In Search of a Lost Language: Performing in Early-Recorded Style in Viola and String Quartet Repertoires

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1) The Role of the Performer

1.1) Introduction

The role that performers take on when approaching the WAM canon has changed from the dawn of recording up to the present day. While early-recorded performers often sound as though they are aiming at personalised performances of musical works, many contemporary performers adhere to a performance style that places them at the service of preconceived notions of how musical works should sound. In general terms, early recordings evidence a musical culture in which performers were given a central role in realizing musical works, while many contemporary performances are interchangeable, evidencing a culture in which performers are at times viewed as at best transparent and at worst immaterial. This is why I argue for an 'all-in' approach to copying early recordings as a means of achieving an alternative performance style unencumbered by the restrictive ideologies of today's mainstream performance practices (MSPs).[23] These contemporary ideologies include the views that musical works are Platonic objects that exist in-and-of-themselves and separately from their performances, that performers must be true to the letter of these works and by extension to the intentions of their composers (*Werktreue*), and that performers should display their professionalism via a 'neat and tidy' approach to realizing the notation of these intention-laden works which, in the worst case, entails mechanically following directions laid out in the score. In string playing, this generally results in MSPs characterized by adherence to notated detail and agreed-upon understandings of how specific repertoires should sound, making notated structure audible where detail is subordinate to form, a hierarchical and stable approach to rhythm where pulse is perceptible, togetherness of ensemble, clarity of articulation, precision of intonation, and abstaining from individualistic mannerisms such as ornamentation and portamento. This is not to say that all MSPs are exactly alike, however, as evidenced by the (extraordinarily subtly) varied ways in which this approach is applied in mainstream, historically-informed (HIP) and recordings-inspired (RIP) performance spheres alike.

[23] The abbreviation MSPs is used in reference to both mainstream performance practices and mainstream performances throughout.

Instead of dismissing the conception of *Werktreue* on which contemporary MSPs are built, however, I make an unconventional turn by suggesting that an alternative to MSPs can be achieved by resurrecting *Werktreue's* 19th-century practical realities as evidenced by early recordings. Indeed, while 19th-century performers too were expected to be faithful to scores and the intentions of composers, they demonstrated their deference and skill via highly personalised approaches characterised by the alteration of notated detail and structure, wild rhythmic flexibility, dislocation (or un-togetherness of ensemble), and frequent use of ornamentation and portamento. In other words, they too were beholden to the ideology of *Werktreue*, but achieved radically different sounding outcomes to their modern counterparts: outcomes driven by notions of performer centrality.

Performers today can attempt to inhabit the 19th-century practical realities of *Werktreue* by creating performances that sound like those of their early-recorded colleagues. As early-recorded performances are not restricted by the ideologies of today's MSPs, taking an all-in approach to copying them circumvents many of the predominant characteristics of today's prevailing practices. However, if performers 'pick-and-choose' only those elements of early-recorded performances that suit current ideologies and restrictions, the outcomes will not offer a substantive alternative to current practices and will ultimately not end up resembling early-recorded style. The likely reason some of today's performers take a pick-and-choose approach is that they are ensnared by practices of which they are unaware. As Hubert L. Dreyfus argues, we are immersed in our cultural context and therefore have a limited understanding of its practices.[24] Leech-Wilkinson, too, suggests that normative behaviour in WAM "has become internalized, usually to the extent that it is no longer recognized as a defined, stylized practice but is simply taken as natural."[25]

Hence, it is crucial to understand how we are embedded in MSPs before attempting to create alternative performance practices, so as not to end up picking and choosing only those elements suitable to current tastes.

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[24] Dreyfus, *Being-In-The-World*, 35.
[25] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance: The Book*, chapter 10, "Normativities," 2019, https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-10/, accessed September 22, 2019.

1.2) MSP Ideology and Practice

1.2.1) Musical Works as Platonic Objects

Many performers today see musical works as objects-in-themselves, believing, in other words, that they are located somewhere other than in their particular performances. Nicholas Cook argues that seeing musical works as unchanging eternal forms, an approach he calls Platonic philosophical-musicology, largely dictates the role of the performer in today's MSPs.[26] In effect, performers in today's MSPs are like the group of men in Plato's story of the cave—the men are imprisoned in a cavern and believe that shadows projected on the cave wall are real objects, even though the shadows are caused by objects situated behind them that they cannot see.[27] Within this Platonic point of view, performances then are understood as mere shadows of idealised musical works that we cannot perceive with our senses—works unchanged since the composer imagined them into existence—while scores are the mechanisms by which these shadows are projected.[28]

According to Lydia Goehr, what follows from this view is the notion that musical works are "fixed in meaning before interpretation takes place."[29] As long ago as 1992, she critiqued the view of musical works as eternal forms in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, examining the notion that musical works can be considered "historically and ideologically neutral," or eternal and unchanging, and concluding that because they are endowed with meaning by their historical and cultural contexts, any change in a work's context will change its meaning. What follows, then, is that works whose meanings are constantly changing cannot be regarded as fixed objects. Goehr argues further that the view of works as objects should be abandoned and replaced by the work-concept, "a complex structure of sounds related in some important way to a composer, a score, and a given class of performances," and that, "[t]o understand the idea of a musical work is to understand all the elements in their interrelations."[30] Adopting the work-concept perspective results in musical works being viewed as an evolving web of interrelationships between performers, sonic events, audiences, scores and composers, thereby invalidating the idea that musical works are Platonic objects. Unfortunately, her argument has had little effect as yet on the practical realities of MSPs.

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[26] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 3.
[27] Plato, *Republic*, from *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6, translated by Paul Shorey (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1969), Book VII, section 514a, accessed May 24, 2017, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7.
[28] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 3.
[29] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 276.
[30] Ibid., 81, 20.

If we continue to believe that musical works are objects with fixed meanings, then a performance style that adheres strictly to the notated score is necessary because the score contains the mandatory instructions for projecting the shadow of the work-in-itself. In turn, if performers are true to the notated score, the work (*Werktreue*), and by extension, to the intentions of the composer, the hope is that their performance will be a representation (reproduction) of the eternal form of the work itself. Cook however warns us that continuing to view works as Platonic objects has resulted in dire consequences for the role of performers:

> [This] gives rise to…what I call the paradigm of reproduction: performance is seen as reproducing the work, or the structures embodied in the work, or the conditions of its early performances, or the intentions of the composer. Different as these formulations are…they all have one thing in common: no space is left for the creativity of performers.[31]

Cook, who is extreme in his critique, even goes so far as to doubt whether there is any space at all for performer creativity within this paradigm. He also notes that attempts at divining the early conditions of a work's performance, such as those undertaken within HIP spheres, only reinforce the view of musical works as Platonic objects, because they furnish performers with yet another set of instructions, in conjunction with the score, to be faithfully reproduced in the hope of projecting the shadow of the eternal work.

1.2.2) *Werktreue* and Composer Intent

If musical works are seen as Platonic objects and performances as their shadows, then in order for these shadows to adequately represent the original, fidelity to the work (*Werktreue)* must be observed. The score in today's conception of *Werktreue* is seen as a necessarily incomplete representation of the composer's intentions, to be used as a tool to delve into the mind of the composer who created the composition's eternal form. This focus on the composer's intentions is connected with the Platonic view of musical works as objects, because these objects are conjured into existence when the composer imagined their sounds. In theory, therefore, by being true to a composer's intentions, performers can reproduce the sounds the composer imagined when creating the work-as-object. Goehr however makes a compelling argument that the concept of *Werktreue* is philosophically incomprehensible in a world where "original examples [of the work]

[31] Cook, *Beyond the Score,* 3.

serving as the standard" cannot be compared to the non-standard.[32] Nevertheless, despite this intractable problem, a belief in the concept of *Werktreue* continues to be central to MSPs.

An example of *Werktreue's* continued influence today can be found in conductor Hartmut Haenchen's book *Werktreue und Interpretation: Erfahrungen eines Dirigenten* (*Werktreue* and Interpretation: Experiences of a Conductor).[33] Haenchen advocates going back to original sources and careful academic study of the score in order to achieve an interpretation in line with the composer's intentions.[34] He views textual sources, such as scores and historical performance treatises, as keys with which to unlock the intentions of the composer. Further, when those intentions are followed to the letter, performances will be faithful to the work.

