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

Context of Current Practice

My recorded portfolio, precisely because of its expressive qualities, does not conform to modern standards for performance. Rather, its value is derived from the attempt to breathe new life into the distant, century-old practices heard on early recordings. In creating the portfolio, I was deeply affected by my physical, psychological, and emotional connections to these sounding documents and, as a result, early-recorded performance style became an integral part of my identity as a musician. Where early in my career, experimentation with elements of early-recorded style provoked scorn and derision, and perhaps even held back my professional advancement, today my growing knowledge of these same elements allows me to communicate music differently and with a strong sense of moment-to-moment gesture.

As Robert Philip, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and Nicholas Cook have argued, early-recorded practices are largely excluded from Western Art Music's (WAM) Mainstream Performance Practices (MSPs), because they run counter to the 'neatness and tidiness,' regularity of pulse, and clarity of notated detail and structure that are viewed as necessary elements of current professional performance practices.[292] Consequently, because early-recorded practices are excluded from MSPs, creating new performance practices that copy them will be viewed by some as laughable or unprofessional. What this project set out to demonstrate, however, is that the very elements derided as 'unprofessional' on early recordings—elements such as rhythmic and tempo flexibility, portamento, vibrato, pitch ornamentation, and multi-layering—can themselves be the foundations for different kinds of performance practices: practices that break the constraints of MSPs.

Today's MSPs are restrictive in nature, requiring adherence to the detail and structure of notated scores and agreed-upon understandings for how repertoires should sound, all while conforming to professional standards of neatness and tidiness. Hence, cultivating divergent performance practices can be seen as a desirable goal. I have argued that MSPs are a broad, international range of practices (to which parts of my own professional practice belong) centred on a canonic repertoire housed in a 'museum of musical works' (to paraphrase Lydia Goehr), along with strong agreed-upon

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[292] Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, 250. Leech-Wilkinson, "Recordings and Histories of Performance Styles," 252. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 3.

understandings for how these repertoires should sound.

MSPs are sufficiently broad, however, to include substantial parts of current Historically Informed (HIP) and Recordings Informed (RIP) Performance practices. Specifically, the latter practices adhere to regularity of pulse in the context of *tactus* and 'rhetorical performance' and by what I have referred to as a 'pick-and-choose' approach to early-recorded practices, where some elements are used as long as they do not disrupt the norms of MSPs. Performers who use features from early recordings such as portamento, dislocation, and tempo flexibility, albeit in MSP-conforming ways, end up remaining well within the range of currently acceptable practices. Many times, research into early recordings retains a bias towards MSPs, as for example, when researchers dismiss practices they find displeasing, distasteful, or jarring on historical recordings by pointing to the advanced age of the performer in question, period technological limitations, or the nervousness historical performers are said to have experienced in recording environments. Nonetheless, the collective weight of thousands of early recordings, and the radically different performance approaches they preserve, are much harder to dismiss as instances of technological or performer deficiencies. By picking and choosing those elements that suit MSP standards, RIP ends up presenting historical performance styles in ways that are both palatable and uniform, while ignoring the more extreme and idiosyncratic elements heard on early recordings. The relatively safe nature of such an approach thus provides a warrant for more exact copying of early recordings, according to what I have called the 'all-in' method, as well as for more detailed study into the diversity of performance practices these recordings convey.

What early recordings fundamentally reveal is a wide gap between the performance practices of a century ago and those of today. Acknowledging this gap means questioning current beliefs about conforming to composers' intentions, our understandings of period texts, and prevailing, agreed-upon ideas for how certain repertoires should sound. While many contemporary musicians claim fidelity to composers' intentions, numerous recordings by these same composers and the musicians of their era are often ignored when they conflict with the parameters of MSPs and audience expectations. Many of today's musicians clearly prefer to avoid the risks associated with playing in ways familiar to the very composers to whom they pledge fidelity in order to conform to MSPs. At the same time, early recordings also reveal a gap between our understandings of period writings on music, on one hand, and the actual musical sounds of the period on the other. In previous chapters, I have highlighted

numerous examples of composers and performers broadly ignoring their own written instructions for performance, for example, Lionel Tertis's recording of *Sunset* or Oskar Nedbal's recording of *Romanticky Kus*. Systematic analysis of early recordings demonstrates that wide-ranging, radically-differentiated performances of canonic works were the norm a century ago: a state of affairs that is wholly antithetical to our shared understandings for how certain works and repertoires should sound within the context of MSPs.

