

THE SONATAS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO BY JOHANNES BRAHMS:

A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

by

RACHAEL MASSENGILL FISCHER

(Under the Direction of Michael Heald)

ABSTRACT

This study presents a pedagogical approach to Johannes Brahms's Sonatas for Violin and Piano, Opp. 78, 100, and 108. A brief biographical sketch of Brahms, along with a discussion of his relationships with several nineteenth-century violinists, and comments regarding the composition of his three violin sonatas (and the works' place within the sonata genre as a whole) provides historical context. Some concepts of nineteenth-century violin performance practice are also covered, particularly those related to the instructional content of Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser's *Violinschule*. A main component of this study involves the application of both historical and modern day principles of tone production on the violin to especially lyrical passages from Brahms's sonatas. In addition, passages requiring more overtly challenging violin techniques are examined. Suggested exercises and practice techniques are provided for both types of issues.

INDEX WORDS: Johannes Brahms, Violin sonata, Violin pedagogy, Violin technique, Lyricism, Tone production

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

Over the course of his career, Johannes Brahms composed and published twenty-five pieces in a wide variety of chamber music genres. Among these works are three compositions for violin and piano: the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 (1879), the Sonata in A Major, Op. 100 (1887), and the Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108 (1889). Each of these works has earned a place in the standard repertoire of violinists and collaborative pianists alike. The intent of this document is to consider these three pieces in a pedagogical context that will provide historical and pedagogical information for violin students and teachers.

In an effort to provide contextual information that will lead to a greater understanding of these works, this study briefly outlines the history of the violin and piano sonata before Brahms (particularly those of the Classical tradition), examines Brahms's relationships with violinists of his day, and discusses the composition of the three works at hand. The study also contains an examination of interpretive aspects of the sonatas, which includes some discussion of selected issues of performance practice. From the standpoint of violin pedagogy, this document identifies major issues in violin playing that present themselves in these pieces. It is well documented that many of Brahms's instrumental works contain connections to his lieder, and the sonatas are no exception.<sup>1</sup> In fact, one of the most well-known allusions to a song in all of Brahms's works is

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Musgrave, "Words for Music: the Songs for Solo Voice and Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 214-217.

found in the finale of the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is necessary for the violinist to develop a technique that allows the inherent lyricism of the music to be realized. In this document, I provide suggestions for preliminary exercises and pieces to be studied either prior to or in conjunction with Brahms's sonatas. This addresses not only the problem of lyricism, but other aspects of violin playing, too.

### **Need for the Study**

There are a number of books, articles, dissertations, and theses dedicated to the chamber music of Johannes Brahms and the violin and piano sonatas in particular. However, a large number of these writings focus strictly on establishing historical context for the pieces or providing theoretical analysis. Likewise, a great deal of material exists that examines principles of violin pedagogy and also applies those ideas to specific pieces, particularly violin concertos. This study aims to apply principles from representative writings on violin pedagogy and technique from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries to Brahms's sonatas for violin and piano. While these pieces do not demand the same level of virtuosic ability as the standard violin concertos, they are equally valuable to a violinist's technical and musical development, particularly with regard to sound production.

### **Review of Literature**

A great deal of material has been written that provides a general overview of Brahms's life and works. Among these sources, two works have proven particularly helpful in my research:

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<sup>2</sup> Dillon Parmer, "Brahms, Song Quotation, and Secret Programs," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* Vol. 19, No. 2 (Autumn, 1995), 167.

*Brahms* by Malcolm MacDonald<sup>3</sup> and *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* by Styra Avins.<sup>4</sup>

MacDonald's biography provides a thorough account of Brahms's life, with a significant amount of attention devoted to the music itself. Avins's text is a collection of over five hundred letters from Brahms to various figures within his circle. Carefully annotated, these letters were selected specifically for their ability to either explain aspects of Brahms's music, or provide, through his own words, insight into the understanding of Brahms as a person.

Several sources provided general background information about the history of the violin sonata and Brahms's violin sonatas in particular. Among these is Robin Stowell's essay, "The Sonata" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, which traces the evolution of the violin sonata from the Baroque era to the mid-twentieth-century.<sup>5</sup> Brahms's violin sonatas have been discussed in many essays and monographs that survey his chamber music as a whole including those by David Brodbeck,<sup>6</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason,<sup>7</sup> and Sir Donald Tovey.<sup>8</sup> Among the many theses and dissertations written about Brahms's sonatas, a large majority examine the works through an analytical lens<sup>9</sup> while others, including Margaret Notley's doctoral dissertation, recount the compositional history of specific works.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (New York: Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, selected and annotated by Styra Avins, trans. by Joseph Eisinger and Styra Avins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Robin Stowell, "The Sonata," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 168-193.

<sup>6</sup> David Brodbeck, "Medium and Meaning: New Aspects of the Chamber Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 98-132.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, *The Chamber Music of Brahms* (New York: Macmillan, 1933).

<sup>8</sup> Donald Francis Tovey, "Brahms's Chamber Music," in *The Main Stream of Music and Other Essays*, collected, with an introduction by Hubert Foss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 220-270.

<sup>9</sup> The following theses and dissertations include theoretical analysis of the violin sonatas: Case, Evan L., "Johannes Brahms: A Study of the Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano" (master's thesis, Kent State University, 1969); Kenneth Ross Hull, "Brahms the Allusive: Extra-compositional Reference in the Instrumental Music of Johannes Brahms" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1989); Ryan C. McClelland, "Tonal Structure, Rhythm, Meter, and Motive in the Scherzo-type Movements of Brahms's Chamber Music with Piano" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004); Gail E. Nelson, "The 'Regenlied' Sonata for Piano and Violin in G Major, Opus 78 by Johannes Brahms" (DMA diss., Stanford University, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Anne Notley, "Brahms's Chamber-music Summer of 1886: A Study of Opera 99, 100, 101 and 108" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1992).

A significant number of sources related to violin pedagogy were consulted for this document. Treatises by violinists such as Leopold Mozart<sup>11</sup> and Joseph Joachim<sup>12</sup> supply the reader with specific exercises to improve violin technique in addition to providing insight into the musical values of the eras in which they were written. Carl Flesch's two-volume *The Art of Violin Playing* is touted by its editor as "monumental...certainly still the most comprehensive and thorough treatise dealing with practically everything that is of concern to the violinist-musician."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the work does include a great number of musical examples and suggestions for interpretation for several works, including the last movement of Brahms's Sonata in G Major, Op. 78. Another important and more recent contribution to the violin pedagogy literature is Ivan Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*.<sup>14</sup> A thorough and methodical approach to bow technique and sound production can be found in Robert Gerle's *The Art of Bowing Practice*.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Simon Fischer's *Basics: 300 Exercises and Practice Routines for the Violin*, the most recently published collection of pedagogical material consulted for this study, contains systematically organized exercises that address specific tasks.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the violin treatises that promote an understanding of violin playing through various periods in history, several other sources related to nineteenth-century performance practices were consulted. Clive Brown's *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* examines a number of issues including tempo, articulation, phrasing, and notation, in

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<sup>11</sup> Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, trans. Editha Knoch, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Violinschule*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Simrock, 1902—5).

<sup>13</sup> Eric Rosenblith, preface to *The Art of Violin Playing* by Carl Flesch, 2 vols. (1923—8; repr., New York: Carl Fischer, 2000), iii.

<sup>14</sup> Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Simon and Schuster, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> Robert Gerle, *The Art of Bowing Practice* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Simon Fischer, *Basics: 300 Exercises and Practice Routines for the Violin* (London: C.F. Peters, 1997.)

addition to issues specific to string playing.<sup>17</sup> Another work, David Milsom's *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900*, focuses on a much smaller time frame and deals exclusively with issues of violin playing.<sup>18</sup> Several sources pay special attention to the music of Brahms or the performance style of those in his circle. Of particular benefit are the articles and essays by Clive Brown, George Bozarth, and John Finson, and dissertations by Emily Helvey and Demetra Lambros.<sup>19</sup>

### Methodology

This research brought together several types of information. Initially I reviewed books, articles and dissertations pertaining to Brahms's life and works, particularly his chamber music, to gain an understanding of the personal and musical influences that led to the composition of the three sonatas. Sources relating to issues of nineteenth-century string performance practice were also consulted. I examined much of the standard literature of violin pedagogy, ranging from writings of Leopold Mozart and Pierre Baillot to those of Joseph Joachim, Carl Flesch, Ivan Galamian and Robert Gerle, in order to understand the wide variety of approaches to teaching both the violin repertoire and the physical aspects of violin playing.