Many performers and conductors who espouse these kinds of views, however, tend to ignore composers' recordings of their own works—especially when these are at odds with textual sources like scores and treatises. Haenchen was widely recognized for his performances of Richard Strauss's orchestral works, but comparisons between Haenchen's and Strauss's recordings of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, for example, show vast differences in style. These differences arise because Haenchen uses critical editions of scores edited by musicologists claiming that these scores accurately convey the composer's original notation (known as so-called 'urtexts') in order to achieve an 'informed' reading of Strauss's score. In so doing, Haenchen reinforces the idea that what is important about a work is contained in its notated score, as filtered through modern assumptions of how that score should sound, while the recording of the work by Strauss—with its un-notated tempo modifications and rhythmic flexibilities—is ignored because it cannot be mapped onto either the score or other textual sources.[35] Haenchen is not being true to the composer as subject, but rather to an abstract view of the composer's intentions as encoded in the work-as-object via the score. This is typical of the way MSPs favour textual sources over sounding ones, with the former understood as providing objective and verifiable data about a musical work and the latter as a subjective, trifling rendering of that work. This attitude perhaps also informs musicologist Michael

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32 Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 259.
33 Translation mine.
34 Hartmut Haenchen, *Werktreue und Interpretation: Erfahrungen eines Dirigenten* (Friedberg: Pfau Neue Musik, 2013), 3.
35 Richard Strauss, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, recorded by the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Hartmut Haenchen, on *Richard Strauss,* Laserlight Classics, 2004, 24418/1 (CD). Richard Strauss, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, recorded by the Wiener Philharmoniker, conducted by Richard Strauss, 1944, reissued Everest, 1980, SDBR 3475 (LP).

Musgrave's suggestion that Johannes Brahms's recording of his *Hungarian Dance* no. 1 is nothing more than "a hasty if enthusiastic response to the recorded medium."[36] Brahms's playing is difficult to map onto both his notated score and contemporary ideas of how it should be played, and its easy dismissal by Musgrave and others conveniently precludes questions about whether either can be said to truly align with his intentions.

Our shared certainty about the objectivity of works and the agreed-upon ways in which they should sound is the bedrock of MSPs. In the worst case, this relegates the performer to the role of automaton or, as composer Igor Stravinsky put it, a mere executor whose "input or interpretation is not required" and whose chief purpose is to follow the score.[37] While performers often object to the notion that they are mere automatons, citing the many expressive freedoms they believe they have (while still remaining true to work and composer), Cook nonetheless argues that, since the mid-20th-century, the player's role as a conduit for the composer's intentions has made performance an act of execution rather than a site for creative practice: "In short, expression remains, but it has been transformed into something objective."[38]

1.2.3) Practical Realities of MSPs

A wide variety of approaches, from HIP and RIP to so-called conventional, conform to the core principles of MSPs. These are characterized by literal adherence to texts (scores and verbal accounts) and agreed-upon understandings of style, neatness and tidiness, making notated structure audible, and clarity of pulse and rhythmic hierarchies. In the following section I define all of these features broadly. In specific terms, however, the pick-and-choose approach to early recordings, as is common in RIP spheres, is the outcome of these mainstream practices. My intention here is not to unduly dismiss the importance of MSPs, as they are central to the way that musicians today, including myself, function. Musicians who perform large numbers of works with many different colleagues need shared practices for music-making in order to quickly and efficiently reach performance decisions, and without these, the WAM industry would cease to function.[39] Despite their efficiencies, however, MSPs restrict the possible approaches open to performers, resulting in musical expression that conveys different qualities than those

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[36] Michael Musgrave, *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 305.
[37] Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 163.
[38] Cook, *Beyond the Score,* 222.
[39] Western Art Music, as discussed in the Introduction.

heard in early-recorded performances. Below I discuss the restrictive effect of MSPs on WAM culture in order to make this effect visible and to consider its impact on alternative approaches to performance. While I focus here on string playing in chamber and orchestral contexts in particular, these are broadly representative of MSPs more generally.

Literal Adherence

If Cook is right when he observes that, "music affords an apparently unlimited variety of interpretive options," why do many of today's performances of canonic works sound so similar?[40] Indeed, for many of today's MSP performances, a musically-educated listener would be able to fairly accurately reconstruct the composer's written musical score given time and repeated listening. This is possible because agreed-upon ideas regarding how certain repertoires should be played, also known as 'style,' in combination with an attempt at literal adherence to the notated score, restrict performances to a narrow range of possible approaches. These agreed-upon ideas are widely shared and include, for example, playing the note after an appoggiatura more softly in Mozart's string quartets or sharply attacking the accents in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Most professional musicians have either consciously or unconsciously assimilated these agreed-upon notions of 'style' and routinely apply them in practice. These shared ideas mean that, with a minimum of effort, musicians from around the world can play a wide variety of repertoires together with very little rehearsal, and that orchestras can play to a high standard with even the most incompetent of conductors. In addition to adhering to such agreed-upon stylistic parameters, performers also strive to literally follow the notated score by accurately reproducing notated pitches, rhythmic values, tempi, and dynamic indications. Exceptions are sometimes made in the case of notated dynamics, where performers will allow for changes in order to achieve clarity of balance between accompaniment and melody for example. Un-notated slowing is also allowed, provided that it serves to elucidate the topographical detail and structure of a score, and provided that these details are kept subordinate to the audibility of overall form. In short, both of these kinds of un-notated alterations are used to support neatness and tidiness while helping to make musical structure audible.

The results of this attempt at literal adherence to both score and style are performances that conform to a narrow range of possible approaches. This leads Daniel

[40] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 3. Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance*, "Part 1: Introduction and Examples," https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-1/.

Leech-Wilkinson to observe how mannerisms that have *not* been agreed upon for a particular WAM style (like portamento in Mozart or ornamentation in Brahms) tend to be excised in order to make performances more acceptable to critics and peers, with more significant departures from the notated score even less likely to be accepted.[41] If today's performances of canonic repertoires often sound alike, then, it is because they broadly conform to MSP's written and unwritten rules of law, including both notated scores and agreed-upon conventions of un-notated style. Abiding by these rules is what is often called 'playing by the book' or a 'textbook' performance style.

Neatness and Tidiness

MSPs today are sanitized, neat, and tidy: standards performers dare not defy if they wish to preserve their professional reputations. This clean performance style results from an emphasis on vertical togetherness in ensemble playing, rhythmic stability, and the clear elucidation of notated detail. Accuracy of intonation, cleanliness of tone quality, and clarity of articulation are also all expected.[42] Robert Philip discusses the sanitization of MSPs over the course of the 20th century:

> Ensemble became more tightly disciplined; pianists played chords more strictly together…acceleration of tempo was more tightly controlled...the tempo range within a movement tended to narrow; [and] the use of portamento became more discreet.[43]

While Philip acknowledges that when it comes to performance "the menu of possibilities, from current period and conventional practice, from new and old scholarship, and from a hundred years of recordings is vast," and that "we can pick what we like," he affirms the centrality of cleanliness when he adds "as long as we make it sound neat and tidy and sell it in an attractive package."[44] Leaving aside the bit about an 'attractive package,'[45] which, in our era of social media *chic* has more to do with looks than performance style, what Philip's 'menu of possibilities' actually describes is an illusion of choice—one captured by philosopher Slavoj Žižek's description of *choix forcé*:

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[41] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, e-mail to the author, December 16, 2015.
[42] As Leech-Wilkinson has noted, the "characteristics of modern performance style therefore include reliability, blend, and synchronization." Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance*, "Part 2: The Fabulous Status Quo," https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-2/.
[43] Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording,* 232.
[44] Ibid., 250.
[45] As an aside, violist Lionel Tertis's 1938 advice on hair style makes for interesting reading in light of some performers' visual packaging today: "Long hair and locks over the right or left eyebrow are nauseating to look at and utterly useless in furthering musical capability." Lionel Tertis, "Beauty of Tone in String Playing," in *My Viola and I* (London: Kahn and Averill, 2008), 147.

