Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Stam, E.W.

Citation
Stam, E. W. (2019, October 31). *In Search of a Lost Language: Performing in Early-Recorded Style in Viola and String Quartet Repertoires*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/79999

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/79999

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

3) Early-Recorded Viola Analyses

3.1) Introduction

Performers today are increasingly aware of the importance of historical recordings as documents of the stylistic contexts of canonical 19th-century composers. However, historical recordings have had little impact on MSPs,[127] which are restricted by the need to be neat and tidy, to conform to expectations of how particular repertoires should sound, and to adhere to the structure and notated detail of scores. Often those that do make use of early recordings are performer-researchers who take a pick-and-choose approach to applying elements from early recordings, leaving out de-synchronisation, continuous rushing and heavy portamento in order to preserve a modern veneer of professionalism. However, I find this approach inadequate for achieving a performance style that either conveys the atmosphere of early-recorded performances, or that circumvents MSPs' constraints, or both.

I argue that familiarity with early recordings allows us to question some of the fundamental assumptions underlying our current performance practices. Why do we feel the need for a steady tempo? Is playing the notated pitches and rhythms obligatory? Why are we so reticent about making use of varied, frequent and heavy portamento? And finally, why do we not embrace the richness inherent in multi-layered untogetherness-of-ensemble in our performances? As I have argued in Chapter One, the 'all-in approach' is a useful method for unlocking the answers to some of these questions as well as for creating performances rich in moment-to-moment expressivity. The all-in approach refers to creating live or recorded performances that are copies of early recordings and that are as informed and accurate as possible for the performer(s) given their musical and technical abilities and the constraints of time. These copies attempt to capture the detail and overall atmosphere of the original recordings. In order to create all-in copied performances, I have undertaken detailed analysis of historical recordings. The goal of this analysis is to understand the physical (bodily) and musical approaches taken by violists of the early-recorded era. These analyses will show how early-recorded violists approach performance through a similar stylistic language, albeit in different dialects, which is closely related to the approach of early-recorded singers, and which is fundamentally at odds with today's MSPs. The process of analysis has helped increase my understanding of early-recorded style in general and has served as the basis for creating

[127] Mainstream performance practices as discussed in Chapter One.

annotated scores that function as the starting point for my own recordings. These recordings are discussed in Chapter Five.

Before proceeding with this detailed analysis, however, I briefly discuss the issue of tuning, which varies substantially from recording to recording. I also explain the labelling system used for portamento techniques in my analyses with reference to Kai Köpp's list of portamento types. My approach to the analyses themselves then applies Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's concept of 'close-listening,' or "focusing one's full attention on the sound of the performance," and expands on this method through annotated scores and software analysis using Sonic Visualiser.[128] The end goal of this analytical process is to achieve an understanding of the recordings by generating evidence that can support broader conclusions about stylistic practices in the early-recorded era. The analyses examine tempo modification, i.e., change in the average speed of the music; rhythmic flexibility, i.e., divergence from the notated rhythms and detailed beat-to-beat changes of speed that do not substantially affect the average tempo of a musical phrase; and elements related to pitch like vibrato, portamento and timbre. I also explore multi-layering created through arpeggiation, dislocation and other non-notated practices that affect the relationship between multiple voices, resulting in the non-simultaneous sounding of notes that are notated as vertically aligned. Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison referred to multi-layering as "the presence of two or more directional tendencies, acting simultaneously," and, in my work, I examine the multi-layering that results from varying elements of a musical texture pulling in different directions, most often as a result of dislocation.[129] These stylistic devices are used in noticeable and often drastically different ways on the recordings studied here as compared to how they are applied (or neglected) in contemporary MSPs, including RIP.[130]

This is the first comprehensive analysis of the early-recorded performance practices of violists who were active before 1930 and who were recorded in a solo capacity.[131] A selection of these recordings includes overlapping repertoire, allowing for a close comparison between players in order to examine both their individual idiosyncrasies and their stylistic commonalities. Because Lionel Tertis's prolific output encompasses more than 100 recordings, only a handful of key recordings have been

---

[128] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music,* Chapter 8.2 paragraph 19, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html.
[129] Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Ambiguity and Multi-layeredness" from *Chasing the Butterfly*, accessed January 2, 2019, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=207.
[130] Recordings Inspired Performances as discussed in Chapter One.
[131] By solo capacity, I refer to recordings for viola alone or viola with piano or orchestral accompaniment.

included here. My selection of Tertis's recordings includes some of his earliest recordings, recordings of his own compositions, and recordings of canonical repertoire, such as Brahms's *Sonata* Op. 120 and Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*. The other performers examined here are Oskar Nedbal, Léon Van Hout, Arthur Post, Pierre Monteux, Maurice Vieux, and an anonymous American viola player. In addition to comparing and contrasting these violists' performances, I also examine the relationship between early-recorded string playing and singing. I argue that strong correlations between the two suggest an attempt on the part of string players to copy singers. My analyses demonstrate that Tertis's recordings are often closer to those of the early-recorded singers studied than those of other pre-1930 violists. The analyses also reveal variations of style in early-recorded performances, with performers separated by generation, national school or character taking divergent approaches. On one hand, these performers share a common expressive language, while on the other, their regional dialects or preferences lead to varied outcomes.

3.2) Issues of Tuning and Pitch on Early Recordings

While many musicians assume that the modern tuning standards of A=440hz or A=440hz+ (441,442), as commonly used by today's symphony orchestras, have been around for at least a century, historical research shows just how recently this international standard was adopted. The A=440hz standard was not agreed upon until 1939 at an international conference in London and had to be reaffirmed in both 1955 and 1975. This reaffirmation was the result of the persistence of deviations in standard pitch worldwide. It seems that the A=440hz standard represented a kind of "compromise between two important traditions: the pitch level favoured by composers of eighteenth-century music [around A=415,3hz] and the more brilliant pitch levels introduced by the makers of nineteenth-century wind instruments [up to A=450hz]." There was also a nineteenth-century French standard of A=435hz, as decreed by law in 1859.[132]

In the 1980s, political activist Lyndon H. Larouche campaigned internationally to have the tuning standard lowered to Giuseppe Verdi's favoured A=432hz, arguing that,

---

[132] Lynn Cavanagh, "A Brief History of the International Establishment of International Pitch Standard A=440hz," 1999, accessed September 14, 2016, http://wam.hr/sadrzaj/us/Cavanagh_440Hz.pdf, 3, 4, 2. While A=415,3hz may have been a kind of average pitch in the 18th century, it was by no means standard. There were a wide variety of tunings used at the time, with lower pitches favoured for chamber music contexts, and higher pitches for church contexts due to shorter organ pipes being cheaper and thus higher in pitch.

"the great Cremona string instruments show conclusively that they were constructed to be in agreement with [A=432hz]."[133] Studies conducted at the time by Bruno Barosi, an acoustic physicist in Cremona, showed that the sound of the violin was "distinguished by [an] abundance of overtones" in both quantity and volume, with the 'Omobono' Stradivarius displaying "its best resonance at [A=432]."[134] Whether A=432hz can be said to be scientifically supported as the ideal A for all string instruments remains an open question.[135]

It is important to be aware of such issues, because it seems likely that many early recordings of viola players and string ensembles were made at lower tunings than today's standardised pitch. However, because the playback speeds of record players vary, it is nearly impossible to determine the exact pitch used on any given recording. With any wax cylinder or shellac record, the quicker the playback device turns, the higher the resulting pitch. Further, as pre-World War II settings of record players were far from standardised, mechanical setup or even listeners' choice of speed was responsible for the pitch at which a recording would be played.

Consequently, sound engineers today who make transfers of early recordings need to make their own choices about the speed and pitch of playback, because the digital media to which we now transfer these recordings have a single unvarying pitch. David Hermann, who transferred the majority of Tertis's 78rpm discs to CD, chose to transfer the Vocalian records made between 1919-1924 at about A=437hz, while transferring Tertis's Columbia discs made between 1924-1936 at A=440hz. Hermann's rationalisation for these choices was his theory that Tertis may have played with a lower A in the early 1920s and that the A=440hz standard became more widely adopted by the early 1930s.[136] This is all a matter of speculation, and as such, any decisions about pitch height in digital transfers remains somewhat arbitrary. For my copies of early recordings,

---

133 Lyndon Larouche, "The Power of 256," *Executive Intelligence Review* 17, no. 24 (June 8, 1990): 67.
134 Hartmut Cramer, "Experiment Proves Music Sounds Better at Low Tuning," *Executive Intelligence Review* 15, no. 48 (December 2, 1988): 58 - 59.
135 However, it could be fruitful to consider the possibility of experimenting with lower tunings in current performance practices, as these may be better suited to string instruments, especially those with gut strings. Perhaps string players would do well to question today's orchestral As, which are often well above A=442hz in common practice, and which may serve wind instruments while doing little for the warmth of sound of string instruments.
136 David Hermann, e-mail to the author, March 12, 2016. While playback speed on wax cylinders and records of course affects the tempo and pitch at which the music is heard, in the context of the early recordings examined here, where the deviation in tuning is at most 8hz or approximately 1/3 of a semitone, these tempo differences will be minimal. The approximate tempo deviation based on playback speed can be calculated by multiplying the tempo in beats per minute by 0.555555. Depending on the speed, this means that for many of the recordings studied here with a tempo between 60 bpm and 120 bpm, a range of speeds of less than 5 bpm (depending on their playback speed) can be assumed.

I was forced to adhere to an A=440hz tuning in order to fit with available pianos. I did experiment with lower tunings in the practice studio, however, and found that they added richness to the tone. As a result, I believe performances on stringed instruments at a lower tuning are worthy of future study.

3.3) Portamento

Portamento is prominent throughout early recordings of singers and string players. Leopold Auer's (1845 - 1930) advice to violinists that, "in order to develop your judgement as to the proper and improper use of the portamento, observe the manner in which it is used by good singers and by poor ones," reflects the intimate connection between its use by singers and string players of the era.[137]

While portamento is rarely used in MSPs and is today considered by many to be 'messy' or 'overly sentimental,' Leech-Wilkinson links the device to communicative performance practices of the early-recorded era, arguing that, "portamento…seemed to signal empathy [and] a willingness to be moved by the feelings being portrayed in music."[138] Soprano Adelina Patti's 1905 recording of Mozart's *Voi che sapete* from *Le Nozze di Figaro* showcases many of the kinds of portamenti prominent in early-recorded vocal style and amply illustrates Leech-Wilkinson's claim that the device signals empathy. Köpp's thorough study of this recording documents the six different types of portamento Patti uses and argues that the recording can be viewed as a kind of masterclass in the use of 19th-century portamento technique.[139] Köpp's classification of these six types of portamento, which I have translated and included below in its entirety, explains how each type can also be executed by string players. Köpp's list makes reference to violinist Louis Spohr's (1784 – 1859) preferred use of these various types, as explicitly detailed in his 1832 *Violinschule*:

Portamento Techniques in 19th-Century String and Vocal Practice[140]

- PL: (*Portamento Langsam*) Sliding with one finger during a slur
  (Small intervals up to a perfect fourth, according to Spohr)

---

137 Auer, *Violin Playing as I Teach It*, 63.
138 Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, Chapter 7, paragraph 6 http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap7.html.
139 Kai Köpp, "Hohe Schule des Portamentos," (Bern: Kai Köpp, 2015), 6.
140 Spohr, *Violinschule*, 120, 126 and 196. Köpp, "Hohe Schule des Poramentos," 9 - 10. Translation mine.

- PS : (*Portamento Schnell*) Sliding with two different fingers during a slur
  (Large intervals of a perfect fifth or greater; Spohr prefers sliding with the guide finger rather than with the arrival finger)[141]

- I: (*Intonazione)* Sliding into the beginning of a phrase
  (Small intervals, sliding with the arrival finger)

- C: (*Cercar della nota)* Sliding with the arrival finger after a bow change
  (Small intervals)

- A: (*Anticipazione della nota)* Sliding with the arrival finger before the bow change
  (Small and large intervals)

- L: (*Librar la voce)* Changing fingers on the same note
  (Small intervals)

I use the abbreviated capital letters on the left side of this list to classify portamento types used on many of the recordings analysed below. The list is also a practical tool that string players can use to hone their portamento skills because of the clear guidance it provides in executing the various types. However, in the context of early recordings, there are some shortcomings in Köpp's portamento list: his so-called 'fast' PS and 'slow' PL portamenti are not necessarily either fast or slow, as both are executed at varying speeds on early recordings, with the 'fast' portamento tending to sound lighter than the 'slow' portamento because of the change of fingers. On early recordings, performers also make use of both devices outside of the intervallic boundaries preferred by Spohr. While the PS or 'fast' portamento describes a slide using either the guide finger or the arrival finger under a slur, these two slides sound quite different in practice. Likewise, a version of both the C and A portamenti executed with the guide finger sometimes creates a kind of pitch ornament after or before the bow change, even though this type of portamento is not described in the list above. Despite these shortcomings, this list is the most thorough classification of portamento types to date. In Clive Brown's writings by contrast, portamento techniques are vaguely classified as either 'French' (using the arrival finger) or 'German' (using the guide finger)—inadequate descriptors in the context of early recordings where French and German players use both the guide and arrival fingers to slide interchangeably. While Köpp interprets Spohr as preferring the

[141] The guide finger refers to the finger used on the note from which a portamento departs, while the arrival finger is the finger that will be used to play the note following the portamento.

guide finger, Spohr does not exclude the possibility of using the arrival finger. This is at odds with Brown's view that Spohr saw the use of the arrival finger as a pernicious French technique.[142]

Both the frequency and diversity of portamenti in today's MSPs have been severely curtailed. Sliding between notes often results in rhythmic dislocation and softens attack, thereby obscuring the clearly defined moment when one note begins and another ends. As a result, portamento challenges the framework of neatness and tidiness considered desirable in MSPs. Teachers, juries and conductors have told me on numerous occasions not to use portamento in my performances, even in repertoires where historical evidence shows that portamento was used frequently by musicians closely associated with those works.[143] Despite the current lack of sympathy for portamento in MSPs, early recordings demonstrate that the technique, along with devices like tempo and rhythmic flexibility, was widely used by string players and singers connected with late-19th and early-20th-century repertoires. The analyses of historical viola recordings below, alongside the annotated scores found in Appendix III, demonstrate how these 19th-century portamento techniques were used in practice.

3.4) Oskar Nedbal's Pioneering Solo Recordings

According to Tully Potter, Oskar Nedbal (1874 - 1930) is the first violist to have been featured as a soloist on a recording.[144] Nedbal's historical importance as a musician is however little acknowledged today outside of his native Czech Republic. Born in Tabor, he studied composition with Antonin Dvořák and was the violist in the Czech String Quartet with Karel Hoffmann, Josef Suk, who was married to Dvořák's daughter, and Otto Berger. Nedbal was also well established as both a conductor and a composer: he led the Czech Philharmonic on occasion, and his ballets and operettas were regularly performed throughout the Austro-Hungarian empire. The two recordings Nedbal made coincided with a productive and happy period in his life, during which he gained recognition as a composer and was promoted by Gustav Mahler, who conducted a

---

142 Clive Brown, "The Decline of the 19th-Century German School of Violin Playing," CHASE 2011, accessed May 25, 2017, http://chase.leeds.ac.uk/article/the-decline-of-the-19th-century-german-school-of-violin-playing-clive-brown/.

143 For period performances of late-19th and early-20th-century repertoires, we can turn to recordings of the leading string players of the time like Joachim, Ysaÿe, Auer, Casals and Tertis.

144 Tully Potter, liner notes to *The Recorded History of the Viola Volume 1*, 1995, Pearl Records, GEMMCDS9148.

number of his works in Prague and Vienna.[145]

Nedbal made two 78rpm discs: the first in 1910 of his own composition *Romanticky Kus,* and the second in 1911 of Franz Schubert's lied *Du bist die Ruh*. Although he was born in 1874, just one year prior to Tertis, Nedbal's playing style is close to that of his generational predecessors. As David Milsom notes, his playing style is "directly comparable (in spite of the fact that Nedbal was born more than forty years later) with the sound world of [violinist] Joseph Joachim [1831 - 1907]."[146] Indeed, what we hear on Nedbal's recordings is frequent and nuanced rhythmic flexibility, ornamentation of pitch (adding non-notated pitches often in the form of trills or grace notes), and a non-continuous ornamental approach to vibrato (an uneven, irregular, and non-continuous use of the device)—making his playing style comparable to Joachim's recordings of Johannes Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* no. 1 and 2 and of his own *Romance* in C major.[147]Nedbal and violinist Marie Soldat-Roeger's (1863 - 1955) recordings demonstrate that in some cases the ornamental approach to vibrato of Joachim's era was carried over across generations, while other performers of the time, like Tertis and violinist Fritz Kreisler (1875 - 1962), made use of wider, more continuous vibrato.[148] This demonstrates that the phenomenon of performance style change was not only influenced by generational trends, but that a wide variety of styles coexisted in the early-20th century.

3.4.1) Oskar Nedbal and Unknown Pianist: *Du bist die Ruh* Op. 59 no. 3 by Franz Schubert (recorded 1911)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.4.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.4.1.

Nedbal's recording of his own arrangement of Schubert's lied *Du bist die Ruh* is remarkable for its freedom of ensemble playing, wide-ranging rhythmic flexibility, heavy portamento, and the diversity of arpeggiation used by his pianist—all of which are currently considered impermissible within today's MSPs. As far as Nedbal's arrangement

---

145 Lyudmila, Peřinová, "Oskar Nedbal and Vienna," Tabor, 2010, International Oskar Nedbal Society, accessed July 18, 2018, http://www.oskarnedbal.cz/dokumenty/clanky/O.Nedbal%20and%20Vienna.pdf.
146 David Milsom, liner notes to *A - Z of String Players,* 2014, Naxos, 8.558081-84.
147 Johannes Brahms, *Hungarian Dance* WoO 1/1 and WoO 1/2, Joseph Joachim, *Romance in C major*, Joseph Joachim (violin), recorded 1903 by The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd., and reissued 2004 on *The Great Violinists: Recordings from 1900 - 1913*, Testament 749677132323.
148 Marie Soldat-Roeger was a pupil of Joseph Joachim. For more information on her performance style, see: David Milsom, "Marie Soldat-Roeger (1863 - 1955): Her Significance to the Study of Nineteenth-Century Performing Practices," 2007, accessed July 21, 2018, http://www.davidmilsom.com/AHRC.html.

for viola is concerned, he plays the first strophe an octave lower than indicated in the vocal score and takes the final strophe up an octave, resulting in a transformation of both sound and character. Exposing the special sound qualities of different registers of the instrument in this way was common practice in arrangements of vocal works for stringed instruments in the early 20th century. Tertis uses this technique in many of his notated transcriptions, as do violinists Kreisler and Auer and cellist Pablo Casals (1876 - 1973).

Tempo Modification

Nedbal makes extensive use of tempo modification here, a central characteristic of many early-recorded performances, to an extent that would be frowned upon today. His approach to tempo closely mirrors that of a number of early-recorded singers (several vocal recordings are examined below), with broad slowing at the start of each strophe and the pianist rushing the introduction (m. 1 - 7) and interlude (m. 49 - 53). This separates the viola/piano sections from the sections with piano alone. The tempo graph below (Figure 3.01) illustrates this phenomenon, with tempo in beats per minute appearing along the vertical axis and the recording unfolding over time in seconds along the horizontal axis. Here, we see the pianist setting a quicker tempo in the introduction, which Nedbal then slows with his entrance in m. 8. The graph shows Nedbal's broad slowing at the endings of phrases, for example, in m. 11 and m. 25, followed immediately by a spike in tempo—especially where the pianist rushes in the interlude at m. 49 (here m. 49 follows the cut made at the end of m. 25).[149]

[149] As shown in the annotated score in Appendix III, Score 3.4.1, Nedbal cuts the second strophe of the work (m. 26 - 48), leaving his performance structured as follows: piano introduction m. 1 - 7, strophe 1 m. 8 - 25, interlude m. 49 - 53, strophe 2 (originally strophe 3) m. 54 - 82.

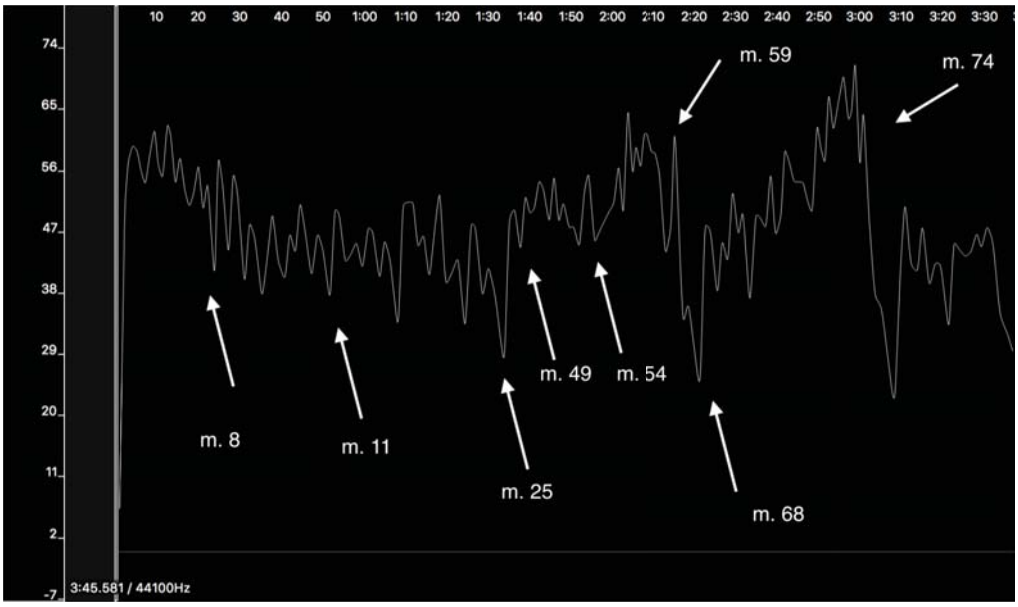

Figure 3.01: Tempo Graph of Oskar Nedbal's recording of Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*.

The graph further shows how the final section, with its rising pitch, is divided by tempo into two phrases, m. 54 - 65 and m. 68 - 74, both of which contain the same material in the viola part. Nedbal rushes towards the top two notes (m. 59 - 60), which he broadens, thereby creating a sense of arrival on the highest pitch. The tempo graph shows that this same shaping through tempo modification is even more pronounced during the second iteration of the phrase (m. 68 - 74). Here, Nedbal stretches the top notes even longer before returning to a slower tempo in the final bars that more closely matches his tempo in the opening phrase.

Nedbal's beat placement is often early or late in relation to the pianist, and this unevenness is reflected in the jaggedness of the tempo graph. This beat placement, however, also plays a part in both rushing and slowing on a larger scale throughout the recording. Nedbal places beats slightly behind the pianist in the opening section, which slows until m. 25, before placing them slightly ahead in the final section, which rushes to m. 74, suggesting that he is using these placements to signal what kind of tempo flexibility he desires to the pianist. This also holds true for the approach many early-recorded singers take with this work, including Lilli Lehmann and John McCormack.