Method and Approach

In order to circumvent the restrictiveness of MSPs and close the gap between current and early-recorded practices, I formulated the following research question: how might viola and string quartet performances in early-recorded style be brought about today? In order to answer this question, I studied relevant literatures on early-recorded style, as well as other attempts to incorporate this style into contemporary performances. I also carried out historical and biographical research on early-recorded performers, contacted collectors and transfer engineers, and delved into recording archives. Most importantly, however, I created my own performances in early-recorded style by using the all-in method of copying historical viola and string quartet recordings. This involved the detailed analysis of early recordings and resulted in richly annotated scores, which were then used to imbed as many elements as possible from these recordings into my own performance practice. At the same time, I also adapted my physical approach to the instrument, bringing it more in line with early-20th-century parameters. This helped me learn to use a wider range of techniques than might otherwise have been possible, including portamento, ornamental vibrato, tempo modification and rhythmic flexibility, and pitch ornamentation. I then imparted this all-in copying method, along with the aforementioned techniques, to my colleagues in order to be able to apply it in chamber music contexts, resulting in a recorded portfolio that includes solo, viola/piano and string quartet recordings.

I also used a lo-fi recording method to create the recorded portfolio. This recording technique has many advantages, including its similarity to acoustic, recorded sound, and its non-transparency as a medium. Importantly, it eliminates intermodulation distortion, which frequently afflicts mid-range frequencies in music recorded with contemporary microphones, resulting in the flattening of a great deal of local gestural information conveyed by the mid-frequency range in favour of a more highly defined picture of a broader frequency range. Lo-fi recording thus helped me focus more on the

moment-to-moment, gestural aspects of performance, while de-emphasising my more habitual focus on elements such as purity of sound and precision of intonation. The process of recording itself was also very different from that which typically characterizes conventional, contemporary, hi-fi recording environments, given that my recordings were made using long, live takes in small rooms. As such, the recording process yielded significant insights, both artistic and reflective, into how early recordings were made and how the styles they convey might be brought to life today.

Accompanying this recorded portfolio is a written thesis consisting of five chapters. In Chapter One, I dealt with the restricted role of the performer in the context of MSPs. I noted that this role was defined by its relationship to current conceptions of *Werktreue* and preferences for neatness and tidiness, rhythmic regularity, and highly detailed and structural playing. I also discussed how these forces influence both HIP and RIP performances today. I then juxtaposed this paradigm with 19th-century textual descriptions of a more performer-centred conception of *Werktreue,* whereby players were expected to take on a creative role on par with that of composers: a role that *necessitated* radical alterations to the rhythm, detail, and structure of those composers' scores. I then connected these 19th-century descriptions with the practical realities heard on early recordings and argued that an all-in approach to copying early recordings could circumvent the limitations of MSPs, thereby elevating and emancipating the role of the performer.

In Chapter Two, I discussed how mainstream hi-fi recording paradigms work against the all-in approach to copying early recordings on both technological and artistic levels, through the loss of gestural information caused by intermodulation distortion, and the resulting focus on precision of intonation, synchronisation, and unblemished purity of tone. I then considered how the lo-fi approach that I developed with Geoffrey Miles was used to create the recorded portfolio and how this approach supported the performance practices I copied from early recordings: practices that were similarly oriented towards moment-to-moment gesture and away from precision, synchronicity, and purity of tone.