> In the subject's relationship to the community to which he belongs, there is always such a paradoxical point of *choix forcé*—at this point, the community is saying to the subject: you have freedom to choose, but on the condition that you choose the right thing."[46]

Today performers *do* have an overwhelming range of choices, which should in theory add to the range of performance practices one hears, "whether by provoking experimentation with unfamiliar historical styles, or simply the desire to do something different."[47] The operative word here, however, is *should*, as the disciplining effect of neat and tidy performance practice, combined with the attempt at literal adherence to scores and agreed-upon understandings of style, means performers are required to choose the right (and mostly, the same) thing.

Audible Structure

One of the forced choices imposed on performers is the requirement of making musical structure audible. If a work is seen as a Platonic object with an eternal form and a notated structure that lies at the core of its identity, then that form should be recognizable and reproducible in performance. *Werktreue* ideology posits that the sounds imagined by the composer, when the eternal form of a work was conjured into existence, are made audible in a performance that is true to a work's notated structure. As pianist Alfred Brendel writes, because "the form and structure of a piece are visible and verifiable in the composer's text," they should be readily audible as well.[48] Cook locates the origins of this transition in performance practice in the 1930s, relating it to parallel shifts in architecture, interior design and fashion, and arguing that our current, structuralist approach to performance practice has much in common with the geodesic dome of architect Buckminster Fuller (1895 – 1983).[49] He notes that, "Fuller's design translates to music" by virtue of its subordination of detail to overall structure, where "each event is uniquely positioned within an encompassing, architectonic structure," resulting in "the display rather than the concealment of structure." In terms of musical performance, this means that local details become subordinate parts of phrases, which are subordinate parts of sections, which are in turn subordinated to whole movements or works. In Cook's view, the result of this was that, "the elements of expression were regularised and rationalised, [and] relocated from the plane of moment-to-moment

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[46] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ontology* (New York: Verso Books, 1989), 185 - 6.
[47] Cook, *Beyond the Score,* 207.
[48] Alfred Brendel, "An A - Z of the Piano: Alfred Brendel's Notes from the Concert Hall, " *The Guardian*, August 31st, 2013, accessed August 12, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/aug/31/alfred-brendel-pianists-a-z.
[49] For further information on Fuller's geodesic domes see "About Fuller," The Buckminster Fuller Institute, accessed June 6, 2019, https://www.bfi.org/about-fuller/big-ideas/geodesic-domes.

succession to that of structure."[50] Contrary to performances focused on 'moment-to-moment succession,' in which structure becomes subordinate to detail through the use of unsteady tempi and phrasing combined with heavy localised rushing or slowing, structuralist MSP performances subordinate detail to an overall structural hierarchy in which phrases become subordinate parts of larger sections, which in turn become subordinate parts of longer movements. Structuralist performances use steady tempi to create a sense of unity in longer works or movements in combination with un-notated slowing in order to elucidate structural joins between larger sections or phrases. Clarity of articulation, balance, tone and rhythmic detail then help to make audible a work's proportionality, construction, and the relationship of its individual parts to the whole.

The HIP Approach

For decades now, performers and musicologists of the HIP movement have carved out a space within MSPs, of which they have become an institutionalised part. Their success has been sufficiently significant to foster the adoption of many elements of their performance style across WAM performance practice, with HIP conductors regularly appearing with conventional symphony orchestras, and with many musicians playing on both 'modern' and 'period' instruments. The ease with which musicians move between HIP and so-called conventional practices demonstrates how HIP, with its focus on scores, texts, and agreed-upon understandings of style, is as much a part of MSPs as so-called 'conventional' practices. This belonging is further illustrated by gaps between sonic evidence of past performances in the form of early recordings and current HIP performance practices.

Cook situates HIP within modernist, structuralist practices and even connects it with the values and assumptions of Stravinskian ideology, in which performers are mere executors. He argues that the HIP movement reinforces knowledge about composers and their scores and polices the application of that knowledge in performance, not unlike conventional MSPs, resulting in a practice with written and unwritten codes based on agreed-upon understandings of how historical repertoires should sound.[51] Such internationally shared codes again have the advantage of allowing performers to quickly and efficiently reach performance decisions when rehearsing and performing together.[52]

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[50] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 216, 222.
[51] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 222.
[52] As Leech-Wilkinson notes in reference to HIP, but as equally applicable to MSPs more generally: "All these rules and beliefs could be seen as strategies for limiting the vast range of possibilities for performance

While HIP sets itself apart from conventional MSPs by exploring non-vibrato playing, *son filé*, and the use of 'period' instruments and bows, these elements have in many cases been applied within MSPs' existing ideologies without fundamentally challenging them. As a result, HIP performers, too, find themselves relegated to executive rather than creative roles, as the 'rules and regulations' of historical treatises are superimposed upon the structuralist, neat and tidy, and score-adhering approaches inherent to MSPs.

In order to inform themselves about historical performance styles, HIP practitioners rely on texts such as period performance practice treatises. These treatises have been used, however, to fashion new or at least updated agreed-upon understandings of style, like playing strong beats with greater emphasis than weak beats, or like swelling in the middle of long notes. HIP, however, has increasingly been challenged by gaps between period textual and sonic evidence, particularly where overlaps between turn-of-the-20th-century performance treatises and early recordings are concerned. As Neal Peres Da Costa observes:

> The comparison between written texts and early recordings often produced striking contradictions. Many texts fail to discuss the practices in question, or provide only cursory remarks about them. And where more detailed descriptions exist, they do not convey many significant features that can be heard on the recordings. Sometimes the written advice of particular pianists appears to conflict with their own recordings…In addition, many notational symbols and musical terms appear to have indicated something wholly different to the meaning that they now convey.[53]

That early-recorded performers routinely contradict their own written advice demonstrates how challenging it is to extrapolate information about period performance style from texts. Violinist David Milsom reflects on the gap between 19th-century performers' writings and recordings, concluding that, "common sense would suggest that theory is rarely carried out strictly in practice, and this general state of affairs might be said to apply here [with early recordings]."[54] One reason for the frequent contradictions that arise between theory (text) and practice (recordings) may be that, in their historical contexts, textual sources conveyed different meanings than they do now. As a result, by

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interpretation, whose variety I suspect musicians subconsciously recognise and, because of the extent and viciousness of performance policing, are terrified by." Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance*, chapter 6.7, "Music Makes Better Sense Performed 'Historically,'" https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-6-7/.

[53] Neal Peres Da Costa, *Performing Practices in Late 19th Century Piano Playing: Implications of the Relationships between Written Texts and Early Recordings* (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2001), 430.

[54] David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth Century Violin Performance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 105.

adhering to contemporary understandings of historical texts, modern performers will end up sounding very different than the historical performers they wish to emulate.

This gap between text and practice in the early-20th century casts doubt on the historically-informed nature of modern HIP performances, as they are based heavily on textual sources in the absence of contextualising sonic evidence. Further, given the sheer width of this gap in relation to early-20th-century recordings, it is hard to imagine it being any narrower where 18th-century repertoires are concerned—as acknowledged by musicologists Clive Brown, Cook and Philip alike:

> The implications of these recordings for our approach to Classical performance practice are profound. They strongly reinforce the view that what we currently do in the name of historically-informed performance of this repertoire has only a tenuous connection with anything that might be considered a fine style by Mozart or his contemporaries.[55]

It is unsurprising, then, that many MSP-adherent HIP performances of 19th-century repertoires, as derived primarily from modern readings of 19th-century texts, point to a similarly 'tenuous connection' with the practices heard on recordings of the time—practices that, when found to be incompatible with MSPs and texts (scores and treatises), are often discarded or discounted, with the recording medium usually taking the blame.