Rhythmic Flexibility

Nedbal's rhythmic alteration here involves multi-layering caused by dislocation and arpeggiation in the piano part and more frequent variation in the lengths of notes compared to the notated score. This looseness means that Nedbal's and his pianist's

approach to the notated rhythms is inexact, another feature of their performance that would be frowned upon in the context of MSPs.

I classify dislocation and arpeggiation as a form of rhythmic flexibility because of the way these techniques undermine a clear location of the beat. These continual variations of rhythm give this performance its characteristic rhapsodic quality. The purple markings in Figure 3.02 show the dislocation between the left and right hands of the pianist, who spreads beats throughout, thereby undermining a clear sense of beat location—a feature emphasized by Nedbal's placement of his notes slightly ahead or behind the pianist's as described above. When Nedbal does play the chord in m. 59 precisely together with the pianist, therefore, the result is a special effect. On this chord, the pianist also refrains from arpeggiating, as it coincides with a sudden change in harmony over the German word *erhellt* in the original vocal text, which translates, remarkably, as 'clarified.'

This loose approach to rhythm gives the whole performance an improvisatory feel as if the rhythmic figures could be performed in any number of ways. The arpeggiation in the piano also de-emphasises any sort of firm accented beat where rhythmic synchronisation or continuity of pulse might be expected in MSPs.

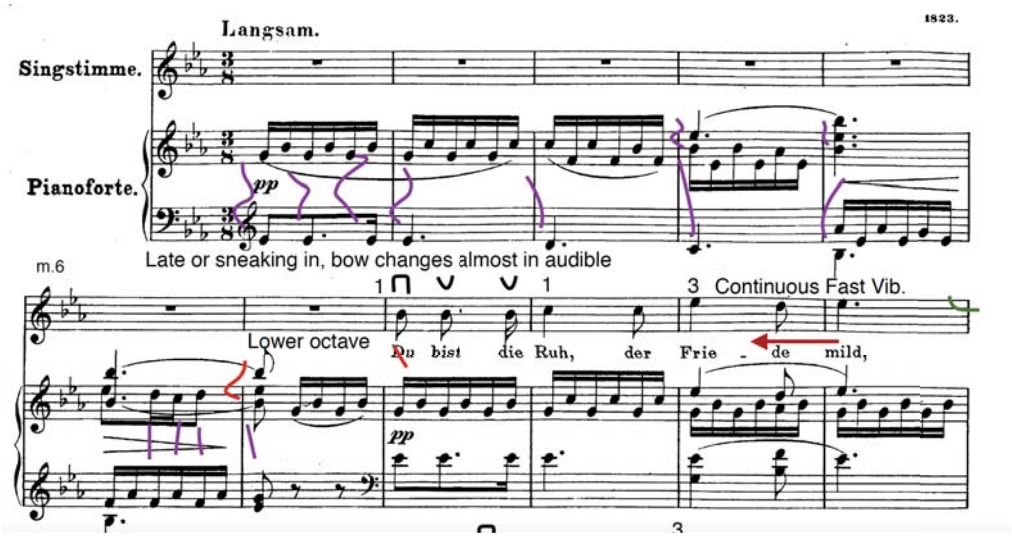

Figure 3.02: Dislocation in Oskar Nedbal's recording of Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*.

Dislocation and arpeggiation aside, Nedbal's frequent variation of note lengths results in a notable example of rhythmic alteration on the long final note of the piece, which is held through the second beat of m. 81—well past the length notated in Schubert's vocal part, which directs the singer to stop on the third beat of m. 80. This

lengthening of final notes beyond their notated length seems to have been a common practice amongst singers on early recordings, and a particularly striking example is found on Lilli Lehmann's recording of *Isolde's Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner—the first known recording of the *Liebestod*—in which she extends the final note on the word *Lust* several bars beyond Wagner's notated length in the score.[150] In *Du bist die Ruh,* Nedbal similarly holds the note at the end of the phrase in m. 19 straight through the rest. In many of his recordings of lyrical works, Tertis similarly negates rests in favour of sustaining the sound: examples of this practice can be found on his recording of John Ireland's *The Holy Boy*, which is analysed below. Nedbal's lengthening and shortening of notated rhythmic values in *Du bist die Ruh* is also heard in his continuously varied execution of dotted rhythms: for example, he lengthens/underdots the notes in m. 8, 12, 16 and 18, while overdotting the thirty-second notes in m. 22 and 24. The effect of these dottings is to create variation: the lengthening in m. 8 sounds calming, while the overdotting in m. 22 signals a more driven approach.

Portamento

Nedbal uses heavy portamento throughout this recording, with a frequency and placement that, on one hand, resembles the six early vocal recordings discussed below, and on the other hand, would be deemed excessive by the standards of today's MSPs. Indeed, Nedbal's portamento often appears in every bar, for example, between m. 76 and 78, and at times in every two or three bars. He uses predominantly PL (as in m. 18 and m. 22) and PS (as in m. 25) types,[151] with the finger fully connected to the string throughout the slide and with the bow sustaining the sound to create a heavy sliding effect. All six of the early-recorded singers studied apply the same PS portamento as Nedbal on the long downwards intervals in m. 23 and 25, while John McCormack and Johanna Gadski are the only two to apply portamento at m. 18 in the same way as Nedbal. Both John McCormack and Elena Gerhardt use a portamento similar to Nedbal's in m. 70. This illustrates a broader connection between the portamento use of early-recorded singers and string players: a theme that will reoccur throughout these analyses.

---

150 Richard Wagner, *Isolde's Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde*, Lilli Lehmann, Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Lindemann, recorded July 2nd, 1907*,* reissued 1993, *Lilli Lehmann: The Complete Recordings,* Symposium 1207/8 (CD).

151 These Portamento types are discussed above: PL is Portamento Langsam (slur, sliding with the same finger) and PS is Portamento Schnell (slur, sliding with two different fingers).

Vibrato

While I discuss Nedbal's vibrato at length in the analysis of *Romanticky Kus* below, it is apparent that he uses the device more frequently on his recording of *Du bist die Ruh*. In m. 10 - 11 there is a striking instance of fast continuous vibrato, which shows that Nedbal was indeed capable of vibrating in this manner despite his general propensity for a slow, ornamental vibrato that often tapers off or starts part way through a note rather than being fully present throughout an entire note length. This is part of the Joachim-like approach to vibrato that Milsom ascribes to Nedbal: an approach that may sound odd to modern string players, who generally play late-19th-century music with wide and continuous vibrato.[152] A further element connecting Nedbal to Joachim is his timbre, which comes across as robust due to his continuous legato. By contrast, the Franco-Belgian violists discussed below, Léon Van Hout and Maurice Vieux, have a more nasal sound coupled with a quick and narrow vibrato.

Pitch Ornamentation

Nedbal's approach to pitch ornamentation (adding non-notated pitches mostly in the form of grace notes or trills) resembles that of early-recorded singers, and while none of those surveyed use the practice in *Du bist die Ruh,* there are numerous instances in Patti's recording of *Voi Che Sapete,* for example, where added grace notes are often combined with portamento.[153] For his part, Nedbal uses pitch ornamentation in *Du bist die Ruh* by adding grace notes to the motives in m. 18, 22 and 64, and in the latter, his added notes sound remarkably like the 'cracking' of the human voice. In early vocal recordings as well, one often hears the singer, overcome with emotion, overshooting the intended pitch and thereby creating a kind of ornament. Leech-Wilkinson describes this ornament as the 'Italian sob,' in relation to how integral speech sounds that signify emotion were to early-recorded singing.[154]

3.4.2) Lionel Tertis and Arnold Bax, piano: *Du bist die Ruh* Op. 59 no. 3 by Franz Schubert (recorded 1927)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.4.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.4.2.

Below I compare Nedbal and Tertis's recordings of their viola/piano

---

[152] Milsom, liner notes to *A - Z of String Players*.
[153] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Voi che sapete* from *Le Nozze di Figaro,* Adelina Patti, recorded 1905, reissued 1993, *The Era of Adelina Patti,* Nimbus Records, NI 7840/41 (CD).
[154] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, Chapter 8.3, Paragraph 78, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html.

arrangements of Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh,* examining some of the similarities and differences between the two, and illustrating the common stylistic language shared by both performers as well as the diversity they achieve within that language. Both performances share a propensity for tempo modification, with quicker piano solo sections contrasted with slower piano/viola sections, frequent and heavy portamento, and rhythmic alteration. Nedbal and Tertis diverge, however, in their use of vibrato, their placement of portamento, and the extremity of their tempo modification.

The two performances also make cuts in different places. Nedbal cuts the second strophe at m. 26, therefore in his version we hear the upper octave for the first time in m. 54, along with the final strophe's more dramatic change of harmony. However, Tertis plays the second strophe, delivering it an octave higher than the first, before making a cut in the final strophe from m. 61 to m. 76, using the empty bar in m. 61 to jump to the next section. Unlike Nedbal, Tertis arrives at the final strophe already playing in the upper octave, emphasizing its more dramatic harmony by expanding his dynamic range, starting softly and building up to a loud climax in the final section. It is notable that Tertis's pianist, Arnold Bax, adds an extra bar to the piano part in m. 28 and m. 51, thereby mirroring the material in m. 27 and extending the phrase. It is highly likely that Bax, who was an accomplished composer in his own right, felt that such alterations to Schubert's notation were fully permissible.

Comparing Tempo, Rhythm, Portamento and Vibrato

Tertis's tempo is in the m.m.♩ = 80 range, while Nedbal's is much slower—mostly between m.m. ♩ = 40 - 58. Both recordings share a pattern of slowing throughout the first strophe after a quicker piano introduction, with the pianist rushing in the interludes. On Tertis's recording, pianist Arnold Bax plays with his 'hands together' throughout, making little or no use of the prominent arpeggiation and dislocation heard on Nedbal's recording. Bax uses rubato in the form of beat-to-beat variation and by dislocating the piano accompaniment from the viola, whereas Nedbal's pianist creates a more multi-layered texture through arpeggiation and dislocation. As a result, Nedbal's recording sounds far more extreme in its layering than Tertis's.

Nedbal uses mostly PL and PS portamento types, while Tertis uses a wider range of types such as L portamento in m. 35, where he changes from the A to the D string, creating a warm timbre. Remarkably, both players apply portamento at nearly identical locations throughout, however Nedbal's are more drawn out than Tertis's, which tend to be quicker. Tertis's use of a wider variety of portamento types results in greater contrast

when compared with Nedbal's more monotonous approach. However, both recordings use portamento with a frequency and heaviness that would be frowned upon in today's MSPs. Tertis's wider, more prevalent vibrato is also apparent throughout, and he uses a greater dynamic range than Nedbal. Tertis, unlike Nedbal, does not however add any pitch ornaments. Tertis's approach to rhythmic flexibility sounds more smooth and shaped than Nedbal's, which comes across as unyielding.

3.4.3) Violists and Singers: *Du bist die Ruh* Op. 59 no. 3 by Franz Schubert on Early Vocal Recordings

The recordings can be found in Appendix II - recordings 3.4.3.1 – 3.4.3.6 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.4.3.

Nedbal and Tertis's recordings of their own viola/piano arrangements of Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh* can be fruitfully compared with recordings of the lied by early-20th-century singers. This was a popular work at the beginning of the 20th century, judging from the sheer number of recordings of it that were made. Here I have examined six vocal versions—those of Johanna Gadski (1903), Lilli Lehmann (1907), Elena Gerhardt (1911), Julia Culp (1910), Karl Erb (1911) and John McCormack (1924)—looking at similarities and differences between them while also comparing them to the recordings by Nedbal and Tertis.[155] In so doing, what becomes clear is that Nedbal's and Tertis's general approach to tempo modification, rhythmic flexibility, and portamento is similar to that of the early-recorded singers, despite the striking differences observed on a detailed level between the two violists' recordings as examined above. Perhaps it could be said that both violists were attempting to emulate singers.

Tempo and Rhythm

All six of these vocal recordings, just like the two viola recordings, show variation in tempo between quicker piano solo sections and slower sung sections. Some performers, however, exaggerate these tempo modifications more than others: while all rush over the rising line from m. 54 - 60, for example, Lehmann and McCormack do so to a much greater extent, and in ways more similar to Nedbal's pronounced rushing than to Tertis's. There are also a wide variety of approaches to the piano accompaniments

[155] Franz Schubert, *Du Bist die Ruh,* Johanna Gadski, 1903, Victor 85025, Lilli Lehmann, Fritz Lindemann (piano), 1907, Columbia S 9001-B (78rpm), Elena Gerhardt, Arthur Nikisch (piano), 1911, ac 5105f (78rpm), Julia Culp, Otto Bake (piano), 1911, 04853 (78rpm), Karl Erb, Eduard Künneke (piano) 1911, xB 5456 (78rpm), John McCormack, Edwin Schneider (piano), 1924, Cc5030-2 (78rpm).

here, with highly arpeggiated versions heard on Nedbal's and Gadski's recordings, and with more vertically synchronised versions heard on Bax and Tertis's, Edwin Schneider and McCormack's, and Arthur Nikisch and Gerhardt's recordings. Nikisch, however, makes prevalent use of 'swung' or dotted notes in his sixteenths even though he plays without arpeggiation. The singers, just like the violists, also use a variety of over- and underdottings, some of which are connected with long portamenti that affect rhythmic texture, thereby demonstrating these performers' loose yet shared approach to the execution of notated rhythms.

Portamento

All of the singers use portamento frequently by the standards of MSPs, as do Tertis and Nedbal, albeit in varied ways. Figure 3.03, excerpted from the full annotated score comparing early-recorded singers of *Du bist die Ruh*, uses colour coding to show the location of portamenti used by each singer. Here, we can see that all of the singers used portamento on long descending intervals such as in m. 23, as do Tertis and Nedbal, while various approaches were taken to the placement of upward portamenti. Culp uses heavy downward portamenti but no upward sliding at all, while McCormack uses lighter downward slides and subtle upward L and A portamenti—his slides generally being quick yet highly varied. While nearly all of the singers slide to the top note in m. 60, Lehmann does not and instead slides one note earlier. The short slides used by both Tertis and Nedbal at m. 18 (and in analogous places) are used only by Gadski, Gerhardt and McCormack, while the others sing legato without using portamento. In general, however, singers are not limited by issues of fingering, bowing, string-crossing and hand position, and therefore tend to use a somewhat greater range of portamento types than either Nedbal or Tertis, sliding both before and after consonants with great freedom. These recordings all demonstrate the extent to which portamento was a routine part of the era's performance style.

Vibrato

While the vibrato width of the singers surveyed here is varied but generally quite narrow when compared with many of today's singers performing 19th-century repertoires in MSP style, all use frequent and continuous vibrato in the style of Tertis, with none using Nedbal's more ornamental approach. The width of the various singers' vibrato is also quite comparable to Tertis's and far wider than Nedbal's. Perhaps Nedbal's vibrato more closely matches the style of a much older generation of singers

like Patti who, instead of making the device integral to their timbre throughout, used a straight tone on some notes while ornamenting others.

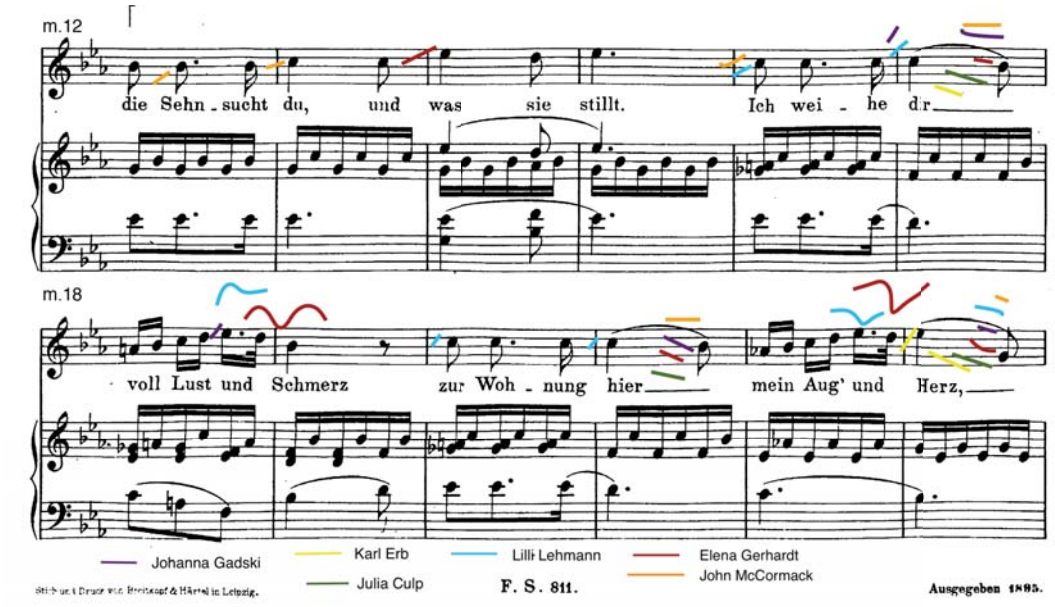

Figure 3.03: Singers' portamento use in Franz Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*.

These recordings show that while both Nedbal and Tertis use tempo modification, rhythmic flexibility and portamento in ways similar to early-recorded singers, Tertis's continuous and wider vibrato is closer to that of the early-recorded singers surveyed above than Nedbal's more ornamental use of the device. Nevertheless, early-recorded violists and singers shared a common stylistic language—one substantially different from today's MSPs.[156]

3.4.4) Oskar Nedbal and Unknown Pianist: *Romanticky Kus* Op. 18 by Oskar Nedbal (recorded 1910)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.4.4 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.4.4.

Oskar Nedbal's recording of his own composition, *Romanticky Kus*, demonstrates ornamental use of vibrato, heavy portamento, arpeggiation/dislocation, as well as a flexible approach to tempo that belies his notation. These gaps between notation and

[156] It should be noted that Kristine Healy has recently examined how both historical and modern instrumentalists purport to use singing as a model for their performances in her PhD dissertation *Imagined Vocalities: Exploring Voice in the Practice of Instrumental Music Performance* (University of Huddersfield, 2018). I leave it to the critical reader to decide whether my analyses demonstrate a strong relationship between early-recorded singing and viola playing or whether they are an example of the 'constructed vocality' (196) to which Healy refers.

performance in Nedbal's approach to tempo are notable, given that he is both the performer and composer of this piece—indeed, nearly all of his tempo choices are at surprising odds with the notated score. This is striking given the assumption in MSPs that adhering to a composer's notated performance directions is both necessary and desirable.

Ornamental Vibrato

Nedbal's ornamental approach to vibrato sounds both infrequent and non-continuous. However, examining spectrograms of Nedbal's recordings reveals a more frequent use of vibrato than may be, at times, audible to the naked ear. Vibrato speed is measured by analysing the number of cycles of pitch undulation per second and width is measured by adding the total span of the pitch oscillation from the lowest point below the note played to the highest point above it. Using a spectrogram as a tool for visually portraying vibrato speed allows for accurate measurements of a performer's vibrato regardless of how our perception of this vibrato may be affected by surface noise. In contemporary viola playing, vibrato speed tends to be in the range of 5 - 7 oscillations per second, while width often varies depending on pitch height and string: as wide as approximately 2 semitones on the C string and as narrow as 1 semitone or less for higher A string pitches.

Nedbal's vibrato speed on this recording is slow by any standard—sometimes as slow as 4,6 oscillations per second in the low register and even as slow as 5,6 oscillations per second in the higher register, which is slower than Tertis's vibrato at its slowest in the low register (see section 3.10.7 for more on Tertis's vibrato speed). The width of Nedbal's vibrato is also surprising, extending over 2.5 semitones at times. When analysed closely, it is also apparent that Nedbal's vibrato is uneven, in that it is often interrupted multiple times over the course of a single note. The spectrogram image below (Figure 3.04) shows the pitch vibration of recorded frequencies on the vertical axis and the recording over time represented by bar numbers on the horizontal axis. The darker red colours represent the fundamental pitches of the piano and the viola, the lighter green colours represent overtones, and the yellow colouring represents pitch oscillation. Gaps in vibrato can be seen in *Romanticky Kus* on the first beat of m. 28 (28.1) where pitch oscillation is no longer visible.

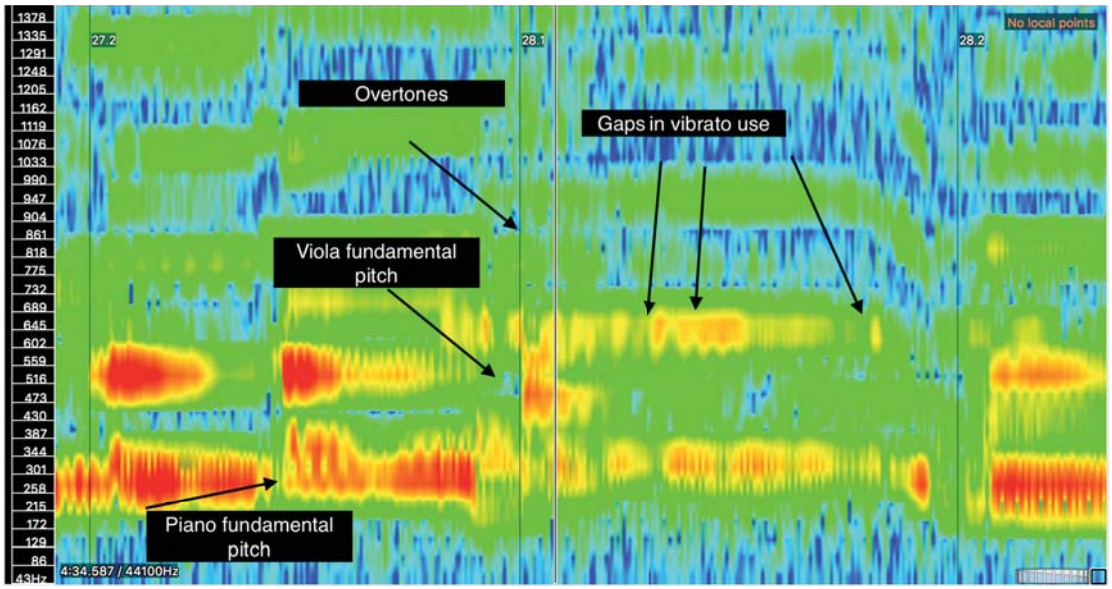

Figure 3.04: Vibrato gaps and unevenness in Oskar Nedbal's recording of *Romanticky Kus* m. 27 - 28.

I have marked Nedbal's use of vibrato graphically in the score example below (Figure 3.05), with yellow lines showing on which notes he uses the device and where in the note it appears.

