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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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Propositions

1. The ways in which Brahms's orchestral works are performed today do not reflect the flexible handling of tempo that – with the help and approval of the composer – was developed to such a high level by Fritz Steinbach and the Meiningen Court Orchestra.
2. The ways in which regular symphony orchestras and specialized ensembles associated with the historically informed performance practice movement (HIPPP) have organized their work and production processes are an obstacle to the development of performance practices for nineteenth- and early-twentieth century orchestral repertoire that engage seriously with converting knowledge about nineteenth-century performance practice into sounding results.
3. In the current artistic climate, in which a narrow definition of 'correct' performance has become dominant internationally, historical research can be used not only to examine the foundations of that definition critically, but also to pave the way for alternative modes of performing.
4. Contemporary attempts to apply neglected nineteenth-century expressive tools as an element of historically informed musical performance, including my own research, are based to a considerable degree on speculation about their historical application.
5. The way in which hairpins are represented in Urtext editions of nineteenth-century repertoire contributes to a way of performing them that does not do justice to knowledge of their expressive significance.
6. The image of Brahms – as a weighty, bearded, serious German – that is delivered to us through the sieve of history has contributed to ways of performing his music that he would hardly have recognized.
7. The possibilities for embedding artistic research in an academic context, as offered at Leiden University by ACPA, provides an excellent opportunity for in-depth application of historical research to musical performance, providing a valuable corrective to the superficial and often naïve attempts of some later twentieth-century period-instrument musicians to present their performances as historically informed.
8. Artistic research in an academic context can possibly be used to demonstrate the value of creative impulses and importance of artistic dimensions in research in other academic fields.
9. Because no Dutch political party has a fully-fledged vision of the (social) importance of art and culture, the further marginalization of the arts - particularly the performing arts - will continue at an accelerated pace.
10. Insofar as an international career in the performing arts involves substantial air travel, it is certain that the damage this causes to the climate cannot be compensated for with any artistic achievement.