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<sup>17</sup> Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> The following sources discuss performance practices: Clive Brown, "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 48-98; George Bozarth, "Fanny Davies and Brahms's Late Chamber Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 170-219; Jon Finson, "Performing Practice in the Late Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to the Music of Brahms," *The Musical Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 457-475; Emily Sue Helvey, "Johannes Brahms's Enigmatic Performance Directions: Ambiguous Markings and Issues of Performance Practice" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2007); Demetra Lambros, "Considerations in the Performance of the Violin and Clarinet/Viola Sonatas of Johannes Brahms" (DMA diss., Stanford University, 1996).

Upon study of the music itself, I have determined that certain issues permeate these works, particularly those related to the production of a singing sound. Therefore, specific passages from the sonatas have been selected to demonstrate the importance of developing a technique that will help create a beautiful violin sound and highlight essential characteristics of Brahms's style. Other issues, such as articulation and the execution of double stops and string crossings are also discussed through the identification of moments in the music where these particular technical matters arise. In addition to excerpts from Brahms's works, several exercises have also been selected as supplementary material to aid in the improvement of these techniques.

### **Delimitations**

While theoretical analysis is important to the complete understanding of any piece of music, it is not addressed here as many other sources contain this material. Although Brahms's sonatas call for equal partnership between the violinist and pianist, this document does not include any discussion of technical demands required of the pianist. While a wide variety of important sources on violin pedagogy from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries has been consulted, these materials by no means constitute a complete collection of all available resources on the subject.

### **Chapter Organization**

The document is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 provides historical background information which includes a brief overview of Johannes Brahms's life and provides a context for the composition of his violin sonatas. Chapter 3 examines matters of interpretation and performance practice through the use of historical resources. Some issues to be discussed here

include nineteenth-century conventions regarding tempo, vibrato, and portamento. Chapter 4 isolates and examines the problem of creating a singing sound on the violin. Chapter 5 addresses additional issues of both the right and left hands, including the techniques required to perform string crossings and double stops. In these two chapters I will examine the specific relevance of these issues to Brahms's music, and provide suggestions for improving certain techniques in order to accomplish musical goals.



## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

#### Johannes Brahms: A Brief Biographical Sketch

Remembered today as one of the most important successors of Ludwig van Beethoven in the realm of chamber and orchestral music, Johannes Brahms was born on May 7, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany to Johanna Henrika Christiane Nissen (1789–1865) and Johann Jakob Brahms (1806–72). Johann Jakob was a musician who was skilled on several instruments, and as such, it was no surprise that Johannes began receiving musical training at a young age. Brahms took lessons on the piano, cello, and horn and his first documented performance as a pianist took place in 1843. He also became an avid reader at a fairly young age, taking interest in German romantic poetry, novels by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul, and folklore. Musically, he was very fond of the works of Bach and Beethoven, performing their works on his earliest solo concerts.<sup>20</sup>

Although he studied piano, theory, and composition with one of the most well-known teachers in Hamburg, Eduard Marxsen, in his late teens Brahms was still a fairly obscure virtuoso pianist and composer, even in his hometown.<sup>21</sup> He presented two solo piano concerts in Hamburg in 1848 and 1849, the latter of which received excellent reviews, but it was not until 1853 that Brahms reached a turning point in his musical career. In addition to the publication of several of his pieces that year, Brahms completed a concert tour of northern Germany with Eduard Reményi, during which he met Franz Liszt and Joseph Joachim. After spending the

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<sup>20</sup> George Bozarth and Walter Frisch, “Brahms, Johannes,” in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879> (accessed July 26, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Styra Avins, “One Fateful Year: 1853,” in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 9.

summer of 1853 with Joachim in Göttingen, he was encouraged to make contact with several important German composers and musicians including Robert and Clara Schumann.<sup>22</sup>

When he visited the Schumanns in September, 1853, Brahms brought with him the scores for several works from a variety of genres including solo piano pieces, lieder, string quartets and violin-piano duos, which Robert Schumann praised publically in his famous essay in the *Neue Zeitung für Musik* in October of 1853.<sup>23</sup> Joachim and the Schumanns quickly became some of Brahms's closest friends and their music had a huge impact on Brahms's development as a composer and performer. Following Robert Schumann's untimely death in 1856, Clara became one of his most important musical advocates, and because of her recommendation, Brahms obtained a conducting position in Detmold. During his tenure there, he utilized the ensemble to try out his latest compositions in addition to perform works of earlier composers.<sup>24</sup>

During the 1850s and early 1860s Brahms attempted to make a career in Hamburg as a piano teacher, choral conductor, performer, and composer.<sup>25</sup> It was during this time that his first mature chamber works, including the two string sextets, two piano quartets, the horn trio and the piano quintet, were published. Brahms made the journey to Vienna for the first time in September of 1862 following the encouragement of Joachim, Clara Schumann, and several Hamburg musicians, including composer Carl Peter Grädner and Bertha Porubszky, a member of Brahms's Hamburg Frauenchor.<sup>26</sup> Because of his connection with Clara in particular, Brahms was welcomed into the Viennese musical establishment and was invited to perform several solo and chamber concerts. He also cultivated relationships with several prominent Viennese

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<sup>22</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Kurt Hofmann, "Brahms the Hamburg Musician 1833–1862," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23–24.

<sup>25</sup> Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, xx.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Musgrave, "Years of Transition: Brahms and Vienna 1862 – 1875," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 31.

musicians including violinist Joseph Hellmesberger with whom Brahms would collaborate on several occasions.<sup>27</sup>

Although impressed with the city of Vienna, Brahms hoped to return to Hamburg as the conductor of the city's Philharmonische Konzertgesellschaft, but in the fall of 1862, the position was awarded instead to Julius Stockhausen. Brahms then proceeded to accept a position as the director of the Vienna Singakademie in early 1863, where he programmed not only his own compositions, but conducted performances of Renaissance music and works by Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. Knowing that a musical career in Hamburg was not to be, Brahms spent a vast majority of his time in Vienna. He also embarked on several concert tours in central Europe for financial reasons. During these tours, he played a wide range of solo repertoire and collaborated frequently with Joseph Joachim.<sup>28</sup>

In February of 1865, Brahms's mother passed away after suffering a stroke.<sup>29</sup> Following her death, Brahms completed and presented the *German Requiem*, which eventually received much critical acclaim. The premiere of the complete work took place at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on February 18, 1869, and after this performance, Brahms's reputation as a composer became well-established. In addition to writing several other works for chorus and orchestra following the success of the *German Requiem*, Brahms also composed several more collections of songs.<sup>30</sup>

In her book *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, Styra Avins calls the year 1871 a turning point in Brahms's life. By the end of that year Brahms had obtained a permanent job in Vienna as the director of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, and found a permanent home within

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<sup>27</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Avins, "Letter 192," in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 317-318.

<sup>30</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

walking distance.<sup>31</sup> Much like he had at Vienna's Singakademie, Brahms programmed a great deal of early music including Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, eighteenth-century symphonies, works by his contemporaries (Bruch, Dietrich, and Goldmark, for example), and his own pieces for chorus and orchestra. On account of the serious nature of most of the repertoire, Brahms was often criticized, but he remained on good terms with the organization.<sup>32</sup> It is likely that his time with the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde orchestra must have led directly to the composition of his symphonies. Avins also points out that throughout Brahms's life, he composed pieces for musical ensembles with which he was personally familiar. Having finally served as music director of an orchestra, he may have felt he had gained the skills necessary to write for such an ensemble.<sup>33</sup>

In the early 1870s, Brahms resumed composition of orchestral music, and wrote his three string quartets. His first two quartets, Op. 51, Nos. 1 and 2 in C minor and A minor respectively, were completed in the summer of 1873, and the third, Op. 67 in B-flat Major, in 1875. Only a year later, Brahms completed his Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68, on which he had been working since 1862. A long string of orchestral works including his remaining three symphonies, two overtures, the Violin Concerto, Op. 77, his Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83, and the Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, Op. 102, followed in the late 1870s and 1880s.<sup>34</sup>

While collaborating closely with Joseph Joachim in the completion of the Violin Concerto in 1878, Brahms also began composing the Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78, which was finished the following year. Several mature chamber works quickly followed, including piano trios, cello sonatas, string quintets, the Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100,

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<sup>31</sup> Avins, "At Home in Vienna: 1871-1876," in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 419.

<sup>32</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>33</sup> Avins, "At Home in Vienna: 1871-1876," in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 419-420.