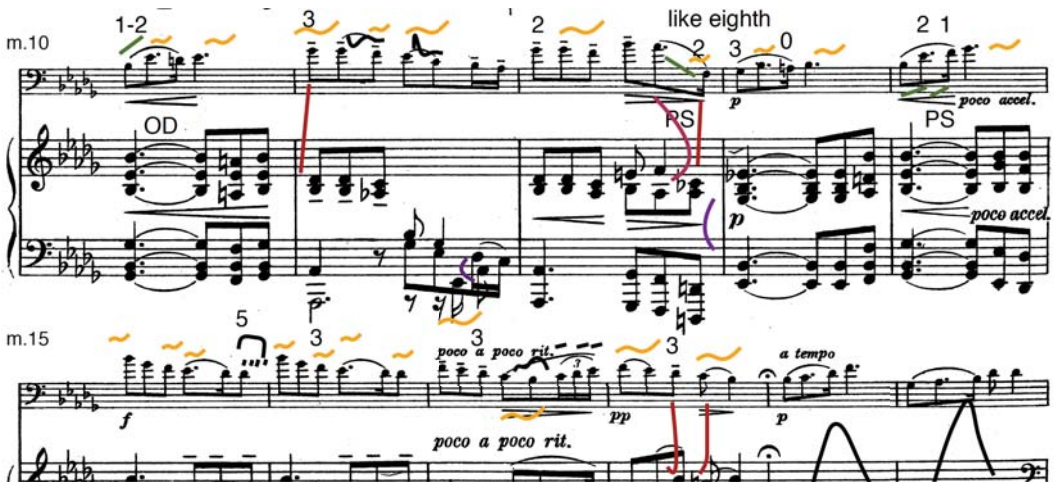

Figure 3.05: Nedbal's use of Vibrato in *Romanticky Kus*.

Between m. 15 - 18, Nedbal uses vibrato on 16 out of 19 eighth notes. As my analysis of the recording shows, he applies vibrato on the majority of longer melodic notes. It is notable, then, that from m. 40 - 42 and between m. 84 - 89 he uses no vibrato on the long notes where the viola plays the bass line. Vibrato is thus more pronounced in melodic material and not used when accompanying. This is similar to the use of vibrato

by some early-recorded string quartets, where middle voice or accompanying performers use less vibrato than melodic players. Nedbal's use of vibrato is remarkably similar to that of Jirí Herold, the violist who replaced him in the Czech String Quartet. Both players often refrain from vibrating bass lines or accompaniments while using vibrato more heavily in melodic lines. Herold takes this approach, for example, in the Czech String Quartet's recording of Antonin Dvořák's *'American'* quartet, which is discussed in Chapter Four.

Another feature of Nedbal's vibrato is the way he uses the device to ornament individual notes. On most vibrated notes, he starts vibrating either at the beginning of the note or uses the device in the middle of the note, allowing it to taper off towards the end so that each note is vibrated separately. The slowness and thinness of Nedbal's vibrato is striking when compared with the greater speed and width of Tertis's vibrato. A constrained ornamental vibrato, rather than a continuous and prominent one, is a feature of Nedbal's recordings, yet this vibrato is also applied in varied ways to beginnings, middles, and endings of notes. Nedbal's uneven approach to vibrato is thus at odds with contemporary MSPs where string players often take an all or nothing approach, using vibrato either continuously or not at all (like when playing 18th-century works, for instance, where vibrato is considered by many to be stylistically inappropriate, even though period treatises often describe vibrato as an ornament).

Portamento

Nedbal's portamento in *Romanticky Kus* is both slow and heavy, with PL portamenti resulting from the use of the same finger for sliding between notes, as in m. 41, 71, and 73. The PS portamenti in m. 3, 4, and 7 are also heavy and prominent. Nedbal's choice of fingerings remains relatively simple and centred around first position, while in similar works (like Grieg's *Jeg elsker dig*, analysed in section 3.10.7), Tertis uses technically challenging fingerings resulting in varied portamenti that are more similar to those heard on early vocal recordings. Nedbal's simpler approach here, however, means he often changes positions only where necessary or convenient, further implying that his use of portamento was not only part of an aesthetic approach to the instrument but was also part of the standard technical approach to changing positions. This makes it difficult to pinpoint whether portamento results from his left-hand technique or from an aesthetic approach to fingering choices, as seems to be the case with Tertis. Slides like Nedbal's, which inevitably result from routine changes of left hand position, were

derogatorily referred to by violinist and pedagogue Carl Flesch (1873 - 1944) as 'omnibus' portamenti, and this kind of routine sliding is naturally frowned upon in today's MSPs.[157]

Arpeggiation, Dislocation

There is continual dislocation between Nedbal and his pianist on this recording, creating rhythmic ambiguity. In the piano, the majority of the chords are arpeggiated, and most of the playing between the left and right hand is dislocated. There are some notable exceptions, however, such as in m. 5 - 6, where not dislocating the hands creates contrast with the preceding bars. This demonstrates how playing 'hands together' can sound like a special effect when dislocation is the default approach, similar to the '*erhellt* moment' in m. 59 of Nedbal's recording of *Du bist die Ruh*. M. 7 is also notable for a combination of dislocation in the piano part and de-synchronisation with the viola line, creating a multi-layered texture where four different voices (viola melody, two layers of counterpoint in the piano, and harmony) move independently of one another. [158] This is a striking example of how multi-layering can reveal the simultaneous movement of different lines in different directions at the same time. At other moments, the pianist plays the chords strictly together when the viola is dislocated from the piano, as for example between m. 63 - 66 where the viola plays broken chords, and from m. 51 onwards where the viola plays grace notes. Generally, however, a lack of an overall sense of rhythmic steadiness or pulse results from the continual use of dislocation throughout. By contrast, expectations of 'tidiness' in today's MSPs preclude desynchronised playing of this nature.

Tempo

One of the most remarkable features of this performance is the relationship of the chosen tempi to the notated score. From m. 40 Nedbal totally ignores his own suggested m.m. ♩=108 for the middle section marked Un poco piu mosso. Rather, his tempo is radically slower, at somewhere between m.m. ♩=45 - 60. Taking this middle section at half tempo is a notable decision, given both the time limitations of a 78rpm record (around 4'30) and the fact that nearly a third of the piece had to be cut to fit the recording on a single side. At the poco meno mosso in m. 85, rather than slowing, Nedbal and his pianist push the tempo forward to m. 95, where the pianist cuts the lengths of the chords, maintaining a sense of momentum towards the conclusion. The

---

[157] Carl Flesch, *Violin Fingering: Its Theory and Practice* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966), 52 – 53.
[158] I borrow the concept of 'multi-layeredness' from Slåttebrekk and Harrison. This refers to multiple layers in the music pulling in different directions. See Slåttebrekk and Harrison, *Chasing the Butterfly*, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=207.

recording lasts 4'27, which means that the performers may have run out of space on the one side and had to finish quickly. In any case, the performance shows total 'infidelity' to the literal notation of Nedbal's own score. Why does Nedbal take such a slow tempo for the middle section and then rush at the end, when precisely the opposite is indicated in the score?

Nedbal's total disregard for his own notated metronome markings and verbal tempo indications is unusual even by the standards of the day. The proportionality that these indications in the score set out for the work is shifted on this recording, with the middle section becoming longer and weightier than it might be in a quicker tempo. Nedbal's choice of tempi as a performer of his own piece could not be deduced from the notated score, showing how unreliable scores might be as indications of how composers may have performed their own works. It is remarkable, too, that even seemingly empirical performance directions here, such as metronome markings, are utterly ignored by the composer whilst playing. This phenomenon is fascinating in light of Köpp's assertion that many early-20th-century performers wilfully ignored and even sought to overturn performance directions in notated scores, as a result of the perception that scores were over-notated.[159] The numerous examples of composers taking this route when recording their own works suggests a culture of performance in which adherence to notated detail was of little concern.

A Contemporary Comparison

Currently, the only commercially available recording of this piece is a 1996 Panton recording by cellist Michal Kaňka and pianist Jaromír Klepáč. Comparing this recording with Nedbal's shows how large the gap is between the composer's approach and a contemporary version rooted in MSPs. Arpeggiation, dislocation, multi-layeredness, portamento and ornamental vibrato are all absent, as one might expect, from the modern recording.[160] The tempo and metronome indications are also strictly followed, and a regular pulse is maintained throughout—further demonstrating the wide gap between MSPs and Nedbal's early-recorded approach.

---

[159] Köpp, "Das Nichtnotierte und das Nichtnotierbare."

[160] Oskar Nedbal, *Romanticky Kus*, Michal Kaňka, Jaromír Klepáč on *Famous Czech Miniatures for Cello and Piano,* Panton 710370-2, 1996.

3.5) Léon Van Hout

The Belgian violist Léon Van Hout (1864 - 1945) was born in Liège and died in Brussels after a career as Principal Violist at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, and as violist in the Ysaÿe Quartet. He also taught at the Brussels Conservatoire, where he was responsible for the education of a generation of Belgian violists.[161] Only recently have two 78rpm discs from Van Hout's recorded output come to light. They feature Nicolas Gervasio's *Feuille de printemps* and Robert Schumann's *Abendlied*. Three additional records listed in the Odeon catalogue dating from 1905 - 1906, including *Sarabande* by Béon (first name unknown), *Plaisir d'amour* by Jean Paul Égide Martini, and *Romance* by Karl Davydov, are presumed lost.[162] These dates suggest, however, that the two recordings of works by Gervasio and Schumann for the same label were likely made at or around same time. Like many other early recordings, Van Hout's lost 78s were likely victims either of the two world wars that ravaged the European continent or of the fast pace of technological obsolescence. To my knowledge, I am the first to analyse or comment on the two recently discovered Van Hout recordings, as they have yet to be released publicly in digitally-remastered form.[163] Van Hout is the oldest violist of the Franco-Belgian school to have left behind recordings, and his quick vibrato, dislocation around the beat, and varied use of portamento are reminiscent of violinist Eugène Ysaÿe's (1858 - 1931) recordings—unsurprising, given Van Hout's career as the violist in the Ysaÿe Quartet.

3.5.1) Léon Van Hout and Unknown Pianist: *Feuilles de printemps 'Bluette'* by Nicolas Gervasio (exact recording date unknown; likely 1905-1906)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.5.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.5.1.

Van Hout recorded a work entitled *Feuilles de printemps 'Bluette'* by a little-known French composer named Nicolas Gervasio. A number of Gervasio's works can be found in the National Library of France, but scant information on his background is available. This small salon piece is an example of the kinds of works that were popular at the turn of the 20th century, with their relatable melodies embedded in an accessible harmonic

---

161 Maurice Riley, *The History of the Viola Volume I* (Ann Arbor: Braun-Brumfield, 1993), 259.
162 Henry König, "Labelliste von Odeon 'B'," *Musiktiteldatabas*, accessed November 16, 2017, http://www.musiktiteldb.de/Label/Ode_x42.html.
163 I am indebted to Tully Potter for making these recordings available to me.

language. In today's MSPs, the focus is often on canonic masterworks, and as a result many of these pieces have been forgotten and are no longer performed. In any case, the recording starts with a spoken introduction, common for many Pathé records, where the title of the work and Monsieur Van Hout's name are announced in French.[164]

Rhythmic Flexibility

One of the key features of this recording is Van Hout's continuous dislocation from the piano accompaniment. He allows the melody line to follow its own direction and continually places notes early or late in relation to the piano accompaniment, creating exactly the kind of multi-layering that is so common in early-recorded style, yet deemed so 'untidy' in the context of MSPs. An example of this is Van Hout's early arrival in m. 17, before the pianist reaches the downbeat. Likewise, going into m. 20, Van Hout creates extra layering by arriving well ahead of his pianist while at the same time the pianist dislocates basses from the right-hand melodic material, creating three separately-timed arrivals on the same downbeat. During the middle section of the piece, in m. 28, Van Hout's timing on the second-beat eighth notes is late, placing them behind the piano. In the following bar, however, he places the same motive early, ahead of the piano. From m. 35 as shown in Figure 3.06, Van Hout places his melody line ahead of the piano accompaniment so that even his elongated C sharp does not give the pianist enough time to catch up. He approaches m. 37 in a similar manner with a long C sharp, and his entrance is again early. He then continues to rush and is constantly ahead of the pianist through to m. 42. Generally, one gets the impression that Van Hout is both continuously and deliberately placing his notes around rather than with the piano accompaniment.

[164] Van Hout makes three small cuts on his recording of this work to: the opening eight-bar piano introduction, the section from m. 44 - 49, and the piano interlude m. 55 - 57.

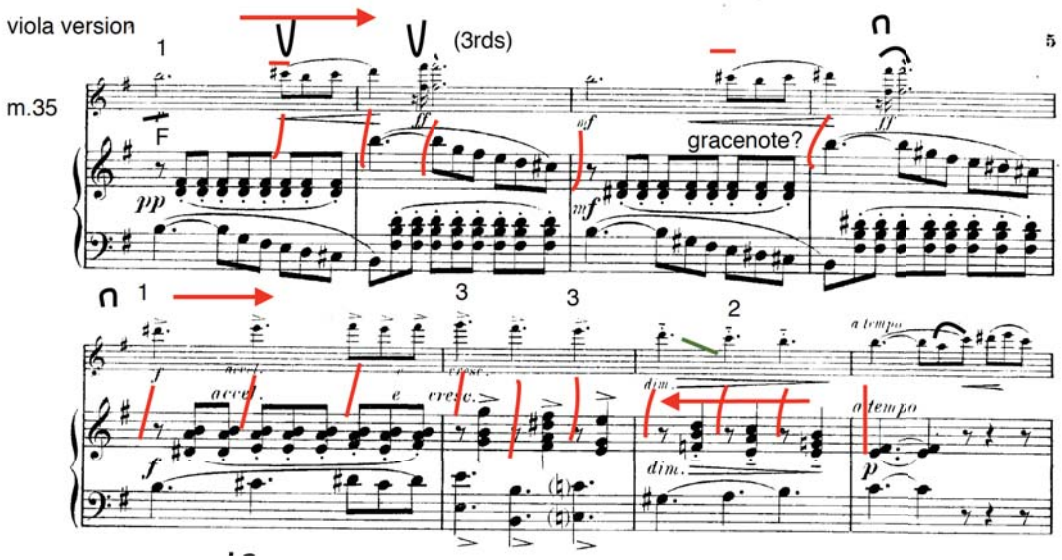

Figure 3.06: Leon Van Hout's dislocation in Gervasio's *Feuille de printemps*.

There are also some instances of rhythmic flexibility here that are connected to early-recorded vocal style. In m. 54, for example, Van Hout slows broadly and the pianist places his chord late on the fermata, much like an orchestra slowing into a long fermata in an opera aria. The dislocation in m. 73 and 74 between the right hand of the piano and the viola is also reminiscent of early-recorded operatic duets, where two voices have parallel melodic material yet follow their own path in relation to one another, creating a multi-layered texture. An example of this technique in operatic repertoire can be heard on Enrico Caruso's and Antonio Scotti's recording of Verdi's *Solenne in questa'ora* from *La Forza del Destino.*[165] This parallel but not synchronous style of melodic playing is a remarkable quality of Van Hout's approach and is similar to that of Ysaÿe's on many of his recordings.

Vibrato

If we recall that Nedbal uses sparing ornamental vibrato and that Tertis uses frequent continuous vibrato, Van Hout uses a vibrato that is more continuous and frequent than Nedbal's. Unlike Tertis, Van Hout is also prone to playing both longer notes and individual notes within a melodic phrase without any vibrato. Vibrato is however present for the entire duration of the long notes in m. 11, yet Van Hout uses no vibrato on most moving eighth notes, nor on the long harmonic high A mid-melody in m. 28, nor on the lower octave A in m. 30, nor on the top B in m. 32—to which he slides

[165] Giuseppe Verdi, *Solenne in questa'ora* from *La Forza del Destino,* Enrico Caruso and Antonio Scotti, recorded 1906, reissued 2000, *Enrico Caruso: The Complete Recordings vol.3 1906 - 1908*, Naxos 8.110708 (CD).

with the fourth finger. Much like Ysaÿe's vibrato, Van Hout's is also quick and intense, resulting in vibrancy and brilliance of tone—with notable examples on the high Bs in m. 50 and m. 72—in contrast to the slower and less shimmering vibrato of Nedbal, Tertis, or German violist Arthur Post, once again demonstrating the diversity of approaches amongst string players of the era.

Portamento

Van Hout's portamento is frequent, varied, and often quick, with prominent use of the C type throughout.[166] He frequently changes bow before or after sliding, which adds contrast to his portamenti. For example, in m. 15 he creates a kind of ornamented PS portamento by first changing the bow, resulting in the open A string being repeated before he slides upwards. Further examples of portamento after bow changes occur in m. 64 and 70. He also uses this technique a number of times on his recording of Schumann's *Abendlied,* resulting in grace notes followed by portamenti similar to those heard on Patti's recording of Mozart's *Voi che Sapete.*[167] Van Hout also uses slower, heavier portamenti here, such as the C portamento in m. 72 and the downwards PS slide in m. 76. The result is a diversity of portamento types, adding to the vibrant brilliance of Van Hout's tone. Like Nedbal and Tertis, however, Van Hout's portamento is frequent and heavy by MSP standards.

Van Hout and Ysaÿe

One of the most interesting aspects of this recording is its similarity to Ysaÿe's recorded output in terms of rhythmic flexibility, portamento, and vibrato. The way Van Hout times his melodic material around the piano accompaniment on this recording also resembles the approach taken by Ysaÿe on many of his own recordings.[168] By comparing Van Hout's recordings with Ysaÿe's, it is possible to speculate about the ways in which the two musicians may have functioned together in the context of the Ysaÿe Quartet. Based on the dislocation, portamenti, sound, and vibrato one hears on their solo recordings, one might expect the quartet to have made frequent use of the same devices. PL portamenti might have been used often between adjacent notes, with PS and C techniques applied to longer intervals. Likely, the sound of the quartet was based around

---

166 C portamento refers to the *Cercare la nota* type discussed above in section 3.3.
20 Mozart, *Voi che sapete,* Patti (78rpm).
168 Philip analyses this phenomenon on Ysaÿe's recording of Henri Vieuxtemp's *Rondino.* Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 66.

a quick, narrow, and intense vibrato on long melodic notes, with shorter notes left unvibrated, and with the occasional open string, harmonic, or unvibrated motive creating distinct non-vibrato timbres within melodic lines. In Chapter Four I go on to examine some early-recorded string quartets in greater detail, pointing to broadly overlapping stylistic approaches with the string players examined in the current chapter. In any case, the soloistic approach displayed by Van Hout's dislocation, shimmering vibrato and varied portamento reveals him to have been a confident and imaginative performer, and his skill likely played a role in encouraging composers of his day to reimagine the viola's possibilities. It is no coincidence, then, that composer Claude Debussy wrote a prominent viola part for his string quartet, which was dedicated to the Ysaÿe Quartet.[169]

3.5.2) Van Hout (recording date unknown), Tertis (recorded 1920), and Ysaÿe (recorded 1912): *Abendlied* Op. 85 no. 12 by Robert Schumann

The recordings can be found in Appendix II - recordings 3.5.2.1 – 3.5.2.3 and the annotated scores are in Appendix III – scores 3.5.2.1 – 3.5.2.3.

The second of Van Hout's recently-discovered recordings is of Robert Schumann's *Abendlied*, an often-recorded work at the beginning of the 20th century. Ysaÿe, Van Hout, and Tertis all recorded the piece, offering a direct opportunity to compare their various performing styles. All three performances make use of similar expressive devices, including wide fluctuations of tempo from beat to beat, rushing, slowing, frequent portamento, and significant use of dislocation by their accompanying pianists. This supports the view that while there may be wide differences of approach between individual early-recorded performers, the expressive tools they use come from a shared performance style—one substantially different from today's MSPs.

Vibrato

There are some significant differences in vibrato use between the three performers. Van Hout's vibrato can be characterised as quick compared with Tertis's, with Tertis's vibrato speed averaging 6 cycles per second while Van Hout's reaches 6,75 and at times 7 cycles per second. The narrowness of Van Hout's vibrato is also notable when compared with Tertis's. To illustrate, on the fourth beat of m. 4, Van Hout's vibrato covers a range of less than a semitone, while Tertis's covers more than a

[169] David Code, "Debussy's String Quartet in the Brussels Salon of 'La Libre Esthetique,'" *Journal of 19th-Century Music* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 257 - 287.

semitone; incidentally, Ysaÿe uses no vibrato on this note. Moving between vibrated and unvibrated notes is a characteristic of both Ysaÿe and Van Hout's recordings. Van Hout sets up his open G-string in m. 15 by transitioning to non-vibrato in the previous measure before slowly applying vibrato in m. 16 and widening its range. Van Hout applies the same technique to the long A flat in m. 16, starting without vibrato then slowly adding vibrato towards the middle of the note before tapering it off: an approach that can be heard on Adelina Patti's recording of Vincenzo Bellini's *Ah non credea.*[170] In m. 4, Ysaÿe uses the same technique, increasing his vibrato before letting it taper off completely on the last note of the bar. Ysaÿe uses the quickest and narrowest vibrato of the three (which is no surprise given he is playing the violin), Van Hout's vibrato is a little wider but still quick, and Tertis uses wide, slow and continuous vibrato.

Tempo Modification and Rhythmic Flexibility

There are wide modifications of tempo on all three recordings as well as nuanced flexibilities of rhythm. While all three performances reach m.m. ♩=30 at their slowest points, Ysaÿe's quickest moments only reach m.m.♩=52 while Tertis's and Van Hout's reach m.m.♩=70. On all three recordings, the pianist rushes from m. 18 to 19, placing each successive chord earlier, with Tertis's recording being the most extreme in this regard. This rushing through a moment that might otherwise seem static because of the long trills thus holds the listener's attention and propels the music forward, whereas simply relying on a regular pulse as a performer in MSP style might do could cause these bars to sound directionless. Generally, all three of these recordings use a range of tempi much wider than would be considered proper in today's MSPs. These performances also feature dislocation between melody and accompaniment, though in Van Hout's version this is most pronounced, with Ysaÿe's being somewhat less so and Tertis's even less still. Van Hout's recording combines dislocation in the piano part coupled with the placement of the viola notes around the piano chords, as in m. 6, and from m. 24 all of Van Hout's notes are dislocated from the piano accompaniment. In m. 9 and 10 the consistent placement of the piano chords either before or after the viola creates a multi-layered effect. Van Hout also makes use of swung eighth notes, such as on the third beat of m. 6 and in m. 21. This is in line with Van Hout's propensity for multi-layered playing as demonstrated on his recording of Gervasio's *Feuilles de Printemps*.

---

[170] Vincenzo Bellini, *Ah non credea* from *La Sonnambula,* Adelina Patti, recorded 1906, reissued 1993 on *The Era of Adelina Patti,* Nimbus Records, NI 7840/41 (CD).

Portamento

All three recordings feature frequent portamenti, with Van Hout using 27 instances of the device, Tertis 40, and Ysaÿe 35, in a piece that lasts a mere 30 bars. This is a remarkable amount of sliding by MSP standards. Despite using portamento less often than Tertis, however, Van Hout applies the technique in a highly audible manner. His slides are long and drawn out, and he maintains bow contact with the string at all times while sliding, making portamento a highly recognisable component of his performance. All three performers also use multiple portamento types, thereby creating variety, with Tertis using C, PS, and A types in m. 26 and 27. In all three recordings, rarely a bar goes by without at least one slide.

