchestra! If we consider the great difficulties – motivated by tremendous effects – that Beethoven's compositions present, and the equally high standards the great master demands in the execution thereof. But it was remarkable to see how everyone, inspired by the importance of the task at hand and filled with love for the highly esteemed composer, diligently worked together, how in a state of pure delight he led the performances of his works, how every nuance in piano and forte, in accelerando and ritardando, was transmitted from him to every individual participating artist, in eager concentration, so that the ideal of Beethoven's creation was, as it were, expressed through and by them.[13]

[13] "Beethoven's Große musikalische Akademie 13 Dezember 1813" in *Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, (WamZ 1813, No. 48, pp. 749-50). *Die Ausführung beider Compositionen geschah von Wiens ausgezeichnetsten Tonkünstlern (beiläufig 100 an der Zahl) unter Herrn v.*

With Carl Philip Emanuel Bach's remarks in mind, perhaps one can consider this description as evidence of what can be achieved in the field of tempo modification with a large ensemble of highly qualified musicians, led by an inspired composer. Particularly interesting, of course, is the critic's description of the orchestra following Beethoven's accelerandi and ritardandi. This is even more relevant since – apart from one small ritardando over three bars in *Wellington's Victory* – neither the score of that piece nor the score of the *Seventh Symphony* contain any printed accelerando or ritardando instructions. In other words, the critic was referring to unprescribed tempo modifications. At the same time, I think this description of a momentous occasion under the direction of a towering figure can hardly be used as evidence of anything more than what it is, namely an account of an exceptional event. Indeed, the fact that the review mentioned the successful modification of tempo as a remarkable feature of the performance can be interpreted to suggest two things: the modifications took place in this performance and this was not a feature of general orchestral performance practice at the time.

There are reasons enough to believe that modifications were indeed part of Beethoven's performance style. Musicologist Marten Noorduin, who conducted extensive research into Beethoven's metronome markings, proclaimed, in a review of a recording of the *Ninth Symphony*, that a substantial amount of circumstantial evidence suggests that Beethoven had a

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Beethovens Leitung des Ganzen, und Herrn Schuppanzighs Direktion an der ersten Violine, mit solchem Ausdruck, Kraft und Präzision, das Ersterer mit der innigsten Rührung gestand, es sey das Non plus ultra *der Kunst, und wisse keine Forderung an ein Orchester bei der Ausübung seiner Compositionen zu machen, welche dieses nicht vollkommen befriedigt hätte. Wahrlich der größte Lobspruch, den sich je ein Orchester erwarb! wenn man die – gewiß durch ungeheure Effekte motivierten – Schwierigkeiten eines Beethoven'schen Satzes, und die ebenso strengen Forderungen dieses großen Meisters in Absicht auf Execution berücksichtigt. Es war aber auch merkwürdig zu sehen, wie, im Gefühle der Wichtigkeit des übernommenen Geschäftes, Alles mit Eifer und Liebe für den hochgeschätzten Componisten zusammenwirkte, wie dieser in verklärter Entzückung die Aufführung seiner Werke leitete, wie jeder Ausdruck im Piano und Forte, im Accelerando und Ritardando von diesem auf jeden einzelner, mit gespannter Aufmerksamkeit mitwirkenden, Künstler überging, und so das Ideal von Beethovens Schöpfung gleichsam aus ihm hervorging).*

flexible conception of time, particularly in slow movements.[14] Brown, in his aforementioned edition of Beethoven's *Sonatas for Pianoforte and Violin*, goes further:

> Documentary sources from Beethoven's lifetime provide incontrovertible evidence that certain kinds of tempo flexibility, including modification of the notated rhythms and agogic accentuation, were not only an occasional expressive resource, but a pervasive element of beautiful performance.[15]

An often-cited comment by the Austrian pianist and composer Joseph Fischhof (1804-1857) provides corroboration of the fact that Beethoven would have expected modifications of tempo from those performing his music:

> Mr. Artaria (head of the renowned art dealer in Vienna) asked me to put in order his rich treasure of Beethoven manuscripts (this is by the way the most important collection that can be found in the possession of any individual, containing multiple unknown works by Beethoven). On the autograph of the song *'Nord oder Süd'* (also known as: *'So oder so')* Op. 103, F major, it says clearly in his hand: "100 after Mälzl, but this can go only for the first bars, as emotions have their own tempo, this cannot be expressed in this number (of 100)".[16]

Of course, Beethoven's preferences regarding flexibility of tempo are not the subject of this dissertation. I am merely trying to give a general characterisation of his assumed preference as part of the nineteenth-century landscape of approaches to tempo modification, from which I believe he

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[14] Noorduin, M. "Why Do We Need Another Recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony? - Symphony No. 9" *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 18, no. 3 (2021), pp. 601–9.

[15] Brown, C. "*Beethoven Sonatas for Pianoforte and Violin",* p. XIV.

[16] Fischhof, J. "Einige Gedanken über die Auffassung von Instrumentalcompositionen in Hinsicht des Zeitmaaßes, namentlich bei Beethoven'schen Werken," *Cäcilia,* 1847, pp. 84-97. https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_C9MqAAAAYAAJ/page/n5/mode/2up. (Last accessed June 2020). *Herr Artaria (Chef der bekannten Kunsthandlung in Wien) ersuchte mich im Herbst 1844, seinen reichen Schatz von Manuskripten Beethoven's, der, beiläufig gesagt, der Bedeutendste ist, der bei einem Einzelnen vorzufinden, und auch mehre unbekannte Werke von Beethoven enthält, zu ordnen. Auf dem Autographe des Liedes „Nord oder Süd" (auch unter dem Titel: „So oder so") Op. 103, F-Dur, steht von ihm deutlich zu lesen: „100 nach Mälzl, doch kann diess nur von den ersten Täkten gelten, denn die Empfindung hat auch ihren Takt, dieses ist aber doch nicht ganz in diesem Grade (100 nämlich) auszudrücken."*

cannot be left out. It is important to note that Fischhof's testimony confirms that Beethoven connected emotion and tempo in a manner that is consistent with other earlier sources regarding musical performance in Vienna.

In an anonymously published account of his journey to Vienna, aristocrat and music lover Carl Ernst Philipp von Reitzenstein gave a description of tempo modification in opera performance in Vienna. Reitzenstein claimed that he travelled extensively and compared performances from opera houses in Vienna, London, Naples, Munich, and Paris. He felt fortunate to have heard the same works performed in different opera houses, as comparing performances showed him how important the quality of the performance was for his experience as a listener. He concluded that, "performance is everything," before making a statement about the preferred style of performance in Vienna:

> It characterises the local taste that beautiful performance is vastly more appreciated than flawlessness, and likewise the orchestra in question.

I find this a truly remarkable statement because it gives us information about the artistic priorities of the Viennese, and even specifies that they preferred expression over flawlessness in orchestral performance. Reitzenstein continued to describe a performance of Salieri's opera *Axur* that impressed him:

> I was particularly surprised by the new and refined way the opera Axur by Salieri was performed. Words, stage action and music were constantly so intimately intertwined that they seemed to be one entity. The instruments came up with strength and emphasis, as if driven by one spirit when the tension rose; everything sounded sweet and melting when softer passions spoke. At this occasion I noticed a manner to express the falling affect hitherto unknown to me. When the excitement of the passions gradually calmed down to exhaustion, and the fiercest clusters made way for milder feelings, so too did the orchestra, in closest agreement with the singers, gradually relax the tempo, and slow down the flow of the melodies by and by, as the expression needed to become softer and softer. If the excitement rose again, when it became more bustling and emphatic, so too did they drive the

> tempo and the flow of the melodies forward again, extraordinarily unified in their intentions. This manner of performing arouses pure delight.[17]

A few conclusions can be drawn from Reitzenstein's observations. First of all, it is clear that what he was writing about was modification of tempo in performances of opera, and in all likelihood of the unprescribed kind, as he described the ebb and flow of tempo in relation to the emotions in the music and the dynamic range of the ensemble. Secondly, it is equally clear that he considered this to be a new way of performing, as he wrote that he, who claimed to have seen and heard many performances all over Europe, had not come across it before and was surprised by it. Finally, I find his characterisation of the musical taste in Vienna fascinating: beautiful performance being preferred over flawlessness.

The distinction between flawless and beautiful performance, which Reitzenstein makes, is reminiscent of the distinction between a correct and a beautiful performance, perhaps most eloquently described by the German composer, violinist, and conductor Louis Spohr in his *Violinschule* of 1833:

> Performance means the manner in which the singer or performer produces what the composer conceived and wrote down for the listener to hear. If this is limited to a faithful reproduction of what is prescribed by notes, symbols, and (art) words, it is called a *correct performance*; but if the performer adds something of his own and is able to spiritually enliven what is presented, so that the listener can recognise and experience the composer's intentions, then

[17] Reitzenstein, C. E. Ph. von. *Reise nach Wien*. Vienna: Hof, 1795, pp. 255-7. *Es characterisirt den hießigen Geschmack, dass man unendlich mehr einen schönen Vortrag, als große Fertigkeit schätzt, und so auch das Orchester von dem die Rede ist. (…) In der Vorstellung der Oper Auxur ward ich besonders überrascht durch die Neuheit und Feinheit dieses Vortrags. Worte, Spiel und Musik waren stehts auf das innigste in einander verwebt, und schienen nur einen Wesen zu sein. Mit Stärcke und Nachdrück, wie von einem Geiste getrieben, erhoben sich die Instrumente, wenn der Affect stieg; Süß und hinschmelzend ertönte alles, wenn leisere Regungen sprachen. Bei dieser Gelegenheit merkte ich eine mir noch unbekannte Art und Weise, den fallenden Affect auszudrücken. Wenn das Toben gespannter Leidenschaft nach und nach zur Erschöpfung heruntersank, und die heftigsten Ballungen milderen Gefühlen platzmachten, so ließ auch das Orchester, im genauesten Einverständnis mit den Sängern, den Takt nach und nach sinken, und die Melodien langsamer und immer langsamer fortwallen, je nach dem der Ausdruck sanfter und immer sanfter werden sollte. Stieg nun der Affect wieder, ward er rauschender und nachdrucksvoller, so beschleunigten sie auch wieder mit seltener Übereinstimmung den Gang der Melodie. Diese Art des Vortrags erregt Entzücken.*

> this is called a *beautiful performance*, which then combines correctness, feeling and elegance. The beautiful performance must of course be considered superior to the correct one.[18]

Leaving aside the issue of the composer's intentions, which Spohr mentioned so casually here, but which in the twentieth century became such a hotly contested issue, this quotation makes it clear that Spohr expected the performer to add something of his own in order to spiritually enliven the performance so that the listener could experience the emotions embedded in the music. In search of an answer to the question whether Spohr would agree that modifications were among the traits a performer or a conductor might add to the performance of orchestral repertoire, one needs to examine a few other sources. He appears to have a strict opinion about tempo rubato in orchestral playing in his *Violinschule*:

> The division of the rhythms according to their time value must be the strictest in orchestral playing, because otherwise no precise togetherness of the players would be possible. All lingering on single or multiple notes *(the Tempo Rubato)*, which can often be of great effect in the solo playing, must therefore not take place here.[19]

Unfortunately, Spohr does not specifically write about unprescribed accelerando and ritenuto in orchestral performances, which leaves room for these remarks about tempo rubato to be read as instructions to avoid them. But I believe that would be a mistake.

Spohr instructed violinists who were to play in orchestras that they could not play in the same free manner in which they might play a solo or a

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[18] Spohr, L. *Violinschule*. Haslinger, Vienna, 1833, p. 195. *Vortrag heisst die Art und Weise, wie der Sänger oder Spieler das, was der Komponist ersann und niederschrieb, zu hören giebt. Beschränkt sich dies auf ein treues Wiedergeben dessen, was durch Noten, Zeichen und Kunstwörter vorgeschrieben ist, so nennt man es richtigen Vortrag; tut der Ausübende aber von dem Seinigen hizu und vermag er das Vorgetragene geistig zu beleben, so dass vom Hörer die Intensionen des Komponisten erkannt und mitempfunden werden können, so heist dies schöner Vortrag, der dann Korrektheit, Gefühl und Eleganz in sich vereinigt. Dem schönen Vortrag muss der richtige natürlich vorausgehen.*

[19] Ibid. p. 248. *Die Eintheilung der Taktglieder nach ihrem Zeitwerth, muss beym Orchesterspiel die allerstrengste seyn, weil sonst kein genaues Zusammentreffen der Spieler möglich wäre. Alles Verweilen auf einzelnen oder mehreren Tönen, (das Tempo Rubato) welches beim Solospiel oft von großer Wirkung ist, darf also hier nicht stattfinden.*

quartet, because it would cause chaos if individual members of string sections were to modify the rhythm according to their own liking. This is not to say that he necessarily disapproved of unified modifications of tempo (or of rhythm for that matter) in orchestral performance. In fact, in a letter to Moritz Hauptmann dated 6 Oct. 1843 about a performance that Spohr conducted in London, one can learn the opposite:

> The biggest sensation, however, was caused by the Overture from *Freischütz*. It had hitherto been performed somewhat sluggishly and strictly in tempo. I took it, as you know from our theatre, sometimes faster, sometimes slower and the orchestra followed excellently. This caused such an impression that the next day all newspapers wrote about it extensively.[20]

There are many things we can conclude from this letter. First of all, it confirms the fact that Spohr applied tempo modification in his performances with orchestras. Secondly, one can learn that this was customary practice in his theatre in Germany and it was not in England. Lastly, one can conclude that it was possible for Spohr as a conductor to convey his intentions successfully to an orchestra that was not his own and that was not in the habit of playing this particular overture using tempo modification. It is of course important to keep in mind that one cannot with any degree of certainty establish a baseline of steady tempo as an objective point of reference against which this and the previously mentioned modifications could be measured.

If one simply thinks of the fact that all measurements of tempo had to be made in real time, because there were no recordings available, I think it is safe to say that the nineteenth-century baseline of a steady tempo was more flexible than today's metronomically or mathematically grounded idea of steady tempo. The idea of flexibility in the fundamental tempo can also be found in an article in the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung* of 1841:

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[20] Spohr, L. *"Letter to Moritz Hauptmann,"* October 1843, http://www.spohr-briefe.de/briefe-einzelansicht?m=1843100603. (Last accessed, August 2022) *Die größeste Sensation machte aber die Ouverture des Freischütz. Diese war bisher etwas pomadig und im strengen Takt exekutiert worden, - ich nahm sie, wie Sie es von unserm Theater aus kennen, bald schnell, bald langsam und das Orchester folgte vortrefflich. Dies imponierte so, daß am andern Morgen alle Zeitungen davon voll waren.*

> In the performance of quartets, quintets and even orchestral pieces to which the players have become accustomed together, one can hardly imagine any expressive passage in piano, or crescendo up to fortissimo in the more excited powerful affect, in which the prevailing tempo will not – sometimes imperceptibly – be modified, and a temporary hurrying or hesitating would take place; this is the character of the expression of what is vividly felt and vivaciously represented, because otherwise the representation would remain purely mechanical as with a music box.[21]

All this clearly shows that modification of tempo was an element of a beautiful performance of chamber music, orchestral music, and opera.

CONCLUSION

By assembling these sources and presenting my understanding of their meaning, I have aimed to sketch the background against which the work of Hans von Bülow and the Meiningen Orchestra took place, not to give a full account of the theory and practice as related to the modifications of rhythm and tempo in the nineteenth century. With these quotations from methods and treatises, particularly in combination with the accounts from "ear witnesses", I do think one can draw some conclusions about the situation regarding modifications in the nineteenth century in orchestral performances. These modifications belonged to the domain of “beautiful performance” and enabled listeners to experience the emotions embedded in the score. Writers such as C. Ph. E. Bach and Spohr considered the application of such modifications to be more achievable in solo performances, chamber music, and solo playing accompanied by a small ensemble of high-quality

[21] Smidt, A. (red.) “Beiträge zur Philosophie des Schönen in der Musik“ *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung* 7. September 1841. https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=awm&datum=18410907&seite=1&zoom=33 (Last accessed August 2022). *Es lässt sich im Vortrage von Quartetten, Quintetten, und selbst Orchesterstücken, bei welchen die Spieler zusammen eingewöhnt sind, kaum irgendeine ausdrucksvolle Stelle im piano, crescendo bis zum fortissimo gleichsam im erregteren heftigeren Affekt denken, bei welchen sich nicht auch unmerklich das herrschende Tempo abänderte und ein temporäres Eilen oder Zögern einträfe; es ist dies der Charakter der Äußerung des lebhaft Gefühlten und lebendig Dargestellten, denn sonst bliebe die Darstellung rein mechanisch wie allenfalls bei einer Spieluhr.*

players, than in larger ensembles or orchestras. This by no means implies that these modifications were not applied in orchestral settings. In fact, numerous accounts confirm that they were. Factors that limited the possibilities of effectively applying modifications in orchestral settings related to the size of the ensemble, the quality of the players and conductors, and the amount of rehearsal time available. As I will discuss in the next chapter, rehearsal time was a factor that is specifically mentioned in relation to the refined level of ensemble playing by the Meiningen Orchestra.
Speaking from personal experience as a conductor, I can confirm that one of the first things that tends to get lost in performances that are being put on without sufficient rehearsal time is modification of rhythm and tempo, as the musicians under those conditions feel that they need to revert to steady and even handling of tempo to avoid disorder and lack of togetherness in the performance.

1.2 Bülow's Revolution

Hans von Bülow, arguably the most influential conductor of the nineteenth century, studied the piano with Friedrich Wieck (1785-1873), father of Clara Schumann-Wieck, in his native city of Dresden. After meeting Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and hearing some compositions by Richard Wagner (1813-1883), particularly the premiere of his opera *Lohengrin* conducted in 1850 by Liszt in Weimar, Bülow decided to abandon his law studies in Leipzig and dedicate himself to a future in music instead, against the wishes of his parents. In 1857, he married Liszt's daughter Cosima. He built a reputation as a virtuoso pianist and as an excellent conductor, specialising in Wagner (he conducted the premieres of two of Wagner's operas, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) but also works by other major composers such as Brahms and Tchaikovsky.

Many considered Bülow to be a difficult man, who did not always operate tactfully and lost positions in Zurich and Hannover because of his brusque manner. He divorced his wife Cosima, who had left him for Wagner in 1870, although this did not stop him from conducting Wagner's works. In 1880, Bülow was appointed chief conductor in Meiningen after resigning from his post in Hannover in the aftermath of a scandal, which involved a fight with a tenor who did not meet his standards in rehearsals for *Lohengrin*. Duke Georg II of Meiningen acted swiftly and offered Bülow the post in Meiningen within ten days of his resignation in Hannover. In his book *On Conducting,* Austrian composer, pianist, and conductor Felix Weingartner (1863-1942) described the impact of Bülow's work with the Meiningen Orchestra, particularly through his tours with the orchestra. He also provided a sobering assessment of the quality of the bigger orchestras of the time:

> Bülow's star first shone brilliantly again when in 1880 he became chief of the Meiningen Orchestra. A year later the Duke, whose scenic art had already effectively influenced the dramatic theatre, sent him off with the orchestra on a grand concert tour through Germany, Austria and Russia. Seldom has such a victory of mind over matter been seen. A rather poorly appointed orchestra, by no means absolutely excellent in its proportions, conquered everywhere the large orchestras, famous the whole world over as possessing the best

> artists; this was the work of the eminent conductor, who – a second Leonidas – had the courage to defy, with a small troop of admirably schooled players, the big musical armies that were mostly led by ordinary time beaters. By dint of diligent, indefatigable practice he had so infused into the orchestra his own conception of the works as to get a perfection of *ensemble* at that time unknown […] These concert-tours by the Meiningen Orchestra were of inestimable significance. Those whom it concerned recognised that it would not do to go on simply beating time and playing away with the old reprehensible carelessness and thoughtlessness, for that would certainly lower them in the eyes of the public, which after once having nibbled dainties at the table of the great, would no longer be content with canteen fare. So, these people first took pains to cultivate the orchestra better on the technical side, held more rehearsals, followed more consciously the dynamic indications, and in general gave more attention to accurate *ensemble.* The capacity of orchestras has since then greatly increased, and composers today can set problems that even a few years ago would have seemed insoluble, while at the same time a better rendering of the works of the old masters has been made possible. These things represent the *gain* from Bülow's work and make his name an ineradicable landmark in the evolution of the art of conducting; to him alone after those great composers who themselves were notable conductors, we owe the diffusion and the strengthening of the consciousness that conducting is an art and not a handicraft.[22]

Weingartner also described other features of Bülow's conducting style, which he considered as being harmful, which I will examine in Chapter 1.3 when discussing Brahms's relationship with Bülow.

For now though, I want to highlight Weingartner's characterisation of the modus operandi of the large orchestras as being mostly led by "ordinary time beaters." This assessment leaves little room for the idea that modifications might have become part of the general performance practices of these large orchestras. He drew parallels between some great composer/conductors and Bülow by writing that "after those great composers who themselves were notable conductors to him alone do we owe the strengthening of the consciousness that conducting is an art." Weingartner's words confirm the fact that the examples of the great composer/conductors of the past had not found their way into in the mainstream orchestral performance practices of the nineteenth century.

[22] Weingartner, F. *On Conducting,* transl. and ed. Ernest Newman. Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1906, pp. 12-13.

According to Weingartner, it was only through Bülow's work that this refined style was finally more broadly adopted in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Bülow himself wrote about the fact that the work of one of the great composer-conductors of the past, Felix Mendelssohn, had not been carried further by others. In an 1872 article, published in *Signale für die Musikalische Welt,* Bülow shared his memories of Mendelssohn's conducting:

> By the way, one cannot express enough regret over the fact that Mendelssohn, principally in his capacity as a conductor, did not 'make a school' which could have been and should have been the case. The master himself was not to blame for this, but the youngsters who, with the exception of the kapellmeister Dr. Rietz and Eckert, failed to profit from the excellent example. I remember as if it were yesterday, although at the time I was younger than Mehul's Joseph in his *Romanze*, that I experienced the most overpowering impression I ever had of Schubert's C major Symphony, under the direction of Mendelssohn. At the time, Schubert was not yet considered one of the great inhabitants of the Olympus; people loved, admired, and savoured him as a *minorum gentium,* but lamented his lack of compact form, and his repetitive rhythms. But under Mendelssohn's baton, one was not aware of these shortcomings. The brilliant leader, without making any cuts, understood the art of completely obscuring the mentioned shortcomings, using only his refined sense of elasticity in rhythm and the magnetic eloquence of his conducting gestures. What wonderful colours, what spirited modifications of movement and tempo he applied, how he led the listener away from the endless 'steppes' of the *Allegretto,* so that the listener, in the end, had no idea of the time passed during the acoustical representation. One had simply spent some time in the eternal spaces of a timeless world.[23]

[23] Bülow, H. von, "Lohengrin in Bologna. Kein Leitartikel, sondern ein vertrauliches Gespräch (im australischen Style), durch diplomatische Indiskretion in die Öffentlichkeit gebracht," in *Signale für die Musikalische Welt* (1872), pp. 24-25. *Daß Mendelssohn übrigens […] in seiner Eigenschaft als Dirigent nicht Schule gemacht, was hätte sein können und sollen, ist gar nicht genug zu beklagen. Am Meister lag die Schuld nicht, sondern an den Jüngern, die mit Ausnahme von den Hofcapellmeistern Dr. Rietz und Eckert nichts von dem glänzenden Beispiele profitiert haben. Ich erinnere mich noch, als ob es heute wäre, wiewohl ich damals viel knabenhafter war als Mehul's Joseph in seiner Romanze, des nie wieder so mächtig mir zu theilgewordenen Eindrucks, den ich von der Schubert'schen C-dur-Symphonie unter Mendelssohn's Leitung empfing. Damals war es noch nicht Mode, Schubert in den höchsten Olymp einzulogiren, man liebte, bewunderte, goutirte ihn als einen minorum gentium, lamentierte jedoch über die Breitspurigkeit seiner Formen, über die Eintönigkeit seiner Rhythmen. Aber unter Mendelssohn's Tactirstab ward man [sich] dieser Mängel nicht bewußt. Der geniale Führer verstand es, ohne Rothstift, lediglich mit Hülfe seiner elastischen Feinfühligkeit und der magnetischen Eloquenz seiner Zeichensprache, die genannten Mängel vollständig zu verhüllen. Welche wunderbaren Coloritnüancen, welche geistreichen Bewegungsschattirungen wendete er nur an, wie*

Bülow shared the importance of Mendelssohn's work to him as a conductor, which I believe can be understood as corroboration of the fact that his style was indeed – as Weingartner suggests – connected to the tradition of the great composer/conductors of the past. It is noteworthy that Bülow's appreciation of Mendelssohn's style seems at odds with what Wagner wrote about his conducting in *Über das Dirigieren* in 1869. Wagner claimed to have learnt about the nature of Mendelssohn's style in his work with the London Philharmonic Society. As the orchestra offered little rehearsal time, he had to accept their way of playing more or less as offered by them. In it, Wagner claimed to have recognised Mendelssohn's style (Mendelssohn had worked with the orchestra extensively), characterising it as lacking in tempo modifications:

> It flowed like water from a city well; stopping was out of the question, and every allegro ended as an undeniable presto. The trouble to intervene was embarrassing enough; because only at the correct and well-modified tempo did the other damage to the performance, hidden under the general flow of water, become apparent. The orchestra never played anything other than *'mezzo-forte;'* there was no real *forte* and no real *piano*.[24]

As one can see, Wagner and Bülow perceived Mendelssohn's style very differently. Bülow lamented the fact that Mendelssohn did not pass on his approach in the sense that he had pupils or followers to disseminate his style of working. Given his negative assessment of Mendelssohn's conducting style, it seems unlikely that Wagner, who like Liszt had no appreciation for

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ermöglichte er's nur, über die diversen Steppen des „endlosen" Allegretto hinwegzugleiten, daß der Zuhörer am Schlusse von der Zeitdauer der akustischen Erscheinung keine Ahnung hatte? Man hatte eben in ewigen Räumen, in einer zeitlosen Welt geweilt.

[24] Wagner, R. *Über das Dirigieren.* (Entstanden 1869) Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig, 1911, p. 17. *Das floss denn wie das Wasser aus einem Stadtbrunnen; an ein Aufhalten war gar nicht zu denken, und jedes Allegro endete als unläugbares Presto. Die Mühe hiergegen einzuschreiten war peinlich genug; denn erst beim richtigen und wohl modifizierten Tempo deckten sich nun die unter dem allgemeinen Wasserfluss verborgenen anderweitigen Schäden des Vortrages auf. Das Orchester spielte nämlich nie anderes als „mezzoforte"; es kam zu keinem wirklichen forte wie zu keinem wirklichen piano.*

the Leipzig school, of which Mendelssohn was a notable member, would have regretted this lack of lineage.[25]

Even without students or conductors other than Bülow following his example, there were other ways in which Mendelssohn's style of performing may have been carried on. The German musicologist Andreas Moser (1859-1925), who seems to agree more with Bülow's characterisation than with Wagner's, wrote about the influence of Mendelssohn on the young violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907):

> Joachim's inimitable *'rubato'* may be traced to the example of Mendelssohn, who understood perfectly how to blend one subject with another without forcing the passage in the smallest degree. He also freed him from certain prejudices and habits to which violinist are prone, for example, that the use of the springing bow is not permissible in classical compositions. 'Always use it, my boy, where it is suitable or where it sounds well,' was Mendelssohn's opinion. But he did not stop here: he also often accompanied the boy on the pianoforte when he played in private and almost always when he played in public.[26]

If Mendelssohn's style of playing was as hurried and unsophisticated as Wagner described his conducting, it could hardly have served as a source of inspiration for Joachim's "inimitable rubato," as Moser suggested. Whatever the precise nature of Mendelssohn's tempo modifications may have been, "his refined sense of elasticity in rhythm and the magnetic eloquence of his conducting gestures" served as a shining example for Bülow, thus suggesting a link between Bülow's style and Mendelssohn's example. The other lineage of tradition lies, of course, in Bülow's collaboration with Wagner.

I find Weingartner's praise of Bülow as the man who single-handedly managed to build on what the great composer/conductors had done in the past and caused an irreversible transformation of the art of conducting, all the more credible because he was not afraid to criticise Bülow relentlessly in

[25] It is perhaps not surprising that Wagner objected to Mendelssohn's style in this way, if one considers the fact that the critic Henry Chorley described Wagner's performance of a Beethoven Symphony as "a fatiguing piece of exaggeration, full of fierce sforzandi and ill-measured rallentandi." in a review in The Athenaeum, 28 (1855), p. 329.

[26] Moser, A. *Joseph Joachim, A Biography.* Philip Wellby, London, 1901, p. 46.

other parts of his book, as can be seen later in this chapter. His observation that the tours Bülow made with the Meiningen Orchestra were of crucial importance is also credible, given the confirmation of the impact their performances had on the audiences and the critics in the cities they visited in other sources such as those quoted below. In a letter to the concert agent, Hermann Wolff, who was responsible for organising the concert tour of 1882, Bülow stated what he wanted to achieve with the concert tours:

> My goal […] was and still is to present our achievements in two musical capitals, Leipzig and Berlin, to a larger and more competent circle of connoisseurs and music lovers, and to expose them for comparison and judgement.[27]

Bülow did not fear comparison with the orchestras in these two musical capitals and it is reasonable to assume that this was the case because he knew that he had something to offer which they did not. In his letters, one can find evidence of the fact that Bülow thought of his concert tour in military terms. He described, for instance, the visit to Berlin with his orchestra as an attack ("Angriff"). Bülow did not hold the Leipzig style of performance in high regard, as we can see in this quotation from a letter to his wife in 1882:

> Today is the day of the decisive musical battle in the capital of pigtails and wigs, who understand nothing of the romantic Beethoven.[28]

The reviews of the concerts in Berlin provide corroboration of the fact that Bülow and the Meiningen Orchestra surpassed the quality of the orchestras in the capital. One critic for the *Berliner Zeitung* commented that the

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[27] Bülow, H. von, "Letter to Hermann Wolff," Meiningen, 4 September, 1881, in *Briefe und Schriften,* VII, ed. Marie Bülow, Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig, 1907, p. 86. *Meine Absicht […] war und ist immer noch, in zwei Musikmetropolen, Leipzig und Berlin, unsere Leistungen einem grösseren competenteren Kreise von 'Kennern und Liebhabern' vorzuführen, resp. zu vergleichender Beurteilung zu exponiren.*

[28] Bülow, H. von, "Letter to Marie Schanzer," 20 January, 1882, in *Briefe und Schriften,* p. 133. *Heute ist nämlich die musikalische Entscheidungsschlacht in der Metropole der Zöpfe, Perrücken, die vom Romantiker Beethoven nichts wissen.*

musicians (and actors on an earlier occasion) from the small town of Meiningen had put the capital – where the standard of orchestral concerts was, in his opinion, quite poor – to shame. Other critics wrote about "a miracle" and a "phenomenal effect." Ticket sales constituted another indicator of the success in Berlin; the capacity of the hall of the *Sing Akademie* with 1200 seats was insufficient for the demand. The concerts were repeated three times in the much bigger Central Skating Rink (the site that later became the *Philharmonie*) but the demand for tickets still could not be met. It is reasonable to assume that the public was drawn to these concerts because they found in them something that they did not find elsewhere, namely excellent quality of expression and ensemble.

For Bülow, the visit to Leipzig not only meant an opportunity to prove the value (and superiority) of his work in comparison to Carl Reinecke and the Gewandhaus Orchestra, but also a chance to take revenge for the lack of appreciation and respect that had befallen Brahms, whom he admired, on earlier occasions in Leipzig, particularly regarding the reception of his *First Piano Concerto*. On 18 March 1882, the critic of the *Musikalische Zeitung* commented on the performance of the evening before:

> Last night's concert proved that nobody, not even Brahms himself, is more qualified to perform his works than Bülow, whether at the piano or conducting his Meiningen Court Orchestra.[29]

As one can see, Bülow succeeded in demonstrating the superiority of his style of performing Brahms, but not necessarily in increasing the critic's level of respect for the qualities of Brahms himself as a composer and pianist. In a letter to his mother, dated 26 January 1882, Bülow reflected on how he had triumphed everywhere he went with his orchestra:

[29] An anonymous review quoted by Kern. V. and Müller, H. in "*Die Meininger Kommen!* " *Der gestrige Abend hat es bewiesen, dass Niemand, auch Brahms selber nicht, zur Ausführung seiner Werke berufener ist als Bülow am Klavier oder an der Spitze der Meininger Hofkapelle. („Nach Smendek, MT, vom 23.8.1997").*

> The triumphs I have celebrated elude any description. Victory everywhere I went with my 50 people, instead of in the past just with my 10 fingers.[30]

The enormous success of the Meiningen Orchestra under Bülow was possible partly because the standards of other orchestral playing were not very high, allowing him to stand out significantly. Apart from the inadequate quality of the competition, Bülow's work was very impressive by many accounts. An important element of his style was modification of tempo. By his example, Bülow revolutionised the way orchestras functioned in relation to this important expressive tool. But Bülow did not invent these modifications. As discussed in Chapter 1.1, they had been part of the high art of beautiful musical performance since at least the eighteenth century. Bülow does, however, deserve credit for finding a unique way of realising them with his Meiningen Orchestra.

As discussed in the previous chapter, factors such as size of ensemble, quality of players and rehearsal time, seem to have been crucial for his success. The size of the orchestra in Meiningen was modest. When Bülow took over the orchestra, it consisted of merely thirty-six players. He considered it one of his first tasks to persuade Duke Georg II (the orchestra belonged to his Meiningen court) to hire eight more players. During his five-year tenure, the orchestra never exceeded forty-eight players. Styra Avins puts these numbers in perspective in her article "The 'Excellent People' of the Meiningen Court Orchestra", writing that orchestras in Berlin and Frankfurt had eighty members at the time.[31] As discussed in Chapter 1.1, the size of an ensemble matters when it comes to the application of modifications; the larger the ensemble, the more difficult it becomes.

Regarding the second factor - the quality of the players - Bülow went to great lengths to further improve the quality of the orchestra, which already

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[30] Bülow, H. von, "Letter to his mother" January 26, 1882, in *Briefe und Schriften*, VII, p. 137. *Die Triumphe, die ich gefeiert habe, entziehen sich jeder Schilderung. Sieg überall, wo ich mit meinen 50 Leuten, statt früher nur mit meiner 10 Finger hingekommen.*

[31] Avins, S. "The excellent people of the Meiningen Court Orchestra and the Third Symphony of Johannes Brahms," in *Spätphase(n)?, Johannes Brahms' Werke der 1880er und 1890er Jahre Internationales musikwissenschaftliches Symposium Meiningen 2008,* ed. Maren Goltz, Wolfgang Sandberger and Christiane Wiesenfeldt. Henle Verlag, München, 2010, p. 36.

included some excellent players such as clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld (1856-1907), for whom Brahms would later write his *Clarinet Quintet* and his two *Clarinet Sonatas*, and concertmaster Friedrich Fleischhauer (1834-1896), a former student of Joseph Joachim with whom Bülow often played chamber music and who was one of the most highly respected concertmasters and string quartet players in Germany. Bülow did manage to attract some new musicians of excellent quality, despite the limited financial means of the orchestra. For example, he recruited the outstanding horn player Gustav Leinhos (1835-1906), a renowned Waldhorn player who played for Wagner at the premiere of *Der Ring des Niebelungen* in Bayreuth in 1876, and who premiered Richard Strauss's *First Horn Concerto* with Bülow and the Meiningen Orchestra in 1885. Another important addition was Friedrich Hilpert (1841-1896), who became first cellist in 1876; he had already held the same position in the Vienna Court Orchestra, doubling at the Vienna Philharmonic, and went on to hold the title *Kammervirtuoso* in Meiningen from 1876-1885. In 1882, Bülow brought Alexander Ritter, a former student of Ferdinand David in Leipzig, to Meiningen as an assistant concertmaster. When he decided to replace an oboist with a better one, Bülow personally contributed 300 marks to make the replacement possible, as his wife reported:

> 'The material means are modest,' he said. So modest that, in order to lure a good oboist, for example, he offers him a bonus of 300 marks from his pocket in addition to the thousand and fifty marks of annual salary [...][32]

Clearly, Bülow made every effort to build an orchestra that would be able to perform at the highest possible level. We can surmise that Bülow deliberated upon the flexibility of the musicians he brought to Meiningen, making sure that they would be able to execute the kind of modifications he required of the orchestra.

[32] Bülow, M. von, *Hans von Bülow Leben und Wort,* ed. A. Spemann and H. Holle, F. Engelhorns Nachf., Stuttgart, 1925, p. 136. *Die materiellen Mittel sind bescheiden, ' sagte er. 'So bescheiden, dass er, um zum Beispiel einen guten Oboisten zu locken, ihm zu den tausendfünfzig Mark Jahrgehalt dreihundert Mark Zuschuss aus seiner Tasche anbietet […].*

The third factor related to rehearsal time. Since Duke Georg II had decided to close the Meiningen Opera and transfer its resources to the theatre a few years prior to Bülow's appointment, the orchestra concentrated purely on instrumental music. Many orchestras in musical capitals were forced to divide their time between operatic and symphonic duties. This meant that, unlike their colleagues in Meiningen, they would always be pressed for time when it came to planning rehearsals. The absence of operatic duties gave the Meiningen Orchestra a considerable advantage. Pianist, composer and conductor Ferdinand Hiller (1811-1885), for instance, described how the orchestra in Meiningen was financed by someone who did not care for opera and that, therefore, the conductor had ample time to rehearse instrumental music. He added:

> That the rest of us can't hold a half dozen rehearsals is bad enough – still, it's better that we make good music with two or three rehearsals than not at all.[33]

Hiller's words make it clear that Bülow's situation was very favourable compared to other conductors and orchestras.

Yet it was not just having sufficient rehearsal time that made the difference; the way Bülow made use of that time was also important. In an interview with the *Weimarer Zeitung* in December 1880, Bülow explained that his method was based on the so-called "Meiningen principles,' an idea he had borrowed from the theatre company:

> I am working according to the Meiningen principles: separate rehearsals for winds and strings – the latter being divided into 1st and 2nd violins, violas, cellos, and basses (i.e., five sectional rehearsals for strings alone). Every dynamic nuance is studied; every stroke of the bow; every staccato prepared until it is exactly together; musical phrasing and punctuation rehearsed in every detail. 'In art there are no trivial things' is my maxim. This system, which has been in effect since October 1, seems to work well. In any case, I hope to obtain better artistic results than have hitherto been obtained anywhere in Germany. The concentration on Beethoven's music (from October 1 until December 20 not a note by any other composer will be played) seems

[33] Avins, S. "The excellent people" p. 34, quoting Reinhold Sietz; *Aus Ferdinand Hillers Briefwechsel* Bd. IV, Arno, Köln, 1967, p. 174.

> to me to be a necessary condition for this experiment, which seeks to found a 'style' to form the proper taste in both playing and listening.[34]

In his book on Bülow, Alan Walker offers a wonderful contextualisation of this interview:

> The polished stage productions of the Meininger troupe, admired all over Europe, were the result of the rigorous discipline that Georg II had imposed on his actors. However sumptuous the production, it never overwhelmed the integrity of the play itself. And however talented the individual actors, they subordinated themselves even to minor roles for the sake of the whole. 'There are no minor roles, all roles are major,' was one of Georg's maxims, and it is clear that Bülow had it in mind when he paraphrased it during the interview, he gave to the *Weimarer Zeitung*, saying: 'In art there are no trivial things.' The Meininger troupe was famous for its crowd scenes and its lighting effects, yet they were not the usual diversions meant to distract from the plot but were subsumed to it. This is the context in which Bülow's appropriation of the term 'Meininger principles' should be understood: (1) Integrity to the musical text; (2) each orchestral player a soloist, but none more important than the others: (3) the virtuosity of the team placed in the service of the composer to such a degree that it simply disappeared during performance and became part of the composition itself.[35]

Bülow's method made it possible for the musicians to play by heart and for conductor and orchestra to look each other in the eye, allowing for a new level of intensity in the communication between them. No wonder the orchestra's ensemble playing was deemed a miracle by the critic of the *Berliner Volkszeitung*.

Weingartner considered the success of the Meiningen Orchestra and Bülow to have led to improvements in other orchestras. People now felt obliged to make substantial improvements. Within a few decades, the standard of orchestral playing had been raised to such a level that it hardly compared to the general level of performance before Bülow's revolution had taken place. As Walker points out:

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[34] Walker, A. *Hans von Bülow, A Life and Times*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 282. quoting an interview with Hans von Bülow in the *Weimarer Zeitung*, issue of 16 December 1880.

[35] Ibid, p. 281.

> Bülow found in Meiningen an opportunity to realise a long-cherished dream to make his conducting an extension of his piano playing. He had sometimes talked of the piano as 'a 10 fingered orchestra.' He now came to regard the orchestra as a multi fingered piano which through rigorous rehearsals would learn to respond to his every musical impulse.[36]

Perhaps it is this ideal of absolute control, combined with a tendency towards a pedagogic element in his music making (by his own admission; see the quotation above about his intention to found a new "style" to form proper taste in both playing and listening), which, as Weingartner claimed, caused Bülow to exaggerate his modifications increasingly. He felt that Bülow "often went too far" in his efforts "to be excessively clear." As Weingartner described:

> His quondam hearers and admirers will recollect that often when he had worked out a passage in an especially plastic form, he turned round to the public, perhaps expecting to see some astonished faces, chiefly, however, to say 'see, that's how it should be done!' But if the Venus of Melos, for example, were suddenly to begin to speak, and to give us a lecture on the laws of her conformation, we should be a good deal sobered down. Art-works and art-performances exist only for the sake of themselves and their own beauty. If they pursue a 'tendentious' aim, even though this should be instructive in the best sense, the bloom goes off them. From 'tendencies' of this kind Bülow's interpretations were seldom quite free.[37]

There are reasons for being cautious when it comes to evaluating the qualities of Bülow's style on the basis of critical observations of his contemporaries such as this one. Personal feelings may have played a role in some observations and, even if one accepts these comments at face value, it remains very difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding his possible exaggerations in the absence of a clearly defined baseline to compare his modifications against.

In his diatribe against Bülow, and particularly Bülow's admirers who followed him blindly, Weingartner lists a number of examples that offer a

[36] Ibid, p. 282.
[37] Weingartner, *On Conducting,* pp. 16-17.

picture of Bülow's transgressions of the rules of subtle modification. Fundamentally, three kinds of exaggerations can be distinguished in Weingartner's account of Bülow's style: (1) choosing a basic tempo that he considered to go against the nature of the work or movement in question; (2) deviations from a fundamental tempo that are so substantial that they tend to negate the previous tempo and destroy the feeling of unity within a movement; (3) exaggerated phrasings ("breath-pauses") that interrupt the flow of the music in such a way that they become musical events in their own right that overshadow the narrative of the piece.[38] Although, as I will show in the next chapter on Brahms and Bülow, this criticism partly coincided with a critical opinion of Bülow's style as expressed by Brahms himself, I think it is important to see Weingartner's critique of Bülow, at least in part, as stemming from his profoundly different tastes and aesthetics in relation to orchestral performance in general and modification of tempo in particular.[39]

Tension between the two men may also have played a role in the critical assessment of Bülow's work by Weingartner. David Wooldridge in *Conductor's World* reflected on both the substance of Weingartner's critique of Bülow, which he found unjustified in some cases, and the possible origins of his ire.[40] He pointed to the history between the two men, particularly around the fact that Weingartner had gone to Meiningen at Liszt's recommendation, seeking the post of assistant conductor to Bülow, but – claiming an independent spirit - had been unwilling to subjugate himself to Bülow's every wish. Bülow advised Weingartner to seek any position (elsewhere) in which he might be able to exercise his independence freely and appointed Richard Strauss (1864-1949) in his stead. Wooldridge assumed that it must have come as a bitter blow to Weingartner to see Strauss replace him at the Berlin Opera thirteen years later, and to find himself without an operatic post for the next eleven years.

[38] Ibid, pp. 13-25.
[39] Listening to Weingartner's recordings of the Brahms Symphonies confirm that he adhered to his chosen tempos rather strictly.
[40] Wooldridge, D. *Conductor's World*. Barrie and Rockliff, London: The Cresset Press, 1970, p. 76.

Whilst Weingartner's personal feelings towards Bülow's continue to remain a subject of speculation, it is worth comparing the first published edition (1895) of Weingartner's *On Conducting* with the revised edition he published in 1905. Wooldridge concluded that the first edition championed Bülow, whilst the revised edition constituted a vitriolic attack on his former colleague. Bülow had died in 1894 before the publication of the first edition, meaning that Weingartner's changed tone and judgement in the revised edition of 1905 could not have originated from an evaluation of any new accomplishments by Bülow as a conductor. It may have been prompted by a re-evaluation of his previous accomplishments, or Weingartner may have felt freer to express his true feelings eleven years after Bülow's death than one year after it.

Conclusion

The importance of Bülow and his work with the Meiningen Orchestra can hardly be overstated. He had singlehandedly changed the notion of what could be achieved with a well-rehearsed orchestra and, by example, had initiated a transformation of orchestral performance practice which led to a new standard for beautiful orchestral performance in the nineteenth century. This transformation included introducing the modifications into the wider realm of orchestral performance, which, as I have shown in the previous chapter (1.1), had hitherto mostly featured in the world of solo performance, chamber music and larger ensembles of exceptional quality. As I shall show in the next section, however, there are good reasons for not choosing Bülow's performance style as a model for the performance of Brahms's orchestral music today.

1.3 Bülow and Brahms

Bülow had been in charge of the orchestra for a year when Brahms first visited Meiningen to rehearse his *Second Piano Concerto* in October 1881. His rehearsal method, as described above, had already resulted in a very high level of ensemble playing that made it the ideal orchestra for Brahms with which to try out, rehearse, and revise his music. In his biography of Brahms, the Austrian-American musicologist Karl Geiringer (1899-1989) describes the origins of the cooperation between Bülow and Brahms:

> When, in the spring of 1881, on the occasion of his Viennese concerts, Bülow told Brahms of his innovations, the composer was deeply interested, and the impulsive conductor was accordingly impelled to place his orchestra at Brahms's disposal for rehearsals of his new compositions. It was not long before Brahms profited from this offer. In the summer of 1881, he announced his intention of bringing the concerto [the second concerto opus 83] to Bülow in October. Bülow was completely carried away by this new composition, and by Brahms's playing of it, and with passionate enthusiasm he placed himself at his new friend's disposal.[41]

When Brahms's friends expressed concern about his intended close collaboration with Bülow - who, in the words of Avins, had a reputation as a man with a neurotic, quarrelsome, and high-strung nature - Brahms explained his reasoning. In a letter to Ferdinand Hiller, he was clear about how he saw the opportunity and the role of Bülow:

> But you and others probably aren't interpreting my 'Bülow journeys' simply enough. I was in Meiningen above all in order to be able to play and rehearse a new piano concerto in peace and without the discomforting anticipation of a concert. That's something I can do nowhere else. Nowhere else would this have been considered strange, either, even if I had selected the biggest fool of a conductor. Why then here and with regard to B[ülow], who is, certainly, a very peculiar, a very testy, but nevertheless an intelligent, serious, and competent man? You must also be able to imagine for yourself how outstandingly his people have been rehearsed; and so, when someone like me

[41] Geiringer, K. *Brahms: his Life and Work*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1936, p. 157.

> comes along and makes music with them, so straight from the heart, I really don't know where he could do any better.[42]

This is a telling quotation, particularly in light of later developments in their relationship. Brahms clearly cherished the opportunity to try out and revise his work in Meiningen, and he appreciated the excellent preparatory work of Bülow. I find it significant that he not only suggested bringing his scores to Meiningen, but that he also wanted to make music "straight from the heart." Brahms later criticised Bülow's style as being "always calculated for effect," which could be understood as the exact opposite of "straight from the heart."

However critical his judgement of Bülow's style may have been at the time, Brahms did return to Meiningen to work on his third and fourth symphonies. In an entry on 14 November 1884 in his *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms,* Richard Heuberger (1850-1914) reflected on the unique nature of the collaboration between Brahms and Bülow:

> The conversation turned to Hans von Bülow, whose concerts in Vienna with Brahms were about to take place. (Hans von Bülow gave concerts on 20 and 25 November as well as 2 December 1884 with the Meininger Hofkapelle in Vienna). While the programme of the first evening consisted exclusively of works by Beethoven, on the second evening Bülow played the D minor concerto with Brahms as a conductor. In the 3rd concert, Brahms played his B flat major concerto whilst Bülow conducted. Brahms believed Bülow made too many changes in the concert programmes, and during the concert always enjoyed a cause for excitement. Thus, Bülow once proposed to Brahms that they would not decide before the concert who would play and who would conduct. This should only be decided on stage. This was also said to be the origin of his idea to play the B flat major concerto without a conductor. Excitement before the audience is a welcome thing, or even a prerequisite for Bülow, whereas Brahms in such cases loves – and claims to possess – calmness.[43]

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[42] Brahms, J. letter to Ferdinand Hiller, October 1881 in Avins, S. *Johannes Brahms, Life and Letters.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, pp. 581-582.

[43] Heuberger, R. *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms – Tagebuchnotizen 1875-1897.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1971, p. 25. *Das Gespräch kam auf Hans von Bülow, dessen Wiener Konzerte mit Brahms damals bevorstanden. (Hans von Bülow konzertierte am 20. und 25. November, sowie am 2. Dezember 1884 mit der Meininger Hofkapelle in Wien. Während der erste Abend ein reines Beethoven-Programm beinhaltete, spielte Bülow am zweiten Abend das d-Moll-Konzert, während Brahms dirigierte. Im dritten Konzert spielte Brahms sein B-Dur-Konzert und Bülow dirigierte). Brahms meinte, Bülow ändere zu viel an den Programmen und habe dann im Konzert immer noch einen Grund zur Aufregung gerne. So schlug Bülow Brahms einmal vor,*

Bülow's proposal to decide on the spot who would play and who would conduct in such demanding and complex compositions as Brahms's piano concertos is testimony to the unique nature of their collaboration. It is hard to imagine any two other people both possessing the required capacities in each discipline. At the same time, this quotation makes clear that Brahms and Bülow had quite different personalities and consequently quite different priorities as performing musicians; Bülow looking for adventure and excitement, Brahms looking for calmness. Given the unique mix of exceptional musical capabilities and their contrasting personalities here, it is not surprising that their relationship had its difficulties.

During an extensive tour of Germany and the Netherlands with the *Fourth Symphony* in 1885, their friendship reached breaking point. Brahms had agreed to conduct a semi-private performance of the *Fourth Symphony* with the Frankfurt Museum Orchestra during the tour. What made matters worse was the fact that the performance with the much larger Museum Orchestra took place just a few weeks before Bülow and the Meiningen Orchestra were to visit Frankfurt with the same work. When Bülow learned about Brahms's concert, he removed the symphony from his programme, replacing it with Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*. On resigning his post in Meiningen soon afterwards, Bülow ended his collaboration with Brahms there.

Before this dramatic turn of events, it is noteworthy that Brahms had repeatedly – and often at very short notice – insisted on conducting the *Fourth Symphony* himself during the tour of the Meiningen Orchestra. One cannot say with any degree of certainty why he did so, but I would argue that it is not unlikely that it had something to do with his misgivings about

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sie mögen vor dem Konzert nicht bestimmen, welcher von ihnen ein Klavierkonzert von Brahms spielen und welcher es dirigieren werde. Erst auf dem Podium sollte dies ausgemacht werden. So sei auch seine Idee aufzufassen, das B-Dur Konzert ohne Dirigenten zu spielen. Aufregung vor dem Publikum ist Bülow angenehm, ja fast ein Bedürfnis, während Brahms in solchen Fällen Ruhe liebt und diese auch besitzt, wie er sagt.

Bülow's style.[44] In his praise for the exceptional conductor that Bülow was, Liszt's pupil Frederic Lamond (1868-1948) included something Brahms supposedly had said to the Meiningen Orchestra:

> He [Bülow] was the greatest conductor who ever lived, not even Toscanini approaching him. I have seen and heard them all. No one, Nikisch, Richter, Mahler, Weingartner, could compare with him in true warmth and expression. Brahms was a good conductor, but did not compare with Bülow, who could galvanise the most villainous, struggling band of musicians into an array of heaven-sent archangels. Brahms (in the rehearsals for the premiere of the Fourth Symphony in Meiningen in October 1885), repeatedly said to the orchestra: 'Wait, gentlemen, until you hear this work conducted by Bülow.'[45]

Brahms had a peculiar sense of humour and I think that Lamond, who sees his remark to the orchestra purely as praise for Bülow, may have misunderstood him. Why would Brahms, who had every reason to want his *Fourth Symphony* to be presented to the public as beautifully and as convincingly as possible, have insisted on conducting the performances himself, with Bülow available to conduct, if he truly felt that Bülow's rendering was superior to his own? In his letter to Hiller, quoted above, one could already see that what Brahms valued most highly was the opportunity to work with the orchestra himself, and that he expressed appreciation for Bülow specifically in the role of preparing the orchestra.

Composer/conductor Richard Strauss provides further corroborations of the quality of Bülow's rehearsals, and he also comments on the difference between Brahms's attitude and that of Bülow. In reference to Bülow's rehearsals of the *Fourth Symphony* in *Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* he wrote:

> Bülow rehearsed magnificently and his zeal and his moving conscientiousness were often strangely at odds with the indifference which

[44] In light of Bülow's proposal to Brahms to decide on stage who would conduct and who would play a concerto, this decision about who would conduct the symphony, just before the actual performance, is perhaps a little less extreme than one might have thought.
[45] Lamond, F. *The Memoires of Frederic Lamond*, Glasgow: William MacLellan, 1949, pp. 40 and 49.

> Brahms displayed quite publicly over matters of dynamics and interpretation of his work.[46]

At the very least, this report is an indication that Bülow and Brahms did not always have the same artistic priorities when it came to rehearsing the *Fourth Symphony*. Musicologist Konrad Huschke (1875-1956) pointed out that Brahms could not fully develop his ability as a conductor because for him, as a creative genius, conducting his works would always be of lesser importance than creating them. He goes on to quote witnesses saying that Brahms was known to have often preferred listening to his music over conducting it, and that he did not always have the time or the patience to bring out all the delightful details in his music:

> This explains the verdict of Teichmüller and others that the true greatness and beauty of his works, especially in the very demanding *4th Symphony*, and the subtleties of its instrumentation, only came to full expression under Bülow and Nikisch (although perhaps here and there in too sophisticated a manner).[47]

It is also possible that Brahms gradually came to a more critical assessment of Bülow's conducting style. Critic and writer Max Kalbeck (1850-1921), for instance, claimed Brahms said this in 1887:

> Bülow's conducting is always calculated for effect. At the moment when a phrase begins, he gets (the players) to leave a tiny gap, and he also likes to change the tempo ever so slightly. In my symphonies I have strenuously sought to avoid all this kind of thing. If I had wanted it, I would have written it in.[48]

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[46] Strauß, R. *Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*. Atlantis Verlag, Zürich, 1949. Reprint Schott, Mainz, 2014, p. 191. *Bülow hatte fabelhaft probiert und sein Eifer und seine rührende Gewissenhaftigkeit hatten oft in seltsamem Gegensatz gestanden zu der Gleichgültigkeit die Brahms selbst bezüglich der Dynamik und des Vortrags seiner Werke ganz offen zur Schau trug.*

[47] Huschke, K. *Johannes Brahms als Pianist, Dirigent und Lehrer*, Friedrich Gutsch Verlag, Karlsruhe, 1935, p. 47. *Daraus erklärt sich das Urteil Teichmüllers und anderer, dass die ganze Größe und Schönheit seiner Werke, vor allem der in dieser Beziehung so anspruchsvollen vierten Sinfonie, und die Feinheiten ihrer Instrumentation erst unter Bülow und Nikisch zur Rechten Geltung gekommen seien (vielleicht allerdings da und dort mehr erklügelt alles gut war).*

[48] Kalbeck, M. *Johannes Brahms,* vol. 3. Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, Berlin, 1912, p. 495. *Bülows Dirigieren ist immer auf Effekt berechnet. Sobald eine neue Musikalische Phrase einsetzt, lässt er eine kleine Pause machen und wechselt auch gern ein wenig das Tempo. Ich habe mir*

Literalists have sometimes misused the last part of this quotation to argue against tempo modification in Brahms, claiming that one should not do anything that is not written in the score when performing his music. I shall return to this in Chapter 1.5 on Brahms's assumed preference for a "middle way." The remark that Bülow's conducting was always calculated for effect is highly relevant for the purpose of examining the relationship between Bülow and Brahms.

My conclusion is that, in light of these later critical observations, the fact that Brahms insisted on conducting many of the performances of the *Fourth Symphony* himself, taking Bülow's place, gives me sufficient grounds to think that his remark "Wait, gentlemen, until you hear this work conducted by Bülow" should be understood as exactly the mixture of sarcasm and self-depreciation that Brahms was known for. It should not be taken as a confession by Brahms that Bülow's rendering of the *Fourth Symphony* was superior to his own.

It is entirely possible that Brahms preferred to hear his symphony conducted by himself (straight from the heart) rather than Bülow (calculated for effect). As composer-conductor Richard Strauss noted:

> After the hyper-refined inventive and resourceful manner in which Bülow had interpreted Brahms's music, Brahms's own simpler and more sober way of conducting these pieces made no particular impression. But one heard the work itself.[49]

I believe that it is quite possible that Brahms conducted the symphony himself because he wanted to hear the work itself.

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das in meinen Symphonien ernstlich verbeten; wenn ich es haben wollte, würde ich es hinschreiben.

[49] Huschke, *Johannes Brahms,* p. 49. *Nach der überfeinen, geistreichen Art, wie Bülow die Brahms-Werke dargestellt hatte, konnte die einfache Sitte mit der Brahms die Stücke selbst dirigierte, keinen sonderlichen Eindrück machen. Aber man hat das Werk gehört*!

Conclusion

Bülow's ground-breaking work with the Meiningen Orchestra makes him one of the most important conductors of the nineteenth century and possibly of all time. The critical opinions that Brahms, Weingartner, and others expressed about some aspects of his highly personal interpretations, which often seem to have included exaggerations, are reason for me to try and avoid those characteristics in my own performances. At the same time, it is quite clear, given the success of his tours, that his efforts with the Meiningen Orchestra led to an exceptional level of orchestral discipline, expression, and ensemble playing, which made the orchestra a shining example for many musicians in the nineteenth century. It is also important to acknowledge the fact that Brahms was a loyal attendee at Bülow's later concerts in Berlin, so whatever criticism he may have had of him should not be mistaken for a total rejection of his art.

