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

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SUMMARY

This dissertation and the corresponding films and recordings presented here are an effort to distil an approach to performing the orchestral music of Johannes Brahms that is significantly different from what has hitherto been produced in the fields of both Mainstream Orchestral Performance Practice (MPP) and the Historically Informed Performance Practice (HIPP). In the first chapter, I demonstrate how my approach is based on my understanding of historical sources concerning the use of modification of rhythm and tempo in orchestral performance, particularly relating to the work of the conductor Fritz Steinbach and the Meiningen Orchestra. In the second chapter, I describe my role as a conductor in this project, and the way in which I have tried to reinvent and re-implement the tools of modifying rhythm and tempo with my project orchestra. I describe my methodology in four films about each project week in the years 2019-2022. The films show how I evaluated the preliminary results and considered them in following editions and they demonstrate how my perspective changed over the course of the project, as well as how the project was perceived by participating musicians and by experts and audiences. In separate films, I provide examples of modifications of rhythm and tempo as realised with the project orchestra in the recordings. In the third chapter, I describe other characteristics of the project orchestra and its way of playing, including the use of *portamento*. In Chapter 4, I present recordings of the four Brahms symphonies and the four concertos that were made during the four years in which I conducted my PhD research, 2019-2022. The fifth chapter contains evaluations and conclusions. It also mentions possible future goals and projects. In a separate section I present a list of works and recordings cited, a summary, a short biography and my acknowledgements.