Commonalities and Differences in Schumann's Abendlied

Comparing Van Hout's recording with Ysaÿe's reveals commonalities between the two musicians with regards to a narrow and quick vibrato, combinations of vibrato and non-vibrato, varied portamento, and frequent dislocation around the piano accompaniment. These commonalities likely result from both players' inculcation in the Franco-Belgian culture of string playing, as supported by other early recordings of performers from this school.[171]

There are also some pronounced differences between Ysaÿe and Van Hout, with Ysaÿe using the A portamento regularly, whereas Van Hout does not.[172] However, Van Hout does use the A portamento frequently on his recording of *Feuille de printemps*. Like Tertis, Ysaÿe often stays on one string for whole passages, playing high up on the A string, as for example at the end of m. 20. Ysaÿe also makes more frequent use of swung notes than Van Hout. Tertis's vibrato is wider and used continuously throughout; he does, however, use varied portamento and more discrete dislocation.

While there are pronounced differences between the three recordings, they all feature widespread use of portamento, tempo flexibility and dislocation, in ways that lie far outside of the boundaries of MSPs. All three players thus share a common expressive language in the way these devices are used, with each speaking their own particular dialect *of* that language.

---

[171] For an extensive overview on the topic, see David Milsom, "The Franco-Belgian School of Violin Playing: Towards an Understanding of Chronology and Characteristics, 1850-1925," *Ad Parnassum* 11, no. 21 (October 2014).

[172] A portamento refers to the *Antizipazione* type, where the slide takes place before the bow change as discussed above in section 3.3.

3.6) Arthur Post

While Van Hout can be viewed as a representative of turn-of-the century Franco-Belgian viola playing, Arthur Post (1869 - 1936) comes from a distinctively German background. The two performers demonstrate stylistic differences related to their respective national traditions on their recordings while also evidencing period-based commonalities. Post's 'German' approach can be heard in his sparing, wide and ornamental use of vibrato, and the heavier quality of timbre he obtains from the viola, as compared with Van Hout's quick, continuous vibrato and shimmering, brilliant timbre.

Post was a graduate of the conservatoire in Berlin and obtained his first teaching position in the 1890s at the conservatoire in Mannheim, where he taught his younger brother Willy Post.[173] The brothers, along with siblings Max and Richard, went on to found the Brüder-Post Quartett in 1911. The group played throughout Germany until Arthur's death in the 1930s. The Brüder-Post Quartett was one of the first German quartets to make recordings, one of which is analysed in detail in Chapter Four. Arthur Post also made two recordings for viola and piano: one of Bach's famous *Air* and the other of Jan Kalivoda's *Nocturne*.

3.6.1) Arthur Post (recording date unknown) and Lionel Tertis (recorded 1919): *Air* from the *Orchestral Suite* no. 3, BWV 1068, by Johann Sebastian Bach

The recordings can be found in Appendix II - recordings 3.6.1 – 3.6.1.2 and the annotated scores are in Appendix III – scores 3.6.1 – 3.6.1.2.

The *Air* from Bach's *Orchestral Suite* no. 3, popularized by violinist August Wilhelmj (1845 - 1903) as 'Air on the G String,' was an often-performed piece at the turn of the 20th century, and Tertis's 1919 recording of the piece allows for a direct comparison with Post's.[174] In general, Post's recordings feature infrequent and slow vibrato, a great deal of rhythmic flexibility, simple fingering choices and heavy portamento, as compared with Tertis's continuous, quick vibrato and varied portamenti resulting from complex fingering choices.

Vibrato

Post's vibrato in Bach's *Air* is slow, averaging 5,5 cycles per second, compared

---

[173] "Biographische Notizen zur Familie Willy und Christel Post," Stadtarchiv Frankfurt an der Oder, 2004, accessed December 27, 2017, http://www.stadtarchiv-ffo.de/aktuell/2011/w_post/pdf/w_post_biogr.pdf.

[174] Interestingly, a number of cylinders attributed to August Wilhelmj have recently been discovered at the British Library. See "Wilhelmj Cylinders," Sounds British Library, https://sounds.bl.uk/classical-music/wilhelmj, accessed February 1, 2019.

with Tertis's average of 6 or higher. Despite Posts's slow vibrato speed, it is far narrower than Tertis's, and like Nedbal, Post leaves many shorter notes unvibrated. In sum, therefore, his vibrato can be described as slow, narrow, and ornamental. The majority of his 16th notes are played without vibrato, and he also makes frequent use of the open G string, as in m. 2 and 6. By comparison, Tertis vibrates most of the 16th notes and avoids the open G string in order to vibrate the long Gs. Tertis also makes use of fingerings high on both the G and C strings, while Post uses fingerings that are in the lower positions. Post also creates greater contrast between vibrato and non-vibrato notes by not tapering his vibrato off during notes in contrast to Nedbal and Van Hout.

Rhythmic Flexibility

Post's performance makes frequent use of dislocation and rhythmic flexibility, which, alongside both arpeggiation and dislocation of melody from accompaniment in the piano part, creates multi-layering—with different layers of counterpoint moving in independent rhythmic directions. A notable example of this occurs in m. 5, where the top voice of the piano line is dislocated from both its accompanying harmony as well as the viola line, creating an audible three-layered texture. Such de-synchronisation, along with moments of extreme slowing and rushing, obscure the continuity of pulse, making Post's performance at odds with MSPs in general and with contemporary performances of 18th-century works in particular. Examples of heavy slowing take place at the first and second endings of the A section in m. 6 as well as at the end of m. 20, while extreme rushing can be heard throughout the rising sequence in m. 19. In fact, Post generally tends to rush when pitches rise, and to slow when highlighting phrase endings and cadential harmonies—as does Tertis.

Portamento

The heavy portamento used here by Post closely resembles that generally used by other early-recorded violists, surprising though it may sound to modern ears not used to hearing the device in works by Bach. There are PS, PL, and C portamento types on this recording, including some long slides on the G string. Tertis, likewise, uses plenty of portamento on his recording of this same work, though his slides are often somewhat less drawn-out and languishing than Post's.

Timbre

Post's timbre sounds smooth and rich even though he uses a generally softer volume and wider dynamic range than Tertis, who plays in a hefty forte throughout. This

is interesting in light of Tertis's student Eric Coates's remark that Tertis's notorious pianissimo playing "carried to the farthest corner of the building."[175] Likely, Tertis's pianissimo was quite voluminous under the ear or in the range of the recording horn, resulting in a pianissimo character at a greater distance in a concert hall. We also should not rule out the possibility that Tertis made a conscious choice to use a full-bodied tone on his records in order to cut through the surface noise of the recording medium. This observable difference between Tertis and Post, given that they were working with the same type of recording technology, is nonetheless notable. Generally, the recordings discussed here reveal that Post's timbre can be characterised as rich yet soft, distinguishing his approach to tone production from that of Van Hout, Tertis, and Nedbal: Van Hout's tone is nasal, penetrating and bright, Tertis's is full and vibrant, and Nedbal's is rich while at the same time dark.

3.6.2) Arthur Post and Unknown Pianist: *Notturno* Op. 186 no. 1 by Jan Kalivoda (recording date unknown)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.6.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.6.2.

The second recording by Arthur Post is of the *Notturno* no. 1 by Czech-born Jan Kalivoda (1801-1866), who made a career as a composer, conductor and violinist. He held a long-term post at the court of Donaueschingen, allowing him to produce a prolific quantity of orchestral, choral and chamber music.[176] Kalivoda's music is only known to me, however, through this set of *Nocturnes*, which are often assigned to beginning viola students owing to their low degree of technical difficulty. That Post chose to record one of these works, however, suggests that they were likely fully accepted as concert pieces in the early-20th century. The characteristics of Post's playing here include narrow yet slow vibrato, frequent unvibrated notes, heavy portamento, and tempo and rhythmic flexibility.

Portamento

While Post uses relatively simple fingerings in this performance, his portamenti tend to be heavy, with plenty of the PL type owing to his frequent shifting with the same

---

[175] Eric Coates quoted in John White, *Lionel Tertis: The First Great Virtuoso of the Viola* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 15.

[176] John Daverio and Alena Nemcova, "Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda" in Stanley Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Second Edition*, Volume 13, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 330 - 331.

finger. PL slides can be heard in m. 6 and during all analogous moments, such as in m. 11, where Post makes use of several portamenti in a row. The use of such back-to-back portamenti, while frequently heard on early recordings, is very uncommon in today's MSPs. In m. 33 and 35, PL portamento is again used, and there is a remarkable physically uncomfortable 4 - 4 PL slide in m. 65, in what would be considered a crude fingering choice by today's standards. Playing these two notes in third position would allow the violist to shift imperceptibly back to the first position during the bow change, thus circumventing this heavy slide. Generally, Post's fingers seem to be stuck to the fingerboard and this, combined with his legato bow stroke, results in heavy sliding.

Tempo Modification

Post's use of tempo modification is prominent and extreme by the standards of MSPs and can be heard in his heavy slowing at the ends of phrases, as from m. 11 into 12, and at m. 58 and 65. While slowing to mark phrase endings and new sections is common in MSPs, many would likely view Post's slowing, through which he structures his performance, as out of context in relation to the overall tempo. Post's structured approach to slowing is clearly shown by the three equal, radical dips in tempo in m. 12, 58, and 65, with the first being around m.m. ♩= 34 and the latter two around m.m. ♩=30. The middle section of the piece is then played at around m.m. ♩=55. Post also rushes throughout this middle section, gradually gaining speed until m. 40. In the outer sections, there is observable slowing within each phrase interspersed with moments of pronounced rushing, as in m. 59 and m. 66 for example.

Like the recordings of Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh* discussed above, the piano introductions and interludes here are played at a faster tempo than the viola/piano sections. For example, from m. 2 into m. 3, the pianist reaches a quick tempo before slowing into Post's entrance. The pianist also rushes at m. 29, m. 31, and 33, each time pushing forward into Post's entrances. In m. 37, Post's heavy slowing is followed by rushing in the piano. This supports the general trend on early recordings where solo piano sections are rushed, while sections with solo instrument (or voice) and piano are often performed more slowly.

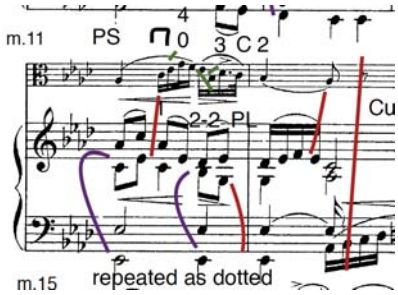

Figure 3.07: Notable multi-layeredness in m. 12 by Arthur Post in Kalivoda's *Notturno*.

Rhythmic Flexibility

On a local level, there are notable moments of multi-layeredness caused by dislocation in this performance. The most intriguing of these occurs in m. 12 (Figure 3.07), when the pianist plays the last sixteenth of the first beat after Post's resolution to the A flat on the second beat, creating a moment of dissonance during a standard dominant-tonic resolution. This is perhaps not coincidental, as this is also the moment where the performers cut to the upbeat of m. 29. Perhaps, then, the pianist was preoccupied with searching for the end of the cut and was thus unable to devote full attention to Post's unpredictable slowing.

There are also some jagged stops and starts, such as in m. 46 and 47, where Post slows the first beat while speeding up the third beat of the bar. Throughout the performance, swung sixteenth notes and frequent over- or under-dotting of rhythms can be heard. In m. 60 and 62, for example, Post underdots his sixteenth notes, placing them before the fourth sixteenth note in the piano while the pianist swings the sixteenth notes and dislocates the chords underneath them, creating a layered and somewhat chaotic texture. In the final seven measures of the piece, rather than slowing gradually as an MSP performer might do, Post slows suddenly in m. 73 but then rushes the second beat of m. 74, slows again, then rushes in m. 76, and only then slows definitively for the final chords. The result is that slowing is achieved here through a series of stops and starts. These kinds of sudden, jagged transitions between rushing and slowing are a characteristic of many early recordings and can be found in many of both Van Hout and Tertis's performances. The general result of all of these rhythmic flexibilities is that the viola and piano, while linked, are almost never entirely rhythmically synchronised.

3.7) Maurice Vieux, Jean Batalla piano: *Arioso et Allegro de concert* by Stan Golestan (recorded 1933)

The recordings can be found in Appendix II - recordings 3.7a – 3.7b and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.7.

The French violist Maurice Vieux (1884-1951), who came from a subsequent generation than Van Hout and Post, plays in a much more streamlined way, making his performances closer to today's MSPs. I have included Vieux here, however, in order to make a comparison with his older colleagues. While Vieux retains some traditional characteristics of the older Franco-Belgian style (as represented by Van Hout), like quick and narrow vibrato, he performs in a much cleaner and tidier style than his predecessors, using infrequent portamento and playing in a stable tempo.

Vieux was a student of Théophile Laforge, the first professor whose position was dedicated exclusively to the viola at the Paris conservatoire. Laforge was the dedicatee of Georges Enescu's (1881 - 1955) *Piéce de Concert*, which I have included in my recorded portfolio (in Chapter Five I discuss my approach to this piece). Vieux himself was the dedicatee of Max Bruch's *Romance* for viola and orchestra, along with a number of other contemporaneous compositions.[177] The only viola/piano recording of Vieux's currently available is of the *Arioso and Allegro de concert* by Stan Golestan. Golestan (1875 - 1956) was a Romanian-born composer who studied in Paris with Vincent d'Indy, Albert Roussel and Paul Dukas.[178] His *Arioso et Allegro de concert* of 1932 was a 'morceau de concours,' meaning it was the obligatory new composition students played for their exams at the conservatoire in Paris that year, and it too was dedicated to Maurice Vieux.

Below I examine Vieux's continuous vibrato, timbre, portamento, streamlined use of tempo, rhythmic flexibility, and articulation. His use of many of these devices is much more in line with current MSPs than any of the performers surveyed thus far.

Vibrato and Timbre

Vieux's vibrato is continuous but narrower than Tertis's, yet he vibrates more frequently and continuously than either Ysaÿe or Van Hout, leaving almost no notes unvibrated in lyrical passages. The general timbre produced by Vieux, which in part

---

177 Pierre Breton, "Maurice Vieux (1884 - 1951)" in *Encyclopædia Universalis*, accessed February 3, 2018, http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/maurice-vieux/.
178 "Stan Golestan," Bibliothèque Nationale de France Catalogue General, accessed February 4, 2018, http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb147920248.

results from his narrow and quick vibrato, is comparable to Van Hout's more penetrating, nasal approach and thus is unlike the more mellow tone of Nedbal and Post.

Portamento

Vieux uses some portamenti on this recording, although these slides are much lighter than those of his predecessors, which fits well with the general taste for lighter portamenti in the 1930s. By this time, many string players had become more sparing in their use of slides, taking pains to avoid what was often viewed as the 'romantic excesses' of the previous generation. Perhaps, however, the Eastern European 'Romanian' flavour of this piece influenced some of Vieux's portamenti, like the slides in m. 25 and 26, as well as his portamenti in the passage from m. 117, with its augmented seconds. The use of light, infrequent portamento of this kind is often accepted in performances of genre pieces like Golestan's *Arioso et Allegro de concert* within today's MSPs.

Tempo Flexibility

This recording demonstrates a structured and rigid approach to tempo over an underlying pulse, similar to that favoured by contemporary MSPs. There are a few noteworthy exceptions detailed below, but generally the performance is rhythmically predictable.

In the opening arioso, Vieux follows the accelerandi and ritardandi indicated in the score, especially in the cadenza-like passage marked ad libitum in m. 8. I imagine the older generation of violists might have taken greater freedoms with such a passage, perhaps merging the sixteenths and eighth-note values together at the end of the bar and rushing wildly through the sixteenth-note figures. At m. 16, Vieux does slow somewhat earlier than indicated in the score, and at m. 21 this slowing continues over the bar line into the start of the Tempo I—an approach more like that heard on earlier recordings, where performers often slow or rush prior to notated accelerandi and ritardandi. In the passage marked poco a poco agitando at m. 25, Vieux makes a steady accelerando, before slowing a little in m. 31, allowing space for further rushing in the following bars. The poco lento section at m. 117 is played at a slower tempo of around m.m. ♩ = 70, down from the average of m.m. ♩ = 170 in the preceding section. This too seems to be generally in line with the expectations of MSPs.

Vieux then plays the Allegro section steadily, with some slight rhythmic dislocations between viola and piano—the most obvious of which occurs at the return of the opening material at m. 145, with the two performers unaligned for an entire measure.

It is likely that Vieux forgot to clearly cue his pianist here. At m. 139, where agitando is indicated in the score leading into the cadenza, Vieux ignores what could be seen as an indication to speed up and stays in his previous tempo, even slowing towards the end of the section: a rare moment where, like his older colleagues Nedbal, Van Hout, Post and Tertis, he ignores notated performance directions.

Articulation

The cadenza showcases Vieux's virtuoso up-bow staccato technique and includes some expressive intonation: notably, the very sharp E flat in m. 118, which seems to belong to the sound world of Romanian folk musicians and Romanian violinist Enescu, who often sharpened or flattened melody notes for expressive effect. The deliberate sharpening or flattening of melodic notes for expressive purposes was common among some early-recorded performers and is often viewed unfavourably in today's MSPs. Another interesting feature is the spiccato technique Vieux uses in m. 98, which is wild and springy, and executed in the upper half of the bow in a style heard on many early recordings; Tertis, too, often uses this kind of spiccato.[179] Contemporary players by contrast tend to prefer a more controlled, clean, and tidy spiccato played in the lower half of the bow close to the string. This results in more evenness of rhythm, articulation, and bow control, whereas throwing the bow at the string in the upper half leaves more to the forces of gravity and can result in an uneven, unpredictable, and uncontrolled bouncing. This difference between spiccato in the upper and lower halves of the bow is illustrative of the evolution of string playing from a more uncontrolled, wild style in the early-20th century to the controlled cleanliness expected today.

In sum, Vieux generally takes a controlled and steady approach to rhythm and tempo, and a light approach to portamenti, placing his style closer to our own than to the other violists examined here. Missing from Vieux's recording are many of the central elements of early-recorded performance practice such as multi-layeredness, tempo modification, and heavy portamento. At the same time, some elements, such as his thrown spiccato and quick vibrato, do place him within historical traditions and closer to the recordings of Van Hout.

[179] There is a notable example of this in the 4th movement of Brahms's *Sonata* Op. 120 no. 1 on both of Tertis's recordings, starting at m. 11.

3.8) Early recordings of Meyerbeer's *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine*

Below I examine early recordings of violists performing together with singers. These recordings showcase a broadly shared performance style between violists and singers centred around widespread rhythm and tempo flexibility, heavy and frequent portamento, and unnotated ornamentation. The approaches taken by the singers examined here can be connected with those heard on the viola/piano recordings studied thus far.

3.8.1) Albert Vaguet (tenor), Pierre Monteux (viola) and Pianist (unknown): *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine* from *Les Huguenots* by Giacomo Meyerbeer (recorded 1903)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.8.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.8.1.

Tenor Albert Vaguet (1865 - 1954) and violist Pierre Monteux (1875 - 1964) recorded the aria *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine* from Meyerbeer's opera *Les Huguenots* in 1903. This may well be the earliest surviving recording of a viola. Monteux was a renowned conductor who premiered Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, and who enjoyed an international career spanning over six decades as one of the leading conductors of the first half of the 20th century. Monteux, however, began his career as a violist, playing in various orchestras throughout France and performing chamber music with Gabriel Fauré and Camille Saint-Saëns.[180] This is Monteux's only recording as a violist, and as such, it can add to our understanding of how 19th-century French viola playing sounded. Vaguet's approach then displays many elements of early-recorded vocal style such as pitch ornamentation and multi-layered rhythmic dislocation with both Monteux and the pianist.

The aria *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine* as notated begins with the viola alone for 18 bars before the entrance of the singer at the Andante Cantabile, with the words '*Plus blanche.*' This opening solo was cut from Monteux's recording, likely due to the time limits imposed by the wax cylinder. By contrast, on tenor Enrico Caruso's recording (examined below) this introduction was recorded in its entirety. For Monteux's recording, I have indicated m. 1 at the start of the Andante Cantabile.

---

[180] John Canarina, *Pierre Monteux, Maître* (Pompton Plains: Amadeus Press, 2003), 22.

Rhythmic Layering

Vaguet, Monteux, and their pianist create multi-layering between the work's piano, viola, and voice parts, with each musician following an independent path: a kind of layering that is characteristic of early recordings, and that begins in this performance in the opening bar, where the piano chord on the downbeat of the Andante Cantabile is played before Vaguet's late entrance, and where Monteux's even later entrance is played an eighth note after Vaguet's. Vaguet then stretches his opening half note, allowing Monteux to catch up on the third beat of the bar. The fact that such pronounced dislocation at the beginning of the recording was not corrected likely indicates that the performers found it normal and not disturbing to the overall effect of the performance; otherwise, they could simply have re-recorded the aria. Within today's MSPs, such dislocation would be viewed as a fault.

Further multi-layeredness as a result of rhythmic flexibilities occurs in m. 3, where Vaguet takes time for the octave portamento on the word '*blanche*' bringing the tempo to a near standstill at the end of the bar. Monteux then reacts in m. 4 by rushing, before slowing into Vaguet's entrance. Vaguet again engages in extreme stretching towards the end of m. 7 and, as a result, in m. 6 - 7 Monteux delays a number of his eighth notes preventing him from getting too far ahead of the singer. The way he does this is surprising, however: he swings the last eighths of m. 6 unevenly, and in m. 7 he plays the first five eighths of the measure in a quick tempo before lengthening the sixth and seventh notes of the bar. As a result, none of Monteux's eighth notes are synchronised with Vaguet's. Despite this, the two meet on the downbeat of m. 8, and Vaguet then overdots the final eighth of the bar, creating dislocation with Monteux.

After Monteux's entrance in m. 26, Vaguet delays his entrances on each of the proceeding figures, and as a result, the two voices never overlap so that both remain continuously audible. The two parts are notated as overlapping but if they are performed in this way, the volume of the tenor in such a high register on a wax cylinder will naturally push the viola solo to the background. This kind of dislocation thus serves a practical purpose, allowing for greater clarity of melodic textures as a result of their independent placement and ultimately resulting in greater ensemble balance. In sum, all three performers allow their parts to proceed independently, connecting vertically at critical points such as climaxes and on changes of harmony.