<sup>34</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

composed in 1886, and the Violin Sonata in D minor, Op. 108, composed from 1886-88. During the 1870s and 1880s, Brahms was also invited to perform as a soloist and conductor in many major European cities and was honored with medals and awards in several cities and countries.<sup>35</sup>

As illustrated by his programming of many works of early music during his tenure as a conductor of the Singakademie and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Brahms held great interest in works of earlier composers. This was also evident in his work overseeing editions of works by C.P.E. Bach and François Couperin, and his contributions to the collected works of Mozart, Schubert, and Chopin. Brahms's personal library contained a collection of historically interesting autographs and rare editions, including many of Beethoven's sketches. His interest in music of the past is evident in his own compositions, particularly his choral works, but also in some instrumental music.<sup>36</sup>

Although he declared his compositional career complete in 1894, Brahms was inspired by clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld and completed several important works in the early 1890s: the Clarinet Trio, Op. 114, the Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115 and two sonatas, Op. 120. Several collections of piano pieces were also completed during this time. While his production of compositions had definitely slowed in these final years of his life, his music continued to be performed across Europe to great acclaim.<sup>37</sup> However, his close circle of friends was being rapidly depleted as a result of several untimely deaths. Brahms was apparently most affected by the death of Clara Schumann in May of 1896, and in photographs from her funeral looked unhealthy himself. Brahms succumbed to liver cancer on April 3, 1897.<sup>38</sup> He is buried near Beethoven and Schubert in Vienna's Central Cemetery, and the majority of his personal

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<sup>35</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Avins, "The Final Years: 1891-1897," in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 679.

collection of manuscripts, books, music and letters is housed at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde.<sup>39</sup>

### **Brahms and the Violinists of his Day**

Johannes Brahms surrounded himself with a rather large group of people with whom he consulted for advice and collaborated musically. Among them were several violinists who had a distinct impact on Brahms's musical career and compositional output. Two of the most important were Eduard Rémenyi (1828-1898) and Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), both of whom Brahms encountered for the first time in 1848.<sup>40</sup>

As a result of political unrest across Europe, many refugees fleeing the Austro-Hungarian Empire passed through Hamburg, and the Hungarian violinist Eduard Rémenyi was one of them. Along with Joseph Joachim, Rémenyi had studied violin in Vienna with Joseph Böhm.<sup>41</sup> Upon his arrival in Hamburg in 1848, Rémenyi presented several solo recitals and asked Brahms to serve as his accompanist for one of them. Not only was Rémenyi impressed with Brahms's playing, which resulted in a short-term musical partnership, but Brahms was also taken with the Hungarian national style and folk influences of the music that the violinist performed.<sup>42</sup>

As Rémenyi was personally involved in the Hungarian uprising against Austria, he was eventually ordered by the police to leave Hamburg and temporarily went to the United States to continue pursuing his virtuoso career. Upon Rémenyi's return to Hamburg in late 1852, his collaboration with Brahms resumed and the two left Hamburg for an eight month tour of northern Germany. Among the works performed were Beethoven's C minor Violin Sonata, Op.

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<sup>39</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>40</sup> Malcolm MacDonald, "Young Kreisler (1833-54)," in *Brahms*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Clive, *Brahms and His World: A Biographical Dictionary* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 356.

<sup>42</sup> MacDonald, 11.

30, No. 2, and a violin concerto by Vieuxtemps. The tour led the pair through Hanover where Joseph Joachim had recently been appointed concertmaster of the court orchestra. Rémenyi had planned to renew his acquaintance with Joachim, who had already become very successful as a violinist and conductor, but Joachim was more interested in Brahms and encouraged him to visit him in the summer.<sup>43</sup>

After leaving Hanover, again on orders from the authorities, Rémenyi and Brahms sought out Franz Liszt in Weimar. While Rémenyi felt completely at home with Liszt's lavish living conditions and revolutionary musical thoughts, Brahms wished to leave as quickly as possible, even after Liszt had performed some of Brahms's works in addition to his own. Brahms's apparent indifference toward Liszt's music infuriated Rémenyi and at this point he and Brahms parted ways for the remainder of their lives. Left on his own, Brahms wrote to Joachim asking permission to visit the violinist at Göttingen.<sup>44</sup>

Brahms had first encountered Joachim when he heard him play Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Op. 61, in Hamburg in 1848, a performance that had a great impact on the young Johannes.<sup>45</sup> Their friendship began in earnest once the two formally met in Hanover in 1853, and it was immediately obvious to Joachim that both he and Brahms possessed very compatible personalities and similar musical ideas, essential traits which, Joachim was reported to have sensed, did not exist in the Rémenyi-Brahms partnership.<sup>46</sup> The summer Brahms spent with Joachim in Göttingen was the beginning of a life-long friendship that facilitated Brahms's

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<sup>43</sup> MacDonald, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>45</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>46</sup> Karl Geiringer, "Seven Eventful Months," in *Brahms: His Life and Work* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 28-29.

introduction to several well-known musicians of the time, including Robert and Clara Schumann.<sup>47</sup>

Like Rémenyi, Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) was a talented Hungarian violinist. Following his first public performance in Pest when he was only eight years old, Joachim completed his violin studies in Vienna. In early 1843 he relocated to Leipzig to study with Felix Mendelssohn who helped establish Joachim's international career as a violin soloist and facilitated his development as a composer. Following Mendelssohn's death in 1847, Joachim chose to leave his post as leader of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and teacher at the Leipzig Conservatory to study with Liszt in Weimar, although Joachim would eventually oppose the musical ideals of the "New German School." Joachim relocated again, this time to Hanover where he not only served as concertmaster of the court orchestra, but also completed many of his own compositions. It was during this time that he became close friends with the Schumanns and Johannes Brahms.<sup>48</sup>

Having sent a package of compositions to Robert Schumann several years earlier that were returned unopened, Brahms was understandably hesitant to approach the composer a second time. However, Joachim finally convinced him to visit the Schumanns, and this time Brahms and his compositions were met with high praise.<sup>49</sup> With Joachim's encouragement, Brahms made vital connections that helped him become part of the German musical establishment. Brahms's relationship with Joachim can be traced through hundreds of letters in which the two men exchanged exercises in counterpoint and Brahms asked for advice,

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<sup>47</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>48</sup> Beatrix Borchard, "Joachim, Joseph," in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14322> (accessed July 26, 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Avins, "One Fateful Year: 1853," in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 20.



particularly regarding the composition of his Violin Concerto, which is dedicated to Joachim.<sup>50</sup>

The violinist became a champion of Brahms's works both in German-speaking lands and abroad, and was involved in the first performances of works such as the String Sextet, Op. 18, String Quartet, Op. 51, No. 2, Violin Concerto, Concerto for Violin and Cello, Clarinet Trio, and Clarinet Quintet.<sup>51</sup> Even when their relationship became strained due to personal matters, Joachim never failed to promote Brahms's music as a violinist and conductor.<sup>52</sup>

Another violinist who played an important role in the introduction of Brahms's chamber music to the public was Joseph Hellmesberger (1828-1893), son of the violin virtuoso and conductor Georg Hellmesberger (1800-1873) who taught at the Vienna Conservatory and was a co-founder of the concerts of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. In many ways, Joseph followed in his father's footsteps, serving in the role of artistic director of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde concerts and professor at the conservatory.<sup>53</sup> He had a very successful career of which the most important part was his founding in 1849 of the Hellmesberger String Quartet with Matthias Durst, Karl Heissler and Karl Schlesinger, which was regarded as the premier Viennese string quartet at the time. While the main repertory of the quartet consisted of classical works like Beethoven's string quartets, the group also promoted new music by Bruckner and Brahms, among others. In fact, it was with the Hellmesberger Quartet that Brahms performed his Piano Quartet in G minor in his first concert in Vienna in 1862.<sup>54</sup>

Even upon Brahms's arrival for the first time in Vienna in 1862, Hellmesberger supported him fully and held Brahms's music in such high esteem that he, according to Max

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<sup>50</sup> Clive, 245.

<sup>51</sup> Clive, 245.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Evidon, "Hellmesberger: (2) Joseph Hellmesberger (i)," in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12740pg2> (accessed January 21, 2011).

Kalbeck, declared Brahms to be “Beethoven’s heir.”<sup>55</sup> Brahms continued to appear with the Hellmesberger Quartet nine times in the next eight years, and the group also presented several of his other chamber works including the String Sextet, Op. 18 and String Quartet, Op. 51, No. 1. Joseph Hellmesberger performed with Brahms for the premiere of Brahms’s Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100 on September 2, 1886.<sup>56</sup>

While the previously mentioned violinists were all professionals, Brahms also befriended several amateur musicians who provided inspiration for some of his works. One such person was the winemaker and amateur violinist Rudolf von Beckerath (1833-88). The von Beckerath family resided in the southwestern German cities of Rüdesheim and Wiesbaden and participated in a variety of musical activities in the region. It is thought that Brahms was introduced to Rudolf through the publisher Fritz Simrock. He proceeded to stay in touch with the von Beckerath family through correspondence and occasional visits. Rudolf was a highly skilled violinist who owned a Stradivarius violin and was instrumental in extending an invitation to Brahms from the Krefeld music society in 1879 for a performance of his Symphony No. 1, Op. 68.<sup>57</sup> In the summer of 1883, Brahms spent several months with the von Beckerath family, during which he and Rudolf played a significant amount of chamber music for violin and piano including works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Grieg.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Violin Sonata through the Classical Era**

Brahms’s three full-length sonatas for violin and piano continued a long-standing European chamber music tradition begun in the Baroque era. By the mid-seventeenth century,

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<sup>55</sup> Kalbeck’s quote is found in Clive, 209.