1.4 Fritz Steinbach and the Meiningen Orchestra

After a brief period (from December 1885 to April 1886) in which Richard Strauss took over as chief conductor following the sudden departure of Bülow, German conductor and composer Fritz Steinbach (1855-1916) became Bülow's true successor. Brahms had recommended Steinbach to Duke Georg II. Steinbach held the post from 1886 to 1903. It was not easy for him to follow in Bülow's footsteps, but his relationship with Brahms offered him a path forward that would eventually lead to worldwide recognition of his qualities as a conductor. Luckily, most of the excellent players stayed in the Meiningen Orchestra after Bülow's departure. The first attempt to continue the tradition of taking the Meiningen Orchestra on tour, which Steinbach undertook as early as 1887, made it clear that without Bülow's name on the programme, the public showed little interest in hearing the orchestra. The tour turned out to be a financial debacle, which led to Duke Georg's decision to put further plans for concerts outside Meiningen on hold. Steinbach subsequently decided to dedicate a substantial amount of his time to collaborating with a choir, extending the repertoire of the orchestra to works that required it. In the years 1887-1890, he organised performances of works such as Haydn's *Seasons*, Händel's *Judas Maccabaeus,* Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony,* and, in 1890, Johann Sebastian Bach's *Matthew Passion* with 300 musicians in the church in Meiningen. The success of these productions led to renewed interest in the concerts of the Meiningen Orchestra and its new conductor.

After the debacle of his tour in 1887, Steinbach also focused on Brahms's orchestral music. Steinbach's relationship with Brahms did not start in Meiningen. Geiringer reported that Steinbach had tried to persuade Brahms to accept him as a student in 1875. Brahms, famous for his dislike of teaching, did not accept him as a student but, according to Geiringer, "put his refusal so nicely that he quite won the young man's heart."[50] Steinbach went on to follow Brahms's recommendations and studied with people like

[50] Geiringer, *Brahms*, p. 130.

the Viennese pianist, teacher and Beethoven scholar Gustav Nottebohm (1817-1882), and with conductor and composer Otto Dessoff (1835-1892). Having been trained and schooled by peers whom Brahms trusted and respected, he was in an excellent position to make the best possible use of Brahms's visits to Meiningen to learn to understand the symphonies under his guidance. By studying the composer's own rehearsals and performances and through his frequent interactions with Brahms, Steinbach had exhaustive opportunities to absorb the composer's approach to music-making as well as Brahms's preferences for the performance of his own music.[51] In his biography *Johannes Brahms*, Max Kalbeck elaborated on Brahms's appreciation of the young conductor:

> Often enough he gratefully showed Steinbach his full satisfaction when he noticed how attentively he observed his slightest hints, how cleverly and resourcefully he traced his most hidden intentions, with what devotion, bordering on self-sacrifice, he drove the orchestra to the highest and strongest utterances of concentrated power. Equally far removed from the shallow rostrum virtuoso as from the pedantic time beater, Steinbach was the conscientious, devoted friend serving the good cause. As a conductor too, he found his role model in Brahms, who with the baton could fire up and drive forward like the best, when in front of an orchestra that was devoted to him and an audience that was sympathetic to him. Bülow the conqueror, had been succeeded by Steinbach the consolidator. He [Steinbach] kept in his mind and in his heart the impression of Brahms, as he conducted the Haydn Variations, the Piano Concerto in B flat Major, with d'Albert as a soloist, and the F Major Symphony, for an electrified audience on Christmas day 1887, and he became Brahms's faithful guardian, his trusted adviser, dedicated follower and expert interpreter of his art.[52]

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[51] Pasternack, J. R. "Brahms in der Meininger Tradition – His Symphonies and Haydn Variations According to the Markings of Fritz Steinbach", Edited by Walter Blume: A Complete Translation with Background and Commentary" D.M.A. Diss., University of Washington, 2004, p. xi.

[52] Kalbeck, M. *Johannes Brahms*. Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, Berlin, 1914, Book. IV/1, p. 81. *Oft genug gab er […] Steinbach dankbar seine volle Zufriedenheit zu erkennen, wenn er wahrnahm, wie aufmerksam jener seine leisesten Winke beachtete, wie klug und findig er seinen verborgensten Intentionen nachspürte, mit welcher an Selbstaufopferung grenzender Hingebung er das Orchester zu den höchsten und stärksten Äußerungen gebändigter Kraft antrieb. Vom gefallsüchtigen Pultvirtuosen wie vom pedantischen Tackschläger gleichweit entfernt, war Steinbach der gewissenhafte, der Person in der Sache dienende ergebene Freund. Auch als Dirigent erkannte er sein Vorbild in Brahms, der, mit dem Tackstock anfeuern und fortreißen konnte wie irgendeiner, wenn er ein ihm ergebens Orchester und ein ihm sympathisches Publikum vor sich hatte. Auf Bülow der Eroberer war Steinbach, der Befestiger, gefolgt. Brahms, wie er am Weihnachtstage 1887 die Haydn-Variationen, das von d'Albert*

Kalbeck, with his colourful language and his very personal style, can perhaps not always be considered to be the most reliable source. Yet what I find striking in his description of the collaboration between Brahms and Steinbach is the closeness of the two men and the selfless devotion of Steinbach to Brahms's music. These qualities, as also confirmed in other sources, distinguished this new relationship between composer and conductor from the one Brahms had had with Bülow. Brahms sometimes honoured Steinbach, for instance, by sharing the podium with him and taking turns leading the orchestra at concerts. This kind of shared responsibility had also been an element in the relationship between Bülow and Brahms, but as noted above, not without some tension. On the occasion of their reconciliation, Bülow gave Brahms a postcard on which he had written "Executive. Legislative." under their images, meaning that Brahms composed the music and Bülow conducted it. In light of Kalbeck's description of their relationship, I think he would have accepted this division of responsibilities much more readily from Steinbach. Kalbeck also referred to this when he wrote that Steinbach re-adjusted (*neu reguliert*) the arrangement.

gespielte B-Dur Konzert und die F-Dur Symphonie dem elektrisierten Auditorium vorführte, blieb ihm vor Augen und im Herzen stehen, und er wurde der treue Hüter und Berater, der begeisterte Bekenner und kundige Deuter seiner Kunst.

Figure 1.1: A Postcard from Bülow to Brahms.[53]

After nine years of study and work, and one year after Bülow's death, Steinbach proved himself to the world as a great conductor, a worthy successor to Bülow, and above all, as the preeminent Brahms conductor of his time at a festival in September 1895 (*Sachsen-Meiningschen Landesfest*) dedicated to the 3 B's (Bach, Beethoven and Brahms). In the many concerts and tours with the Meiningen Orchestra that followed, he established himself as the ideal interpreter of Brahms's orchestral works. Steinbach maintained a close relationship with Brahms until the composer's death in 1897. After his last tour with the Meiningen Orchestra had ended in 1903, he took over the Gürzenich Orchestra in Cologne. Steinbach's tenure in Cologne consolidated

[53] Photograph shown by Allan Walker, *Hans von Bülow, A Life and Times*, p. 327. Beneath the picture Bülow has written a further inscription 'Hans von Bülow zu freundlichen Erinnern an Mainz, 16 Nov' ('In friendly remembrance of Mainz, November 16').

his position and opened opportunities for him to conduct all over Europe and in New York.[54]

Although his international successes are impressive, when it comes to choosing a style of applying modifications in a manner that Brahms might have known and appreciated, I believe the focus must remain on Steinbach's work with the Meiningen Orchestra. Sources such as the reviews by Alexander Berrsche and John Alexander Fuller Maitland suggest that no conductor came closer to Brahms's ideal way of applying these modifications than Steinbach in his collaboration with that particular orchestra. The fact that his style of interpreting the Brahms symphonies involved much that was not found in the printed score but rather was added of his own accord, as Spohr might have put it, is confirmed by a critic for the *Musical Times*, who wrote in 1902 that he had the impression that the conductor (Steinbach) seemed to be recreating the music rather than giving a rendering of it.[55] An extended feature article in *The Times* of 16 April 1910, almost certainly by Fuller Maitland, provides another description of Steinbach's way of performing Brahms with the Meiningen Orchestra which underpinned the unique quality of their collaboration:

> The Meiningen Orchestra under Herr Steinbach was *hors concours*; their Brahms playing, absolutely non-metric and absolutely unified, was a unique revelation.[56]

The fact that the writer calls the playing "absolutely non-metric" is striking to me. He might have chosen words such as "very free'' or "elastic'', but he wrote "absolutely non-metric'', which suggests to me another level of

[54] In his book *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies*, Christopher Dyment gives a wonderful overview of Steinbach's career during and after his Meiningen years, quoting many important witnesses of his Brahms performances with orchestras in London, New York, and elsewhere. These are very helpful and important when it comes to understanding how Steinbach's style may have developed over time.

[55] "The Meiningen Orchestra." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 43, no. 718 (1902): 819–819. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3369511. (Last accessed August 2022)

[56] Dyment, C. *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies from Brahms to Boult*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2016, p. 156.

freedom and a different concept of tempo. I will discuss my understanding of this concept of tempo in Chapter 1.7.

The style of playing of the Meiningen Orchestra under Steinbach may have been a unique revelation in the world of orchestral performance, but in chamber music and solo playing, such non-metric playing was also practised by others. Maitland's description of Steinbach's style is reminiscent of a description of the elasticity of Joachim's playing in his biography of the German violinist and composer, which the author attributed to the British musicologist Donald Tovey. It contains a more detailed description of non-metrical music making:

> The moulding of his phrases, as it may be called, is inimitable, for it consists of slight modifications of the strict metronomic value of the notes, together with slight variations of power such as no marks of expression could convey. 'Elasticity' is the word which best expresses the effect of his delivery of some characteristic themes; as in a perfect *rubato* there is a feeling of resilience, of rebound, in the sequence of the notes, a constant and perfect restoration of balance between pressure and resistance taking place, as an india rubber ball resumes its original shape after being pressed. Compared with this kind of subtle modification, the phrasing of many players who lack a keen sense of rhythm, but who wish to play in a free style, suggests the same pressure when applied to a lump of dough; the slackening of pace is here made up by no acceleration in another place as it is with the great artists. It is, perhaps, this subjection to the real laws of rhythm that makes Joachim an extraordinarily easy player to accompany; one seems to know what he is going to do before he does it, and the notes of his phrases seem to follow a natural curve which, once started, must pursue an inevitable course.[57]

Tovey wrote about the relation between elasticity and the real laws of rhythm, stressing the importance of a balanced handling of rubato. Fuller Maitland's description of the playing as "absolutely non-metric" means that Steinbach's modifications must have been substantial. His qualification that the Meiningen Orchestra's playing was "absolutely unified," I think, goes beyond the togetherness of the ensemble playing. It suggests not only that Steinbach's modifications never undermined the sense of unity in a

[57] Fuller Maitland, J. A. *Joseph Joachim.* Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., Edinburgh, 1905, p. 28.

movement or composition, but also that they served to create a sense of necessity and wholeness of the work.

Conclusion

With Brahms's help, Steinbach developed an unsurpassed level of flexibility in his performances of the composer's music with the highly accomplished orchestra that Bülow had left behind in Meiningen. While plentiful, the descriptions of his style quoted above suggest that his modifications of rhythm and tempo never threatened or undermined the music's sense of unity. In that respect, in striking a balance between modification and unity, Steinbach's style seems to have been superior to Bülow's. Taking a step back, we may even say that as Bülow prepared the orchestra for the arrival of Brahms, allowing him to make music "straight from the heart," he also – for the entirety of his tenure – prepared the orchestra for Steinbach, who could develop his highly refined style of modification with an orchestra that had already been trained to follow the conductor's every whim.[58]

Though, as I have shown above, there are significant differences between Bülow's and Steinbach's style of performing Brahms, I think that there is also a continuum through their work with the Meiningen Orchestra. I am confirmed in this belief by a choice of words by Alexander Berrsche in a 1937 review of a performance of Brahms's *Fourth Symphony* under the direction of the Austrian conductor Oswald Kabasta (1896-1946). In it, Berrsche refers to Kabasta's style as more closely related to the style of Arthur Nikisch (1855-1922) than to the "somewhat snappy austerity" (*zackigen Herbheiten*) of the Bülow-Steinbach tradition.[59] Berrsche, who praised Steinbach lavishly on other occasions, thus presented a very brief but fascinating qualification of the Meiningen style. What I find relevant for the point I am trying to make here is his reference to the Bülow-Steinbach-

[58] See the quotation earlier in this chapter in which Kalbeck calls Bülow a conqueror and Steinbach a consolidator.
[59] Berrsche, *Musik und Betrachtung, Trösterin Musika*, p. 249.

Meiningen style as a single thing, stressing the connection between Bülow's work and Steinbach's,

Regardless of how Steinbach's performance style in Brahms's music may have evolved after his tenure in Meiningen, I am most interested in his style of performance with the Meiningen Orchestra, particularly because of Brahms's direct involvement in the development of that style.

Reviews and other descriptions by contemporary writers and ear witnesses can help one understand the unique qualities of this style. Berrsche, for instance, commented on Steinbach's significance as a Brahms conductor on the occasion of Steinbach's death in 1916:

> When Brahms died, many people might have comforted themselves with the thought that Steinbach was still alive. How can we find consolation now that Steinbach is dead? Anyone who has once experienced what a Brahms performance under this conductor meant and has taken in how the other – even the best – orchestral conductors are used to performing Brahms's symphonies, knows that with Steinbach's passing Brahms has died for the second time. A real and truthful tradition perished before it could take root, and with it at the same time a culture of making music with the orchestra, without which the content of this tradition cannot be expressed. People got used to praising Steinbach only as the effective master of external structure and powerful climaxes. Certainly, he was that too, but such praise, in its one-sidedness, muddled the image of this man and has also been used often enough as indirect criticism. But that so few had the ears to hear from Steinbach's Brahms interpretations the great width of expressions of the cantilena, the measured dynamics, the absolutely plastic phrasing and the ever so rare, natural rubato, is both embarrassing and ridiculous at the same time. I have often tried to demonstrate the nature of Steinbach's agogic in detail and will keep doing so on other occasions. But all discussions of individual examples are just a stammer in relation to the overall conception of Steinbach's music-making. It lives indescribably and unforgettably in the memory of everyone who has got to know it. I think he knew well that he had few learning listeners among the conductors, and it was clear to him that his work, which had made many happy, was at the same time a silent demonstration against widespread lack of understanding.[60]

[60] Ibid, pp. 580-581. *Als Brahms starb, mochte sich wohl mancher mit dem Gedanken getröstet haben, daß Steinbach noch lebe. Was soll uns über den Tod Steinbachs trösten? Wer nun einmal erlebt hat, was eine Brahms-Aufführung unter diesem Dirigenten bedeutete, und sich vergegenwärtigt, wie die anderen – auch die besten – Orchesterleiter Brahmssche Symphonien wiederzugeben gewohnt sind, der weiß, daß mit Steinbachs Hinscheiden Brahms zum zweitenmal gestorben ist. Eine echte und richtige Tradition ist zugrunde gegangen, noch ehe sie Wurzel fassen konnte, und mit ihr zugleich eine Kultur des Musizierens mit dem Orchester,*

Berrsche's obituary is important on various levels. First of all, it confirms once again the closeness between Brahms and Steinbach and the uniquely Brahmsian style of performing Brahms's orchestral works that Steinbach had developed. But what Berrsche also makes clear is that this style was lost on Steinbach's death, as it had not yet taken root. He pointed to how it lived on in the memories of those who got to know it – "indescribably and unforgettably" – and how any attempt to describe certain traits of Steinbach's style in detail was, in fact, futile when compared to the totality of his way of music making. Berrsche's words make it clear to me that I should not leave any stone unturned in my efforts to understand Steinbach's style, but also that I should avoid any claim that my research would enable me to perform in his style today. If his contemporaries felt that Steinbach's style could not be recreated immediately after his death, who am I to claim that I would be able to do so more than 100 years later?

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ohne die der Inhalt dieser Tradition nicht ausgedrückt werden kann. Mann hatte sich daran gewöhnt, Steinbach nur als den wirkungsvollen Meister des äußeren Aufbaus und der großen Steigerung zu loben. Gewiß, er ist auch das gewesen, aber solches Lob verwirrte in seiner Einseitigkeit das Bild dieses Mannes und ist auch oft genug dazu benutzt worden, einen Tadel dahinter zu verbergen. Daß aber so wenige die Ohren hatten, aus den Steinbachschen Brahms-Interpretationen die große Ausdrucksgewalt der Kantilene, die abgetönte Dynamik, die absolut plastische Phrasierung und das so seltene, natürliche Rubato herauszuhören, das ist beschämend und lächerlich zugleich. Ich habe öfters an Einzelheiten gerade die Art des Steinbachschen Agogik zu demonstrieren versucht und werde dies auch bei anderen Gelegenheiten noch tun. Aber alle Besprechungen einzelner Züge sind nur ein Gestammel gegenüber dem wahren Gesamtbild des Steinbachschen Musizierens. Unbeschreiblich und unvergesslich lebt es jedem in der Erinnerung, der es kennengelernt hat. – Ich glaube, er hat es wohl gewußt, daß er unter den Dirigenten wenig lernende Hörer gehabt hat, und er war sich klar darüber, daß sein Wirken, das viele beglückt hat, zugleich eine stumme Demonstration gegen weitverbreitetes Unverständnis war.

Figure 1.2: A portrait of Fritz Steinbach, signed by him in 1907.[61]

[61] Signed copy of photograph in possession of author.

1.5 Walter Blume's Brahms in der Meininger Tradition on Modifications of Rhythm and Tempo

In his printed manuscript *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition*, German conductor and Brahms scholar Walter Blume (1883-1933) provided a detailed account of Fritz Steinbach's style of performing Brahms.[62] I came across this document some fifteen years ago after Walter Frisch at Columbia University gave me a photocopy of his copy of the text. Blume's text is now readily available, but that was not the case at the time. An edition of the original German text (Olms, Hildesheim 2018) came on the market in 2018, and Jonathan Robert Pasternack provided a full English translation in his 2004 dissertation.[63]

Over the past ten years, I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to realise most of what Blume suggests in performances, if not all of it. These experiences have shown me that however detailed and comprehensive Blume's text may be, it only offers answers to a limited number of the many performance questions that a conductor looking for a historically informed approach to Brahms's orchestral music needs to consider. This holds true for the many issues Blume does not discuss in his text as well as for those he does discuss. To illustrate this last point, I will give one example of a passage at the end of this chapter in which I have implemented Blume's suggestion for modification of tempo as part of a more substantive modification of my own design.

As discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, I worked with Blume's suggestions well before I started my evaluation and re-evaluation of the historical evidence of nineteenth-century orchestral practices as part of my PhD research. Looking back on that experience, I recognise the possibility of incorporating much of what Blume wrote into a wide range of approaches to the performance of this repertoire, including ones that ignore the bulk of

[62] Blume, W. *Brahms in der Meiniger Tradition.*
[63] Pasternack, J. R. "Brahms in der Meininger Tradition – His Symphonies and Haydn Variations According to the Markings of Fritz Steinbach"

historical evidence concerning nineteenth-century orchestral performance practices (like my own approach until the start of my PhD research in 2018).

If one wants to use Blume's text as a guide for developing a style of performance, it is important to have a closer look at the question of what it can and cannot tell us. Christopher Dyment, who gives a valuable assessment of the way one can view Blume's text in his book *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies*, pointed out that there are many important questions surrounding Blume's work to which one does not have – and in most cases can no longer expect to find – answers. These are questions that concern a wide range of issues, including the frequency with which Blume may or may not have heard Steinbach perform Brahms, the evident errors in the text, the exact source of Blume's annotations, and the matter of how many of his own ideas Blume may have inserted into his text. Given all the questions surrounding it, I agree with Dyment's conclusion that Blume's text, which he calls "a tertiary source" in relation to Brahms's work (as does Pasternack), should be treated as an aid towards reconstructing the Meiningen style, but certainly not as an infallible guide.[64]

I will proceed to discuss Blume's remarks concerning modifications in the introduction of his text and in his remarks concerning the first movement of the *Fourth Symphony*. The remarks on this movement can be considered as being representative of the whole of Blume's text. It is not always possible to isolate the issue of tempo modification from the issue of tempo and other issues, so I have sometimes broadened the scope of my selection of Blume's suggestions a little to provide necessary context. I provide my own relatively free translation of Blume's text. When Blume makes references to specific pages and lines in his score (which is in a format that does not correspond with modern editions), I have replaced these with bar numbers.

[64] Dyment, C. *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies.* pp. 150-155.

In his introduction, Blume wrote that the element of rhythm, and the precision in its execution, had become more important in musical performance compared to earlier times (his text is from the year of the centenary of Brahms's birth, 1933).[65] Blume conceded that rhythmic precision need not, in itself, be a defect, but that it should not become mechanical 'as it is in jazz'.[66] Blume also assumed that the general tendency to take faster tempos in classical music at the time could be related to the preference for strict tempo and rhythm.[67] He goes on to argue that a successful performance requires a flexible tempo, with moments of speeding up and slowing down. As Blume mentioned, one can find at least tendencies towards such moments in almost every theme. In his words, "it is important not to lose the electroscopic fine feeling for the slightest tempo modifications, and rather cultivate and develop it as a counterweight to a rhythm with a motor-like precision."[68] (Underlined by Blume). Blume

[65] The year 1933, in which Hitler came to power, is of course a pivotal year in German politics. The Nazis started a campaign against what they called 'unemotional', 'mechanical' and 'soul-less' foreign influences in music - namely Jewish and African-American influences. In this context, the term jazz was an easy placeholder for music and musicians that fell into these categories. Close reading of Blume's text, however, does not reveal anything to suggest that he may have shared the feelings of the Nazis towards jazz music, or any other opinions about jazz music that he might have had beyond its rhythmic features. In fact he specifically states on the first page of his introduction that he aims neither to judge nor to fully comprehend the influence of jazz in (classical) music-making. *Es ist jedoch nicht der Zweck dieser Zeilen, über diese Erscheinungen Werturteile zu fälllen oder sie zu ergründen.*

[66] What Blume calls 'jazz music' is not necessarily what we understand it to be today. It is not unlikely that he refers to what Arnold Schoenberg called 'primitive dance music' in *Style and Idea* (reprint of the original edition; Faber, London, 1975 ed. Leonard Stein, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984), p. 320: 'Today's manner of performing classical music of the so-called 'romantic' type, suppressing all emotional qualities and all un-notated changes of tempo and expression, derives from the style of playing primitive dance music […] Thus almost everywhere in Europe music is played in a stiff inflexible metre – not in tempo, i.e. according to a yardstick of freely measured quantities.' Consideration of the complex interactions between 'classical' and 'popular' music-making during first half of the 20th-century, however, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[67] Philip, in *Early Recordings*, points out that in the 1930's musicians began to turn away from the early twentieth-century trend towards higher maximum speeds.

[68] Blume: *Es gilt also, das elektroskopisch feine Gefühl für geringste Tempo-Modifikationen nicht verloren zu lassen, sondern es zu pflegen und zu bilden als Gegengewicht zu einer nur motorenhaft präzisen Rhythmik.* (underlined by Blume)

emphasised that tempo modifications should not be exaggerated and stressed that one needs to strike a careful balance between the poles of rhythm and melody. Tempo modifications, according to Blume, bring rhythm and melody to life.

Blume's suggestions concerning modifications illustrate the intricate connections between modifications of rhythm and modifications of tempo, in the sense that the one requires or causes the other. If one wants to elongate individual notes, such as Blume suggests in some of the examples given below, there are often consequences for the flow of tempo. Theoretically, one might argue that it is possible to maintain the same tempo in the accompaniment and to disconnect the layer of the music within which the modifications of rhythm are to take place from the steady flow of tempo, resulting in vertical asynchrony as discussed in Chapter 1.1. But on closer inspection one can see that the suggestions Blume makes often do not allow for such a solution. In the list below, I specify which modifications of rhythm have consequences for modifications of tempo. I have left those modifications of rhythm that do not require a modification of tempo in the domain of modification of rhythm, such as is the case in my first two suggestions.

FOURTH SYMPHONY, FIRST MOVEMENT, ALLEGRO NON TROPPO

1) Blume's remarks concerning the phrasing of the movement's opening statement of the main theme can be seen as a form of modification of rhythm, certainly when considered in combination with his remarks on the upbeats in bars 13-16 as they seem to involve a delicate lengthening of notes:

> The upbeat should always be emphasised and the downbeat less so. If one imagines the bar line to be moved forward by a quarter-note, one achieves the proper phrasing, and it is a good thing to imagine the theme like that. In Steinbach's marking, this is what the theme looks like:

Bars 1-6:

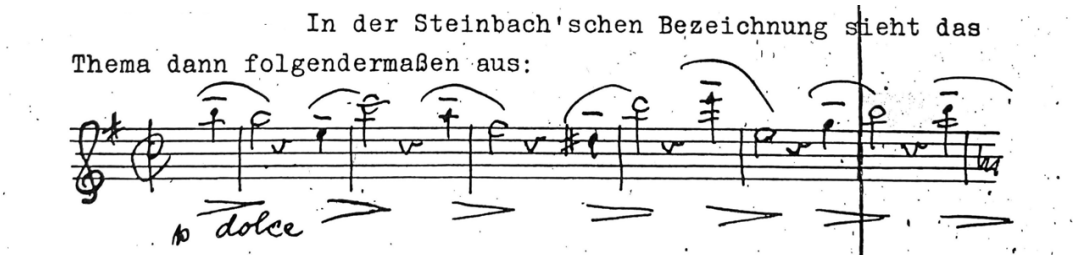


Figure 1.3: Blume *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition* page 66.

In bars 11 to 14 Blume proposes "long" upbeats, meaning that the eighth notes should not be swallowed up. Brahms expressed this only through his diminuendo signs. The eighth note upbeats, however, need also support in timing by applying a "tenuto."[69]

Bars 13-16:

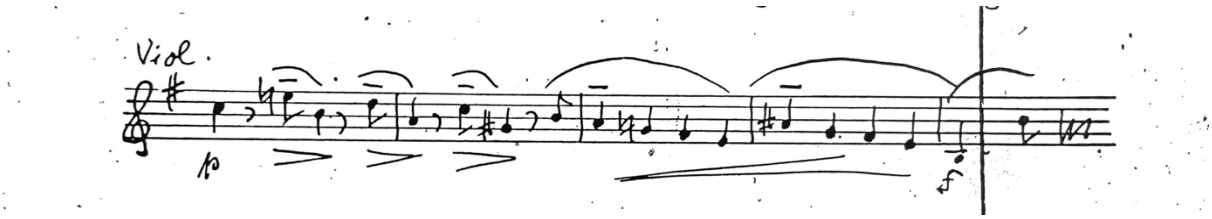


Figure 1.4: Blume page 67.

2) At letter A, Blume's remarks concerning the phrasing again involve a form of modification of rhythm of the subtlest kind, as the suggestions for emphasis have delicate consequences for the execution of the rhythm of the notes marked with tenuto and in hairpin markings:

At letter A, the theme is distributed between first and second violins and dissolved in eighth note octaves. One should observe the various nuances. In contrast to the beginning, here, in the 4 bars after letter A, through a hairpin <> into the one, the one is emphasised, but in the 4th bar again, as before the last quarter-note is emphasised. The emphasis on the one happens here as a counterweight to the fourth beat quarter-note suspensions in the woodwinds.

Bars 19-27 (letter A and following):

[69] Blume first explains what he means by tenuto signs in his suggestions for the first movement of the *First Symphony* on page 13 of his document. His text is somewhat at odds with his suggestion of lengthening the upbeats here: 'In no case should the impression be given that the notes here should become lengthened by the tenuto sign. More to the point these notes just receive special emphasis. Should the tenuto sign ever represent lengthening of the note value, this is to be indicated by the word *rubato*').

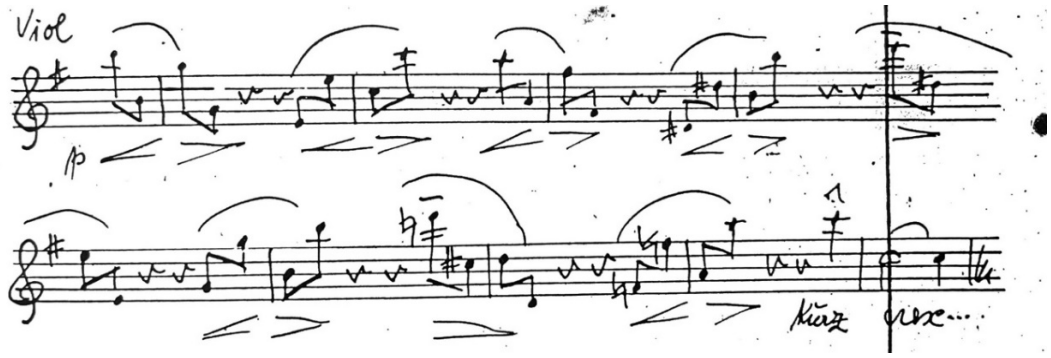


Figure 1.5: Blume page 67.

3) The accented bar is lifted out of the general flow of the tempo through the emphasised accents. This is a more substantial form of modification of rhythm that results in an explicit modification of tempo:

> In the flowing 'Alla breve stream', bar 76 stands firmly, as a 4/4, with broad bow strokes, the strings should emphasise each quarter note equally.

Bar 76-78:

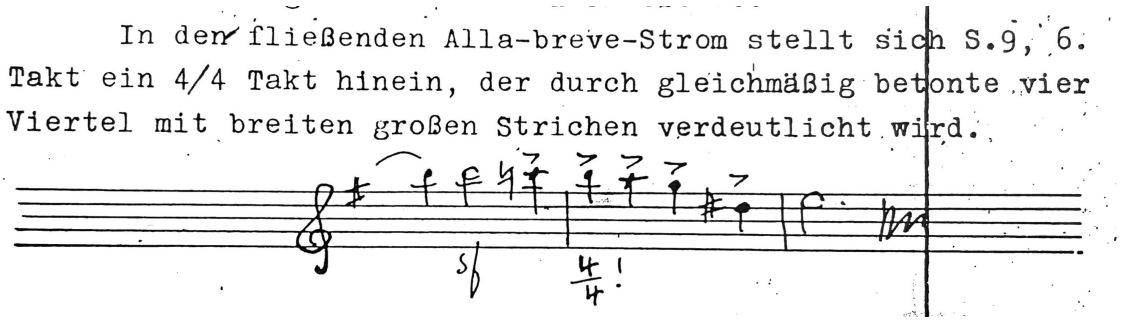


Figure 1.6: Blume page 68.

Many examples of this can be found elsewhere in Blume's text in which the pattern of beats from the conductor is connected to these kinds of tempo modifications. In this case, beating four beats in bar 76, as opposed to two beats per bar in the surrounding bars (alla breve) would suggest to the orchestra to temporarily slow the flow of the tempo.

4) Blume links his suggestion to lengthen the upbeat of the phrase four bars after letter D to the broad character of the phrase:

> The D sharp upbeat in the fourth bar of letter D is a long upbeat and must give the violin phrase the necessary broadness.

Bar 91-95:

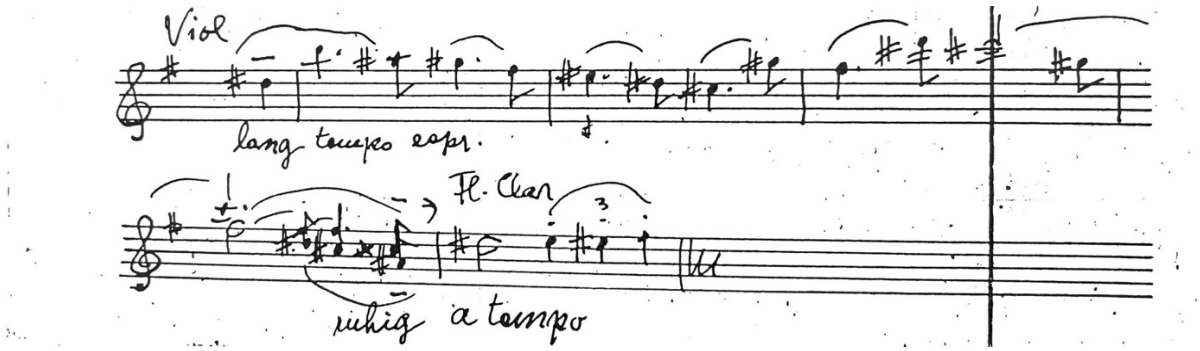


Figure 1.7: Blume page 68.

On the second line of the example given by Blume and shown here above, one can see “ruhig” followed by “a tempo” in his hand. As he notes:

> The C double sharp/A sharp (before the entry of the theme in flute, clarinet, and horns [sic], in bar 94/95, must be clearly heard. To achieve this, one must play them not too short and play a small ‘breath pause.’

This remark qualifies as modification of tempo, as the marking in the music example suggests a return to a tempo in bar 95.

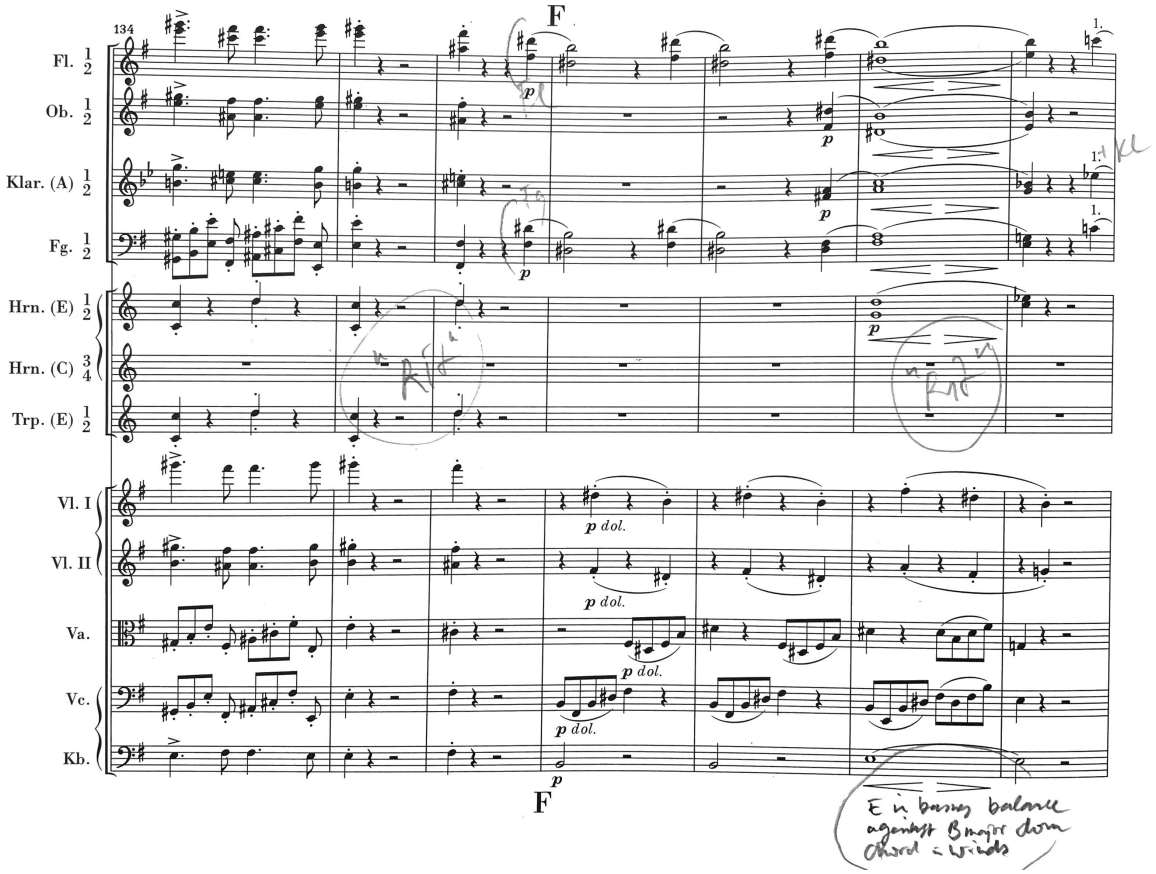
5) This suggestion clearly exemplifies a modification of tempo:

> At letter F, two four-bar phrases start as transition periods to the main theme; these should be separated from each other by a short fermata or, even better, by a ritardando. Thus, one should make a ritardando in the bar before letter F, as well as the fourth and eighth bars in F. Then one takes up the original tempo again.

Blume misplaces his ritardandi by one bar; they probably are more linked to the hairpins in the third and seventh bar after letter F than to the fourth and eighth. There are plenty of instances of mistakes regarding the exact placement of things in the score in his text. I would suggest that this is one of those mistakes. Even if one does not accept this suggestion, I think that it

is hard to imagine a ritardando that would take place exclusively in the fourth and eighth bar of letter F, with no modification in the previous bars.

Bars 134-147 (from my score, not from Blume's text)



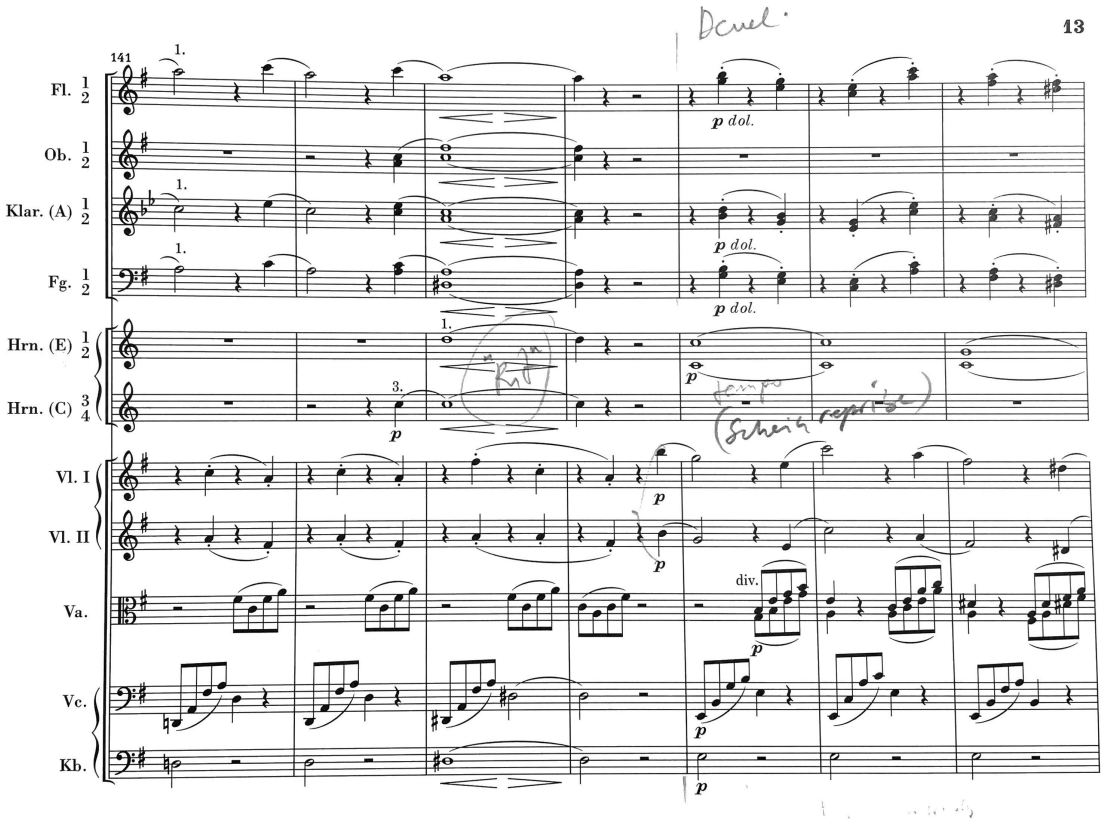


Figure 1.8: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Fourth Symphony (Score) pages 12-13.

6) This is an example of the implications for modification of rhythm connected to hairpins, with very subtle potential consequences for the tempo. It concerns a fairly detailed description of rubato in which the time that was "stolen" in the first half of the bar is given back in the second:

> The episode at letter K should be shaped very freely, and must altogether diminish until the 'ppp' before letter L. The first halves of the bar should each time expand a little, so that the half notes with crescendo may be beautifully 'spun.' The eighth notes of the second half of the bar follow more or less in tempo.

Bars 227-228 (letter K)

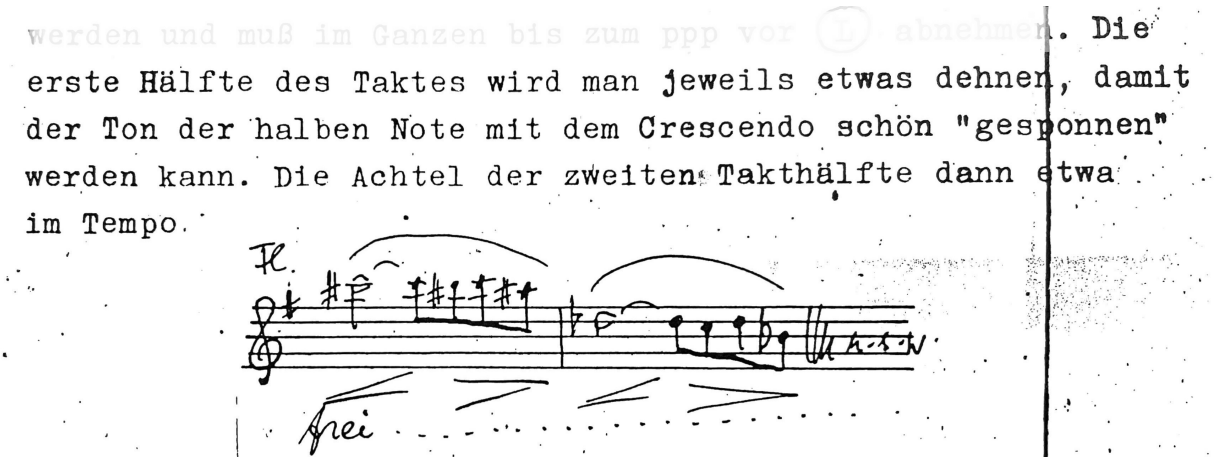


Figure 1.9: Blume page 71.

Blume gives many examples of this technique, sometimes describing the required modification even more specifically than he does here, as can be seen in this example from the end of the first movement of the *Second Symphony*, in which he instructs the flute and oboe to rush and fall back in tempo:

Bars 502-503 of the first movement of the *Second Symphony*

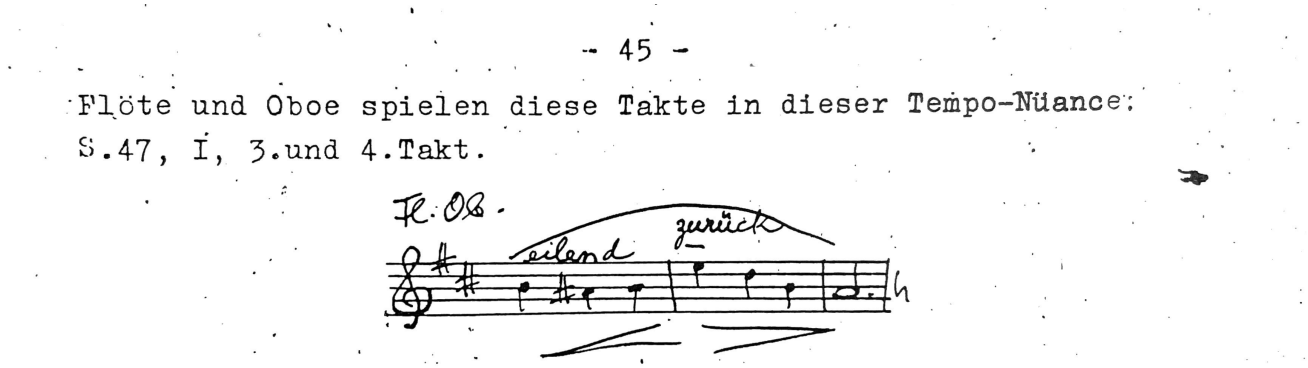


Figure 1.10: Blume page 45.

Each of Blume's examples confirms what one can learn from other sources: the hairpins are to be read and understood as signs indicating expression involving tempo flexibility, and not merely dynamics, as they are often understood today.

There is an abundance of evidence dealing with this way of understanding the hairpins. In their *Violinschule,* Joachim and Moser, for example, make an explicit connection between hairpins, vibrato, and agogic inflection:

> Here the vibrato requires not only a brief lingering on the notes marked with <>, but the bow must also support the trembling with a light pressure on the string. The time lost on the vibrated note must be regained from the notes that follow, so that the proceeding takes place without in any way interrupting the rhythmic flow of the passage.[70]

Applying Joachim and Moser's words to this particular suggestion by Blume, one may assume that the technique of beautifully spinning the half note in the first half of the bar requires some added bow pressure. In his article *The Brahmsian Hairpin*, scholar and pianist David Hyun-Su Kim gives examples of the fact that this way of looking at hairpins can be found in many other sources. Authors such as Hugo Riemann and Arnold Schoenberg confirmed that the hairpins relating to more than one note must be understood as being not so much dynamic markings, but rather as expressive indications frequently associated with rhythmic inflection.[71] In his book *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice*, Brown notes that in Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms, the hairpin, when it relates to one note, seemed to generally require a warm but not too powerful accent, perhaps with an agogic element in some instances, and vibrato where appropriate.[72] Brown also writes that the sign generally implied vibrato. I will return to this subject in the section on vibrato in Chapter 3.

Concerning the necessity to regain the time lost in the first half of the hairpins by speeding up in the second half, it is noteworthy that Brahms

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[70] Joachim, J. and Moser, A. *Violinschule.* Simrock, Berlin, 1905, pp. III -7. *Das vibrato erfordert hierbei nicht nur ein kurzes Verweilen auf der mit dem Zeichen <> versehenen Note; auch der Bogen unterstützt die Bebung durch einen leisen Nachdruck auf die Saite. Die auf dem vibrierten Ton verlorene Zeit ist mit den folgenden Noten so geschickt wieder einzubringen.*

[71] Kim, D. H. "The Brahmsian Hairpin" in *19th-Century Music* 36, no. 1 (2012) pp. 46-57. https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2012.36.1.046. (Last accessed August 2019).

[72] Brown, C. *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice: 1750–1900.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp. 126-127.

himself – at least by one account – did not always feel obliged to do so. In 1929, the pianist Fanny Davies (1861-1934), a student of Carl Reinecke and Clara Schumann, who had performed with Joachim and who had heard Brahms perform, wrote the following in her contribution to *Cobbett's Cyclopaedic Survey of Chamber Music:*

> The sign <>, as used by Brahms, often occurs when he wishes to express great sincerity and warmth, allied not only to tone but to rhythm also. He would linger not on one note alone, but on a whole idea, as if unable to tear himself away from its beauty. He would prefer to lengthen a bar or phrase rather than spoil it by making up the time into a metronomic bar.[73]

I take this quote as an encouragement not to worry about making up for all the time I may have used in bringing out expressive effects in hairpins within the bar or phrase, as Brahms himself was - at least by this account - not overly concerned with it.

7) This suggestion contrasts two modifications of the tempo in an episode in which Brahms himself has not given any markings. In his text, Blume writes "utter calm" (*eitel Ruhe!*) with a broadening in the third bar. In his music example, one can see even more clearly that he juxtaposes calm *(ruhig)* with *a tempo*:

> At letter L, the widened main theme represents utter calm! The third bar is to be broadened a little, and the following bars (249-251) should be a little separated and each time should be played in tempo. This is done also in the second passage (bars 252-258).

[73] Bozarth, G. "Fanny Davies and Brahms's late chamber music" in *Performing Brahms Early evidence of Performance Style,* edited by Musgrave, M. and Sherman, B. D. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 172.

Bars 246-258 (letter L and following)

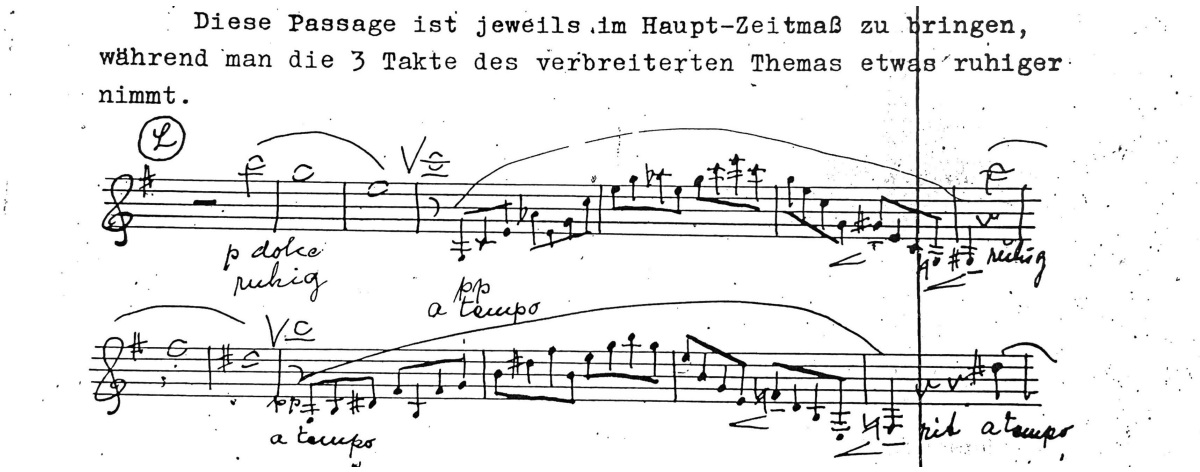


Figure 1.11: Blume page 72.

8) This suggestion concerns a clear link between crescendo (though strictly speaking not marked by Brahms other than by his *sempre più forte* in bar 381) and an increase in tempo.

> With the strong crescendo to fortissimo from bar 387 on, one also increases the tempo. By restoring the initial tempo at letter Q, and by playing the theme broadly and massively, with help of the upbeat in character, a very good effect is created. The strings should race through their passage two bars before Q in tempo, unconcerned by the broadened upbeat to Q.

Bars 392-399 (from my score, not from Blume's text). For a complete view of the *sempre più forte* and the increase of tempo in bars 287-390, see my music example in the conclusion section of this chapter.

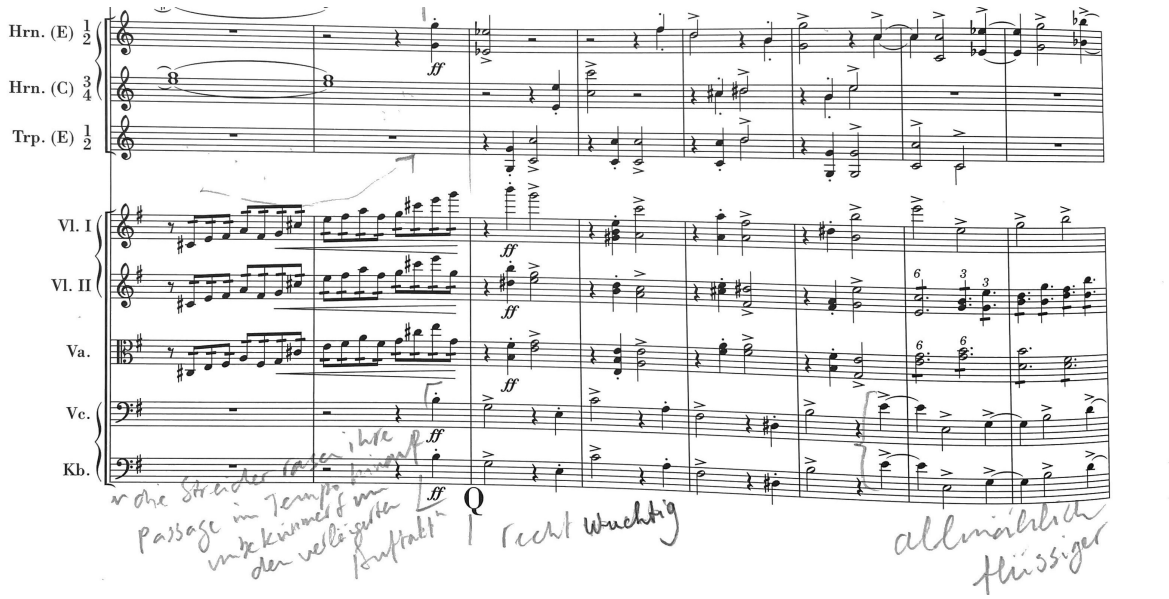


Figure 1.12: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Fourth Symphony (Score) page 32 (partially shown).

9) Blume's last suggestion for tempo modification is also his last remark on the first movement. It contains the suggestion to beat the penultimate bar in four, a characteristic example of a change in beating pattern designed to show a tempo modification to the orchestra:

> From the fifth bar in Q, the massive and broad character becomes more flowing. From bar 402, with the appearance of the eighth notes in the violins one moves into a livelier tempo, which one keeps until the end. Only the penultimate bar, with the four quarter notes in the timpani, should be beaten out in four and broadened.

CONCLUSION

Blume gives about thirty-five suggestions for the first movement of the *Fourth Symphony*.[74] In addition to modifications of rhythm and tempo, he also addresses subjects like expression, dynamics, orchestral balance and phrasing (often in the form of suggested commas or breaks). As such

[74] The exact number could be a topic of discussion, as some interconnected remarks can be counted as one suggestion, and it is sometimes debatable if suggestions should be counted separately or taken together as one.

subjects are intricately connected, categorising them into separate points is not always helpful. The subject of modifying rhythm and tempo is amongst the most frequently discussed issues in his text, which can be interpreted as corroborating the idea that modification of tempo was an essential aspect of Steinbach's style.

Modifications of rhythm or tempo can be very subtle and very brief. But as a result of their use, the tempo can become less even, less regular and consequently somewhat less predictable. This can certainly have a profound effect on its perception by musicians and audiences alike. The kind of flexibility that is needed for these modifications requires a particular diligence and a general alertness that benefits the quality of the music making. I believe that Fuller Maitland described this kind of flexibility in his article in the *London Times* (quoted in Chapter 1.4) when he called the playing of the Meiningen Orchestra under Steinbach "absolutely non-metrical and absolutely unified."[75]

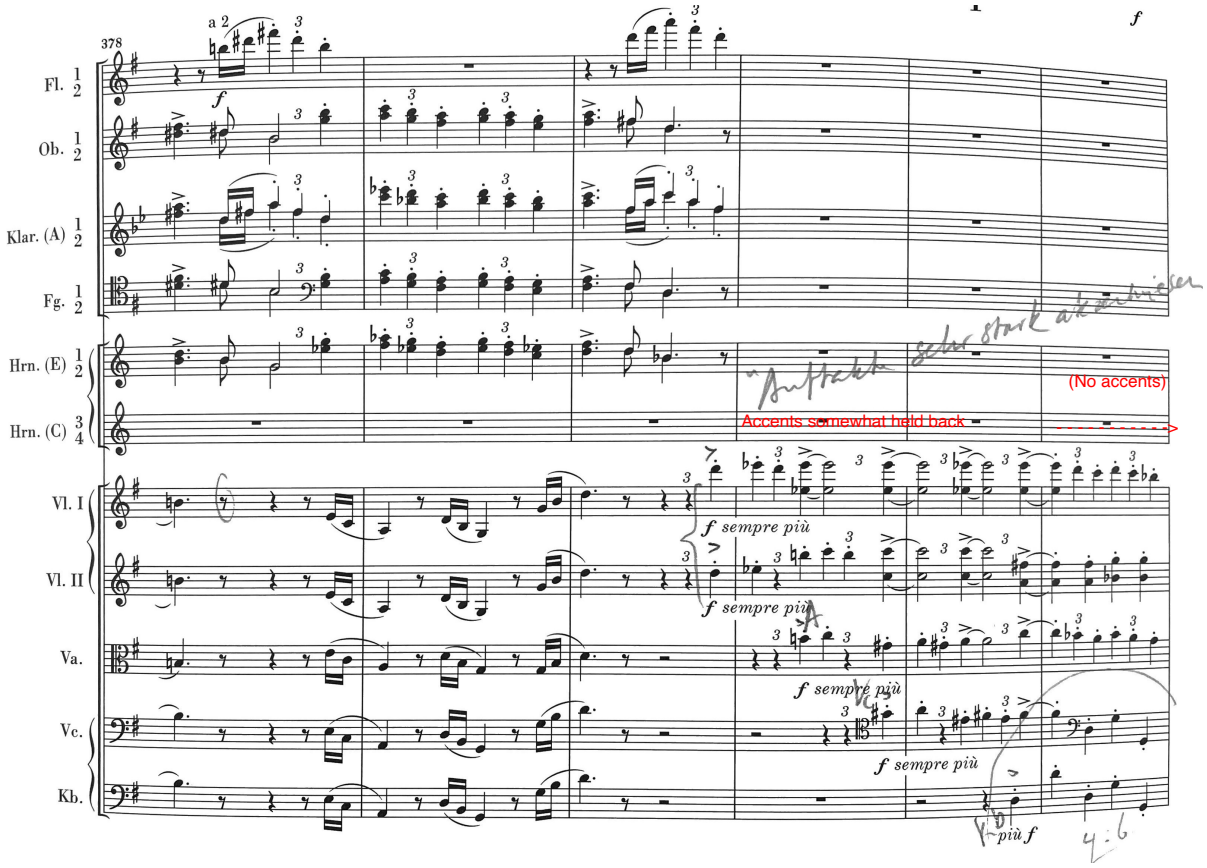
Finally, I would like to use point 8, which represents a clear-cut example of moving forwards in tempo, as an example of how I work with Blume's suggestions. After carefully reading and thinking through his remarks, I believe that they only specify a part of what I think effective tempo modification would entail in the episode from bars 381-394. In many instances in the Brahms symphonies, I have noted that accents can serve to hold back a tempo more often than move it forward.