Tempo

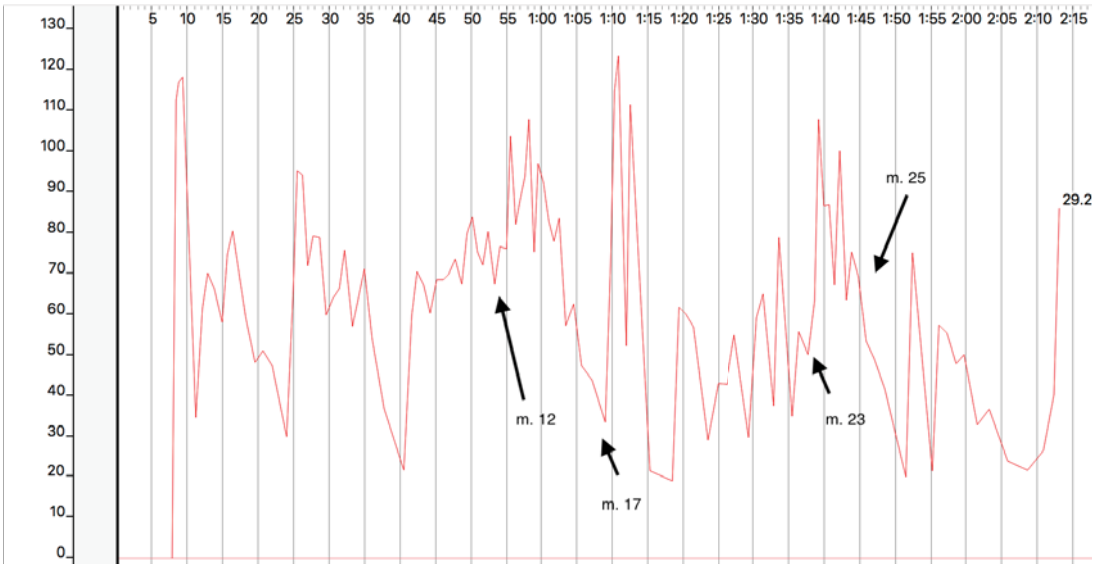

Figure 3.08: Tempo graph of Vaguet and Monteux's recording of Meyerbeer's *Plus Blanche*.

The tempo graph above (Figure 3.08), with beats per minute along the vertical axis and the recording over time along the horizontal axis, shows a wide range of tempi from beat to beat with almost no moments of rhythmic steadiness. This is radically at odds with the MSP notion of an audible continuity of rhythmic pulse and is demonstrative of the extremes of tempo flexibility attained in early-recorded practice. In m. 12, for example, Monteux starts rushing, giving momentum to the phrase before slowing in m. 15, contradicting the strongly-worded indication s'animant toujours d'avantage. From m. 17 Vaguet starts to rush, and after taking time between m. 19 and m. 22, he lurches abruptly forward with his '*toujours*' in m. 23 and m. 24. This is followed by dramatic slowing in m. 25 and m. 26, resulting in extreme tempo modification throughout this phrase.

Portamento

Given that the musical material moves quite quickly here, there are few obvious opportunities for portamenti in the viola part. Vaguet, however, makes frequent and prominent use of a variety of portamento types throughout, well in keeping with early-recorded vocal style. He uses an I portamento into '*un*' to start the phrase at the end of m.

8, which is echoed by Monteux's slide in m. 10.[181] Vaguet then cuts the C sharp in m. 11, allowing him to take in more air for the two consecutive portamenti into the third and fourth beats of the bar. In m. 15, he then adds variety to the repeated ascending fourth by using an A followed by a PS portamento. He slides up to the high G in m. 19, lingering on the slide and the high note, then breathes before starting m. 20 and takes yet another quick breath after the first '*re-ine,*' which comes across as breathless and passionate. In the second '*re-ine*' and the '*des*' of '*des amours,*' he slides heavily between the two notes. In m. 21, Vaguet uses three different types of portamento, starting with the C type followed by PS and PL slides. Tertis similarly uses three portamento types in close succession on his recording of Benjamin Dale's *Romance* (discussed below). In both cases, this confluence of portamenti is connected with climactic tension and general slowing over the phrase. The frequency and diversity of portamenti on this recording show how central the device was to Vaguet's performance practice.

Ornamentation

Vaguet follows in the tradition of early-recorded singers like Patti, Frida Hempel (1885 - 1955), and Nellie Melba (1861 - 1931), who frequently use pitch ornaments in both cadenzas and arias. Vaguet's version of the cadenza varies considerably in pitch from Meyerbeer's notated score: an individual approach to ornamentation that is prominent on early recordings of opera arias and shows the willingness of singers like Vaguet to adjust pitches to their own voice and expressive vision. Vaguet also adds ornaments in m. 17, 25, and 28, while in m. 19 he adds an extra D upbeat, repeating the word '*bel*' of '*bel ange.*' This results in greater clarity, with the two words becoming connected rather than separated, as they would be if the notated fermata between them were observed.

Monteux's Viola Playing

This recorded excerpt of Monteux playing the viola gives us a fleeting glimpse of his playing style. He uses vibrato only on longer notes, such as in m. 25 and m. 26 at the top of the arpeggios, and does not vibrate the opening eighths except in m. 7 and m. 8 on the elongated first notes of the bar. Like Van Hout's recordings, vibrato is used mostly on longer, lyrical notes here. The tone Monteux produces is powerful and sustained, allowing him to be heard at all times alongside Vaguet's substantial operatic voice. It is possible that Monteux is playing on a Stroh viola here, which would go a long

[181] The I portamento refers to the *intonazione* type, sliding into the first note of a phrase, as discussed above in section 3.3.

way towards explaining his greater audibility and powerful timbre on this recording. Stroh instruments, featuring a metal resonating horn attached to the body of the instrument, are self-amplified and often characterised by a direct, powerful, and narrow-bandwidth tone. This powerful timbre is unlike the rich, warm sound of Nedbal or Post, or the shimmering, nasal sound of Van Hout. However, Monteux's overall rhythmic approach is much like Ysaÿe and Van Hout's, favouring dislocation between interrelated voices and fitting him within the stylistic context of the early-recorded Franco-Belgian school.

3.8.2) Enrico Caruso (tenor), Violist (unknown), and the Victor Orchestra: *Bianca al par* from *Les Huguenots* by Giacomo Meyerbeer (recorded 1909)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.8.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.8.2.

A direct comparison can be made between Vaguet and Monteux's recording, and tenor Enrico Caruso's second recording of Meyerbeer's *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine*. Caruso recorded the aria twice in Italian (now titled *Bianca al par*): first in 1905 with piano accompaniment, and second in 1909 with both a viola soloist and orchestra. Caruso's recording also includes the recitative preceding the aria where the viola solo begins, which was cut in Vaguet and Monteux's recording. The Italian translation of the text Caruso recorded is not the standard 'Royal Edition' published by Boosey and Co. in 1870, nor is it the earlier 1848 version translated by Manfredo Maggioni and published by Addisson Publishing. Whatever translation Caruso is using, however, it is worth bearing in mind that it has implications for the rhythm of the vocal line. The viola soloist on this recording unfortunately remains unknown, while *The Discography of American Historical Recordings* reveals that the recording was made in Camden, New Jersey with the 'Victor Orchestra' and that the disc is a first take.[182] The Victor Orchestra made use of freelance musicians in the New York area, but unfortunately information on the viola soloist on this recording was not preserved.

Rhythmic Flexibility

The opening viola solo on Caruso's recording is notable for its dislocation

[182] "Bianca al par," The Discography of American Historical Recordings, accessed July 3, 2018, https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/200008422/C-8351-Bianca_al_par_di_neve_Alpina.

between the upper and lower parts of what should be double stopping in m. 2.[183] This suggests that this difficult and uncomfortable double-stopped passage (especially in this Italian version, which is in D flat major, thereby eliminating the possibility of using open strings) is played by not one, but two players. The same holds true for the double-stopping in m. 10 and m. 11, where the second violist inadvertently holds the lower D flat in m. 11 a little longer than his colleague, thereby revealing the strategy used.

The viola soloist follows Caruso's flexibility, however, rather than pursuing a multi-layered texture the way Monteux does with Vaguet. An example of this can be heard in m. 18, where Caruso takes time over a portamento and is followed by the solo violist, whereas Monteux stretches here by lengthening a number of notes resulting in his eighths becoming dislocated from the voice.[184] Caruso however uses rhythmic flexibility in a smoother way than Vaguet, taking time over multiple beats and measures together with the violist and orchestra rather than dwelling on specific notes or fermatas. Caruso also often rounds off phrases by slowing before rushing to propel the material forward.

On a smaller scale, Caruso both lengthens and shortens notes, as in m. 31 for example, where he dots the first motive before singing the following bar in straight eighths. The high A in m. 36 is then sung as a fermata, with Caruso creating a particularly steely timbre. Caruso likewise impressively retains enough air in order to hold the final high A through the entire first bar of the orchestral tutti—a full bar longer than notated. This addition of unnotated fermatas to lengthen high notes is a characteristic of early vocal recordings.

Like Vaguet, Caruso rushes in m. 38 and 39 (m. 23 and 24 in Vaguet's version), however unlike Vaguet, who overdots each of these motives, Caruso lengthens the rhythmic figure on '*o-gnor*' so that his upbeats sound more like triplets. Thus while both singers take broad liberties in rhythmic matters, they approach this flexibility in different ways: Caruso uses sweeping full-measure rubatos, while Vaguet dwells over multiple high points within a measure, making the flexibilities of the former singer sound smoother, more rounded off, and less unpredictable, than the latter. As a result, Caruso's performance can be described as somewhat closer to MSPs than Vaguet's, while both clearly belong to an early-recorded stylistic tradition owing to their broad rhythmic and tempo flexibilities.

---

[183] Double stopping refers to playing on two strings at the same time. The term is derived from the 'stopping' of two strings with the fingers of the left hand.

[184] The bar numbering for the Caruso recording starts with m. 1 at the Andante and is therefore different to the annotated score of the Vaguet/Monteux recording, where m. 1 is marked at the start of the Andante cantabile section.

Portamento

Portamento is prominent and heavy in both the viola and vocal parts here. The viola soloist uses plenty of sliding in the opening recitative, including during the arpeggios in m. 6, 7, 11, and 12, where heavy portamenti are combined with quick vibrato on the long notes at the ends of the arpeggios. Caruso uses both the I and C portamento types frequently, with instances of the I type occurring in m. 20, 21, 23, and 25, and his conclusion of m. 26 is remarkable for its PS portamento, which is combined with trembling vibrato and an expressive cracking of the voice. There is also some marked variation of portamento in repeated motives in m. 28 and 29, where Caruso uses four different portamento types (A, I, PL and PS) in the space of two measures, thereby creating contrast. His special emphasis on C and I portamenti types separates his recording from Vaguet's, where PS and PL slides are more prominent. Both tenors are however proficient in using multiple portamento types to create colour and variety.

Vibrato

While both Vaguet and Caruso make prominent and continuous use of vibrato, there are some differences between the approaches of the viola soloists. The solo violist on Caruso's recording uses vibrato more frequently and continuously than Monteux, as for example on the moving eighths from m. 16 (m. 1 in Vaguet's version) where Monteux plays non-vibrato.

Ornamentation

As on the Vaguet recording, pitch ornamentation is used prominently by Caruso, who performs his own version of the cadenza in m. 43. He starts with a long virtuoso fermata on the high B and, unlike Vaguet, ends in the higher register with a G sharp fermata. Comparing Caruso and Vaguet shows the extent to which sounding outcomes can vary when personalised ornamentation is used by different singers: an approach heard sparingly if at all in 19th-century opera repertoire performances today.

In sum, Caruso and Vaguet share a musical-expressive language that makes broad use of portamento, flexibility of rhythm and tempo, and ornamentation, but they differ in the ways they use these devices—demonstrating how the expressive tools commonly used in early-recorded performances can result in highly varied and personal approaches to the same musical material.

Three Russian Records

Three additional early recordings of the aria *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine* have

recently come to light, all of which were recorded in Russia in the early-20th century. These recordings, with tenors Andrej Labinsky (2-22775) in 1905, Leo Klementyev (022130) in 1909, and Dmitry Smirnov (022338) in 1913, were all released by the Gramophone Co.[185] The Labinsky recording names the viola soloist as N.T. Manasevich, who also made a number of recordings on the violin. All three performers make frequent use of tempo modification, rhythmic dislocation, portamento, and pitch ornamentation. The Smirnov recording is particularly notable for its extended cadenza, to which the viola player contributes his own composed (or improvised?) harmonic material.

The stylistic approach taken by Vaguet, Caruso, and the three Russian singers in this aria by Meyerbeer, demonstrates a broadly similar approach to that of the early-recorded violists examined here. The overlapping approaches of violists and singers of the early-recorded era can thus be a source of inspiration for string players today who wish to adopt an early-recordings-inspired style. In particular, Tertis's integration of many early-recorded vocal techniques within his own playing style (as examined below), serves as an example for how string players might adapt the approach of early-recorded singers to their own instruments.

3.9) Early-recorded Singers and String players: Portamento and Layering

As we have seen, multi-layeredness is central to the performance style of string players performing alongside singers on early recordings. Robert Philip observes that on Fritz Kreisler and John McCormack's recording of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, the two musicians achieve this layering through their divergent placement, timing, and execution of portamenti when performing the melody in unison. Even when the two slide over the same intervals, they do so in different ways.[186] This allows the two unison voices to be heard as separate, demonstrating how multi-layeredness can result in clarity of melodic texture and how the independent placement of voices can allow for greater balance of ensemble. This layering, and the de-synchronisation that results, thus cannot be simply derided as sloppiness, as it functions as a device for allowing the expression of multiple individual performers to be heard simultaneously.

Following his observation of this layering, Philip argues that, "in practice, singers

---

[185] These recordings can be found at "Russian Records," accessed July 3, 2018, https://www.russian-records.com/search.php.
[186] Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 178.

and string-players used portamento in rather different ways."[187] While this is the case for the small sample size of recordings Philip uses to draw this conclusion, I find that the diversity of portamento types used on early recordings by singers and string players shows considerable variety *and* overlap, both within *and* between the two groups. The violists examined here, including Nedbal, Van Hout, Post and Tertis, all use the device differently, and the same holds true for the singers whose recordings I have studied. At the same time, connections can be made between portamento types, placement, and frequency used by these violists and singers. What also makes Philip's argument problematic is that he compares string players to Richard Tauber (1891 - 1948), Rosa Ponselle (1897 - 1981) and Maggie Teyte (1888 - 1976)—rather than to these singers' predecessors, like Caruso (1873 - 1921), Vaguet (1865 - 1943) and Patti (1843 - 1919). Much like the violists examined thus far, the latter group of singers use a far greater diversity and frequency of portamenti than their successors. Comparisons between singers like Vaguet and Caruso, and violists like Tertis, clearly evidence a shared approach to portamento.

3.9.1) Zoia Rosovsky (mezzo soprano), Lionel Tertis (viola), and Unknown Pianist: *Extase* by Henri Duparc (recorded 1921)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.9.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.9.1.

The proximity of Lionel Tertis's recordings to those of early-recorded singers is demonstrated by the three recordings he made with mezzo-soprano Zoia Rosovsky, who was a well-known singer of Russian origin. Rosovsky received mixed reviews in her era: after a Queen's Hall concert in 1918, for example, she is described as having "a fine voice and an effective if not a great dramatic style."[188] Poet Ezra Pound wrote too that, "if it was Zoia Rosovsky as announced in the programme, then let us pray that she will continue to sing behind a curtain and that she will keep to the Spanish mode; for the effect was infinitely preferable to anything she has given us on the concert platform."[189] This backhanded compliment from the ever-critical Pound for her 1919 London performance as part of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* suggests that Rosovsky was at least a singer of some repute in her day. Despite this, however, little information has come

---

187 Ibid., 174.
188 "London Concerts," *The Musical Times,* 59, no .900, (February, 1918): 82.
189 Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 2008), 190.

down to us about Rosovsky's life or professional career. It is notable that Rosovsky was criticised for lacking 'dramatic style' in the press, given that her recordings evidence a wild approach to tempo and portamento by the standards of today's MSPs. Her approach is, however, at the same time somewhat more restrained than that of other singers of her era like Melba and Luisa Tetrazzini (1871 - 1940).

Rosovsky's recordings with Tertis convey a sense of intimate interaction between the viola and the voice. Tertis transcribed Duparc's song *Extase* (originally for voice and piano) for voice, piano, and viola, performing most of the piano's right-hand melodic material on the viola. Adding an obbligato string instrument to songs was common practice in the early 20th century. There are a number of prominent recordings that document this practice, such as Kreisler and McCormack's 78rpm records, which include no fewer than 22 songs, as well as two records made by Mischa Elman and Caruso.[190] In the early-20th century, string players frequently toured with singers, playing pieces with piano to allow the singers to rest their voices during concerts, as well as accompanying arias and songs.[191] The connection between Tertis's playing and early-recorded singing thus has a basis in his performing experience. He toured widely with a number of the most prominent singers of his era and received the following letter from Melba in 1926:

> My dear Lionel, I am delighted that you honour my farewell tour in England by playing for me. We must do the Mozart Aria. I wonder if you have a copy of my cadenza. I can't find mine (so like me). I return to England about 17th September, so do ring me up…and we might have a little rehearsal and then you could give me the song.[192]

The familiarity of this letter speaks not only to Tertis's connection with Melba but to the stature he achieved as a violist in his time.[193]

---

[190] John McCormack, Fritz Kreisler, recorded 1919 -1924, reissued 1991, *The Kreisler/McCormack Duets,* Pearl 9315. Enrico Caruso, Mischa Elman, recorded 1914, *Elegie - Melodie*, Victor 89066.
[191] Edward F. Kravitt, "The Lied in 19th Century Concert Life," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1965): 208.
[192] Nellie Melba, quoted in White, *Lionel Tertis,* 85.
[193] It is notable too that in the letter quoted above Melba is searching for a copy of her own personal cadenza for the aria, giving us another example of singers creating their own cadenza for an aria—a standard practice at the time.
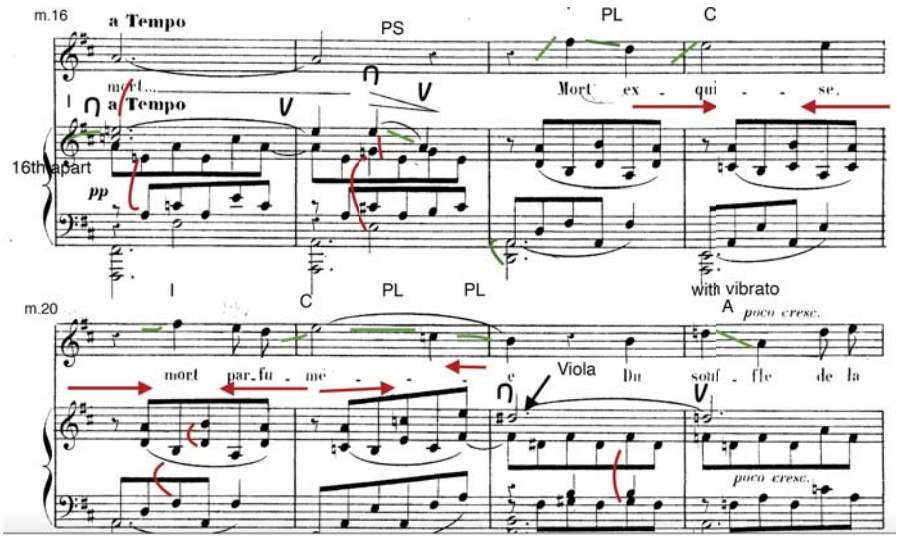
Figure 3.09: Rosovsky's use of portamento in Duparc's *Extase*.

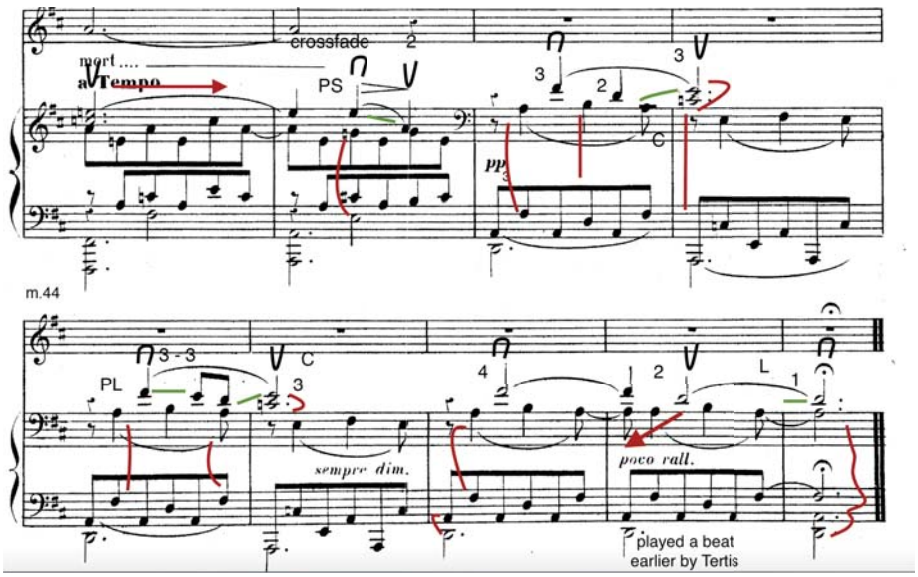

Figure 3.10: Tertis's use of portamento in Duparc's *Extase*.

Portamento

Rosovsky and Tertis use portamento in similar ways, contradicting Philip's assertion that early-recorded singers and string players used the device differently.[194] In *Extase*, between m. 5 and 7 for example, Tertis uses four different types of portamento, while in the analogous melodic material in m. 20 - 22, Rosovsky uses three. Tertis's portamento in the closing melody in m. 42 also resembles Rosovsky's in m. 18, where he uses a C portamento into both of the E flats. The one notable difference in their

[194] Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style,* 174.

treatment of this passage is Rosovsky's I portamento into her high Fs in m. 19 and 20.

It is also remarkable that Tertis chooses complex fingerings that facilitate additional portamenti, such as the awkward change to a first and then a second finger in m. 6, where he could easily have stayed in the 4th position thereby avoiding three slides. This suggests that Tertis's fingering choices may have been led by a desire to more closely match the frequency, location, and weight of Rosovsky's portamenti.

Vibrato

Rosovksy and Tertis use remarkably similar vibrato as shown by the spectrogram below (Figure 3.11), with pitch in Hertz along the vertical axis, the recording unfolding over time in seconds on the horizontal axis, and the layers of yellow lines depicting the overtones of the fundamental frequencies. The fundamental frequencies are all below the 1000hz range and somewhat blurred by their proximity to one another in the spectrogram, however the higher overtones in the 1500 – 1800hz range give a clearer picture of vibrato width and cycles per second. In m. 22 for example, Rosovsky's final B and Tertis's D sharp both have a vibrato speed of 5,5 cycles per second, while Rosovky's vibrato width encompasses 1,5 semitones and Tertis's covers 1,25 semitones. This shows just how similar their vibrato speed and width is here. In fact, the second beat of m. 24 is a remarkable moment where both the speed and width of their vibrati end up being nearly identical. The result is an intimate connection in timbre between voice and viola.