Rhetoric

A central feature of HIP discourse is the desire to apply the rhetorical devices used in historical verbal oratory to musical performance, due in large part to the prominence given to rhetoric in period performance treatises.[56] Concerning the practical realities of the rhetorical approach to contemporary HIP, then, one of the central tenets of MSPs, HIP included, is that of discernible pulse, whereby rhythmic regularity and stability, and perceptibility of pulse, help convey neatness and tidiness while making notated structure audible. In HIP, an approach to rhythm known as *tactus* refers to a regular, underlying rhythmic orientation point that creates a hierarchy of beats. This hierarchy organizes the beats of a bar, dividing them into strong and weak beats, and suggests that each beat be given its appropriate emphasis with recurring regularity. *Tactus* does not mean that pulse is metronomic, but rather that it is discernable, audible, and

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[55] Clive Brown, "Performing Classical Repertoire: the Unbridgeable Gulf between Contemporary Practice and Historical Reality" in *Classical and Romantic Music* (London: Routledge, 2011) ed. David Milsom. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 222. Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording,* 233 - 234.

[56] Uri Golomb, "Rhetoric in the Performance of Baroque music," *Goldberg Early Music Magazine* 51, no. 56 - 57, (April 2008): 2.

comfortingly regular. By providing the underlying scaffolding on top of which rhythmic freedom between strong beats can be taken on a surface level, *tactus* serves as a foundation for what is known in HIP as 'rhetorical' performance. This freedom between strong beats is meant to add an element of speech-like rhetoric to musical performance. According to musicologist Uri Golomb, the HIP approach to rhetoric is based upon interwoven patterns of hierarchies encompassing metre (strong and weak beats), harmony (stressing dissonance over consonance), rhythm (emphasising long notes on weak beats), and stressed melodic peaks, with articulation being the central tool for conveying meaning.[57] The *tactus* of modern rhetorical HIP performance, however, is wholly distinct from the more moment-to-moment playing heard on early recordings—playing that, while described by some as 'rhetorical' for its rhythmic freedom, lacks this underlying regularity of pulse. While it is eminently possible to play with a great deal of rhythmic flexibility within the context of a steady *tactus,* early-recorded performances convey this surface flexibility on top of a constantly varying, frequently indiscernible, pulse. According to Golomb, the HIP approach to rhetoric is as "incompatible with waves of rubato" (by which he seems to mean an irregularity or unpredictability of pulse) as it is with "large changes of pulse," because such rhythmic flexibilities are "not part of oratory." He goes on to observe that in HIP rhetoric, "performers also emphasise metric regularity—an alternation of weak and strong beats—which could be compromised by overdrawn rubati."[58] Indeed, as early recordings are often characterized by both irregular and indiscernible pulse, on both a surface and deeper level, they are as such incompatible with modern HIP approaches to *tactus* and rhetoric.

Despite Golomb's assertion that widespread flexibility of pulse is incompatible with oratory, however, Austrian actor Alexander Moissi's (1879 - 1935) early-recorded reading of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem *Erlkönig* provides a strong counterexample, demonstrating that the speech patterns upon which we base concepts like rhetoric have, like musical performance, evolved over time.[59] This suggests that early-recorded performances might be considered 'rhetorical' in the context of early-recorded oratory, with its frequent and unpredictable changes of pulse. As such, Cook's use of the term 'rhetorical' when describing early-recorded rhythmic freedoms may carry some weight. However, Cook then goes on to connect early-recorded style to modern HIP

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[57] Ibid., 8.
[58] Ibid., 8, 5.
[59] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Erlkönig*, Alexander Moissi, recorded 1929, Columbia 16073 (78rpm). This recording can be found here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhV2WwEQj7U (accessed September 22, 2019).

performance, positing a false equivalence between two utterly different approaches to rhetoric, with the former based on constant variation of pulse and the latter tied to a steady *tactus*. The connection Cook attempts to substantiate here, in this case between pianist Carl Reinecke's (1824 - 1910) early recordings and modern HIP fortepianist Bart van Oort's performances, is thus unfounded. Reinecke's extreme approach to tempo modification and rhythmic alteration fundamentally lacks a discernable pulse, while Van Oort's more controlled performance, despite demonstrating surface rhythmic flexibility, maintains a hierarchy of beats over an audible underlying pulse.[60] Here too, early recordings point to a sizeable gap: between the practical realities of rhetoric as used in modern HIP on one hand, and as applied by early-recorded performers on the other.

As rhetorical performance in modern HIP spheres is based on a hierarchical relationship of rhythm and meter, or surface flexibility, over an underlying discernable pulse, it has little in common with the rhythmically unpredictable and obscure performances heard on early recordings. Thus, despite HIP's embracing of surface rhythmic flexibilities, its adherence to an audible regularity of pulse situates its practices well within current MSPs, thereby restricting performers' choices with regard to rhythm and tempo. Modern HIP performers would do well to re-examine 18th-century writings on *tactus* in light of the gap Da Costa's work exposes between 19th-century texts, in which performers are instructed to maintain a strict sense of pulse, and early recordings, which evidence performers entirely disregarding such advice.[61]

The Pick-and-Choose Approach

Despite a growing body of research on historical recordings, few performers are willing to integrate early-recorded style into their performances when this is at odds with MSPs. There have been a number of experiments in recent years that make use of early recordings, in what I call recordings-inspired performance or RIP, with its practitioners often describing how this approach has opened up significant, alternative approaches to performance. Da Costa, for example, states that, "[h]aving experimented with [early-recorded style], it becomes almost inconceivable to play this music in the straightjacketed manner nowadays frequently heard."[62] Violist Heng-Ching Fang similarly views her research on early-recorded style as having helped her "to achieve an expressive

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[60] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 4 - 5, 102.
[61] Da Costa, *Performing Practices in Late 19th Century Piano Playing*, 317 - 320.
[62] Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 310.

performance in an imaginative and creative manner," and "not to be bound by notation."[63] However, I question whether the results of such experiments convey the freedom and imaginativeness claimed by their practitioners, and whether such work has resulted in a true alternative to MSPs. Indeed, most of these performers end up adhering to Philip's 'menu of possibilities' for MSPs, with elements of early-recorded performances being chosen and applied in ways that conform to agreed-upon expectations of style, of neat and tidy playing, of making notated structure audible, and in ways that confirm modern understandings of historical performance treatises, with surface rhythmic freedoms being used on top of an underlying regular pulse. This 'pick-and-choose' approach, rather than elevating the performer, further constricts their role by adding elements of early-recorded style to the already constrained, execution-driven practices of MSPs. Such an approach is all the more surprising given the general incompatibility of the central elements of early-recorded performance style with MSPs.

Anna Scott claims that Da Costa's Brahms performances, which have been informed by early-recorded style, exemplify this pick-and-choose approach because they are bound by an aesthetic ideology of control. In current Brahms performance practices, this control functions like a magnified version of the MSP ideology underlying agreed-upon understandings of how Brahms's music should be played, that is, with an even higher degree of tonal, expressive and technical control, further amplifying elements like neatness and tidiness, the audibility of structure, and regularity of pulse. As Scott points out, "Da Costa's RIP Brahms performances, beautiful though they are, are perhaps an unwitting elucidation of the extent to which the aesthetic ideology of control continues to mediate such ventures."[64] Those who take a pick-and-choose approach are likely to disregard the un-notated, uncontrolled nature of early-recorded style, instead preferring neatness and tidiness, and adherence to scores and agreed-upon understandings of style. As Leech-Wilkinson has noted, again in reference to HIP but equally applicable elsewhere: "[O]nce recordings are available suddenly no one wants to know about the composer's expectations: they're simply too unlike current performance values to be borne…we clearly do not believe in the professed values of HIP when it comes to the uncomfortable truth of previous performance styles."[65] In the pick-and-choose approach,

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[63] Heng-Ching Fang, *The Twentieth-Century Revolution in String Playing as Reflected in the Changing Performance Practices of Viola Players from Joseph Joachim to the Present Day: A Practice-Based Study* (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2008), 89 - 90.
[64] Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms,* ix, 173, 115.
[65] Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance*, chapter 6.7, "Music Makes Better Sense Performed 'Historically,'" https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-6-7/.