<sup>56</sup> Clive, 209.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Notley, “Brahms’s Chamber Music Summer of 1886: A study of opera 99, 100, 101, and 108” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1992), 9.

the violin sonata was generally a multi-movement work in which the violin was the principal melody instrument while an organ or harpsichord realized a figured bass, and an additional string instrument provided a sustained bass line. This style originated in northern Italy, and eventually spread to German-speaking nations, France, and England.<sup>59</sup> While the earliest known violin sonatas appeared in 1610, it was not until the turn of the eighteenth century that Archangelo Corelli (1653-1713) emerged as a huge influence in the development of the genre. His Twelve Sonatas, Op. 5 were published in Rome in 1700, and many contemporary composers followed his four-movement *sonata da chiesa* or *sonata da camera* layout.<sup>60</sup> Influential Baroque sonata composers from Venice included Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1750/51) and Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), both of whom began to create sonatas which synthesized the *sonata da chiesa* and *sonata da camera* styles. Additional important sonata composers were Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644-1704), Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), and Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770).<sup>61</sup>

With his six sonatas for violin and obbligato keyboard (BWV 1014-1019), Bach first demonstrated the idea of equality between the violin and keyboard in a sonata setting, although other composers at the time did not abandon previous compositional practices of using keyboard continuo. Even into the Classical period, composers were divided as to the roles of the violin and keyboard in the sonata, with some composers contributing to the violin's use as an accompaniment instrument with the keyboard cast as the dominant melody instrument.<sup>62</sup>

Composing twenty-six works for violin and keyboard throughout his lifetime, the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), particularly his mature sonatas, represent an initial

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<sup>59</sup> Robin Stowell, "The Sonata," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, edited by Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 168.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-70.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 170, 173-74.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

peak of the genre in the Classical era. While the works from his childhood consisted mainly of simple piano parts with optional violin accompaniment, his later sonatas written in 1778 in Mannheim and Paris, and the mature sonatas composed in 1779-87 in Salzburg and Vienna began to codify the complete equality between keyboard and violin that is present in the sonatas of Beethoven and the later Romantic composers including Johannes Brahms. It is with these later sonatas of the 1780s that Mozart began altering previously accepted formal design of the sonata, leading to his preference for a piece in three movements rather than four, and also establishing the use of large-scale forms for each movement.<sup>63</sup>

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) composed ten sonatas for piano and violin, and continued the development of the genre. Even more than Mozart, Beethoven treated the violin and keyboard as equal protagonists. Overall, Beethoven's sonatas also illustrate his preference for three-movement works, as only three of the sonatas, Op. 24 and Op. 30, No. 2, and Op. 96 contain four movements. Beethoven's work in the genre culminates with his final two sonatas, Op. 47 and Op. 96. In the Sonata in A Major, Op. 47, Beethoven emphasizes in his own description the concerto-like qualities of the work. The piece's dedicatee, Rodolphe Kreutzer, declared it "outrageously unintelligible" and never performed the work. Unlike any of Beethoven's previous violin sonatas, but similar to some by Mozart (the Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 454, for example), this work begins with a slow introduction followed by a massive sonata form movement. In stark contrast to the energetic and almost bombastic "Kreutzer" Sonata, Beethoven's final violin sonata, Op. 96, illustrates a much more intimate side of the violin-piano duo partnership.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Robin Stowell, "The Sonata," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, 179.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-2.

## The Genesis of Brahms's Sonatas for Violin and Piano

It is no surprise then, as the result of Brahms's vested interest in "early music," that he was well-versed in the traditions of the Classical period and was particularly impacted by the works of Mozart and Beethoven. His initial encounters with music of the Classical period came through his piano teacher in Hamburg, Eduard Marxsen. Marxsen had studied piano and music theory in Vienna with musicians who were students of, or otherwise had very close connections to Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.<sup>65</sup> One of Brahms's earliest documented performances included chamber works by both Beethoven and Mozart.<sup>66</sup> In addition to having works of these masters in his own repertoire, Brahms stated in a letter to Joachim that he considered three specific works, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Violin Concerto, along with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* some of the "most powerful experiences" of his life as a young musician.<sup>67</sup>

Although Marxsen's methods for relaying the techniques of the Classical composers to Brahms are not entirely clear, it is well-documented that Brahms found both the orchestral and chamber works of Mozart and Beethoven incredibly important as he was preparing his own contributions to those genres. Aside from his immense appreciation for Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor, and frequent use of it as an example for his composition students, Brahms also made a point to illustrate what he felt was a direct connection in his compositions to the traditions of Mozart and Beethoven. A notable example of this, as reported by Max Kalbeck, occurred when Brahms sent a copy of the original edition of his Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 to Heinrich Groeber. Brahms inscribed the opening notes of Beethoven's Violin Sonata in G

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<sup>65</sup> Imogen Fellingner, "Brahms's View of Mozart," in *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, ed. Robert Pascall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 41.

<sup>66</sup> Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>67</sup> Letter to Joachim quoted in Fellingner, 41.

Major, Op. 96 and a Mozart Violin Sonata in G Major along with a quotation from Goethe's *Faust*: "Come, rise to higher spheres!/If he senses, he will follow."<sup>68</sup>

The Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 was the first full-length violin sonata that Brahms allowed to be published, although it seems that Brahms had begun work on, but suppressed (as he was known to do) at least three others in earlier years.<sup>69</sup> The three-movement work was composed in Pörschach during the summer months of 1879, and is well-known for Brahms's inclusion of "autobiographical expression." The most obvious example of this occurs in the last movement as the main theme alludes to two of Brahms's settings of poems by Klaus Groth. The inclusion of the melodic material from "Regenlied" and "Nachlang," Op. 59, Nos. 3 and 4 adds a programmatic level to the piece.<sup>70</sup>

Evidence also points to the fact that Clara Schumann was an important inspiration when Brahms was composing the Sonata in G Major. In early 1879, Clara's youngest child Felix was in very ill health. In February of that year Brahms sent a letter to Clara that contained twenty-four measures of what would become the second movement of Op. 78. In his letter Brahms explained: "If you play what is on the reverse side quite slowly, it will tell you, perhaps more clearly than I otherwise could myself, how sincerely I think of you and Felix—even about his violin, which however is surely at rest."<sup>71</sup> The inclusion with the letter of this musical fragment from an incomplete work was very unusual for Brahms, but it does shed some light on the possible inspiration for the funeral march-like section in the second movement.<sup>72</sup> While Clara Schumann appears to have been the first outsider to know of the sonata's existence, Brahms

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>69</sup> MacDonald, 278; McCorkle, Margit, *Thematisch-Bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1984), 329.

<sup>70</sup> David Broadbeck, "Medium and Meaning: New Aspects of the Chamber Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, 117.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Struck, "New Evidence on the Genesis of Brahms's G Major Violin Sonata, Op. 78," *The American Brahms Society Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1991), 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

presented the work to Joachim upon its completion in 1879 while the two were still completing work on the Violin Concerto.<sup>73</sup>

By the summer of 1883, the Sonata in G Major was also well-known to Rudolf von Beckerath, who, according to Max Kalbeck, implored Brahms to continue writing pieces for the violin-piano duo.<sup>74</sup> Based on letters between the von Beckerath family and Brahms, it can be concluded that Brahms began to work on what would become his Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. 100 that summer. Letters from 1884 illustrate that the von Beckerath family may have already heard a preliminary version of the second movement of the work.<sup>75</sup> As he had done in Op. 78, Brahms stated that he included references to songs in this sonata, particularly in the first movement which includes “echoes” of “Wie Melodien zieht es mir,” Op. 105, No. 1, which, like the sonata, was completed in 1886 near Thun, Switzerland.<sup>76</sup> In its final form, the sonata is a three movement work that is more compact than its predecessor, but, like the G Major Sonata, is still lyrical in character. One of the most notable features of the work is its hybrid second movement which combines traits of a slow movement and a scherzo in an alternating pattern.

Brahms’s final contribution to the genre, the Violin Sonata in D minor, Op. 108, was composed between 1886 and 1888, and is in complete contrast to either of the preceding sonatas in its overall character. It was also composed on a larger, almost symphonic scale, consisting of four movements, but interestingly, due to the conciseness of formal development it is no longer than the previous sonatas. Where Op. 78 and Op. 100 contain direct references to Brahms’s

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6; see also MacDonald, 279.

<sup>74</sup> Max Kalbeck’s quote is found in Notley, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 12.

songs, in this sonata Brahms forgoes such connections in favor of a less lyrical, but more restless and stormy character throughout the work.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> MacDonald, 336.