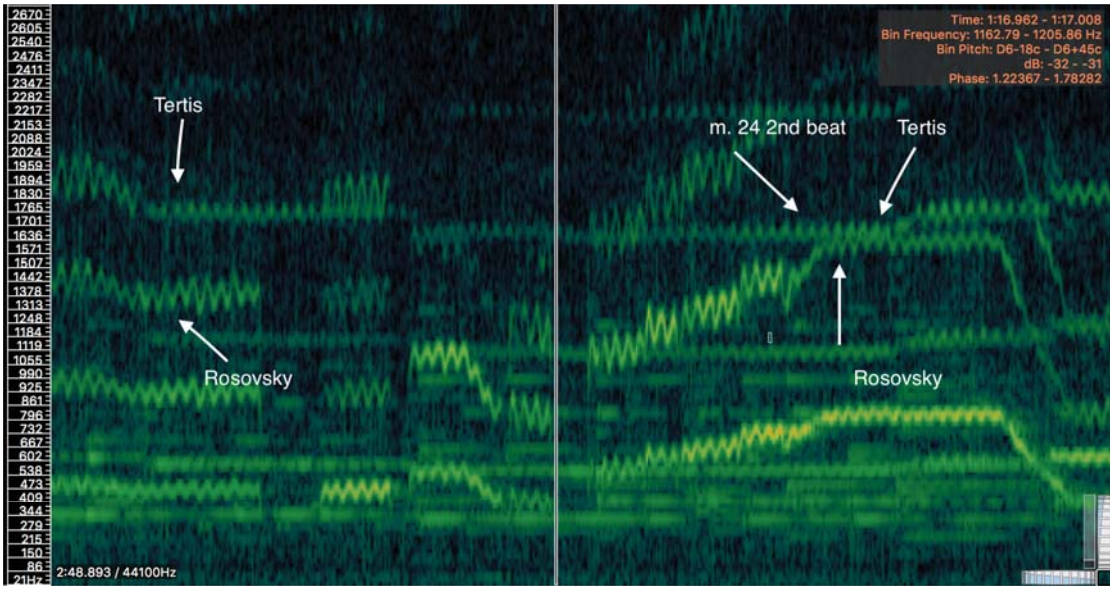

Figure 3.11: Vibrato used by Rosovsky and Tertis in m. 24 of Duparc's *Extase*.

Tempo and Rhythm

Arpeggiation and dislocation in the piano part is used throughout here, as in m. 42 for example, where the pianist layers the bass notes and middle-voiced chords in the left hand and right-hand countermelody, timing each of these separately. This continual arpeggiation, combined with the frequent portamenti used by Rosovsky and Tertis, creates a fluid rhythmic context, obscuring the clear location of the main beats of the bar.

Rosovsky also uses heavy slowing at phrase endings, especially in the final verse, where her entrance at '*sur ton sein pâl*' in m. 34 is taken at a slower tempo. As found on the recordings of *Du bist die Ruh* examined above, the tempo of the sung sections here is slower than the instrumental introduction and interludes; Tertis also copies this approach on his recording of Grieg's *Jeg elsker dig* (analysed below).

Tertis's vocal approach to rhythmic flexibility in *Extase* can be heard in m. 25, where he rushes to the climax of the phrase on the high D in m. 29 and broadens the top note much like Caruso does in m. 36 of *Bianca al par,* before restoring tempo by rushing. Indeed, Tertis's proximity to early-recorded vocal style is demonstrated by the similarity of his timbre, vibrato, portamento, and use of rhythmic flexibility to Rosovsky's: both here in *Extase,* as well as in Tchaikovsky's *None but the lonely heart,* as discussed below.

3.9.2) Zoia Rosovsky (mezzo), Lionel Tertis (viola), and Unknown Pianist - *нет только тот, кто знал (None but the lonely heart)* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (recorded 1921)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.9.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.9.2.

Tchaikovsky's song нет только тот, кто знал, translated as *None but the lonely heart*, features Rosovsky in her native Russian. Tertis created an expanded viola obbligato for this song, using melodic material from the right hand of the piano part and adding to this his own countermelodies.

Multi-layeredness

The three performers again create an ambiguous, multi-layered texture here using dislocation and continual rushing and slowing throughout phrases. This layering is somewhat similar to that heard on Vaguet and Montexu's recording of Meyerbeer's *Plus blanche que la blanche Hermine,* as discussed above. The pianist's placement of harmonic changes on the downbeat with the left hand, such as in m. 3 and m. 11 for example, are early and thus propel the music forward. These early beats counteract Rosovsky and

Tertis's frequent slowing, which stretches against the push of the pianist's harmonic motor. From m. 21 - 27, the rising figures rush forward to the climax before slowing abruptly into the second verse. In m. 38, both Tertis and Rosovsky deliver the same melodic line, and like McCormack and Kreisler in the *Ave Maria* example described above, they use variations in portamento and timing allowing both lines to be audibly distinguishable throughout. To illustrate this, in m. 39 Rosovsky overdots the last beat while Tertis plays straight quarter notes, and in m. 40 Tertis sustains the tone while Rosovsky considerably shortens her last note before entering early in m. 41 and delaying the fourth beat. The pianist then rushes into m. 42 and arrives before Rosovsky, who arrives before Tertis, creating dislocation between the three performers at this climactic moment. This kind of de-synchronisation at such a key moment would be frowned upon in today's MSPs, yet here, each of the three performers pursues their own direction with great abandon, ultimately adding weight to the climax. The relationship between Tertis's line and the piano in the final bar is unclear: it seems they are widely dislocated around the first beat of the final bar and that the pianist, rather than finishing the performance by playing the notated syncopations, opts to play two chords in their place. This general approach to dislocation throughout adds complexity and ambiguity to the performance, with its variegated layers divided between the harmonic-rhythmic motor of the piano, the vocal melody, and the viola countermelody.

Portamento

Much like in Duparc's *Extase* as discussed above, here Rosovsky and Tertis use portamento in similar ways, with one of the few notable differences being Tertis's clean start at the opening and Rosovsky's I portamento at her entrance in m. 9. Tertis uses the I portamento more infrequently than many singers of the era, although violinist Albert Sammons uses it a number of times on his recording with Tertis of the second movement of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante,* as discussed below.

The rest of the portamenti used by Tertis and Rosovsky are closely interrelated. For example, Tertis's PS slide in m. 18 is echoed by Rosovsky's on the same motive in m. 22; in m. 28, Rosovsky's C portamento is followed by Tertis's. As a result of his imitation of Rosovsky's portamento, however, Tertis falls behind the pianist going into m. 29, resulting in an unusually large dislocation of almost a beat between the two players. Elsewhere, in m. 46 Rosovsky uses a C portamento followed by a PL portamento on a descending major second, while Tertis uses portamenti on descending major seconds multiple times, as in m. 5, 6, 49, and 50.

In sum, these examples support the claim not only that Rosovsky and Tertis inhabited a similar stylistic world—one at odds with today's MSPs and their curtailment of portamento, dislocation, and ornamentation—but also that Tertis's performance style throughout his recorded oeuvre was indeed close to that of the singers of his time.

3.10) Lionel Tertis: Selected Recordings (1919 - 1933)

3.10.1) Lionel Tertis: *The Holy Boy* by John Ireland, arr. Lionel Tertis (recorded 1921)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.1.

Lionel Tertis's output of over 100 78rpm discs underscores his stature as an international soloist in the early-20th century. Among those recordings, two stand out as featuring the viola alone: the first, of John Ireland's Christmas carol *The Holy Boy,* and the second, of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Chaconne*. Tertis wrote a harmonised piano accompaniment for *The Holy Boy*. Why he decided to record the piece without a pianist thus remains a mystery. Perhaps a pianist was unavailable for the recording session, or perhaps he simply felt inspired to play it alone. In any case, the piece is a transcription of a song, and Tertis's use of portamento and tempo flexibility here further demonstrates how comparable his performance style was to that of the early-recorded singers discussed above.

Timbre and Vibrato

Tertis uses sustained legato and uniform timbre between the strings and registers of the instrument. He sustains the bow throughout using an even bow-speed, while vibrating continuously on all notes. His fingerings allow the majority of the phrases to be played on the same string, resulting in a more unified timbre within phrases. He uses the D string for the opening, moving to the A string for the first time at the end of m. 12. A combination of portamento, seamless legato and continuous vibrato, however, make the difference in timbre between the A and D strings nearly indistinguishable. The result is that the four strings, the bow, and the fingers, seem to vanish into a continuous spun-out legato. The outcome of this is what I call a 'singing performance style,' where delivering the contours of the melody takes precedence over the physical limitations of the viola.

Portamento

Tertis uses a wide variety of portamenti with great frequency, which helps to sustain his continual legato and develop tension through the phrases. He makes frequent use of PL portamenti, as in m. 1, but also connects bow changes together with C portamenti, as in m. 7. Alongside the frequent PL and PS portamenti, Tertis uses the C and A types as well, as in m. 3, and the L type, as in m. 51. In fact, each of the different portamento types except for the I portamento, to which Tertis turned infrequently, can be found on this recording—with the device being used at least once per bar and as often as four times in m. 43.

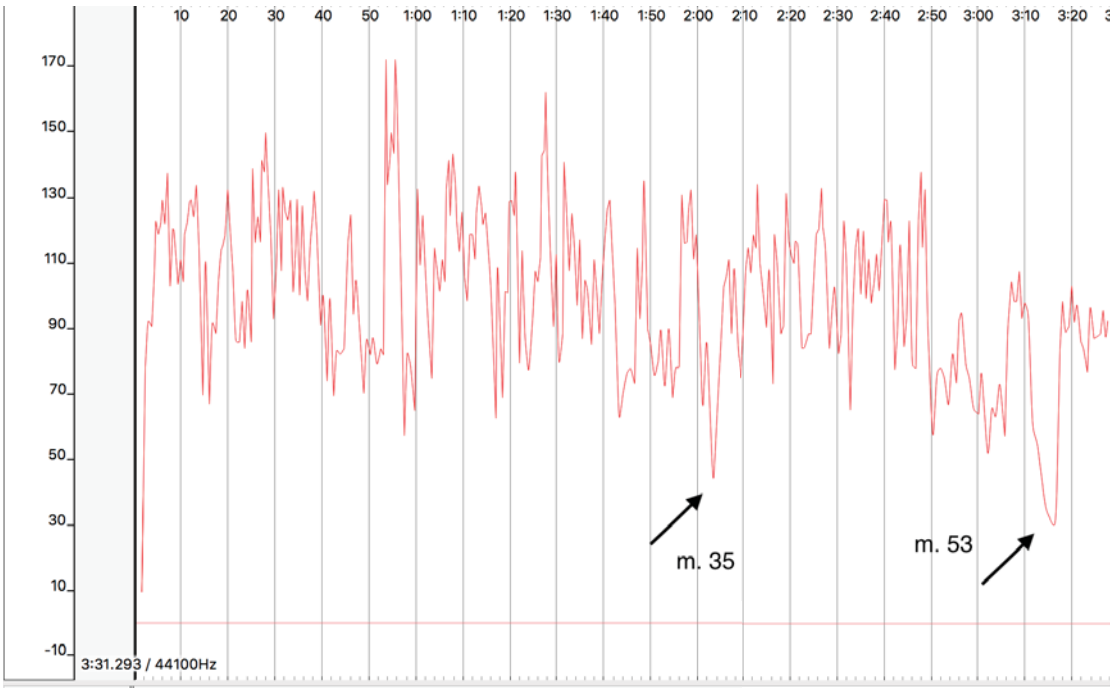

Figure 3.12: Tempo graph of Tertis's recording of the *The Holy Boy* by John Ireland.

Tempo Flexibility

The tempo graph above (Figure 3.12), with beats per minute on the vertical axis and the recording over time on the horizontal axis, shows massive flexibility in tempo from beat to beat. The eighth notes are played with continual rhythmic variation, often moving forward or slowing down. Tertis shapes the rising and falling melodic line with tempo much like an a cappella singer might, given that the melodic line is free from rhythmic restraints of harmonic accompaniment. His tempo varies widely, from under m.m. ♪=24 at the end of m. 53, to quicker than m.m. ♪=150 in m. 16, which is an extreme variation by any standard. There are some pronounced moments of slowing at

the end of m. 35 and again in m. 53 at phrase ends, with m. 36 slowing so much it sounds as if the piece has come to an end. This underlines Tertis's proximity to early-recorded singers like Vaguet, as examined above, who also sing with a great deal of rhythmic flexibility on a beat-to-beat level.

3.10.2) Lionel Tertis: *Chaconne* from the *Partita* no. 2, BWV 1004, by Johann Sebastian Bach (recorded 1924)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.2.

Tertis's November 25, 1924 Columbia recording of the *Chaconne* from Bach's *Partita in D minor* was the second-ever complete recording of the piece, made just months after violinist Isolde Menges's (1893 - 1876) world premiere recording of the work on April 7, 1924.[195] The performance of a violin piece as difficult as Bach's *Chaconne* on the viola had been unheard of until Tertis's pioneering effort. As Tertis wrote: "I had taken my courage in both hands in 1911 and given the first performance in public of the *Chaconne* on the viola."[196] Much to his consternation, however, his efforts were almost entirely ignored in the press. Violist John White quotes from a review in *The Strad,* which remarks only that, "Mr. Tertis made the experiment of playing Bach's "Chaconne" on the viola—as someone said it is better so than as a pianoforte piece."[197] Such less than jubilant reactions to his efforts underscore the difficulties Tertis faced in winning recognition for the viola as a solo instrument. Given the sluggish response of the low C string, the chords and arpeggios in the *Chaconne* are awkward and difficult to play, and I can attest to the fact that learning this piece on the viola requires both dedication and virtuosity. No wonder Tertis's consternation at such a lukewarm reception in the press was so great. By 1916, however, the *Musical Times* wrote that, "Mr. Tertis amazed his audience by his virtuoso playing on the viola of the famous *Chaconne* written by Bach for the violin." By the 1930s, Tertis's reputation was clearly established, with reviewers using many superlatives—often underlining the ideology of fidelity to the composer—in reference to Tertis's performance of the piece. In 1935, a review in the *Musical Times* appeared stating that Tertis:

> [P]erformed the amazing double feat of transferring Bach's Chaconne to the viola, note for note, and of restoring it, so far as possible, to bowing and phrasing Bach himself

---

[195] J.S. Bach, *Chaconne* from *Partita* no. 2 BWV 1004, Isolde Menges, recorded 1924, HMV D875-6 (78rpm).
[196] Lionel Tertis, *My Viola and I*, 43.
[197] White, *Lionel Tertis,* 21.

> must have known when he wrote it for violin and out-curved bow of his day. The experiment was a noble success…Tertis always does seem to get close to the mind of any composer whose music he plays.[198]

A quick glance at my annotated score, however, (see Appendix III, Score 3.a10.2) shows that Tertis delivers the *Chaconne* in a highly individual style, with numerous additions of bowings, rhythmic alterations, tempo flexibility, and ornamentation. It is hard to imagine that Tertis's interpretation of this piece, one he had played on numerous occasions for four decades, had altered greatly between 1924 and 1935. The opinions espoused by the *Musical Times's* author about the bowing and phrasing of 'Bach himself' and the 'mind of the composer' were thus far removed from how many HIP performers approach Bach today. A second review of the same 1935 recital even took Tertis's performance to be an *improvement* upon Bach's work, with Edwin Evans of *The Daily Mail* writing: "On the musical side, it struck me, with listening, that in sonority it was a distinct improvement on the original…the chords and arpeggios spread across the strings gain much in dignity by starting from a deep foundation."[199] This evidences two competing understandings of the role of the performer in reviews of the same performance by Tertis. While Evans focuses on Tertis improving the piece by making it his own, *The Musical Times* author focuses on Tertis's fidelity to the composer. While these two ideas may seem to be in conflict, in the context of the 19th-century role of the performer as laid out by Mary Hunter and discussed at length in Chapter One, making a work one's own (including personal alterations or improvements) was seen by many as the best way of being faithful to its composer.[200]

Portamento and Controversy

The *Chaconne* was Tertis's first recording for the Columbia Graphophone Company in fulfilment of his newly-signed contract in 1924. As Potter writes: "He turned in a terrific performance, although in later years he regretted having indulged in so many portamenti."[201] Potter refers here to anecdotal conversations with Tertis's former students, but whether this is accurate or apocryphal remains uncertain.[202] If Tertis did indeed feel this way about his recording in later years, it may say more about changing attitudes towards portamento than about his 'indulgence' in the device in 1924.

---

198 Quoted in White, *Lionel Tertis,* 31, 138.
199 Ibid., 137.
200 Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer," 361.
201 Tertis, "Beauty of Tone in String Playing," 148. Tully Potter, liner notes to *Lionel Tertis the Complete Columbia Recordings (1924 - 1933)*, reissued 2006, Biddulph 80216-2 (CD).
202 Tully Potter, e-mail to the author, April 16, 2016.

Continuous sliding between notes was central to his playing style, and this came to be seen as excessive in the context of increasingly 'clean and tidy' performances in the 20th century—especially in what were thought to be 'pure' 18th-century repertoires. Tertis's own admonitions against the overuse of portamento in *Beauty of Tone in String Playing* from 1938 underscore the style change and growing aversion to 'indulgence' and 'messiness' that took place throughout the 1930s.[203]

Seen in the context of recordings by Tertis and others from the era, however, the use of portamento here is no more frequent and heavy than one might expect. Tertis certainly uses some long portamenti on this recording, connected with his frequent use of high positions on the low strings, where the slides function as a tool for keeping whole passages on single strings. The slide from the D up to the B flat on the G string in m. 36 is a notable example, as is the portamento up the C string in m. 26 and the consecutive slides in m. 27 and 28. In each of the slower sixteenth-note sections, Tertis also uses frequent portamento, such as those from m. 77 - 83 and m. 210 - 224. Generally, his frequent and heavy portamenti here would be considered tasteless within today's MSPs in works of Bach, which is perhaps why Tertis himself was keen to denounce his own portamento use on this recording in his later years.

Tempo and Rhythmic Flexibility

Tertis makes great use of tempo flexibility here, structuring the development of the performance through individual sections, which are in turn separated by varying approaches to tempo—in stark contrast to today's tendency to create structural coherence via adherence to a steady tempo. The tempo graph below (Figure 3.13), with beats per minute along the vertical axis and time in seconds along the horizontal axis, lays out the tempo structure of Tertis's performance. Of the four sides, numbers 1 and 2 (which starts in m. 65) start slowly and rush towards their middles before slowing at their endings, as illustrated by the curved tempo arch. Sides 3 (starting in m. 133) and 4 (starting in m. 209) generally build in tempo, rushing continually to their final cadences before slowing heavily.

[203] For an overview of this phenomenon see Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32.

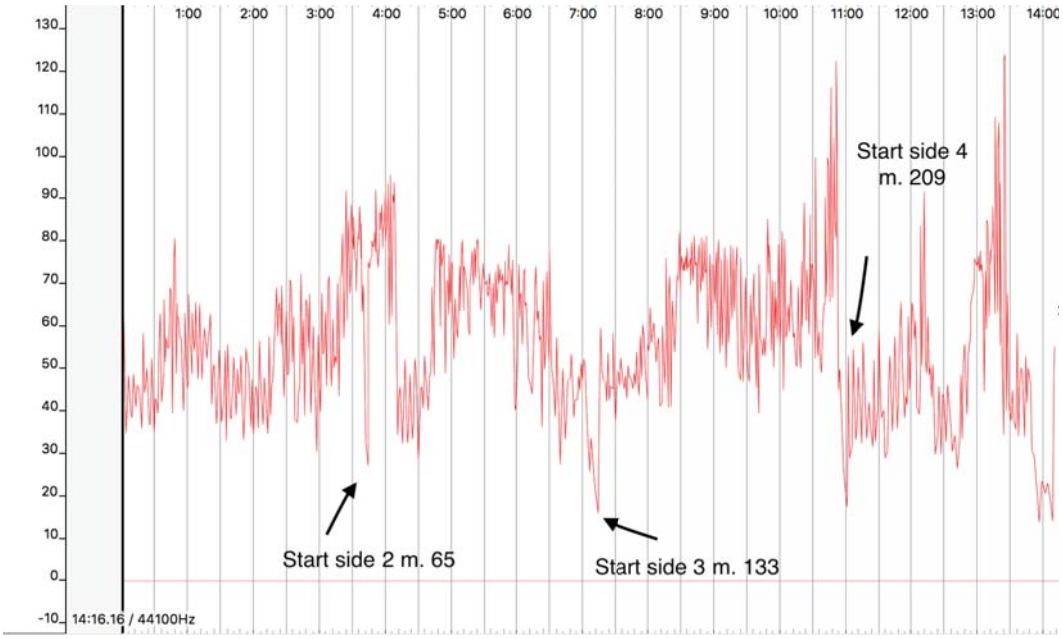

Figure 3.13: Tempo graph of Lionel Tertis's recording of Bach's *Chaconne*.

This general shaping of tempo is then combined with irregularity of rhythm within sections, caused by the spreading of chords and localised rushing and slowing. As a result, despite the general sweep created by tempo modification, throughout the performance there are frequent, jagged irregularities caused by stops and starts on a localised level. For example, the opening statement on the first side of the recording is irregular in tempo, with slowing on the first beat of m. 13 followed by rushing on the second and third beats of the bar. Similarly, Tertis stretches the beats over the long portamenti from m. 25 while rushing between them, and in m. 49 he starts the section at a slower tempo and gradually rushes towards m. 64 before slowing into the final cadence of the side.

The second side then starts in m. 65 with a quick tempo. Here Tertis accents and lengthens the basses, giving a greater sense of harmony to the texture. At the end of m. 76 he slows to a broader tempo with plenty of stops and starts, before rushing again from m. 84 - 89. The tempo is varied throughout the arpeggio section with slowing used to emphasise harmonic shifts and bass notes, such as on the first beat of m. 118. From m .120 Tertis slows, rounding off the section and the side. The third side, with the G major section of the work, then starts slowly before Tertis creates a large-scale build-up of tempo, rushing through m. 208. There is, however, also jagged slowing and rushing within this section, such as from m. 175 - 176.

The final side then starts slowly and rushes through m. 227. Tertis slows again

into m. 235 before rushing forward to m. 248. Here, the return of the theme is played in a slower tempo, much like the opening. Tertis then slows for the long portamenti in m. 255, further broadening towards the end. The close relationship of the tempo of the final appearance of the theme in m. 249 and the opening (around m.m. ♩=40) is demonstrative of the way Tertis's tempos are interrelated, revealing structural connections on a large scale.

While there is indeed a sense on this recording of what Leech-Wilkinson refers to as a 'moment to moment' rhythmic approach, my analysis shows how tempo modification can create a grand, sweeping, and ultimately unified performance structure, where both small- and large-scale flexibilities (the improvisatory feel of jagged localised changes and the overall sweep of rushing and slowing) rely on and relate to one another.[204] Structure is thus revealed here by flux, rather than by the steady unified tempos so characteristic of MSPs.

Ornamentation and Articulation

Tertis ornaments, adds and changes pitches, and uses varying bow strokes to create varied articulation, resulting in a highly idiosyncratic approach. His use of ornamentation includes the addition of a repeated C and B flat in m. 10 and m. 11, as well as the double-stopped thirty-second notes at m. 236. Tertis also uses his own characteristic rhythms, repetitions of notes, and double-stoppings at m. 89 and m. 202, where the notated score contains a number of chords marked 'arpeggio.' Examples of varied articulation, on the other hand, include the upper-half spiccato used at m. 75 and m. 153, the ricochet bowing in m. 118, and the combination of long and short articulations used to differentiate the voices in m. 161.[205] Here, Tertis plays the repeated Gs long and the other notes short, creating voicing. Tertis also spins out a seamless legato texture by using uneven slurrings, such as in m. 30 - 32, where he often slurs five notes together creating a legato texture that negates the main beats of the bar.