recordings become 'additional evidence' alongside scores and performance treatises, yet unlike these textual sources, they are readily discarded when they transgress the boundaries of MSPs. This is similar to the way composers' recordings (like Richard Strauss's or Edward Elgar's) are dismissed when they are deemed incompatible with their scores and agreed-upon understandings of how those scores should sound. Recordings are problematic evidence for contemporary musicians because they are less malleable than texts when it comes to fitting them within the acceptable bounds of MSPs. Texts are much more open to varied interpretations, and can easily be brought in line with contemporary dogmas, while recordings can be analysed with great accuracy through repeated listening and with the help of software. A further reason some performers take a pick-and-choose approach is that a loss of professional esteem might result from an uncontrolled, unstructured, and non-score-based performance style, despite the vast amount of early-recorded evidence supporting such a style. As Scott notes, the importance attached to professional competence in MSP ideology, even in RIP spheres, can put performer-researchers' reputations at risk:

> Tensions between RIP style and modern expectations of competence also come into play in advanced artistic research spheres where, in the context of conferences for example, performers face pressures to perform in ways widely perceived as competent while demonstrating and disseminating their research outcomes, thereby confirming their authority as both expert performers and scholars.[66]

Although recordings are less malleable than texts when it comes to interpreting them within the framework of MSPs, it is notable that the pick-and-choose approach is also evident in analysis contexts. Early recordings are often subject to superficial examination and quickly dismissed when they are incompatible with contemporary norms. Superficial analysis usually involves listening to recordings a number of times and disregarding those elements that do not conform to MSPs as evidence of technological faults or performer incompetence and nerves. Thorough analysis, on the other hand, takes the recorded performance at face value, as a representative sound document—one that performers and producers deemed commercially viable at the time of its release.[67] This approach then proceeds through detailed annotated score and software analysis to map out the performance practices heard on these recordings, making a concerted attempt to understand these practices for what they are rather than judging them in the

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[66] Ibid., 341 - 342.

[67] Obviously other considerations apply when analyzing historical recordings that were not released commercially such as discarded takes, amateur home records or investigative field recordings. All of the recordings analyzed as part of this project were commercially released.

framework of MSPs. While some early recordings may contain technological faults or performer mistakes, it is important to remember that they capture relatively 'live' unedited performances in stretches of up to four and a half minutes. Further, while early recordings contain surface noise and a narrower range of recorded pitch compared with their modern counterparts, all recording technologies, both early and modern, affect and transform timbre. Of course, there are examples of recordings where performers were required to rush in order to fit material within the timeframes imposed by wax cylinders and 78rpm records. Despite such technological restraints, however, the early-recorded evidence reveals that performers of the era shared a common stylistic language that was fundamentally at odds with MSPs: one involving un-notated and extreme modifications of tempo and rhythm, an unstructured approach to performance, and frequent de-synchronisation of ensemble. This observation holds for early-recorded performers and groups with international reputations that rehearsed diligently and had lengthy careers at the highest level. Ascribing these underlying performance elements to technological limitations or mistakes thus ignores the widespread commonality of these practices, the international reputations of the performers in question, and the professional standards of an era in which such recordings were deemed worthy of release.

An example of pick-and-choose analysis can be found in music historian Tully Potter's description of the recordings violist Oskar Nedbal (1874 - 1930) made in 1910 and 1911. Potter asks: "How much allowance must we make in Nedbal's case for nervousness and the alien surroundings of the cold, clinical studio?"[68] This is much like Musgrave's suggestion that Brahms's recordings are "a hasty if enthusiastic response to the recording medium."[69] Is Potter accounting for Nedbal's radically un-notated approach to rhythm and tempo by evoking 'nervousness' and 'alien surroundings,' rather than taking his performances as representative of his playing style? Bear in mind that in Nedbal's day, recordings were often made in informal settings, and many performers had the opportunity to record multiple takes before deciding which to release commercially.

Fang does some similarly partial analysis of the recordings violist Lionel Tertis (1876 - 1975) made for Vocalian between 1919 and 1924, arguing that Tertis went from a uniform, less expressive single-speed vibrato, to using a wide variety of vibrato speeds later in his career: "His speed of vibrato…remained the same almost without variation [and] several years later he gradually developed various kinds of expressive vibrato."

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[68] Tully Potter, "The Czechoslovakian Viola School," in *The History of the Viola Volume 2,* ed. Maurice Riley (Ann Arbor: Braun-Brumfield, 1991), 221.
[69] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms,* 305.

Fang's description of the development in Tertis's vibrato, made without the benefit of current technologies like software analysis, classifies his recordings as consistent with narratives about the rise of continuous vibrato in the early-20th century.[70] None of this is evidenced by close analysis of Tertis's recordings. Using software to measure vibrato width and speed, I could not detect any noteworthy differences between the recordings he made in 1919 and 1930.[71]

Fang also discusses Tertis's use of portamento in light of his written warnings against overusing the device. As Tertis writes:

> Portamento is another resource which, unless employed with the utmost discretion, can ruin the artistry of string playing. Incorrectly performed, or overdone in the slightest degree, it can make all the difference between sentiment and that horrid word 'sentimentality,' the latter in this case resulting in abominable vulgarity.[72]

Tertis, however, uses frequent and heavy portamento on nearly all of his recordings. On this, Fang only remarks: "[Tertis] basically followed his own indications. However he occasionally broke his own rules."[73] This seems an inadequate conclusion given that Tertis drastically breaks his own rules for portamento, contradicting his written advice on nearly all of his recordings.[74] That Fang points out a few examples of Tertis's portamento as exceptions to these rules, when his recordings break those rules far more often than they follow them, reflects how the analysis of recordings can be shaped by prior knowledge of contemporaneous writings, even when the link between practice and text is tenuous at best. This example thus illustrates both how unreliable written sources can be when seeking to understand how past musicians performed, and how unduly affected by contemporary readings of historical texts our hearing of recorded evidence can be.

Given the nature of her analyses, it is no surprise that in her performances Fang takes the pick-and-choose approach and ends up broadly adhering to MSPs. She uses light portamento and a degree of tempo and rhythmic flexibility inspired by the early recordings analysed, but her performances still conform to expected norms of neatness and tidiness, of making notated structure audible, and of maintaining a sense of

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[70] Fang, *The Twentieth-Century Revolution in String Playing as Reflected in the Changing Performance Practices of Viola Players from Joseph Joachim to the Present Day*, 68, 25.
[71] It is also notable that by 1919 Tertis was 43 years of age and an internationally recognized soloist. It seems unlikely that any successful performer would fundamentally alter their technique at this stage of their career.
[72] Tertis, "Beauty of Tone in String Playing," 148.
[73] Fang, *The Twentieth-Century Revolution in String Playing as Reflected in the changing performance practices of viola players from Joseph Joachim to the Present Day*, 79.
[74] For Tertis's rules see Tertis, "Beauty of Tone in String Playing," 149. My analysis of his portamento use can be found in Chapter Three.

underlying rhythmic pulse or *tactus*. As such, her performances fit well within current MSPs rather than capturing the style heard on the early recordings that inspired her.

Indeed, Fang suggests that contemporary performances can be 'enhanced' with early-20th-century stylistic elements, but she cautions that overuse of these elements may lead performers away from the intentions of the composer. This implies that the composer's intentions can be separated from the stylistic language of early-recorded performances, despite those intentions being situated in a performing context closer to that of the early-recorded era than our own.[75] By contrast, Scott questions our commitment to the intentions of composers when she asserts that, "once [performers are] armed with this knowledge [of early-recorded style] their acts will speak volumes about just how historically-informed they are prepared to be." She goes on to note that Brahms himself would be viewed as an uninformed, disrespectful Brahmsian pianist today, for his uncontrolled use of tempo and rhythmic flexibility and his unstructured, non-score-based performances.[76] Perhaps Haenchen similarly views Strauss as an 'uninformed' Strauss conductor, given that Haenchen's recordings of Strauss are based on critical editions of scores, which he values more highly than Strauss's own recordings. As mysterious or unknowable as composers' intentions may be, when presented with evidence of these composers (and the players of their time) actually performing their own works, contemporary musicians tend to pick-and-choose those elements that suit modern tastes and ignore those that do not.