## CHAPTER 3

### USE OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES AS TEACHING TOOLS

While this document is not intended to be a comprehensive performance practice study of Brahms's music for violin and piano, some information regarding general interpretive concepts and string performance practice issues of the nineteenth century can be helpful for students and young performers approaching these sonatas perhaps for the first time. The study of nineteenth-century performance practice is a fairly new endeavor. However, a vast amount of published material and documentary evidence regarding conventions of nineteenth-century violin technique and performance is available to the contemporary scholar. Among these sources are treatises, historical performing editions, correspondence, newspaper reviews, and, in some cases, recordings.<sup>78</sup> Many of these resources have proven helpful in the study and interpretation of Brahms's music for violin and piano.

#### Some Conventions of Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing

Following the success of Leopold Mozart's *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, several nineteenth-century violinists associated with the German school published their own contributions to the pedagogical literature. Each of these treatises provides instructional information for the development of violin technique along with valuable insights into interpretive issues of the day. Following publications by Louis Spohr (1832) and Ferdinand

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<sup>78</sup> D. Kern Holoman, "The 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Introduction," in *Performance Practice: Music after 1600* ed. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie, The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 323; Clive Brown, "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 48.

David (1864), Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser collaborated to write their own *Violinschule* (1902-5). This text is considered by many to be important in the investigation of nineteenth-century violin performance because it addresses the philosophies with which Joachim, one of the most prominent nineteenth-century violinists, went about his performing and teaching career.<sup>79</sup> Although Brahms's death preceded the publication of this work by several years, the composer was very familiar with Joachim's style of violin playing, and therefore he was also acquainted with the techniques and principles covered in the *Violinschule*.<sup>80</sup>

The authors of recent scholarship repeatedly acknowledge marked differences between the nineteenth-century approach to violin playing and that of today. Joachim and Moser's text provides a great deal of evidence through which these differences can be identified. The *Violinschule* is divided into three volumes, the first two of which contain vital technical information for both the beginning and advancing violinist. These two volumes also contain materials that explain some stylistic issues including the acceptable use of certain bow strokes, vibrato, portamento and certain types of ornamentation. In the third volume, one finds a wide variety of pieces from the Baroque to Romantic eras, including Tartini's "Devil's Trill" Sonata and Brahms's Violin Concerto, for which Joachim has supplied fingerings and bowings. Short essays, most of which were written by Moser, serve as introductions to important technical and musical aspects of each piece. Moser also included a series of essays in this final volume in which one can begin to understand Joachim's views regarding traditions of violin playing and aesthetics.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> David Milsom, "Genealogies of Violin Playing," in *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance, 1850-1900*, 21.

<sup>80</sup> Brown, "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music" in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 58.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Joachim completed his formal violin training in Vienna with Joseph Böhm, who studied with Pierre Rode, who was a student of Giovanni Battista Viotti, the founder of the nineteenth-century French school of violin playing.<sup>82</sup> As a result of his violinistic pedigree, Joachim was known to have been associated with certain established traditions from the Viotti school, including the production of “beautiful and powerful sound that was not dependent on vibrato as one of its basic elements.”<sup>83</sup> In fact, none of the known treatises or violin methods of the nineteenth century propose that vibrato was anything more than an expressive device that was not to be overused. It was not until players of the so-called Franco-Belgian school, including Eugène Ysaÿe, became established in the twentieth century that the notion of continuous vibrato became standard practice and consistently recorded in print.<sup>84</sup> Instead, portamento was the more important expressive device of nineteenth-century violinists like Joachim, Louis Spohr, and Charles de Bériot.<sup>85</sup> Joachim and Moser dedicate a rather brief section of volume two of the *Violinschule* to discussion of proper technique for both of these expressive devices.

As the second volume of the *Violinschule* deals almost entirely with the development of shifting techniques, Joachim and Moser’s first order of business was to present instructions for proper hand positioning in the lower positions (first, second, and third) on the fingerboard, followed by technical descriptions, exercises, and selections from the violin repertoire for accomplishing smooth and inaudible shifting among these positions. At this point, the authors introduce techniques for producing portamento and vibrato, much of which is based on

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<sup>82</sup> Milsom, 15; Chappell White, “Viotti, Giovanni Battista,” in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29483>.

<sup>83</sup> Brown, “Joachim’s Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms’s String Music,” in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 64.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

instructions and aesthetic concerns found in Louis Spohr's 1832 treatise. Immediately, Joachim and Moser call to the reader's attention the fact that both portamento and vibrato were initially vocal techniques, and that the violinist must take care to ensure that no sounds are produced which would be unacceptable in singing.<sup>86</sup>

Joachim and Moser explained the proper use of portamento in violin playing as follows: "the audible change of position is used if two notes occurring in a melodic progression, and situated in different positions, are to be made to cling together, or their homogeneous nature is indicated at least by a connecting bridge of sound."<sup>87</sup> The authors continue by describing the two basic types of portamento, again based on techniques that would have been standard practice for vocalists:

The portamento used on the violin between two notes played with one bowstroke corresponds, therefore, to what takes place in singing when the slur is placed over two notes which are meant to be sung on one syllable; the portamento occurring when a change of bow and position is simultaneously made corresponds to what happens when a singer for the sake of musical expression connects two notes, on the second of which a new syllable is sung.<sup>88</sup>

These written descriptions are enhanced with short examples from the violin repertoire, taken from works by Haydn, Rode, Mozart, and Mendelssohn, in which stylistically appropriate options for the use of portamento are illustrated.<sup>89</sup>

Compared to the detail with which Joachim and Moser describe the proper technique and usage of portamento, the following section regarding vibrato is rather short. Similar to the discussion about portamento, this portion also relies heavily on Spohr's views on vibrato as related to the human voice, frequently quoting him directly:

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<sup>86</sup> Joseph Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Violinschule*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Simrock, 1902-5), 92.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-92a.

The singer in the performance of passionate movements, or when forcing his voice to its highest pitch, produces a certain tremulous sound resembling the vibrations of a powerfully struck bell. This, with many other peculiarities of the human voice, the violinist can closely imitate. It consists in the wavering of a stopped note, which alternately extends a little below and above the true intonation, and is produced by a trembling motion of the left hand in the direction from the nut to the bridge. This motion, however, should only be slight, in order that the deviation from purity of tone may be scarcely observed by the ear.<sup>90</sup>

After another lengthy quotation from Spohr's *Violinschule*, Joachim and Moser contribute a few additional tips for the violinist, including the recommendation that the left wrist should be completely relaxed and unhindered when performing vibrato. Like Spohr, Joachim and Moser warn against the constant use of vibrato, stating that violinists should recognize "the steady tone as the normal one."<sup>91</sup>

According to Clive Brown, Joachim had found vibrato to be an extremely problematic issue during his lifetime, and proceeded to address the issue at some length in the third volume of *Violinschule*.<sup>92</sup> Joachim describes vibrato as adding the effect of warmth to good tone production, but he also reinforces the fact that if used improperly, the device can cause "extreme discomfort in the listener." In essence, instead of establishing any hard rules, it seems that Joachim believed the performer should be intelligent enough to determine when the use of vibrato would be appropriate as an expressive device based on the general character of a piece of music. He also emphasized that instead of a continuous vibrato, one should use the device to help the listener distinguish between harmonically significant and passing notes.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, he discusses the use of vibrato not only as a mechanism to produce "spice" in slower pieces, but also within faster passage work. Joachim selected two measures of Rode's third caprice from his

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<sup>90</sup> Joachim and Moser, *Violinschule*, vol. 2, 96.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 96a.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music" in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 66.

<sup>93</sup> Brown quotes Joachim in "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 66-67.

24 *Caprices* to illustrate the use of the symbol < >, which Joachim (and Moser) interpret to represent an invitation not only for vibrato, but slight emphasis with the bow as well.

Interestingly, this symbol also appears in the music of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, though there is no documentary evidence that Brahms understood this sign solely as a symbol for vibrato when he incorporated it into his string music.<sup>94</sup>

Although not intended as such, the five pieces Joachim recorded in 1903 serve as a kind of supplement to the *Violinschule* for the twenty-first century violinist or scholar. These short pieces or single movements by Bach, Joachim, and Brahms can be heard today on *The Recorded Violin. The History of the Violin on Record*.<sup>95</sup> Upon listening to these recordings, one almost immediately notices a sparing use of vibrato, one of the most obvious characteristics that illustrates not only a very different style of playing from that of today, but different even from the style demonstrated by violinists like Fritz Kreisler and Eugène Ysaÿe on other recordings made at that time. Although Joachim was in his seventies, and obviously past his prime as a performer, these recordings illustrate many of the principles he and Moser discussed in the *Violinschule*, particularly regarding vibrato and portamento.