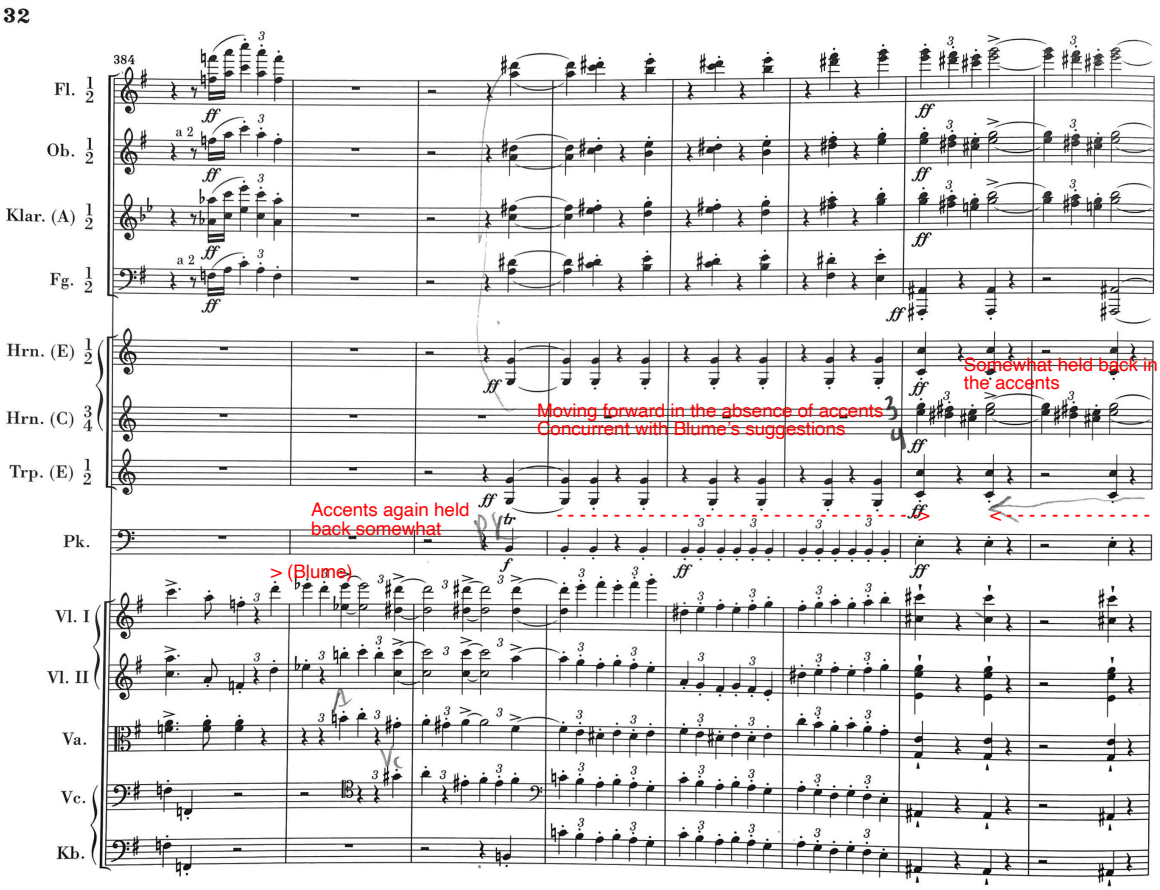
Looking at this episode with that idea in mind, I propose the following modifications: following Blume's suggestion to play an accented upbeat to bar 381, I use this and the following accents to achieve a *quasi-crescendo* intensification in accordance with Brahms's *sempre piu forte* in bars 381 and 382 without moving forward, but rather holding back almost imperceptibly. In bar 383, I use the absence of accents to move forwards towards the downbeat of bar 384. In bars 385 and 386, I hold back again, as I have done in the almost identical bars 381 and 382. In bars 387-390, I use the absence of accents again (as I did in bar 383) to move forwards into bar 390. In these

[75] Dyment, *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies,* p. 156.

three bars without accents, the driving forwards of the tempo will be clearly noticeable, with the modification not being “almost imperceptible” as it was in bar 383. Having arrived in bar 390, I again use the thick texture of parallel thirds and the accents in woodwinds and horns in the second half of that bar as a slowing factor. I ensure that the accent is not repeated in the second half of bar 391, as Brahms did not put it there. The absence of accents makes bar 391 a suitable departure point for the last thrust forwards by the upper strings (“race on,” as Blume writes). My interpretation of the hairpin opening in bar 392 and 393 is that it relates to tempo as much as it does to volume. At the last quarter note before letter Q, the entry of horns, cellos, and basses is in the massive and broad character described by Blume. The upper strings do not have to broaden their sixteenths on the fourth beat of bar 393 to fill out the quarter-notes in horns, cellos, and basses that will be played in the new broad tempo. All this is marked in my score as follows:

Bars 378-399 (from my score, not from Blume's text):





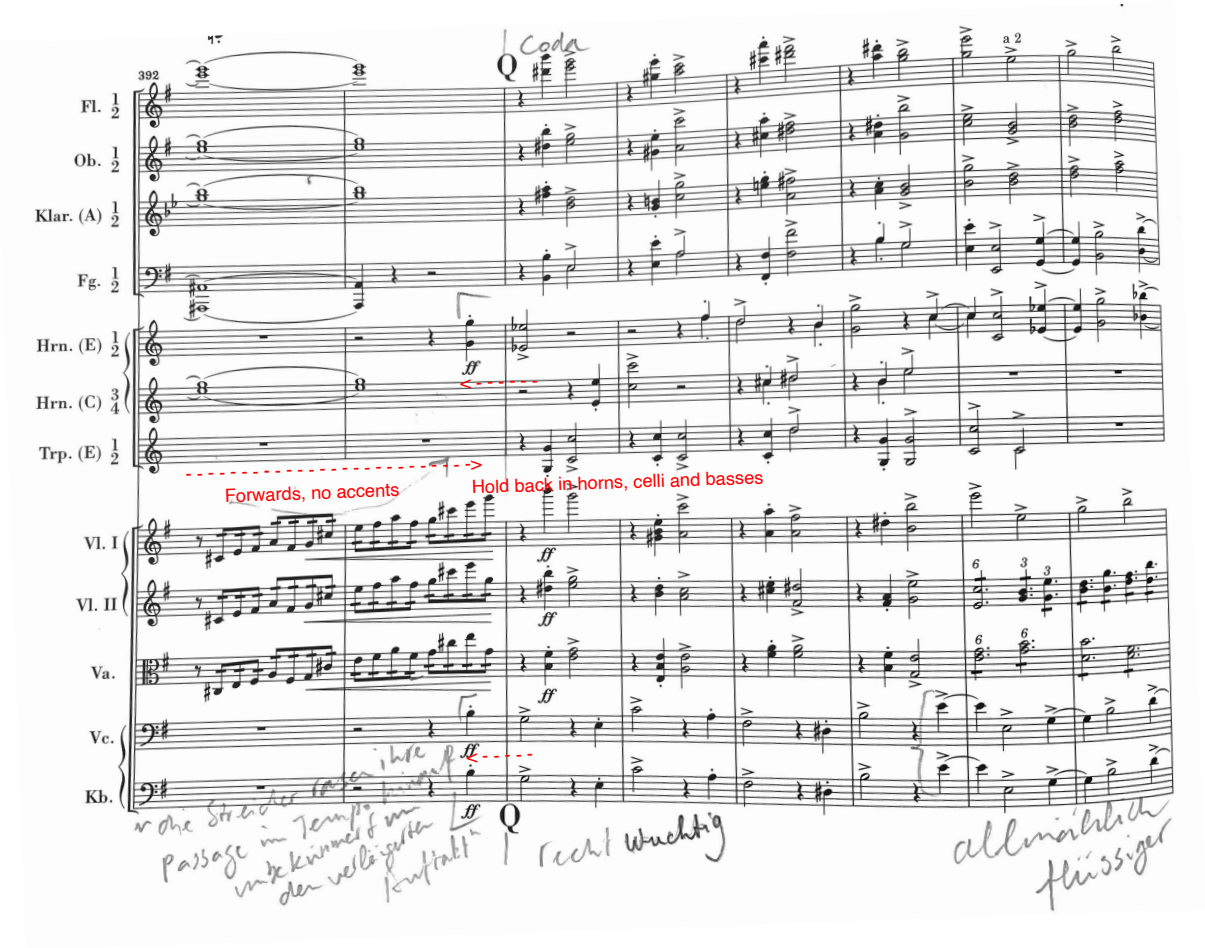


Figure 1.13: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Fourth Symphony (Score) pages 31-32.

While I concur with Blume's suggestion to move the tempo forward in the crescendo (an ongoing *sempre piu forte*) in bars 387-390, I also apply other substantial modifications about which he does not write. Working with Blume's suggestions as I have demonstrated here, I use them as a starting point and not as a final verdict on the execution of Brahms's music.

Apart from a purely aesthetic motivation that might prompt me to follow his suggestions, there are two factors that I apply as guiding principles when I consider Blume's suggestions. The first is whether I can fully understand the rational motivation behind them. I would not want to follow his suggestions without being able to comprehend fully why he suggested them in the first place. This is a prerequisite in my experience, particularly when it comes to exploring those suggestions by Blume that are counterintuitive to me. I find it important to engage with those suggestions,

particularly because I realise that my intuition – in part – is still shaped by, or based on, old beliefs.

For me, this brings to mind the words of Alexander Berrsche in his book *Trösterin Musika*:

> I am not saying it is right to do it like that because Steinbach did it, but that Steinbach did it like that because it is right.[76]

Building from this, I would say that I can only consider implementing Blume's suggestions if I can follow his reasoning and make it my own.

The second guiding principle concerns feeling, or emotional understanding. As will be discussed in the next section, on Brahms's assumed preference for a middle way in tempo modification, he often used a quotation from Goethe's *Faust*: "if you cannot feel it, you will never grasp it." Indeed, that is something I would recommend to anyone who intends to use Blume's suggestions for performing Brahms in the Meiningen Tradition: if you cannot feel it, leave it out, and feel free to come up with your own heartfelt solution.

[76] Berrsche, *Musik und Betrachtung,* p. 244.

1.6 Brahms's Assumed Preference for a Middle Way and His Concept of Tempo

In *Performing Brahms*, Robert Pascall and Philip Weller argue that Brahms's preferred style of orchestral performance and the application of modifications can be described as a "middle way." They make a strong case for their assumption about Brahms's preferred performance style, positioning him in-between the conductors Hans Richter (1843-1916), who adhered rather strictly to a given tempo, and Hans von Bülow (1830-1894) who, as I have already described, applied extensive modifications.[77] Brahms's objections to Bülow's style have been sufficiently examined in Chapter 1.3. The conductor Adrian Boult, in his paper "Some notes on performance", given at a November 1909 meeting of the Oriana Society in Oxford, provides a description of Richter's style:

> No one who has ever heard Richter can forget the magnificent breadth, dignity and power of his performances and his steady beat which produces an absolutely even tempo unbroken sometimes from beginning to end of the longest symphonic movement. But this is all he does at performance. All the expression he wishes for – usually exactly what is indicated and nothing more – is arranged in rehearsal.[78]

Pascal and Weller summarised Brahms's opinion of this style as follows:

> Limited and unfocused rehearsal, coupled with lack of understanding, superficiality, unrelenting metricality, and general dullness in performance seem consistently to be Brahms's chief complaints against Richter.[79]

[77] Adrian Boult quoted by Pascall, R. and Weller, P. in "Flexible tempo and nuancing in orchestral music: understanding Brahms's view of interpretation in his Second Piano Concerto and Fourth Symphony," in *Performing Brahms,* p. 237.
[78] Dyment, *Conducting Brahms,* p. 11; Dyment refers to: Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.*), Music and Friends: Letters to Adrian Boult* (Hamish Hamilton, London 1979) which contains the paper "Some Notes on Performance," by Boult, given at a meeting of the Oriana Society, Oxford, in November 1909.
[79] Pascall and Weller, "Flexible tempo," in *Performing Brahms,* p. 234.

Their assumption of Brahms's preference for a "middle way" is based on a thorough investigation of various sources describing nineteenth-century practices; they do not include twentieth-century performances as a point of reference.

For me, as a musician of the twenty-first century, it is important to be able to relate Brahms's presumably preferred style of using tempo modifications in orchestral performance to later performance practices of the twentieth century right up to today. In his book *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, Robert Philip mentions how flexibility of tempo gradually disappeared from orchestral performance practice over the course of the twentieth century.[80] I believe that if one takes into account the increasing evenness of tempo (and sound) that has been the result of this development, one cannot choose to describe Brahms's preferred style of orchestral performance as a "middle way" today. In other words, it may be perfectly appropriate to classify Brahms's presumably preferred style of tempo modification in orchestral performance as a "middle way" in the context of the nineteenth-century evidence and at the same time perceive it as "radical" or "extreme" in the context of later twentieth-century practices.[81]

I agree with musicologist and Brahms expert Walter Frisch, who wrote that there never was one authorised or authentic manner of performing the Brahms symphonies, as there is plenty of evidence, highlighted by Frisch and others for example in *Performing Brahms*, suggesting that he approved of

[80] Philip, R. *Early Recordings and Musical Style; Changing tastes in instrumental performance 1900-1950.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 229-240.

[81] In his article *"Authentischer Brahms?"* (1996) conductor Hartmut Haenchen draws two conclusions: (1) Modifications of tempo (which are not included in the printed score) belong to the fundamental idea of the composition; (2) these modifications should be executed almost imperceptibly ("unmerklich" as Mahler would have put it). Whilst I completely agree with his first conclusion, I find the second conclusion problematic. Not only because in the absence of a nineteenth-century yardstick, one has no way of telling what Brahms and his contemporaries might have considered to be '(almost) imperceptible', but also because I think that almost imperceptible handling modifications of tempo and rhythm does not correspond with contemporaneous descriptions of Brahms's own playing. Haenchen, H. *Werktreue und Interpretation, Erfahrungen eines Dirigenten, Band 2: Von Brahms über Wagner bis Riemann-Persönliches* PFAU-Verlag, Saarbrücken, 2013 p.9.

many different styles.[82] Portraying Brahms as an advocate of a middle way, or as a radical, can be equally deceptive. For example, this well-known drawing of Brahms by Willy von Beckerath (1868-1938) might serve as a perfect illustration of the composer's preference for the middle of any road, as it depicts him in what appears to be a very relaxed, almost casual posture whilst conducting:

Figure 1.14: Willy von Beckerath, drawing of Brahms conducting.[83]

[82] Frisch, W. "In search of Brahms's First Symphony," in *Performing Brahms,* p. 279.
[83] Brahms conducting, 1894. Engraving after a drawing by Willy von Beckerath (Royal College of Music, London) copyright Willy von Beckerath Erben.

Those who wish to portray him as a moderate may also quote Brahms himself, who wrote to his friend the singer, pianist and conductor Georg Henschel (1850-1934), in 1880 that "the so-called elastic tempo moreover is not a new invention, and to it, as to many other things, one should add *con discrezione*."[84] On the other hand, this passage from Konrad Huschke's *Johannes Brahms als Pianist, Dirigent und Lehrer* might serve to paint him as a radical:

> However, Brahms could be overcome by fiery passion when conducting […] This is how Rehberg once witnessed him in Leipzig's old Gewandhaus. At this conservative site where Reinecke conducted with all too much genteel restraint, this enthralling and spirited Brahms stood out all the more, especially in a rehearsal for the premiere of his Fourth Symphony. When the sensational Scherzo movement was practised, he went completely out of control. Everything was not phrased sharply enough for him, not vivid enough. Everyone in the orchestra had to give their best, and it was plain to see that the Gewandhaus musicians were completely unfamiliar with demands like that. At one time he even screamed into the orchestra: Gentlemen, are you all married? Another time he jumped up from the rostrum to the kettledrum and hit it so hard that the poor timpanist was very worried about his instrument. And in the performance that evening, as Teichmüller remembered, when conducting, he made such lively and big movements that a cellist fell backwards when dodging him and dragged another one with him. Here we find an almost 'wild' Brahms, whose glowing temperament drove the fieriest outburst of temper, as it was once reported from Meiningen that he had literally electrified the orchestra with his fire' (Dr. J. Grosser to the Berliner Börsen-Courier dated 1 December 1885).[85]

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[84] Henschel, G. *Personal Recollections of Brahms, some of his letters to and pages from a journal kept by Georg Henschel.* The Gorham Press, Boston, 1907, p. 79.

[85] Huschke, *Johannes Brahms,* pp. 43-44. *Auch feurige Leidenschaft konnte Brahms beim Dirigieren übermannen. (…) So hat ihn einst Rehberg im Leipziger alten Gewandhaus erlebt. An der konservativen Stätte, wo Reinecke nur allzu vornehm zurückhaltend dirigierte, fiel dieser packend-temperamentvoller Brahms besonders auf, namentlich in einer Probe zur Uraufführung seiner vierten Sinfonie. Als der hanebüchene Scherzo Satz geübt wurde, geriet er ganz außer Rand und Band. Alles war ihm nicht scharf genug phrasiert und nicht plastisch genug. Jeder im Orchester musste sein Letztes hergeben, und man sah deutlich, dass den Gewandhausmusikern so etwas ganz ungewohnt und fremd war. Einmal schrie er sogar im Orchester hinein: "Meine Herren, sind Sie denn alle verheiratet?" Ein andermal sprang er vom Pult zur Pauke hinauf und schlug derart darauf, dass der arme Pauker in größte Sorge um sein Instrument geriet. Und in der Aufführung am Abend geriet er, wie sich Teichmüller erinnert, sogar beim Dirigieren in so lebhafte Schwing-bewegungen, das ein Cellist beim Ausweichen nach rückwärtsfiel und noch einen mit sich riss. Hier hatte man einen beinahe "wilden" Brahms vor sich, den sein glühendes Innere zu feurigstem Temperamentsausbruch trieb, wie auch einst*

As one can see, the evidence presented hardly points in a single direction; it is almost as if the conductor making such wild gestures that cellists in the orchestra fell over and the conductor in Beckerath's drawing are not the same person. When it comes to characterising Brahms in order to justify a certain style of performance, there are many avenues to explore and many pitfalls to be avoided. It is perhaps enough to say that, just as there is no simple characterisation which might do justice to the complex nature of Brahms's personality, neither is there a simple characterisation that could fully define the right style of performing his music. The evidence shows that he was a musician who was able to appreciate a broad range of different performing styles. In *Performing Brahms*, Bernard D. Sherman suggests that Brahms, like many composers, may have been more concerned with a performer's ability to convey musical content than with adherence to a specific performance practice.[86]

Brahms's attitude regarding performance and his ability to appreciate different perspectives on his work also relates to how he marked his scores for performers. Avins, in her chapter 'Performing Brahms's music: clues from his letters' in *Performing Brahms*, includes a quote from a letter Brahms wrote to the conductor Otto Dessoff, who had asked him about some specific tempo modifications that Brahms had not marked in the score, but that he felt would be helpful in performing the *Second Symphony*. Brahms answered him as follows:

> A *quasi ritard* in the first movement may be just as lacking as a *più moto* at the 12/8 in the Adagio. But they are such superfluous indications. 'If you don't feel it, etc.'[87]

aus Meiningen berichtet wurde, er habe durch sein Feuer das Orchester förmlich elektrisiert (Dr. J. Grosser an den Berliner Börsen-Courier vom 1.12.1885).

[86] Musgrave and Sherman, *Performing Brahms*, p. 3.

[87] Avins, S. "Performing Brahms's Music," in *Performing Brahms*, pp. 24-25 (Original German as follows) *Quasi Rit.* im 1-ten Satz dürfte ebenso gut fehlen wie ein *piu moto* beim 12/8 Adagio stehen dürfte. Das sind aber so überflüssige Bezeichnungen. "Wenn ihr's nicht fühlt" etc.

As Avins explains, this last part ("If you don't feel it, you will not grasp it etc.") is a quote from Goethe's *Faust*: "Wenn ihr's nicht fühlt, ihr werdet's nicht erjagen." I agree with Avins that this answer is crucial for understanding Brahms's way of making music and notating it, and the relationship between notation and performance generally. It shows how important it was to him that modifications of tempo and the expressive reasons for applying them should be felt, or "emotionally understood", by those who wished to perform his music.

Berrsche provides corroboration of the view that Brahms did expect modifications that are not marked in the score from musicians who performed his music in *Trösterin Musika*, where he writes about tempo modifications in performances by Fritz Steinbach of Brahms's *First Symphony*:

> No one should want to argue that Brahms didn't mark these in his score. Every writer will be cautious when it comes to marking the most refined subtleties down explicitly. They would instantly be exaggerated, and it is surely better not to attempt a subtlety than to coarsen it.[88]

The fact that Berrsche, in 1929, felt obliged to address the objection that the modifications he felt Steinbach had applied appropriately and effectively had not been prescribed by the composer can be seen as an indication that in the first half of the twentieth century there was (mounting) pressure on performers to adhere strictly to what could be found in the score. While an advocate of unprescribed modifications, Berrsche warned against exaggerations. This quote is an example of a historical source that can be used both by people advocating modifications and by people warning against (excessive) use of them. Some might see it as confirmation of the need to apply modifications, others might take it as warning against exaggerations. As I have previously stated, the absence of an objective norm, or base line, against which one might be able to measure modifications, is a serious

[88] Berrsche, *Musik und Betrachtung,* p. 244. *Mann soll nun nicht einwenden wollen, Brahms habe doch dererlei nicht vorgeschrieben. Die ganz feinen Dinge wird jeder Autor sich hütten, ausdrücklich vorzuschreiben. Sie würden nämlich dann sofort übertrieben werden, und es ist gewiss besser, eine Feinheit gar nicht zu machen, als sie zu vergröbern.*

obstacle when it comes to drawing specific conclusions from sources such as this.

Brahms thought of tempo as a living and constantly, subtly changing thing, as can be surmised from a famous remark in a letter to his friend, Henschel, already quoted from. Brahms writes in response to Henschel's request for metronome marks: "for I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together."[89] A few years later, Brahms wrote to amateur violist Alwin von Beckerath that "for normal people, metronome markings could not remain valid for over a week."[90] This idea of flexible tempo seems to align with that of conductor/composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), as violist and close friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner (1858-1921), recalls about his concept of tempo and tempo modification in relation to the printed score:[91]

> Everything is expressed in the greatest detail through note values and silences. This clearly concerns everything that can be represented in writing. About the much more important things such as tempo, the total conception and the construction of a work, frustratingly little can be pinned down, as these are living and flowing things that can never be exactly repeated twice even in direct succession. This is why metronome markings are inadequate and almost useless because, if the work is not to be senselessly ground out in barrel organ style, the tempo will already have changed by the end of the second bar. Therefore, the right proportions between the various sections are more important than the initial tempo. Whether a tempo is a degree faster or slower often depends on the mood of the conductor and may vary somewhat accordingly without any detrimental effect on the quality of the work. As long as the whole [performance] is alive and is built up within the bounds of this freedom with irrefutable coherence.[92]

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[89] Henschel, *Personal Recollections of Brahms* p. 79 (for the full quotation see below).

[90] Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music," in *Performing Brahms* p. 21, quoting an undated letter, dated by her on internal evidence as January 1884.

[91] Natalie Bauer was also the violist of the all-female string quartet in which Marie Soldat-Roeger (1863-1955) was the first violin. Marie Soldat was the first and for a long time also only woman to play Brahms's violin concerto as a soloist. Brahms highly respected her playing.

[92] Bauer-Lechner, N. *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler.* Leipzig, E.P.Tal & Co. Verlag, 1923, 25. *Alles wird durch Notenwerte und Pausen bis ins Kleinste ausgedrückt. Das gilt nun freilich von dem, was sich darstellen lässt. Über das weitaus Wichtigere: über das Tempo, und vollends die Gesamtauffassung, und den Aufbau eines Werkes, lässt sich so nur verzweifelt Wenig feststellen, denn hier handelt es sich um etwas Lebendiges, Fliessendes, das nie, auch nur zweimal hintereinander, sich völlig gleichbleiben kann. Deshalb ist ja auch das Metronomisieren unzulänglich, und fast wertlos, weil schon nach dem zweiten Takte das Tempo ein anderes*

While there are no irrefutable arguments or truths in artistic matters, the idea that all deviations from a fundamental tempo must serve to build a narrative that – at least for the duration of the performance – appears to have complete coherence is very persuasive. In fact, I think that the need to build a coherent and convincing narrative should always be the first aim of a performer. Different modifications can be applied to build such a narrative. This view allows for the possibility that one performer may apply a rallentando in the same bar in which another may apply an accelerando, whilst both create an equally convincing narrative.

Conclusion

Brahms would have been used to hearing his works performed with tempo modifications, and he seemed to particularly appreciate it when the expressive device was motivated by the musician's own intuition and emotional understanding of the music, even when that differed from his own. I believe that many of the modifications Brahms would have expected and appreciated are not marked in the score, partly because of his dread of performances that would include these modifications without the proper feeling motivating their use. Brahms's reference to Goethe, for instance, inspires me to always feel an emotional motivation for my tempo modifications. Brahms also welcomed the idea that a musician's emotional understanding of his music could lead to a style of performance that he personally might not have foreseen. The pianist and scholar Charles Rosen (1927-2012), mentions how his teacher Moritz Rosenthal (1862-1946), who

geworden sein muss, wenn das Werk nicht drehorgelmässig, niederträchtig, heruntergespielt wird. Weit mehr als die Anfangsgeschwindigkeit kommt es daher auf das richtige Verhältnis aller Teile untereinander an. Ob das Tempo im Gesamten um einen Grad geschwinder oder langsamer ist, mag oft von der Stimmung des Dirigenten abhängen und, ohne Nachteil für das Ganze Werk, um ein Geringes variieren. Wenn das Ganze nur ein Lebendiges, und innerhalb dieser Freiheit mit unumstößlicher Notwendigkeit aufgebaut ist. (sic)

sometimes played Brahms's piano music for the composer, recalled how Brahms had commented on his playing:

> You know, Brahms let me play [his music] however I wanted […] He never told me I was wrong or that what I had done was incorrect. 'I have a different idea of the piece,' he would say, and he would play it for me. It was a wonderful experience.[93]

Rosenthal's account provides another indication that Brahms could accept and even welcome performers' modifications of rhythm and tempo that would help them shape the narratives that they themselves found in the music. What the historical evidence further suggests to me is that conductors should carefully consider their default position in relation to rhythm and tempo. Based on the evidence presented here and in the previous sections and on my experiments with the orchestra, I believe that considering evenness of tempo a special effect in Brahms can result in artistically satisfying results. As a consequence, my default position has become a constantly subtly changing tempo, not a stable tempo to which one occasionally or frequently applies modifications. In my opinion the twentieth-century concept of a metronomically maintained tempo with occasional modifications, is simply not supported by the evidence that suggests that Brahms and other nineteenth-century composers and musicians had a much more flexible idea of the fundamental tempo, within which modifications could be integrated. Taking this one step further, I would suggest that one can also think of the fundamental tempo as the grand total of all the modifications applied in a piece or movement, rather than as something that exists independent of these modifications.

[93] Rosen, C and Temerson, C. *The Joy of Playing, the Joy of Thinking: Conversations about Art and Performance.* Paris, 2016, p. 8.

1.7 Tools for Modifying Rhythm and Tempo

In the previous sections, I have demonstrated that modification of rhythm and tempo has been an element of beautiful musical performances for centuries. I have shown how, through the work of two eminent conductors, Hans von Bülow and Fritz Steinbach, and their work with the Meiningen Orchestra, these modifications became part of a style of performance of Brahms's orchestral music that the composer himself highly appreciated. Moreover, by using information from historical sources, by drawing lines between various sources, and by contextualising them, I have illustrated how this particular style largely disappeared soon after the composer's death, or soon after Steinbach left the Meiningen Orchestra.

The approach to modifications in orchestral performance that I have derived from all of this is based on the idea that tempo is a living and constantly subtly changing thing. Marion Ranken (1884-1966) writes about her time as a violin student at the Joachim School in Berlin and gives a detailed account of many of the qualities of the German style that Brahms was so familiar with through his connection with Joachim. She gives a description of tempo as something present only in the background as a "pulse-beat." Her description also contains an idea about the relationship between the details and the total conception of a piece:

> But the tempo too, and this is what I especially wish to emphasise here, is now no longer the rigid taskmaster, but is found to be merely the 'beat' […], as it is extended throughout the whole movement, and just as, within the phrase itself, one note is subordinate to others so, as the scale widens, one bar becomes subordinate to another bar, one phrase to another phrase, and finally one section to another section and there must be a sense of passing over the one without emphasis and of dwelling restfully on the other. If, in making this clear, fluctuation in speed does occur, as is often the case, this is something entirely different from any set change of tempo for the very good reason that the tempo is always in the background, whether audibly or inaudibly, keeping up the idea of an average pace, a normal pulse-beat, and

> so playing the most important role of all – that which welds everything into a sensible and balanced whole.[94]

Ranken touches on many relevant points here. I find her remarks about the subordinate character of one beat, bar, or phrase to another helpful when it comes to understanding the connection between modifications on different micro/macro levels. In particular, her suggestion that one can widen the scale and look at the relationship between whole sections of a composition as an expansion of the modifications in a particular bar or phrase made me realise how consequential small modifications can be and how they can be related to the larger structure of a movement or a whole work. Her text also reads as a manifesto against evenness in expression, sound, and tempo. The concept of tempo being a living and constantly changing thing, as suggested by Brahms and described by Mahler, and the idea that it should be present in the background as described by Ranken, form the backbone of my (newly found) approach to tempo. It is with this concept in mind that I apply my modifications of rhythm and tempo.

Because, as argued by Berrsche for example, the tradition of applying such modifications in the style of Steinbach has been lost, the expressive tools that were part of this tradition cannot simply be re-implemented; they must be re-invented. Austrian conductor Nicolaus Harnoncourt, for instance, commented on the need to "translate" the way one pronounces musical language in *Musik als Klangrede*:

> The music of the past has become a foreign language through the course of history, through the distance of the past from the present, through the detachment from one's own time in its entirety. Separate aspects may be universal and timeless, but the pronunciation as such is bound to time and can only be found again if it is brought into the present time through a kind of translation.[95]

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[94] Ranken, M. *Some Points of Violin Playing and Musical Performance as learnt in the Hochschule für Musik (Joachim School) in Berlin during the time I was a student there, 1902-1909.* Privately printed, Edinburgh, 1939, p. 120.

[95] Harnoncourt, N. *Musik als Klangrede, Wege zu einem neuen Musikverständnis.* Residenz Verlag, Salzburg, 1982, p. 25. *Die Musik der Vergangenheit ist durch den Lauf der Geschichte, durch die Entfernung von den Gegenwart, durch das Losgerissensein von der eigenen Zeit in ihrer Gesamtheit zu einer Fremdsprache geworden einzelne Aspekte mögen allgemeingültig*

The expressive potential of historical tools, such as modification of rhythm and tempo, unevenness of sound, portamento and vibrato used only as an ornament can only be revealed, in my experience, by working with them. One could argue that what I am talking about here is a re-invention of the impact of the use of historical tools on the listener, not a re-invention of the tools themselves.

My understanding of what these tools are, however, has profoundly changed through working with them. My concept of modification of tempo, for instance, changed as a direct result of the practical experience of working with it as an expressive tool. I can say the same about my conceptions of portamento and vibrato, and about the way these various tools can be connected to create an expressive result. Reinventing modifications of rhythm and tempo requires experimentation with an orchestra, and that experimentation lies at the core of my research project. The process of re-invention and implementation with my project orchestra will be described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Firstly, I will present my toolset. My research shows that the modifications are in part unprescribed by Brahms, and in part implied by his marking of the score. My research has taught me to read the markings in the score in a different way. I now identify many of the markings as having implications for modification.

TOOLS OF MODIFICATION

1) Verbal crescendo and diminuendo (cresc. / dim.) indications.

In contrast to what I was taught and what I have been teaching over the past half century (to diligently keep a steady tempo at crescendos and diminuendos), I will now, as a rule, move the tempo forward in response to

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und zeitlos sein, die Aussage, als solche aber ist zeitgebunden und kann nur wiedergefunden, werden wenn man sie in einer Art von Übersetzung in die heutige Zeit hinein bringt.

crescendo and move it backward in response to diminuendo. In my opinion, the historical evidence, some of which has been presented in the previous sections, shows that this was considered to be an integral part of beautiful musical performance of the highest quality in the nineteenth century. I think of this type of modification as being a more sensitive way to handle the relationship between the emotional current of the music and the tempo than the rather rigid timekeeping I have previously applied.[96] The fact that the vast majority of MPP and HIPP orchestral performances today stick to the rule that tempo should remain steady in crescendo/diminuendo shows how widespread this rejection of nineteenth-century practices has become over the course of the twentieth century.

2) Single opening hairpin (<) and closing hairpin (>) indications.

Crescendos and diminuendos are sometimes marked with opening and closing (single) hairpins. Brahms often combines these markings with the words crescendo and diminuendo. The positioning of these markings also sometimes seems somewhat arbitrary. Music scholar Camilla Cai, for instance, writes about Brahms as an editor, particularly of his piano pieces. She argues that one must reconsider and ultimately revise the notion that Brahms was both a very careful editor of his music, and a good nineteenth-century role model for the modern scholar.[97] Based on her detailed analysis of editing issues in some of his late piano works, she concludes that Brahms "looks to have been an inconsistent, even an impatient editor." Cai notes that in the corrections of some proofs of the manuscript of Op. 116, "he paid little attention to the differing crescendo and diminuendo symbols, although in the autograph he had made careful adjustments of this very element of

[96] For the idea of emotional current see for example Reitzenstein's review of the performance of Salieri's opera *Axur*, in Vienna, quoted in Chapter 1.1, where he claims to have heard a performance of the piece in which there was a direct connection between the level of excitement and the tempo.

[97] Cai, C. "Was Brahms a Reliable Editor? Changes Made in Opuses 116, 117, 118 and 119," *Acta Musicologica* 61, no. 1 (1989): 83–101. https://www.jstor.org/stable/932975. (Last accessed September 2021).

expression."[98] One example of such careful adjustment can also be found in the second movement of the *First Symphony*, notably in bar 5 of the example below in the second violin part, where Brahms took great care to show where to start the hairpin (see the crossed-out section just before the bar line):

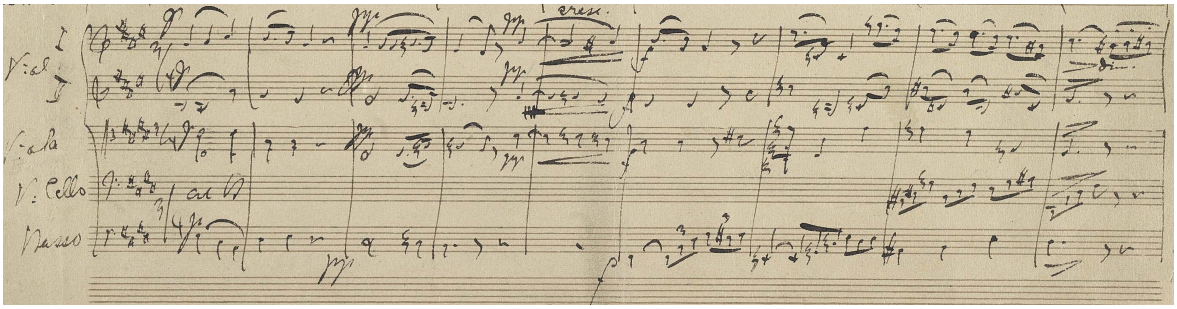


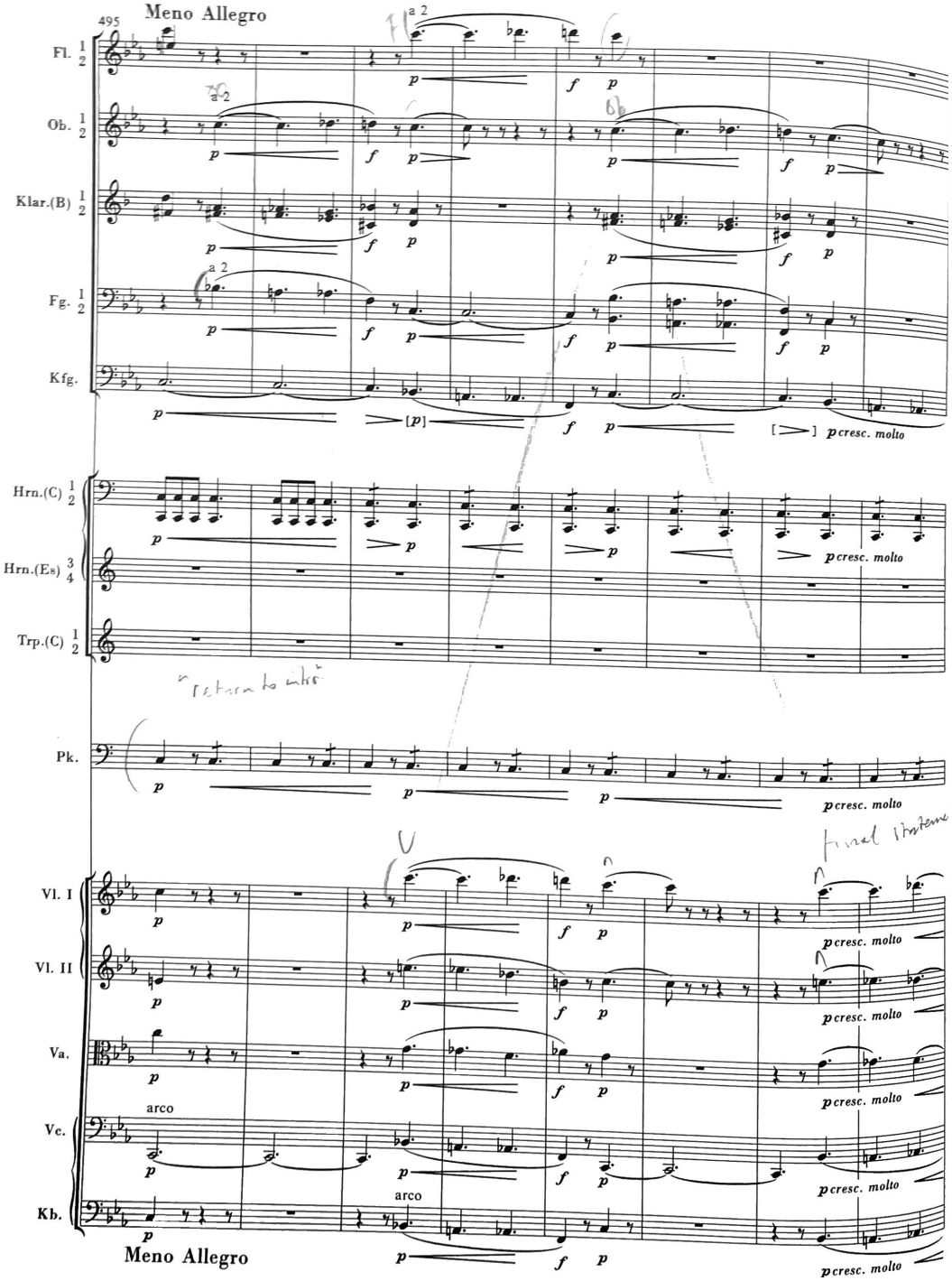
Figure 1.15: Brahms manuscript of First Symphony.

Though many variations of the positioning of these markings exist in different editions and some argue that Brahms was not always very precise in his placing of markings, the order in his symphonies usually seem to be this: cresc., followed by an opening hairpin. There are occasions where Brahms writes cresc. and a hairpin < at the same time and others where he writes cresc. alone (also the reverse with dim.).

So far, I have not been able to distil a uniform way to understand these instructions, nor have I found any such recipe in the writings of others. Whilst Cai in her work demonstrates that Brahms occasionally was sloppy in his marking and in his revisions, I see no alternative to closely reading of the scores and his markings as they have been handed down. Given Brahms's ability to appreciate different styles of performance of his music, differences in marking could also be understood as representing different options that he would have found acceptable or would even have welcomed. Whether or not one accepts this idea, I think it is important to look carefully at every individual instance and decide about the possible meaning of the marking or – perhaps more to the point – to formulate an understanding of the markings that does justice to the detailed marking and serves one's personal musical

[98] Ibid, p. 93.

narrative. A good example of such an effort can be found in the Meno Allegro section of the first movement of the *First Symphony*, in which one can find multiple hairpins as well as verbal *cresc.* and *cresc. molto* markings:



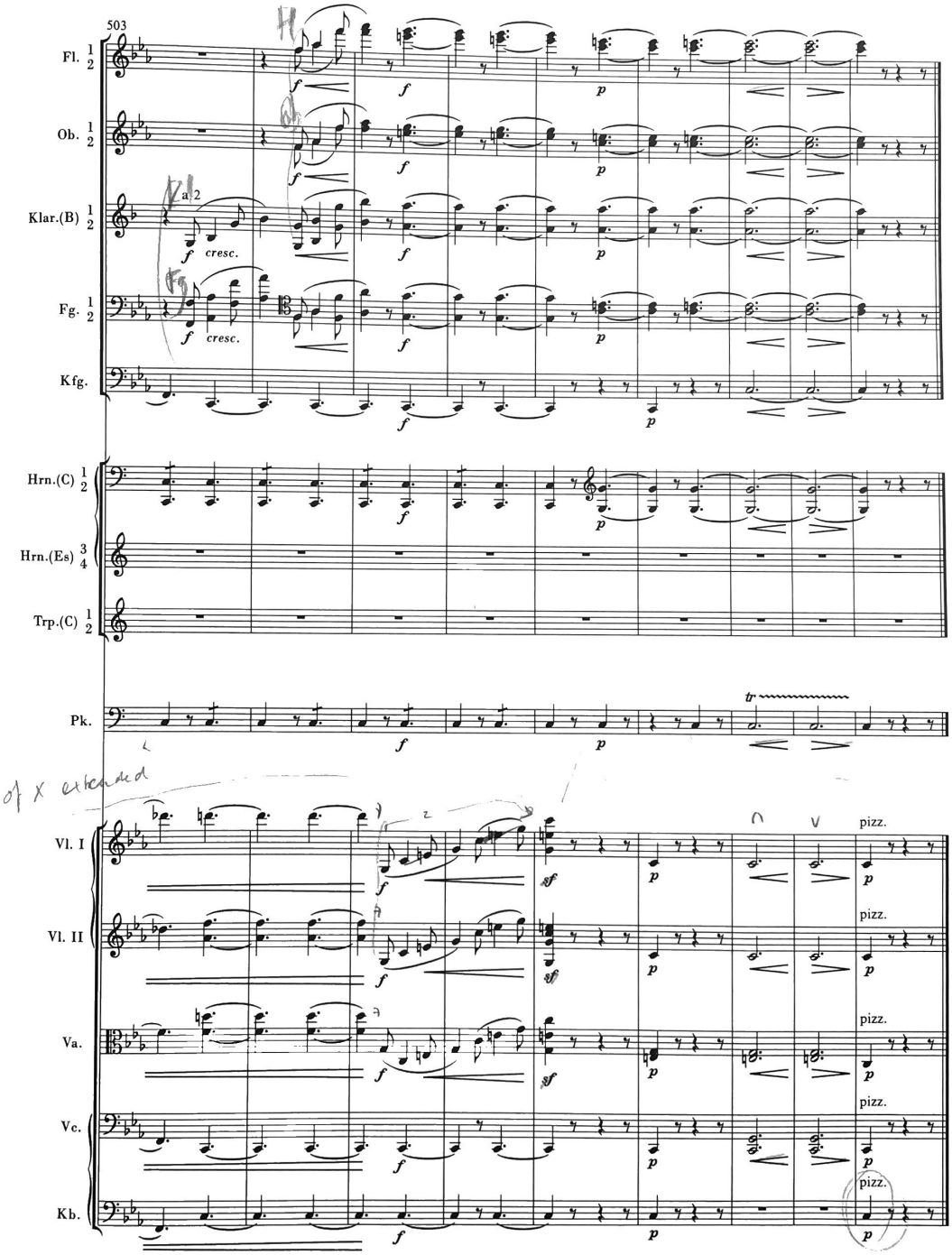


Figure 1.16: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition First Symphony (Score) pages 66-67.

There is, of course, the possible explanation that the added < markings, particularly the ones in bars 502 and 504, are intended as a reminder not to reach the desired dynamic level early, but to keep sufficient room to continue the crescendo towards the end of the line. But I find it unlikely that Brahms would have made the effort to include so many markings (here and

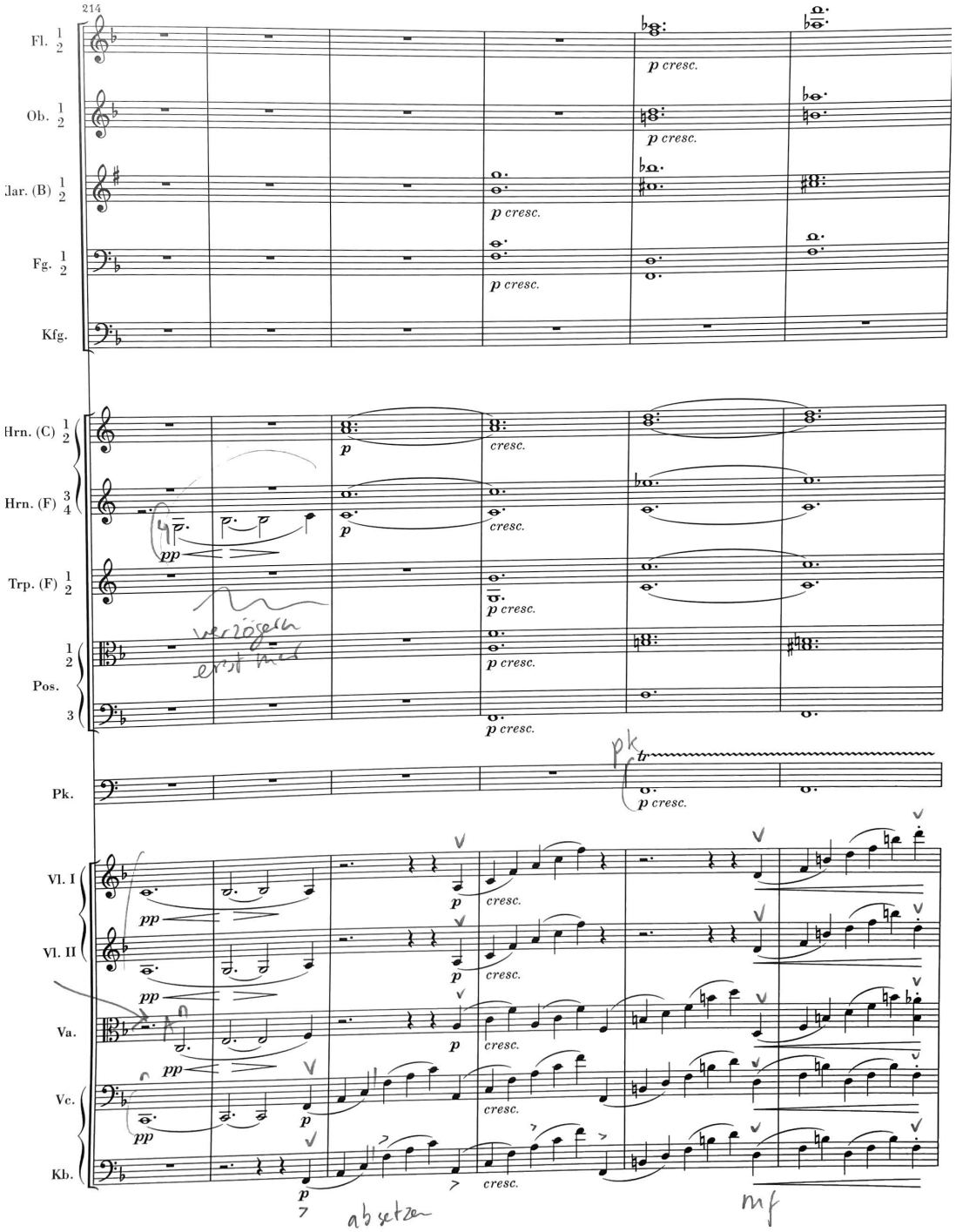
in many other instances in the scores of the symphonies) only to warn against possible miscalculations of crescendos.

My newly found way of reading these hairpins means that I interpret them as signs referring to expression, particularly as a way of signalling direction; a desire to reach a goal (be it a dynamic level such as *forte* or *fortissimo*, or a goal note, sometimes marked by a *sforzato*). Examples of both can be found in the two pages from the *First Symphony* given above. Whether the goal note or the dynamic level is reached with difficulty or with ease determines whether I speed up or slow down in the opening hairpin (see also the discussion of sets of hairpins below). As a rule, I suggest moving forward in <, and relaxing the tempo in >. However, sometimes the opposite works well. In his *Notizen über Beethoven*, German composer Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838) mentions this exact effect:

> Sometimes he [Beethoven] held back the tempo in his crescendo with a ritardando, this created a very beautiful and highly striking effect.[99]

A good example of a place where I tried to achieve this type of expression can be found at the end of the first movement of the *Third Symphony*. Expanding the tempo slightly in the hairpin in bar 219 can serve the purpose of making the listener feel that reaching the top of the mountain in bar 220 requires, in fact, an effort:

[99] Wegeler, F. G. and Ries, F. *Biographische Notizen über Beethoven*. Bädeker, Koblenz, 1838, p. 106. *Mitunter hielt er in seinem **crescendo** mit **ritardando** das Tempo zurück, welches einen sehr schönen und höchst auffallenden Effekt machte.*


214
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Clar. (B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn. (C) 1 2
Hrn. (F) 3 4
Trp. (F) 1 2
Pos. 1 2 3
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
p cresc.
pp
cresc.
verzögern
erst tief
pk
tr
abs etzen
mf

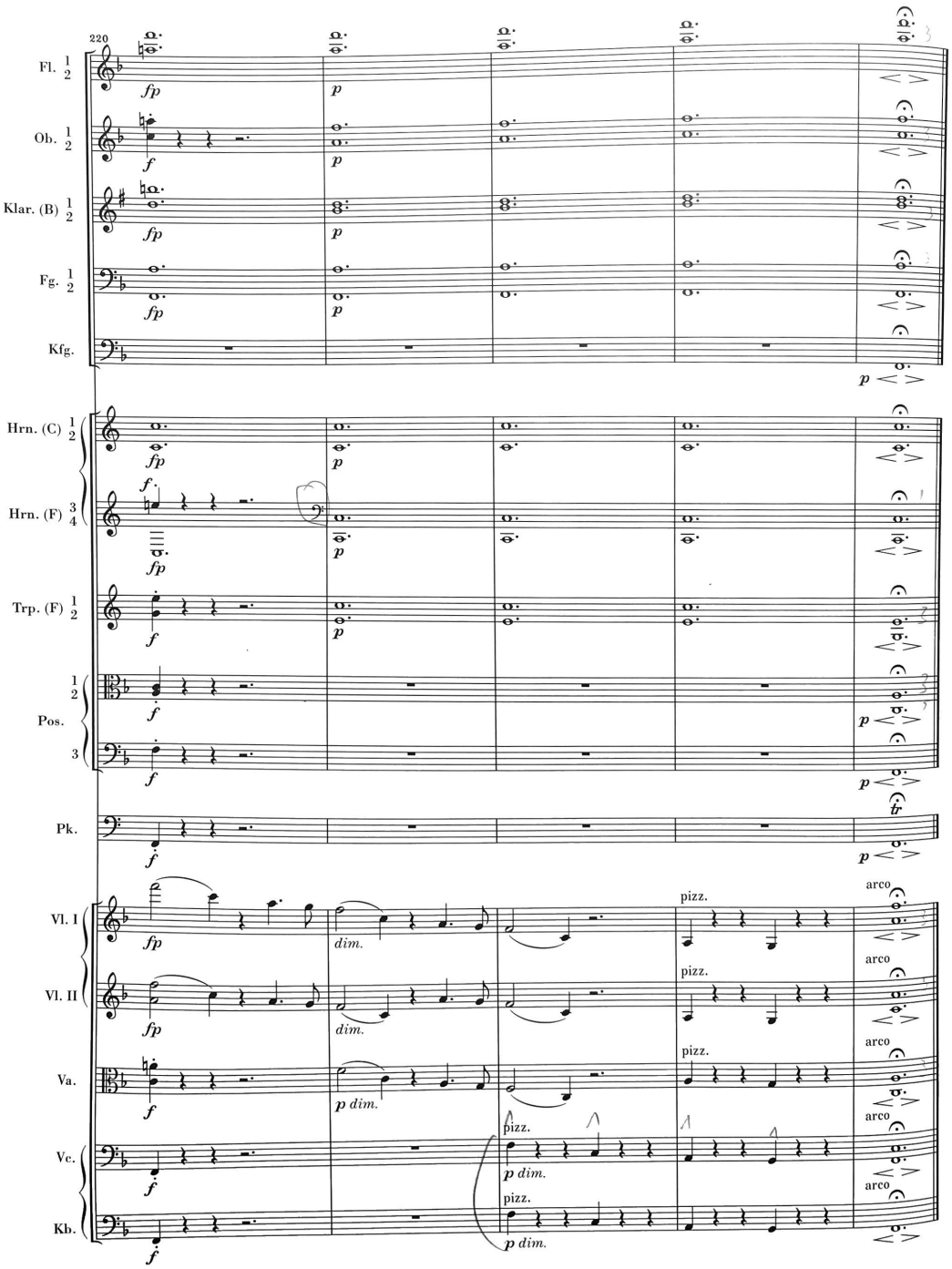


Figure 1.17: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Third Symphony (Score) pages 55-54.

3) Hairpins (<>) markings.

As already discussed in Chapter 1.5, in which some of Blume's remarks on Brahms's *First Symphony* in the Steinbach style are discussed, this sign

suggests expression. It can also imply movement in the same way as the separate hairpins discussed above, as well as agogic accentuation, and sometimes vibrato or portamento to and from the centre of the hairpins. Though moving forward in < and backward in > is in line with most of the historical evidence and works well in practice, I have found that the opposite works better in some cases, as described in the previous section. There is some evidence suggesting that this too is a legitimate way of understanding the historical meaning of hairpins. Blume, for example, describes this technique in the second subject of the first movement of the *First Symphony*, where he adds "breit" to the hairpins in the oboe part and explains that the tempo needs to be broadened in the hairpins.[100]

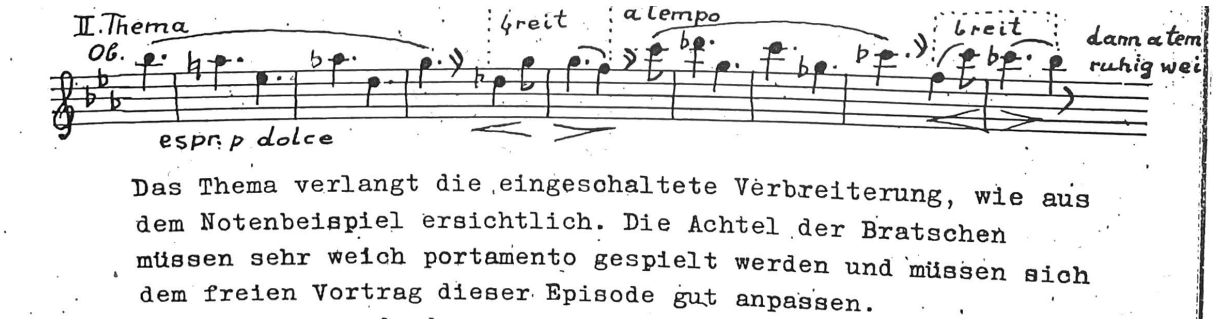


Figure 1.18: Blume page 15.

I see this as further confirmation of the fact that hairpins are indeed principally signs suggesting expression. If this expression requires movement, one can decide which type is most suitable. At the heart of the hairpins, one can usually identify a goal note, which one can highlight using different techniques such as vibrato, lengthening, or extra warmth in the sound.[101] As the sign in itself suggests a certain flow and lacks a vertical orientation point, I think an accent in the style of a sf, or sfz, or > should be avoided in hairpins unless it is specifically notated. Regarding the goal note,

[100] Blume, p. 15. The tempo requires application of a broadening as can be seen in the example. The eighth notes in the violas must be played with weak portamento and should accommodate the free performance of this episode.
[101] This subject is discussed in the section on single hairpins in relation to crescendo markings under section 2 in this chapter.

it is always important to ask whether this note is to be reached easily or with a degree of difficulty. Blume gives a beautiful example for the flute and oboe line, with an easily reached goal note, at the end of the first movement of the *Second Symphony*, as quoted in Chapter 1.5.

In my opinion, one factor relating to the understanding of sets of hairpins has been neglected so far. If one compares the visual impression of hairpins in manuscripts to hairpins in print, the difference is absolutely striking. In the autographs of Beethoven and Brahms, the hairpins jump out and cannot escape the attention of the reader. In print, however, they are often represented so modestly in proportion to the notes that one must make a sincere effort to see them, let alone to feel their importance. In this way, I think the printed editions have made it quite easy for musicians to underestimate the importance of the sets of hairpins as signs suggesting expression. Consider, for example, this passage of Beethoven's *String Quartet* Opus 130 (first movement, bars 122-126) from the autograph:

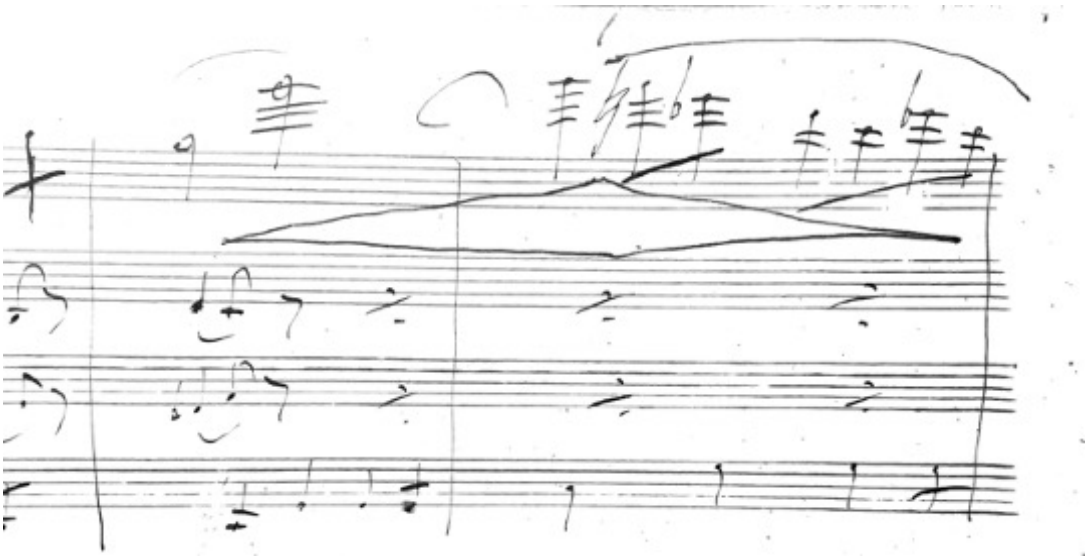


Figure 1.19: Beethoven String quartet op. 130 Bärenreiter facsimile page 19.