While early recordings might help enhance our interpretations by increasing our vocabulary of expressive devices, how original and personal can our performances be if we continue to conform to MSPs by adhering to the notated detail and structure of scores, and by maintaining regularity of pulse and our neat and tidy standards of professionalism? Although there is nothing inherently wrong with picking and choosing how one applies stylistic elements from early recordings, this approach does not seem to result in the creative and imaginative performance practices that RIP performer-researchers claim to seek. At a fundamental level, their performances are neither far from conventional MSPs, nor close to the stylistic language of the early-recorded performances that presumably inspired them. By cherry-picking stylistic elements, musicians are left with plenty of room to fall back on safe habits, making it nearly impossible to create performances that sound like those of the early-recorded era. That

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[75] Fang, *The Twentieth-Century Revolution in String Playing as Reflected in the Changing Performance Practices of Viola Players from Joseph Joachim to the Present Day*, 90.
[76] Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms*, 340, 115.

such performances fall within MSPs demonstrates the influence of contemporary performance paradigms, with the early-recorded evidence, when applied selectively, offering nothing more than the illusion of choice—a Žižekian *choix forcé*—to even the most experimentally-minded of modern performer-researchers.

While a pick-and-choose approach conforms to MSPs, an 'all-in' approach to copying early recordings results in alternative practices that give performers a central, creative role in realizing musical works. So far I have associated MSPs with contemporary HIP, where musical rhetoric is expressed as a function of surface rhythmic freedoms over an audible, underlying and regular pulse. These same HIP practices often also use performance treatises in ways that conform to MSPs, despite gaps between turn-of-the-20th-century writings and recordings. I have also defined structuralist performance as central to MSPs, HIP included, whereby detail is subordinated to structure with the help of neat and tidy parameters such as vertical togetherness of ensemble, controlled tempo, precision of intonation, and abstention from idiosyncrasies like portamento. In MSPs, these elements are used in an attempt to adhere literally to scores and agreed-upon understandings of style. This is the bedrock of contemporary conceptions of *Werktreue*, with score and style assumed to reflect composers' intentions in works that are fixed in form and meaning as objects-in-themselves.

1.3) *Werktreue* Reimagined

Today it is fashionable to call for doing away with *Werktreue* and, by association, with adherence to the intentions of the composer, especially in light of Goehr's, Cook's and Leech-Wilkinson's elegant demonstrations that the concept is philosophically incoherent. However, I argue that *Werktreue* can be reimagined in light of the way 19th-century understandings of the concept are put into practice on early recordings.[77] By taking an all-in approach to copying these recordings, we can come to view the concept of *Werktreue* from the point of view of performers and not musical works-as-objects.

1.3.1) *Werktreue* Ideology in 19th- and Early-20th-Century Texts

More than a century ago, it was common for written texts to encourage performers to pursue personal expression either in parallel with, or as a means of

[77] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works,* 259. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 8. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*, chapter 2.1, paragraph 9, accessed June 14, 2019, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap2.html.

adhering to, the intentions of composers. One of the prominent views in that era, as espoused by philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel (1770 - 1831), was that musical works were brought to life through the integration of the spirits of the composer, performer and listener. For Hegel, the existence of musical works relies on the interaction of a trinity of 'spirits': the literal, personal subjects of the composer, performer and listener. As Mary Hunter notes, "performance as a matter of spiritual self-transformation is an idea profoundly connected to Romantic notions of subjectivity [which] was considered to be both the true 'content' and the object of music."[78] Thus, the individual and personal experiences of composers, performers and audiences, as derived from their interaction with musical works, open up the possibility for self-transformation and development. In this way, transformative personal experience is the stated goal and outcome of musical works, and this experience is central to the meaning with which these works are endowed when interacting with them. This runs contrary to modernist notions of *Werktreue* where musical works are objects-in-themselves, relegating performers to reproductive roles and turning audiences into passive listeners. As such, neither performers nor audiences are able to influence the meaning or 'content' of musical works. Contemporary notions of *Werktreue* assume that fidelity to scores and other texts brings one closest to the intentions of the composer, quite apart from the personal experience of performer creativity or listener engagement. As a result, performers are required to become transparent, and to simply follow instructions contained in the score according to agreed-upon understandings of how works should be played—classic Stravinskian ideology.

Conversely, many 19th-century writers saw performers as an essential part of the creative process. Here, Hunter develops the argument that a transcendent and genius performer was central to 19th-century understandings of the meaning of musical works:

> Once the new aesthetics of music at the turn of the nineteenth century are considered from the perspective of performance, however—that is, partly from the perspective of the performer him- or herself, and partly from the perspective of writers who gave some thought to the role of the performer in the whole music-making nexus—it emerges that…the performer's role was considered to demand genius and…the performer—was regarded as a fully fledged artist on a par with the composer.[79]

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[78] Mary Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 2 (Summer, 2005): 383.

[79] Ibid., 361.

Hunter quotes Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik* (1835), in which he describes the performer's role as follows: "In the matter not of technique but of the spirit, genius can consist solely in actually reaching in the [performance] the spiritual height of the composer and then bringing it to life."[80] For Hegel, the spiritual 'genius' of the performer is connected with personal expression on the one hand, and with the 'spirit' of the composer on the other. This results in a duality, where a performer's devotion to the 'spirit' of the composer reaches its pinnacle when music is transmitted through the lens of their own personal 'genius.' This genius is revealed, however, by nothing less than a highly personalised performance of a musical work, resulting from an individualized understanding of the 'spiritual height of the composer.' As Hunter puts it: "The job of the performer was understood to be about developing and displaying a unitary consciousness that merged his subjectivity with the composer's."[81] If we set aside the actual ghostly presence of the composer's 'spirit' or consciousness, what remains in practice is the performer's own understanding of what that consciousness might entail. This primacy of personal understanding where 19th-century performers are concerned is at odds with current demands for conformity to agreed-upon understandings of the style, meaning, and intention, of composers' works.

The performer's quest to reach the spiritual height of the composer is often described as a transcendental experience in contemporaneous texts, with the performer ascending into the realm of the 'spirit'. Tertis describes this process as follows: "The interpreter of music in its highest form must rise in his music-making above the levels of the everyday world, its commonness and its vanity, and hold himself apart, in an atmosphere of idealism."[82] This view combines transcendence, or rising 'above the levels of the everyday world,' with self-transformation, as the performer reaches 'an atmosphere of idealism' and is irrevocably changed by the act of performance before returning to the everyday. Violinist Leopold Auer (1845 – 1930) uses similarly idealistic language, focusing on the importance of the performer's personalised understanding of the composer's intentions:

> Concentrate quite simply and honestly on putting your whole heart and soul into the task of making the music you are playing live, expressing it as *you feel* the composer

[80] Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel as quoted in Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer," 362.
[81] Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer," 384.
[82] Tertis, "Beauty of Tone in String Playing," 155.

> meant it to be expressed. And do this with reverence and devotion…The worshipper [violinist] is approaching a new dispensation of musical beauty—and such are holy."[83]

The key points made by Auer are that it is the performer's personal understanding of the composer's intentions that matters and not the composer's intentions in-and-of-themselves, and that there is no contradiction between personal expression on one hand, and devotion to the composer's intentions on the other. A contradiction between individualism and fidelity is only implied if one takes a modernist view of musical works as Platonic objects that need to be shadowed or reproduced via performance. While today many musicians claim to play as *they* feel the composer meant their work to be expressed, their approach is more often than not guided by an attempt at literal adherence to the score and current agreed-upon notions of style. These tenets of MSPs can strongly affect even the most personally-felt interpretations of composers' intentions and scores, thereby constricting performer creativity. For 19th-century performers, personal expression no doubt similarly conformed to the stylistic conventions of their time. Both recordings and performers' annotated scores of that era, however, confirm that these boundaries were much wider than those enforced by today's MSPs.