Chapter Three was devoted to the detailed analysis of early viola recordings. I studied recordings by all violists known to have made solo and viola/piano duo recordings prior to 1930. This analysis demonstrated the huge distance between these performances and those shaped by MSPs in terms of rhythmic and tempo flexibility, portamento, vibrato, pitch ornamentation, and multi-layering. Far from treating these as

mere superficial adornments or sloppy mistakes, I discussed how these techniques led to the blurring of structural boundaries, wide fluctuations in pulse, frequent de-synchronisation, and the alteration of notated rhythms and pitches, thereby fundamentally transgressing contemporary notions of *Werktreue*, which privileges the parameters of neatness and tidiness, steadiness of pulse, and clarity of detail and structure. These analyses also substantiated differences and commonalities in style between individual players, with Nedbal and Arthur Post connected by their use of ornamental vibrato, dark timbre, and heavy portamento, and Léon Van Hout and Pierre Monteux sharing quick vibrato, varied portamento, and radical dislocation. Further, I explored how Tertis closely replicated the wide vibrato, heavy and frequent portamento, and rich timbre of many singers of the period. The wide-ranging performance practices examined in this chapter can be described as variable, erratic, and highly personal, thereby illustrating the stark contrast between early-recorded performances and their much more uniform, predictable, and palatable modern HIP and RIP counterparts.

Chapter Four dealt with the detailed analysis of five recordings by four of the earliest-recorded string quartets. Here, I examined the wide range of stylistic approaches taken by the Haagsche Toonkunstkwartet and the Brüder-Post, Klingler, and Czech Quartets to elements such as multi-layering, tempo and rhythmic flexibility, portamento, and vibrato. As in Chapter Three, the analysis revealed an enormous gap between these ensembles' performances and those of today and a dizzying array of approaches that constituted the language of early-recorded style. The Klingler and Post Quartets use frequent agogic lengthening, the Klingler and Czech Quartets use highly-consistent rhythmic and tempo flexibilities, and the HTK take a more risky, haphazard approach to rushing.

In Chapter Five I examined the physical parameters of viola playing in the early-20th century, as well as the adaptations I made to my own practice in order to emulate this performance style, including moving the instrument towards the center of the neck and adopting a 'Franco-Belgian' bow grip. I also discussed the process of making the recorded portfolio, including my all-in copies of early recordings as well as my extrapolations from early-recorded style in works for which there was no historical original to copy. In order to break free of the bounds of MSPs and reclaim a creative role more on par with the composers of the works I performed, I focused specifically on stylistic parameters such as rhythm and tempo flexibility, ornamentation, vibrato, portamento, and multi-layering, allowing these techniques to take precedence over

notated detail, structure, and rhythm, along with modern preferences for neat, tidy, and deferential professionalism.

Together, the written thesis and recorded portfolio demonstrate how copying early-recorded performances that are idiosyncratic or extreme, in full and without selectivity, opens up new paths for violists, other string players, and chamber groups, who wish to explore radically alternative approaches to WAM repertoires well outside the confines of MSPs, or to narrow the gap between their performances and those of the late-19th and early-20th century, or, as in my case, both. The all-in approach to copying early recordings is as useful for challenging the default parameters of MSPs and reimagining how WAM repertoires sound as it is for rejuvenating lost historical playing styles: copying early-recorded rhythmic and tempo flexibilities breaks our habits of playing with a steady pulse and the structural ordering of sub-phrases and phrases within larger sections; portamento and vibrato disrupt modern preoccupations with precision of intonation and unblemished quality of tone; pitch ornamentation can be a gateway to the further erosion of modern conceptions of *Werktreue*; and multi-layering makes neat and tidy vertical synchronisation nearly impossible. As the goals of this project were to revitalise historical performing approaches and find an alternative to MSPs, in the next section, I summarize the central elements of early-recorded performance style, as demonstrated by my analyses, for other musicians wishing to pursue similar aims.

Elements of Early-Recorded Style

First, wide-ranging un-notated tempo flexibility was shown to be present generally, demonstrating that performers of the era often used multiple groupings of irreulgar tempi across single works or movements. Rhythmic detail was also often performed quite differently than notated, with notes under- or over-dotted or played with swing and quicker note values shortened and sped up.