### **Understanding Brahms's Instructions**

Brahms's works contain moderate numbers of musical instructions and descriptors. He was a firm believer in the publication of editions from which a performer could produce an accurate rendition of the composer's intentions, but at the same time felt that intelligent and knowledgeable performers should not be constrained to play only what the composer had written on the page. Therefore, he avoided what Clive Brown describes as "exhaustive and over-

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<sup>94</sup> Brown, "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 68.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

prescriptive details in such matters as tempo and expression markings” in order to leave some aspects of the music open to interpretation by the performer.<sup>96</sup> However, Brahms did explain his notation or voice his opinion about aspects of the performance of his music occasionally.

Although he was known for his self-critical tendencies and general reluctance to speak about his music with outside parties, his correspondence does, on occasion, provide some enlightening information regarding his music and nineteenth-century performance practice as a whole.<sup>97</sup>

As scholars have stated in recent years, tempo is one of the most complicated issues in any musical performance, historical or otherwise.<sup>98</sup> Styra Avins, in her studies of Brahms’s correspondence, came across many letters in which Brahms expressed his views about tempos in his music, and also voiced a general feeling of aversion to the metronome.<sup>99</sup> Selected letters to Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim, and Brahms’s publishers, among others, indicate his resistance to including metronome markings in his music, but also imply that he believed that his works could be performed at a number of different tempos, within reason.<sup>100</sup> Avins calls attention to one of Brahms’s most famous comments regarding the metronome in his response to George Henschel’s request for advice about tempos in the *German Requiem*:

In my view, the metronome isn’t worth much; at least so far as I know, many a composer has withdrawn his metronome markings sooner or later. Those which are found in the Requiem are there because good friends talked me into them. For I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together. The so-called elastic tempo is not a new discovery, after all, and to it, as to many another, one should attach a ‘con discrezione’. Is that an answer? I know of none better; what I know,

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<sup>96</sup> Brown, “Joachim’s Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms’s String Music,” in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 49.

<sup>97</sup> Avins, “Performing Brahms’s Music: Clues from his Letters,” in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 11.

<sup>98</sup> Brown, “Tempo,” in *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice: 1750-1900*, 282.

<sup>99</sup> Avins, “Performing Brahms’s Music: Clues from his Letters,” in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 20.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

however, is that I indicate my tempos in the heading, without numbers, modestly but with the greatest care and clarity.<sup>101</sup>

Perhaps the last sentence of this excerpt is the most important, as, within it, Brahms reveals that his tempo indications were not written to dictate an exact metronomic tempo, but perhaps instead to indicate a more overarching atmosphere. Throughout his three violin sonatas, one finds examples of Brahms's preferred method of tempo indication, which seem, in many cases, to combine not only instructions regarding the speed, but also descriptions of the general character of each movement.<sup>102</sup> One of the most obvious examples of this is the indication *Un poco presto e con sentimento* found at the beginning of the third movement of the Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108.

In addition to his standard method of indicating tempo at the beginning of a movement, Brahms also made use of several additional tempo or character modifications within movements, which should be carefully examined in order to determine the composer's intentions. Like other late nineteenth-century composers, Brahms often used the Italian term *tranquillo* in his music to indicate a shift to a quieter mood.<sup>103</sup> However, he also used a capitalized version of the term in some works, which could create some confusion. Styra Avins cites a letter from Brahms's editor, Robert Keller in which Keller suggested, and Brahms seemed to agree, that *tranquillo* serves as a reminder not to rush through a passage, while *Tranquillo* indicates a complete change of tempo. The same principle could also be applied to *animato* and *Animato*. Avins concedes that Brahms may not have consistently applied this method throughout his compositional output, but based on her own experiences as a performer, she finds that one should understand lower case indications

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<sup>101</sup> Avins, Letter 386 in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, 559; Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music: Clues from his Letters," in *Performing Brahms: Evidence of Early Performance Style*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Johannes Brahms, *Sonaten für Klavier und Violine*, Edited by Hans Otto Hiekel, fingering by Hans-Martin Theopold, fingering and bowing of violin part by Karl Rörig (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1975).

<sup>103</sup> "Tranquillo," in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29483> (accessed February 1, 2011).



as expressive markings, while capitalized versions of the same terms serve as tempo indications.<sup>104</sup>

Brahms also used the term *sostenuto* quite frequently in his music. According to Clive Brown, this term has several connotations, including a vague tempo indication, an expressive direction, or it was used in combination with other tempo indications. As a tempo marking on its own, *sostenuto* was not consistently categorized historically. Brown found the term listed as a middle ground between the largo-adagio group and the andante-allegro group in the Paris Conservatoire's *Principes élémentaires de musique*, but also listed as a faster tempo in other sources. Analysis of various composers' use of *sostenuto* does very little to clarify the ambiguity of the term.<sup>105</sup> Brahms uses the word both as an expressive marking and as a tempo indication, and a notable example of the latter occurs at the beginning of the development section of the first movement of the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78.<sup>106</sup>

Some of Brahms's correspondence holds information of great interest for string players, particularly the letters exchanged between Brahms and Joseph Joachim. Styra Avins argues that Brahms was a very practical musician who expected his works to be performed, and therefore he felt he had an obligation to ensure that all of his music was suitable for the instruments for which he wrote. This becomes obvious in letters to Joachim in which Brahms requests suggestions or alternatives to what he had already written, particularly with regard to his string quartets or the Violin Concerto.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music: Clues from his Letters," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 22-23.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, "Other Terms Affecting Tempo," in *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*, 372.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>107</sup> Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music: Clues from his Letters," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 26.

Among the subjects Brahms discussed with Joachim were dynamic indications, orchestration, the interpretation of ornament signs, and articulation markings.<sup>108</sup> One exchange illustrating the two men's difference of opinion regarding articulation is found in Clive Brown's essay about Joachim's violin playing. The following is Brahms's initial response to a suggestion by Joachim to change articulation markings in the Violin Concerto:

with what right, since when and on what authority do you violinists write the sign for portamento [i.e., portato] (  $\frown$  ) where it does not mean that? You mark the octave passages in the Rondo (  $\frown$  ) and I would put sharp strokes ' '. Does it have to be so? Until now I have not given in to the violinists, and have also not adopted their damned lines  $\frown$ . Why then should  $\frown$  mean anything else to us than it did to Beethoven?<sup>109</sup>

Joachim responded to Brahms's irritation by including several musical examples in his letter illustrating different issues of violin articulation. He also acknowledged certain fundamental differences between articulation on the violin and the piano, which he stated created the necessity for what was, in Brahms's opinion, an unorthodox notation.<sup>110</sup>

On occasion the letters provide hints of information about nineteenth-century string performance practice that became less enigmatic through accounts of other nineteenth-century musicians. One such statement from Brahms can be found in a letter to Joachim written before the premiere of the String Quartet No. 3, Op. 67: "But a few open strings here and there, they delight my eye and calm my spirit."<sup>111</sup> Following her quotation from this letter, Avins immediately discusses the fact that not only would the use of open strings be a sign of good string writing, but the sound produced on them would be much richer than a pitch on a stopped string. This view leads Avins to determine that in order to create resonance to match an open

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<sup>108</sup> Clive Brown, "Joachim's Violin Playing and the Performance of Brahms's String Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 50.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>111</sup> Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music: Clues from his Letters," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 26.

string, one would have used vibrato to play Brahms's music in the late nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> An interesting personal account from Fanny Davies, a piano student of Clara Schumann, describes a private performance of the Piano Trio, Op. 101 with Brahms, Joachim, and Robert Hausmann. In her description of the event, Davies mentions the fact that Brahms felt the need for open strings to be emphasized in both the cello and violin parts, and also describes a particular moment in the second movement during which the performers were "passionate, as the music demands, and played vibrato in contrast with what had gone before."<sup>113</sup> As the section of the music Davies was describing is marked *espressivo*, Davies's account seems to be aligned with the general concepts of tasteful use of vibrato in the nineteenth century that Joachim had prescribed in his *Violinschule*. Since Brahms was at the piano, one could speculate that what Davies witnessed might have been what Brahms intended for the performance.

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<sup>112</sup> Avins, "Performing Brahms's Music: Clues from his Letters," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, 26.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

## CHAPTER 4

### ACCOMPLISHING LYRICISM

While the sonatas for piano and violin discussed here exist as products of Brahms's high maturity, it is important to note that Brahms composed chamber works throughout his career, along with piano music and lieder.<sup>114</sup> The earliest lied, "Heimkehr," Op. 7, No. 6, was written in May 1851, and the last, the *Vier ernste Gesänge*, Op. 121, was completed in 1896.<sup>115</sup> Though many of Brahms's songs have become part of the standard vocal repertoire, others remain in relative obscurity compared to those of other German song composers like Franz Schubert and Robert Schumann.<sup>116</sup> Brahms has been excluded from the list of the most important German song composers by some critics, who categorize him with those less well-known for their song output. Michael Musgrave, in an essay about Brahms's *Lieder*, attributes this misunderstanding to several factors. First, since Brahms generally avoided setting works by many of the major German poets, his songs often contain awkward moments in vocal declamation. Secondly, his published groups of songs contain relatively few pieces, many of which seem to lack the psychological development seen in those of Schumann or Schubert.<sup>117</sup> However, when it comes to understanding the musical content of many of Brahms's instrumental works, his *Lieder* and *Gesänge* provide important musical clues, particularly in the case of his sonatas for violin and piano.