In sum, Tertis's recording of the *Chaconne* is both a technical and musical tour-de-force. His expressive tools include a large-scale tempo modification strategy combined with detailed localised rhythmic flexibilities. A full range of articulation and portamento techniques, combined with a robust timbre, creates a sense of narrative throughout the *Chaconne's* vast structure. This performance brings together Tertis's

---

[204] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance,* Chapter 8.1 paragraph 6, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap8.html.

[205] Ricochet bowing refers to throwing the bow at the string (usually in the upper half) and allowing it to bounce back producing a rapid series of notes.

creative compositional alterations with his virtuosic approach to the viola, resulting in a highly distinctive performance.

3.10.3) Lionel Tertis and Ethel Hobday piano: *Sonata* Op. 120 no. 1 by Johannes Brahms (recorded 1924)

Tertis recorded Brahms's *Sonata* in F minor twice with very different pianists: first for Vocalion with Ethel Hobday (1872 - 1947) in 1924, and again for Columbia with Harriet Cohen (1895 - 1967) in 1933. These two recordings underline the ways in which performance practice changed more generally in the early-20th century, while at the same time illustrating changing attitudes to Brahms's music. Anna Scott focuses on the "underlying aesthetic ideology of control" and the "hyper-controlled…agenda-laden accounts of [Brahms's] musical contexts" that currently justify the approach to Brahms's music in today's MSPs.[206] As such, Tertis's 1933 recording illustrates a controlled performance more in line with contemporary approaches, while the 1924 version is closer to the early recordings of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists as copied by Scott.

Two Approaches to Op. 120 no. 1

Of Tertis's two recordings of Brahms's *Sonata* Op. 120 no. 1, the first demonstrates what Scott terms "uncontrolled playing of detail and structure," while the second evidences a more controlled, detailed, and streamlined approach.[207] This is largely the result, however, of the differing approaches taken by the two pianists and not an indication that Tertis made drastic changes to his performance style. Other recordings made by Tertis in the early 1930s, like of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* (examined below), which was recorded only two months after the second recording of Brahms's *Sonata*, feature more unrestrained, rhapsodic playing. Furthermore, Tertis used most of the same fingerings, bowings, and portamenti on both Brahms recordings. It is largely the unnotated use of tempo modification and rhythmic flexibility that sets the first recording with Hobday apart from the more streamlined, steady approach to tempo on the second recording with Cohen. Cohen, a generation younger than Tertis, exemplified the new wave of 20th-century pianists who preferred a more controlled approach to tempo and rhythm, while the older Hobday takes a frenzied and at times disorderly approach. Hobday however "enjoyed the friendship of Brahms and other notable musicians"

---

[206] Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms*, 331.
[207] Ibid., 338.

during her time in Vienna, and she shares her birth year with Ilona Eibenschütz, the Brahms-circle pianist central to Scott's 'romanticized' copied performances of Brahms.[208] Ethel was also the wife of Alfred Hobday, principal violist of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and was the pianist on the debut recording of Edward Elgar's *Piano Quintet.*[209] Below I have chosen to discuss the Hobday and Tertis recording of Brahms's *Sonata*, as its unpredictable and highly-charged nature more clearly demonstrates those elements of early-recorded performance style that are most at odds with MSPs than the second recording with Cohen.

Movement 1: Allegro Appassionato

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.3.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.3.

Tempo Modification

One of the main means of expression used by Hobday and Tertis in the work's first movement is large-scale tempo modification. Much like Tertis's recording of Bach's *Chaconne,* the movement is divided into larger tempo areas, which are distinguished by slowing at their outer ends and rushing throughout their middles.

The tempo graph below (Figure 3.14) shows a large variation in tempo, from m.m. ♩=50 in the closing section of the piece to m.m. ♩=170 in m. 190. By the standards of MSPs, this represents a massive variation in basic tempo within a single movement in which the only notated tempo indications are allegro appassionato and sostenuto ed espressivo for the final section. This recording supports Philip's observation that early recordings feature great flexibility of tempo within single movements, while in fact going far beyond a tempo variation from m.m. ♩=84 to m.m. ♩=148 in Alfred Cortot's recording of Chopin's *Piano Sonata* no. 3, which Philip cites as an extreme example of this phenomenon.[210]

I can also relate a personal experience connected to tempo modification in this movement, having performed it at the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition on the Isle of Man in 2010. Inspired by Tertis's performance, I slowed heavily for the second theme and as a result I was eliminated from the competition and told by one

---

[208] Eric Blom, "Ethyl Hobday," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Volume IV* (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd., 1954). Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms*, 338.
[209] Edward Elgar, *Piano Quintet,* Ethel Hobday, Spencer Dyke Quartet, recorded 1926, National Gramophone Society NGS 1-10 (78rpm).
[210] Philip, *Early Recordings and Music Style*, 36, 19.

juror that such tempo variation in a single movement when not marked by the composer was unacceptable. This anecdotal experience demonstrates the extent to which MSPs mandate a steady approach to tempo within single movements of musical works as well as the extent to which adhering to the notated score is given precedence over other forms of expression in MSP culture.

As shown in the tempo graph (Figure 3.14), Tertis and Hobday's tempi divide the movement structurally by thematic groups. The first section runs to m. 37 and is followed by the second thematic group played in a slower tempo until m. 53. Hobday and Tertis then rush after m. 53, before slowing into a new tempo area at m. 90, where the thematic material of the second subject group returns. They gradually rush throughout the development section before slowing for the recapitulation at m. 135. Here, the second subject group at m. 153 is again taken slower but not as slowly as in the exposition at m. 36. The section from m. 168 rushes heavily and in m. 206, where the opening theme again returns, rather than slowing down in order to emphasise this structurally, Tertis and Hobday rush through it, slowing abruptly and without warning for the final sostenuto ed espressivo section before slowing gradually from m. 231 onwards. Generally, however, sections here are rushed to their middles before slowing at their outer ends. This continuous rushing throughout each of the main sections of the movement creates an appassionato character, while tempo flexibility also results in a general sense of direction that conveys the movement's structural form. As a result, this performance is detailed and impetuous on a moment-to-moment basis while still conveying a sweeping sense of overall structure.

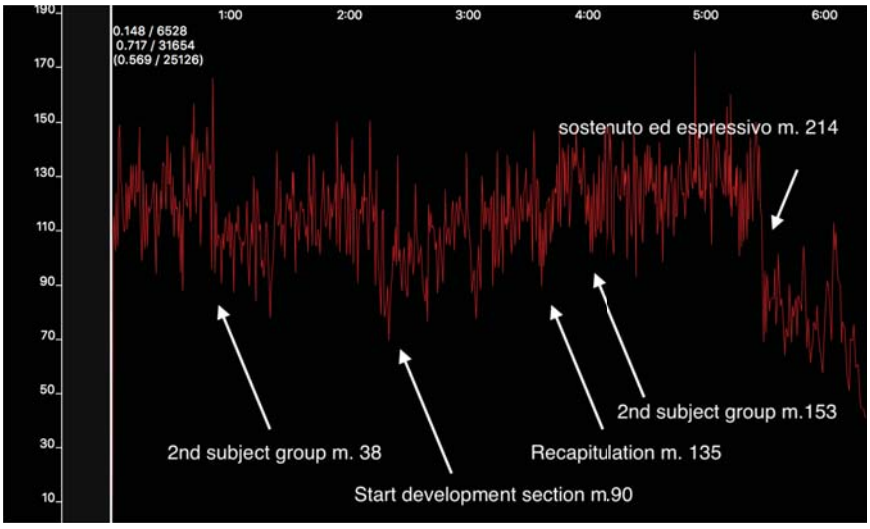

Figure 3.14: Tempo graph Hobday and Tertis, Brahms's *Sonata* Op.120 no.1 Movement 1.

Rhythmic Flexibility

On a localised level, rhythmic flexibility gives expression to individual phrases throughout the performance, with lengthening and shortening of notes creating direction and variation. For example, in m. 112 the same motive is repeated twice, with the harmony altered the second time: the first time Tertis rushes forward, while the second time he starts quickly and slows abruptly. The decisive chords in a quicker tempo in m. 116 then come as a shock, demonstrating how rhythmic flexibility can add a sense of unpredictability to a repetitive phrase and aid abrupt changes of character. There is a sense of flux throughout the movement created by the continual unevenness of the beats, such as the lengthening of the second beat and shortening of the first beat in the opening theme from m. 6.

Another example of this is Hobday's wild approach to the opening bars: she rushes through m. 3 and 4, well beyond the general tempo Tertis takes for the opening theme, resulting in a breathless, impetuous character. Cohen's performance of the introductory bars in a steady tempo on Tertis's 1933 recording is strikingly different. The contrast between the two pianists is further evident in matters of dislocation and arpeggiation. Hobday uses these devices frequently while Cohen does not, as can be heard in the passage from m. 192, where Hobday arpeggiates and dislocates every chord. The continual dislocation used by Hobday is further evidence of her proximity to the recordings of an older generation of pianists like Carl Reinecke, who was an illustrious representative of the so-called Leipzig School, of which Clara Schumann was also said to be the exemplary proponent.[211]

Portamento

Tertis's portamenti often follow from his complex fingerings in phrases where simpler fingerings would have allowed him to avoid sliding altogether. This approach allows Tertis to use frequent portamenti, as early-recorded singers do, even in passages that are awkward on the viola. His use of these unorthodox fingerings sets him apart from other early-recorded violists like Post, Nedbal, and Van Hout, who favour simpler fingerings and generally use portamento when it is more readily at hand. A noteworthy example of this takes place in m. 7, where Tertis uses a 2 - 2 fingering rather than an extension over the interval of a diminished fourth, resulting in a heavy slide. Tertis uses five portamenti in the opening theme alone and a further five in the second theme,

[211] For a detailed discussion of Reinecke's place within the Leipzig School of pianists see Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record*, 162.

including a C portamento into the D flat on the first beat of m. 41. This C portamento is notable because it is deliberately added without a change of left-hand position. In the sostenuto ed espressivo section (from m. 214), Tertis uses similarly unorthodox fingerings, like the 1 - 1 slide in m. 215 and the awkward jump to a 2nd finger on the F in m. 216 on the D string, as well as the awkward jump to a first position G on the third beat in m. 217. Each of these fingerings allows him to add portamenti that would not be possible with more conventional in-position fingerings: for example, playing m. 215 in the first position would result in two fewer portamenti, but by sliding up on the G string, Tertis not only adds portamento but keeps the whole motive within the timbre of a single string. Tertis also uses two subtle L portamenti in the final four bars, changing from the A string to the D string three measures from the end, and changing from the 3rd to the 2nd finger in the penultimate bar. This fingering results in each of the three notes being re-articulated and played with a different sound colour. Fingerings of this kind, where portamenti are created while adhering to the timbre of a single string within melodies, are a central part of Tertis's style.

Movement 2: Andante un poco adagio

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.3.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.3.

Timbre and Portamento

Tertis's use of continuous and wide vibrato, frequent long and short portamenti, and sustained legato, is similar to the approach of early-recorded singers like Rosovsky and Caruso. As in the first movement, there are further examples here of how Tertis's physically awkward fingerings increase the possibilities for voice-like portamento, such as in m. 28 - 29, where the 2 - 2 slide in m. 28 could easily have been avoided by staying in position. Similarly, sliding to the 3rd finger on the first beat of m. 29 on the D string creates a colour change where Tertis could also easily have stayed in position.

Tempo and Rhythmic Flexibilities

The variation of tempo in this movement is broad, from around m.m. ♩ =30 at its slowest point and up to m.m. ♩=85 at its quickest, with exaggerated slowing at phrase ends, and especially at the transitions into m. 23 and m. 41. Hobday and Tertis tend to create more variation within individual bars or smaller groups of bars rather than continually changing the overall tempo as they do in the first and last movement of the sonata. An example of this tempo flexibility within smaller groups of bars occurs in m. 7

and 8, where they rush the rising melodic line and slow the descending line in m. 9 and 10, much as the early-recorded singers discussed earlier do in Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*. From m. 17 into 19, Tertis and Hobday rush to the high B flat, the top note of the phrase, in a way similar to the flexibility used by Caruso in *Bianca al par,* where he rushes through the rising line before slowing as the melody descends. Continual dislocation between the piano and viola here creates a general sense of ambiguity as far as the location of the main beats of the bar are concerned. An example of this occurs in the opening measures, where Hobday's left-hand eighth notes are ahead of Tertis's, which are stretched over the bar line, creating dislocation throughout the opening melody. From m. 35, Hobday also plays swinging, uneven sixteenths, in contrast to the straight and measured sixteenths played by Cohen in this passage. In m. 61 Hobday swings sixteenth triplets unevenly into the second beat of the bar, which is then echoed by Tertis's swinging thirty-second note upbeats from m. 64 - 66.

Movement 3: Allegretto grazioso

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.3.3 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.3.

Rhythmic Flexibility

Tertis and Hobday take a lilting dance-like approach to this minuet-inspired third movement. The tempo is much steadier here than in the other movements, with the exception of the middle section from m. 47, which Hobday starts in a quicker tempo before slowing abruptly in m. 63. While the general tempo of this movement is quite steady, Tertis and Hobday use localised flexibility to create unevenness and swing that contributes to the dance-like character of their performance. This continual unevenness stands in stark contrast to the solid and assured approach to rhythm characteristic of performances of Brahms's works today. Examples of this unevenness can be heard in the way Hobday swings the two eighth-note figures in m. 3 and 4, which are characteristic gestures of this movement, and the way she plays uneven syncopations in the middle section from m. 55. Her melody in m. 125 then combines swing and dislocation, creating complex layering. The section from m. 63 features some abrupt rhythmic flexibility, with rushing from m. 66 into m. 67 followed by abrupt slowing.

Portamento

Tertis's use of portamento in this movement creates a folk-like character, as in m. 4 and 8 for example, where he slides on the second of the repeated motives. He slides up

to the C in m. 34, resulting in both slowing and dislocation of the viola line from Hobday's right hand material. The portamento here is created by a change of bow before sliding from the lower F, creating a 'yodelling' effect that gives the performance a touch of Austrian folk character. This tongue-in-cheek approach to portamento is at odds with how many performers might approach such a serious canonic work in MSP style today.

Movement 4: Vivace

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.3.4 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.3.

Tempo Modification

The finale of this work features some wild, rushed, and uncontrolled playing that would be considered sloppy and inaccurate by the standards of MSPs. Rushing occurs both within and across sections of the movement, and it is this overall forward movement throughout that results in an exciting performance.

The two players treat moving eighth notes throughout the movement in an off-the-cuff fashion. They continually rush—especially in the recurring motive from m. 3. Tertis also approaches the eighth notes marked with dots with a thrown spiccato in the upper half of the bow, creating the uncontrolled rushing heard in m. 11 - 12 for example. He also takes the triplet eighths at a remarkable speed in m. 216 and m. 217. These arpeggios are difficult to play because of the string crossings, yet he virtuosically rushes through them with great clarity and accuracy. Hobday's similarly daredevil approach in the opening four measures demonstrates that she seems willing to sacrifice accuracy for speed. From m. 66, she also rushes despite grasping at handfuls of wrong notes, conveying an impression of enthusiasm. In m. 104 and m.159, a technically awkward bit of piano writing, Hobday again rushes forward, once again neglecting accuracy in favour of speed.

While continuous rushing is a feature of this performance, so too is the use of moments of slowing—in order to facilitate further rushing. For example, while the entire opening passage rushes, the slowing at m. 17 for the return of the opening theme creates an opportunity to again push forward. This occurs in m. 107 - 108 too, where Hobday slows the tempo slightly only to then rush in the following section. Another example of this takes place in m. 163, where Tertis slows his theme before rushing in m. 174.

Rhythmic Flexibility

Rhythmic flexibility also adds to the exuberant and enthusiastic character of this performance, as for example from m. 123, where Tertis's uneven approach to dotted rhythms creates a Hungarian Gypsy-like flavour. Prior to this, in m. 121 - 122, Hobday arpeggiates the fourth-beat quarter note in the left hand while arpeggiating the second half of m. 134 to emphasise the top E of her right-hand melody, creating a lilting and rhapsodic effect.

In sum, this performance of the fourth movement of Brahms's *Sonata* Op. 120 no. 1 by Tertis and Hobday is characterised by continuous rushing, an improvisatory approach to rhythmic detail, and a lack of adherence to the details of the notated score.

A Connection From Brahms to Tertis?

This recording evidences a possible link between Hobday's performance style and her acquaintance with the Brahms circle of pianists at the end of the 19th century. Her approach is similar here to the recordings of Ilona Eibenschütz and Adelina de Lara, pupils of both Clara Schumann and Brahms. Scott found Eibenschütz and De Lara to be most at odds with current practices amongst the pianists closely associated with Brahms.[212] Hobday shares her propensity for constant rushing, dislocation, arpeggiation and extreme slowing with both of these pianists. That Hobday and Tertis's recording so closely resembles the performance style of the 'Brahms circle' pianists like Eibenschütz and De Lara, suggests that this approach to Brahms's music existed beyond the confines of the composer's inner circle in the early-20th century. As Potter notes:

> [S]ome critics today—and even string players, who should know better—turn their noses up at the slides and scoops of portamento affected by Tertis and his contemporaries. But all the late-Romantic composers represented here would have expected to hear exactly this style of playing.[213]

If Tertis indeed understood Brahms's style, then it was a very different style to that expected in today's MSPs. Far from controlled, Brahms as played by Tertis and Hobday is unpredictable, petulant, wild, and humorous.

---

[212] Scott, *Romanticizing Brahms*, 330.
[213] Tully Potter, liner notes to *Lionel Tertis*, *The Complete Vocalion Recordings (1919 - 24)*, reissued 2006, Biddulph 80219 (CD).

3.10.4) Lionel Tertis and Frank St. Leger piano: *Romance* from the *Suite* Op. 2, by Benjamin Dale (recorded 1920)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.4 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.4.

Composer Benjamin Dale (1885 - 1943) was not only closely associated with Tertis but also wrote the *Suite* Op. 2 for him. Tertis's recording of the second half of the work's second movement, *Romance*, starting with the return of the opening material at m. 109 on a single side of a 78rpm record, gives us both an idea of what his performances of the whole work may have sounded like and also sheds light on his approach to the works of composers with whom he was personally associated. In this case, Tertis seems to be even less concerned with adhering to the notated detail of the score than he is in works by Brahms or Mozart. Given that Tertis edited the viola part, adding bowings and fingerings to the published edition of the work, it is notable that it would be very difficult to reconstruct Dale's notation through repeated listening to his performance. Tertis's unnotated approach to tempo and rhythm departs from the score to such a considerable degree that it is well outside what might be considered acceptable within MSPs.

According to White, Dale's *Suite* was commissioned by Tertis and premiered in 1906. Tertis requested an orchestration of the final two movements by the composer, which he premiered on May 18, 1911.[214] Tertis remembers the orchestral premiere at the Royal Philharmonic Society with conductor Arthur Nikisch as somewhat disastrous: "The famous conductor, secure in his immense reputation, had not taken the slightest trouble to acquaint himself with the work, such was the attitude, still tolerated in 1911, of a lordly foreigner towards the native muse."[215] Despite a less than ideal premiere, Tertis went on to give numerous performances of the piece. As a 1922 review in *Musical Opinion* states: "Dale has scored [the *Romance* and *Finale*] and it has been performed in London under Nikisch, at The Hague under Mengelberg, and at Glasgow under Ronald."[216] Notably, the original orchestral parts of the *Suite* were aboard the Titanic when it sank in 1912.[217] Dale is now little remembered as a composer and few of his works are performed with any regularity.

---

[214] White, *Lionel Tertis*, 17.
[215] Tertis, *My Viola and I*, 34.
[216] Quoted in White, *Lionel Tertis*, 304.
[217] Ibid., 17.

Tempo Modification

Even though the notated score encourages a degree of flexibility with markings like con anima, accelerando, and piu lento, Tertis's use of tempo modification is nonetheless extreme, ranging from about m.m. ♩=30 to m.m. ♩=128. An example of this can be heard in m. 141, where Tertis starts a gradual accelerando eight measures before the notated con anima. Tertis's continual rushing and slowing in advance of notated ritardando and accelerando markings is similar to Edward Elgar's on the recording of his *Enigma Variations* from 1926 and is demonstrative of an approach that can be heard frequently on early recordings.[218]

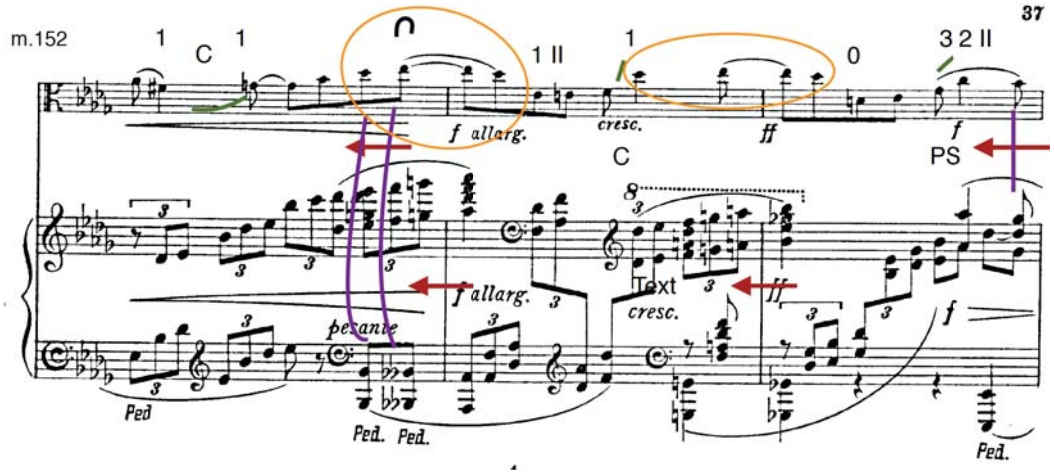

Figure 3.15: Tertis plays rhythms notated differently the same way in Dale's *Romance*.

Tertis also engages in jagged rushing and slowing, like in m. 154, where he stretches the high C before abruptly continuing in a quicker tempo in m. 155. This lengthening of specific notes before abruptly returning to tempo in sudden starts and stops is also at odds with contemporary MSPs, where the tendency is to use gradual slowing before a gradual return to tempo.

Rhythmic Flexibility

Tertis also uses extreme flexibility on a beat-to-beat level, which contrasts strongly with the audible pulse expected in MSPs. He approaches the opening section from m. 112 much in the style of an operatic recitativo. The notated lento quasi fantasia suggests a certain freedom of rhythm, and Tertis remembers the *Romance* as a movement in which "rubato is of such cunning and so incessant that it requires a conductor of very

[218] Edward Elgar, *Enigma Variations* Op. 36 on *Elgar Conducts Elgar*, Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, Edward Elgar, recorded 1926, reissued 2005, Naxos 8111022 (CD).

considerable experience to follow and be on spot."[219] Tertis's flexibilities go well beyond the freedoms that might be expected in contemporary MSPs, as heard in his variation of the repeated motives from m. 112 - 114 for example, where each of the upbeats are played with an elongated A with the following notes accelerating quickly into the next bar. In m. 152 - 153 he lengthens the first D flat before rushing the D flat in the second measure, and while both bars are notated differently, they end up sounding rhythmically identical (see Figure 3.15).