Second, portamento was used frequently in a highly audible manner. Kai Köpp's portamento list proved a helpful tool for labelling, deciphering, describing, and playing the myriad portamento techniques heard on the recordings studied. While many of the portamenti on these recordings seem to result from routine changes of position combined with legato slurring, I suggested that others were added for deliberate effect. In many cases, such as on the recordings of Tertis and Van Hout, awkward choices of fingering were shown to create portamento where simpler non-portamento fingerings would not, pointing to these players' conscious use of the device.

Third, the recordings studied also demonstrate a great deal of variation in the use

of vibrato: while Tertis uses continuous vibrato, for example, violists like Nedbal and Post, and the HTK, Czech, and Brüder-Post Quartets, all use the device in an ornamental, uneven manner. While vibrato is a regular part of these performers' practices, however, the pitch variation is often small and uneven by modern standards. In my recorded portfolio, I was committed to capturing these varied approaches to vibrato.

Fourth, ornamentation in the form of altered and added pitches is present on recordings by Tertis, Nedbal, and Van Hout. Examples of this technique also vary, from Tertis's reworked cadenza for Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* and his individual arpeggiation in Bach's *Chaconne,* to Nedbal's grace notes in Schubert's *Du Bist die Ruh.* These uses of ornamentation show a flexible attitude with regard to notated scores, illustrating the ways in which individual, personalised performances of works were central to the style of the period.

Fifth, and finally, multi-layering played an important role in both the viola/piano duo and string quartet recordings studied. Multiple voices often moved in rhythmically divergent ways, illustrating the contrapuntal nature of the musical texture and the individual direction of its constitutive musical voices. In order to achieve this kind of layering, a high degree of de-synchronisation is required, as demonstrated on the Klingler Quartet's recording of the first movement of Beethoven's *String Quartet* Op. 127.

While these early-recorded practices diverge radically from modern MSPs, they also result in a sense of moment-to-moment vivacity, through which performances take on more evocative, gestural qualities. The performers on these recordings sound as though they accept or possibly even embrace the technical faults and asynchrony that result from extreme risk-taking, for example, drastic rushing and slowing, giving their performances a distinctly 'live' quality. The deeper one delves into the recordings studied here, the less these practices sound random or unrehearsed, and the more they begin to resemble deliberate and studied performance strategies. The detailed, all-in copying process helped me to internalize such performance strategies, resulting in the closeness of my recorded portfolio to early-recorded style.

Contributions

The main contribution of the present study is that it is the first, documented attempt at the all-in copying of early-recorded performances in viola solo, viola/piano duo, and string quartet repertoires. While many have expressed doubts about whether multi-performer copying of early recordings was even possible, my portfolio of 28

recordings demonstrates that it is indeed both a possible and viable method. These recordings also demonstrate how early-recorded style can be used to substantially expand the range of WAM performance practices. For example, my extrapolations from early-recorded style (recordings of works for which there is no historical original to copy) show how this approach can inform personal and unconventional performances that diverge from MSPs in the same significant ways as their early-recorded models. The portfolio also shows that, through a combination of research and practice, early-recorded style can be given new life in contemporary performances in ways that sound intimate, personalised, and expressive.

The written thesis also sheds new light on both the commonalities and wide-ranging diversities of early-recorded viola and string quartet performance practices. On one hand, turn-of-the-century performers played in ways that were extreme, idiosyncratic, and wholly lacking in the kind of uniformity common within MSPs; on the other, this diversity flourished despite, or perhaps precisely because of, a shared musical language that included un-notated rhythmic and tempo flexibility, portamento, vibrato, pitch ornamentation, and multi-layering.

This study also contributes to existing literature on historical viola and string quartet recordings. It is the first detailed, comprehensive analysis of early-recorded viola playing and, as such, contributes to a general understanding of viola playing at the beginning of the 20th century through detailed descriptions of the performance styles of Nedbal, Van Hout, Post, and Tertis. The overlap in performance style between early-recorded violists and singers of the period that I have demonstrated also adds to our understanding of how string players and singers influenced one another—providing support for the frequent exhortations in historical treatises for string players to copy singers. My detailed analysis of the HTK's pioneering recordings and a selection of recordings by the Brüder-Post, Klingler, and Czech Quartets is also the first of its kind to be undertaken, thereby adding to our understanding of the diversity of approaches taken by early-recorded string quartets.