And the violin part in the Henle edition of 2007: [102]

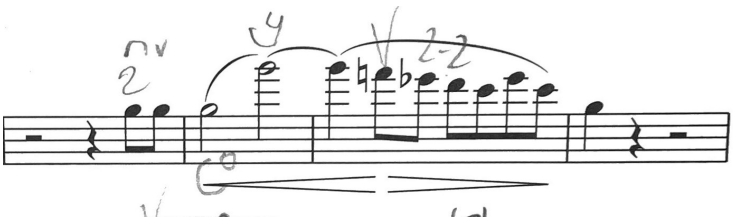
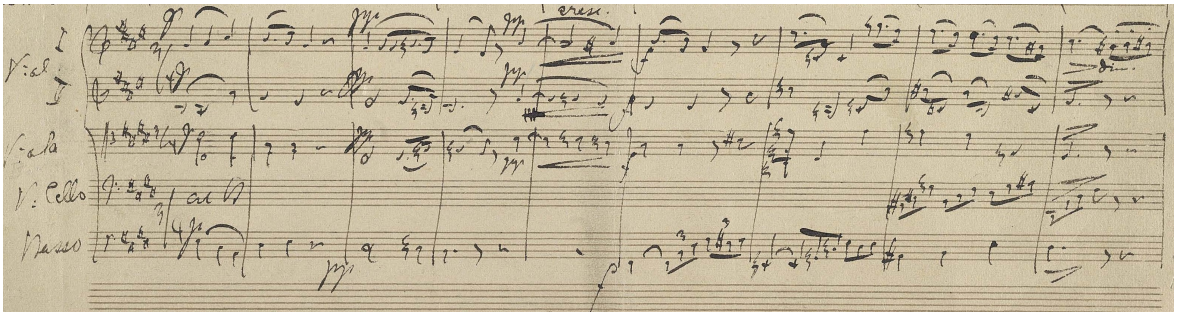


Figure 1.20: Beethoven String quartet op. 130 Henle urtext edition violin part page 4.

Like Beethoven, Brahms also wrote hairpin signs in his scores with rather thick lines that can hardly be overlooked, as this example from the second movement of the *First Symphony* shows (only the lines of the string orchestra). The lines in his hairpins are thicker than the vertical lines in his notes. Their thickness seems to be similar to the horizontal lines Brahms uses to connect the notes in the dotted rhythm on the first beat of bar two for example, or the notes on the second and third beat of bar three in the first violin part. One can also see that the legato slurs are thicker than the vertical lines that are part of the notes:[103]



[102] I think it is noteworthy that Beethoven made an effort to 'close' the hairpins, by linking them together in the middle. In print they are 'opened up' by a slight separation between < and >, as appears to be customary in Urtext editions. Beethoven's notation, which presents the set of hairpins as a single marking instead of two separate ones, suggests a roundness and a wholeness that is lost in the printed translation. In my personal opinion, this unified marking is more suitable to suggest an expressive meaning than the separate hairpins that can more readily be understood as indications of beginnings and endings of a crescendo and a diminuendo.

[103] This example also contains simultaneous use of a (verbal) cresc. and < indication, in the first violins in bar 5.

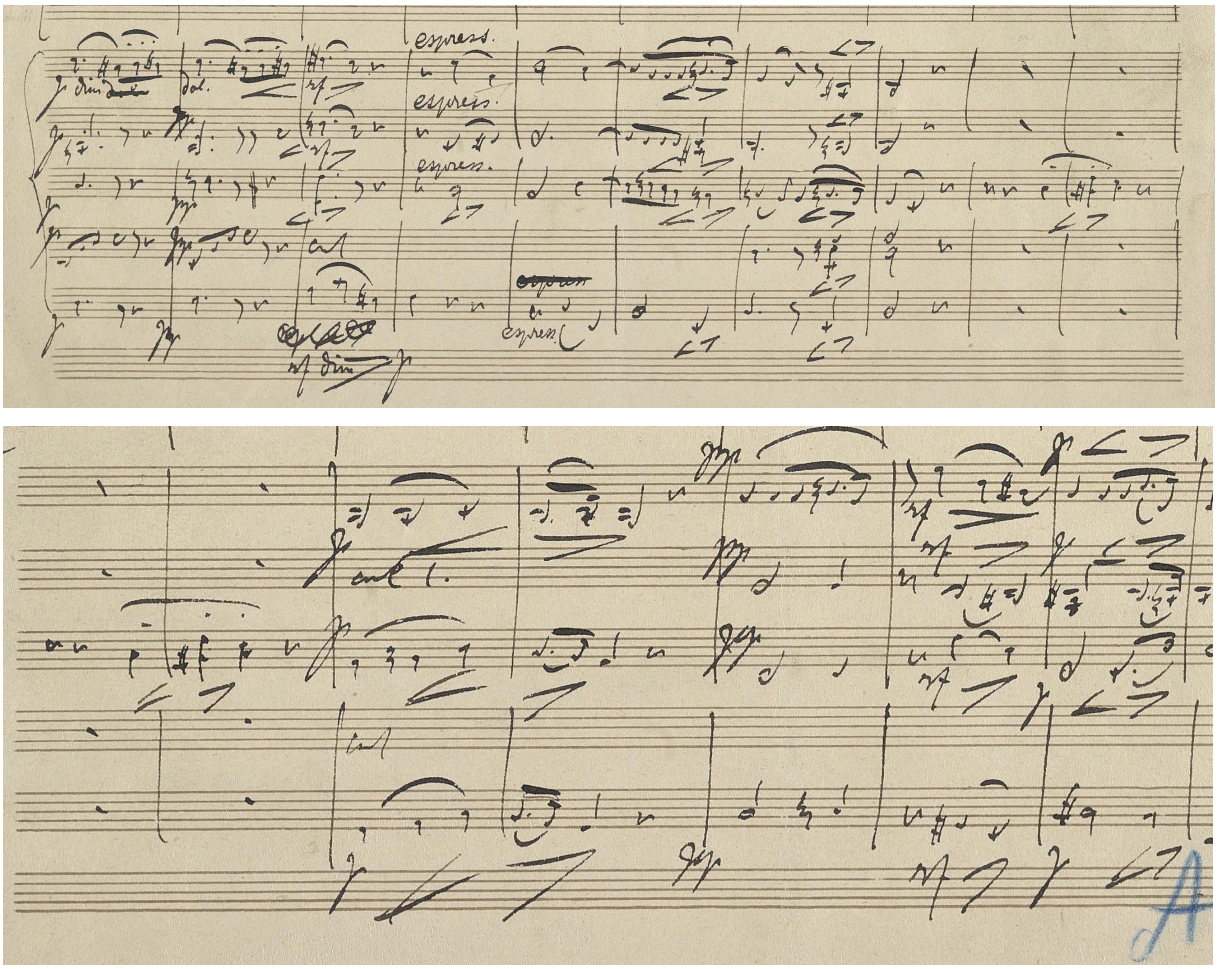


Figure 1.21: Brahms manuscript First Symphony.

These nuances in thickness tend to get lost in print. Thought and effort has been made to reflect the shape of the legato slurs (somewhat thicker in the middle, thinning out at start and finish). The hairpins appear to be printed with thinner lines in the score, as can be seen in this rendition of the third line of the example from the autograph (bars 22-27) in the Henle Urtext score:

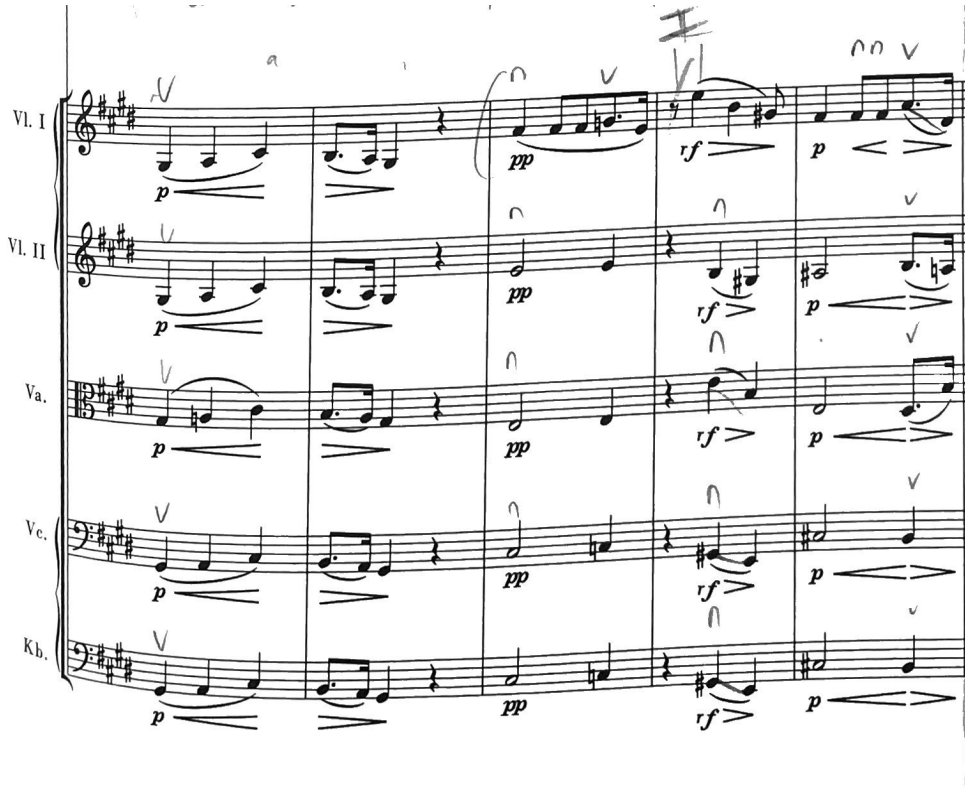


Figure 1.22: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition First Symphony (Score) page 68. (partially shown)

If in the score one might still think that the lines in the hairpins are perhaps a fraction thicker than the ones used as vertical lines in the notes, this does not seem to be the case in the parts on the stands in the orchestra, as the following example from the first violin part of the Henle edition makes clear. The lines in the hairpins appear much thinner in proportion to the notes:

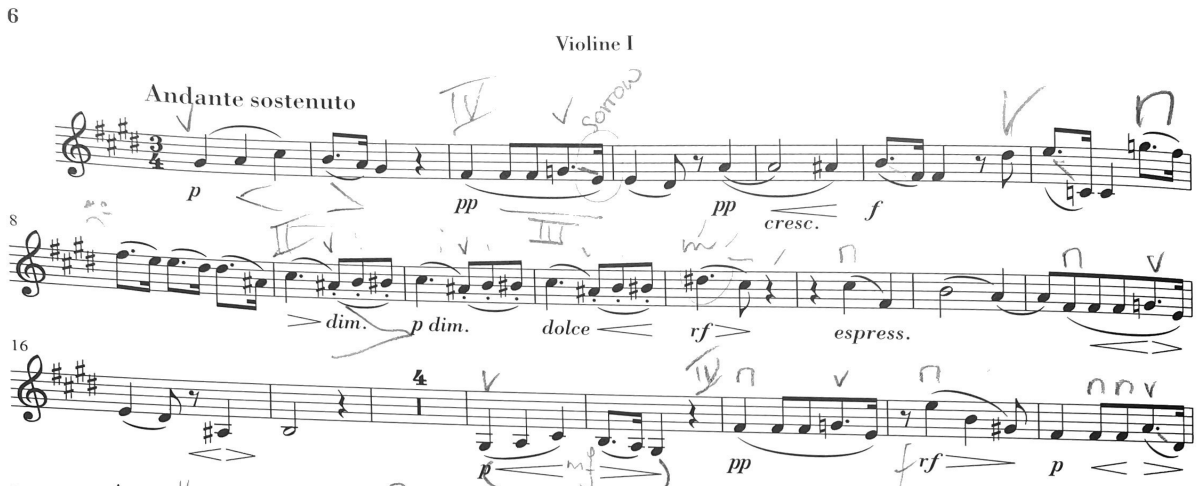


Figure 1.23: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition violin 1 page 6.

I deliberately show an annotated part as used by the players in my orchestra in order to illustrate that even the modest personal markings of the players are visually more present than the printed hairpins. Yet the main point I want to make relates to the limited presence of the printed hairpins in proportion to the notes and other printed information. One can clearly see thinner lines in the hairpins, in each step from manuscript to printed score and part. I would argue that the way they are printed in the parts suggests that they appear to be the least visually impactful of all the markings for dynamics and expression for the musicians. I have prepared each part for the project in September 2022 with handwritten thicker lines for the hairpins.

4) Verbal markings regarding the character of a tempo, a passage, or a theme/melody.

Brahms took great care to suggest the tempo for a movement in words rather than in numbers. To demonstrate this, I want to return one more time to Brahms's answer to Georg Henschel, when he asked him about metronome markings and tempo in *Ein Deutsches Requiem*:

> I think here as well as with all other music the metronome is of no value. As far at least as my experience goes, everybody has sooner or later withdrawn his metronome marks. Those which can be found in my works - good friends talked me into putting them there, for I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together. The so-called 'elastic tempo' is moreover not a new invention. *'Con discrezione'* should be added to that as to many other things. Is this an answer? I know of no better one; but what I do know is that I indicate my tempi (without numbers) modestly, to be sure, but with the greatest care and clearness.[104]

The first part of this quotation about the metronome and the "con discrezione" is often referenced for obvious reasons (as already discussed in Chapter 1.6 on Brahms's assumed preference for a "middle way"), but the last sentence makes clear that Brahms made very serious efforts to find the best possible wording for the tempo characterisation of each movement in

[104] Henschel, *Personal Recollections,* pp. 78-79.

the score. One can surmise, for example from the fact that he changed the markings of the finale of the *First Symphony,* that he sometimes kept searching for the best tempo indication for a long time. When Dessoff premiered the piece, it was marked as "Allegro con brio." Brahms later changed it to "Allegro moderato con brio" and finally to "Allegro non troppo ma con brio." Brahms's titles of the movements of his symphonies are remarkably nuanced: he seldom provides a tempo indication without qualifying it: "Allegro ma non troppo," etc. I will return to the subject of tempo in Chapter 3.6, which contains a list of Brahms's tempo indications for all movement of the symphonies.

It makes sense that the other verbal markings by Brahms in the score must have been equally carefully chosen and, therefore, should be considered very seriously. For me, the most productive way to interpret these nuanced indications has been to ask myself some questions about the markings. What would I have done differently if these nuances had not been added by Brahms, for instance if the movement had simply been called "Presto" rather than "Presto ma non assai"? Another question that I have asked myself relates to how I would want a passage to be played without the indications "animato", "tranquillo", "espressivo" or "ben marcato."

From asking these questions, I have learnt that the nuances implied in these indications fall into two categories: warnings and encouragements. For example, a marking "ma non assai" after Presto is a warning against playing the Presto too fast, whereas indications such as "con anima", "cantando", "tranquillo", or "agitato" suggest doing something extra that is considered necessary for bringing out those qualities or characteristics. This would have naturally included tempo modification for the nineteenth-century musician. Looking at the changed markings of the finale of the *First Symphony*, I would assume that the marking "Allegro moderato" could be read as a suggestion to look specifically for a moderate tempo, whereas the marking Brahms finally chose simply warned against taking the Allegro tempo too fast. A very subtle difference, but one that has clear consequences for the understanding of the tempo and the way one modifies it. As mentioned before, one must keep in mind that there is no way of establishing a baseline, particularly

because Brahms gave very few metronome markings. Although these metronome markings might have been helpful to understand what may have felt "tranquillo", "agitato", or "non troppo" to Brahms, they would not necessarily lead to tempos that would have the same effect on musicians and listeners today. I think one may conclude from Brahms's refusal to provide metronome markings on the one hand, in combination with the great care he took to find the best wordings for his tempo indications on the other, that it was more important to him how a tempo felt than how it could be defined in metrical terms. The verbal tempo and character markings in the symphonies, other than the names of the movements, are:

First Symphony
I, Meno Allegro in bar 495 in the first movement; III, *poco a poco tranquillo* in bar 152 in the third movement; IV, *stringendo poco a poco – a tempo* in bars 8-12; *stringendo molto - in tempo* in bar 18-20; *Più Andante* in bar 30; *f sempre e passionato* in horn and flute solos in bars 30 and 38; *animato* bar 94; *animato* in bar 118; *largamente* in bar 186 with upbeat; *animato* in bar 220; *calando- animato* in bars 297-301; *string.* in bar 383; *Più Allegro* in bar 391 in the Fourth movement.

Second Symphony
I, *cantando* in bar 82; *(quasi ritenente)* in bar 118; *cantando* in bar 350; *cresc. ed un poco stringendo* in bars 461-468; *ritard.* in bars 469-476; *in tempo, ma tranquillo* in bar 477; *poco rit.* – in bars 494-496; *in tempo, sempre tranquillo* in bar 497; *espress. cresc.* in bar 509 in the first movement; II, *(l'istesso tempo ma grazioso)* in bar 33; III, *Presto ma non assai* in bar 33; *Presto ma non assai* in bar 126; *Poco a poco Tempo primo* in bars *190-194* in the third movement; IV, *largamente* in bar 78; *ben marcato*[105] in bar 114; *Tranquillo* in bar 206; *Sempre più tranquillo* in bar 221; *in tempo* in bar 244; *largamente* in bar 281 in the fourth movement.

[105] I have included this marking because in my opinion the marking *ben marcato* can have consequences for the tempo, depending on the circumstances.

Third Symphony
I, *f passionato* in bar 3; *grazioso* in bar 36; *f agitato* in bar 77; *ben marc.* in bar 81; *f agitato* in bar 83; *poco rit.* in bars 109-111; *Un poco sostenuto* in bar 112; *Tempo I* in bar 120; *grazioso* in bar 149 in the first movement; II, *poco rit.* in bar 131 in the second movement; IV, *ben marc.* in bar 93; *ben marc.* in bar 149; *Un poco sostenuto* in bar 267 in the fourth movement.

Fourth Symphony
II, *rit. – in tempo* in bars 109-110; *poco rit.* in bar 112 in the second movement; III, *p grazioso* in bar 52 with upbeat; *pp ma ben marc.* in bar 168; *Poco meno presto* in bar 181; *Tempo I* in bar 199; *ben marc.* in bar 262 in the third movement; IV, *f ben marc.* in bar 25; *ben marc. largamente* in bar 33; *espress. cresc.* in bar 49; *espressivo* in flute in bar 97*; pp. espress.* in trombones in bar 113; *rit.* in bar 128; *poco ritard.* in bars 249-252; *Più Allegro* in bar 253 in the fourth movement.

5) Zones of calm and moving forward (implied not prescribed)

I first came across the German terms *ruhig* and *weiter* when I studied Mengelberg's scores in the context of preparing performances of Mahler's *Fourth Symphony* in 2017. When I looked for Mengelberg's score of the Mahler symphony in the library of the National Music Institute, I saw that the collection also contained his personal scores for all the major orchestral works by Brahms and I ordered copies of all of them. I used Mengelberg's annotations in his Mahler score for performances of that symphony with my orchestra in September 2017. With that experience in mind, I carefully studied his Brahms scores to find out how they might reflect nineteenth-century performances practices and how the annotations related to Mengelberg's recordings of the Brahms Symphonies. In Chapter 1.10 on Mengelberg's Brahms scores, I will look at his Brahms interpretations in more detail. For now, I intend to look at his application of tempo modifications in terms of tempo zones of calm and moving forward, which are unprescribed

by the composer. Mengelberg often includes a capital R or W in his scores.[106] He uses these terms to indicate tempo modifications, with *ruhig* suggesting calm or slowing down and *weiter* moving ahead. *Ruhig* is used in two separate ways, either to suggest a calm tempo for a particular theme or passage, or to suggest relaxing the tempo over the course of a section. Both types can be found in the example below: a moving forward with W and backward with R on page 30, in the 9th and 10th bar after letter A (second and third bars):

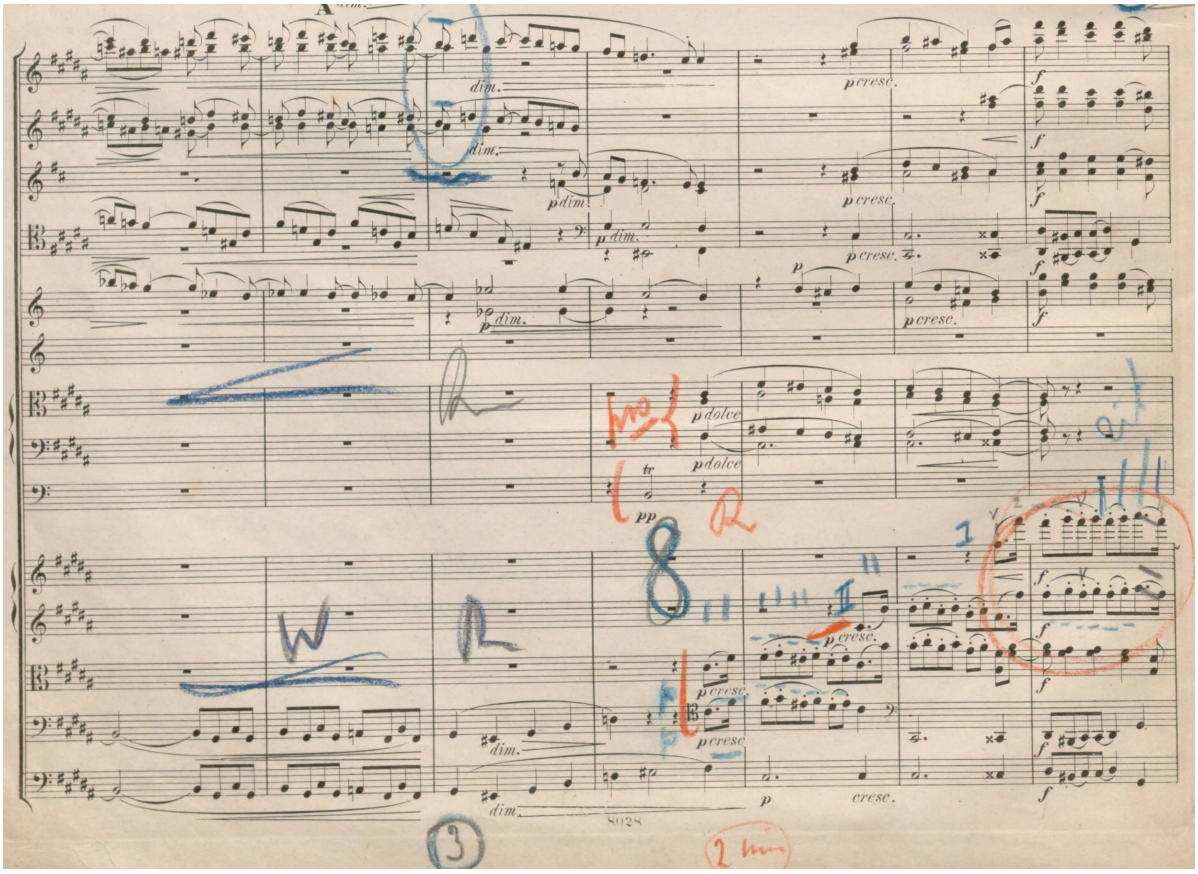


Figure 1.24: Mengelberg's score of the Second Symphony page 30.

And the character indication R appears on the next page at letter B (R "fließend", calm but flowingly):

[106] Mengelberg's full score of the Adagio of the *Second Symphony* can be found on my website: https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Mengelbergs-score-of-the-Adagio-from-Brahmss-Second-Symphony.pdf.

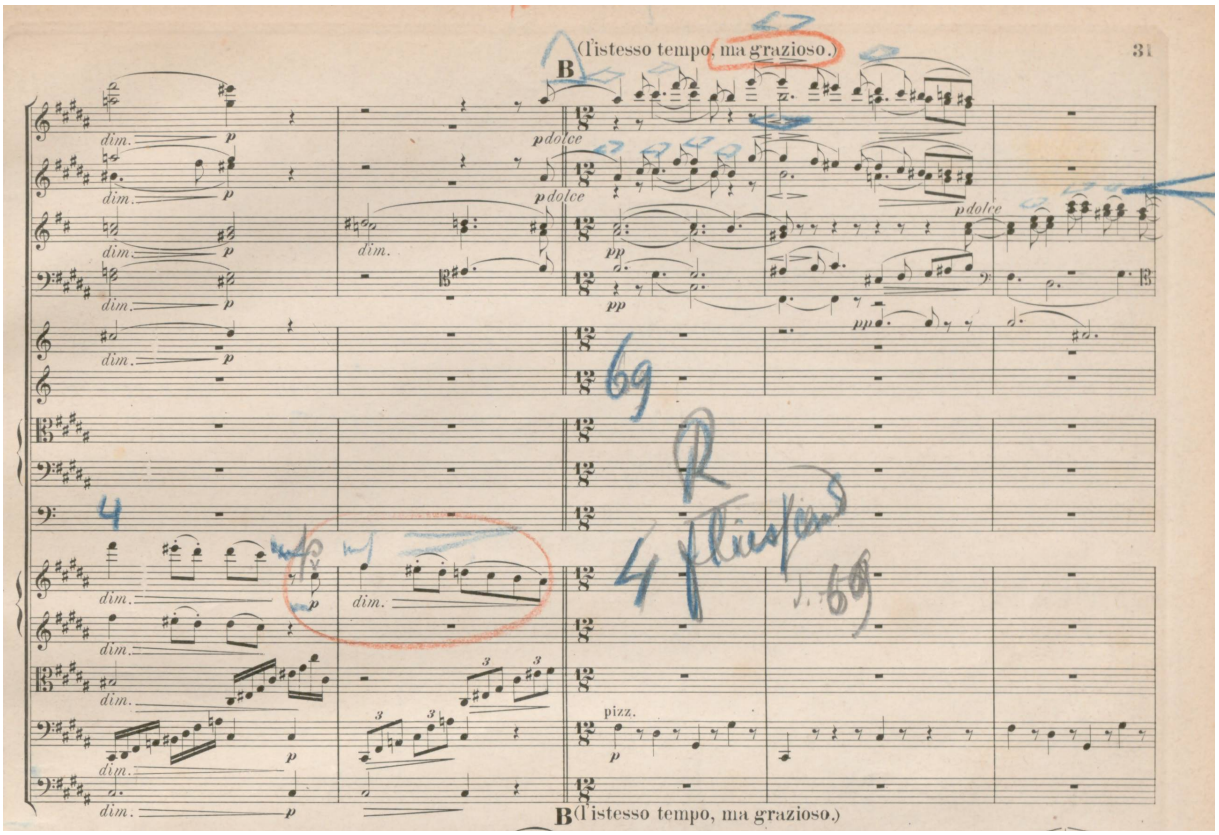


Figure 1.25: Mengelberg's score of the Second Symphony page 33.

These different ways of using R and W as indications of movement correspond with the impression one has when listening to Mengelberg's recordings. He seems always to be moving towards a goal, or to relax after having reached it. This creates a constantly changing tempo and a sense of unpredictability in his performances.

Given the subtle and nuanced descriptions of tempo modification presented in the previous sections, I think that Mengelberg often seemed to use the most obvious tools of clearly noticeable crescendos and diminuendos, accelerandos, and ritardandos in a very outspoken style. Listening to his recordings one can hardly be in doubt about what he does when, and how. Comparing Mengelberg's recordings of orchestral repertoire to the five short pieces Joachim recorded in his seventies in 1903, is arguably of limited relevance, but the Joachim's recordings do provide examples of a subtle style of modification of rhythm and tempo. Ranken writes about the nuanced meaning and use of the terms "ruhig" und "weiter" in the context of her description of the Joachim School and style:

> Besides, not even a novice could fail to hear that 'hurry and drag' did not at all describe the ebb and flow or the dramatic and breathless moments of any Joachim performance any more than they do the still larger movements of nature even when these are wild and convulsive. For behind these, one feels that there is a law of which balance is an essential part. 'Hurry and drag,' on the other hand (as used by musicians), denote a loss of balance. The next thing that began to be apparent was that the words 'vorwärts' (forward) and 'ruhig' (quietly, calmly) did not necessarily apply very much to the actual pace but were primarily descriptive of the mood and character of the section. Thus, although it is unreasonable to make your dwelling-place in paths and passages in whatever sphere these may occur, because they are there only for the purpose of leading you from one point to another, this does not, therefore, make it necessary for you to hurry along them unduly. So, of certain musical 'passages' you were told to go 'forward,' through them, or in other words, simply to keep moving, and this sense of purposeful 'moving' was the essential thing, not the actual pace at which you moved. Conversely, when you came to a section of essential importance where a statement of the subject-matter of the piece occurred, you had to convey the impression of dwelling on it, of resting there for a time – this being one of the goals of your journey. The word 'ruhig' conveyed this impression, as also the lyric mood of a great many second subjects to which it was generally applied. Since these second subjects always come after a transition section, the contrast between the 'vorwärts' movement which is concerned in getting from one place to another, and the movement which is a purpose in itself as it is, for instance, in a dance, was more easy to demonstrate here than elsewhere.[107]

Ranken proposes that understanding *ruhig* and *weiter* involves much more than just tempo and relates principally to the mood and character of the music. She goes on to explain a key factor in the way one can experience tempo, which could be described as the frequency of moments of vertical orientation in relation to the beat/pulse of the music. I find Ranken's explanation of the way in which the frequency of accents relates to the sense of either movement and direction or dwelling particularly important, as it opens up a way of experiencing the same tempo as faster or slower, depending on the number of accents within it:

> Whether these opposite impressions can be conveyed entirely without change of speed will have to be decided by each player on each occasion, but in any case, a great deal can be done by the treatment of accent alone. Thus, one

[107] Ranken, *Some Points of Violin Playing,* p. 117.

> single impulse, like the push to a wheeled vehicle, can convey you along a straight passage or path, but on the threshold of a dwelling-place, purpose, and movement at once become less straight ahead, and for each turn and twist there is needed another push and another impulse. So, in the transition section the fewer the accents the more you get the impression of passing on to something important, and the greater number of bars that can be passed over without emphasis, the more you are prepared for the final climax which does not occur until the appearance of the new subject. If by undue emphasis a climax is made before this point and the impetus is thus checked, the subject, when it does appear, enters lamely and without clear purpose. When, however, ushered in dramatically by a great player the impression given is that a new personality, whose appearance first makes one pause and on whom one's attention then settles down and dwells restfully, has come onto the stage.[108]

I use the idea of *ruhig* and *weiter* for tempo modification but, inspired by Ranken's remarks, I now always investigate whether the sense of calm or moving on is best created by modifying the number of accents (moments of vertical orientation) or by a change of tempo. This can be applied both in situations with local consequences, specifically around sets of hairpins and accents, but also on a larger scale involving deviations from the basic tempo over a number of bars or a longer passage. It is noteworthy that Ranken connected the use of tempo modification to the structure of a piece, particularly in light of criticisms of so-called structuralist performance practice. I will return to this subject in Chapter 1.8 on the work of Dr. Otto Klauwell (1851-1917). Ranken also describes the use of *ruhig* in connection with the characterisations of second subjects, which I will address below under point 6, the last kind of modification of tempo I will discuss.

6) Characterisation of particular themes or subjects

In the context of an approach that allows for much greater fluctuation of tempi, which is the natural result of using all the tools mentioned thus far, it is entirely consistent with the sources to modify the tempo of particular themes and subjects. Introducing modifications of tempo by, for example,

[108] Ibid p. 118.

taking second subjects with a lyrical character a little slower, as suggested by Ranken, creates a need for flexible tempo elsewhere if one wants to avoid sudden changes in tempo that might be experienced as undermining the sense of unity that was so important to people like Steinbach.

When it comes to applying the ideas of *ruhig* and *weiter* in terms of modifying of tempo connected with crescendo and diminuendo indications, and to tempo modification as a tool for characterising particular themes and subjects, there is some evidence that one's intuition will not necessarily guide one in the right direction. In his chapter on metronome markings and tempo in *Performing Brahms*, Bernard D. Sherman provides a list of measured tempi and timings in 23 different pre- and post-World War II recordings of the first movement of Brahms's *Second Symphony.* [109] He does so to show how tempi and durations developed over the course of the twentieth century. By comparing tempi at various moments in recordings of the movement, Sherman concludes that the conductors accelerated the tempo in the pre-1946 recordings more than their colleagues in the post-war recordings. This is a particularly important conclusion, as it suggests that the tradition of speeding up beyond and above the basic tempo all but vanished in contemporary orchestral performance practices while the tradition of slowing down survived. This prompted me to actively search for opportunities for acceleration. Sherman's conclusion reminded me of something Bernard Haitink (1929-2021) shared about the difference between conducting Brahms symphonies with the great international symphony orchestras he used to work with and with the much smaller Chamber Orchestra of Europe, with whom he recorded some live performances in the Royal Albert Hall.[110] He mentioned how "conducting Brahms symphonies with the great orchestras can be like walking a dog that wants to stop at every tree." Speaking from my much lower level of personal experience as a conductor, I can confirm that slowing down an orchestra in Brahms is much

[109] Sherman, B. D. "Metronome marks, timings, and other period evidence regarding tempo in Brahms" in *Performing Brahm*s, p. 119.
[110] Bernard Haitink and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe performing Brahms's *Fourth Symphony* live recording Proms 2011: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QLuYj2jxoc. (Last accessed November 2022).

easier than accelerating the tempo. Orchestras seem much more able react in a unified manner to gestures suggesting slowing down than to those suggesting speeding up. When it comes to evaluating the results of my own recordings, I cannot help but notice that my ear welcomed moments of relaxation much more readily than moments of forward movement, certainly at the beginning of my project. My perceptions have changed, however, through exploring opportunities to accelerate the tempo during the past few years. I now often feel impatient when I listen to performances where a tempo does not move forward for extended periods of time. At the same time, I must confess that even with this new perspective, I still find it harder to connect emotionally with the effect of moving forward than with that of relaxing the tempo. I feel that I have to compensate for my late-twentieth-century training that has taught me to distrust the excitement and unrest that result from acceleration and to appreciate moments of calm more readily. Thus, applying modifications of tempo in a style that Brahms may have been familiar with may require an effort to embrace accelerandi as much as rallentandi, even if this initially seems counterintuitive.

The other main category of modifications is the modification of rhythm. As discussed in Chapter 1.5, modifications of rhythm are often closely related to those of tempo. In Chapter 1.1, I quoted Brown, who, in his 2020 edition of the *Beethoven Violin Sonatas,* discussed three types of rhythms that were presumably performed differently than the strict reading of the music would suggest to a modern musician. Such deviations from the text relate to slurred figures, successive notes of the same length, and dotted figures.[111] In their publication on *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms's Chamber Music*, Clive Brown, Neal Peres Da Costa and Kate Bennett Wadsworth do not address the subject of modification of rhythm in any separate chapter or section of their contributions. But they agree that the historical evidence suggests that Brahms would have expected performers to perform rhythms in his music in a flexible manner.[112]

[111] Brown, *Beethoven Sonatas for Pianoforte and Violin.* pp. XIV-XV.
[112] Brown, C., Peres Da Costa, N., Bennett Wadsworth, K. *Performance Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music.* Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2015.

Listening carefully to my project orchestra, I was struck by the thought that the unevenness in sound of the nineteenth-century instruments can be used to stimulate a freer interpretation of the printed rhythms. The most obvious effect, to my ear, is in the natural horns, where the difference between stopped and open notes, which Brahms used so imaginatively, can serve as an example of how some notes of equal value in print can sound quite different in performance. On the period woodwind instruments too, some notes sound much more open than others. Experimenting with ways of using these types of unevenness in sound, in combination with unevenness of rhythm, to create expressive shapes and sounds that serve the chosen musical narrative is much more in line with the historical evidence on modification of rhythm than efforts to produce an equal sound on every note. On string instruments, the use of portamento and incidental (as opposed to continuous) vibrato are also sources of unevenness in sound that have a clear relationship to the issue of rhythmical unevenness of notes which, on paper, would appear to have the same value or length.

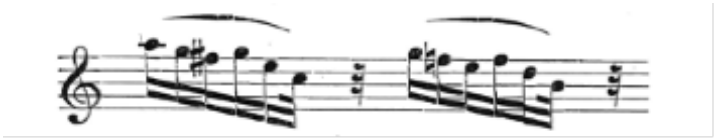
Considering all these factors and looking at the practical experience of applying modifications of rhythm with the project orchestra, I have come to the following list of opportunities for its use, beginning with the three types described by Brown in his introduction to the *Beethoven Violin Sonatas*:

Five types of modification of rhythm

1) Slurred figures

Brown writes that Brahms and his German contemporaries would almost certainly have expected some inequality in rhythm when it came to the execution of paired eighth notes, lengthening the first at the expense of the second. As I showed in Chapter 1.5, Blume often adds short rests in between groups of slurred notes, suggesting a shortening of the last note under the slur. This seems perfectly in line with what Brahms wrote to Joachim in a letter about the *Violin Concerto*, namely that slurred pairs of eighth notes required a short articulation after the second note and that a similar style might be applied to final notes of longer groups. Brahms's choice of words is

remarkably nuanced, and leaves room for the free interpretation of notes under a legato slur:

> By the way, I think that the slur over multiple notes does not take anything away from the duration of any of them. It means legato and one applies it by group, period or mood. Only when the slur is over two notes does it take from the second:
>
> 
>
> In case of larger groups of notes:
>
> 
>
> This would be a freedom and a subtlety in the performance, which would mostly be appropriate. Such considerations are of no use for me, but you have the broom in your hand, and we have a lot to sweep.[113]
>
> Figure 1.26: Moser *Johannes Brahms in Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim* page 153.

Brahms makes clear that unequal note value is a given in paired eighth notes as far as he is concerned. But he prefers to leave the decision to shorten the last note of larger groups of notes to the performer, and he does remark that it would be appropriate to shorten them in most cases. Brahms's remark, in my opinion, opens the door to a less literal reading of slurred notes of equal length in general. The fact that he preferred to leave the choice for such a reading to the performer, in combination with the suggestions by Blume to emphasise certain (same length) notes under a slur, encourages me to look

[113] Moser, A. *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim.* Deutschen Brahms-Verlag, Berlin, 1908. Zweiter Band, p. 153. *Nebenbei noch meine ich, dass der Bogen über mehreren Noten keiner derselben etwas an Wert nimmt. Es bedeutet legato, und man zieht ihn nach Gruppe, Periode oder Laune. Nur über zwei Noten nimmt er der letzten: (see example in English text) Bei größeren Notengruppen: (see example in the English text) Wäre das eine Freiheit und Feinheit im Vortrag, die allerdings meistens am Platz ist.*

for opportunities to shape notes under a single legato slur unequally. In concurrence with Blume's suggestion under point 4 below, I do not limit my efforts to paired eighth notes, or even to the last note of a slur over more than two notes. For example, if groups of eighth notes are to be played in the context of an accelerando, playing each consecutive eighth note under the slur a bit shorter than its predecessor, will help create a flow.

2) Successive notes of equal length

Brown writes that successive notes of equal length were almost never played equally, and that these notes would have been varied depending on harmonic tension, their place in the bar (weak or strong beat), and agogic emphasis. Blume does not write at length about this but, as discussed in Chapter 1.5, he often writes that in passages of notes of equal length some notes are to be played longer, or with more emphasis, than others, effectively creating unevenness between them. Also, in the third example from his remarks on the *Fourth Symphony* in Chapter 1.5, Blume states clearly that each of the accented notes (5 consecutive quarter notes) should get the same emphasis *(gleichmäßig betonte Viertel).* The fact that he mentions it as a special effect makes it clear that musicians tended not to apply equal emphasis on consecutive notes of equal value without specific instructions to do so.

3) Dotted rhythms

Musicians applied a wide range of interpretative freedom to the execution of dotted rhythms, depending on the character or structure of a piece or passage. The characterisation can be enhanced by exaggerating the printed rhythm, for example by shortening the short notes in dotted rhythms to avoid softening the rhythm by turning the pattern into triplets. In his suggestions for the third movement of the *First Symphony*, Blume writes about a rhythmic exaggeration:

> The woodwind players should treat their 16th notes as 32nds rather than sloppily play them as triplets.[114]

In Brahms, I believe that it is important to make a clear distinction between the dotted rhythms that can be somewhat freely interpreted, and those that appear simultaneously with eighth notes or triplets in an accompaniment or other layers of the music. In the first case, these considerations can purely revolve around characterisation of the melody or line in question. But in rhythmically multi-layered situations, one needs to consider the effect of the rhythmical patterns in the other voices. A good example of this may be found at letter D in the second movement of the *Second Symphony*, where Brahms mixes eighth notes in 12/8 with dotted rhythms in common time. The example below shows the passage in Mengelberg's score:[115]

[114] Blume, p. 25. *Die Holzbläser behandeln ihre Sechzehntel lieber als 32stel, als dass sie nach der Triolen-Seite hin schlampen.*

[115] Mengelberg's grey pencil markings above the first violin line at letter D seem to suggest that he intended to beat eighth notes in common time, or at least thought of the rhythm here in binary terms.

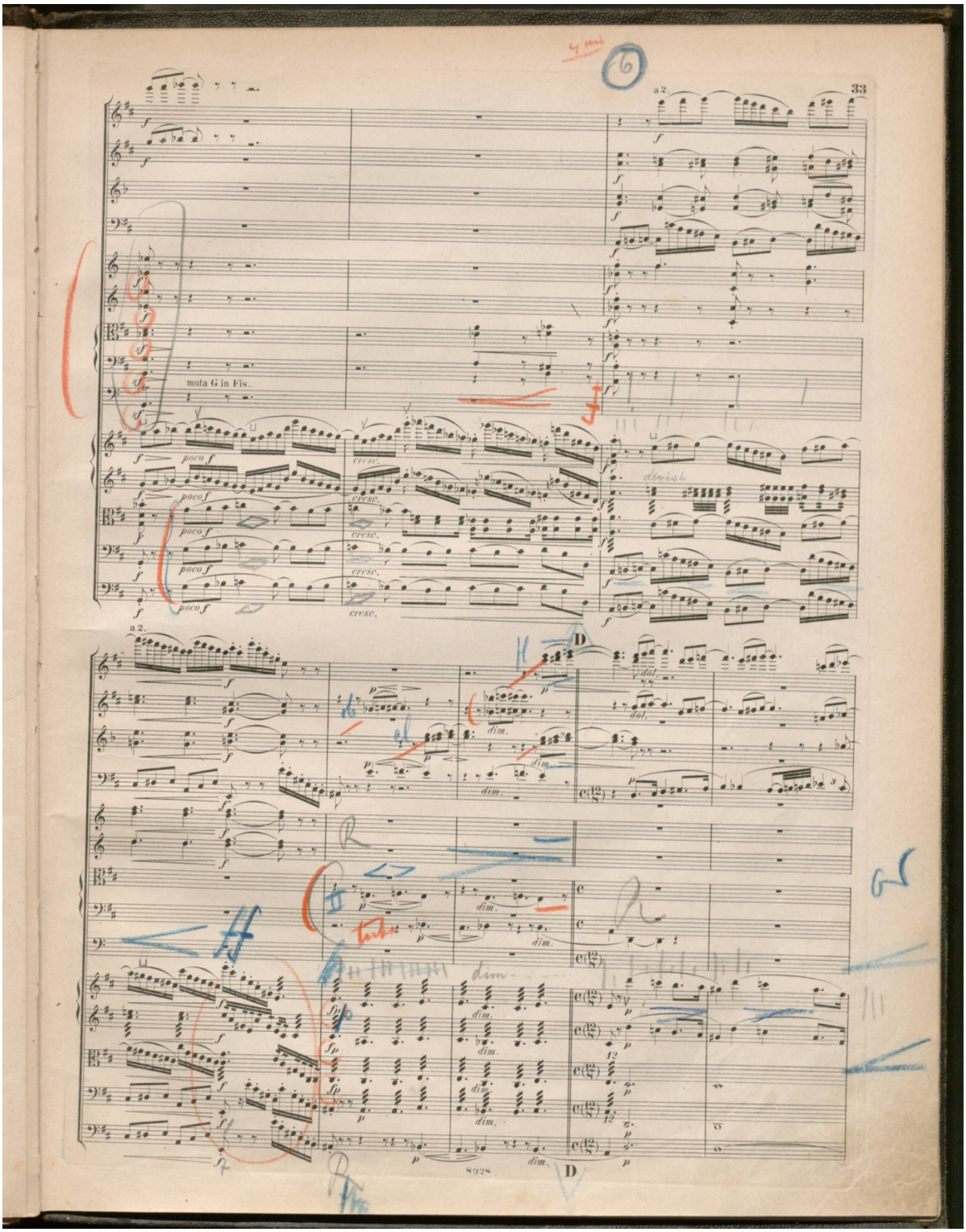


Figure 1.27: Mengelberg's score of the Second Symphony page 33.

It makes sense that Brahms, who often used simultaneous 2 against 3 or 3 against 4 rhythms, expected them to be played in such a way as to ensure that the multi-layered effect would be realised. This works best if one exaggerates the individual rhythms (very even triplets against (slightly) over-

dotted rhythms). In situations where there are no multi-layered effects to consider, performers can choose all sorts of subtle modifications of dotted rhythms, depending on their understanding of the character of the melody or figure in question. Shortening the short note in the dotted rhythm (veering towards double dotting) can result in extra liveliness and lengthening the short note (towards triplets) can bring smoothness or relaxation of the character. Klauwell pointed to a possible difference between dotted rhythms of melodic and rhythmic nature – this is something I will discuss in Chapter 1.8. on Klauwell's rules for modification.

4) Agogic emphasis of individual notes

As discussed in Chapter 1.5, Blume wrote extensively about the agogic accentuation of individual notes, especially those that are connected to other notes through a slur. The technique of applying these agogic accents, for example on the top notes in a melody, can involve lengthening of them, though one often also sees warnings against using that tool, emphasising the importance of other means of highlighting individual notes through added warmth of sound instead (see also Chapter 1.8).

5) Hairpins

I have already discussed hairpins in Chapter 1.5 and in this Chapter under point 3 of the tempo modifications. I return to them here to emphasise the fact that the technique of speeding up in the < part of hairpins and slowing down in the > part (or, as discussed above, sometimes the opposite) involves modifying the rhythm as it affects the lengths of the notes in question. It constitutes another example of the intricate connection between modifications of rhythm and tempo, especially if one considers various opinions on the need to make up for the lost time within the bar or the phrase.

Conclusion

The concept of tempo as a constantly changing, living thing that can be present in the background of a performance must guide the use of these tools for modifying rhythm and tempo. There is a danger in presenting these tools item by item because it can create the impression that they can be used separately or that one can pick and choose. By their very nature, however, these tools must be considered and felt or experienced in conjunction with each other, so that the listener experiences each movement or even each symphony as a whole. In applying these tools, it is important to look for opportunities to counter the effects of one's training and conditioning as a twenty-first century musician, particularly when it comes to accelerating the tempo, which musicians trained in the second half of the twentieth century have learned to mistrust more than slowing down the tempo.

My default position as a performer has shifted over the course of my research. In the first year, I thought of a fundamental tempo that would be rather present in the foreground. Within the framework of this fundamental tempo, I applied what I felt were necessary modifications. In the second year, I prepared my scores and orchestral parts in such a way that I marked all the modifications I wanted to implement in the performances. I soon realised that they were so plentiful that there were not many places in which I intended to leave the tempo alone. In my preparations for the project week of the third year, it also became obvious that I was not making a serious enough effort to apply modification of rhythm. I began to discover the connection between modifications of rhythm and of tempo, as explained in Chapter 1.5 on Blume's writings, and I changed my default position to one in which any idea of a fundamental tempo would only exist in the background. In the fourth year I have striven to weave a web of micro and macro modifications, unrestrained by measurements against a fixed tempo.

This entire process has altered my understanding of the way my intuition guides me as a performing musician. In Chapter 2.1, concerning my role as a conductor, I will write about the connection between my changing artistic principles and my intuition. For now, I would simply like to point out

that in practice it is not possible (for me) to process a complete rationalisation of each separate consideration regarding modifications of rhythm and tempo in performance or even in rehearsal. Instead, I try to familiarise myself with the new concepts concerning this expressive tool and others in a way that permits me to work with them in an intuitive manner. This familiarisation is much more a process of moulding melodies and phrases in my mind than of actual (instrumental) practice or theoretical consideration. How far my intuitive way of working with these newly re-invented expressive tools and changing perspectives is actually reflected in the recordings will be investigated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

1.8 Klauwell's Rules, Further Contextualisation of My Approach

My work with the project orchestra in 2019, 2020 and 2021 has been based on an approach in which I apply modifications based on historical evidence in an intuitive way. After Clive Brown first introduced me to Otto Adolf Klauwell's book *On Musical Execution* in October 2021, I initially felt somewhat disappointed at encountering such a rich and specific source only after finishing the first three programmes of my project.[116] Yet I soon realised that this also offered a unique opportunity, as it enabled me to see whether or not my research and intuition had led me in a direction that would correspond with Klauwell's very specific instructions in his book. Klauwell, a pianist, music writer and composer, studied with Carl Reinecke (1824-1910) and Ernst Friedrich Richter (1803-1879) at the Leipzig Conservatory. He became a teacher at the Cologne Conservatory in 1871 and its deputy director in 1905. In 1883, Klauwell published a book on musical performance in which he provided an extensive list of suggestions as to when to use modifications of tempo. While most examples in his book are taken from the piano repertoire, I consider that much of what he writes also applies to orchestral performances. Klauwell's teacher Carl Reinecke, after all, was not only one of the most important pianists of the nineteenth century, but also the conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig from 1860 to 1895. It is plausible that the aesthetics concerning modification of tempo in piano playing and orchestral performance are closely related. Someone like Hans von Bülow, for instance, also considered his work as a conductor to be, in large part, an extension of his work as a pianist.

Anna Scott, Neal Peres Da Costa and others have conducted extensive research into the use of modifications of rhythm and tempo by pianists whom Brahms directly influenced or whom he regarded highly. Their work not only shows modifications in line with Klauwell's suggestions from his writings, but also types of modifications that differed from Klauwell's rules.

[116] Klauwell, O. *Der Vortrag in der Musik. Versuch einer systematischen Begründung desselben zunächst rücksichtlich des Klavierspiels*. Verlag von J. Guttenberg (D. Collin), Berlin, 1883. English translation: *On Musical Execution.* Schirmer, New York, 1980, p. 9.

Peres Da Costa concludes, for instance, that the written sources provide copious evidence of keyboard dislocation and arpeggiation throughout the nineteenth century, which would lead one to assume they were implicated in tempo modification.[117] While Klauwell discussed these subjects elsewhere in his book, however, they are not included in his list of modifications. One might assume from this that dislocation and arpeggiation do not necessarily belong to the domain of tempo modification. At the same time, though, one might also argue that these tools were such a natural part of the Reinecke/Klauwell way of playing that Klauwell simply saw no need to include them in a list of tools specifically intended for modification.

In her dissertation *Romanticizing Brahms*, Anna Scott offers a detailed analysis of different performance styles in contemporaneous Brahms playing through the work of pianists like Adelina de Lara (1872-1961) and Ilona Eibenschütz (1871-1967). She studies the styles of playing of pianists Brahms knew and highly valued by playing in their style herself, and even copying them in detail. In doing so, she illustrates, among other things, that each contemporaneous style of playing Brahms contained a multitude of details that are difficult to express in words. Her findings show a different style of playing, very free and dynamic in nature, yet closely related to the recorded playing of the historical examples.[118] Comparing other nineteenth-century pianistic performance styles to Klauwell's rules can help one understand that these rules, though presented as a comprehensive list, cannot serve to lay down a complete roadmap to nineteenth-century pianistic performance, and certainly are not a comprehensive guide to a Brahmsian style of piano playing, if such a thing could even exist.

Klauwell's rules and the formal way in which he presents his ideas remind me of Bülow's characterisation of the Leipzig style of performance. As discussed in Chapter 1.2, he deemed Leipzig to be "the capital of pigtails and wigs that know nothing of the romantic Beethoven." Since Reinecke was

[117] Peres Da Costa, N. "Performing Practice in Piano Playing" in *Performance Practice in Johannes Brahms's Chamber Music.* Bärenreiter-Verlag, Karlsruhe, 2015.
[118] Scott, A. "Romanticizing Brahms." PhD diss., Leiden University, 2014.

such an influential musician in Leipzig and given the fact that Klauwell was his pupil, I think one can assume that Klauwell's rules are at least somewhat representative of the Leipzig style of performance. If Bülow's characterisation of that style is even remotely accurate, it is clear that it was not necessarily close to Brahms's free and elastic style, as described earlier. Yet Klauwell's list remains a unique late nineteenth-century source of information about the application of modification before the age of audio recording. On the title page of his book, Klauwell uses the same quote from Goethe's *Faust* that Brahms used in his letter to Otto Dessoff, which translates as "if you don't feel it, you will never grasp it." This not only gives a welcome hint as to how to understand Klauwell's systematic writing style, but it also suggests that he had the element of valuing "emotional understanding" in common with Brahms. I have looked at Klauwell's list, point by point, to see if and how these rules might correspond to my recordings of the first three projects. Except for a few rules that seem designed specifically for pianists, most of his rules can be applied directly to orchestral performance as well. For each of these, I have briefly referred to my application of the rule. These are intended only to indicate briefly how my style of applying modifications relates to Klauwell's writing, not to give a full account of my modifications. I present my discussion of examples of modifications in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, in the form of 14 films with musical examples.

KLAUWELL'S RULES ON MODIFICATION. [119]

> *1) The beginning of a composition should always be performed with marked clearness, and consequently at times with greater breadth.*

In my recording, the tempo of the opening of the first movement of the *Second Symphony* is, for instance, slower than the main tempo of the overall movement. I found this approach in all of the six historical recordings that I

[119] The following 21 rules appear on pages 9-57 of Klauwell's book. The English may sometimes appear to be somewhat awkward, but it is directly quoted from the book.

studied in my essay "In Search of Traces of Steinbach," and in all of the recordings examined by Sherman as discussed in Chapter 1.7.[120]

> *2) The so-called second theme, in all sonatas and pieces of similar construction, is to be taken somewhat slower wherever it expresses a more tranquil contrast to a first theme of lively rhythm.*

In my recordings of the first movements of the *First*, *Second*, and *Third Symphonies*, I have indeed taken the second subject somewhat more calmly than the first. Ranken also mentions this type of modification as something commonly applied at the time.

> *3) The long passages, frequently introduced between the second theme and the close, must move, in contradistinction to the preceding portions, in a somewhat more lively tempo.*

I also applied this rule in my recordings of the first movements of the first three symphonies.

> *4) The closing periods of the several parts must, in nearly every case, be rendered with modified tempo, either retarding or accelerating the same.*

In my recording and in most of the historical recordings I studied, the first movement of the *First Symphony* contains a faster closing period. The closing period of the first movement of the *Second Symphony* constitutes an example of a calmer tempo.

> *5) Variations must modify their tempo according to their character, even where the composer gives no special directions.*

There are no examples of variation movements so far in my recordings. Brahms does give a new tempo indication for each of the variations in his

[120] Leertouwer "In search of sounding evidence of traces of Fritz Steinbach's approach to Brahms's Second Symphony", June 2021, https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/In-search-of-sounding-evidence-of-traces-of-Fritz-Steinbachs-approach-to-Brahmss-Second-Symphony-31-05-2020-revised-15-06-2021.pdf.

Haydn Variations though, and Blume also suggests some further characterisations and tempo indications.

> *6) The immediate repetition of a section must be rendered with a change of tempo, as a rule somewhat broader (more expressive).*

The same 4 bars are repeated in the agitato section in the close of the exposition in the first movement of the *First Symphony*. I have intensified the agitato in the repeated bars, not by broadening them, but by pushing them forward. Playing a repeated phrase more emphatically could certainly involve broadening, and I have done so in other places. I would argue that playing a repeated group of bars more lightly, stressing that it contains no new information, is equally valid as repeating it with greater emphasis, stressing that it needs to be said one more time in order to be fully understood. I decide how to shape a repeated section based on my understanding of the rhetorical build-up. Klauwell chose the words to describe this rule so that it allows for modifications other than broadening. In my own way, I address the same issue of repeated sections by looking for an expression in relation to the first statement of the section that suits the narrative I want to build.

> *7) Every ascending movement is, like every crescendo, generally to be slightly accelerated; every descending movement and every decrescendo to be slightly retarded.*

There are plenty of examples of this technique in my recordings, some of which can be seen and heard in Chapter 2.4 with examples of modifications I applied. Yet if a top goal-note at the summit of an ascending line can be understood as "hard won" as opposed to easily reached, and/or if there are accents in the ascending line, I have sometimes done the opposite of what Klauwell suggests here.[121] As discussed in the presentation of my tools of expression in Chapter 1.7, Ferdinand Ries claimed that Beethoven sometimes applied this technique with great effect as well.

[121] See e.g., the two samples given under point 2 in the list of tempo modifications in Chapter 1.7.

8) Strongly or quickly modulated passages require, for their thorough comprehension, a somewhat broader tempo.

In general, my modifications are related to the harmonic structure of the piece; if the harmony changes rapidly, I tend to take more time, but sometimes I like to speed up to create a somewhat dazzling effect, particularly in development sections. This is not in line with the suggestion by Klauwell, who seems to prioritise thorough comprehension at all times.

9) The more fully a polyphonic passage is treated, and the lower the pitch in which it is set, the broader the tempo it will bear.

This appears to be a rule designed to keep clarity in polyphonic passages set in low registers (or played by ensembles tuning to a lower A?) by moderating the tempo. It does not apply in Brahms's orchestral works.

10) Unexpected modulations, deceptive cadences, and the like, should be prepared, in order to increase the suspense, by a poco ritardando.

I feel that preparing deceptive cadences by a poco ritardando tends to take away the element of surprise crucial to them. Playing straight into them also often seems to undermine this effect. I have strived to prepare unexpected modulations and deceptive cadences but not – as Klauwell seems to suggest – only by a poco ritardando. This suggestion and the previous one regarding the thorough comprehension of polyphonic passages remind me of Bülow's description of Reinecke and the Gewandhaus Orchestra's playing. Rules such as this one and numbers 8, 12, 13 and 15 are perhaps indications of a hyper-correct performance style that prompted the critical observations by Bülow and by Huschke quoted earlier.

11) Unimportant intermediate passages, little introductory and closing phrases and the like are, in keeping with their character, not to be rendered with the full breadth of the prescribed tempo.

I move through such passages swiftly in my work. Ranken's description of structure-related modifications aligns with this rule.

> *12) Before beginning the repetition in sonatas and other pieces composed in three divisions, a ritardando should set in.*

Klauwell has phrased this rule so that it can be understood as referring to the repeat of the exposition or to the recapitulation after the development section in a sonata form movement. Blume claimed that Steinbach did not observe the first repeat in the first movements of the *First* and *Second Symphonies*, but if one does, connecting a modified tempo of a closing group to the tempo of the opening requires some careful planning, as does the connection to the development section. The transition from development to recapitulation constitutes an important moment in pieces in sonata form. In the first movements of the *First* and *Second Symphony*, I have applied a ritardando in those places. It is prescribed by Brahms in the *Third*.