From m. 120 - 124 he also rushes by shortening the fourth beat of every bar. One of the most extreme examples of rhythmic alteration here, however, takes place from m. 135 - 136, where Tertis plays the notated sixteenths as eighth notes. Similarly, in m. 159, extreme stretching occurs on both the first and fourth beats of the bar, where no notated slowing is suggested, further underlining the rhapsodic flexibility of his performance.

Portamento

Tertis's long, heavy, and varied portamenti here are close to those of early-recorded singers like Patti, Caruso, and Melba. Tertis frequently uses high positions on the lower strings, like for the portamenti between the octave A flats from m. 127 - 129, where the entire passage is played on the G string. Similarly, from m. 146, he plays the high D flat on the C string and the high A flat in m. 149 on the G string. The result is a uniform timbre with large parts of the melody played on single strings, allowing for long downwards portamenti afterwards. In the main theme, from m. 130, all of the long intervals are connected with portamento, while the multiple portamenti in m. 133 help maintain a continuous legato over the bow change. In m. 137, Tertis uses L, PL, C and PS portamento types in close succession, perhaps inspired by the notated con tenerezza. Interestingly, although the fingerings Tertis uses on his recording are the same ones he marked in the published viola part, these fingerings still give little indication of the frequency of his portamento use nor do they indicate the different portamento types he uses.

In sum, Tertis's recording of Dale's *Romance* demonstrates the use of extreme tempo and rhythmic flexibility, and in so doing departs radically from the notated score. At the same time, his frequent, heavy portamento is similar to that used by early-recorded singers.

---

[219] Tertis, *My viola and I,* 34.

3.10.5) Lionel Tertis and Ethyl Hobday piano: *Sunset* by Lionel Tertis, (recorded 1922)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.5 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.5.

Lionel Tertis as Composer and Performer

Most 19th-century virtuoso performers were adept at composing original, well-crafted compositions and were also expected to be able to transcribe, ornament, and improvise (in the form of preluding). As Charles de Bériot writes in his *Méthode* of 1870: "We address ourselves here to the violinist who would like to give his talents the highest possible direction: that of violin composer."[220] Tertis's small compositional output, combined with his large numbers of transcriptions and arrangements, place him within this 19th-century tradition. I have analysed his recordings of two of his own compositions here, beginning with *Sunset* and then moving on to *Hier au soir*. Tertis was however far less prolific as a composer than his hero Kreisler, or than pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff, both of whom are among the few performer-composers in this tradition whose works have been accepted into the WAM canon. It is unclear when Tertis composed *Sunset* but the manuscript bears a dedication to his first wife Ada, whom he married in 1913.

Portamento

This recording is notable for the sheer quantity of portamenti used. Tertis's fingerings were present in the manuscript that was used for the published edition of the score and he again adheres to these fingerings on his recording. While the notated fingerings hint at portamento use, it is again unlikely that a performer today, having never heard his recording while adhering to the tenets of MSPs, would have any idea of the extent to which Tertis uses the device. In total, he makes 70 slides in a piece consisting of only 54 bars. Intriguingly, Tertis marked 'glissando' in the penultimate bar: an awkward compositional choice in light of his own continual sliding throughout the piece on his recording. The recording also includes all of the portamento types, showing how prevalent and diverse Tertis's use of the device was. As a result, the printed score seems inadequate when drawing conclusions about how the composer played his own

[220] Charles de Bériot, *Méthode de Violon,* Paris, 1870, 176. "Nous nous adressons ici au violoniste qui voudrait donner a son talent la plus haute direction: Celle de violon compositeur." Translation mine.

work, even though it includes his own fingerings and bowings. This demonstrates the important role early recordings play in understanding the historical use of portamento, as in this case the fingered score proves to be a wholly inadequate predictor of parameters such as frequency, diversity, and audibility.

3.10.6) Lionel Tertis and Unknown pianist: *Hier au soir* by Lionel Tertis, (recorded 1925)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.6 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.6.

Another of Tertis's compositions called *Hier au soir* was recorded in 1925 for Columbia in the early days of his contract with the label. Both the date of composition and the dedication to 'Mache' in the published score remain a mystery. Tertis adds a repeat on his recording at m. 22, allowing him to both fill more of the side of the 78rpm record, and to play con sordino the second time through. Tertis's performance of this work contains extreme rhythmic flexibility and frequent, varied portamenti, and it would again be difficult to reconstruct the notated score from repeated listening to his recording, and vice versa.

Rhythmic Flexibility

There is a wide-ranging and continuous flexibility throughout this performance, with frequent dislocation between the left hand of the piano and the viola. Tertis exaggerates these flexibilities the second time through, as for example in m. 12, where he rushes forward. Wide variation from beat-to-beat can also be heard in m. 10 - 11. This extreme flexibility is similar to that heard on Tertis's recordings of Dale's *Romance* and Ireland's *The Holy Boy*.

Portamento

Tertis uses frequent portamenti here, like at the entrance of the viola in m. 7 for example, which starts with three portamenti in a row, while m. 17 - 19 contain no fewer than six slides.

In sum, in recordings of his own works, Tertis departs radically in terms of tempo and rhythmic flexibility from his own notated scores. This flexibility was central to Tertis's performance style, and he shares the ability to create continual flux in melodic lines with singers such as Vaguet and Caruso, as demonstrated by the analysis above of the aria *Plus blanche que la blanche hermine*. At the same time, his portamento use is heavier, more frequent, and more varied than may be deduced from his notated fingerings. The

irreproducibility of the notated score from these performances, and vice versa, demonstrates the distance between Tertis's performance practice and today's MSPs.

3.10.7) Lionel Tertis and Ethel Hobday, piano: *Jeg elsker dig* by Edvard Grieg, arr. Lionel Tertis, (recorded 1922)

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.7 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.7.

Among the numerous discs of short works recorded by Lionel Tertis is his own transcription of the song *Jeg elsker dig* by Edvard Grieg. His performance here is closely connected with early-recorded vocal style, as his approach to tempo, frequent and varied portamenti, and continuous vibrato, is similar to the recordings of *Du bist die Ruh* analysed above.

Tempo and Rhythmic Flexibility

Here Hobday plays the piano introduction and interludes faster than the viola/piano sections with Tertis, much the way pianists and early-recorded singers do in Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*. Tertis and Hobday also use much rhythmic flexibility, such as frequent over- and under-dotting. Hobday's piano introduction and interlude are also remarkable, however, for their combination of swung rhythms, arpeggiation and dislocation, such as from m. 2 - 4 and m. 21 - 24 for example. She also fills the gap between viola/piano sections by rushing over Tertis's conclusion of the initial phrase in m. 11. The solo viola double stops in m. 41 - 42 then repeats the piano material from the opening, and Tertis performs this phrase freely and slowly as a kind of cadenza—taking time to emphasise the dissonant final chord of m. 41 through lengthening before rushing forward in m. 43. From m. 43, Tertis takes over material from the original piano part on the viola, playing this material in a less vocal way—both in a quicker tempo and almost pianistically—before rushing through to the final bar.

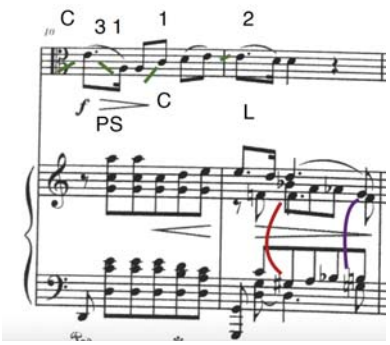

Figure 3.16: Portamento types used by Tertis in Grieg's Jeg elsker dig.

Portamento

Tertis uses frequent and varied portamento here, often multiple times in a single bar, as in m. 19 and between m. 10 - 11 (Figure 3.16), where he uses the C, PS and L types in quick succession. Surprisingly, the climax in m. 39 is played without portamento, yet, as if to compensate for this, Tertis uses a C portamento on the last eighth of the bar before using a downwards PL portamento to round off the phrase in m. 40. In general, Tertis's frequent, varied use of portamento here closely resembles that of Rosovsky in Duparc's *Extase,* as discussed earlier.

Vibrato Range

While vibrato speed on Tertis's recordings of *Sunset* and *Hier au soir* tends to be more uniform, here it covers a wider range (from 6,32 to 8,1 cycles per second), with slower vibrato in the lower register and quicker vibrato in the higher. His range of vibrato speeds is thus similar to that of early-recorded singers, whose vibrato is often attuned to their vocal register.

3.10.8) Lionel Tertis and Albert Sammons violin, London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Hamilton Harty: *Sinfonia Concertante* KV 364 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (recorded 1933)

Tertis, Sammons, and the newly-founded London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Hamilton Harty, made the first recording of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* K. 364 in 1933. This recording is the only available opportunity to hear Tertis as a soloist with orchestra and includes Tertis and Sammons's reworked version of violinist Joseph Hellmesberger Jr.'s first movement cadenza. Joseph Hellmesberger Jr. (1855 - 1907) was a renowned Viennese violinist, conductor, pedagogue, and an early director of the Vienna Conservatoire. He composed a number of often-played cadenzas that were

widely circulated in the 19th century.[221] His cadenza for Bach's *Concerto for Two Violins* also appears on Arnold and Alma Rosé's 1928 recording of the piece, and it is therefore interesting to note contemporary musicologist Michael Sternberg's reaction to that cadenza here:

> If you have a taste for the bizarre, you might want to check out the 1928 recording [of the Allegro finale] by Arnold and Alma Ros[é]...Twenty measures before the end, the music screeches to a halt, whereupon there follows a nearly two-minute cadenza by the famous 19th-century quartet-leader Joseph Hellmesberger. Its general clumsiness and howling grammatical indiscretion are perfect examples of the sort of thing Mozart was sending up in his Musical Joke, K.522.[222]

Surprisingly, Tully Potter—an early recordings enthusiast and admirer of Tertis—also brings similarly judgmental language to bear when describing the Tertis and Sammons recording of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*:

> Tertis played Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante with Ysaÿe, Thibaud, Primrose (a performance in Paris which stimulated that great player to take up the viola), Goldberg, Busch and Kreisler, but his most frequent partner was Sammons. Their recording, the first to be made of this beautiful work, featured Beecham's new London Philharmonic with Sir Hamilton Harty conducting. Although he was a devoted Mozartian, Harty did not think to remonstrate with Tertis over the changes that the violist made to the score. The most radical was to throw out Mozart's cadenza for the first movement and replace it with Tertis's own, based on one by the older Joseph Hellmesberger, who composed an equally ill-judged cadenza for the last movement of Bach's Double Concerto. Despite the tamperings, and the soloists' all-pervasive portamento, the performance has always been valued for the superb interplay between Sammons and Tertis and the stylish accompaniment."[223]

In sum, Potter views this recording as excellent with the exception of the cadenza and the overuse of portamento, and notes that a conductor of Harty's reputation should have taken Tertis to task for his outrageous rewriting of Mozart's score. I argue, however, that Tertis's changes to the score follow one interpretation of the 19th-century ideal of the performer (as discussed in Chapter One), with Tertis understanding and being faithful to Mozart's music through his own personal, social, and historical lens—his alterations to the score included. Steinberg's and Potter's attacks, however, show just how deeply current beliefs about the way canonic WAM masterpieces should be performed are embedded in musical discourse. Even writers with a great interest in early recordings, like Potter, feel required to attack performance practices like portamento that fall outside of the bounds acceptable in MSPs of Mozart's music today. Portamento

---

[221] "Obituary Joseph Hellmesberger," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 34, no. 609 (Nov. 1st, 1893): 664.
[222] Michael Sternberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 19. J.S. Bach, *Concerto for Two Violins* BWV 1043, Arnold Rosé, Alma Rosé, Orchestra, 1928, Victrola M 123.
[223] Potter, liner notes to *Lionel Tertis the Complete Columbia Recordings*.

itself, while clearly embedded in a 19th-century approach to music-making, may stem from even older historical approaches. How are we to know that it is these early recordings rather than our own MSPs that are incongruous with the performance practices of Mozart's era? It seems even more odd that some writers object to early-recorded cadenzas on the grounds that they do not fit the stylistic parameters of the work in question. If the 'intentions of the composer' are important to today's musicians, then surely the cadenza can be viewed as a moment in a work where the performer is expressly requested by the composer to either compose or improvise in their own style. Or, as philosopher Peter Kivy puts it:

> The cadenza is the most obvious instance, in the modern concert repertory, where the composer has mandated a completely empty space in which the performer is free to 'do her own thing' it is an *intended* gap in the 'text.' And intentional authenticity would lie in the performer, if she can, doing her own thing, not slavishly imitating the composer's style. For *that* is not what the composer intended.[224]

How strange, then, that contemporary musicologists like Steinberg and Potter are so negative about these early-recorded cadenzas, given that they are a realisation of what might be called the 'intentions of the composer.' Their attacks on these performances could be viewed as having little to do with respecting composers' intentions and much more to do with reinforcing mainstream judgements about what constitutes 'serious' music-making.

Movement 1: Allegro maestoso

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.8.1 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.8.

Tempo Modification

Potter remarks on Harty's 'Mozartian credentials' as a conductor, and therefore one might expect him to conform more readily to the unwritten rules of MSPs for how Mozart's music should be performed by not engaging in unnotated slowing or rushing.[225] Harty however indeed makes tempo modifications, by slowing during the orchestral tuttis. While broad slowing at the ends of sections or phrases is still used today in 19th-century repertoires to highlight structural boundaries, this is not an accepted approach for MSPs of 18th-century repertoires, so even the few tempo modifications heard here are bound to sound extreme to some.

---

[224] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities, Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 274.
[225] Potter, liner notes to *Lionel Tertis the Complete Columbia Recordings.*

Examples of these tempo modifications include slowing and rushing in m. 25 - 26 and rushing through the crescendo from m. 54, slowing during the closing tutti section at m. 344, and the pronounced slowing from m. 62 - 64, which leads to a slower tempo area in m. 72 where the soloists enter. Like the early-recorded singers in Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh,* Tertis and Sammons take their solo sections at a much slower pace here than the orchestral tuttis. Another example of the use of slower tempi for solo sections can be heard at Sammons's entrance in m. 172, which slows further into m. 176. Sammons follows this by rushing back into the orchestral tutti in m. 180. Tertis then takes a similar approach to his solo section from m. 187. Tertis and Sammons also slow broadly in m. 222, emphasising the structural boundary at the return of the recapitulation.

Portamento

Heavy portamento is prevalent here in both the orchestral and solo parts; its use is often also connected with both unnotated slowing and lyrical passages. For example, there is the pronounced portamento in the first violin group at m. 18 coupled with broad slowing at the end of this phrase, which sounds thoroughly 'un-Mozartean' in the context of MSPs. There are further orchestral portamenti into m. 93 and m. 346, connected each time with unnotated slowing. Tertis and Sammons also use pronounced portamento over the motive in m. 76 and 77 as well as in lyrical passages, such as at m. 143.

The Cadenza

Tertis's arrangement of Hellmesberger's cadenza exemplifies his compositional creativity. Just prior to the cadenza, in m. 317, Tertis alters Mozart's score by playing an octave higher, resulting in greater projection of the viola part. Tertis's compositional rearrangement can be heard at the end of m. 29 of the cadenza, where he cuts six bars from Hellmesberger's notation and adds his own lyrical material based on Mozart's phrase material from m. 143 of the main movement. Tertis also alters the double stops in m. 39, changing the harmony to a diminished chord that moves through several inversions. At m. 68, Tertis cuts the Adagio and substitutes in three of his own bars with moving parallel chords, before adding his own virtuosic scale and double-stopped chords with trills to finish the cadenza. These final added bars are remarkable given how harmonically out of place these chords sound in the context of both Hellmesberger's chromatic cadenza and Mozart's harmonic language—chords that would not sound out

of place, however, in 1930s jazz. This jarring harmonic sequence is thus perhaps most in the spirit of Kivy's conception of 'intentional authenticity,' where the performer of a cadenza is given free rein to do 'their own thing.' Tertis's approach also reminds me of a more contemporary example of a Mozart cadenza as performed by violinist Gilles Apap, which incorporates blues and Americana in its rhythmic, harmonic and melodic material.[226]

Movement 2: Andante

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.8.2 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.8.

Portamento

Heavy orchestral portamento is present in each of the string sections. Indeed, the broad portamenti in the celli in m. 38, and the two successive portamenti in m. 61 in the violins, are noteworthy examples of how the device was used in orchestral settings. Tertis and Sammons then use a wide variety of portamento types in this lyrical movement: Sammons's opening phrase from m. 8 makes frequent use of I portamenti, much like Patti on her recording of Mozart's *Voi che sapete,*[227] while in m. 22 there is a prominent example of Tertis using the L portamento type to play the two Fs on different strings, thereby creating a change of colour. This is another example of a technically-awkward fingering that seems expressly engineered in order to add portamento.

Tempo Modification

The movement is structured into tempo areas, with gradual slowing and rushing used to connect these sections—much like Tertis's approach to Brahms's *Sonata* op. 120 no. 1 with Hobday. The opening tempo of about m.m. ♩= 55 is followed by slowing until m. 24, where Tertis's melody ends at around m.m. ♩=35. This follows the pattern of slower soli and quicker orchestral tutti used in the first movement. At m. 35, the orchestra takes a quicker tempo, which the soloists maintain for the major key section that follows. This is followed by gradual slowing by Tertis from m. 67, where the material modulates to G minor. At m. 96, the soloists rush to a new tempo area which they reach in m. 104, and which the orchestra maintains through to the conclusion. In

---

[226] Kivy, *Authenticities, Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, 274. In addition to 'intentional authenticity,' Kivy also discusses authenticities of concept, sound, and practice, among others. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto in G Major* K. 216, Gilles Apap, 2011, accessed March 18, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmjGDBWZZFw.

[227] Mozart, *Voi che sapete,* Patti.

sum, the solo and minor key sections are played slowly here, while orchestral tuttis and major key sections are quicker.

Movement 3: Presto

The recording can be found in Appendix II - recording 3.a10.8.3 and the annotated score is in Appendix III – score 3.a10.8.

Tempo Modification

The tempo of the final movement adheres to a relatively narrow range from between m.m. ♩ =140 - 170. Here, tempo modification is used within individual phrases, as heard in the rushing over rising materials in m. 3 - 4, or in the slowing over falling phrases in m. 16 where the oboes and horns take up the melodic material. The violins rush the rising sixteenth notes enthusiastically in m. 33, much like Tertis and Sammons later do in m. 132. As with Tertis's recording of Dale's *Romance*, slowing begins several bars prior to indications in the score, in this case at Mozart's calando poco a poco in m. 196. Tertis and Sammons follow this slowing, however, with a jarringly abrupt a tempo in the following measure. The approach to this phrase in many MSPs (including that taken when I performed this piece) is to slow slightly until m. 202 before gradually accelerating to restore the movement's main tempo so as not to confuse the orchestra with an abrupt change of tempo. Tertis and Sammons, however, are much more daring here, slowing until the end of the phrase and suddenly returning to tempo without preparation.

Articulation

Throughout the movement there are moments of what Philip describes as "startling contrasts between two or more musicians playing together," which he notes are defining features of early-recorded style.[228] In many cases, this results from Sammons and Tertis playing the same motives with varying approaches to articulation. For example, Tertis plays the triplets broadly and on the string in the upper-half of the bow, while Sammons plays the triplets sharply, briskly, and off-string in the lower half of the bow, resulting in contrasting timbres. These striking differences of articulation are maintained throughout and show how Sammons and Tertis, who performed and recorded together over the course of many years, adopted and accepted independent approaches to the same motivic material within the same piece.

[228] Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, 105.

Ornamentation

Tertis's compositional creativity is again evident in the alterations he makes in this movement. In m. 247, for example, he plays the entire passage an octave higher, resulting in greater audibility and brilliance. In m. 444, he composes his own line a third and then a sixth below the violin, allowing him to finish the movement together with Sammons, rather than giving the violin the final say. These alterations give a more prominent role to the solo viola.

Slapdash?

Because of an array of wrong notes, a loose approach to vertical togetherness, and frequent tempo modifications, this recording may come across as slapdash. For example, in m. 137, Sammons plays a jarring A flat that falls outside of the F major chord instead of Mozart's notated A, later repeating this mistake by adding a strange D flat to the parallel passage in m. 304. It is remarkable that neither Tertis nor Harty corrected him, as Tertis does not echo this mistake in the viola iteration of this passage. There are also a number of glaringly wrong notes in the woodwinds, which, taken together with Sammons's errors, may make this performance seem unkempt. However, it is important to remember that the performers and recording company found the result acceptable for commercial release. The quality of this performance is not found in precise attention to notated detail but rather in its overall sweep and moment-to-moment, unstructured approach.

In sum, this recording of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* shows how tempo modification, rhythmic flexibility, and portamento were applied to large-scale works with soloists and orchestra in the early-recorded era. Furthermore, the alteration of notes and ornamentation heard throughout the work, and especially in its cadenza, evidence a 19th-century understanding of the role of the performer, supporting both Hunter's and Kivy's arguments concerning the empowerment and authenticity of individually creative players.[229] Following this approach can allow contemporary performers to bypass the restrictions of MSPs, fundamentally altering the way Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* sounds today.

[229] Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer," 374. Kivy, *Authenticities, Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, 274.

Conclusion

While adherence to notated detail and structure and a 'neat and tidy' approach are central parameters of today's MSPs, detailed analysis of early recordings by violists reveals that Oskar Nedbal, Léon Van Hout, Arthur Post, Pierre Monteux, and Lionel Tertis operated well outside these narrow parameters. Instead, their performances are embedded within the culture of their time, as evidenced by their use of tempo and rhythmic flexibility, multi-layering, varied and heavy portamento, vibrato, and ornamentation—an approach echoed by early recordings of violinists, cellists, conductors, pianists, and singers. The relationship between viola playing and singing practices of the era has also been demonstrated here, especially where shared approaches to portamento and vibrato are concerned. All of the performers studied here take a non-literal approach to the notated score, with plenty of instances of ornamentation, re-composition, or performance decisions that ignore or conflict with the notated score. Despite these broad commonalities, however, there is also great diversity here—often according to national school. Nedbal and Post can be viewed as 'German' players, using less frequent, slow, and narrow vibrato, along with wild tempo and rhythmic flexibility; Van Hout, Vieux and Monteux can be viewed as representatives of the Franco-Belgian school, with their more frequent, fast, and narrow vibrato, and tendency to play melodic material dislocated around a steadier accompaniment. Tertis, who is neither Franco-Belgian nor German, often sounds closer to early-recorded singers than his colleagues because of his use of continuous, fast, and wide vibrato and portamento. While all the violists examined above use frequent portamento, Tertis uses complex fingerings in order to increase the frequency and diversity of his slides. Together, these commonalities and diversities amongst performers are what I refer to broadly as the 'early-recorded approach': one equally evidenced by string quartet recordings of the time, as examined in the following chapter.