Finally, my rehabilitation of the concept of *Werktreue,* putting into practice the recent re-thinking of the concept undertaken by scholars like Mary Hunter, connects seemingly contradictory 19th-century descriptions of the centrality of the performer, on one hand, and their fidelity to composers and works, on the other, to early-recorded practices.[293] I have argued and demonstrated that adopting early-recorded style can be a

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[293] Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer."

step towards re-imagining rather than abandoning the concept of *Werktreue,* as this style was predicated upon the notion that 19th-century performers enacted their fidelity by creating altered and highly personalised versions of composers' works—rendering performance a much more co-creative and performer-centered act than it is today.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of the key limitations of this study, however, involves the sheer quantity of recordings that could have been discussed, with only a small part of Tertis's large recorded output and a select handful of early string quartet recordings being analysed, copied, and extrapolated. While my overview of early-recorded viola playing is quite thorough in nature, examining a much wider diversity of early string quartet recordings could have allowed me to draw more nuanced conclusions about the quartet playing of the period. For example, although my selection covered some of the earliest-recorded groups across diverse national origins, due to constraints of both time and scope, I was forced to leave out quartets connected with the Franco-Belgian, American, and English traditions, in whose recordings divergent approaches to vibrato and rhythmic and tempo flexibility can be heard. Further analysis of a broader range of early-recorded string quartet and chamber music recordings is thus needed, particularly where the ecology and idiosyncrasies of ensemble playing in the early-recorded era are concerned. That being said, any such wide-ranging analysis would inevitably find frequent and varied use of elements such as rhythmic and tempo flexibility, portamento, vibrato, pitch ornamentation, and multi-layering, while the copying and extrapolation of a wider sample of early string quartet recordings would likely lead to similarly artistically meaningful results.

Given that my recorded portfolio demonstrates the viability of copying early multi-performer recordings, further avenues for future work include the all-in copying of late-19th- and early-20th-century orchestral and opera recordings. Having observed the close connection between early-recorded singing and viola playing, working together with singers to copy early recordings and then extrapolating this approach to works such as Brahms's *Zwei Gesänge* Op. 91 and Frank Bridge's *Three Songs for Medium Voice, Viola and Piano* could also provide valuable, further insights into this historical relationship. Where the early-recorded viola in particular is concerned, a broader analysis of Tertis's recorded output is needed, including some important turn-of-the-century works he recorded such as Frederick Delius's *Violin Sonata* no. 2, Edvard Grieg's *Violin Sonata* no. 3, and Ernö von Dohnányi's *Sonata* Op. 21. Tertis's recorded output of chamber music is also worthy

of further study, such as his recordings of Felix Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio* no. 2, Franz Schubert's *Piano Trio* no. 1, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *'Kegelstatt' Trio* KV 498 with violinist Albert Sammons and pianists Ethyl Hobday and William Murdoch. Subsequent studies of this material would allow for greater insight into Tertis's performance practices as a chamber musician. As part of this project, previously undiscovered recordings by Van Hout and the Haagsche Toonkunstkwartet also came to light, and historical catalogues show that both Van Hout and the HTK made more recordings now considered lost. A continued search for these catalogued, but lost, early viola and string quartet recordings is thus important, given the wealth of information they might contain.

And finally, as my recorded copies were limited by working with digital technology, albeit of the lo-fi sort, repurposing or recreating historical recording equipment in order to press 78rpm shellac records could add further information to the copying process, including a deeper understanding of the conditions under which early recordings were made. Amy Blier-Carruthers undertook just such a pioneering project with students from the Royal College of Music in an orchestral context by making wax cylinders.[294] Similarly, the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States created the 'American Epic' series about the history of recorded 'roots music,' in which they engaged contemporary performers to make 78rpm records.[295] While simply using historical recording technologies can lead to useful insights, however, further research using the all-in copying method where both technology *and* performance style are concerned is needed in order to attain a deeper understanding of the processes and practices of the early-recorded era.