> *13) All cadences are to be retarded a trifle.*

I have often applied this type of slight ritardando. According to Klauwell's rule 11 though, adding weight to such moments in the score should be avoided, especially ones that do not contain new musical information. I find that slowing down in simple cadences can often be considered a hallmark of late twentieth-century performances and recordings of Brahms's orchestral music, as this seems to be the only type of tempo modification that has weathered the test of time.[122] Anna Scott found, for instance, that Brahms's pianists tend to plunge straight into and through cadences of all types, slowing well afterwards, if at all.

> *14) The duration of the fermata is very often not indefinite but can be precisely measured according to the periodisation of what precedes.*

[122] This assumption fits in with Bernard Haitink's description of conducting Brahms Symphonies with large symphony orchestras as being like 'walking a dog that wants to stop at every tree', which we saw in the previous chapter.

See below.

> *15) Most 'fermate' should be prepared by ritardando (not always noted by the composer) and divided by a trifling pause from what succeeds.*

I have often applied modifications that correspond with these two rules. One example of the application of these two rules (14 and 15) can be found in the third movement, Poco Allegretto, of the *Third Symphony.* In my performance, I slow down the fermata considerably, so that the last phrase of the woodwinds, in which the dotted rhythm is already a doubling in note value of the preceding two utterances of the winds, gets plenty of space and expressivity (as is also suggested by the hairpin markings in the score). As a result of this ritardando, the beats in which the length of the fermata might be perceived are already slower than the basic tempo. I think of the length of the fermata *(lunga)* as roughly two bars plus one beat, followed by a beat rest and then by the calm upbeat in the solo horn. This produces a result in which indeed the periodisation from bar 94 on is two bars-two bars-four bars. I feel that this idea should be executed in such a way that a natural feeling of timing can be guaranteed. As with so many of these cleverly calculated effects, all is lost if, in the immortal words of the cellist Wieland Kuijken, "one can smell the pencil."

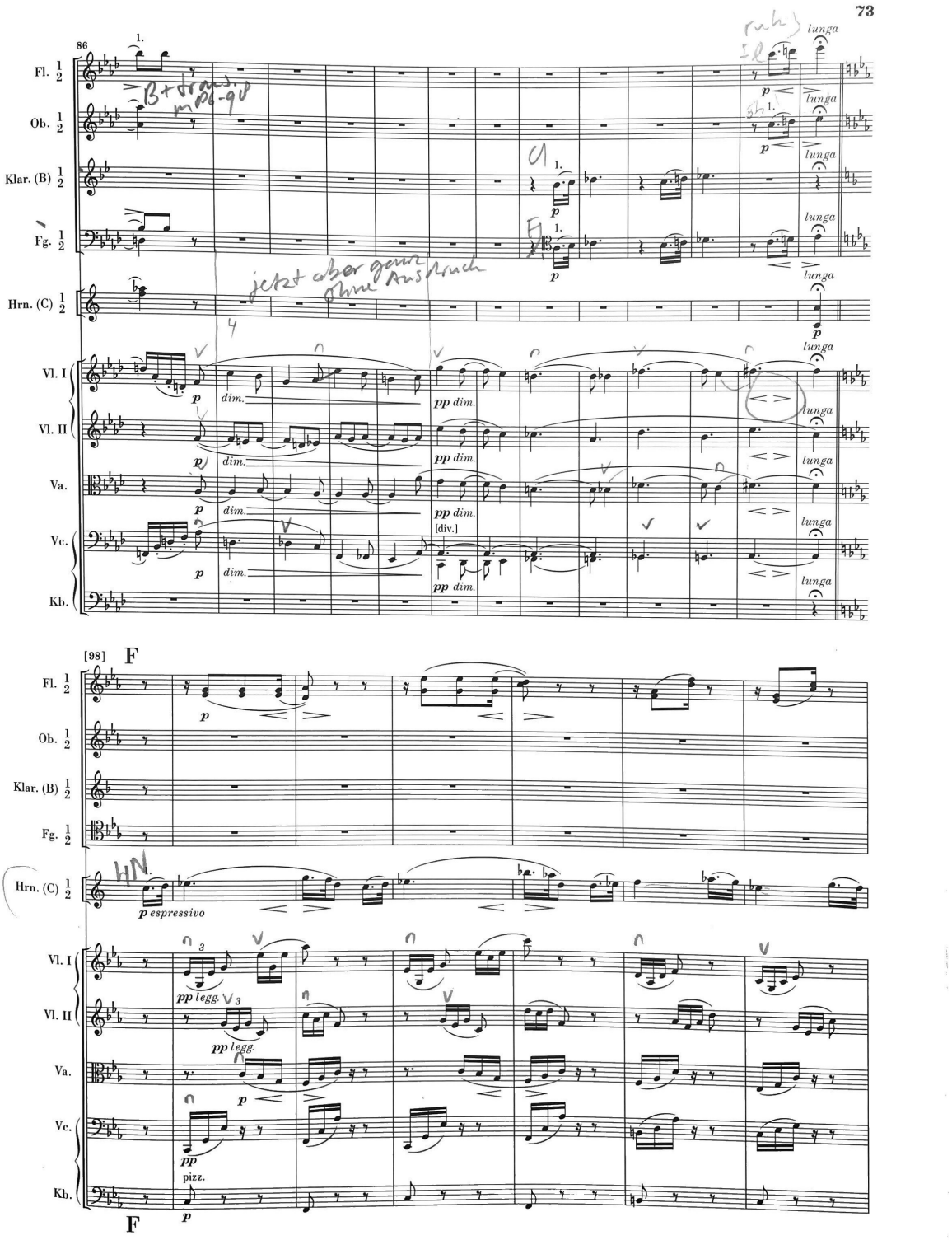


Figure 1.28: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Third Symphony (Score) page 73.

16) Suspensions and changing notes on the accented part of the measure must be very slightly prolonged at the expense of the next-following tone.

17) The highest tone of a musical phrase or melisma should as a rule be somewhat prolonged.

See below.

18) Notes of lesser value, coming after dotted notes, are to retain their full breadth in melodic passages; but should be shortened a trifle in such of a purely rhythmical character in favour of the dot.

Points 16, 17, and 18 are examples of modification of rhythm that I have often applied with my orchestra. These are also discussed in Chapter 1.5 in the section dealing with Blume's suggestions, and in my list of tools for modification of rhythm in Chapter 1.7. This is the first time I have come across the distinction of dotted patterns in melody and accompaniment. I intend to look for opportunities to experiment with this in the future.

19) In broken chords are often comprised tones of melodic significance, which should be marked, less by forcible stress than by prolongation through being held down longer than the succeeding harmonic tones.

As indicated by Blume and discussed in Chapter 1.5., the way in which the notes of melodic significance are highlighted clearly depends on the instrument on which the line is played. Klauwell's suggestion for pianists is to prolong the note. Earlier we saw suggestions by Blume and by Joachim/Moser for adding bow pressure on stringed instruments and vibrato or extra warmth on both stringed and wind instruments. Whichever means is chosen, it contributes to less evenness in these passages.
In Blume's description of the consequences for the duration of notes with tenuto signs, he makes a distinction between tenuto in the context of a rubato and elsewhere, stating that:

> the high notes of the oboe-theme should each be given tenuto signs – as shown in this extract[123]:

[123] See reference 120.

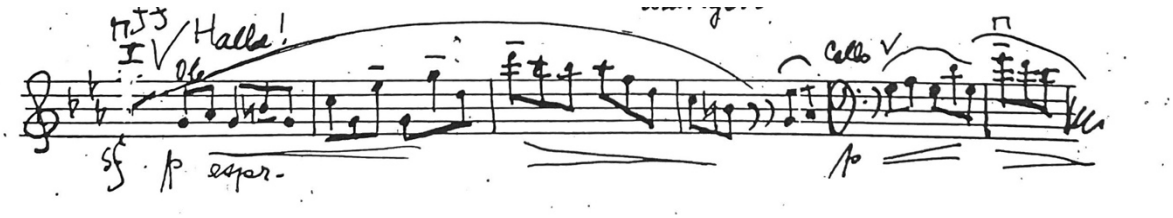


Figure 1.29: Blume page 11.

Nevertheless, like all such markings these are to be taken with a grain of salt. *Tenuto* means literally that the notes should be slightly held. But in fact, that is already saying too much. In no case should the impression be given that the note values have become lengthened by the tenuto sign. Instead, these notes just receive a special emphasis. Should the tenuto sign ever represent the lengthening of a note value, this is indicated by the word *rubato*, as in the two bars before letter A:[124]

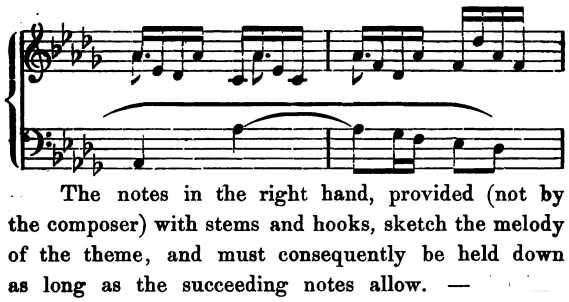
Figure 1.30: Blume page 11.

Here the A-flat should be held a bit longer and then the 'stolen' time should be compensated for (*rubato* literally means "stolen.") The time value of one note is robbed in favour of another note, but then is compensated during a measure so that no delay or acceleration occurs in the overall progression of the tempo. The actual tenuto sign is superfluous if one keeps in mind the musical principle that the high notes of a musical phrase demand a pronounced, emphatic expression.[125]

[124] It is important to note that the rubato has been added by Blume. It is not to be found in the score.

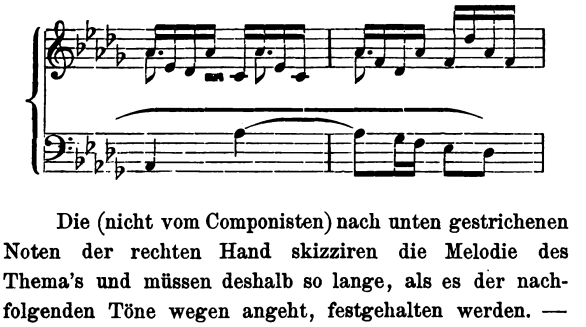
[125] Blume, *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition* p. 12. Die hohen Noten dieses Oboe-Thema haben jeweils tenuto-Zeichnen (vergl. Beispiel). *Wie alle derartigen Bezeichnungen sind sie jedoch cum grano salis zu nehmen. Ausgesprochen heißt das „tenuto", dass die Töne etwas gehalten werden sollen. Das ist aber eigentlich schon zu viel gesagt. Auf keinen Fall darf hier der Eindruck entstehen das mit dem Tenuto-Zeichen der Notenwert verlängert wird. Vielmehr sollen diese Noten nur besonders prononciert werden. Soll durch das Tenuto-Zeichen auch der Notenwert verlängert werden, wird das angezeigt durch „rubato" wie z.B. zwei Takte vor A. Das as wird man etwas länger aushalten und das" gestohlene" Tempo wieder einholen. (Rubato heißt wörtlich: gestohlen. Mann stiehlt zugunsten einer Note von den Zeitwerten anderer Noten, macht dies aber im Verlaufe des Taktes wieder gut, so dass im Gesamtverlauf des Tempos keine Verzögerung oder Beschleunigung eintritt). Das denn Tenuto-Zeichen wird entbehrlich, wenn man als musikalischen Grundsatz im Bewusstsein hat dass die hohen Töne einer musikalischen Phrase ein prononciertes betontes Aussprechen verlangen.*

One can see that Klauwell's instruction "to hold down longer" than the marked notes would suggest is the kind of lengthening that Blume tried to avoid outside of what he calls "rubato." One of Klauwell's music examples illustrates the way he talked about creating an "overlap" between tenuto notes and following notes, which can already be played "underneath" the held ones. The German edition of Klauwell's text describes this much more clearly than the English edition. The German edition reads: "[Die Töne] sollen über die Dauer der nachfolgenden harmonischen Töne hinweg festgehalten werden". The English edition does not quite catch this nuance, as it says that the tones of melodic significance "should be marked […] by prolongation through being held down longer than the succeeding note." Similarly, the text under the music example also seems more subtle in the German than in the English edition. The wording in German, for instance, does not suggest as strongly as the English does that the beginning of the succeeding notes means the end of the marked ones, as can be seen here:



The notes in the right hand, provided (not by the composer) with stems and hooks, sketch the melody of the theme, and must consequently be held down as long as the succeeding notes allow. —

Figure 1.31: Klauwell English version page 55.



Die (nicht vom Componisten) nach unten gestrichenen Noten der rechten Hand skizziren die Melodie des Thema's und müssen deshalb so lange, als es der nachfolgenden Töne wegen angeht, festgehalten werden. —

Figure 1.32: Klauwell German version page 49.

In both cases, however, Klauwell's suggestion involves a lengthening of the marked note. On melody instruments, such as the violins and oboe who are responsible for producing the notes in the example Blume gives about lengthening notes with a tenuto sign in rubato, playing the next note does of course mean ending the previous one, except for certain double-stopping possibilities on string instruments that do not apply here.

> *20) In order to mark very distinctly the attack of an important part or chord, it is often necessary to minutely curtail the note immediately preceding.*

Many examples of this rule concerning timing and articulation can be found in my recordings. Working with period instruments has made me much more aware of the importance of timing in establishing impactful accents or chords. The instruments have a smaller capacity for dynamic contrast as their range of dynamics is generally speaking more limited than that of modern instruments. Hitting the keys harder on my 1845 Rosenberger Viennese grand piano, for example, tends to cause a sound implosion rather than an explosive accent. This is also the case with my 1619 Amati violin; it does not respond well to weight or pressure. Only by working with timing (playing the notes in question early or late in relation to the metronomically exact moment of occurrence in the score) can the attack of an important part or chord be brought out, not by sheer volume. Bringing out the accent or accented chord effectively often requires shortening the notes immediately preceding it. This represents a way to create space for the accent to be heard clearly and not be (partly) swallowed up by the resonance of the previous chord.

One example of this technique can also be found in Blume, who states that the B flat major chord on the downbeat of bar 70 of the finale of the *Third Symphony* should be played noticeably short. By doing so, the quarter-note rest that follows it can have the effect of a definite break before the whole orchestra comes in with the new fortissimo chord in the second half of the bar, as can be seen here in the passage from my score:

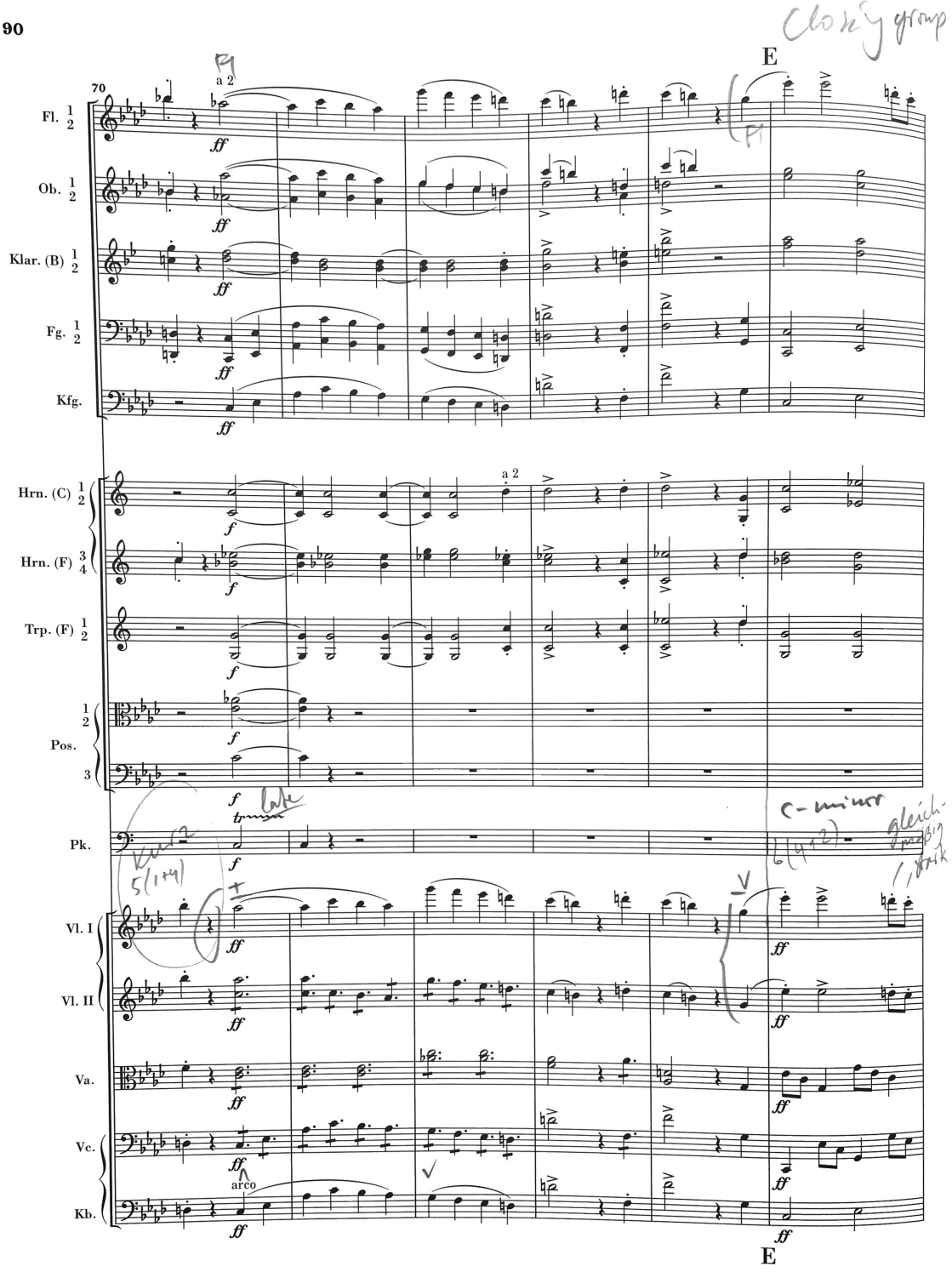


Figure 1.33: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Third Symphony (Score) page 90.

(To add to the effect described by Blume, I bring in the orchestra late on the second half of bar 70).

> *21) Long trills, or embellishments of like nature, are as a rule (particularly in slow tempo or when preceded by a ritardando) to be begun quietly, and then gradually carried up to the highest degree of rapidity.*

This constitutes a rule for pianists that does not necessarily apply to orchestral practices, with the exception of solo passages for wind or string instruments. At the very least, one can say that the desired expressive unevenness previously discussed extends to the domain of the trill, something that risks – if performed absolutely regularly – being confused with the sound of a doorbell.

Modification and Compositional Structure

I find it noteworthy that Klauwell's instructions, in line with Ranken's writings, suggest a close connection between compositional structure, particularly sonata form, and considerations regarding tempo modification. As such, they may be seen as belonging to a structuralist performance practice. This is a subject that scholar George Barth writes about in his article "Effacing Modernism":

> Perhaps the most deeply seated conviction of the modernist performer is of the obligation to clarify structure, which is too often conflated with unimaginative notions of form.[126]

Barth goes on to quote Cook, who writes:

> The idea that structure should as a matter of course be brought out, disclosed to listeners, reflects the aesthetics of Bauhaus or international modernism, as embodied in the slogan 'form follows function' and seen in the modernist architecture of the interwar and post-war periods.[127]

[126] Barth, G." Effacing Modernism, or How to Perform Less Accurately Through Listening", *Historical Performance*, Indiana University Press, 1(2018), pp. 148-189.
[127] Cook, N. *Beyond the Score, Music as Performance.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. 38.

Barth also mentions that structuralist performance can lead to details being obscured:

> When the modernist demands that structure subsume detail, the romantic perceives a failure of imagination – for which there is an obvious remedy: attention to the unique possibilities of the moment. That is an 'obligation.'[128]

These remarks by Barth and Cook are of a general nature and do not seem intended to address the fact that the very structure of the sonata form brings with it a certain order in the presentation of a composer's ideas. From the division of ideas across a composition, one can draw conclusions as to what the importance of these ideas might have been in the mind of the composer. More substantial or consequential ideas tend to be positioned as first, second, or third subject rather than as transitional phrases or bridges, codas, and codettas.

Klauwell's suggestions clearly reflect that hierarchy, as he proposes to take time when bringing out the main ideas, and to move on ahead in transitional phrases. It is, of course, entirely possible that Brahms considered structural considerations to be important, but at the same time welcomed people playing against that structure in performance. Behind this lies perhaps the question about how one might communicate the structure of a piece through performance; does one intentionally mark transitions or – in the style of Klauwell – bring out main ideas at the expense of transitional phrases to enhance the sense of structure? Or does the structure simply emerge as the sum of the momentary choices? I can see that my approach, which appears to be quite similar to what Klauwell describes, and as such might be considered to be of a structuralist nature, could prompt me to neglect details, particularly in transitional phrases, where the tempo is relatively fast.

This might be particularly detrimental to the quality of the performance of Brahms's music, because form, function and content are intricately connected in his symphonies. Frisch, for instance, reflects on how

[128] Barth, *Effacing Modernism* p. 161.

Brahms "forcefully reshape[d] Classic-Romantic models," and he describes Brahms's use of "motivic-thematic complexes rather than more straight forward themes or melodies.[129] Frisch's description of Brahms's handling of motivic-thematic coherence is reminiscent of Berrsche, who described how Brahms's symphonic style of writing depends not so much on contrasting ideas but rather on an organic blossoming of the Melos itself (*das organische Wachsen des Melos selbst*). [130]

In Brahms, the main ideas not only contain the seeds of organic development, but this development is often already under way during the first presentation of the idea.[131] Brahms's transitional phrases are seldom just that; they often contain details with great structural or expressive importance. As Austrian-American composer and theorist Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) argues:

> Music of the homophonic-melodic style of composition, that is music with a main theme, accompanied by and based on harmony, produces its material by, as I call it, *developing variation*. This means that variation of the features of a basic unit produce all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic and unity on the one hand and character, mood, expression, and every needed differentiation on the other hand – thus elaborating the *idea* of the piece.[132]

Frisch uses this quote in the prologue of his book *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, in which he "attempt[s] to show that a careful clarification, refinement and enlargement of Schoenberg's concept of developing variation can yield a valuable tool for examining not just brief themes by Brahms, but larger portions or movements and even entire works."[133] To me these observations regarding the intricate structure of Brahms's writing make it clear that musical events are often connected to, or

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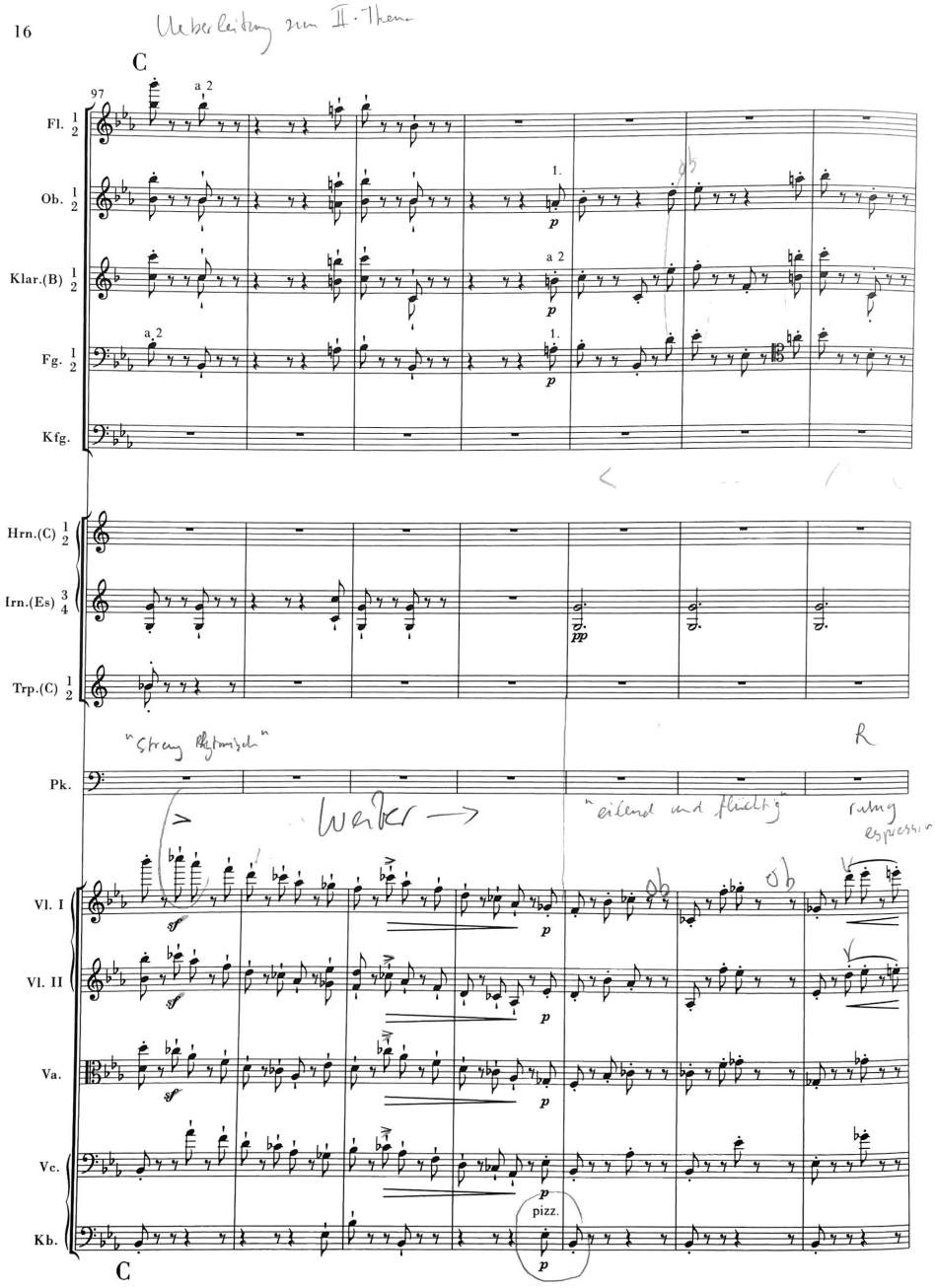
[129] Frisch, W. *Brahms The Four Symphonies*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2003, pp. 46-49.
[130] Berrsche, *Musik und Betrachtung,* p. 243.
[131] As Frisch points out in the case of the first subject of the allegro section of the first movement of the First Symphony
[132] Schoenberg, A. *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, California, 1984. Reprint of the original edition. London: Faber, 1975, p. 397.
[133] Frisch, W. *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990.

presented as part of, a narrative built as an ongoing developing variation. Given this intimate connection between form and narrative, I find it is hard to take the objections of writers such as Barth, who argue against structuralist performance, into account when considering my approach to Brahms.

It seems clear to me that the sources, particularly the material quoted in Chapter 1.6, support the idea that building a musical narrative constitutes the most important task of the performer. Indeed, I consider musical performance to be a form of storytelling. Moreover, the subject of the musical narrative should be the dramatic content of the music itself, not the form in which it is presented. In other words, whilst getting a grip on the structure of a piece can be an important part of a performer's understanding of a musical composition as a whole, considerations regarding structure have no place in the dramatic musical narrative.

Klauwell's rules are deceptively straightforward and simple, and their strict application could easily lead to neglect of expressive details, possibly of the kind that Barth and Cook seem to condemn as modernistic. Close reading and attention to Brahms's technique of constantly developing ideas can help avoid such a loss of expressive opportunities. One example of an expressive detail that could be overlooked if one follows Klauwells's rule on transitional phrases can be found in the transition to the second subject in the first movement of the *First Symphony*:


Ueberleitung zum II. Thema
C
97
a 2
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
1.
a 2
p
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Irn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
pp
"Streng Rhythmisch"
R
Pk.
weiter
"eilend und flüchtig"
ruhig
espressivo
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
pizz.
C

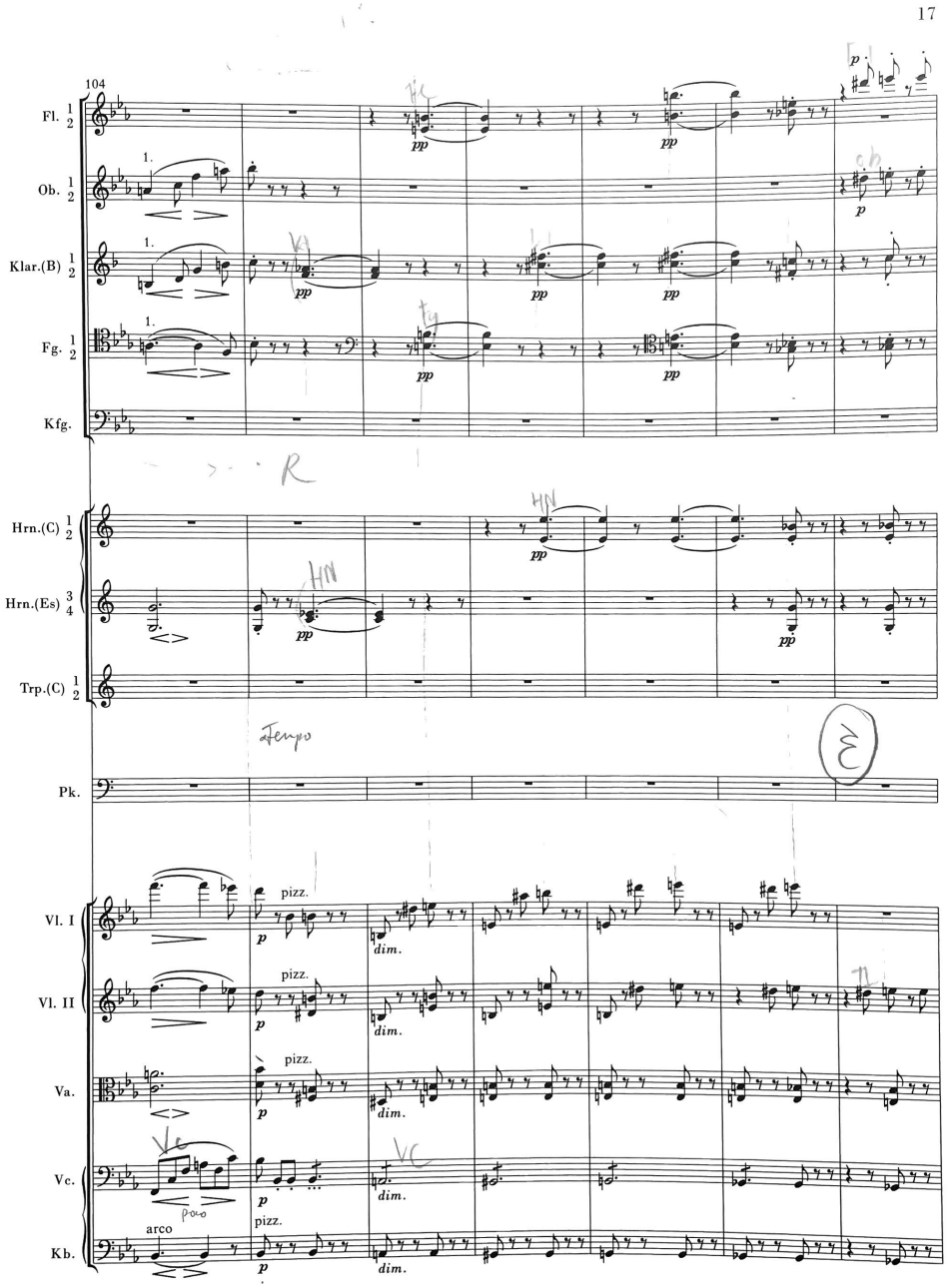


Figure 1.34: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition First Symphony (Score) pages 16-17.

The transition to the second subject begins at letter C, bar 97 (the first bar of this example). According to Klauwell, one should move ahead in this type of transitional phrase. The instructions “streng rhythmisch” and “eilend” as marked in my score in bars 97 and 101 originate from Blume’s suggestions, as do the “ruhig, espressivo” connected to the hairpins in bars 103-104 and

the “a tempo” in bar 104.[134] Interpreting the hairpins in the violins and in the answer in the lower strings and woodwinds in bars 103-104 as signs for expression and shaping them in such a way that this can be brought out, requires some lingering on these phrases. This can help to counteract rushing this expressive detail, which is part of a transitional phrase that, according to Klauwell, one is supposed to move through relatively quickly. Blume’s suggestion “ruhig, espressivo” also stresses the importance of taking some time to bring out this detail.

Conclusion

There are indications that the kind of nuanced modifications Klauwell wrote about can hardly be put into words. Considerations regarding the difference between theory and practice, as discussed for example in Chapter 1.2 regarding the discrepancy between Spohr’s writing and performing styles, can all be understood as reasons for being extra careful when drawing firm conclusions from Klauwell’s writings. Based on Scott’s and Peres Da Costa’s work, it can be said that Klauwell’s rules, systematic and comprehensive as they may appear to be, do not tell the whole story about nineteenth-century (pianistic) performance practice. The pianist and conductor Max Fiedler (1859-1939), for instance, mentions how “in his own works, Brahms used a rubato that could not be written down.”[135] In *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*, the violinist and researcher David Milsom writes about the gap he finds between the writings and the recordings of nineteenth-century performers, concluding that “common sense would suggest that theory is rarely carried out strictly in practice.”[136] It is certainly a possibility that what Klauwell preached was not necessarily what he practised.

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[134] Blume, *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition,* p. 15.
[135] Dejmek, G. *Max Fiedler Werden und Wirken.* Vulkan Verlag, Essen, 1940, p. 29. *Ein Rubato […] das man nicht hinschreiben kann.*
[136] Milsom, D. *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth Century Violin Performance*. Farnham, Ashgate, 2003, p. 105.

Notwithstanding these legitimate remarks concerning the value and significance of this type of written source, I find it striking that my way of applying modifications of rhythm and tempo resembles Klauwell's rules so closely. Many of the modifications I have applied with the project orchestra can be seen as being in line with his rules. In the few instances where I do the opposite of what he suggests, I think that my approach addresses the same issues as mentioned by Klauwell, but just in a different manner. None of his rules mention situations for which I had not designed my own strategy based on the historical information I had assembled before learning about his writings. This is not to say that Klauwell's rules provide a fool-proof and comprehensive roadmap to modifications in Brahms's symphonies.

By objecting to the neglect of expressive details in structuralist performances, Barth raised an interesting point about the relationship between form and function (or content) in nineteenth-century music, and its significance in performance. This subject stretches far beyond the boundaries of my project but I think it deserves further research, particularly in light of Brahms's intricate and complex compositional technique as regards structure and content, characterised by Frisch as Developing Variation.

1.9 Traces of Nineteenth-Century Practices in Early Twentieth-Century Recordings of Brahms's Orchestral Music

In a study titled "In Search of Sounding Evidence of Traces of Fritz Steinbach's Approach to Brahms's Second Symphony", published on my website and shared with the musicians of my project orchestra, I compared the tempo modifications in six historical recordings of the first movement of Brahms's *Second Symphony* with the suggestions that can be found in Walter Blume's *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition.*[137] I think that some of my findings may be relevant in the context of this dissertation, that is why I will summarise them here. The recordings I selected were: Walter Damrosch, New York Symphony Orchestra, 1928; Leopold Stokowski, Philadelphia Orchestra,1929; Max Fiedler, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, 1930; Fritz Busch, Staatskapelle Dresden, 1931; Hermann Abendroth, Breslau RSO, 1939; and Felix Weingartner, London Symphony Orchestra, 1940. I went through the first movement of the symphony not so much bar by bar, but rather point by point through Walter Blume's writings. I aimed to analyse how the various orchestras and conductors had addressed the issues listed by Blume. I intended to compare how they handled these issues in the recordings with Blume's suggested solutions, without making any assumption that any concurrence might be regarded as proof that the conductors followed these suggestions.[138] It was not my intention to prove any lineage of tradition.

As perhaps the most complete written document on performance issues in the Brahms symphonies during the pre-war period, Blume's manuscript constitutes a unique source of information. This is one reason why I wanted to look at these recordings through the lens of Blume, focusing in particular on the performance issues he had selected for his writings. By

[137] Leertouwer, "*In Search of Sounding Evidence of Traces of Fritz Steinbach's Approach to Brahms's Second Symphony",* June 2021, https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/In-search-of-sounding-evidence-of-traces-of-Fritz-Steinbachs-approach-to-Brahmss-Second-Symphony-31-05-2020-revised-15-06-2021.pdf

[138] Blume published his text in 1933. Four of the six recordings I studied had already been released before 1933.

doing so, I found that this process was a two-way street, in the sense that it allowed me to review Blume's writings in the context of other people's solutions for the same issues he listed, and indeed also to consider the things he does not address. I found many tempo modifications in the recordings - often subtle and sometimes radical - that Blume does not suggest or discuss in his writings.

In relation to contemporary performance practices and recordings, the six recordings contained significant, extensive and substantial tempo modifications. By analysing these, I reconsidered how to calibrate my own compass for such modifications. As a result, I prepared the scores for my performances in such a way that I committed to orchestral tempo modifications as a general rule in each symphony, and not solely as a special effect in some places. I aimed to make a distinction between micro-modifications, often as related to smaller and medium-sized hairpins which could imply tempo rubato, and tempo modifications relating to longer stretches, pushing forward or relaxing the tempo. I even went as far as to mark up a score with all intended modifications, which I provided to the musicians of my orchestra as an attachment to the study.[139] In addition, I marked the modifications in the orchestral parts for the project in 2021, using the same arrows, hairpins and verbal instructions that can be found in my annotated score.

In my study, I found that the players and conductors in the six recordings addressed many of the same performance issues that Blume had. While there is certainly some concurrence between the recordings and Blume's suggestions, none of the recordings fully aligns with his writings. My analysis of these recordings and of Mengelberg's recordings in Chapter 1.10 illustrates that even when recordings do coincide with Blume's suggestions, one should not read too much into this, as these instances also happen in recordings by musicians demonstrably far removed from the Steinbach tradition. Assuming that Blume's writing is an honest effort at a

[139] Leertouwer: Annotated score of Brahms's *Third Symphony*: https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-3-full-score-scan-marked-26-8-2021.pdf.

comprehensive description of the key features of Steinbach's performance of Brahms's orchestral works, the absence of any recording that reflects his writing can be taken as confirmation that Steinbach's style had indeed disappeared, as suggested by Berrsche, who wrote that with Steinbach, Brahms had died a second time.

Conclusions

My analysis of these historical recordings revealed that the six recordings represent (or show traces of) a style of performing Brahms with flexible tempo, one that orchestras and conductors moved away from during the twentieth century. Admittedly, my conclusion is based on a detailed investigation of a selection of historical recordings on the one hand, and a rather general characterisation of later MPP recordings on the other. I have listened to many post-war recordings, including some that are classed as HIPP, in which I found the kind of evenness that I attributed to them in my earlier generalisation. I was struck by the level of detail in the historical recordings, which demanded further investigation. This was much less apparent in the more even recordings from the second half of the twentieth century. The greater evenness of the later recordings made them less eventful when it came to tempo modifications. In comparison with the earlier recordings, they were certainly more flawless and the quality of the recording made it possible to hear more details, but they provided far fewer points to discuss.

I did, however, find two live recordings of Brahms's *Third Symphony* that showed considerable modifications of rhythm and tempo: a performance on 18 December 1949 by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra at RIAS Berlin, under the direction of Wilhelm Furtwängler, and a performance by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, released on 14 August 2020 under the direction of Richard Tognetti. Both of these recordings challenged my general characterisation of the MPP in Brahms's orchestral music. I highlighted some of the tempo modifications in these two recordings that stand out against the general evenness of almost all other recordings

currently available. In my review, I concluded that they contained many instances of tempo modification that could be classed as exaggerations, as described by Weingartner.[140] As such, these recordings represent a style of tempo modification that I more readily associate with the exaggerations attributed to Bülow than with Steinbach's more refined style. That being said, I would like to add that I feel grateful for the fact that the two live recordings provided me with an opportunity to contextualise the historical recordings of the first decades of the twentieth century, not only in relation to more even recordings, but also these more capricious ones.

[140] Leertouwer, "A critical review of some tempo modifications in two recordings of the last movement of Brahms's Third Symphony" 08-2021, https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/A-critical-review-of-some-tempo-modifications-in-two-recordings-of-the-last-movement-of-Brahmss-Third-Symphony-August-19th.pdf.

1.10 Annotated parts and Willem Mengelberg's Brahms Scores

Annotated parts from Meiningen and Brussels

Orchestral parts or scores with nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century performance markings are rare, certainly for Brahms's works. In January 2019, at the outset of my project, I travelled to Meiningen to study the material of the Court Orchestra that is kept there in the library of the Meiningen Museums. This material contains markings that in part date back to the nineteenth century. Some markings in brass parts list performances dating from Steinbach's time, indicating that the material was used as early as 1881 and 1883 (as marked in the second trombone part). Even though these parts were unfortunately used until the 1960s and contain a mix of markings from musicians over a period of some 90 years, it is clear that they contain valuable information. In my opinion, these parts provide an important topic for possible future research, particularly if one would have the technical means to separate the layers of annotations philologically. At the same time, however, I had to conclude that, with the time and resources available to me, the material was of limited value for my project. To illustrate the difficulty of drawing helpful conclusions from the markings in the Meiningen parts, I point to the bowings in the following examples. The markings in blue in the first example, taken from the Meiningen parts, initially correspond to Blume's suggested bowing, as shown in the second example, taken from Blume's text. In bar 5, however, this is no longer the case, as the blue slur ends with the d, whereas Blume suggests including the following g in the slur. In bar 7, too, the blue lines do not correspond with Blume's suggestions. Furthermore, the bowings in blue appear to be used in combination with those in grey, as for instance in the first two bars, but in bar 3 they represent opposite solutions. I have no means of identifying which markings are the oldest and which are more recent in a scientifically verifiable way. But even if I would be able to say with absolute certainty that the blue markings are from the days of Brahms and Steinbach, and the grey markings from later days, I would still be unable to draw conclusions from this material that would have significantly influenced or enhanced my project.

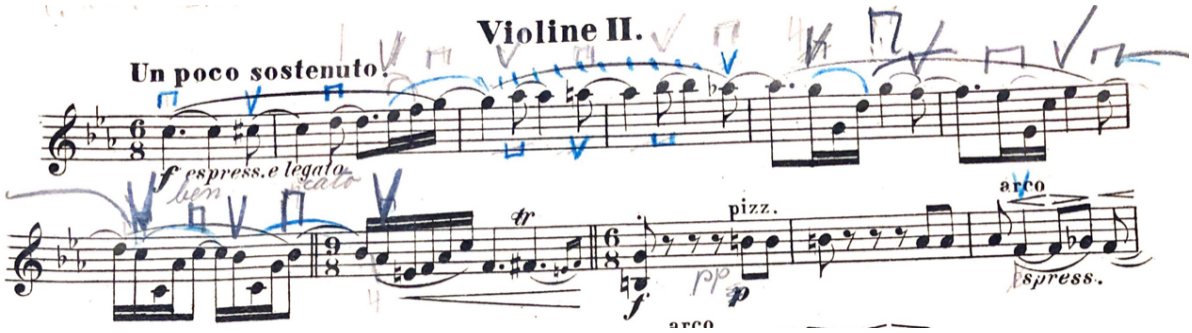

Figure 1.35: First Symphony, first two lines of an annotated second violin part from the Meiningen library.

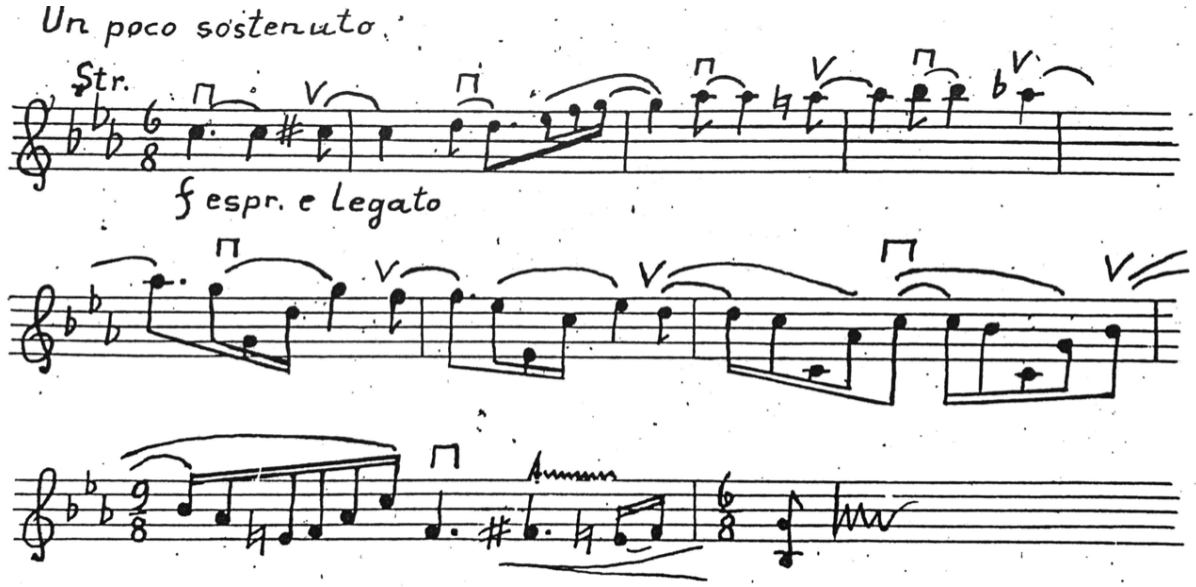

Figure 1.36: Blume page 9.

In the library of the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussels, I found material (parts and scores) that had been used by organist, musicologist and composer François-August Gevaert (1828-1908). Gevaert, who became director of the conservatory in 1871, presumably conducted the conservatory orchestra in that capacity. The material contains some interesting markings (particularly some bowings and occasional fingerings), but in this case, too, I had to conclude that it was of limited relevance for my project as Gevaert, who worked mainly in Paris and Belgium, in all likelihood worked in a style that was heavily influenced by the Franco-Belgian tradition.

MENGELBERG'S BRAHMS SCORES

A third source of information I looked at was the annotated scores of Willem Mengelberg. I studied Mengelberg's Brahms scores and his recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra (1930-1931 and 1940-1941) to find out how his style of performing Brahms related to Blume's description of Steinbach's style. I also wanted to compare his approach to the different styles of performance I had heard in the six early recordings of the *Second Symphony*. Mengelberg started as the second chief conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1895, at the age of twenty-four. Under his leadership, described by the orchestra itself as perfectionist, wilful and authoritarian, it quickly gained an international reputation. Many admired Mengelberg for his significant role in the development of musical life in the Netherlands in general, and for his contribution to the quality and reputation of the orchestra in particular. Yet he lost his post in 1945 as a result of his apparent sympathy for the German forces that occupied the Netherlands during the Second World War.

Mengelberg has no special reputation as a Brahms conductor. As Christopher Dyment notes,

> On the whole, it is probable that Mengelberg's approach was fashioned only by his own study and inclinations […]. Ultimately, the conclusion […] must be that whatever may have been the lines of authority that Mengelberg might have sought to invoke in order to explain his idiosyncratic interpretative style in much of Brahms, he alone was responsible for it.[141]

I agree that there is no demonstrable connection between Mengelberg's style of conducting Brahms and the style of those conductors to whom the composer gave his approval, let alone Steinbach's style with the Meiningen Orchestra. Dyment decided not to include Mengelberg's recordings in his study of recorded evidence of a performance style reflecting Brahms's own, arguing that his style was too idiosyncratic to warrant a place among the

[141] Dyment, *Conducting Brahms,* p. 120.

conductors closely related to Brahms.[142] Given the nature of Mengelberg's recordings and scores, I can see why Dyment took this decision. At the same time, though, I find that Mengelberg's annotated scores can give a unique and important insight into his style of working with the orchestra. These scores include a lot of markings and contain detailed information of a style that – even if one accepts the verdict that it is highly idiosyncratic – had its roots in the nineteenth century.

I studied all of Mengelberg's scores of Brahms's orchestral music, and I have written two studies about them. I looked at his score of the *Double Concerto* and examined the soloists he performed the piece with. I also compared the markings in his score of the second movement of the *Second Symphony* to his recording with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of 1940. These studies, with links to audio examples, can be found on my website.[143] A few of my conclusions are also relevant to my search for traces of nineteenth-century performance styles in early twentieth-century recordings. Some examples include:

- Mengelberg's instructions and markings in the score do not always correspond with the results in his recordings. Some of the things he writes about, particularly relating the metronome markings, are quite different from what one can hear in the recordings.
- Though his scores are extensively marked, in my studies I was able to point to many things that happen in the recordings but are not marked

[142] There are also historical voices criticising Mengelberg's Brahms. Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), for example, wrote about a Mengelberg performance of the *Second Symphony*. Geoffrey Skelton in Paul Hindemith: *The Man behind the Music, a biography* (Gollancz, London, 1975), p. 42, quotes a "Letter from Hindemith to Emmy Ronnefeldt" from May 1917, which reads: "I am no great Brahms admirer – but anything more un-Brahms-like is hard to imagine: first movement brutal or sentimental, without feeling, second movement distorted and robbed of all its swing, the third just empty notes and the coda of the finale a timpani concerto with orchestral accompaniment. Horrible!"

[143] Leertouwer, "From Score to Recording. Analysing Mengelberg's markings of the Second Movement of Brahms's Second Symphony opus 73"
https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/From-score-to-recording.-Analyzing-Mengelbergs-score-and-recording-of-the-second-movement-of-Brahmss-Second-Symphony-opus-73-28-08-2020-revised-15-06-2021.pdf.

in the scores. The markings in his scores do not reflect all his decisions in performance.

- The recordings provide ample corroboration of the fact that the hairpins printed in the score and those added by Mengelberg were meant to have consequences for expression and timing, and not merely dynamics. In most cases, Mengelberg realises the rubato by moving the tempo forward in the crescendo part of the hairpin and backward in the diminuendo part, without substantially changing the basic tempo. This is also the case for the short hairpins on individual notes and for the long ones related to phrases or bars.
- Variations in the pattern of beating into larger or smaller units of quarter note, dotted quarter note or eighth note serve as a tool to show tempo modifications; smaller units are suggested to slow down or show a slow tempo.
- The use of the letter W for *weiter* and R for *ruhig* corresponds to the speeding up and slowing down over periods of a bar or more. The letter R also indicates the tempo or character of a single bar or a passage.
- In my study of Mengelberg's recording of the second movement of the *Second Symphony*, I found a few instances of concurrence between what Blume describes as Steinbach's tradition and Mengelberg's performance. While I am not trying to depict Mengelberg as a follower of Steinbach's Meininger tradition, I do find it interesting that even just a few of his choices coincide with Blume's description of the latter's style. But finding coincidences with Blume in a recording by a conductor who is clearly so far removed from Steinbach's style and tradition can and perhaps should be taken as warning against reading too much into any such coincidences. After all, they can be considered as indications of a general understanding of the music, engendered by the musical traditions of the time.
- Mengelberg's tempo for the second movement of the *Second Symphony* conforms to most of the oldest available recordings of the symphony. None of the oldest recordings of the Adagio, for instance, have a tempo

that would allow the players to play Brahms's legato slurs in the opening bars of the movement. In other words, none honour Brahms's Adagio *non troppo* tempo indication. Brahms rarely includes bowing slurs that are impracticable for the strings. A tempo at which such slurs are not practicable is in all likelihood distinctly slower than he would have expected.

Conclusion

Though the annotated historical orchestral material I found in libraries in Meiningen and Brussels contains interesting information and, in my opinion, deserves further research, I had to conclude that it was of limited relevance for my project. Mengelberg's Brahms recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, fascinating as they are, cannot serve as a model for a style of performance that might, as Dyment puts it, approximate that of any of the most eminent Brahms conductors to whom the composer gave his approval, Steinbach in particular.[144] His annotated scores, however, offer a unique insight into a way of thinking about music and working with an orchestra that has its roots in the nineteenth century. Like the recordings by Furtwängler and Tognetti discussed in Chapter 1.9, Mengelberg's recordings helped me develop a concept of what an exaggerated style of modification, as described by Weingartner and as attributed to Bülow by him and others, might actually have sounded like.

[144] Dyment, *Conducting Brahms,* p.119.

1.11 Changing Styles in Orchestral Performances in the Late Nineteenth- and Twentieth Centuries

To better understand how the present-day approaches to Brahms in MPP and HIPP relate to nineteenth-century practices, it is worth having a closer look at the general changes in orchestral performance styles since the late nineteenth century. In the twentieth century these changes are documented in recordings. These recordings became increasingly available (and quickly grew in fidelity, by which I mean high-fidelity audio as well as fidelity to the printed score) from the second decade of the century onwards. Philip, in *Early recordings and musical style, changing tastes in instrumental performance 1900-1950*, gives a clear summary of the changing performance practice in the first decades of the twentieth century:

> By the 1930s there were clear trends away from these early twentieth-century characteristics: the spread of continuous vibrato on stringed instruments, its increasing prominence among singers, and its adaptation by many woodwind players, including a movement towards slower vibrato than the fast tremor sometimes heard earlier in the century; the decreasing prominence and frequency of portamento on both strings and voice; a trend towards stricter control of tempo and slower maximum speeds; more emphatic clarity of rhythmic detail, more literal interpretation of note values, and the avoidance of rhythmic irregularity and dislocation; the adoption of steel on the upper strings of stringed instruments, the increasing use of the metal flute, the German bassoon, and wider-bore brass instruments. It is possible to summarize all these elements as a trend towards greater power, firmness, clarity, control, literalness, and evenness of expression, and away from informality, looseness, and unpredictability.[145]

Of course, the change towards a greater evenness of tempo, which constituted only one of many changes in performance practices, did not start suddenly at the beginning of the new century. After Bülow's revolution of the early 1880s, the application of modifications in orchestral performance had changed irreversibly and, as Weingartner wrote in his book on conducting,

[145] Philip, R. *Early recordings and musical style, changing tastes in instrumental performance 1900-1950.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 229-230.

substantial and numerous modifications became much more common in orchestral performance. Weingartner's diatribe against conductors blindly following what he considered to be Bülow's exaggerated style of tempo modification shows that tempo modification became a fiercely debated subject.[146] It is worth acknowledging that this was controversial throughout the nineteenth century, as one can see for example in this quotation from 1833:

> Ritardando and accelerando alternate all the time. This manner has already become so fixed in the minds of the musical public that they firmly believe a diminuendo must be slowed down and a crescendo speeded up; a tender phrase (e.g., in an allegro) will be performed more slowly, a powerful one faster. At times this kind of treatment may well be applicable; but how to determine where requires very deep insight into the composition and very correct feeling.[147]

In 1869, Wagner had vehemently attacked conductors who did not see the need to deviate from a steady tempo, whilst expressing subtle and nuanced views about tempo modifications in his book *Über das Dirigieren*. Bülow, as his most famous protégé, may have been guilty of many exaggerations of tempo but to claim that these were representative of the Wagner school of freedom of tempo, would not necessarily be accurate. Conductor Bruno Walter elaborates on this in *Von der Musik und vom Musizieren*:

> The next generation of conductors followed Wagner's authoritative word so diligently that he could hardly have criticised their achievements for the undifferentiated handling of tempo against which his work essentially turns. Unfortunately, however, under the influence of his teaching and in the misunderstanding and exaggerated application of it, a considerable number of the musical interpreters have fallen into the opposite error: while the conductors against whom Wagner's Philippika (sic) is directed did not realise the need for modifications of the tempo and often sacrificed the living richness of the great works to a senseless evenness of tempi, since then it has seemed more necessary to counteract a no less senseless restlessness and

[146] The musician and author Gunther Schuller, for instance, also points out that Wagner advocated subtle modification and forcefully opposed excessive alterations of tempo. See Schuller. G. *The Complete Conductor*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1997. p. 85.
[147] Feski, J. (pseudonym of Johann Friedrich Eduard Sobolewski): *Caecilia, eine Zeitschrift für die musikalische Welt*, Bd.15, Schott und Söhnen, Mainz, 1833, p. 270.

> arbitrariness in the tempo and an exaggeration of the modifications. The Philistine type, whose heart could not be moved by the lively, creative interpretation of the work, was followed by that of the virtuoso, who was not satisfied with the vitality of the musical flow and who sought to increase it by over-differentiating tempo and performance. Too little was followed by too much, and it seems to me today that it is precisely in line with Wagner's teachings to warn against too much, just as he had opposed too little.[148]

Walter wrote this warning in 1957.[149] As Philip describes, the general tendency towards greater evenness had already set in by this point. Indeed, this tendency resulted in the evenness that characterised most recordings from the second half of the twentieth century. I wonder if Walter had Furtwängler in mind when he wrote these words? Given the animosity between them described by Dyment, who writes that according to Walter, Furtwängler's "supreme egotism had deleterious effects on his performances," I would suggest that this is quite likely.[150] Of course, this is merely speculation. What one can say with certainty is that, in spite of the

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[148] Walter, B. *Von der Musik und vom Musizieren.* Fischer Verlag, Tübingen, 1957, p. 34. *Die nächste Generation der Dirigenten folgte Wagners autorativem Wort mit solchem Bemühen, dass er an ihren Leistungen kaum noch jene undifferenzierte Tempoführung zu rügen gehabt hätte, gegen die sich seine Schrift im Wesentlichen wendet. Doch ist leider unter dem Einfluss seiner Lehre und im missverstehender und übertriebener Anwendung derselben ein beträchtlicher Teil der musikalischen Interpreten in den entgegengesetzten Fehler verfallen: während den Dirigenten gegen die sich Wagners Philippika richtet, die Notwendigkeit der Modifikationen des Tempos nicht aufgegangen war und der lebendige Reichtum der großen Werke oft einer sinnlosen Gleichmäßigkeit der Tempi zum Opfer fiel, schien es seither eher geboten, einer nicht minder sinnlosen Unruhe und Willkür der Tempoführung, einer Übertreibung in den Modifikationen entgegenzutreten. Dem Typus des Philisters, dessen Herz von der lebendig-schöpferischen Interpretation im Werke nicht mitbewegt werden konnte, ist der des Virtuosen gefolgt, dem die Eigenlebendigkeit des musikalischen Verlaufs nicht genügte und der sie durch Überdifferenzierung von Tempo und Vortrag zu steigern suchte. Dem Zuwenig folgte das Zuviel, und es scheint mir heute gerade im Sinn der Wagnerschen Lehre geboten, ebenso vor dem Zuviel zu warnen, wie er sich gegen das Zuwenig gewendet hatte.*

[149] Clive Brown points out that that Wagner may not always have practised what he preached, quoting for example the conductor Henry Smart (1813-1879), who objected to Wagner's tempos in a piece in the *Sunday Times* (17 June 1855): "Firstly he takes all quick movements faster than anybody else; secondly he takes all slow movements slower than anybody else; thirdly he prefaces the entry of an important point, or the return of a theme—especially in a slow movement—by an exaggerated ritardando; and fourthly, he reduces the speed of an allegro—say in an overture or the first movement—fully one-third, immediately on the entrance of its cantabile phrases." Brown, C. *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice: 1750–1900.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 394.