When balancing written evidence of what 19th-century performers were called upon to do, one also comes across what seems to be a contradiction between adhering to the intentions of the composer as encoded in the notated score on one hand, and calls to alter the music using un-notated devices like portamento, tempo modification, vibrato, pitch ornamentation, improvisation, and even the wholesale re-writing of musical material on the other. Such evidence points to 19th-century performers frequently altering pitches and rhythms in scores as well as adding individual ornaments and cadenzas to musical works, some of which is reflected by their recordings. Kai Köpp refers to this state of affairs as the "complimentarity of the notated and the un-notated": an approach he notes has been lost in modern performance practices as a result of our emphasis on accurate, correct performance.[84] As Hunter points out:

> Romantic performance discourse sets up an opposition—in this case mighty composer and devout performer—and then promptly blurs or collapses it. The collapse here turns into a paradox: submission to the master magically produces a kind of empowerment of the performer, and his imagination is as necessary as that of the composer.[85]

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[83] Leopold Auer, *Violin Playing As I Teach It* (London: Duckworth, 1921), 188. Emphasis added.
[84] Kai Köpp, Forthcoming, "Das Nichtnotierte und das Nichtnotierbare," in *Musik aufführen, Kompendium Musik* Bd. 12, ed. Kai Köpp and Thomas Seedorf (Laaber: Laaber, 2019). Translation mine.
[85] Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer," 374.

Nineteenth-century performers' personalised alterations of scores follow logically, however, from an ideology that views their imaginations as necessary for expressing the intentions of the composer. Here, performer creativity is seen as integral to the musical work, with performance viewed as an activity demanding great artistry. Violinist Louis Spohr (1784 - 1859) encourages violinists to achieve this artistry by putting "beautiful performance ahead of correct performance," thereby allowing the listener to receive the intentions of the composer. Crucially, however, it is the performer's responsibility to achieve this 'beautiful performance' through the use of un-notated devices like rushing, slowing, portamento and vibrato. In Spohr's view, a beautiful performance results when a performer's well-developed taste in applying these devices is combined with spiritual self-transformation in the form of the "waking of their soul leading the bow and the fingers."[86] Here, Spohr links concrete tools for performer creativity with self-transformation, resulting in the violinist communicating the composer's intentions. Indeed, early recordings document the use of such tools, from rhythmic and tempo flexibility, ornamentation and portamento, to vibrato and the alteration of notated pitches and rhythms. For many performers of the early-recorded era, these un-notated devices were seen as fully compatible with the intentions of composers and were part of what Auer called "expressing the music as *you* feel the composer meant it to be expressed."[87]

Leech-Wilkinson convincingly argues that "music doesn't exist in works, works don't exist in scores, and neither does music, nor do scores represent composers' wishes, nor should composers' wishes necessarily be observed."[88] The inevitable outcome of this statement, as far as the performance of musical works is concerned, is a situation where 'anything goes.' Indeed, as Leech-Wilkinson argues in *Challenging Performance: The Book*, what all of this implies is that performers should be free to create any sort of performance of a musical work and that WAM culture should be open to a much greater range of possible performances.[89] In my experience, however, while some modern performances communicate more deeply, personally, and expressively than others, early recordings contain many more examples of such highly communicative performances

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[86] Louis Spohr, *Violinschule* (Vienna: Hasslinger, 1832), 195 - 196. Translation mine.
[87] Auer, *Violin Playing As I Teach It,* 188. Emphasis added. Auer made significant alterations to the pitches, rhythms and even structures of musical works in his published editions. His cuts in the final movement of Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* are a notable example.
[88] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*, chapter 2.1, paragraph 9, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap2.html.
[89] Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance*, "Part 1: Introduction and Examples," https://challengingperformance.com/the-book-1/.

within much wider boundaries, departing far more substantially from notated scores and agreed-upon understandings of style. Likely, these more communicative performances result from performers adopting a role on par with that of the composer and, as such, viewing musical works as sites for their own personal, creative input. I argue that performers wanting to take on this role today, thereby attaining the kind of communicative expressivity, individualism and freedom heard on early recordings, can engage in the all-in copying of these recordings in order to integrate the practical realities of this ideology into their own performance practices.

My unconventional turn thus calls for the adoption of a 19th-century view of *Werktreue,* which assumes that the content and goal of musical works is necessarily tied to the individual approach of the performer. Therefore, a performer's personal understanding is integral to the very existence and meaning of a musical work, and in this context, no original Platonic example of that work can be located. This overturns Goehr's argument against *Werktreue*. The work cannot be "fixed in meaning before interpretation takes place," because performance, which in this context is a personal realisation of a work, is an essential and integral part of its identity.[90] Both the performance and performer play a crucial role in filling a gap or absence written into the very fabric of a musical work. This approach is elucidated in Cook's paraphrasing of composer Brian Ferneyhough's idea that, "freedom of responsible performance lies not in executing a series of instructions, however impeccably, but in possessing one's own understanding of the music, and expressing that through performance."[91]

In order to realize 19th-century understandings of *Werktreue* and to achieve personalized performances of musical works, performers today need to take greater responsibility for their role in musical expression and integrate a wider range of concrete tools, like the kind described by Spohr, into their performance practices. One way to do this is through the all-in approach to copying early-recorded style, whereby tools for music-making that are performer-centered, non-score-based, and counter to modern standards of neat and tidy performance, are copied in full and without selectivity, allowing performers to circumvent the restrictive paradigms of MSPs. While Cook argues that pursuing the early (or earlier) conditions of a work's performance through treatises and scores restricts performers to a reproductive role, in my view this does not apply to copying early-recorded style—a context in which the conditions of performance were

[90] Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 276.
[91] Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 283.

determined by performers' personalized understandings of musical works.[92] The all-in approach to copying early recordings allows today's performers to inhabit historical, personal performances and experiences with their own instruments, bows, arms, and fingers. The departure point for this approach is Leech-Wilkinson's view that, "meaning and expressivity is not inherent in the score [but] arises from performance," and that expressiveness, style, and communication belong to the performer's domain.[93] In using the all-in approach, we copy the messages, methods and tools of expressive communication; once armed with this newly-acquired knowledge, we can extrapolate this personalized approach to other repertoires, all while circumventing the limits of MSPs.

1.3.2) Early-Recorded Style

That the all-in approach to copying early recordings can result in circumventing MSPs has been demonstrated by pioneering research projects completed by Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Scott. Both succeeded in applying those elements of early-recorded style that are often ignored by the pick-and-choose approach.[94] Slåttebrekk's work focused on copying Edvard Grieg's 1903 recordings, while Scott devoted her attention to the 'Brahms-Schumann' circle of pianists, copying the performances of Ilona Eibenschütz and Adelina de Lara in particular. Both of these projects went beyond existing RIP performances by musician-researchers, as these pianists devoted considerable effort to copying the details of early-recorded style without regard for whether these elements fit within MSPs. Not content to simply select generalized elements and adopt them in their performances, both Scott and Slåttebrekk copied as many elements from early recordings as they could, attempting to fully integrate these elements into their playing, and placing them ahead of concerns for the primacy of the composer, score, and associated stylistic norms in their chosen repertoires. They each used close listening and analysis of recordings, followed by painstaking efforts to reproduce them at the piano, later extrapolating what they had learned during the copying process to works left unrecorded by their chosen performers.

At first Slåttebrekk attempted to copy Grieg's recordings with total accuracy of detail through the use of editing. He quickly realised, however, that in order to copy the longer line of Grieg's performances as well as the details, he needed to achieve a more

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[92] Ibid., 3.
[93] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*, chapter 8.1, paragraph 10 and paragraph 13, www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html.
[94] Slåttebrekk and Harrison, *Chasing the Butterfly*. Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms*.

'live' performance feel, meaning that longer takes had to be recorded and that simply piecing together accurately-copied minutiae through editing was not enough.[95] Scott focused instead on making live takes of entire works, which she found to be the only adequate method for capturing the improvisatory feel of the originals. For both performers, however, achieving an unpredictable, early-recorded performance style meant putting the control, competence, and accuracy central to current MSPs at risk. Here, Scott describes the way these performances should be viewed: "As such, it is imperative that modern RIP Brahms style, live or recorded, be judged along similar lines as early-recorded Brahms style: as one that is quintessentially 'live,' casual, unpredictable and very nearly improvisatory."[96] Thus, in order to approach early-recorded performance style, musicians will need to go further (from the score, from agreed-upon understandings of style, and from neat and tidy notions of professionalism) than most have been willing to venture thus far. The all-in approach can be a crucial aid here, however, as it allows many central but foreign elements of early-recorded style—like de-synchronisation, heavy portamento, un-structured large-scale gestures, and extreme tempo flexibility—to become absorbed both consciously and unconsciously by the performer. By contrast, the pick-and-choose approach tends to discard or downplay these elements, as they clash with MSPs. Indeed, as Brown notes: "The possibility that we might more creatively use [early-recorded] evidence to attempt to recapture something of the spontaneity and freedom of classical performance is exciting."[97]

While this may be both exciting and creative, fully inhabiting the communicatively expressive approach evidenced by early recordings is a difficult and laborious path to follow. My work engages directly with early recordings in order to achieve a greater understanding of viola and chamber music performance practices in the early-20th century. I take a no-holds-barred approach to copying early-recorded performances, to offering an alternative to MSPs, and to exploring the rugged terrain where the hygiene and professionalism of my performances may be called into question.