My copying of early recordings questions underlying assumptions about how canonic WAM repertoires can or 'should' be performed. The recorded portfolio implies that a far greater range of possibilities than those currently permitted within the context of MSPs should be considered. As the early recordings I copy are vestiges of 19th-century historical performance practices, and as such are connected to the performing traditions familiar to many canonic composers, the styles they capture deserve to be taken seriously by WAM's major institutions, including conservatories, orchestras, music

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[294] Amy Blier-Carruthers, Aleks Kolkowski and Duncan Miller, "The Art and Science of Acoustic Recordings: Re-enacting Arthur Nikisch and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's landmark 1913 recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony," *The Science Museum Group Journal*, 3 (April 21, 2015), accessed July 23, 2018, http://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/browse/issue-03/the-art-and-science-of-acoustic-recording/. Similarly, pianist Inja Stanovich has undertaken a research project focused on making recordings with wax cylinders. Inja Stanovich, "The Creative Processes in (Re)construction of Early Recordings," accessed May 30, 2019, http://tcpm2019.fcsh.unl.pt/inja-stanovic/.
[295] "American Epic," PBS, accessed July 23, 2018, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/american-epic/.

competitions, and record labels. The gatekeepers of these institutions would do well to embrace performers who explore the ways in which the historical realities of early recordings clash with contemporary performance expectations. Conservatoires too should do more to encourage interest amongst students in the musical heritage represented by early recordings, thereby fostering a greater understanding of the history of our current performance practices. Better yet, they could give students the option of exploring early-recorded style in their performances as a way of diversifying their musical vision. While some conservatoires have dedicated 'early music' programs, such trajectories tend to focus on playing historical instruments and repertoires from the pre-1800 era. Such programs should be expanded to include a focus on the era of early recordings where actual sonic traces of historical performances can serve as a guide for inhabiting past performance styles.

The culture of WAM performance practice at large would benefit from making more space for performances with different aims than those represented by MSPs. The growth of an early-recordings-inspired performance style can facilitate connections between audiences and performers, especially if concerts of canonic repertoires are allowed to become unpredictable and surprising events. The personalised, intimate practices heard on early recordings would fit well in numerous settings in which WAM is performed, such as group-muses and salon concerts for example.[296] Indeed, these performance settings are broadly similar to many of those encountered by 19th-century performers and lend themselves readily to the more intimate, communicative, and individualized performance style of the early-recorded era. Given the recent growth of freely available, highly-edited recorded music, a return to a more intimate, personal style of music-making, one emphasising human-to-human contact, might inspire larger numbers of enthusiastic listeners.

While studying early-recorded performances is a celebration of our shared history, there is a growing danger that such nostalgic connections with the past might be seized upon in order to bolster ascendant far-right nationalistic currents. The growing interest in historical fashions, hairstyles, home gardening, and local farmer's markets already demonstrates a certain contemporary nostalgia for cultures of the past. However, this kind of nostalgia has become increasingly associated with the nationalism,

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[296] Group-muses are informal house concerts popularized in the United States, where WAM chamber music is played, and for which the host provides a venue and sends out public invitations on social media. The audience is expected to bring their own food and drinks and provide donations to pay the performing musicians.