[150] Dyment, *Conducting Brahms*, p.136.

general tendency towards greater evenness in performance that spread in the first half of the twentieth century, a distinction between conductors who adhered to a rather strict beat and tempo and those who took greater freedoms can be drawn well into that century. Conductors such as Weingartner, Toscanini (1867-1957) and Bruno Walter (1875-1962) belonged to the former group, while Hermann Abendroth (1883-1956) and Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886-1954) were among the latter.

In the heated debate about tempo modifications, there seems to have been little room for nuance. Toscanini, for example, was pitted against Furtwängler, and though both conductors represented quite different approaches to tempo modification, it is clear from their recordings that Furtwängler was not as erratic, nor was Toscanini as rigid, as their opponents claimed in the debate. After the Second World War, the tendency towards greater evenness - described by Philip as having had a significant impact on the style of performing in the 1930s - increasingly led to an even style in performing Brahms's orchestral music, in which there was little room for modifications of tempo or rhythm.

Some of the recordings from the early decades of the twentieth century discussed in Chapter 1.9 show considerable levels of tempo modification, while others seem to adhere to a more constant tempo. When compared to Blume's suggestions in *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition*, it can be said that no recording reflects the totality of Steinbach's style, as it is described by Blume.[151] Blume describes, for instance, that by the time it became technically possible to record orchestral performances, the high art of modification of rhythm and tempo in the style of Steinbach and the Meiningen Orchestra already had become a thing of the past. As I have argued in earlier sections, various sources point in the same direction, including Fuller Maitland's description of the uniqueness of the style of Steinbach and the Meiningen Orchestra and Berrsche's lament over the fact that with Steinbach Brahms had died a second time.

[151] Leertouwer, "In search of traces" June 2021, https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/In-search-of-sounding-evidence-of-traces-of-Fritz-Steinbachs-approach-to-Brahmss-Second-Symphony-31-05-2020-revised-15-06-2021.pdf.

When writing about the recording industry in the introduction of his text, Blume expresses regret about the fact that there were no available recordings of Steinbach's performances:

> It is regrettable that the recording industry was at the time not at the level of today for the truthful reproduction of orchestral performances. That would have allowed us to understand and feel, through comparison of for example a 'Tristan' under Felix Mottl or a Brahms Symphony under Fritz Steinbach, with a performance of today under equally important conductors, what is meant when people say that the music making in these cases stems from two entirely different states of mind. It is impossible to explain this difference as the rational in this matter cannot grasp the irrational, if I may put it that way.[152]

I find this one of the most wonderful passages in Blume's text. First of all, it is striking that he refrained from passing a negative judgement on the quality of the performances of his contemporary conductors as compared to the giants of the past, this not being the voice of a reactionary deploring a decline in art and society. I feel that the subtlety of this view contributes to the credibility of his writings as a whole. Blume speaks of changing "states of mind" rather than the superior standards of the past. It would be a mistake to think about changes in performance style only in terms of loss of tradition. As the musicologist Daniel Leech-Wilkinson indicates:

> [W]hat we think is proper to a composer or a score is already slightly different from what our teachers' generation thought. And over a century, as recordings show, these differences accumulate to such an extent that musicianship becomes in some respects unrecognisable […] Performance, in other words, inevitably changes in order for scores to continue to make sense to new generations.[153]

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[152] Blume p. 4. *Zu bedauern ist, dass die Schalplattenindustrie früher noch nicht so auf der Höhe und im Schwange was für Orchester-Reproduktionen wie heute. Man würde dann durch den Vergleich etwa eines "Tristan" unter Felix Mottl oder einer Brahms-Sinfonie unter Fritz Steinbach mit einer heutigen Aufführung unter ebenso bedeutenden Dirigenten, wie die genannten, nachfühlen und verstehen können, wenn man sagt, dass hier aus zwei gänzlich verschiedenen Bewusstseinshaltungen heraus musiziert wird. Diese Verschiedenheit begrifflich auseinanderzusetzen ist eine Unmöglichkeit, weil das Rationale in diesem Fall nicht an das Irrationale herankommt, wenn ich es so sagen darf*. (Last accessed July 2022).

[153] Leech-Wilkinson, D, 'Performance changes over time,' in *Challenging Performance* https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-3/. (Last accessed July 2022).

To me, Blume's remark about one's way of experiencing reality (*Bewustseinshaltungen)* is more than a welcome adjunct to his list of instructions and suggestions for performance. I find it quite enlightening that Blume includes extra-musical influences in his views on the style of music making and how it changes. Ironically, the recording industry, to which Blume pointed as a means which might have allowed for a better understanding of Steinbach's style, likely contributed to the rapid disappearance of the performance style of Steinbach and other nineteenth-century performers.

The state of mind of the musicians, as well as the techniques and expressive tools they applied, had already changed by the beginning of the twentieth century, and would continue to do so. As soon as musicians were able to listen to recordings of their performances, their artistic priorities rapidly changed, leading to many improvements in the technical quality of their performances. Yet it is abundantly clear that something important was lost as a result of this new perspective on the art of musical performance– a certain informality, looseness, unpredictability and - most certainly in the case of orchestral performance - a great deal of flexibility. The clinical perfection that gradually became the standard in the twentieth century, particularly in recording studios, had never been part of the world of nineteenth-century musical performance.[154] I consider the rise of the recording industry not as the reason behind flexible and free performances gradually giving way to ones that demonstrated power, smoothness and evenness of expression, but rather as a major factor in promoting, disseminating and stimulating this change. When it came to recording, conductors also advocating a rather strict handling of tempo, in my opinion, provided an easier model for later conductors to follow than did the

[154] For a discussion on how conditions in recording processes influence and change artistic priorities, and particularly how musicians experience the recording process, see the work of Amy Blier-Carruthers, and especially her article "The Performer's Place in the Process and Product of Recording" https://www.cmpcp.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PSN2013_Blier-Carruthers.pdf. (Last accessed June 2022)

advocates of a freer style. Such factors contributed to the evenness of sound, expression and tempo that characterised the vast majority of performances in the second half of the twentieth century.

Over the past two decades, the increased interest in nineteenth-century performance practices by researchers and musicians worldwide has resulted in many fascinating projects and, particularly in chamber music, in significantly different sounding results.[155] In the field of orchestral performance, too, a few attempts have been made to move away from the modernistic style that has characterised both HIPP and MPP. As Dyment, for instance, remarks:

> Now, at the time of writing [2016], the Weingartner influence has been absorbed into the blood stream of the modern Symphony Orchestra, as witness by the performances in 2012, live and recorded, of all Brahms symphonic works by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under their conductor Ricardo Chailly. As Chailly himself has put it, Weingartner's Brahms recordings are nothing less than 'the essence of these works: pure, devoid of extremes, firmly rooted in a tradition that seems buried today […] the freshness, the clarity of his interpretations still have the power to convince.' Once again, the Weingartner influence is directed towards the flowing tempos, the extreme clarity of parts and the modest expansion and contraction of tempos for expressive purposes.[156]

One can see that the qualities Dyment lists here are not exactly at odds with the trend towards greater evenness that dominates the performance practice of the late twentieth century, as described by Philip in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. Regrettably, Chailly does not specify what in his opinion defines the Weingartner tradition that he claims is buried today. He merely characterises it using the rather vague concept of purity and highlights the avoidance of extremes. It is fair to say that Weingartner was one of the most restrained conductors in his modifications of tempo. In that

[155] See for example: Anna Scott's 'Romanticizing Brahms" PhD Diss., Leiden University, 2014; Kate Bennett Wadsworth's "Precisely marked in the tradition of the composer, the performing editions of Friedrich Grützmacher" PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2017 and Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrsion's "*Chasing the butterfly*" project on Grieg, 2008, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no. (Last accessed August 2022)
[156] Dyment, *Conducting Brahms,* p. 230.

sense, his tradition was not buried as Chailly claims, but seems to have survived well into the twentieth century. Dyment goes on to write that "Chailly's interpretations are sometimes far from closely modelled on those to be heard in Weingartner's recordings". I would add that although Weingartner's relatively steady recordings are easier models than those of Abendroth and Furtwängler, with their extensive tempo modifications, I personally hear little relationship between Chailly's recordings and Weingartner's.

Where Chailly has chosen Weingartner as an example, others have tried to follow in Steinbach's footsteps. Dyment also writes about those who try to recreate his style:

> Thus far, contemporary practitioners, intent on following in Steinbach's footsteps have sometimes espoused an extreme approach that appears to be based on insufficiently detailed scholarship: misconceptions concerning the nature of that conductor's general approach with a too literal attempt to implement the precepts of Walter Blume's work – too literal in the sense that some of his hints have been magnified into the obvious and the unjustifiably extravagant.[157]

Dyment goes on to name Sir Charles Mackerras and Sir John Eliot Gardiner as examples of conductors who, in his opinion, failed in their attempts to interpret Brahms in Steinbach's style. He claims that their efforts are sometimes reminiscent of Abendroth's. Because he considers Abendroth's Brahms to be characterised by extreme emphasis and changes of tempo, Dyment concludes that Abendroth, and both Mackerras and Gardiner in so far as they coincide with him, must be considered as being remote from Steinbach's practice. At the same time, one can read Frisch, who claimed that Abendroth can be seen as a conductor who continued (parts of) the Steinbach tradition.[158] These conflicting views can be seen as further corroboration of the idea that Steinbach's style was and indeed remains a very elusive one. My personal impression of the recordings criticised by Dyment concerns their fundamental concept of tempo which, in my opinion, is not sufficiently

[157] Ibid, p. 235-236.
[158] Frisch, "In search of Brahms's First Symphony," in *Performing, Brahms,* p. 286.

flexible. As a result, one can easily get the impression that there is a lack in modification of rhythm and tempo, or that the modifications that are applied are too abrupt. But I must stress that to a large extent the way one perceives the tempo and its modifications is subjective. Much depends on the listener. Nonetheless, Dyment writes that in his view "the task of reconstructing the Meiningen way's approach to the performance of the four symphonies requires a more thoughtful and discriminating approach than has been adopted so far in contemporary attempts in performance practice."[159]

At the very least, one can say that, thanks to recordings such as those by Mackerras, Gardiner and a few others, the old debate about strict tempo versus freedom is being continued in the twenty-first century. This is a very welcome development considering that both HIPP and MPP, at least in the orchestral domain, had become so dominated by those who kept a strict tempo, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century.

My research has led me to a specific understanding of how to approach this music and how to use those expressive tools that I feel have been neglected in the past decades. In my experience, this process, in which my own artistic ambitions have become increasingly outspoken and specific, creates a state of mind that makes it more difficult to appreciate different approaches and outcomes. When I say that I welcome approaches to Brahms's music that are different from my own approach, particularly those that stem from a different understanding of the historical evidence or a different selection of evidence, I am making a conscious effort not to join the ranks of those people whom Leech-Wilkinson refers to as gatekeepers. I genuinely believe that a wide variety of approaches to the performance of Western Classical Music is to the advantage of all those who recognise its relevance for future generations. If more people are allowed and encouraged to form their own perspective on the music and develop their own personal understanding of it, they can learn more about the nature of the music and the paths by which it can be carried into the future can multiply.

[159] Dyment, *Conducting Brahms,* p. 236.

I share Leech-Wilkinson's criticism of gatekeepers (critics, teachers, and others who condemn certain performances as being unsuited to the intentions of the composer) and I too consider them a danger to the development of diverse creative approaches, but I am perhaps somewhat less worried about their influence. I am confident that the crumbling of pillars of the old musical power structures, such as record labels, management bureaus and newspaper critics, will ultimately lead to a situation where one will have to re-invent everything anyway. Whatever the outcome may be, I try to do what I can by advocating an open mind towards unfamiliar styles of performance, both old and new, in the places where I teach, such as the CvA and the National University of Seoul.

It is perhaps not surprising that conductors such as Sir John Eliot Gardiner and Richard Tognetti, who have their own orchestras to work with, have attempted to regain a certain amount of modification of rhythm and tempo in their work. The fact that chief conductors in MPP are now only on the rostrum for about twelve weeks per year or season makes it more difficult to develop a distinct style, let alone re-invent modifications of rhythm and tempo in a substantial and consequential way. I would further assume that the generally preferred role of the conductor in the world of HIPP, and the fact that this work usually takes place in relatively short projects, are factors that hinder the development of a style of playing that would include substantial modifications, which requires prolonged and intensive experimentation and practice.

There is also, perhaps, a mental aspect in HIPP working processes to consider here. The idea that so much power over artistic decisions should lie in the hands of just one person, for instance, seems somewhat at odds with the anti-authoritarian side of the period instrument movement. It seems to me that the default position of HIPP musicians is to be more inclined to trust Urtext editions and the accumulated instincts of a collective of like-minded musicians rather than those of a single conductor. They tend to appreciate the conductor as an inspirational figure, rather than as someone who moulds performances through individual decisions and non-verbal communication skills. Orchestral musicians from, for instance, the Orchestra of the

Eighteenth Century have repeatedly indicated to me that they much prefer an inspiring conductor to a technically skilled one. The more technically skilled a conductor is, the more they are capable of – in the words of Bülow – playing the orchestra like a piano. The idea of being played like a piano is not something musicians with an anti-authoritarian preference would welcome.

That brings me to the last factor that I think has limited the spread of tempo modification in HIPP orchestras. Many of the leading conductors in this field are inspired musicians, but few of them (often by their own admission) have any degree of conducting technique. I am no exception to this. In the introduction, I wrote about how I felt grateful for the advice given to me as a teenager not to pursue a career as a conductor early on, but rather to focus on my broad musical development. While I have made a considerable effort to develop my technique as a conductor over the years, certain aspects in my style of conducting reveal that I am, in fact, a late starter. I vividly remember how conductor Nicolaus Harnoncourt (1929-2016), one of the most inspiring people I have ever worked with, screamed at the Concertgebouw Orchestra: "After all these years that we have worked together, you still think you can get me to go 1-2-3? I cannot do it, I do not want to do it, and I will not do it!" [*Ich kann es nicht, Ich will es nicht, Ich tu es nicht!*]. On another occasion, Philippe Herreweghe, also in a rehearsal with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, told the musicians: "I know that you are used to working with conductors who are much better with their hands than I am, but if you will indulge me, I think I have something to say about this music."

Through experience I know that conductors require a good deal of technique in order to make their intentions regarding modifications of tempo clear to an orchestra. At the same time, though, I think it is important to acknowledge that every form of non-verbal understanding between a conductor and an orchestra is based upon an agreement between them, more than upon any particular technique or skill set of the conductor.[160] Few conductors, if any, will have had the same opportunity as Bülow in Meiningen to craft such an agreement with an orchestra, with both the orchestra and

[160] See Chapter 2.1 about how I see my role as a conductor in this project.

the conductor knowing the music by heart and having months to work together on a limited amount of repertoire chosen by the conductor alone.

Without claiming that such extreme conditions are required to arrive at a convincing style of modifications in orchestral performances, I think it is safe to say that the present system of putting a different conductor in front of an orchestra every week, as is customary with mainstream symphony orchestras, makes it unlikely that major steps in re-inventing tempo modification and other nineteenth-century expressive tools can be expected from that side of the spectrum. Moreover, HIPP ensembles and orchestras, often working in short intensive projects with musicians hired only for a brief period of time, seem principally tasked with efficiently creating results that fit a unified and internationally interchangeable standard of performance. I would argue that both the week-to-week production process of the mainstream orchestras and the project-based organisation of period instrument orchestras make it difficult to achieve the significant changes that are required if one wants to take into account the evidence of the historical practices of the nineteenth century in performance, because that would require substantial and prolonged experimentation. As I feel at the end of each project week with my orchestra that I am just beginning to get a glimpse of what might be possible in this field, I am strengthened in my belief that much more time is needed.

Finally, I would also like to try considering the implications of Blume's idea that states of mind are a factor in changing styles of performance. Perhaps it is important to acknowledge a few extra-musical factors that contribute to greater evenness of expression in the present-day way of making music. This touches on what one expects from music as musicians and as listeners. Musicians tend to honour the great canon of the music of the past by polishing it. Perhaps there is also an element of nostalgia involved here: they want to show their admiration by making every detail golden. In doing so, they sterilise the music and reduce it to something smooth and even. The pressure to do so is ubiquitous in the world of HIPP and MPP alike. What one does must sound polished or it risks being considered insufficient in quality. This pressure is also boosted by the fact

that people now hear more recorded music than music in live performance. If one were to consider only the sonic dimension of music-making, one would be neglecting both the fact that a concert is in some ways a ritual in which the public takes an active part, and that the palpable physical and mental effort that musicians make to produce the music is part of that ritual. I believe that the pressure to make everything sound "polished" may well be increased by a demand for music to comfort or distract people in a rapidly changing world. I suspect that there are numerous extra-musical factors contributing to the demand for smoothness and evenness in performance, including not only the state of mind of both musicians and listeners, but also the way classical music is marketed and consumed.

Conclusion

The tendency towards greater evenness of expression and tempo led to a rather uniform handling of tempo and sound in both HIPP and MPP orchestral performances over the course of the twentieth century. This tendency certainly also affected the performance style of Brahms's music. Attempts to interpret Brahms in the style of Steinbach have been limited in number and, according to experts such as Dyment, rather unsuccessful. The way that orchestral production processes developed in the twentieth century has made it difficult to develop a style of performance based on historical research in a way that also includes substantial amounts of modification. While extra-musical factors contributing to the demand for smoothness and evenness in performance fall outside the scope of this research project, these do merit further research.

Chapter 2. Re-inventing and Implementing Modifications of Rhythm and Tempo with the Project Orchestra

These are my principles, and if you don't like them…. well, I have others![161]

(Attributed to) Groucho Marx (1890-1977).

2.1 My Role as Conductor

Throughout this dissertation, I have used the term "re-inventing" to describe my way of working with modifications of rhythm and tempo. I consider the process of re-invention as being crucial to understanding the nature of the lost tools of expression that are described in the first chapter of this dissertation. I used a selection of historical sources to sketch the history of modifications of rhythm and tempo and their application in orchestral performance in the nineteenth century. I focused in particular on the style of Brahms performance developed by Fritz Steinbach with the Meiningen Orchestra. In doing so, I assembled a concept of tempo and modifications thereof from various historical sources that relate closely to what I have shown might have been Brahms's own ideas regarding this subject and what he might have expected from musicians performing his music. I also described the tools for modification that Steinbach and others reportedly applied. Musicians like Blume, Klauwell, and Brahms himself stressed that working with tools of expression required a certain "feeling" or emotional understanding. To me, my attempts to implement these tools are not the most important part of my work. Instead, the essence of this research project relates to establishing an emotional connection with these expressive tools.

[161] Groucho Marx Quotes. BrainyQuote.com, BrainyMedia Inc, 2022. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/groucho_marx_122547. (Last accessed September 2022).

Blume wrote that by 1933, the year of the centenary of Brahms's birth, the way people experienced reality *(Bewustseinshaltung)* had changed so profoundly since the days of Brahms and Steinbach that it would be impossible to describe in words the change and its effect on the way music was performed. Today, almost one hundred years after Blume wrote his text, this change has become exponentially greater and researchers, musicians and audiences are further removed from the *Bewüstseinshaltung* of Brahms and Steinbach than they can even begin to understand. That is why one needs to think of the process of making emotional sense of the lost tools of expression as being a process of re-invention. Without an emotional understanding of them, implementing these rules and working with these tools is pointless. Of course, for a musician it would be equally pointless just to experience one's emotional response to the "affects" in the music. As a performer, one needs to use these emotions, which are sometimes understood as being directed inwards, to create an outward effect by shaping the performance on the basis of one's connectedness to the emotions. Quantz writes about this in his *Versuch*:

> The performer of a piece must try to place himself within the main and secondary passions that he is supposed to express. And because in most pieces one passion always alternates with others, the performer must also know how to judge every thought, the kind of passion that he contains within himself, and always shape his performance to correspond with it.[162]

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, in his *Versuch*, also writes about the need for the performer to connect to the affects in the music:

> Since a musician can only move if he is moved himself, he must necessarily be able to inhabit all the affects that he wants his listeners to experience; he

[162] Quantz, J. J. *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen; mit verschiedenen, zur Beförderung des guten Geschmackes in der praktischen Musik dienlichen Anmerkungen begleitet, und mit Exempeln erläutert.* Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voß, 1752, Hauptstück XI, paragraph 15, p. 107. *Der Ausführender eines Stückes muss sich selbst in die Haupt- und Nebenleidenschaften, die er ausdrücken soll, zu versetzen suchen. Und weil in dem meisten Stücken immer eine Leidenschaft mit andern abwechselt, so muss auch der Ausführer jeden Gedanken zu beurteilen wissen, was für eine Leidenschaft er in sich enthalte, und seinen Vortrag immer derselben gleichförmig machen.*

> offers them his sentiments as the best way of allowing them to experience them with him.[163]

Lest we put the emotions of the performer front and centre of every performance, I want to stress that both these writers (Quantz and Bach) detail the importance of recognising the affects embedded in the music by the composer. Like other writers, such as Mattheson, they point to specific compositional tools, such as the use of tempo and intervals, to demonstrate the way in which they connect to specific emotions. Like these authors, I think that only by making a very serious effort to identify the affects that the composer intended to embed in his music, can we hope to reveal the full expressive potential of the composition in question.

Musicians today have no choice but to connect with those affects as citizens of the twenty-first century, which means that they link them to emotions that are part of today's way of experiencing reality. Though the musical affects which composers and theorists of the past have named[164] are of a general human nature and can be easily recognised, one cannot say with any degree of certainty whether using these affects to shape one's performance today leads musicians, including those who study history, in a similar direction as it did the people of Brahms's day, or Blume's. In fact, Blume's account claims that this was no longer the case even at the start of last century. Placing the process of emotionally connecting to the lost tools of expression at the centre of my project has had consequences for my role as a conductor. A large part of my responsibility as a conductor obviously lies in leading rehearsals, conducting performances and recording sessions. In the years leading up to my project and throughout the course of it, I have learned to redefine my role and extend it beyond these duties. The following are some examples of my new-found role. I will focus on my artistic responsibilities, leaving aside the practical ones.

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[163]Bach, C. Ph. E. *Versuch*, p. 85. *Indem ein Musikus nicht anders rühren kan, er sey dann selbst gerührt; so muss er notwendig sich in alle Affecten setzen können, welche er bey seinen Zuhörern erregen will; er giebt ihnen seine Empfindungen zu verstehen und bewegt sie solchergestalt am besten zur Mit-Empfindung.*

[164] For example, the French Philosopher René Descartes, who names 6 basic affects: admiration, love, hatred, desire, joy and sorrow in *Les passions de l'âme* (Henry Le Gras, Paris, 1649) p. 94.

CREATING A SHARED ARTISTIC FOUNDATION WITH THE ORCHESTRA BEFORE THE START OF THE REHEARSALS.

I have always believed that if musicians make music based on an approach that they feel is their own, they sound more convincing than when they follow the instructions of even the most artistically outstanding conductor. The Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, for example, shared an approach to a specific and limited repertoire with their founder and chief conductor Frans Brüggen (1934-2014). The musicians had the opportunity to develop this approach through fruitful and intensive cooperation between conductor and orchestra over the course of many years. Seeing and hearing what could be achieved through such a close cooperation was a source of inspiration to me as a student and young musician.

My conviction that a shared artistic approach would be crucial for my project made me realise that I needed to share my insights and the preliminary results of my research with the musicians playing in the orchestra. I realised early on that it would not be enough to do this during the project weeks, because there would not be enough time during the rehearsals. Therefore, I shared essays and "dear fellow musicians" letters with my orchestra members in the first two years.[165] In 2021, I launched a website, making it easier to share materials with the musicians. I used these contemporary technical tools to build a starting point for developing a shared artistic purpose with the orchestra members. I am fully aware that my efforts are dwarfed by notable examples of the past (some of which I have quoted in Chapter I of this dissertation) and indeed of the more recent past, but I nonetheless find inspiration in those examples.

I am convinced that in their work with the Meiningen Orchestra, conductors Bülow and Steinbach also worked on the basis of a musical approach they developed and shared with the musicians. Weingartner describes Bülow's work with the musicians of the Meiningen Orchestra:

[165] Leertouwer "Historically Inspired Modernism," (published June 2021) https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Historically-Inspired-Modernism.pdf.

> By dint of diligent, indefatigable practice he [Bülow] had so infused into the orchestra his own conception of the works as to get a perfection of *ensemble* at that time unknown.[166]

Bülow is said to have thought of the orchestra as a piano on which he could play the orchestral repertoire. In that image, the players would be no more than keys and it would matter little if they shared the conductor's approach to the music. However, Weingartner's description of Bülow's rehearsal process as that of an infusion of ideas and Bülow's own account of these rehearsals suggest that the process involved much more participation and commitment from the musicians than the piano image would suggest. In any case, it is more than likely that the infusion of ideas over a period of many months of close collaboration between conductor and orchestra, made up in part of excellent musicians with impressive track records as performing artists outside the orchestra, would result in a sense of shared purpose. Weingartner's description is reminiscent, for instance, of the review of Beethoven's performance described in Chapter 1.1, in which the writer for the *Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* described how "the ideal of Beethoven's creation was as it were expressed through and by them."[167] Here one finds the idea that the musicians forming an orchestra do not just carry out instructions (in this case from the highest authority, the composer), but they also convey the musical narrative, which is expressed *by and through* them. A prerequisite for this level of engagement, for the musicians to work effectively, in my opinion, is a shared idea about what the music expresses and how it is to be performed. That is why I have striven to share as much as I could of my understanding of the historical sources and my idea of the musical narrative with the musicians of the orchestra.

I like to think of the process of sharing my developing insights with the musicians through emails, short films, and so on, as a way of helping them, as performing musicians, to create – in the words of Brown – a

[166] Weingartner, p.12
[167] WamZ 1813, No 48, pp. 749-50.

different persona. In some ways this can be seen as essentially a modernistic twenty-first century translation of Bülow's rehearsal process, and an effort to create an environment in which the music can be expressed through and by all the musicians involved in the project. My style of leading the rehearsals, performances, and recordings was designed to achieve this goal of creating a shared artistic foundation for our approach.

Artistic priorities in rehearsals

My research led me to choose different artistic priorities in the rehearsal process with the orchestra from the ones I was used to. That is why I started this chapter with a quotation attributed to Groucho Marx. In fact, what I seem to have told myself was: "these are my artistic principles, but because I no longer think they help me in performing Brahms in a way that takes into account what the historical evidence tells me, I must make new ones."

It is relatively easy to keep an orchestra playing together (in vertical alignment) if one does not alter the basic tempo. But my understanding of the historical evidence suggested to me that keeping the tempo steady in order to maintain togetherness was not necessarily something that Brahms would have expected from musicians preforming his music. My changed approach to togetherness constitutes one example of my new-found (different) principles. In the period leading up to the projects, I shared my intentions regarding modifications with the musicians by giving out annotated scores and parts. For the most part, though, I developed and finalised my modifications in collaboration with the orchestra during the rehearsals and performances, prioritising expressivity and experimentation over togetherness. The immediate reaction to un-togetherness from musicians involved in the project, including myself, who had been trained in the twentieth-century tradition of technical perfection and synchrony, is to create or re-establish vertical alignment as quickly as possible. This reflex drastically reduces the room for experimentation with modifications of both rhythm and tempo. My new role as a conductor now included ensuring that reverting to the priority of perfect ensemble, an essential characteristic of

the modernistic performance practice of the twentieth century, was avoided or postponed as much as possible. Only by doing this, could I make sure that there was room for prolonged experimentation. To some extent, I became an advocate of chaos – the exact opposite of what I would previously have considered my role to be. For me personally, it was very important to be able to claim that my approach was based on my understanding of historical information, as I would have been uncomfortable convincing the musicians to try things that were so far outside their comfort zone based purely on my musical aesthetics and intuition as a twenty-first century musician. I have no way of saying whether the musicians might have followed me if I had not been able to claim that my approach was based on historical research. But I can say with certainty that it was the research that led me to apply the modifications of rhythm and tempo described in this dissertation, not the personal aesthetics I had developed as a performing musician.

Another artistic priority became the joint emotional understanding of the music and the modifications. Although I had always considered this an important part of my responsibility as a conductor, it now gained a new urgency and importance because of my research. A constant and active search for how my understanding of the emotional narrative of the piece could help shape the performance, and then sharing this with the orchestra, became an artistic top priority. To be able to lead this process, I had to embrace the amateur musician in myself, looking for how musical events made me feel first of all, before considering ways to shape and polish a performance in order to convey and evoke those emotions. For example, one can feel the difference between an accelerando that is the result of accumulated energy and is in a way self-propelled and an accelerando which is more goal-directed, designed to reach a specific place or goal note in the music. In my opinion, sharing the emotional drive behind these types of accelerandi, rather than focussing on the technical dimensions of the increase of tempo, improved the chance of reaching a unified expressive result. As for the modifications of rhythm, I increasingly felt the need to address the shaping of repeated notes of the same written length. I used the technique of singing a phrase to the musicians, suggesting the uneven

accentuation of syllables in words temporarily set to the music, and also incorporated very plastic gestures to suggest light and shadow.

The experience of working with different artistic priorities, sometimes directly opposed to the ones I had applied before the start of my research project, led me to reconsider what musical intuition can amount to in the context of musical interpretation. My experience as a teacher at the CvA over the past decades has shown me that intuition, like musicality, in the context of (higher) musical education is often seen as something that a student or a musician is gifted with (to a greater or a lesser extent) rather than something that can be taught or acquired, or even developed. Through this research project, my perspective on that concept of intuition has changed. I now think that what we call musical intuition in musical education is often the capacity to work intuitively with one's artistic principles. I think it is important to draw a distinction between the underlying principles and the ability to work with them intuitively, i.e., applying them without consciously affirming the process or indeed the underlying principles themselves at every step. Whilst I would not be able to claim any knowledge of the possibilities of developing people's capacity to use their intuition, I think that my experience makes it clear to me that my intuition in itself does not lead me to any specific artistic choices. These choices, however, are determined by underlying artistic principles that can be influenced and altered. Thus, my intuition, which once led me to keep a stable tempo throughout a movement, now leads me to constantly strive for modifications of the tempo, because my idea about tempo has changed. One might call this 'informed intuition' as this term perhaps makes clear that intuition is not necessarily just a matter of (gut) feeling. Without wanting to advocate change for change's sake, I would like to say that if a performer relies on their musical intuition based on the same unquestioned fundamental beliefs or artistic principles, this could easily result in the repetition of ingrained, unconsciously stored knowledge or ideas. It is clear to me that the fundamental ideas or basic artistic principles one uses in performance through musical intuition can be shaped not only by accumulated listening experiences, as well as all kinds of written and verbal input to shape ideas about performance, but also by extra-musical

factors such as for example the performer's temperament or ideas about the function of classical music in society. [168]

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ever-growing desire for evenness in musical performance over the twentieth century, described by Philip above, led to a style of conducting that was similarly more even in nature. Particularly when it came to varying the units in the pattern with which a conductor used to show the tempo, the tendency became to choose a traditional pattern and change it as little as possible.[169] Sources such as Blume's text, however, suggest that changing the beat pattern once constituted a natural part of a nineteenth-century conductor's modus operandi when wanting to realise modifications of tempo. In fact, Brahms himself reportedly used a rather unusual pattern in the first movement of the *First Piano Concerto*. As Irish composer, organist and pedagogue, Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) recalls:

> His conducting of the D minor concerto threw an entirely new light on the whole composition, especially as regards the rhythmical swing of the first movement. Written in the troublesome tempo of 6/4 most conductors take it too quickly by beating two in a bar or too slowly by beating six. Brahms beat it in an uneven four (__u__u) which entirely did away with undue dragging or hurrying and kept the line of movement insistent up to the last note.[170]

As this quote suggests, beating in these uneven units was remarkable in Brahms's days and it would be remarkable today in performances of nineteenth-century repertoire as well, even though a much greater variety of beating patterns came into existence in the century that followed as a requirement for conducting newly-composed pieces with complex rhythms and changing time signatures. The historical evidence on varying the pattern

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[168] The extent to which old beliefs play a role in the shaping of newfound principals is something I think one can probably only judge at a later stage, in hindsight.

[169] A comprehensive list of traditional patterns can be found in: Rudolf, M. *The Grammar of Conducting A Practical Guide to Baton Technique and Orchestral Interpretation*. Schirmer, New York, 1950.

[170] Stanford, C. V. *Pages from an Unwritten Diary.* Edward Arnold, London, 1914, pp. 201-202.

of beats and using patterns that today would be considered unconventional leads me to look for opportunities to apply these technical tools today.

To create a shared artistic basis for my approach to Brahms's orchestral music, I extended my role in this project beyond the standard role of a conductor in today's performance practice. I shared the findings and preliminary results of my research with the community of orchestral musicians before the start of each project week. This enabled the musicians to make themselves familiar with my developing ideas. My newfound artistic principles also affected my role in rehearsals, performances and recordings, as I found myself working with different priorities. Over the course of the project, the musicians in the orchestra and I developed a more intuitive way of working with these new-found artistic principles. As a conductor I applied a wider variety of beating patterns, including some unconventional ones, to show my intention to strive for a less even way of performing the music. All this is part of an ongoing process of which, in the context of the limited scope of my project, I think I can show only the beginning.

2.2 Re-inventing and Implementing Modifications With the Project Orchestra

I documented the working process with the project orchestra in four films, which can be found on my website through the links provided below. The process of re-inventing and implementing modifications of rhythm and tempo - the central subject of this dissertation – has arguably been the most important aspect of my work with the orchestra. As such, it gets a considerable amount of attention in the films. These films illustrate how my approach to modification of rhythm and tempo (as well as my approach to other subjects such as vibrato and portamento) developed and how my perspective changed over the course of the four-year trajectory of the project – something predicted early on by Clive Brown, Anna Scott and others. This is one reason why I decided to document the process carefully in this way. The films include interviews with participating musicians, revealing their experiences, and changing perspectives. The interviews with experts in the field of historically-informed performance practice of nineteenth-century orchestral repertoires make up another important part of the films. All the interviews together, but perhaps most noticeably the interviews with the musicians of the orchestra, make it clear that the orchestra has functioned here as a kind of laboratory. Experiments were carried out collectively, but also at the level of each individual musician. The films also touch on topics like the position of the project within the wider fields of orchestral performance practices and higher music education.
I have provided links to the films and QR-codes, which can be scanned, for example with a mobile phone or another device. Both the links and the codes lead directly to the films and audio recordings. I hope that the QR-codes will be particularly useful for readers of the printed version of my thesis.

LINKS TO THE FILMS DESCRIBING EACH OF THE PROJECT WEEKS:

Film 1 (2019)
https://vimeo.com/381993988/19eae836bd

QR-code 1

Film 2 (2020)
https://vimeo.com/498298089/66dc9e2576

QR-code 2

Film 3 (2021)
https://vimeo.com/669806758

QR-code 3

Film 4 (2022)
https://vimeo.com/765626194

QR-code 4

2.3 Examples of Modifications of Rhythm and Tempo in the Project Orchestra Recordings

After careful consideration, I decided to present this chapter (like the previous one) in the form of films. By writing several essays about tempo modification with music examples and by monitoring the feedback I received from musicians and others who read them, I learned that I had to reconsider the format in which I would offer this part of my research. Though my audio examples, embedded in the text through hyperlinks, were appreciated, the fact that one was taken away from the text to a separate website for the audio, interrupted the flow of the reader in a way that made it hard to comprehend fully what I was arguing in the text and what I was trying to demonstrate in the examples. This feedback coincided with my own experience as a reader of other texts with audio examples embedded in a similar way. This is why I decided to look for a different way of presenting the examples of modification in the recordings. I ended up choosing the format of a film in which I talk about the type of modification in question and provide the audio example in a way that allows the viewer to follow the music in the annotated score directly.

Rather than trying to present a full discussion of all modifications, I aimed to give examples of several types of modification in recordings of different pieces played in all four years of the project. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, I consider the recorded performances to lie at the core of my project, and the written part of my work as accompanying them. The videos too can be seen as accompanying my recordings. The films are intended to introduce the listener to the sounding results of the several types of modification that can be found in the recordings. As I wrote in the Introduction, watching these films (and listening to the recordings) is possibly the quickest way for the reader to get a good impression of the nature of the project.

LINKS TO FILMS WITH EXAMPLES OF MODIFICATIONS

Examples of modifications of rhythm and tempo with explanation and motivation.

***First Symphony* op. 68, C minor**

First movement: Un poco sostenuto-Allegro

https://vimeo.com/742594238

QR-code 5

Second movement: Andante sostenuto

https://vimeo.com/742670743

QR-code 6

Third movement: Un poco Allegretto e grazioso

https://vimeo.com/742616977

QR-code 7

Fourth movement: Adagio - Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

https://vimeo.com/742626108

QR-code 8

***Second Symphony* op. 73, D major**

First movement: Allegro non troppo

https://vimeo.com/742661960

QR-code 9

Second movement: Adagio non troppo

https://vimeo.com/742660351

QR-code 10

***Third Symphony* op. 90, F major**

First movement: Allegro con brio

https://vimeo.com/742662950

QR-code 11

Second movement: Andante

https://vimeo.com/742666038

QR-code 12

Third movement: Poco Allegretto

https://vimeo.com/742668356

QR-code 13

Fourth movement: Allegro

https://vimeo.com/742594861

QR-code 14

***Fourth Symphony* op. 98, E minor op. 98**

First movement: Allegro non troppo

https://vimeo.com/764507392

QR-code 15

Second movement: Andante moderato

https://vimeo.com/764507688

QR-code 16

Third movement: Allegro giocoso

https://vimeo.com/764507960

QR-code 17

Fourth movement: Allegro energico e passionate

https://vimeo.com/764508265

QR-code 18

Chapter 3, A brief Overview of Other Characteristics of the Project Orchestra and its Playing

The main focus of this dissertation is, as its title suggests, modification of rhythm and tempo. The flexible handling of these two features, however, is not necessarily the first thing that stands out in, nor even the most striking characteristic of, the playing style of the project orchestra.

Reactions from listeners vary from person to person. Some listeners react strongly to the absence of continuous vibrato, while others are surprised by the sound of the period instruments; some comment on the choice of tempo or the abundant use of portamento in the string orchestra. In this chapter I offer an overview of other characteristics, beyond modification of rhythm and tempo, which can be heard in the performances of the project orchestra.

The following contains a description of the size and seating of the orchestra, the musicians and their instruments, and the handling of bowing, and articulation, vibrato, portamento and tempo, each in separate chapters. This overview does not offer as much detail as the chapters on modification of rhythm and tempo do, but I have striven to clearly show how my approach to each element is rooted in my understanding of historical sources. The manner in which I have tried to re-invent the expressive tools of vibrato and portamento, is arguably somewhat more pragmatic than the way I have handled the topic of modification of rhythm and tempo. It is clear to me that my project offers only a glimpse of what might be developed through further research and experimentation in the field of orchestral performance regarding each of these elements.

3.1 Size and Seating

Decisions regarding size and seating have a very great influence on the sound, balance and flexibility of an orchestra. In her article "Performing Brahms's music: clues from his letters," Avins comes to the conclusion that,

while Brahms worked with small orchestras such as the Court Orchestra in Karlsruhe and the Court Orchestra in Meiningen, there are no concrete indications to suggest that he actually preferred smaller orchestras.[171] In fact, there is plenty of evidence pointing to the fact that he enjoyed large orchestras. As Avins confirms, many passages in his correspondence allude to his desire for and pleasure in relatively large orchestras. Brahms worked on his orchestral pieces with the small orchestra in Meiningen, enjoying the high standard of playing there. In a letter to Ferdinand Hiller, he mentions that the musicians of the Meiningen Orchestra are "truly industrious people," and praises their "magnificent accomplishments."[172] Avins assumes that he praised the Meiningen Orchestra in spite of rather than because of its small size. A letter from Bülow to Strauss in 1886 reveals, on the other hand, that Brahms was "against augmenting the strings for No. XIII [*Symphony IV*]." Bülow, who had on many occasions stressed the importance of enlarging the Meiningen Orchestra, regarded Brahms's opposition to this idea "as another personal fiasco."[173] Unfortunately there is no record of the reasons why Brahms might have argued against augmenting the string section on this occasion.

There is documentation regarding the exact size and proportions of the Meiningen Orchestra. In the preface of his Urtext edition of the *Fourth Symphony*, Robert Pascall mentions that it premiered with the Meiningen Orchestra on 25 October 1885 with 51 or 52 players, including a string section of 10 first violins, 7 or 8 seconds, 5 violas, 4 cellos, and 4 basses. The size of the Meiningen Orchestra should not be considered a fixed quantity though. It is a documented fact, for instance, that Steinbach wanted the string orchestra to be enlarged to 16-14-8-8-7 for his concerts in London. He proposed hiring extra musicians from Berlin, Cologne and Frankfurt.[174] My

[171] Avins, "Performing Brahms's music," in *Performing Brahms,* p.18.
[172] Avins, *Life and Letters*, pp. 581-582 quoting a Letter to Ferdinand Hiller of 1881.
[173] Schuh, W and Trenner, F. *Hans von Bülow and Richard Strauss correspondence*, Letter of 18/30 March 1886, Boosey and Hawkes, Bonn, 1953, p. 27.
[174] This is shown by Volker Kern and Herta Müller in *Die Meininger kommen!* (Meininger Museen, 1999) p. 59 (Quoting from Steinbach's cost estimate to Georg II for the concerts in London).

string section can be seen as a variation on the basic Meiningen formation, consisting of 9 or 10 first violins, 9 seconds, 7 or 8 violas, 6 cellos, and 4 basses. I chose the size of the Meiningen Orchestra at the premiere of the *Fourth Symphony* as a reference point for my project orchestra for practical and ideological reasons, not because I believe it to be the size that Brahms ultimately might have preferred himself. I made some adjustments in the proportions between the sections, as can be seen in the numbers given above. In my opinion it is better to have 6 instead of 4 cellos to balance the voices in the string orchestra. In a review in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, the 5 (!) double basses of the Meiningen Orchestra are praised lavishly:

> The five double basses stand out even more favourably, from the half-hearted and lukewarm treatment of these instruments, which has become common practice even in many good orchestras. Here the bass is really bowed properly; that means bowed out fully, not merely superficially.[175]

In my opinion, adding a 5th bass to the section would have a detrimental effect on the balance between cellos and basses and between the higher and lower strings in my particular formation; hence my choice for 9-8-7-6-4.

Deciding the size of the various sections of the string orchestra should, of course, always be done with due consideration not only for the proportions within the string orchestra, but also for the balance between winds and strings. Daniel J. Koury, for instance, has written extensively about sizes and proportions of nineteenth-century orchestras. He notes that seeking out a working ratio between numbers of strings versus woodwinds versus brasses can be quite confounding in the context of the nineteenth-century orchestras. After comparing various sources and orchestra lists, he concludes that one cannot reduce the historical evidence to any simple overall formula which could be universally applied:

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[175] Wiener Algemeine Zeitung November 29, 1884. *Noch weit günstiger stechen die fünf Kontrabässe von der auch in manchen guten Kapellen üblich gewordenen halben und lauen Behandlung dieser Instrumente ab. Hier wird der Bas wirklich gestrichen, das heist ausgestrichen, nich nur angestrichen.*

> If then, one wants to produce a performance that is 'faithful' as to orchestral size and proportions, probably the only recourse open would be to research the orchestra the composer was most familiar with at the time of composition. This can provide a close basis, provided the size of the hall is also taken into consideration.[176]

Koury's opinion strengthens me in my belief that it makes sense to use the Meiningen Orchestra formation, with which Brahms was intimately familiar, as a model for my project orchestra. The formation of about 50 musicians aligns with the size of orchestra Brahms must have heard when his symphony was first rehearsed and performed.

This is an orchestra size that I feel comfortable with as a conductor. As discussed in Chapter 2.1, I have aimed to create a shared artistic basis for my approach to this repertoire with the members of the orchestra. I felt it important to choose a formation that allowed me to establish a sense of connection and communication with each of the players in the group. Moreover, my ideal orchestral formation is one in which everybody matters, so that the absence of even one string player makes a palpable difference. My conviction that a shared feeling that every individual orchestra member is important can increase energy levels and commitment in the orchestra is not based on historical evidence but on my personal experience as a conductor over roughly the past two decades and as a concertmaster during the two decades before that.

Other factors in deciding the size of the orchestra related to practicalities and finances: I could neither afford nor manage a larger group, even if I had wanted to. Finally, the size of the two halls in which we worked, the 'Haitink zaal' of the CvA and the 'Stadsgehoorzaal' in the city of Leiden are of modest proportions and would not have allowed for much bigger formations to perform symphonic repertoire successfully in them.[177]

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[176] Koury, D. J. *Orchestral Performance Practices in the Nineteenth Century, Size, Proportions, and Seating*, U.M.I Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1986, p. 168.

[177] Brahms wrote about the fact that the Meiningen Orchestra was more suitable for the smaller hall of Elberfeld than the larger Gürzenich hall in a letter to Franz Wüllner of November 1885 *(Zudem past unser Orchester in Elberfeld besser als in Eurem grossen Gürzenich) Briefwechsel XV: Johannes Brahms in Briefwechsel mit Franz Wüllner,* ed. Ernst Wolff, (Berlin: Verlag der

Taking the size of the hall into consideration also aligns with Koury's recommendation and is certainly something that nineteenth-century organisers and performers would have done. Bülow, for instance, worked hard to convince the duke and his wife of the necessity for every single extra musician. The budgets had to be balanced on their tours, and the travel costs for every individual musician also had to be considered. Bülow carefully planned every invitation to key players that he felt he needed to improve the standards of the orchestra.[178] I can relate to these considerations, as the organiser of this project. I do find it important to explain my reasons for choosing the size of my project orchestra without claiming that my choices resulted in what Brahms would have considered the ideal size of orchestra.

As well as size, seating is an important factor to consider, as it affects communication between different sections of the orchestra. Seating obviously also determines the location within the orchestra from which individual players deliver their contributions to the musical narrative and this can influence the way the audience perceives the music. I have based my seating arrangements for the project orchestra on photographs of the Meiningen Orchestra. Looking at the first two photographs below, the first thing I noticed is the fact that the orchestra under Bülow is standing and is sitting under Steinbach. It is not clear whether this reflects a permanent change in the way they performed but standing does seem to have been a customary thing in German orchestras of the time.[179]

Deutschen Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1922) and Steinbach hired extra musicians for their concerts in London, where he performed in the James Hall for an audience of over 3000 people.

[178] See also Chapter 1.2 on Bülow's revolution.

[179] David Wooldridge, for instance, has commented that "[i]t was of course customary for the German orchestra to perform standing until the last years of the 19th century." Wooldridge, *Conductor's World,* p. 112.

Figure 3.1: Photograph of Hans Von Bülow with the Meiningen Court Orchestra.[180]

Figure 3.2: Photograph of Fritz Steinbach with the Meiningen Court Orchestra.[181]

The Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) described Bülow's arrangement, in which the musicians were standing up, as a novelty of dubious value, as he considered it 'a return to the old habit, originating in the limited spaces in which concerts took place in the past and in the

[180] "Hans von Bülow mit der Meininger Hofkapelle 1882 in der alten Philharmonie in Berlin." Photograph from the collection of the Meininger Museums, shown in *Die Meininger kommen!* by Kern and Müller, p. 43.

[181] "Fritz Steinbach mit der Meininger Hofkapelle auf der Bühne des alten Meininger Hoftheaters (1899?)." Photograph from the collection of the Meininger Museums, Ibidem, p. 57.

etiquette at the princely court concerts.'[182] The concert reviews of the Meiningen Orchestra under Steinbach that I have seen do not specify whether the orchestra stood or sat.

I also compared the seating arrangements of other orchestras of the time to determine what might have been customary elsewhere, but unfortunately the pictures of orchestras that I found did not show the orchestra in action. The photos shown here indeed appear to be staged. This may well have been a necessity, as the shutter speed of photographic technology of the time, any movement could easily have resulted in blurred images.

Figure 3.3: Photograph of The Berlin Philharmonic in 1882.[183]

[182] Hanslick, E, *Concerte, Componisten und Virtuosen der letzten fünfzehn Jahre 1870-1885. Kritiken von Eduard Hansslick*, Allgemeinder Verein für Deutsche Literatur, Berlin, 1886, pp. 416-417. It was probably in Vienna that the habit of the musicians sitting down first became customary. At least Dittersdorf writes in his autobiography: 'As conductor of Bishop von Grosswardein, I had long music stands and benches made; because I introduced the Viennese method of playing whilst seated, and I arranged the seating of the orchestra in such a way that every player faced the listeners' (1764). Standing can in any case help guard against an easily acquired carelessness and *nonchalance* on the part of the players; sitting preserves their strength. The first is more military, the latter more humane.

[183] Photograph (anonymous) of BSO in 1882 on the website of the Berlin Philharmonic. https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/history/beginning/#event-establishmentaofaaanewaorchestra (Last accessed September 2022).

Figure 3.4: Photograph of Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1891 (with Arthur Nikisch).[184]

Even though these photos were probably staged, the way that the various instrument groups are placed can tell us something about their position in actual performance. This seems all the more likely because the positions in the photographs does correspond with what we know about their positions from other sources (see below). Based on these sources, I produced my own seating arrangement: one I have used over the past decades. I place the second violins opposite the firsts on the conductor's right-hand side and the basses behind the winds, as this appears to be a common feature in all examples of nineteenth-century symphony orchestra seating arrangements.

Figure 3.5: Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht, 2017 (Johannes Leertouwer).[185]

[184] Photograph (anonymous) of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1891 on the website of the Stokowski org. https://www.stokowski.org/Principal_Musicians_Boston_Symphony.htm (Last accessed September 2022).
[185] Still from a videorecording of a live performance with NPhU of the First Symphony in Utrecht, 2007.

My decision to ask the orchestra to sit was based on a combination of practical and ideological arguments. First of all, my project weeks were very intense, with long days of rehearsals and recordings of up to six hours for seven days in a row. It would have been very tiring for the orchestra members to play standing up for so many hours and so many days on end. Apart from that, I must confess that, in those instances where I asked my orchestra to stand, I have never found a fully satisfactory solution for the fact that the cello section remains seated. I personally find this to be detrimental to the communication between the cello section and the standing musicians, and something not sufficiently compensated by the benefit that some players feel freer when standing. Even if the cellists are seated on raised podium parts of 20 or 40 centimetres in height, this problem is not fully resolved in my opinion.

For the project concerning the *Second Symphony* in 2020, I intended to work with a variation of the basic seating arrangements as proposed by the conductor George Henschel, who provided this image in a letter to Brahms.[186]

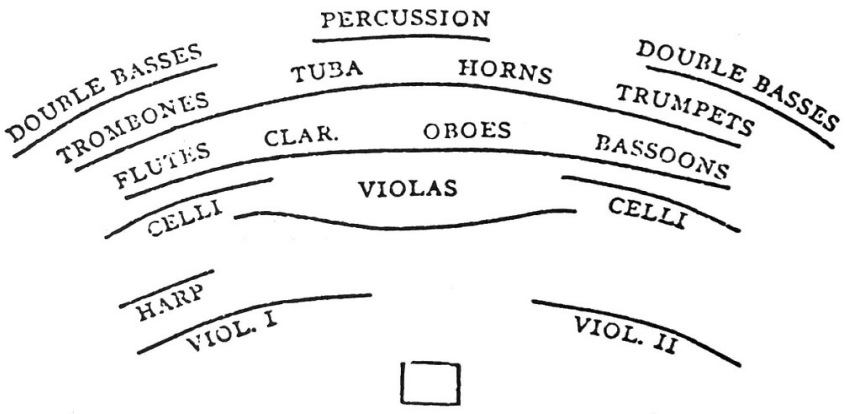

Figure 3.6: Illustration in a letter from Henschel to Brahms.

However, due to the government's social distancing measures, intended to prevent the spread of corona-virus, the distance between the basses and the cellos (as well as the rest of the string section) became too large for them to

[186] Henschel, *Personal Recollections,* p. 84.

play together. To overcome this practical problem, I positioned the cellos (8 for this production because I felt that the importance of the cello part in the *Second Symphony* demanded extra players) in one row, with 2 basses to the left and 2 to the right of that slightly curved arch. The viola section was seated in front of the cellos. This was the resulting arrangement:

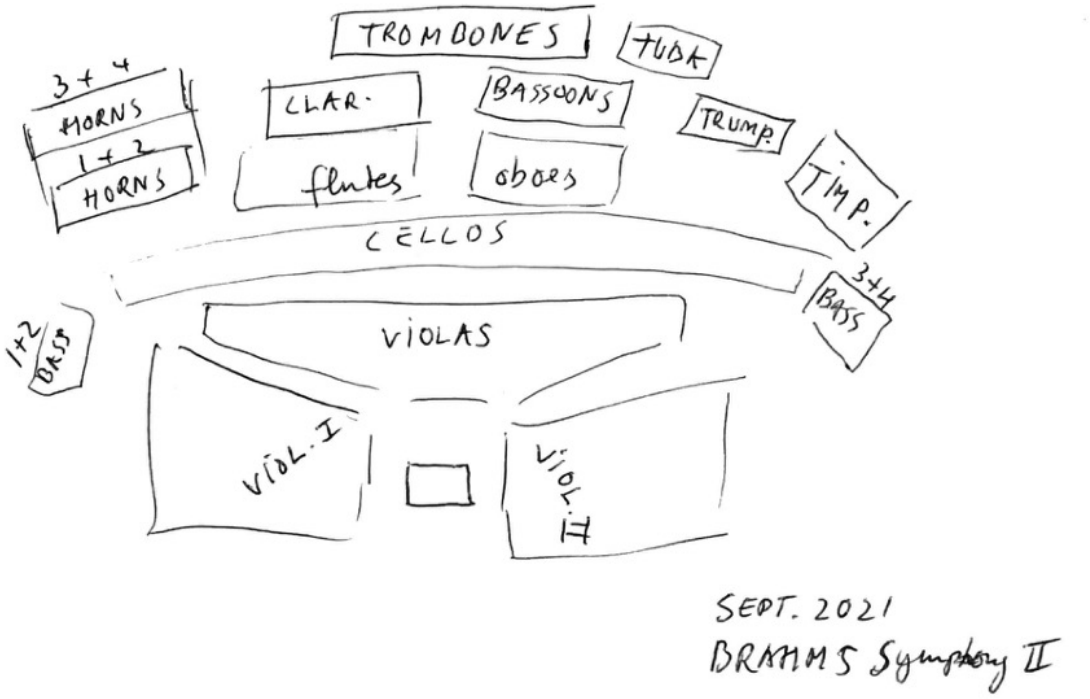

Figure 3.7: Sketch by author of seating arrangement 2021.

All my arrangements were variations of historical examples, with sometimes the basses behind the winds, sometimes the timpani and trumpets in the back row, and sometimes the trombones on the right (as for example in the *First Symphony*, where the trombones only play in the Finale). In the literature on orchestral seating for symphonic performances in the nineteenth century, I have not found evidence that the seating arrangements of the various orchestras would be changed, depending on the repertoire. Today MPP orchestras are often very reluctant to vary their seating. HIPP orchestras appear to be more flexible and sometimes change their seating even for different pieces in one programme. Authors like Elliot Galkin and Daniel Koury give many examples of seating arrangements of nineteenth-

century orchestras, but they do not write about the issue of changing seating for specific repertoire or individual pieces.[187]

The most consequential characteristic of all historical examples surveyed, and indeed one that all nineteenth-century seating arrangements for orchestral performances seem to have in common, relates to the placement of the second violins opposite the firsts. First and second violins often play in octaves, and it can be an advantage for the first violins to hear the lower octave, usually coming from the second violins in their left ear or by their side. This is the case in seating arrangements that became the new standard over the course of the twentieth century, where the second violins are positioned on the inside of the first violins at the same side (left of centre as seen by the audience and by the conductor).

The historical seating arrangement with opposing groups, whilst allowing good contact between lower and upper octaves, has the distinct benefit of highlighting the moments when Brahms and other composers distribute their material so that the first and second violins can engage in dialogue with their voices coming from opposite sides. Twentieth-century seating arrangements, where the first and second violins are on the same side of the orchestra, greatly diminish this effect. One might argue that other string groups like violas and cellos also sometimes engage in dialogue with the violins and with each other. Yet I consider the lively exchanges between first and second violins to benefit most from the opposed seating arrangement.

Certain special moments in Brahms's music also benefit from this arrangement. For example, the first entry of the second violins after 52 bars of rest in the first movement of the *Second Symphony* becomes even more remarkable if the second violin call comes from the opposite side of the orchestra when they answer the first violins.