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<sup>114</sup> Musgrave, "Words for Music: The Songs for Solo Voice and Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, 195; Lucien Stark, "Brahms as Song Composer," in *A Guide to the Solo Songs of Johannes Brahms* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 1; see also Bozarth and Frisch.

<sup>116</sup> Stark, 7.

<sup>117</sup> Musgrave, "Words for Music: The Songs for Solo Voice and Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, 195.

Two of the three violin sonatas contain melodic material that is directly associated to one or more of Brahms's songs. Brahms's use of melodic and motivic content from two closely related *Lieder*, "Regenlied" (Rain-song) and "Nachklang" ("Reminiscence" or, literally, "Echo"), Op. 59, Nos. 3 and 4, in all three movements of the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 are considered to be the most well-known song allusion in the sonatas.<sup>118</sup> The most prominent example within the work occurs in the third movement, which is a rondo in G minor. The first two complete measures of the opening theme (Example 4.1) share melodic content with the first four measures of the voice part in both "Regenlied" (Example 4.2) and "Nachklang" (Example 4.3).<sup>119</sup>

Allegro molto moderato

Example 4.1. Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, 3rd movement, mm. 1-4

<sup>118</sup> Musgrave, "Words for Music: the Songs for Solo Voice and Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, 214; see also Parmer, 167.

<sup>119</sup> Musgrave, "Words for Music: the Songs for Solo Voice and Piano," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, 215.

In mässiger, ruhiger Bewegung

Wal - le, Re - gen, wal - le

7  
nie - der, we - cke mir die Trau - me wie - der

*p*

Example 4.2. “Regenlied,” Op. 59, No. 3, mm. 1-11

Sanft bewegt

Re - gen - trop - - - fen - aus - den - Bäu - - men

*p*

4  
fal - len in das grü - - - ne - Gras,

Example 4.3. “Nachklang,” Op. 59, No. 4, mm. 1-7

Aside from the rhythmic diminution that transforms the song melody into a spinning-off point for the rondo theme, one notices several similarities between the two songs and the sonata movement, including the exact replication of melodic contour and the constant eighth-note accompaniment in the piano part. The song allusion in the first movement of the Sonata in A Major, Op. 100 is much less obvious. In this case, scholars have noted a marked similarity in melodic contour between the opening of “Wie Melodien zieht es mir,” Op. 105, No. 1 (Example 4.4), and the melody found in the second subject of the sonata (Example 4.5) although rhythmic differences somewhat obscure the relationship.<sup>120</sup>



Example 4.4. “Wie Melodien zieht es mir,” Op. 105, No. 1, mm. 1-5



Example 4.5. Sonata in A Major, Op. 100, first movement, mm. 66-74

Dillon Parmer has suggested that Brahms’s inclusion of such song references in his instrumental works was not only based on his supposed belief that song (particularly folk song) was the supreme source for melodic content. After recalling that literary works served as inspirational

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 217.

material for many nineteenth-century symphonic poems, he maintains that these melodies result in the introduction of programmatic elements into Brahms's instrumental music because of their implied texts.<sup>121</sup>

Even more important than the literary connection is the implication that the inclusion of song and song-like melodies in instrumental music requires the performer to develop a technique that facilitates the appropriate delivery of such material. The concept of playing with a singing quality is of particular importance to the violinist. No matter how basic with regard to technique, even the earliest pedagogical writings from the middle of the seventeenth century, stress the importance of beautiful tone production and “intonation as true as that of good singers.”<sup>122</sup> The preface of Francesco Geminiani's 1751 treatise, which is thought by some to be the first significant violin treatise,<sup>123</sup> again emphasizes the vocal quality of the violin sound in the following statement: “the art of playing the violin consists in giving that instrument a tone that shall in a manner rival the most perfect human voice.”<sup>124</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, much of the pedagogical literature from nineteenth-century Germany, including the 1832 *Violinschule* of Louis Spohr (which greatly influenced pedagogical writing in the early twentieth century, as well) described violin technique in such a way so that the student would constantly strive for a singing tone.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Parmer, 163.

<sup>122</sup> Jeffrey Pulver, “Violin Methods Old and New,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 50<sup>th</sup> session (1923-1924), 104.

<sup>123</sup> Pulver, 110; Robin Stowell, “The Pedagogical Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, 225; David Boyden “Geminiani and the First Violin Tutor,” in *Acta Musicologica* 31, Fasc. 3/4 (July-December 1959), 162.

<sup>124</sup> Pulver, 111.

<sup>125</sup> Stowell, “The Pedagogical Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, 227.



## Some Principles of Tone Production

Many concepts and viewpoints about the production of good tone on the violin are presented in the pedagogical literature. The most basic principles of violin playing as described by renowned pedagogues like Carl Flesch, Ivan Galamian, and Simon Fischer will not be discussed here in detail as it is presumed that a student learning and performing Brahms's sonatas already has a clear understanding of the physical mechanics necessary to manipulate the instrument. Furthermore, many of these factors (e.g., bow weight and speed) are only the most rudimentary concepts for developing a good tone on the violin, and though these physical right hand and bow techniques may be in place, it is up to the performer to move beyond sheer mechanical execution, develop his or her own personal concept of an ideal sound, and incorporate "tone production as a means of expression."<sup>126</sup> In the words of Leopold Auer:

The problem involved in the production of an entirely agreeable tone—that is to say a tone which is *singing* to a degree that leads the hearer to forget the physical process of its development—is one whose solution must always be the most important task of those who devote themselves to mastering the violin.<sup>127</sup>

While Auer and many other violin pedagogues consider certain technical exercises essential for improving tone production, another aspect of developing one's sound lies with the use of one's imagination. Just as a singer's voice is his or her own, the violin, or rather, the tone produced through it, serves as the voice of the violinist, and one must always have a concept of the desired sound in mind when practicing and performing. As Ida Kavafian stated,

The first thing that is responsible for a good tone is what each individual has in his or her ear, heart and mind. Each individual has his or her own concept of sound and its importance. While many technical things are important in creating a good sound, the most important aspect is a person's concept of sound. If you can define and hear what kind of sound you want then you will find ways to get it.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Flesch, 77.

<sup>127</sup> Leopold Auer, "Tone Production" in *Violin Playing as I Teach It*, 18.

<sup>128</sup> Sarah Freiberg, "Got Tone? Sound Advice from the Experts on Improving Your Tone Production," *Strings Magazine* 113 (October 2003), 46.

One can experiment with different sounds on the violin as a result of variations in bow speed, weight, and sounding point, but singing aloud is also one of the most efficient and personal ways to go about finding one's sound. This practice is also useful when making decisions about phrasing within a piece of music. Peter Zazofsky, a professor at Boston University and violinist in the Muir String Quartet, noted that the bow is, in essence, "a foreign object, not a natural part of you," unlike one's voice. He encourages students to continually return to singing, and to play in exactly that manner.<sup>129</sup>

In conjunction with excellent bow technique, certain additional factors relating to the left hand, particularly the use of vibrato, can greatly enhance the sound produced on the violin. Carl Flesch emphasized that with proper technical skills, the violinist can produce a singing tone similar to that of the human voice. He described the function of the left hand as such: "aside from creating the most precise possible pitches, [the left hand] is also charged with subliminally melding musical sounds with deep feelings which subconsciously slumber in our souls." Flesch asserts that the tasteful incorporation of vibrato is one of the most important ways in which the violinist may convey the full range of emotions required to emulate the human voice in instrumental music.<sup>130</sup>

### **Accomplishing Lyricism in Selections from Brahms's Sonatas**

The abundance of lyricism in the melodies of Brahms's Sonatas for Violin and Piano provides ample opportunity for a violinist to enhance his or her technique and develop specific tone production goals. Though not directly related to any of Brahms's lieder, the second theme in the opening movement of the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 is one of the most lyrical passages in

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<sup>129</sup> Freiberg, 46.

<sup>130</sup> Flesch, 20-21.

these works. The initial tempo indication of the movement is *Vivace ma non troppo*, but Brahms added the *con anima* (“with soul” or “with life”) designation to the violin part at the beginning of this theme perhaps to stress to the performer the need for a heightened degree of expression. In addition to this designation of character, the passage was written in such a way that, particularly if sung aloud, the intended direction of this symmetrical eight-measure phrase is very obvious. The phrase begins quietly in a fairly low register of the violin, and the highest point of the initial four-measure statement corresponds with the highest pitch (the A in m. 38). The next four measures replicate of the pitch material from the initial statement, but are notated one octave higher and with a continuous crescendo that culminates with a forte dynamic indication in m. 42.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a violin and piano. The first system (measures 36-41) is marked *con anima* and *p*. The violin part features a melodic line with a crescendo leading to a forte dynamic in measure 42. The piano part provides harmonic support. The second system (measures 42-47) is marked *cresc.* and continues the melodic development. The third system (measures 48-53) is marked *f* and shows the culmination of the phrase with a forte dynamic.