The sense one gets from many early-20th-century recordings is that these performers, even the most virtuosic and skilled among them, are willing to radically depart from standards of neatness and tidiness in order to get their message across. Even pianist Alfred Cortot (1877 – 1962), having lived through the era of increasingly sanitized

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[95] Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Prelude and Trouble at Troldhaugen," from *Chasing the Butterfly*, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=1233.
[96] Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms*, 341.
[97] Brown, "Performing Classical Repertoire," 42.

performance practices as documented by Philip, instructed his students to "leave the problems of technique where they belong, in a place of secondary importance, and…place [their] imagination rather than [their] fingers at the service of the inner significance of the music."[98] Indeed, the stylistic attributes associated with early-recorded performances work against neat and tidy playing because they often result in a blurring of musical material or a lack of clarity. Heavy portamento, for example, can obscure rhythmic hierarchies by muddying the attack of the arrival note and its metric placement within the bar. This is likely why many of today's string players view portamento as dirty or nebulous, reserving its occasional use for turn-of-the-20th-century repertoires, jazz, gypsy, or tango music. De-synchronisation similarly blurs the neat and tidy vertical togetherness expected in ensemble performances today, where a lack of alignment between musicians is viewed as a serious technical flaw. In early-recorded style, however, these asynchronous textures result in a rich interaction between musical lines and highlight the independent personalities of various performers. Philip summarises the distinction between contemporary and early-recorded ensemble performances as follows: "A century ago ensemble was looser, pianists arpeggiated and dislocated, there was much overdotting, hurrying of short notes, accelerating and portamento."[99] These un-notated devices each work against values of neatness and tidiness, where controlled use of tempo and rhythm, adherence to notation, and verticality of ensemble playing are expected.

While MSPs focus on making notated structure audible, early-recorded performances generally emphasise expressive gestures through heavy tempo modification and rhythmic flexibility, highlighting expressivity on a more moment-to-moment basis. As Leech-Wilkinson points out, early-recorded musical gestures were large, while in our era they are often "barely noticeable in casual listening."[100] While these large local gestures in early-recorded performances may work on a 'moment-to-moment' level, this does not imply that they are directionless or that they detract from a sense of large-scale narrative. What such gestures point towards is a performance practice that shares much with the concept of storytelling. On early recordings, localised moment-to-moment shaping is often integrated into longer sections through un-notated tempo modification, which is used to distinguish the character of one section of a work from another. These sections are then often tied together by un-notated rushing, a practice largely banished

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[98] Alfred Cortot, translated Cyril & Rena Clarke, *In Search of Chopin* (London: Nevill, 1951), 58.
[99] Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, 232.
[100] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*, chapter 8.1, paragraph 14, www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html.

from contemporary MSPs. This rushing allows early-recorded performers to shape local details with a great deal of flexibility without these moments sounding as out of context as they might do in a contemporary performance with a steady tempo. The result of this approach is not the audibility of notated musical structure, but rather a sense of sweeping narrative, built through the momentum created by rushing between sections of a work. The continuous tempo flexibility of early-recorded performances also frequently undermines an audible sense of pulse, negating the sense of unity this stability is meant to create within MSPs. This continuous rushing and slowing also works against the idea of a regular *tactus*, which holds together surface beat-to-beat flexibilities in modern HIP contexts, thereby undermining any connection to HIP rhetoric as currently understood and performed. At the same time, however, rhythmic and tempo flexibility as heard in early-recorded musical contexts is similar to that used by early-recorded actors such as Moissi and Joesph Kainz (1858 - 1910), where sudden shifts of tempo are used to highlight changes of mood, and unexpected flexibilities on a localized word-to-word or moment-to-moment level are used to either dwell upon or skim over details. In Philip's view, the main difference between early-recorded practices and MSPs is that neatness and tidiness are central today, while in the past, expressive communication as heard on the recordings of actors like Moissi and Kainz was the main driver of performance: "[With the] Busch Quartet playing late Beethoven, or Casals playing Bach, [we] hear the sound of musicians who despite their masterly technical command, were uninterested in the smooth perfection of today, and were anxious only to make the music 'speak.'"[101]

When we listen to early recordings of composers like Grieg, Elgar, and Sergei Rachmaninoff, there are non-score-based forces at work in their performances that we could not have surmised by studying their scores or written accounts of their intentions. In this way, early recordings run counter to modern notions of literal adherence to texts, while at the same time demonstrating the surprising differences between canonical composers' performances of their own works and our own agreed-upon understandings of how those same works should sound. For today's performers, approaching scores as sites for personal, creative practice can be a means of bridging this gap.

As such, the all-in approach to copying early recordings has ramifications for the role of the performer, placing them at the centre of musical expression and substantially bypassing restrictions on their practice as imposed by MSPs. What this also means, however, is that when performers occupy this central role we learn as much about their

[101] Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, 249.

understanding of the music through their playing, as we do about their physical bodies, personalities and competencies—just like when we listen to early-recorded performers. For example, compare conductor Willem Mengelberg's (1871 – 1951) recording of Gustav Mahler's *Symphony* no. 4 with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1939, with conductor Daniel Harding's recording of the same work with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in 2004.[102] Harding and company adhere closely to the notated score, ironing out tempo differences and eschewing sliding between notes, while Mengelberg and company engage in wild, un-notated fluctuations in tempo, frequent, heavy portamenti and de-synchronisation—all of which heightens the expressivity of the music on a moment-to-moment level, emphasizing the individuality and physical presence of performers who are playing together. The playing on the 2004 recording renders the performers transparent, with thorough editing further sanitizing all traces of wind players breathing or string players sliding up and down the fingerboard. Because they are unburdened by the prerequisite of neatness and tidiness, early-recorded string players often take substantial risks, resulting in poor intonation and articulation, and a lack of clarity. This may lead some listeners to doubt their technical competency, but as discussed in chapters three and four, their use of devices like portamento, vibrato and speech-like rhythmic flexibility often creates a sense of 'vocality,' replete with all the cracks and warbles of an impassioned speaker.

Contemporary MSP culture is grounded in Platonic notions of works with fixed meanings embedded in their scores to which performers strive to conform. This is evidenced by the practical realities of MSPs, including adherence to agreed-upon understandings for how works should sound, neatness and tidiness, audibility of notated structure and regularity and discernibility of pulse. In this chapter I have reimagined *Werktreue* in the context of 19th-century understandings of performer centrality, making a connection between this centrality and the highly individual and communicative performances heard on early recordings, with their large gestures, moment-to-moment expressivity, and radical departures from the notated score. These early recordings expose the more personalised aspects of performers' approaches, including their struggles, the risks they are willing to take, and their physical bodies—elements that are minimized in performance today and then further sanitized in contemporary recording and editing processes. Thus recording techniques, like performance practices, can work

[102] Gustav Mahler, *Symphony no. 4*, recorded by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, conducted by Willem Mengelberg, AVRO Hilversum, 1939 (radio broadcast). Gustav Mahler, *Symphony no. 4*, recorded by the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Daniel Harding, Virgin Classics, 2004, 724354566523 (CD).

either for or against 19th-century notions of *Werktreue* as revived through an all-in approach to copying early-recorded style. As modern recording paradigms are shaped by MSPs and vice versa, exploring alternative recording methods and technologies, like those offered by a more 'live' and lo-fi approach, could substantially aid performers looking to take on the role associated with expressive music-making over a hundred years ago.