[187] Galkin, E. W. *A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice.* Pendragon Press, New York, 1988, and Koury, D. J. *Orchestral Performance Practices.*

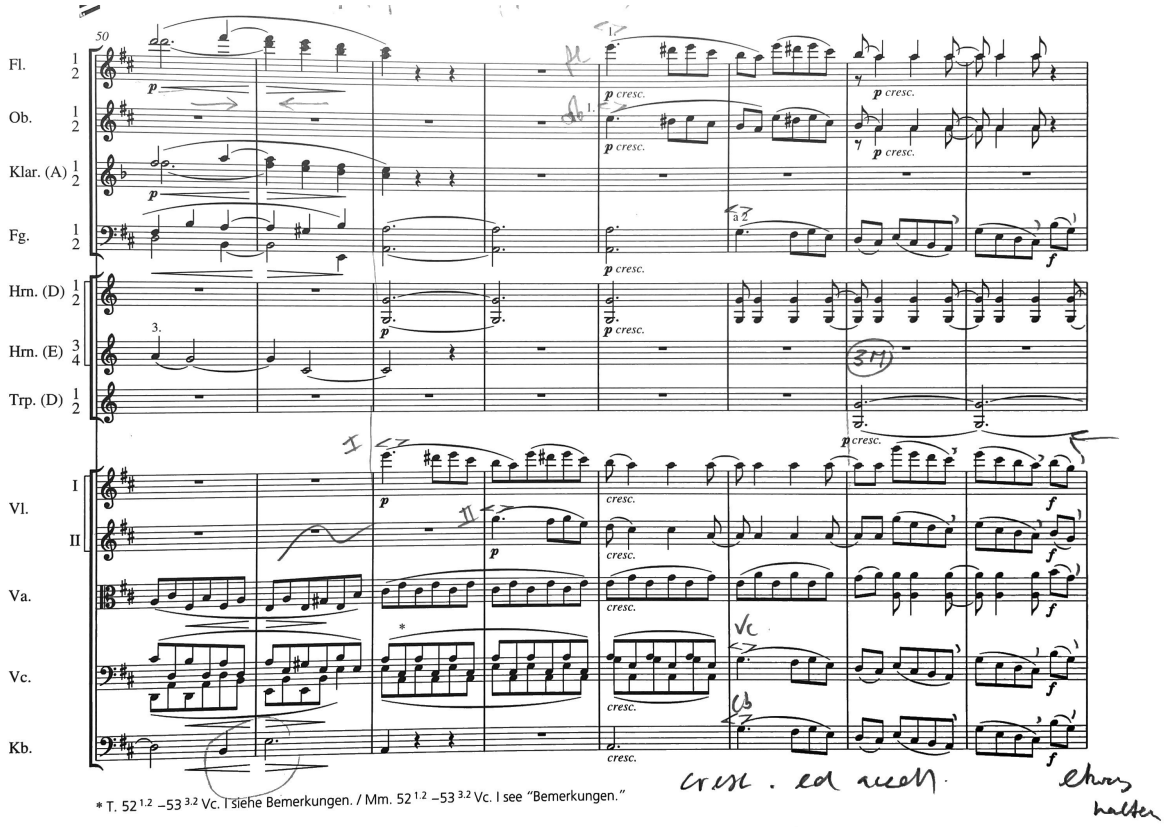

Figure 3.8: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Second Symphony (Score) page 3 (partially shown).

A similar effect is achieved in bar 293, the last bar on the page in the example below, with the answer in the second violins. From bar 290 on, the order of the thematic entries is: horn 1, oboe 1, violin 1, violin 2. Here, the physical space between the individuals and the groups playing these thematic entries creates a sensation of these “calls” originating from different places. I like the description of these figures as "calls" because they consist of the first bar of the main theme from the introduction of the Finale, played there by the first horn.[188] The second violin entry coming from the right-hand side of the orchestra then enhances the feeling that this call is coming from “across the valley” as it were.

[188] The theme is based on the Alphorn melody which Brahms had sent to Clara Schumann in 1868. Blume refers to this theme as ‘Motiv des Westminster-Glockenspiel’ while Giselher Schubert suggests that this theme represents the forces of nature.

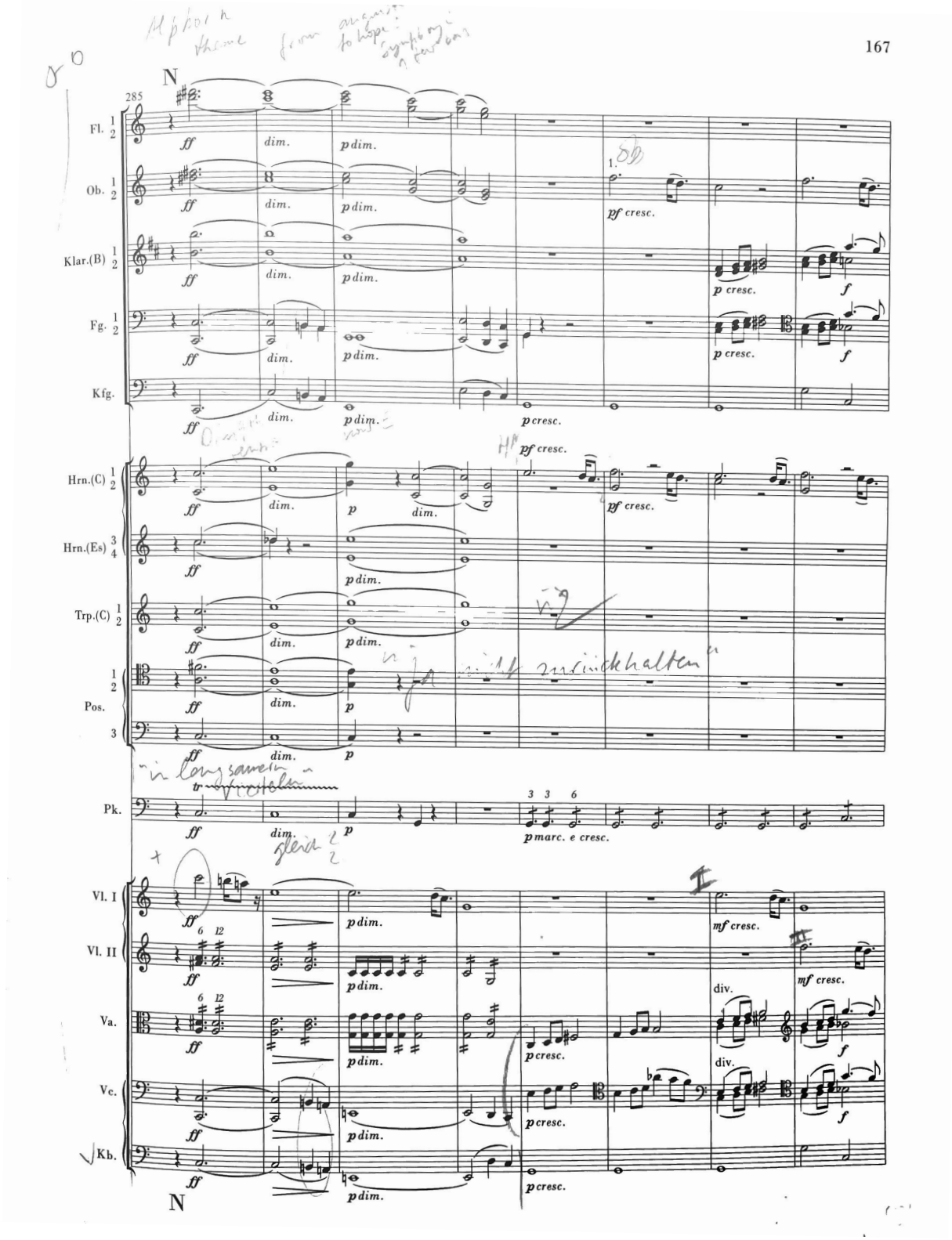

Figure 3.9: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition First Symphony (Score) page 167.

3.2 Musicians and Instruments

I assembled the project orchestra from musicians at different stages of their careers. The principal string players and the solo wind and brass players are, with a few exceptions, professors at the CvA, as are the soloists in the concertos. In close consultation with these musicians, I invited their most qualified students and former students to make up the rest of the ensemble.[189] What I have asked these players to do has been outside their comfort zone, even for players with extensive experience in other period instrument orchestras. This is perhaps particularly true of the musicians of my own generation, who have worked and lived with artistic principles other than those I propose in this project. As Brown mentions in the documentary film on the first project year, each musicians had to develop new personae as performers in order to be able to work with nineteenth-century expressive tools.

As someone who has worked in the HIPP field and in higher education for more than thirty years, I believe that the mental capacity to effect this change does not necessarily relate to age. I have seen flexible old professors and rigid young students as well as dogmatic and open-minded musicians of all ages. The musicians in the project orchestra came from both the Early Music and Modern departments of the CvA. Some of them had experience with playing on gut strings while others did not; some had played nineteenth-century wind instruments before while some had not. I strongly believe that a project such as this benefits from the fact that the participating musicians come from diverse backgrounds and different generations, which can help to stimulate a climate of curiosity and discovery. I think it also creates a situation in which new ideas are not received by a unified group of like-minded individuals, as might be the case in an established orchestra working in the same style on a regular basis, but rather examined from a variety of different angles.

[189] For instance, the second wind and brass players were chosen directly by their principals, and the string section was completed in consultation with the CvA's head of strings.

When it came to choosing instruments for this project, I started by interviewing the principal wind players about their preferred instruments and the pitch that would be most suitable for these instruments. We chose A=438 and I left the choice of instruments to the players themselves, but I did ask for German nineteenth-century instruments, or copies thereof. For students who did not own such instruments, I rented them (oboe, clarinet and trombone). The string players all played on instruments fitted with gut strings; the top two, sometimes three, strings on each instrument being plain gut, while the lower strings being wound gut. Some people had suitable nineteenth-century instruments and others – with the help of a violin maker or other expert – made their "modern instruments" suitable for gut strings. They all used nineteenth-century bows if they had them or could borrow them. This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of the characteristics of a string orchestra using gut strings compared to metal strings, let me just say that I personally prefer gut strings in all music of all periods.[190] Leaving that personal preference aside, I can say from experience that all experiments with expressive fingerings and a limited use of vibrato (left hand), as well as variations of bow speed and pressure (right hand) gain depth, colour, and expression when conducted on gut strung instruments.[191]

The German violin pedagogue Siegfried Eberhardt (1883-1960), who goes into detail about his opinion on strings, makes his position immediately clear with the subtitle of his book, *Die kunstfeindliche Stahlseite* (the steel string as the enemy of art). In his book, one can find a diatribe against the use of steel strings:

> The discovery of the steel string signifies the triumph of weak inertia, the pyrrhic victory of a pitiful, materialistic, superficial conception of an original expression of art, which stands alone in its subtlety [...] But no tranquilisers

[190] I recorded Berio's *Corale su Sequenza VIII per violino, due corni e archi* (1981) with violinist Joe Puglia in 2016. Both orchestra and soloist played on gut strings. Joseph Puglia (viool), Ellen Corver (piano), Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht o.l.v. Johannes Leertouwer, Attacca ATT 2016147.

[191] Juxtaposing gut and steel like this is admittedly based on a simplification of the real choices string players face when choosing their strings, as a wide range of strings made of synthetic gut imitations is now available. Having said this, my experience is that pure gut strings are preferable not only over steel and other metal ones, but also over synthetic strings.

> should put his [the user of steel strings] conscience to sleep before the realisation that he is committing an injustice to the instrument that he pretends to love above all else.[192]

Eberhardt goes on to write about the string tension of steel strings as a vital factor in reducing the expressive possibilities of the player:

> In addition, however, the greatest constraint is the stiffness of the steel strings, which oppress the instrument itself in a paralysing, frosty torpor compared to the elevated free and elastic, spirited and warmly vibrating real strings, which by the nature of their material merge with the wood and the magic of its sound.[193]

Eberhardt's remarks coincide with my experience in the use of gut strings. In addition to what he writes about the nature of the gut strings, there is another factor that I find to be crucially important. The fact that the gut-mounted instruments have a less powerful sound can be used to great advantage, as it forces the musicians who play these instruments to think about dynamics in terms of character and colour rather than volume or decibels. This also holds true for nineteenth-century wind instruments, as they too appear to favour colour over sheer power. The benefit of concentrating on character rather than volume, or perhaps more precisely, always having to consider the expressive motivation behind a particular dynamic, is that it can help bring out a wider range of emotions in the musical narrative.

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[192] Eberhardt, S. *Wiederaufstieg oder Untergang der Kunst des Geigens, Die kunstfeindliche Stahlseite.* Hansen, Kopenhagen, 1938, p. 59. *Die Entdeckung der Stahlsaite bedeutet den Triumph schwächlicher Trägheit, den Pyrrhussieg einer kläglichen, materialistischen, veräußerlichten Auffassung über eine schöpferisch ursprüngliche Kunstäußerung, die in ihrer Feinheit einzig dasteht. […] Alles Morphium aber soll sein Gewissen nicht einschläfern vor der Erkenntnis, daß er ein Unrecht begeht an dem Instrument, das er angeblich über alles liebt.*

[193] Ibid, p. 61. *Dazu kommt aber als stärkste Minderung noch die Spannungsstarre der Stahlsaiten, die das Instrument selbst Bedrücken in einer lähmenden, frostigen Erstarrung gegenüber den erhoben frei und elastisch, beseelt und warm schwingenden echten Saiten, die sich aus der Natur des Materials mit dem Holz vereinigen und dem Zauber des Klanges verschmelzen.*

Brahms's preference for natural horns has been well documented, though he must have heard his music played on valve instruments. The fact that he embraced the difference between open-sounding and closed-sounding notes on these instruments and used those differences to such great effect in his writing, is another indication that the capacity to produce an even sound was not high on Brahms's list of priorities when it came to choosing instruments. My project was not intended to recreate the sound world of the Meiningen Orchestra or any other particular nineteenth-century orchestra. I hope that more researchers and musicians will be able to conduct projects dedicated to nineteenth-century orchestral instruments in the future, as I am convinced that one can learn a lot in this field. To me, it seems particularly important to investigate the question of valve brass instruments, because to my ear they produce a much more compact sound. In Vienna, the first performance of the *Second Symphony* was played on valve trombones, but these instruments were discarded before the first performance of the *Third Symphony* there. There is substantial conflicting information about the use of natural horns in nineteenth-century orchestras from which, at the very least, one can conclude that the choice between valve and natural instruments was not as black and white as it might appear today.[194]

In the second project, in which we played the *Double Concerto* and the *Second Symphony*, the trumpet players in my orchestra played the symphony on early trumpets and the concerto on later nineteenth-century instruments. They proposed to do so in order to balance the sound of the natural horns in the symphony, having the same notes sound open and closed. But the notes Brahms gave them in the *Double Concerto* were hardly playable on early trumpets, which one may take as an indication that he wrote this piece with later trumpets in mind. I believe that such types of subtle sound difference deserve further investigation and research.

[194] John Ericson writes about the use of natural horns and valve horns in Brahms and other nineteenth-century music in his article "Brahms and the Orchestral Horn" https://www.public.asu.edu/~jqerics/brahms-natural-horn.html. (Last accessed November 2022).

Detailed nineteenth-century descriptions of the particular sound of orchestras are rare, but Hanslick did write about the sound of the Meiningen Orchestra in 1884 in his *Kritiken*:

> In terms of precision down to the smallest detail, the Meininger Kapelle is not surpassed by any orchestra in the world and its level hardly reached by one. [...] The Meiningen musicians cannot compete with Vienna's 'Philharmoniker' in the sensual beauty and fullness of sound, the warmth, the temperament of the performance, in short, the splendour of the mass effect. Of course, one must not forget that Bülow's orchestra has only 48 men, while our Philharmonic has 80 to 90. It may be as much due to the quality of the instruments as to the players that the intoxicating shine and the warm colours that emanate from the Philharmonic Orchestra are missing from the Meininger. Bülow's violin players are capable musicians without the ravishing power of the Viennese violinists; double basses and trombones excellent, the oboes often sharp and screaming, clarinets and horns good, although not equal to the Viennese masters of these instruments. The connoisseur will value the effects all the more that Bülow attains with this weaker formation, here by wisely saving the lights, there by concentration of all forces in one point, for example in the final movement of the C minor Symphony, and the Freischütz Overture. An inventive and experimental spirit, Bülow has also introduced effective innovations in his orchestra that other conductors did not think of. This includes the five-string double basses, which give the low C, while the usual four-string ones only reach down to the E; furthermore, the so-called Ritter *Altoviolen,* of stronger build than the ordinary violas, surpass them in tonal richness and reduce the wide distance from this violin class to the violoncellos; finally, the chromatic timpani, which can be immediately re-tuned during the performance by a pedal stroke.[195]

[195] Hanslick, *Concerte, Componisten und Virtuosen der Letzten fünzehn Jahre, 1870-1885*, p. 414. *An Präzision bis ins kleinste Detail wird die Meininger Kapelle von keinem Orchester der Welt übertroffen ja schwerlich von einem erreicht. […] Worin die Meininger sich mit Wiens ‚Philharmonikern' nicht messen können, das ist die sinnliche Schönheit und Fülle des Klanges, die Blutwärme, das Temperament des Vortrages, endlich der Glanz der Massenwirkung. Man darf freilich nicht vergessen, dass Bülows Orchester nur 48 Mann zählt, hingegen unser Philharmonisches deren 80 bis 90. Es mag ebenso sehr an der Qualität der Instrumente wie an den Spielern liegen, dass der berauschende Glanz und das warme Colorit, welches von dem Philharmonischen Orchester ausströmt, den Meiningern fehlt. Bülows Violinspieler sind tüchtige Musiker ohne die hinreißende Gewalt der Wiener Geiger; Kontrabässe und Posaunen vortrefflich, die Oboen häufig scharf und schreiend, Klarinetten und Hörner gut, wenngleich den Wiener Meistern dieser Instrumente nicht ebenbürtig. Der Kenner wird die Wirkungen umso höher anschlagen die Bülow mit dieser schwächeren Kapelle hier durch weises Aufsparen der Lichter, dort durch Conzentration aller Kräfte, auf einen Punkt erzielt, z. B. im Schlusssatze der C-moll Symphonie und der Freischütz Ouvertüre. Ein erfinderischer und experimentierender Geist, hat Bülow auch in seinem Orchester wirksame Neuerungen eingeführt, die anderen Dirigenten nicht einfallen. Dahin gehören die fünfseitigen Contrabässe, welche das Tiefe C geben, während die üblichen vierseitigen bekanntlich nur bis ins E hinabreichen; ferner die*

Apart from innovations regarding the string instruments (there are no Ritter-violas or 5-string basses in the instrument collection of the Meininger Museums), I find Hanslick's description of the oboe sound striking. Particularly for oboists, the choice of instrument has evident consequences for the sound. The type of instrument that was in use in Meiningen at the time of Bülow's and Steinbach's tenure was probably of a type that produced a piercing, rather nasal sound. Not necessarily a choice that present-day oboists feel they have to make, but certainly an interesting topic for further research.

On my website, I provide a list of participating musicians and the instruments they used in the project:

LIST OF MUSICIANS AND INSTRUMENTS

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/orchestra/

I think it is fair to say that the sound of the project orchestra differs from the sound of MPP and indeed HIPP orchestras, due to choice of instruments and particularly to how these instruments are played. As a result, the project orchestra's sound probably aligns somewhat more closely with the sound of nineteenth-century orchestras of Brahms, Bülow, and Steinbach than to the sound of modern orchestras. At the same time though, it must be said that the choice of instruments in my project orchestra was based on a pragmatic rather than a research-driven approach. I think further research in the field of choice of instruments and the coherence of such choices in relation to orchestras and repertoires of a particular composer or period could be extremely interesting and helpful when it comes to understanding the orchestral sound worlds of the past. Clearly such research would be very expensive, as detailed investigations would have to be

sogenannten Ritterschen Altoviolen die von stärckerem Baue als die gewöhnlichen Bratschen, diese an Tonfülle übertreffen und den allzu weiten Abstand dieser Geigenklasse von den Violoncells vermindern; schließlich die chromatischen Pauken, welche während des Spiels durch einen Pedaltritt sofort umgestimmt werden können.

conducted. Instruments would need to be purchased or copied and musicians would need to invest substantial amounts of time learning to play a range of different instruments.

3.3 Bowing and Articulation

My approach with the string orchestra has been relatively simple when it comes to bowing and articulation, which I based on the available overviews of nineteenth-century bowing techniques. Spohr, for instance, begins his list of the technical tools required for beautiful performance featuring refined bowing in his *Violinschule* with:

> The finer nuances of bowing, both in relation to the character of the tone, from strong, even rough to softly whistling, and particularly in relation to the accentuation and individual characterisation of musical phrases.[196]

The fact that Spohr lists the fine art of bowing as his first point can be seen as confirmation of its importance. It is particularly important to distinguish between those techniques that Spohr advocates as being part of the correct performance *(richtigen Vortrag)* and those that are in the domain of beautiful performance (*schöner Vortrag*), such as the one quoted above. Spohr insists, for example, on the student's ability to play *detaché* and other bow strokes in such a manner that all notes have the same strength and duration. This does not constitute an artistic ideal, but rather a prerequisite for the performer to be able to make decisions about how to shape musical phrases based on artistic choices, and not on technical limitations. As Spohr himself writes, beautiful performance must be preceded by correct performance.

Regarding the desire for unification of bowings in sections of the string orchestra, there are some conflicting opinions to be found in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writings. In his *Handbuch Historische Orchesterpraxis* researcher Kai Köpp quotes Spohr, Gassner and Joachim/Moser.[197] Spohr writes in his method that:

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[196] Spohr, *Violinschule* p. 195. *Die feinern Schattierungen der Bogenführung, sowohl im Bezug auf den Charakter des Tons vom starken, selbst rauhen bis zum sanft flötenden, wie auch besonders auf Accentuirung und Sonderung der musikalischen Phrasen.*

[197] Köpp, K. *Handbuch Historische Orchesterpraxis Barock-Klassik-Romantik.* Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2009, Zweiter Auflage 2013. pp. 94-96.

> The most difficult task, however, lies in distributing the bow strokes so that everyone plays exactly together.[198]

Spohr goes on to express his admiration for the exceptionally unified manner in which the violinists in the orchestras of conservatories in Paris, Prague and Naples play. Ferdinand Simon Gassner (1798-1851) also advocates unification of bowings in his writings. On the other hand, Joachim/Moser (partly quoted by Köpp) write:

> It must be admitted without further ado that the uniformity of the bowing is not only pleasing to the eye, but in many cases also benefits the sound of the orchestra, especially in detached passages. If, for example, the uniform designation of the ripieno parts by the conductor or concertmaster extends only to the simultaneous down or up bows and to the change of bow where it coincides with the beginning or end of a musical phrase, then such a practice can only be endorsed. But if it goes so far as to demand the strings to change bows at the same time in passages intended by the composer as a sustained note, a phrase that belongs together, or a melody with a long breath, then it must be rejected under all circumstances.[199]

As one can see, different opinions on the question of unification of bowings in orchestral playing exist within what we might call the German school. Given the fact that Blume provides numerous bowings for sections in Brahms's symphonies, and the fact that the Meiningen Orchestra had more rehearsal time than other orchestras, including sectional rehearsals in which they could unify the bowings of the string players in each section, I have chosen to unify the bowing in the project orchestra and only on rare

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[198] Spohr, *Violinschule* p. 248. *Die schwierigste Aufgabe ist es aber 5) in der Einteilung der Bogenstriche mit den mit spielenden genau zusammen zu treffen.*

[199] Joachim/Moser, *Violinschule* p. 16. *Es sei ohne weiteres zugegeben, dass die Einheitlichkeit der Bogenführung nicht nur das Auge angenehm berührt, sondern in zahlreichen Fällen auch dem Klang des Orchesters, besonders in detachierten Passagen, sehr zu statten kommt. Erstreckt sich beispielsweise die einheitliche Bezeichnung der Ripienstimmen seitens des Dirigenten oder Konzertmeisters nur auf die gleichzeitigen Ab- oder Aufstriche und auf den Bogenwechsel da, wo er mit dem Anfang oder Ende einer musikalischen Phrase zusammenfällt, so kann einer derartigen Praxis nur das Wort geredet werden. Geht sie aber so weit, den gleichzeitigen Bogenwechsel von den Streichern auch an solchen Stellen zu verlangen, die vom Komponisten als ausgehaltene Note, zusammengehörige Phrase oder langatmige Melodie gedacht sind, dann ist sie unter allen Umständen zu verwerfen.*

occasions apply 'free bowing' in order to establish a longer legato line than would otherwise be possible.

For the purposes of this brief discussion, I will use a simple division of legato and non-legato types of bow strokes and my understanding of their application as being part of beautiful performance in orchestral playing.

LEGATO

The nature of legato and the relationship between its expressive quality and tools such as vibrato, portamento, and modifications of rhythm have been discussed in the films presented in Chapter 2.2. The question of Brahms's possible expectations regarding the length of final notes under legato slurs and the extent to which first notes under these slurs should be lengthened - discussed at the same place as well as in my discussion of Blume's instructions in Chapter 1.8 - is complex and does not yield any rules that might be universally applied. What I think can be stated with confidence, as Brown notes in *Performance Practice in Johannes Brahms's Chamber Music*, is that "Brahms would have expected the notes within a slur to be executed with uninterrupted legato."[200] This may seem a rather obvious statement, but I have noticed that many young string players today sacrifice a seamless legato by interrupting the movement of the bow momentarily in order to make their position changes inaudible. In mainstream higher education string teaching, there is a tendency to value a clean sound, devoid of any portamento, over legato. This seems to me to be the exact opposite of what might have been expected of string players in the nineteenth century.[201]

As discussed in Chapter 1.8, Blume systematically suggests that after a legato slur, one should add or imagine a 16th rest. This is his way of suggesting a shortening of the last note under the slur, as he writes that the rest should be made at the expense of the preceding note. My interpretation of Blume's instructions implies playing a smooth and uninterrupted legato

[200] Brown, *Performance Practice in Johannes Brahms's Chamber Music* p. 7.
[201] In Chapter 3.4 the way the connection between legato and portamento was perceived by orchestra members will be discussed.

under every legato slur as well as separating the slurs from each other, or from other notes before or after the slurs, in a clearly articulated manner. How much separation I apply depends entirely on the desired musical effect. I do not think it makes any sense to apply Blume's uniformly marked 16th rest systematically. Consider Brahms's remark to Joachim: "By the way, I think that the slur over multiple notes does not take anything away from the duration of any of them," as discussed in Chapter 1.7. This is at odds with Blume's systematic instruction to shorten the last note under legato slurs over multiple notes.

STACCATO, SPICCATO AND OTHER NON-LEGATO BOWING TECHNIQUES

For string players, the habit of describing various sorts of articulated or non-legato notes in terms of categorised bow strokes has contributed to a tendency to perform such notes in a uniform and even manner, regardless of intervals, harmonic tension, and any other factors that might suggest unevenness. As Brown indicates in *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice,* an understanding of specific techniques of bowing, and how and where they might have been employed historically, can throw considerable light on attitudes towards articulation as a whole. Not only does he discuss a wide range of bow strokes in his book, but Brown also addresses the discussion about spring bow (spiccato and sautillé), mentioning many instructions from methods and other sources.[202] Robin Stowell categorises types of bow strokes with Tourte model bows providing an impressive menu of possibilities, few of which have survived into present-day performance practice.[203] The abundance of different types of nineteenth-century bow strokes and the fact that many of them have disappeared in today's practice is an indication of the fact that the focus of violin technique and methods has gradually shifted more to the left hand.

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[202] Brown, *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice,* p. 259-281.

[203] Stowell, R. *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late 18th and Early 19th centuries.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 177-210.

With my project, I have only just begun to investigate the possibilities of applying some of Brown's and Stowell's suggestions in an orchestral context. The picture that emerges from the historical sources presented in their work, however, indicates that nineteenth-century musicians tended to play short notes much more often near the tip or in the upper half of the bow than is common practice in both MPP and HIPP today. This prompted me to ask my string players to avoid playing short notes in the middle of the bow. In the project orchestra, we have experimented with this since the first year, and violinists and violists in particular have gradually felt more at ease with this technique. It is less easy to lift the bow off the string in the upper half of the bow than in the middle or the lower half. This has produced a style of articulation where relatively short notes (particularly sequences of such notes) are generally less short than is often the case elsewhere today.

As a commonly heard complaint about the twentieth-century execution of short notes (with or without dots or daggers) is that they were performed too short, this seems to be a welcome change. In an interview with members of the Schönberg quartet, they told me that Jennö Léner, the founding leader of the Léner quartet, with whom they had worked, repeatedly told them in their discussions about articulation styles that twentieth-century musicians tended to play dotted notes much too short and in far too mechanical a manner. The tendency to play non-legato consecutive notes of the same length short, or *marcato*, is not limited to notes with dots or daggers. As the players and I became increasingly familiar with playing less short and in the upper half of the bow, we learned to look at passages such as the tenth bar of the first movement of the *First Piano Concerto* differently. If we had an opportunity to play this piece again, I would ask for these notes to be played longer than we did in the recording of the first project in 2019.

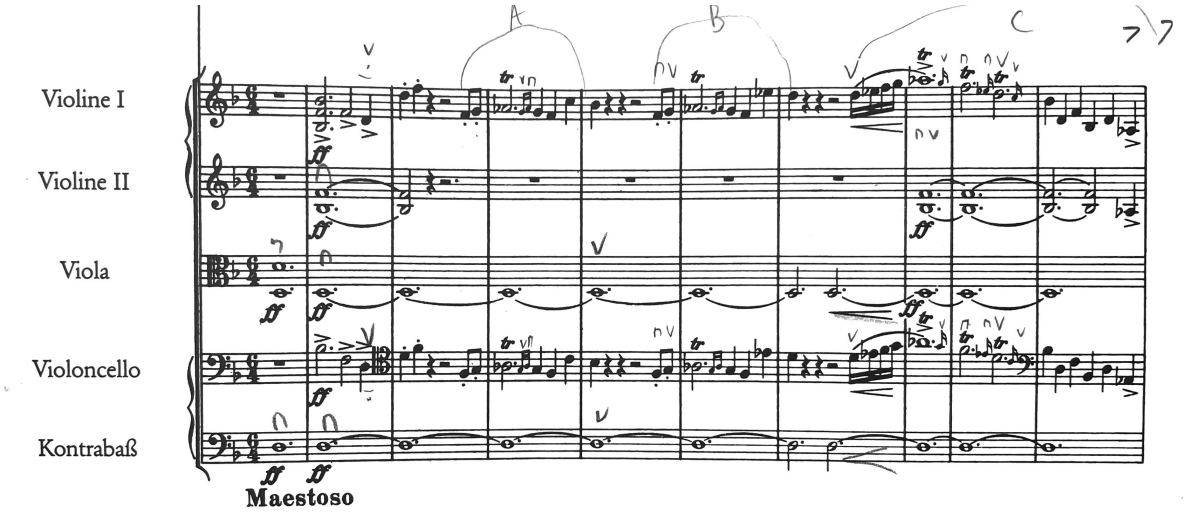

Figure 3.10: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition First Piano Concerto (Score) page 1 (partially shown).

The sound quality in relatively short notes is a topic that deserves special attention. Violinist and writer Fritz Rau, for instance, writes in 1922 about the character of various bow strokes and the necessity of adding vibrato even to short notes:

> Each type of stroke has a certain character. The jumping stroke types: jumping bow, spiccato, flying (sometimes firm) staccato, thrown bow (arpeggios), characterise gentler moods, elegance and grace; marcato and staccato, on the other hand, strength and determination. Legato characterises softness, which can still be supported by changing the contact point of the bow on the string from the bridge to the fingerboard as well as by different tonal strengths. Nevertheless, an artist is not able to succeed fully even with the most perfect bowing alone. One can enjoy the spray of a rapid sequence of tones executed with the jumping bow, a marcato, staccato, or legato tone in forte or piano can sound with this or that timbre, but almost all bow strokes and the tones produced only by them have something mechanical and rigid. Only when the vibrato is added does the mechanical character disappear, the rigidity of the tone is resolved, and one feels the inner engagement of the artist; the playing begins to warm up, gains liveliness, becomes animated. In addition to the portamento, it is precisely the vibrato that is the factor to which the string instruments owe their high expressiveness.[204]

[204] Rau, F. *Das Vibrato auf der Violine*. Kahnt, Leipzig, 1922, p. 33. *Jeder Strichart haftet ein gewisser Charakter an. Die springenden Stricharten: Springbogen, Spikkato, fliegendes (auch zuweilen festes) Stakkato, geworfener Bogen (Arpeggien), kennzeichnen leichter*

This is a fascinating account in many ways. First of all, it provides some insight into an artistic motivation behind the increase in the use of vibrato in the first decades of the twentieth century, particularly in passages with relatively short notes. This increase could be linked to the tendency to play many more notes short than had been the case in the nineteenth century. Rau claims that it is necessary to add vibrato to take away or soften the otherwise mechanical character of tones produced by jumping bow strokes - staccato, marcato or legato - alone. Because this belief has been the guiding principle in many higher educational institutes for over a century, it is not an easy task to reinvent the emotional impact of various bow strokes applied without vibrato, as I strive to do with the project orchestra. It requires a lot of experimentation, specifically in order to reconnect to and project the kinds of characterisations Rau gives at the beginning of the quote above. We have only just begun to do this in my project, but I do believe that we have made some progress in the past four years. The process of working with these types of bowings is driven by asking the right question about all the tools of articulation, and the question of what expressive purpose they serve in particular? This is the best safeguard against getting stuck in the mechanical execution of especially the relatively shorter notes in the score.

There is one key factor that I did not consider in the first three projects with the orchestra. This is the subject of posture, the way one holds

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Gemütsbewegungen Zierlichkeit, Anmut; Marcato, Stakkato dagegen Festigkeit, Bestimmtheit. Das Legato charakterisiert Weichheit, was noch durch Strichstellenveränderungen vom Steg nach dem Griffbrett hin sowie durch unterschiedliche Tonstärke unterstützt werden kann. Trotzdem vermag ein Künstler selbst mit der Vollendetsten Bogenführung nicht zu erwerben. Man kann sich an den Sprühregen einer mit springen Bogen ausgeführten raschen Tonfolge erfreuen; es kann ein Markato-, Stakkato-, Legato Ton mehr oder weniger bestimmt, forte oder piano sein, mit dieser oder jener Klangfarbe erklingen, es haftet doch fast allen Bogenstrichen und den nur durch sie erzeugten Tönen etwas Mechanisches, Starres an. Erst wenn das Vibrato hinzutritt, schwindet das mechanische löst sich die Starrheit des Tones, und man empfindet die innere Anteilnahme des Künstlers; das Spiel fängt an zu erwärmen, bekommt lebendige Gestaltung, wird beseelt. Neben dem Portamento ist es gerade das Vibrato derjenige Faktor, dem die Streichinstrumente ihre hohe Ausdrucksfähigkeit verdanken.

the bow and particularly the position of the upper arm.[205] In his article on the physical parameters of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century violin playing, Brown concludes that:

> German players (especially those trained in the Leipzig Conservatory and the Berlin Hochschule) […] inspired by Ferdinand David and Joseph Joachim, adopted the wider range of bow strokes that had been developed in the wake of Paganini's impact, but sought consciously though cautiously to integrate these innovations into the Classical traditions of the early 19th-century Viotti school as it had been codified by Spohr.[206]

As the bowing arm was held close to the body in the German school, it stands to reason that the wide range of bow strokes Brown writes about would have been executed with the upper arm in that position. I experimented with these types of bow strokes in the upper half of the bow with the project orchestra, but we have not experimented with different positions of the bow arm. It is quite possible that such experiments might lead to a different understanding of the nature of those bow strokes. This is a subject that deserves further research and experimentation. For the project in 2022, I have shared Brown's article with the string players of the project orchestra and encouraged the musicians to conduct their own experiments with the position of the upper arm, particularly in combination with short staccato and marcato bow strokes. I hope that this can be the beginning of an investigation into the possibilities of varying the bow arm position with an orchestra.

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[205] As Eberhardt described, for instance: "In all pictures of Spohr and Paganini, we see the upper arm closely connected to the body. The German School has raised this way of holding the bow arm to some extent to a ground rule." Eberhardt, *Wiederaufstieg,* p. 84. *In allen Bildern Spohr's und Paganini's sehen wir den eng an den Körper angeschlossenen Oberarm. Die deutsche Schule hat diese Form der Bogenführung gewissermaßen zum Prinzip erhoben.*

[206] Brown, "*Physical parameters of 19th and early 20th-century violin playing,* " Updated October 2016, https://mhm.hud.ac.uk/chase/article/physical-parameters-of-19th-and-early-20th-century-violin-playing-clive-brown/. (Last accessed November 2022).

3.4 PORTAMENTO

Portamento was an essential part of expressive sound production on string instruments in the nineteenth century. In his *Violinschule*, Spohr includes portamento as the second point of his list of the technical tools required for beautiful performance:

> The artistic fingerings, which are not used for convenience or easier playability, but for the sake of expression and the tone, including the gliding of one tone to another, and also the finger change on the same note.[207]

Brown also advocates for this expressive tool.

> By the middle years of the [19th] century, as numerous violin and cello treatises, including those of J.J. Friedrich Dotzauer (c.1825), Louis Spohr (1833), Pierre Baillot (1835), Bernhard Romberg (1840), Charles de Bériot (1858), and Ferdinand David (1864) demonstrate, portamento was a fundamental element of artistic performance, which all skilled composers will have taken into account in their writing for string instruments.[208]

Though portamento was considered a fundamental element of artistic performance, many musicians applied it in different ways and portamento, like vibrato, was a hotly contested issue. Köpp, in his article *Die Hohe Schule des Portamento,* in which he investigates the relation between vocal and instrumental portamento technique, points to composer, conductor and teacher Antonio Salieri (1750-1825) who objected not to the use of *portamento di voce* in itself, but to exaggerate the use of this expressive tool in two pamphlets (1810 and 1814). Köpp concludes that Salieri was on the

[207] Spohr, *Violinschule*, pp. 195-196. *Die künstlichen Applicaturen, die nicht der Bequemlichkeit oder leichteren Spielbarkeit, sondern des Ausdrucks und des Tons wegen angewendet werden, wozu auch das Fortgleiten von einem Ton zum andern, so wie der Fingerwechsel auf demselben Ton gehört.*

[208] Brown, Peres da Costa and Bennett Wadsworth, *Performance Practices in Johannes Brahms's Chamber Music*, p. 12.

losing side of this battle, as the nineteenth century was to become the age of expressive portamento.[209]

The subject of portamento has been investigated by many researchers over the past decades. Examples range from Stowell's *Violin Technique* and Brown's *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice* to Job ter Haar's work on Alfredo Piatti and Kate Bennett Wadsworth's dissertation on Friedrich Grützmacher, to name but a few.[210] Such researchers generally agree that the use of portamento was widespread in the nineteenth century, and then became more or less obsolete after the modernist revolution of the 1920s and 1930s. But there is more to say about the subject of portamento and its expressive nature. In Johannes Gebauer's soon to be published *Der "Klassikervortrag"* he warns against reducing the idea of portamento to the aspect of gliding from note to note:

> The portamenti typical of Joachim were thus a combination of left-hand gliding and a special treatment of the bow, which was probably intentional and an integral part of many of his portamenti. This was independent of the actual fingering. A limitation of the portamento discussion for the "Klassikervortrag" can therefore not be limited to a technique of the left hand. Rather, the expressiveness of the classical portamenti in Joachim's style, resulted from a combination of techniques of the left and right hand, which together made a wide range of nuances possible. Portamenti belonged to a declamatory-speaking performance which demanded an even greater need for articulation and "good pronunciation".[211]

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[209] Köpp, K. *Die Hohe Schule des* «*Portamento*» Aufsatz entstanden im Rahmen des SNF-Forschungsprojektes «Die Idee des Componisten ins Leben zu rufen» an der Hochschule der Künste Bern, Forschungsschwerpunkt Interpretation, 2015. https://www.dissonance.ch/upload/pdf/132_16_hsm_kk_portamento.pdf. p. 16. (Last accessed November 2022). *Mit seiner Kritik stand der 64-jährige Salieri allerdings auf verlorenem Posten: Das 19. Jahrhundert sollte das Zeitalter des ausdrucksvollen Portamento werden, und die Nachwirkungen sind noch bis weit ins 20. Jahrhundert auf historischen Tondokumenten zu hören.*

[210] Stowell, R. *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*; Brown, C. *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice: 1750–1900*; Haar, J. ter, "The Playing Style of Alfredo Piatti: Learning from a Nineteenth-century Virtuoso Cellist" PhD diss., Royal Academy of Music, University of London, 2019; Bennett Wadsworth, K. "Precisely marked in the tradition of the composer': the performing editions of Friedrich Grützmacher" PhD diss., University of Leeds School of Music, October 2017.

[211] Gebauer, J. *Der "Klassikervortrag"* to be published by Beethoven Haus Bonn end 2022. Quoted pre-publication with permission by the author. p. 267. *Die für Joachim typischen Portamenti waren demnach eine Kombination aus dem Gleitvorgang der linken Hand und einer*

The link between a declamatory style and the use of portamenti seems to me of vital importance. Thinking about portamento in terms of declamatory-speaking is an effective way to safeguard against random sliding with the left hand. In his dissertation, the violist and researcher Emlyn Stam describes how his attempts to include elements of what he heard and admired in historical recordings, particularly regarding the use of portamento, were systematically met with scepticism or outright disapproval.[212] There is a clear link between the modernist tradition's growing desire for clarity and exact reproduction of the score and the decline of portamento. If one strives to give each note in the score its exact notated duration, portamento is an unwelcome factor because it softens or compromises the rhythmical contours of a phrase. Portamento makes it more difficult to say where one note stops and the next one begins, and it takes time, it occurs at the expense of the exact duration of the departure note or arrival note.

Portamento appears to have been applied in many different ways. In *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, Brown points to the fact that the use of portamento was highly contested throughout the nineteenth century. As he puts it:

> Virtually all authors who discussed portamento in singing and string playing stressed the danger of abusing it; but their notion of abuse is directly dependent on what they considered to be the norm […] but here as elsewhere, ideas of what was tasteful or proportionate will almost certainly have been very different from ours at all stages of the period.[213]

Nonetheless, he concludes that:

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speziellen Bogenbehandlung, die vermutlich beabsichtigt und ein integraler Bestandteil vieler seiner Portamenti war. Dies war unabhängig vom eigentlichen Fingersatz. Eine Beschränkung der Portamento-Diskussion für den „Klassikervortrag" kann sich daher nicht allein auf einen technischen Vorgang der linken Hand beschränken. Die Ausdrucksfähigkeit der klassischen, Joachim'schen Portamenti resultierte vielmehr aus einer Kombination von Techniken der linken und rechten Hand, die zusammengenommen eine große Bandbreite an Nuancierungen ermöglichten. Portamenti gehörten zu einem deklamatorisch-sprechenden Vortrag, der noch ein höheres Bedürfnis nach Artikulation und „guter Aussprache" hatte.

[212] Stam, E. "In Search of a Lost Language: Performing in Early-Recorded Style in Viola and String Quartet Repertoires" PhD diss. Leiden University, 2019.

[213] Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice* p. 587.

> Notwithstanding periodic complaints about the over-use of portamento there can be no doubt that by the middle decades of the 19th century it had become an orthodox and quite freely employed expressive resource, and until well into the 20th century it remained, in its various forms an integral aspect of vocal and instrumental technique.[214]

The fact that portamento remained an integral aspect of vocal and instrumental technique well into the twentieth century, as Brown writes, is confirmed by sources like Rau's book, as quoted in Chapter 3.3. I find it noteworthy that Rau, in the quotation used above, names portamento as the other key factor (with vibrato) that lends the violin its intense expressiveness. This means that its importance was still explicitly acknowledged in the 1920s, at least according to Rau, at a time when vibrato was increasingly seen as a necessary element of all sound production. As one can hear in, for example, the recordings by the violinist Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), who is well-known for his constant vibrato, vibrato did not immediately replace portamento but rather was, at least for some time, applied in combination with it. In the context of my research, the focus must remain on nineteenth-century practices, and these observations are only helpful when it comes to trying to understand the relationship between what one hears in early recordings of the twentieth century and how that might relate to nineteenth-century practices. One can assume that the portamento one hears in historical recordings, and as described by Brown and Rau, echoes nineteenth-century practices of applying portamento. If so, it stands to reason that the increased use of vibrato also reflects (part of) its use in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As performance practice is a constantly changing art, changes in the use of both these expressive tools were in all likelihood gradual.

The use of portamento in orchestras deserves special attention. There appears to be some discrepancy between what authorities such as Spohr and Gassner wrote in the 1830s and 1840s, about how portamento was not permissible in orchestral playing, and its frequent and prominent use one

[214] Ibid, p. 565.

can hear in early recordings. These recordings likely reflect what had become the practice in the second half of the nineteenth century. In *Dirigent und Ripienist*, Gassner described how "playing flageolets, pulling, and gliding in singing passages can easily result in an unpleasant howling in orchestral settings, whilst it can be used to great effect in solo playing."[215] Spohr, to whom Gassner referred in his book, indicates that:

> Further instructions for the orchestral player are to refrain from the application of all anticipations, ornaments, and trills and such, as well as the artistic application of gliding from one tone to another and changing fingers on the same note, in short to avoid all that which belongs to the special effects and embellishments of the solo player, as it would disturb the unity and coherence of sound in orchestral playing.[216]

As one can see, unity of sound is the primary concern of both authors.

There are reasons - leaving aside what we can assume about nineteenth-century practices based on the abundance of portamento one can hear in recordings from the first decades of the twentieth century - to assume that what one reads in sources such as the writings by Gassner and Spohr is not exactly what happened in practice. Brown gives an example of a discrepancy between what Spohr writes in his *Violinschule* and his marking of his *Fifth Symphony*, where fingerings in the first violin part clearly implicate portamento.[217] This reminds me of the discrepancy between what Spohr writes about tempo rubato in orchestral playing and the account of his performance discussed in Chapter 1.1. I consider it likely that what he wrote

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[215] Gassner, F. S. *Dirigent und Ripeinist, für angehende Musikdirgenten, Musiker und Musikfreunde*. Karlsruhe, Ch. Th. Groos, 1844, p. 53. *Das flageoliren gewisser Töne (namentlich jenes des Oktaven-anschlages der leeren Saiten), Ziehen und Rutschen bei Gesangstellen, artet im Orchester leicht in ein unangenehmes Heulen aus, wärend im Solospiele damit ganz herrliche Wirkungen hervorgebracht werden können.*

[216] Spohr, *Violinschule* p. 249. *Fernere Vorschriften für den Orchesterspieler sind: sich aller Zusätze von Vorschlägen, Doppelschlägen, Trillern und dergleichen zu enthalten, wie auch alle künstlerische Applikaturen, das Fortgleiten von einem Ton zum andern, den Wechsel der Finger auf einem Ton, kurz, alles das zu vermeiden, was nur zur Ausschmückung des Solospiels gehört und in das Orchesterspeil übertragen, den Einklang des Zusammenspiels stören würde.*

[217] Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice,* p. 564.

was, in general, stricter than what he practised, and I would assume that this could very well also apply to the subject of orchestral portamento.[218]

Having experimented with portamento extensively since the beginning of my research project, I have found an argument against the idea that portamento could be switched on and off by players, depending on the circumstances (solo/chamber music playing versus orchestral playing). The technique of changing position on string instruments involving sliding from one note to another has aesthetic as well as technical dimensions. Some of my orchestra members who were new to the idea of making audible slides described the technique of audible position changes as "playing it by ear." In contrast to the post-war clean style of playing position changes, this gliding allows players to check whether their approach to the goal note is on track, because one can hear that approach by listening to the portamento.

After playing with audible position changes during the relatively short periods of my project weeks, some players indicated that returning to the clean style of inaudible position changes felt like playing Russian roulette, as it required them to land in the exact required spot without any aural information to guide their finger. Regarding the aesthetic component of portamento playing, the experience with my project orchestra has taught me that the perception musicians have of the music changes as a result of their use of this technique. String players and wind players alike confirmed that their experience in the project orchestra led them to hearing and experiencing legato in a different way. To their ears (and mine), portamento contributes to the expressive nature of legato, adding warmth and smoothness to it. After listening to portamento for a week in the project orchestra, musicians felt that clean legato playing, as demanded of them outside the project orchestra, felt colder.

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[218] Robert Philip, for instance, dedicated a separate chapter to orchestral portamento in his book *Early Recordings and Musical Style*. Philip, after giving several examples of the audible use of portamento in historic recordings, concluded that British orchestras did little to coordinate their portamento in the late 1920s. He points out that, "at the opposite extreme, the Concertgebouw [Orchestra] and most American orchestras coordinated at least the most important portamentos; and that most continental orchestras fell somewhere between these two extremes of laissez-faire and discipline." Philip, R. *Early Recordings and Musical Style* pp. 179-204.

From such experiences with portamento, I conclude that the instruction for nineteenth-century players, trained in the portamento techniques and in the tradition of expressive fingering, to refrain from using them in orchestral settings is very unlikely to have meant that they would have had to learn a new and fundamentally different technique, or a new concept of what would constitute expressive legato. This prompts me to believe that portamento must have been part of the orchestral sound in the nineteenth century. The writings of Gassner and Spohr, in my opinion, were intended to instruct musicians to refrain from applying portamento as a special effect in the same manner as they might do when performing solo repertoire or chamber music. Their remarks were not intended to tell musicians that they would have to learn a new technique and acquire a new taste.

I think that what one can hear in recordings of orchestral performances of the first half of the twentieth century fits this idea perfectly. Philip, for instance, writes about this when discussing the different types of portamento being used and applied:

> To put it negatively, what one gets from orchestral recordings is the lowest common denominator of portamento. Orchestras show what everyone does, not what exceptional individuals do. But the positive side of this is that one gains a broader picture of general habits not only of particular orchestras, but also of different countries, and of the way styles change over time.[219]

After offering detailed analyses of the use of portamento in a number of historical recordings by British orchestras, Philip goes on to conclude that:

> Compared with British orchestras continental orchestras do not show quite such an extreme change in the use of portamento between the 1920s and the 1940s but there is nevertheless a clear general trend from quite frequent and prominent portamento in the 1920s to infrequent and discreet portamento by the late 1940s. Fewer recordings of continental orchestras than of British orchestras were made before the late 1920s, but it is clear that prominent portamento was still part of the string style of Berlin and Vienna around 1930.[220]

[219] Ibid, p. 181.
[220] Ibid, p. 191.

Considering Philip's overview of historical recordings, I have come to a simple strategy when it comes to the use of portamento in the project orchestra. First of all, I encouraged all string players to make all their individual position changes audible to some extent in a non-unified way. I asked them to choose their own fingerings, but to change position in the style of Joachim, since he was at the time of Brahms the main representative of what has become known as the German style:

> The finger which stops the lower note just before the change of position takes place must glide up to the string on which the starting note is played until it reaches the position containing the note to be slurred.[221]

Secondly, I instructed sections to apply a unified portamento for special effect in particular places. To be able to develop a style of applying portamento, I shared exercises, annotated parts, and audio examples of historical recordings with the musicians through my website.[222] All string players in the orchestra eagerly participated in this process and the result was that the sound of the string orchestra changed profoundly.

As a consequence of the first part of my strategy, which resulted in an orchestral sound that can be described as somewhat veiled and as having somewhat less clear rhythmic contours, the sound of the project orchestra is significantly different from any other orchestra, MPP or HIPP to date. This distinct sound is often the first thing that people notice when they hear the orchestra for the first time. The second part of my strategy resulted in unmistakable special effects, applied particularly in melodic passages. I strive to apply explicitly organised portamento by whole sections of the orchestra only if it serves a clear expressive purpose. The expressive goals that are being served by the use of portamento can sometimes be difficult to put into words. As Mendelssohn observed, though, "To me the thoughts

[221] Joachim/Moser *Violin school,* p. 92.

[222] Exercises by Spohr and David, an annotated part of Schumann's cello concerto in an arrangement for violin, a demonstration of my application of portamento and vibrato in it, and links to recordings by Marie Soldat-Roeger can be found at: brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl

which are expressed in music that I love are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary, too definite."[223]

Rather than presenting specific storylines or topics to the orchestra, I often characterise phrases in key words, or I refer to a mood or atmosphere when it comes to working out a particular portamento effect. In her dissertation on the nineteenth-century cellist Friedrich Grützmacher (1832-1903), Bennett Wadsworth lists several characteristic key words that in my opinion can be used for this purpose. She makes a distinction between expressive markings in a soft context, such as amoroso, dolce, grazioso, lamentoso, leggiero, lugubre, misterioso, and semplice, which always occur either together with a piano marking or just after a diminuendo, and markings such as brillante, energico, gioviale, grandioso, imponente, largamente, pesante, and risoluto, appearing only within forte. Characterising phrases with the help of expressive markings such as Grützmacher's can produce several differing kinds of portamento with a specific expressive motivation. This seems to me to be helpful in avoiding portamentos that sound the same and lack in expressive purpose.

Over the past years, I have noticed a growing tendency amongst students who are interested in nineteenth-century HIPP to apply portamento randomly without any specific expressive intention. While I have sympathy for all efforts to bring the valuable expressive tool of portamento to life, hearing these efforts has convinced me even more that connecting the use of portamento to expressive goals is crucial for its effective application (effective in the sense that it enhances a musical narrative that can be recognised by the listener). I feel that, just like the tools of modification of rhythm and tempo, the tool of portamento also needs to be reinvented if one wants to use it in present-day performances in a way that increases the emotional impact of the music on the listener. I am aware of the fact that how one perceives the effect of portamento varies from listener to listener.

[223] Mendelssohn, F. "Letter to Marc-André Souchay" October 1842, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1830 bis 1847.* Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1878, p. 221. *Das, was mir eine Musik ausspricht, die ich liebe, sind mir nicht zu unbestimmte Gedanken, um sie in Worte zu fassen, sondern zu bestimmte.*

What sounds like a random portamento to me may sound convincing and expressive to another listener. Researchers such as Brown, Philip, Köpp and many others have shown that the use and application of different types of portamento varied hugely in the nineteenth century. Re-inventing portamento requires experimenting with what one can learn about the techniques from the historical sources as well as investigating their effects on present-day listeners. Through extensive and prolonged experimentation, one can develop one's intuition to guide the use of the expressive tool of portamento in a way that makes the performance more colourful and more expressive.

Over the course of my project, the use of portamento in the string orchestra has arguably become more sophisticated. In the recordings of the first year (*First Symphony* and *First Piano Concerto)* one can occasionally hear a use of portamento that, in light of what we did in later years, I would now call somewhat unbalanced. These are specifically the instances where string players found it difficult to judge how much bow pressure to apply in combination with portamento. The recordings show that the players became better equipped to find this balance over the years. Another effect that can be heard relates to the occasional imitation of the portamento effects by woodwind players. The wind players indicated that the portamento effects they could hear in the string orchestra inspired them to look for more expressive ways to shape their legato lines. This, in turn, inspired string players to think of portamento as a tool which in some instances could serve to enhance the expressive nature of their legato.

Though there is not much mention of this in historical methods and treatises, this is quite a logical situation, given the fact that portamento relates to the connection between notes, as does legato. I would further argue that, in string playing, the clarity of articulation under legato slurs can undermine the legato in two ways. The first relates to the placing of fingers within a given position of the left hand. If string players place the finger that produces the next note under a legato slur on the string with considerable speed and force, as they would typically have been taught to do in their late twentieth- and early twenty-first century conservatory training, this can

undermine the quality of the legato, as each note gets a very distinct beginning. The second way relates to position changes. If position changes occur within a legato slur, the twentieth-century technique of making them inaudible often causes players to stop temporarily or lift the bow in order to hide the slides. This is very detrimental to a real legato, one which is intended to connect the notes under the slur without interruption of the sound. Experimenting with portamento can inspire string players to use a much softer touch with the fingers of the left hand and expressive slides, resulting in softer beginnings of notes and a smoother legato. This idea translates to the effect of keys on wind instruments; these can contribute to extra clarity in articulation, which does not always enhance the smoothness or expressive quality of legato.

3.5 VIBRATO

Like portamento, vibrato was an essential part of expressive sound production on string instruments in the nineteenth century. However, it was considered to be an ornament, and not the omnipresent ingredient of musical sound production it is today. Spohr, in his *Violinschule*, refers to it as the third point in his list of the technical tools required for a beautiful performance: "the vibrato in its four stages *(Die Bebungen in ihren vier Abstufungen*)."[224] In his chapter on orchestral performance, he does not list vibrato as something that needs to be banned from orchestral playing specifically, but one can surmise that he thought of it as a tool of expression included in the embellishments *(Ausschmückung)* that were in the domain of solo performance and to be avoided in orchestral playing. As Brown indicates in *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*:

> There is therefore every reason to think that, unless a composer specifically requested it, orchestral string sections and wind instruments in tutti sections would have been expected not to use any vibrato […] Nevertheless, it seems likely that, particularly where the influence of the Franco-Belgian school of string players was strong, a certain amount of vibrato on the part of individual players, in circumstances where they would have used it as soloists, might have been observed in orchestral string sections during the last decades of the [19th] century. Where the influence of the German school was strongest, however, it seems less probable that this would have been the case. These tendencies will have been particularly strong in the major orchestras, which were increasingly composed of players who had been trained predominantly as soloists rather than orchestral players in the rapidly proliferating music schools and conservatoires of Europe.[225]

The Meiningen Orchestra – which I use as a model for my approach regarding size, proportions, seating arrangements and to some extent rehearsal technique – can be considered a typically German orchestra, in the sense that the majority of the string players had been trained in the German tradition of Spohr and Joachim. Nonetheless, the evidence shows that several influential

[224] The four stages Spohr refers to are described elsewhere in his book. They are 'slow', 'fast', 'becoming slower' and 'becoming faster'.
[225] Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, pp. 553-557.

musicians in the orchestra received (part of) their training in the Franco-Belgian tradition.[226] It is also a fact that a considerable number of the Meiningen musicians performed as soloists and in chamber music concerts, outside the context of their orchestra.[227] Even if one accepts the idea that the Meiningen Orchestra was essentially an orchestra that operated in the German style, closely related to the Joachim style, with some limited influences from musicians trained in different styles such as the Franco-Belgian style, I think it is unlikely that they would have played without any vibrato.

Spohr and Joachim both refer to vibrato as an effect that is within the domain of ornamentation. In his chapter on "Verzierungen und Ausschmückungen" in *Violinschule,* Spohr writes about *Bebung* (tremolo), describing the various speeds of vibrato with wavering lines above the notes in an annotated score.[228] According to Joachim, vibrato represents "the most important means of expression within the power of the left hand" next to portamento.[229] It is unlikely that this tool would have been thrown overboard completely in orchestral playing. Instead, it seems likely that it was used as a special effect, as described in the methods of Spohr and Joachim.

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[226] Examples include the Dutch violinist Bram Eldering (1865-1943), who was invited by Fritz Steinbach and worked in Meiningen as concertmaster from 1894-1899, and the Dutch cellist Joseph Hollman (1852-1926), who is said to have led the section in the 1880s. Joseph Hollman's tenure as solo cellist in Meiningen in the 1880s is confirmed in multiple sources, but his name is missing from Maren Goltz's *Musiker-Lexikon des Herzogtums Sachsen-Meiningen (1680-1918)* (urn:nbn:de:gbv:547-200800339 Meiningen 2008)

[227] Even the short list of musicians active in the Meiningen Orchestra in the days of Bülow, in Chapter 1.2 of this dissertation, makes this clear. More names can be found in *Der Brahms Klarinettist Richard Mühlfeld* (Goltz/Müller, ARTIVO Music Publishing, Balve 2007) or in Goltz's above-mentioned *Musiker-Lexikon*.