xenophobia, racism, and sexism of far-right political movements. For example, the revival of literary Romanticism in Germany has been associated with anti-democratic ideology, a perceived superiority over non-Western cultures, and the idealization of strongman leadership.[297] At the same time, populist political movements like Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy in The Netherlands promote naive nostalgia for a Romantic European past, untroubled by immigration, refugees, multiculturalism, women's liberation, or LGBTQI rights. Baudet, a pianist of some skill, is often photographed at his instrument, and he frequently speaks at length about canonic composers like Franz Schubert, connecting 19th-century WAM with what he terms the "greater individualism and freedom of the past."[298] The early-recorded performance style that I pursue likewise advocates for increased individualism, through a more performer-centred paradigm, and for more freedom, through the use of multi-layering, de-synchronisation, and rhythmic and tempo flexibility. As such, the romanticising of a more 'authentic' past by Baudet and others, one that happened to be more mono-cultural and less democratic, can be easily tied to the work I have done on performance practice. I however strongly disavow this kind of nostalgia for the Western Europe of a century ago, which was the site of inequality, discrimination, war, and substandard medical care (to say nothing of dentistry). My use of early recordings is not meant to romanticise or return to the past, but rather to create more invigorating performances for diverse, contemporary audiences.

At the other end of the spectrum from those who promote nostalgia for the past are those who believe uncritically in human progress, as illustrated by psychologist Steven Pinker's statement that, "[t]here can be no question of which was the greatest era for culture; the answer has to be today, until it is superseded by tomorrow."[299] This ideal can be found amongst WAM practitioners, many of whom believe that our performance practices are on an upward trajectory, becoming ever cleaner and tidier—and thus closer to the intentions of canonic composers. This view posits that early recordings are documents of the less-than-perfect music-making of ignorant, past generations.

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[297] Philip Oltermann, "Germany's Romantic literary revival built on Blade Runner and seven deadly sins," *The Guardian*, November 10th, 2017, accessed December 27, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/10/compromises-compromise-merkel-generation-reinvents-german-romanticism.

[298] Arjen Korteweg, "Wie nog twijfelt aan de potentie van Forum voor Democratie was niet op het partijcongres," *Volkskrant*, November 25th 2017, accessed December 27, 2017, https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/wie-nog-twijfelt-aan-de-potentie-van-forum-voor-democratie-was-niet-op-het-partijcongres~a4541604/.

[299] Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Viking Press, 2018), 261.

However, despite this faith in continued human progress, technological advancement is increasingly surpassing the skill of performing musicians today, all while we are being outpaced by the perfection of digital recordings. What will be left of our practice in the future if our focus is on ever-increasing degrees of neatness and tidiness? The early decades of the 20th century were the last moments in Western history where human-to-human musical contact was unaffected by recorded music. This is why the recordings of the era evidence personal, human, and thus imperfect, performance approaches. My work with early recordings is meant to reinvigorate music-making of this kind, by juxtaposing human-centred playing with the demands for technical perfection as driven by technology in WAM performance today, and by questioning assumptions about progress in our performance practices. Essentially, I aim to forge possible paths for the future that accommodate individualised musical communication, while questioning both reactionary nostalgia for the past, on one hand, and unbridled optimism about our hyper-connected, digitally-saturated culture of media consumption, on the other.

What this project has made clear to me is that creating performances today in early-recorded style requires both detailed study and determined effort. Once learned, the style can be used with a great deal of personal creativity, in ways that both reveal and narrow gaps between current and past practices and offer a radical alternative to MSPs. While I have internalized this style, there are still numerous professional contexts in which I refrain from using elements of it. In such cases, I often feel as though something is missing from my performances, and I look forward to those occasions when, with like-minded colleagues, I can allow myself free rein. One of the greatest transformations in my practice as a result of this project has been a newfound ability and desire to prioritize moment-to-moment narrativity (the need to tell a story) over pre-planned conceptions and adherence to the printed page. Learning from early recordings is rather like learning to speak a foreign language: it is a process where, through trial, error, and cultural immersion, one slowly gains one's footing in the unfamiliar. In the end, however, meaning ultimately emerges out of the physical effort needed to perform. As Tertis put it: "[T]he overcoming of difficulties, the struggle with the recalcitrant instrument, the wringing of beauty from contraptions of wood, hair, gut and metal—all this is something that makes life worth living."[300] My experience has taught me that this struggle can indeed lead to a richer performance practice and a deeper understanding of our place within our shared musical history.

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[300] Tertis, *My Viola and I*, *Foreward.*