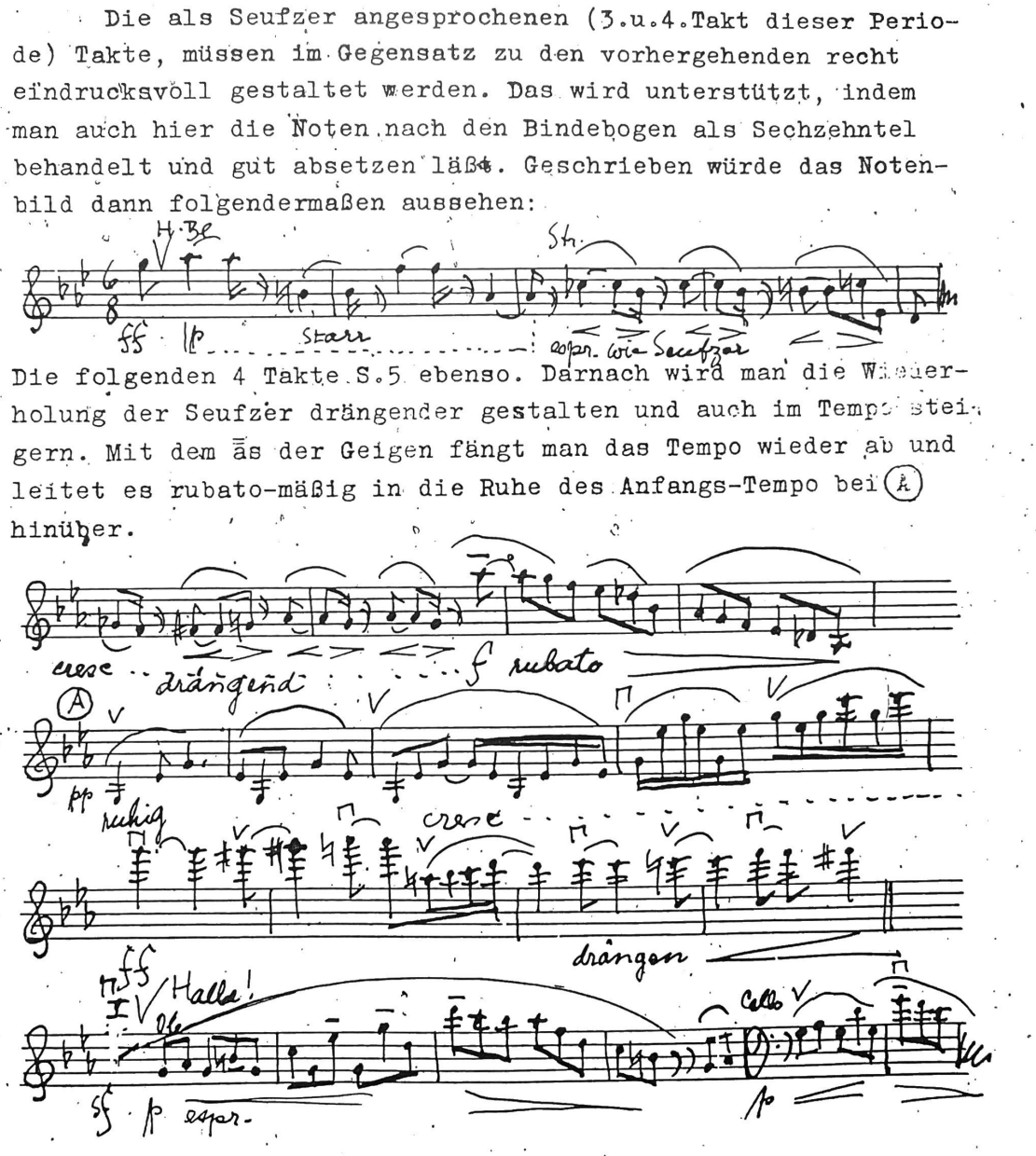
[228] Spohr, *Violinschule,* pp. 175-177.

[229] Moser/Joachim, *Violin School* pp. 96-96a Like portamento, vibrato too was a hotly contested subject amongst musicians. Violinist and pedagogue Leopold Auer (1845-1930), for instance, who had studied with Joachim and who taught violinists like Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz and Efrem Zimbalist, famously writes: "Excessive vibrato is a habit for which I have no tolerance, and I always fight against it when I observe it in my pupils – though often, I must admit, without success. As a rule, I forbid my students using the vibrato at all on notes which are not sustained, and I earnestly advise them not to abuse it even in the case of sustained notes which succeed each other in a phrase. Auer, L." *Violin Playing as I Teach It.* Stokes, New York, 1921, p. 24.

Sources on the use of vibrato in orchestras are scarce, but Blume specifically asks for "no vibrato" in the first movement of Brahms's *First Symphony,* and in the second movement of the *Third Symphony* (see the music examples below).[230] Clearly there would have been no need for him to do so if no vibrato was ever applied in orchestral playing. One should also consider that continuous vibrato had become the default position by 1933. In her assessment of the use of vibrato by the Meiningen Orchestra, Avins discusses how Blume, in all 88 pages of his document about Steinbach's interpretations of the four symphonies and the Haydn-Variations, only mentions vibrato twice. Since he asks for avoidance of any vibrato in both instances, it follows that vibrato would generally have been applied by the string players of the orchestra elsewhere.[231]

Yet such reasoning is based on a simplified view of the use of vibrato. It does not follow from Blume's recommendation not to use any vibrato in two instances that "it was otherwise normal to use it." As the methods by Spohr and Joachim show, the use of vibrato in the German school was limited and considered a special effect. The use of vibrato often related to accents and hairpins. Blume warned against the use of vibrato in the introduction of the *First Symphony*, at letter A. In the 4 bars before letter A, one finds markings containing hairpins and forte rubato:

[230] Blume, *Brahms in der Meininger Tradition* p. 12 and p. 62.
[231] Avins, "The Excellent people" p. 39.



Bei A bewahren die Streicher völlige Ruhe. Kein Vibrato und Schleifen der Töne!

Figure 3.11: Blume page 11 (partially shown).

It is entirely plausible that Blume is warning against continuing the special effect of vibrato belonging to the hairpins, or even the “forte rubato” before letter A, in the pianissimo. In the second situation, where Blume asks the strings to refrain from the use of vibrato, the passage is also flanked by music which contains sets of hairpins. He asks for a silvery colour:

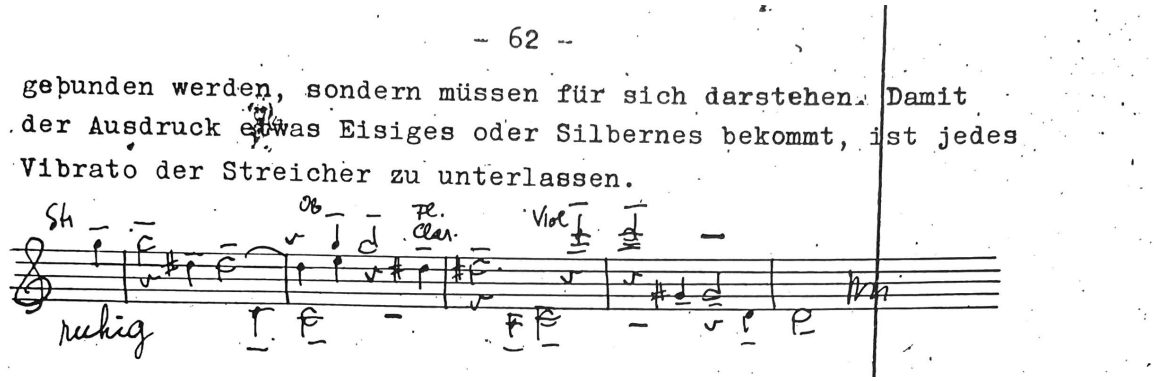


Figure 3.12: Blume page 62 (partially shown).

As can be seen in the score, both before and after these notes, we find sets of hairpins:

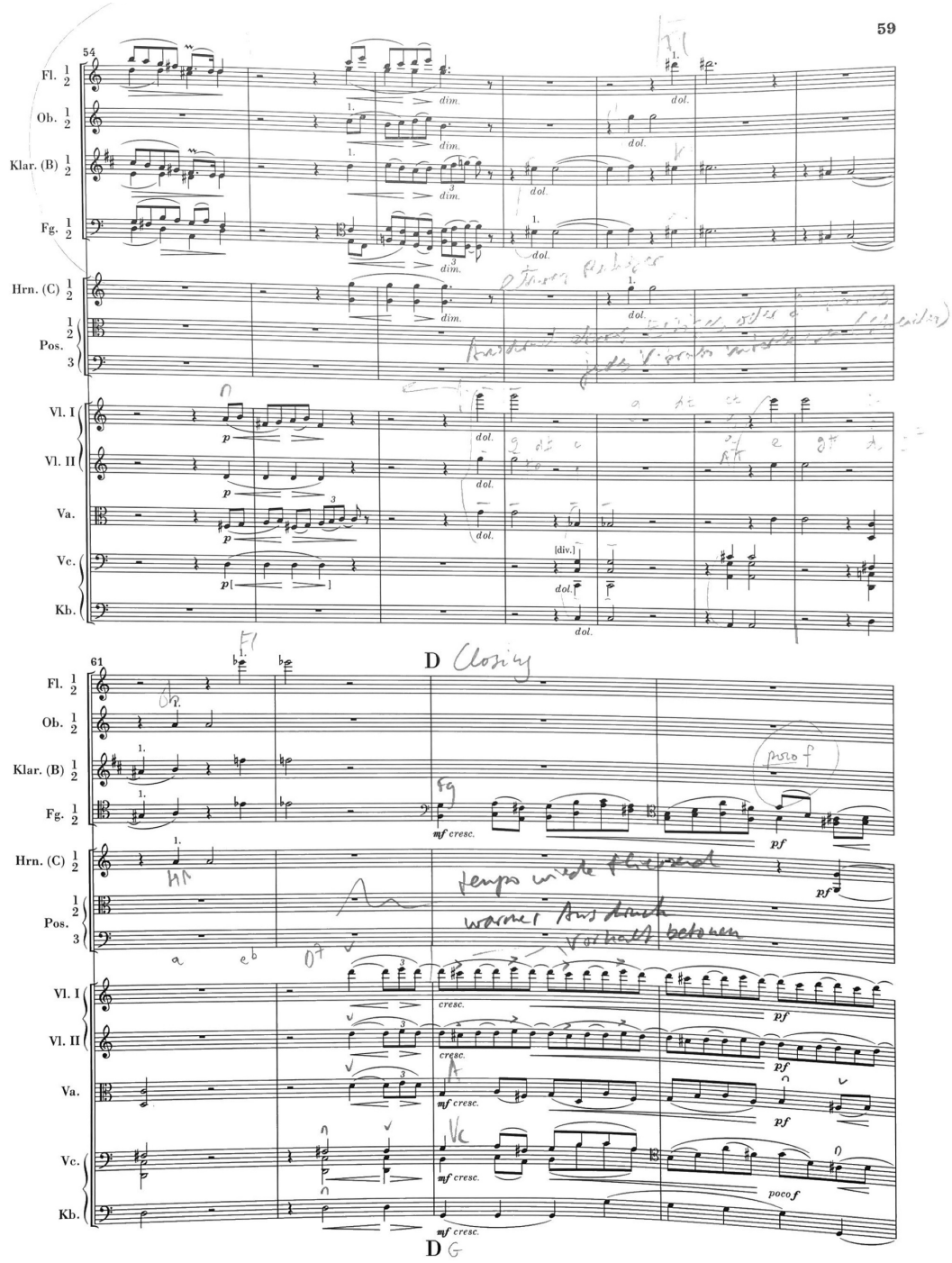


Figure 3.13: Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext Edition Third Symphony (Score) page 59.

Just as in the first example, Blume may have suggested players refrain from the use of vibrato in order to create a contrast with the sound produced in these hairpins, which may well have included it.

If one applied Avins's reasoning to other performance issues discussed by Blume, one might say that everything has to be played exactly in tempo, except for those specific instances where Blume suggests deviations from it. Or the opposite, that everything has to be completely free, except for those occasions where Blume suggests a strict tempo. Very few, if any, issues regarding performance practice lend themselves to such black and white interpretations.

In an article dedicated to the use of vibrato in the early twentieth century, music producer Tomoyuki Sawado discusses film footage of orchestras before 1935 in the belief that visual sources provide the most direct and reliable way of determining the level of vibrato used in orchestral performance. Amongst the examples he gives is an extract from an Austrian film titled *Letzte Liebe* (1931), which has a short section of the Vienna Philharmonic playing the overture to *Don Giovanni*. One sees violinist Arnold Joseph Rosé (1863-1946), who was concertmaster of the orchestra, hardly moving his left hand, while the violinists next to him are using substantial vibrato. Sawado rightly concludes that in the Vienna Philharmonic in 1935 some players used vibrato and others did not, and he suggests that further research is needed to look into the question whether the orchestra had been in that state for many years, or was in a state of transition from non-vibrato to continuous vibrato style.[232] Regardless of the conclusions of such further research, my conclusion is that in a top rank orchestra such as the Vienna Philharmonic, at least on this occasion, players who used vibrato and those who refrained from its use were playing side by side. This conclusion suggests to me that one should be extremely careful in drawing any general conclusions about the (unified) use of vibrato in orchestras.

If the extent and character of vibrato in the string sections of orchestras must to some extent remain a subject of speculation, the same is true for vibrato in the wind sections. Philip, for instance, indicates how woodwind vibrato was spread through the French school of playing, but was

[232] Sawado, T. "To vibrate or not to vibrate, that is the question: The evidence of early orchestral performances on film," 09-14-2014 https://www.fugue.us/Vibrato_History_E.html. (Last accessed September 2022).

met with resistance in Germany and Austria.[233] However, the German and French ways of playing, and the instruments that were being used, were not as separated from each other as one might think. Maren Goltz and Herta Müller describe how Duke Georg II allowed the orchestra to adopt the Paris pitch in 1874 (established in 1859 at A=435 at 15 degrees Celsius) and to replace any instruments necessary in order to achieve this purpose. It took the orchestra almost an entire year to adapt to this lower pitch and it involved an order for new instruments; 4 flutes, 2 oboes, 6 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 2 trumpets, and 2 trombones. Goltz and Müller wrote that the instrument maker Georg Ottensteiner (1815-1879), who received and accepted the order to make most of the new instruments, crafted instruments with distinctly French features. This is not as surprising as it may seem, given the fact that Ottensteiner had lived in Paris from 1838 to 1848, when August Buffet (le jeune) (1789-1864) and Hyacinthe Klosé (1808-1880) were making their new clarinets, before returning to Munich to open a workshop there. While the instruments that were used by the Meiningen musicians showed French features, they were most probably played with little or no vibrato, at least in the nineteenth century.

The style of sound production in the winds was likely to have been closely related to that of the string orchestra, which was dominated by the aesthetics of the Spohr and Joachim traditions. This assumption is in line with general trends in the application of woodwind vibrato as characterised by Philip:

> As with string playing the broad trend in woodwind vibrato over the first half of the 20th century is very clear. In the early years of the century most woodwind players played without vibrato and by the 1940s almost all flautists and oboists, some bassoonists, and a few clarinettists played with vibrato. It was first adopted in France, and by French players in America, was

[233] As Philip notes, "Continuous vibrato may or may not have been a Franco Belgian invention, but it seems very likely that French taste was a significant factor in its development. French influence was certainly by far the most important element in the spread of woodwind vibrato, beginning with Taffanel, Gillet, and their pupils. The comparative reluctance of German and Viennese woodwind-players to adopt vibrato was paralleled by the opposition to violin vibrato of the German school, led by Joachim and his pupils." Philip, *Early Recordings*, pp. 137-138.

> spreading to many British players by the 1930s, and only in the late 1940s became accepted in Berlin and Vienna.[234]

One has every reason to believe that recordings of orchestral music from the first decades of the twentieth century, in which vibrato in the woodwinds is mostly absent, reflect (parts of) the practice of the last decades of the nineteenth century. Philip concludes that the development towards woodwind vibrato in orchestras was rapid and took place after the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Based on my understanding of the sources quoted above, and in line with the sound of the string orchestra, I asked the wind players in the project orchestra to play without vibrato, allowing for some individual variation within the sections, but not in tutti passages or when they were operating as a group. Occasionally, and only in specific cases, I invited players to use vibrato in woodwind solos, as I do in some melodic lines in the strings. Almost without exception, this vibrato connects to sforzato signs, accents, and hairpins. Applying vibrato in these instances turned out to be not very difficult for the wind players. Yet it proved quite difficult to bring out special vibrato effects in the middle of hairpins in the string orchestra, as shown by the recordings of the *First Symphony* and the melodic sections in the violins in the first movement of the *Second Piano Concerto*. The experiments I conducted with the project orchestra seem to suggest that, once habitual vibrato has been banned, it is not easy for players to apply vibrato on particular notes. This requires further experimentation, and for the project week of 2022 I have designed a few specific exercises for the string players.[235]

[234] Ibid, p. 137.

[235] Exercises for hairpins and accents with vibrato can be found on my website: https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Scan-Spohr-excercise-.pdf

3.6 Tempo

The choice of a tempo remains one of the most important tasks of the conductor, even when one's concept of tempo is flexible, and one allows or stimulates deviations from it in performance. As Richard Wagner writes:

> If one wants to summarise everything that is important for the correct performance of a piece of music on the part of the conductor, this lies in his duty always to indicate the right tempo; for the choice and purpose of it allows us to recognise immediately whether the conductor has understood the piece or not. The right tempo gives good musicians, when they become more familiar with the piece of music, the ability to find the right performance almost automatically, because it already contains the insight therein on the part of the conductor. But how difficult it is to determine the correct tempo becomes clear if we realise that it can only be found through achieving the correct performance in every aspect.[236]

The tempo markings in Brahms's symphonies are as follows:

***First Symphony* in C minor Op. 68**

Un poco sostenuto – Allegro – Meno allegro

Andante sostenuto

Un poco Allegretto e grazioso

Adagio – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio – Più Allegro

***Second Symphony* in D major Op. 73**

Allegro non troppo

Adagio non troppo (l'istesso tempo ma grazioso)

Allegretto grazioso (Quasi Andantino) Presto non assai

---

[236] Wagner, *Über das Dirigieren,* p. 15. *Will man alles zusammenfassen, worauf es für die richtige Aufführung eines Tonstückes von Seiten des Dirigenten ankommt, so ist dies darin enthalten, dass er immer das richtige Tempo angebe; denn die Wahl und Bestimmung desselben lässt uns sofort erkennen, ob der Dirigent das Tonstück verstanden hat oder nicht. Das richtige Tempo gibt guten Musikern bei genauerem Bekanntwerden mit dem Tonstück es fast von selbst auch an die Hand, den richtigen Vortrag dafür zu finden, denn jenes schließt bereits die Erkenntnis dieses letzten vonseiten des Dirigenten in sich ein. Wie wenig leicht es aber ist, das richtige Tempo zu bestimmen, erhellt eben hieraus, dass nur aus der Erkenntnis des richtigen Vortrages in jeder Beziehung auch das richtige Zeitmaß gefunden werden kann.*

Allegro con spirito

***Third Symphony* in F major Op. 90**
Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco Allegretto
Allegro

***Fourth Symphony* in E minor Op. 98**
Allegro non troppo
Andante moderato
Allegro giocoso
Allegretto energico e passionate

As discussed in sections 1.6 and 1.7, Brahms refused to give metronome markings for his music and, in the rare cases when friends talked him into providing them, he regretted having done so. He also reportedly said that a sane person would take a different tempo every week. Sherman, for instance, observes that:

> It is evident that Brahms and his contemporaries took varying tempos from performance to performance […] A good case can be made for Brahms's belief that the best clues for performers were not his metronome marks but his verbal tempo markings.[237]

If one accepts the idea, as I do, that the verbal indications contain the most important clues for helping one choose the right tempo, it follows that one needs to study them carefully. Looking at the verbal instructions for the movements of the symphonies, as presented above, the first thing that strikes me is that Brahms only gave a tempo indication without adding Italian qualifiers in two instances, namely in the second and fourth movements of the *Third Symphony,* Andante and Allegro. I discussed the way

[237] Sherman, "Metronome marks," in *Performing Brahms* p. 123.

I interpret these Italian qualifiers, understanding some of them as warnings and some of them as encouragement, in Chapter 1.7. I believe that choosing a tempo that works well for me as a performer – allowing myself an amount of variation in tempo from performance to performance – would not be against Brahms's ideas on the subject of tempo choice.

To me, Brahms's idea that tempo is a living and constantly changing thing is crucial. This concept allows the verbal instructions to lead one to different choices depending on the situation. I am aware of a range of external factors that may influence my choice of tempo, such as the size of the hall, its acoustics, the energy level of the orchestra and of me personally, and the atmosphere in the hall and the audience during a performance. I think that it is more in keeping with what the historical evidence tells us about Brahms's understanding of tempo to vary it under the influence of these factors, rather than to strive for any fixed tempo and adhere to it rigidly. Though my tempos change somewhat from performance to performance, of course, the recordings that I made obviously reflect only the tempo chosen on the occasion of the recorded performance.

I have used Sherman's list and analysis of pre- and post-war recordings of the *First* and *Second Symphony* in order to compare the duration of my performances. Sherman compares his chosen recordings with the reported durations of the premières of these pieces for each movement. He concludes that the pre-war recordings largely sit within a range of one minute from the reported duration of the première in both the *First* and *Second Symphony,* whereas the post-war recordings generally showed an increase in their length – of some 10 to 12% in the case of the *First*, and 6 to 8% in the case of the *Second Symphony*. It is worth investigating the details of Sherman's analysis, as they show interesting deviations for each movement. Put simply, I think it is enough to say that my durations appear to relate more closely to the pre-war recordings than the post-war ones, as well as to the reported timing of the premières of both pieces.[238] As Sherman points out, these figures do not

[238] The duration of the première of the *First Symphony,* conducted by Dessoff in Karlsruhe in 1876, is reported to have been 40:30 (corrected time, without repeat). The mean timing of pre-1946 recordings is 41:26, and my recording is 42:02. The mean timing of the post-1946

provide information about tempo modifications. That is a different subject, which I have covered sufficiently elsewhere in this dissertation. I have made use of Sherman's work here only to compare the durations of my performances with those of some historical examples.

recordings is 45:51. The duration of the première of the *Second Symphony* conducted by Richter in Vienna in 1877, was 38:00 (without repeat); the mean timing of the pre-1946 recordings is 37:23, and my recording is 38:34; the mean timing of the post-1946 recordings is 40:24.

CHAPTER 4. PROJECT RECORDINGS

The recordings have all been made available in mp3 format on my website.[239] Alongside this dissertation, I provide a limited release of the recordings on high fidelity quality CDs.

1. *First Symphony*, op. 68, C minor (recorded September 2019)

First movement, Un poco sostenuto – Allegro

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no_1_deel_1.mp3

QR-code 19

Second movement, Andante sostenuto

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no_1_deel_2.mp3

QR-code 20

Third movement, Un poco Allegretto e grazioso

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no_1_deel_3.mp3

[239] https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/resources/?jsf=jet-engine&meta=category:audio.

QR-code 21

Fourth movement, Adagio – Più Andante -Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no_1_deel_4.mp3

QR-code 22

2. *Second Symphony*, op. 73, D major (recorded September 2020)

First movement, Allegro non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no__2__deel_1_Allegro_non_Troppo.mp3

QR-code 23

Second movement, Adagio non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no__2__deel_2_-_Adagio_non_Troppo.mp3

QR-code 24

Third movement, Allegretto grazioso (Quasi Andantino) - Presto ma non assai

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms_Symfonie_no__2__deel_3_-__Allegretto_grazioso.mp3

QR-code 25

Fourth movement, Allegro con spirito

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symphony-No.-2-IV.mp3

QR-code 26

3. *Third Symphony*, op. 90, F major (recorded September 2021)

First movement, Allegro con brio

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symfonie-nr.-3-Deel-1-Final-Master-88.2kHZ-24-bit-30-01-2021.mp3

QR-code 27

Second movement, Andante

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symfonie-nr.-3-Deel-2-Final-Master-88.2kHZ-24-bit-30-01-2021.mp3

QR-code 28

Third movement, Poco Allegretto

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symfonie-nr.-3-Deel-3-Final-Master-88.2kHZ-24-bit-30-01-2021.mp3

QR-code 29

Fourth movement, Allegro

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symfonie-nr.-3-Deel-4-Final-Master-88.2kHZ-24-bit-30-01-2021.mp3

QR-code 30

4. *Fourth Symphony*, op. 98, E minor (recorded September 2022)

First movement, Allegro non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symphony-No.-4-I.mp3

QR-code 31

Second movement, Andante moderato

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symphony-No.-4-II.mp3

QR-code 32

Third movement, Allegro giocoso

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symphony-No.-4-III.mp3

QR-code 33

Fourth movement, Allegro energico e passionato

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Symphony-No.-4-IV.mp3

QR-code 34

5. *First Piano Concerto,* op. 15, D minor, with Paolo Giacometti, piano (recorded September 2019)

First movement, Maestoso

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Pianoconcert-deel-1-Edit-V1-Mix-V1-Stereo-DXD-p2p.mp3

QR-code 35

Second movement, Adagio

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Pianoconcert-deel-2-Edit-V1-Mix-V1-Stereo-DXD-p2p.mp3

QR-code 36

Third movement, Rondo, Allegro non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Pianoconcert-deel-3-Edit-V1-Mix-V1-Stereo-DXD-p2p.mp3

QR-code 37

6. *Double Concerto,* op. 102, A minor, with Shunske Sato, violin and Pieter Wispelwey, cello (recorded September 2020)

First movement, Allegro

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Dubbelconcert-deel-1-Allegro-44_1-kHz-Mastered-Stereo.mp3

QR-code 38

Second movement, Andante

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Dubbelconcert-deel-2-Andante-44_1-kHz-Mastered-Stereo.mp3

QR-code 39

Third movement, Vivace non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Dubbelconcert-deel-3-Vivace-non-troppo-44_1-kHz-Mastered-Stereo.mp3

QR-code 40

***7. Second Piano Concerto*, op. 83, B-flat major**, with Olga Pashchenko, piano (recorded September 2021)

First movement, Allegro non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Pianoconcert-Nr.-2-Deel-1-Final-Master-88.2-kHz-24-bit-31-01-2022-1.mp3

QR-code 41

Second movement, Allegro appassionato

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Pianoconcert-Nr.-2-Deel-2-Final-Master-88.2-kHz-24-bit-31-01-2022-1.mp3

QR-code 42

Third movement, Andante

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Pianoconcert-Nr.-2-Deel-3-Final-Master-88.2-kHz-24-bit-31-01-2022.mp3

QR-code 43

Fourth movement, Allegretto grazioso

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Brahms-Pianoconcert-Nr.-2-Deel-4-Final-Master-88.2-kHz-24-bit-31-01-2022.mp3

QR-code 44

8. *Violin Concerto*, op 77, D major, with Shunske Sato, violin (recorded September 2022)

First movement, Allegro non troppo

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Violin-Concerto-I.mp3

QR-code 45

Second movement, Adagio

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Violin-Concerto-II.mp3

QR-code 46

Third movement, Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

https://brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl/wp-content/uploads/Violin-Concerto-III.mp3

QR-code 47

Chapter 5. Evaluation and conclusions

The films covering the four project years include much about the ongoing evaluation of my methods and the developing results of the research. These aspects are discussed further, briefly, in this chapter. In addition to this I will discuss the project in the context of artistic research, today's performance practice and the field of (higher) music education. In the introduction to this dissertation, I stated that I intended to demonstrate how nineteenth-century expressive tools of modification of rhythm and tempo can be reinvented and implemented in present-day performances of Brahms's orchestral music. If this demonstration were to offer a meaningful new perspective on ways of performing this repertoire, it would have to have produced a result that was significantly different from those from the domains of both MPP and HIPP. Having studied many historical and late twentieth-century recordings, as well as more recent ones (some of which I discussed in Chapter 1.9), I think it is clear that the recordings I have produced with the project orchestra and present here do indeed constitute such a different result. The reactions from participating musicians, members of the audience, and especially experts in the field such as Clive Brown and John Eliot Gardiner (see the documentary films), confirm that this is a legitimate conclusion.[240]

I aimed to demonstrate how my approach is based on my understanding of historical evidence concerning nineteenth-century (orchestral) performance practice. I believe that by following this approach and describing the process of working with the orchestra, I have shown that I have arrived at this result through the reinvention and implementation of nineteenth-century expressive tools that were subsequently abandoned during the twentieth century. Though I have argued from the outset of my project that I intended the recordings to be the core of my work, with the

[240] In the first two years of the project, I expressed the hope that feedback of fellow conductors and nineteenth-century performance practice experts would help me asses the results and find a path forward. (See film 2 about the second project week, 2020: 'What's next', minute 34:54). I have consulted many peers during the project, particularly amongst the participating musicians. It became clear to me, however, that seeking external feedback or reactions from fellow conductors was difficult. However, I increasingly felt that I did not need the external feedback as much as I had thought in early stages of the project, because the feedback that was accumulated withing the project provided me with sufficient guidance to find my way forward.

written component being, as it were, an accompaniment, I have found the task of carefully explaining how my approach is rooted in my understanding of historical evidence to be both challenging and stimulating.

As historian Hayden White (1928-2018) has suggested, historians may be concerned with events which are 'in principle observable or perceivable' but they are unable to represent these without resorting to techniques that add a fictional element. By creating a hypothesis on the basis of historical evidence or simply by writing about the past, all kinds of moral, rhetorical and aesthetic factors inevitably drive or become part of the narrative. An awareness of the role that these factors play in research has been important in alerting me to the danger of becoming captive to ideological presumptions that might have been developed during the course of the research. It has helped to prevent me from forming an inflexible view of the past that would not only be untenable but also an impediment to creative thinking. White is considered a ground-breaking historian, whose work has challenged the cherished belief that history could be an objective mirror or lens rather than an imaginative construction of the past. The work of White and other post-modern historians such as the Dutch historian and philosopher Frank Ankersmit casts light on the naïve belief of many HIPP musicians and researchers that a truthful reconstruction of historical styles and practices is achievable.

Performing musicians who also engage in historical research, unlike other historians, do not have to rely on language exclusively to communicate their understanding of history. They can perform the music that they investigate in addition to writing about it. This is of course a wonderful way of establishing a feeling of connection to the past, but it runs the risk of creating illusions about historically correct or authentic performance.[241] Satisfactory results in performances (performances that musicians and or audiences enjoy or appreciate) based on an understanding of historical evidence have been mistaken by some (including the performers) as evidence of the correctness of that understanding. However, satisfactory performances of historical repertoire can be achieved through a range of different approaches with a variety of historical and non-historical aesthetic foundations. As such they cannot automatically be proof of any correct

[241] Many CD sleeves and booklets of HIPP recordings of the second half of the twentieth century describe them as 'authentic', 'true to the composers' intentions' or 'historically correct'.

understanding of historical evidence.[242] I personally find it quite liberating to embrace the idea that my efforts as an HIPP musician are nothing more – but certainly also nothing less – than a way of revitalising my relationship with history and keeping alive a connection with the works of art from the past. The fact that how I engage with the historical evidence may well say more about me and the time I live in than about the history I study does not diminish my work as a performing musician or a scholar, but it is important for me to refrain from making false claims about its historical validity. I think it is important to point out that historical evidence does not need to be seen as compelling a performer to certain artistic choices. The confrontation between historical evidence of changing performance practices and one's acquired artistic beliefs can be an endless source of inspiration for performers. The term 'historically informed' allows the performer-researcher to say: the historical evidence tells me that certain things were done in a certain way in the times of the composer, but I choose to do it differently now. As long as one claims that one is historically informed rather than presenting a performance that accurately reflects a historical truth or practice, one can be free in one's artistic choices. At the same time, I have tried to be as specific as I possibly could about the connection between the historical sources I use and my approach, so that others can challenge my understanding of the evidence, my method of re-inventing and applying my findings and the results of the process, based on detailed information. In my opinion, this remains the best way to show how scholarly knowledge about the past can be used to stimulate artistic creativity.

In an article written by Brown for *Early Music* in 2010, he discusses the yawning chasm between contemporary performance practice and historical evidence. Since that article, much work has been done in the field of solo and chamber music performance, but not a great deal in relation to orchestral performance. Brown lists a number of reasons why historical evidence has generally been ignored by performers, ranging from the nature of the education system and the expectations of record producers and

[242] I leave aside efforts to legitimise unsatisfactory performances with historical arguments, though one could claim that these constitute satisfactory performances by a particular set of chosen criteria and as such fall into the category of "satisfactory performances" referred to in the body of my text.

audiences to the attitudes and habits of established performers.[243] In Chapter 1.11, I discussed some of the factors I think have contributed to the fact that the results of historical research have not been applied extensively in orchestral settings.

My proposed way of playing Brahms's orchestral works is not only substantially different from what has been produced in the field of HIPP, but certainly also from what is considered 'proper' performance in MPP and in the field of (higher) music education.[244] I have tried to avoid a combative tone in my writing but I cannot deny that my work can be seen as challenging the current practices. I like to think of my project as a small part of the ever-changing and intermittently evolving ways in which musicians and audiences think about the performance of music from the past. Challenging how music from the past is performed is a way of keeping our relationship with it alive. I contribute to scholarly knowledge and artistic development by explaining how and why I think that particular expressive tools are not just 'proper' for the execution of the music but are indeed an essential element of it.

There has been some discussion among my supervisors about the question of whether the title I chose for this dissertation was defendable. Some might argue that the art of modifying rhythm and tempo never really disappeared from the world of orchestral performance practices, making it impossible for me to claim that I could "re-invent" a supposedly lost tool. It is true that where performances may initially appear to be very rigid in their handling of rhythm and tempo, and very literal in their representation of the printed score, closer inspection invariably reveals some deviations from a metronomically maintained tempo. It is also true that musicians tend to find plenty of opportunities in Brahms's orchestral music to slow down the initial tempo and to take time over transitions and passages that they feel need such treatment, an approach that is certainly not metronomically accurate.

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[243] Brown, C. "Performing 19th-century chamber music: the yawning chasm between contemporary practice and historical evidence," *Early Music,* August 2012, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 476-480.

[244] I am using the adjective 'proper' to refer to performances that are consistent with the beliefs about how this music should be played, as held by the majority of professionals in the fields of MMP, HIPP and (higher) music education. In the field of professional education as a string player in conservatories and universities all over the world, for example, it is considered proper to play Brahms with a continuous vibrato, little or no portamento, and in a steady tempo.

Yet I believe that such deviations from the tempo are something entirely different from what was understood as the high art of modification, which I described and discussed in Chapter 1.8 and which – when it comes to the performance of Brahms's orchestral works – was epitomised in the performances of the Meiningen Orchestra under Fritz Steinbach.

Although my research is a serious effort to approach the elusive style of Steinbach's flexible treatment of rhythm and tempo with the Meiningen Orchestra, I would find it preposterous to pretend that what I do with my orchestra today might closely resemble what they did at the time. As I have shown, Blume commented on how Steinbach's style was utterly lost in the 1930s. Berrsche mentioned that, with Steinbach, Brahms had died a second time, because the performance practice of Brahms's orchestral works by Steinbach had not yet taken root by the time of his death. Given the fact that these contemporaries of Brahms and Steinbach considered it an impossibility to recreate their style almost one hundred years ago, I should dismiss any claim that, in a literal sense, I might be able to do so today. Having said this, it is perhaps important to acknowledge that musicians at the beginning of the twentieth century would have had few incentives to abandon, for example, vibrato or any of the other tools that were then passionately believed to be essential in 'modern' performance by a majority of musicians and music lovers. Using historical evidence about performance practices that they had discarded allowed me to reimagine something that is possibly closer to the Brahms/Steinbach approach than any of them would have been interested in.

As Leech-Wilkinson rightly argues in *ormancerformance*, performance constantly changes over time:

> First of all, what we think is proper to a composer or a score is already slightly different from what our teachers' generation thought. And over a century, as recordings show, these differences accumulate to such an extent that musicianship becomes in some respects unrecognisable.[245]

[245] Leech-Wilkinson, "Performance changes over time," https://challengingperformance.com/the-borfok-3/. (Last accessed July 2022).

I cannot say that my personal experience corresponds entirely with Leech-Wilkinson's idea regarding unrecognisable musicianship, as I always feel that historical sources like recordings and texts reveal various ways of handling the same performance issues, which I address in my own way. This, for me, results in a feeling of connection with other, earlier interpreters, as I can recognise their musicianship even though it led them in different directions. Yet Leech-Wilkinson's main point, of course, is that performance changes constantly and ideas about what is proper in performance differ from generation to generation because of our changing ideas about both history and aesthetics. Through my research, I am challenging the way my own generation and earlier twentieth-century generations now perform or used to perform Brahms. I consider this challenge to be warranted particularly due to the remarkable inflexibility of both MPP and HIPP when it comes to modifications of rhythm and tempo in orchestral performance, as discussed in Chapter 1.10. I do however believe that my project sits firmly within the tradition of HIPP. The fact that I have produced results that differ from what has hitherto been produced in this tradition is the consequence of the relationship I have developed with historical sources, particularly during the years of my PhD research, and the fact that I have not been concerned with following established guidelines to produce a commercially acceptable result.

Whilst substantial work has been done in the field of researching and playing Brahms's solo and chamber music, in an endeavour to bridge the gap between the historical evidence and how the music is performed today, this has not been the case for orchestral repertoires.[246] Apart from the complete cycle of Brahms's symphonies on period instruments by Sir John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique in 2007 and a CD recording of the piano concertos by András Schiff and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in June 2021, there are, to my knowledge, no other projects currently ongoing on Brahms's orchestral music that involve recordings on period instruments. After carefully studying the landmark recordings of Gardiner and Schiff, I think I can safely say that when it comes

[246] The work of pianists Anna Scott and Neal Peres Da Costa was already mentioned in Chapter 1.8, as was the work of cellists Kate Bennett-Wadsworth and Job ter Haar, in Chapter 3.3 on portamento. More recent additions are the dissertations by Leeds PhD students Jung Yoon Cho and Miaoyin Qu, who focus entirely or partly on Brahms performance; see the White Rose website for more information: https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/. (Last accessed November 2022).

to modifications of rhythm and tempo, they do not reflect what I believe to be the flexible style that Brahms might have expected to hear. Gardiner's handling of tempo is rather conventional, whilst Schiff's recording and the orchestra's contribution to it, to my ear at least, support the view that using historical instruments does not in itself guarantee a style of performance that can justly be described as historically informed, particularly in relation to the modification of rhythm and tempo. Their tempi are handled rather uniformly; there is little variation in pulse or density of accentuation; and the orchestral sound is clean and even. There are some projects in which historical research is used as a basis for orchestral performance practice in other repertoires. Philipp von Steinaecker, for instance, focuses on Mahler symphonies in his *Originalklang Project* in the Süd-Tirol. Conductor Kent Nagano and Concerto Köln are researching and performing Wagner operas through a project called *Wagner Readings*. In Sydney, Neal Peres Da Costa leads the *Re-invigorating 19th-Century Performan*ce project at the Conservatorium of Music, and in Oxford, research fellow Claire Holden is overseeing an exceptionally well-funded project called *Transforming 19th-Century HIP.* The Oxford project is described as a five-year project that started in 2016, aiming to transform nineteenth-century HIPP. I fail to see how any single project could ever realise such a far-reaching goal.[247]

I have made a small beginning with the re-invention and implementation of some nineteenth-century expressive tools, and I hope to continue experimenting with modifications of rhythm and tempo, with portamento and with vibrato as an ornament in eighteenth and nineteenth-century music after the completion of this project.

My efforts to re-invent and implement nineteenth-century expressive tools can be seen as a challenge to the effects of twentieth-century 'modernism' in musical performance.[248] My research shows it is possible to challenge these effects based on an understanding of historical sources; in other words, from within HIPP. This is perhaps not as obvious as it may seem. As I have argued in the introduction of this dissertation, one can identify important features, particularly regarding evenness of sound and

[247] Rather than transforming nineteenth-century HIPP, I fear that this project, with its grandiose claim, risks transforming the way in which some HIP practices are evaluated, both in the field of performance and in academia.

[248] For an example of a challenge to such traditional performance practices, see George Barth "Effacing Modernism."

tempo in performance, that MPP and HIPP have in common. Just as the period instrument movement, once promoting itself as anti-establishment, has been incorporated into the power structures of concert organisers and promoters, its fundamental artistic principles seem to me to have become part of the mainstream way of making music, certainly when it comes to the performance of baroque, classical and romantic repertoire. I am convinced that the findings of historical research can be used to broaden the scope of performance styles, not only in nineteenth-century repertoire but also in music from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It does require an open-minded investigation of historical evidence, an acceptance of the uncertainties regarding present-day understanding of such evidence and a willingness to experiment in practice with expressive tools that do not necessarily lead directly to commercially acceptable products. The act of making sense of what one hears or reads about past performance practices and using research findings in performance involves more than merely processing information. One needs to transform, re-imagine or reinvent that information. These efforts can mitigate the effects of the modernist revolution of the early twentieth-century, particularly by making use of expressive tools that were discarded when the modernist performance practice came to such dominance, but I see them mainly as a way of revitalising and perpetuating our relationship with the music of the past. I think it is too early to tell if the present wave of reconsidering current performance styles can best be seen as a new chapter in the same modernist tradition, as a (postmodernist) rejection of modernism or as a new practice with the potential to replace the modernist tradition.

I consider that my project and the way I have conducted it – including the way I have looked at and experimented with the historical sources – offer glimpses of expressive possibilities that have been gradually forgotten, neglected or rejected in today's performance practice of the orchestral works of Brahms and others. At the same time though, I am cognisant of the fact that it is impossible to return to a style of performance that fully represents the character of pre-modernist performance practices. I have added one more voice to the enormous richness of possible relationships one can have towards notation and relics from the past. I am looking forward to hearing many more such voices in the future. Above all, I hope that my work can

serve to expand the ever more narrowly defined domain of "correct," "proper" or "approved" performance of nineteenth-century repertoire.

Though my research is limited in scope, it has had a profound effect on me as a performer and scholar. It has changed my conception of the music I had previously studied. The notion that historically informed performance practice offers merely a perspective on the music of the past, as if one were looking at it through a HIPP lens, no longer satisfies me. This would mean that one would be looking at the same unchanged object through a chosen lens as if the object itself (the music) could be seen as a thing of specifically defined and agreed upon dimensions and properties; or as if the score *were* the music. In fact, a historically supported approach not only offers a particular perspective but often changes the idea of what it is one is looking at. Historical research demonstrates that composers did not notate all the expressive practices they expected performers to employ; it is nevertheless clear that they considered these practices as being integral to a beautiful (rather than merely correct) performance of their music. My idea of the identity of the Brahms compositions I have studied in my research now includes my new-found understanding of the expectations Brahms was likely to have had of those performing his music. Because of this idea, my research has also changed my understanding of my role as a HIPP performer. Basing one's musical performance style on historical sources can, in part, be seen as an effort to make the performance more about the music than about the performer. Indeed, this was one of the ideals of HIPP that I found so attractive when I first encountered it. But, as I have shown - particularly through the writings of Spohr, who describes the necessity for performers to add something of their own to the performance to elevate it from the domain of "correct performance" to the higher domain of "beautiful performance" - the role of the performer has historically been very substantial and far less neutral than I had previously thought. As composer Carl Ludwig Junker put it, performer and composer need to work together "hand in hand."[249] Accepting Spohr's idea that, as a performer, I need to bring something of my own to the performance, so that the emotions in the music may be understood by the listener, begs the question of what it is that I am bringing to it. Of course, my idea of the way the music should be performed is based

[249] Junker, *Einige Der Vornehmsten Pflichten*, p. 37.

in part on my understanding of the historical sources on the use of the suitable expressive tools (the tools with which the composer was familiar and expected to be used by those performing his music). Yet I cannot escape the simple fact that it is my present-day understanding of the music and the historical context that guides my approach, and it is the extent to which I can make the music speak to my present-day colleagues and audiences that guides most of my aesthetic choices.

The idea that music of any period can be best understood through studying and understanding the music of the period before it is important to many performers and researchers who are involved in HIPP. In music education, many conservatories adhere to this fundamental belief, and it often serves as the guiding principle in their curricula, particularly in the early music departments. As the Austrian conductor Nicolaus Harnoncourt states in *Musik als Klangrede,* the music of the classical period, for example, can best be understood through the music of the late baroque period. Indeed, like Harnoncourt, I have always considered this to be the most natural way to come to an understanding of early music, less tainted by one's knowledge and perception of later repertoire.[250]

The ways in which my new-found approach to Brahms's music has spilt over into how I perform other repertoires (both earlier and later) have made me realise that the reverse order can also be pursued effectively, at least when it comes to efforts to reduce the influence of the modernist ideal of evenness of sound and tempo on one's own performance style. The nineteenth-century expressive tools all have their own history and - as discussed in Chapter 1.1 – can be traced back to performance practices of the baroque era. One can certainly argue for an overhaul of the fundamental ideas regarding HIPP of baroque and classical music, based on the research of these periods themselves. But later sources can also provide a new perspective on older music. For example, when I listened to piano rolls by Carl Reinecke playing Mozart and I realised that he was one of the most highly respected interpreters of that repertoire throughout the nineteenth century, I was compelled to question just about everything I thought I knew about the historically-informed performance of Mozart.[251] Reconsidering how

[250] Harnoncourt, N. *Musik als Klangrede,* p. 164.
[251] Reinecke recorded in Leipzig for the Hupfeld studios around 1905. Https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_ELXJNMIE8 . (Last accessed June 2022)

to perform Mozart on the basis of what one hears in his recordings alone would mean trying to understand classical repertoire through a later, more romantic perspective. As such, it could be seen as rowing against the current by those who believe music is best understood in chronological order. But, in my opinion, considering the (later) early recordings, in context with written sources from the classical era itself, can provide an important tool to help broaden one's approach. I have used Reinecke's Mozart piano rolls when teaching students from early music departments of conservatories and with students from mainstream or modern departments, as well as when working with professional MPP and HIPP musicians. I can testify that hearing the Reinecke piano rolls came as a shock to almost all the musicians who had not heard them before. When discussing Reinecke's style, students of early music departments and of modern departments often made objections based on similar arguments, particularly regarding his flexible rhythm and tempo. In my opinion, the fact that objections from representatives of both camps seemed to be largely based on the same idea of 'proper' (even) performance, can be seen as further corroboration of the idea that MPP and HIPP have much in common when it comes to their reasons for rejecting nineteenth-century performance practices. This observation is based on my limited personal experience and on a generalisation of two types of musicians, and I know that ideas about performance are constantly changing. It would be unfair to use these observations to characterise present-day MPP and HIPP in general, but I do believe that comparing reactions to historical recordings by people from different backgrounds can help one to understand the current perception of historical performance and what this says about today's musical aesthetics.

One final thought about the consequences of the fundamental idea of understanding music in a historical sequence concerns the way in which ideas about the proper performance of music of earlier style periods have suffused the approach to music of later periods. My old idea of a relatively clean and even sound in music of the classical era was initially a heavy influence on my idea of sound in nineteenth-century music, though I can now see that this idea lacked a historical foundation. It seems to me a significant danger that misconceptions about the 'proper' performance of early music, through this system of understanding music in historical sequence, can have a profound influence on approaches to all the music that comes after it. If

one claims, for instance – as most early conservatory music departments, not to mention MPP students and performers, did at least until recently – that the use of portamento in Haydn is improper, it is not surprising that the rejection of this expressive tool in classical music is used as a starting point to judge the appropriateness of its use in the music of the nineteenth century. Yet, there is evidence, in the form of autographs and early editions containing fingerings, of the fact that portamento was expected in performances of Haydn's string quartets.[252]

What I have learned about nineteenth-century practices, particularly regarding the use of modifications of rhythm and tempo, portamento and vibrato, made me question how I had performed earlier repertoire. For example, my period instrument CD-recordings of Beethoven's works for piano and violin made in the 1990s and my recording of Mozart's works for violin and orchestra of 2006 represent, to a large extent, the ideal of evenness of sound and tempo. Through my research on Brahms, my approach to Mozart and Beethoven has changed. I now know that the expressive tool of portamento used in the nineteenth century was also applied in earlier repertoire. Beethoven for example, appreciated the expressive use of portamento that he heard used by double bass player Domenico Dragonetti (1763-1846), and there is evidence to prove that Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776-1830), one of the violinists with whom Beethoven worked closely, also applied portamento.[253] With my string quartet, the Narratio Quartet, I play all of the Beethoven quartets. Over the course of the last five years, in parallel with my research project, we have gradually changed our playing style, which now includes more substantial use of portamento and less vibrato, as well as a much freer handling of tempo. The National University of Seoul, where I became professor of HIPP in 2022, has offered me a grant which will allow me to record the complete Beethoven quartets over the next three years, demonstrating our new-found performance style in the Narratio Quartet.

But I find that I also have reason to apply some of the expressive tools described above in Mozart. A review of one of my recent performances with the 'Nieuwe Philharmonie Utrecht' (Mühlfeld, Germany, March 2022)

[252] The early editions of Haydn's string quartets contain instructions for portamento, sometimes *through una corda* markings, sometimes through fingerings. Examples can be found in op.17 no. 2, op. 20 no. 3, op. 33 no. 2, op. 64 no 6 and 77 no. 2.
[253] See Clive Brown's new edition of the Beethoven Violin Sonatas for Bärenreiter, p. XXVIII.

specifically mentioned my use of tempo modification and portamento in Mozart's *Symphony No. 40* and *Piano Concerto No. 17.* In my annual performances of Bach's *Matthew Passion* with the same orchestra, I have also experimented with a more freely applied rhetorical style, particularly in accompanied recitatives (*recitativi accompagnati)*, with less concern for vertical alignment between singer and orchestral accompaniment. At the 2021 Wonderfeel Festival, in 's-Graveland, The Netherlands, I conducted a piece by the composer Calliope Tsoupaki for string orchestra, in which I applied substantial amounts of unprescribed portamento and tempo fluctuations. I find that my research has altered my approach to everything I play and conduct.

As I wrote in the Introduction, with this project I set out to find 'a different Brahms'. My interrogation of the historical evidence and my practical exploration of its implications have not only changed my conception of Brahms's music, but also my wider understanding of the expressive tools that were such an essential aspect of his musical experience and expectations. As a result, I think that I have found a profoundly different Brahms and that, in terms of orchestral performance, the fundamental difference from conventional contemporary conceptions and performing practices in this repertoire represents a significant contribution to knowledge. I am very grateful for the fact that I had the chance to turn my ideas into sounding results together with the project orchestra. Of course there is a sadness in the fact that with the conclusion of the project and the ending of its funding, the orchestra ceases to exist. As I feel a profound connection to the way we have worked together over the course of the four intense years of the project, this also means that with the close of this project, I may well have conducted Brahms for the last time. It is my sincere hope, however, that my work and the recordings of the orchestra will inspire others to find their own different Brahms: I believe strongly that the time is right, and the possibilities endless.

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Summary

This dissertation and the corresponding films and recordings presented here are an effort to distil an approach to performing the orchestral music of Johannes Brahms that is significantly different from what has hitherto been produced in the fields of both Mainstream Orchestral Performance Practice (MPP) and the Historically Informed Performance Practice (HIPP). In the first chapter, I demonstrate how my approach is based on my understanding of historical sources concerning the use of modification of rhythm and tempo in orchestral performance, particularly relating to the work of the conductor Fritz Steinbach and the Meiningen Orchestra. In the second chapter, I describe my role as a conductor in this project, and the way in which I have tried to reinvent and re-implement the tools of modifying rhythm and tempo with my project orchestra. I describe my methodology in four films about each project week in the years 2019-2022. The films show how I evaluated the preliminary results and considered them in following editions and they demonstrate how my perspective changed over the course of the project, as well as how the project was perceived by participating musicians and by experts and audiences. In separate films, I provide examples of modifications of rhythm and tempo as realised with the project orchestra in the recordings. In the third chapter, I describe other characteristics of the project orchestra and its way of playing, including the use of *portamento*. In Chapter 4, I present recordings of the four Brahms symphonies and the four concertos that were made during the four years in which I conducted my PhD research, 2019-2022. The fifth chapter contains evaluations and conclusions. It also mentions possible future goals and projects. In a separate section I present a list of works and recordings cited, a summary, a short biography and my acknowledgements.

SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift en de hier gepresenteerde films en opnames zijn een poging om tot een benadering te komen voor het uitvoeren van de orkestmuziek van Johannes Brahms, die aanzienlijk verschilt van wat tot nu toe is geproduceerd op dit gebied, zowel in MPP als HIPP. In het eerste deel van dit proefschrift laat ik zien hoe mijn benadering is gebaseerd op mijn begrip van historisch bewijsmateriaal met betrekking tot het gebruik van modificatie van ritme en tempo in orkestuitvoering, met name in het werk van dirigent Fritz Steinbach en het Hof Orkest van Meiningen. In het tweede deel beschrijf ik mijn rol als dirigent in dit project en de manier waarop ik heb geprobeerd om de middelen tot modificatie van ritme en tempo opnieuw uit te vinden en te implementeren met mijn projectorkest. Mijn methodiek heb ik beschreven in vier films over elke projectweek in de jaren 2019-2022. In de films laat ik zien hoe de voorlopige resultaten worden geëvalueerd en meegenomen in de volgende edities, en hoe mijn perspectief verandert in de loop van het project, evenals de manier waarop het project wordt ontvangen en beleefd door deelnemende muzikanten, door experts en publiek. Voorbeelden van modificaties van ritme en tempo in de opnames met het orkest worden getoond in aparte films. In het derde deel omschrijf ik andere kenmerken van het projectorkest en de speelwijze van het orkest, en in het vierde deel presenteer ik de in het kader van mijn onderzoek gemaakte opnames van de vier Brahms Symfonieën en de vier Soloconcerten. Het vijfde deel bevat mijn evaluaties en conclusies en beschrijft mogelijke toekomstige doelen en projecten. In een apart deel presenteer ik een lijst met geciteerde werken en opnamen de samenvattingen, een korte biografie en mijn dankbetuigingen.

Curriculum Vitae

Johannes Leertouwer was born in the Dutch city of Groningen on 5 December 1959. He started playing the violin at an early age and received lessons at the local music school in Groningen. After obtaining his Gymnasium alpha diploma in 1979, he moved to Amsterdam to study the violin with Professor Bouw Lemkes at the Sweelinck Conservatory of Amsterdam. With the prize money he won at the National Violin Competition in 1983, he continued his studies with Josef Suk, in Vienna and Prague.

After contacting him during rehearsals with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, where Leertouwer worked as an extra for four seasons, guest conductor Nicolaus Harnoncourt invited him to come and study the Schubert Symphonies in a summer project in Graz, Austria in the summer of 1987. Thereafter, Leertouwer became a member and concertmaster of various international specialised period instrument ensembles and orchestras.

Chamber music has always been an important part of Leertouwer's work. He also made period instrument recordings of music by Bach, Mozart, Schubert, and Schumann. He is currently first violinist of the *Narratio* string quartet, specialised in all Beethoven and Brahms quartets. Leertouwer plays a violin made by the brothers (Antonio & Hieronymus) Amati in Cremona in 1619.

Leertouwer has been working at the (Sweelinck) Conservatory of Amsterdam since 1989. In 2022, Leertouwer accepted a professorship in HIPP at Seoul National University.

Leertouwer strives to share his ideas and insights through different channels. He has made sixty-eight short films, explaining the theological and musical content of each of the individual movements of the Matthew Passion. These films are available with English subtitles on a YouTube channel: *Matthäus volgens Johannes*. For Dutch Radio 4 he made podcasts about the *Messiah* and about his Brahms research. Much of his work on Brahms can also be viewed on a special website, brahms.johannesleertouwer.nl.

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I think it is fair to start my acknowledgements with the man who convinced me to do this research in the first place: Okke Westdorp. Not only did Okke suggest that I should continue my work on Brahms in the form of a PhD research project, but he also ensured that I had the financial means to work with a project orchestra and to record and document the process. After graduating from the Sweelinck Conservatory, the predecessor of the present Conservatorium van Amsterdam (CvA), I knew one thing for sure: I never wanted to teach, because I felt I did not have the time for it. However, after more than thirty years of teaching at the CvA, I feel profoundly grateful for having had the opportunity to work at an institution led by people like Okke, who have the courage to help launch projects such as mine and support them so generously.

Before committing to the project, I visited Clive Brown, whom I had admired from a distance for many years, at his home in Austria, to ask if he would be willing to help me. He immediately agreed to do so in any capacity that might be commensurate with the Leiden University format. I cannot stress enough how important his help has been over the past four years. Whenever I sent an email or asked for comments on my plans or writings, I received crucial feedback within days, sometimes even within hours. Quite often what I sent him showed gaps in my knowledge of historical sources, or in my ability to write in an academic style. Not once did Clive lose his patience. I feel blessed to have received the guidance and help of a man I know to be not only a generous and very knowledgeable expert but also such a kind and warm-hearted gentleman. The fact that Clive participated in the projects of 2021 and 2022 as an adviser in the rehearsals, sharing his vast knowledge as a scholar but also his insights as a violinist with years of experience in applying nineteenth-century expressive tools in practice, was an invaluable source of inspiration for the musicians in the orchestra, the soloists and for me personally.

I am also very grateful for their help, critical feedback and flexibility of my other supervisor Marcel Cobussen and my co-supervisor Anna Scott at ACPA.

Michiel Schuijer, head of the research department at the CvA, was a great help in maintaining a broader overview of my work.

I am thankful to Marten Noorduin, now a researcher and lecturer at Lübeck University, for helping me with critical feedback by sharing his knowledge in the field of research-based performance.

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A crucial role in this project has been played by Susanne Lammers, director of the classical music programme of the Stadsgehoorzaal Leiden. Not only did she invite me and the orchestra to open her season 4 years in a row (2019-2022), allowing us to play each programme for a real live audience, but she also invited us to move the entire project for 2020 to Leiden, allowing us to proceed as planned with all musicians at 1.5-meter distance from each other in the large space of the main hall of the Stadsgehoorzaal. I am very grateful for the generous support of Susanne and her colleagues.

I am thankful to my wonderful recording engineer Jochem Geene.

Special thanks go to my brother Jaap Leertouwer, who made the films documenting the work process and the films with examples of modifications, for his unassuming presence, his diligence and his profound understanding of the nature of the project.

Above all, I must thank the musicians who played in the project orchestra and the soloists who played the concertos from the bottom of my heart. They all worked under considerable pressure to create something special within an extremely limited timeframe. Their willingness to try any idea or suggestion I had to offer at any point in the rehearsals, performances and recordings was a true source of inspiration for which I feel immensely grateful. My project would have been completely impossible without their

professionalism, their curiosity, and their enthusiastic involvement in the music making.