Example 4.6. Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, first movement, mm. 36-43

In order to achieve a singing quality and continuous sound production throughout this eight-measure phrase (and each of the following examples), the violinist should incorporate the practice of the *son filé*, or long sustained stroke, which Ivan Galamian considered to be one of the oldest and most important exercises for tone production and bow control.<sup>131</sup> On the importance of this bow technique, he writes:

What breath control is for the singer—the ability to sing long phrases without having to interrupt them for a new breath—bow control in the long, sustained stroke is for the violinist—the ability to sustain a long tone or musical phrase without having to change bow.<sup>132</sup>

The goal of practicing the *son filé* is to acquire the ability to move the bow as slowly as possible, but with a continuous, resonant sound. As with many other bow techniques, it is helpful to practice the task on open strings initially to ensure the proper skills are developed. Galamian emphasizes the incorporation of several variations of bow direction and dynamic level into the practice of the *son filé* in order to master the technique. For example, one might begin by playing down-bow and performing a gradual crescendo through the entire stroke. Upon changing to an up-bow, the violinist should perform a decrescendo. Another variation could include the execution of both a crescendo and decrescendo within a single up- or down-bow.<sup>133</sup>

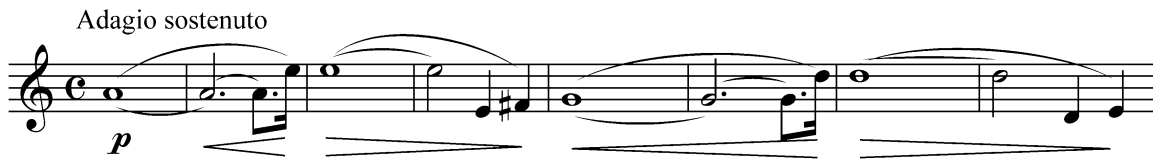
However, techniques such as the *son filé* become more complicated when additional skills are required in order to perform a piece of music instead of a mere exercise on open strings. Some intermediate steps that may prove helpful include practicing the stroke in scales and double stops or studying an etude like No. 1 from Rodolphe Kreutzer's *42 Studies*, an excerpt of which is found in Example 4.7.

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<sup>131</sup> Galamian, 103.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>133</sup> Galamian, 103 contains additional variations for practicing *son filé*.



Example 4.7. Kreutzer 42 *Studies*, No. 1, mm. 1-4

For the second theme of the G Major sonata (Example 4.6), the violinist must be concerned with the actions of the pitch-producing left hand, ensuring that each finger is prepared for upcoming notes. It is important that the left hand moves smoothly when shifting, as sudden or erratic motions increase the likelihood of interrupting the continuous sound produced by the bow.

Since the right hand and bow produce the actual singing sound on the instrument, one must not neglect the need for some articulation with the bow, just as a singer would enunciate a song's text. The marked articulations in this phrase include many slurs whose pitches correspond to a singer's vowel sounds. Just as consonants are required for clear understanding of words, so are articulations for the understanding of this musical phrase, particularly when notes are repeated consecutively as in the case of mm. 36 and 40. The tone quality throughout the duration of these repeated Fs should not be diminished in the least. Both notes require a more articulate bow stroke, perhaps something akin to the sound a singer would produce for words beginning with the letters "b" or "d," at the outset. These concepts of the sustained stroke and articulation of a variety of consonant sounds with the bow should be applied throughout the three sonatas. The following examples were chosen to address either additional issues related to these concepts or the execution of certain aspects of Brahms's notation.

Another concern related to the production of a sustained tone is the register in which a passage is written. Unlike the previous example, which is in a register that projects easily on the

violin, this excerpt, from the second movement of the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 (Example 4.8) is not only in the lowest register on the instrument, but also requires the execution of double stops. As in the theme from the first movement, this theme is eight measures long, but it proceeds at a much slower pace and with an unquestionably different character. This passage represents the return of the opening material from the movement and follows a funeral march-like middle section.

Adagio come I

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the violin part with a forte (*f*) dynamic and 'espress.' marking, and the piano accompaniment with a piano forte (*pf*) dynamic. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The third system shows the violin part with a 'legato' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Example 4.8. Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, second movement, mm. 67-76

Due to the use of double stops, this is an exact reiteration of the piano presentation of the theme, creating a texture reminiscent of two independent but equal singers, which requires absolute equality and balance. In passages such as this it is often helpful to separate the tasks of the right and left hands so that each may gain proficiency at specific assignments.

In practicing these double stops without the bow, one must first ensure left hand coordination unto itself and, as emphasized previously, preparing all movements, particularly shifts, carefully and within the character of the music. That said, it is advantageous to practice moving the hand between two sets of double stops several times to ensure proficiency and accuracy of pitch before moving on to the next pair. It may also be helpful to practice with different rhythms, training the hand to move quickly and smoothly from one double stop to the next. These types of exercises are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

As with the practice of the basic *son filé* bow technique, it is quite valuable to make a study of an excerpt such as this using only open strings. And although this passage should be performed solely on the D and G strings, thus not involving string crossings, open string practice ensures a balanced and resonant sound on both strings. An additional issue is that the two strings used here are the lower two on the instrument. As Simon Fischer states in *Basics*, “the G and D strings are too thick and hard to respond easily when the bow is very close to the bridge.”<sup>134</sup> This comment is notable because, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, if one is required to play with a slow, heavy bow, the point of contact should be closer to the bridge. However, because of the lower register, one will find that a much more pleasant tone is achieved when the bow is placed further from the bridge. Additionally, more weight is needed because the bow is on two strings at once. In this passage, one may also find it necessary to change bow

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<sup>134</sup> Simon Fischer, “Soundpoints,” in *Basics: 300 Exercises and Practice Routines for the Violin* (London: C.F. Peters, 1997), 41.

more often than indicated in the music because of the forte dynamic and Brahms's marking of *espressivo*. One should also note that Brahms included the legato indication in m. 70 to ensure that the passage would be played with the utmost smoothness. Therefore, it is apparent that a change of bowing from Brahms's original slur or phrase markings is acceptable in order to maintain exceptional resonance and tone quality.

The next example begins with the celebrated quotation of "Regenlied" and "Nachklang" that opens the final movement of the Sonata in G Major, Op. 78.

Allegro molto moderato

The musical score is for the opening of the final movement of Brahms's Sonata in G Major, Op. 78. It is written for violin and piano. The tempo is marked "Allegro molto moderato". The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the violin playing a melody with a *p dolce* marking, and the piano providing a harmonic accompaniment. The second system continues the melody with a *p* marking and includes crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. The third system features a triplet in the violin part. The piano part consists of steady eighth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand.



Example 4.9. Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, third movement, mm. 1-16

As stated previously, only the first two full measures are directly connected to the two songs' melodic content, yet these two measures serve as the central material that Brahms expands to create a sixteen-measure rondo theme. Aside from the overall rhythmic diminution, one of the most prominent differences between this opening and the beginning of both songs is the notation of the rhythmic unit that serves as the anacrusis to the melody proper. In the songs (Examples 4.2 and 4.3) the pick-up consists of a dotted quarter note and an eighth note, whereas in the sonata

Brahms not only halved the duration of the rhythm, but inserted a rest to emphasize the need for clear articulation on the repeated pitches.

In this passage the rhythm is defined, in part, by the syllables of “Walle” and “Regen” in “Regenlied” and “Nachklang” respectively. Here Brahms may have intended the violin’s articulation to emulate that of the voice. In order to accomplish that aesthetic both here and in other instances of the rhythm (or its functional equivalent) throughout the sonata, one must execute a more articulate sound with the bow, as discussed in relation to Example 4.6. Consonant sounds, as described by Galamian “are often needed to give a clearer definition and form to the vowel sounds of the continuous tone.”<sup>135</sup> Therefore, one must begin each note by catching the string, and the resonance during the note’s duration should follow. There are varying levels of consonant sounds that can be produced, and the violinist must determine which is most appropriate for a given situation. In making this decision, one might imagine the clarity of diction produced by a singer in both large and small performance or rehearsal spaces. As an example of the amount of clear articulation necessary for a large hall, Galamian described the seemingly overly enunciated consonants of the Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin, in whose performances every word was clearly understood by all in the audience.<sup>136</sup> In addition to imitation of the vocal line in the violin part, Brahms also included aspects of the songs’ piano accompaniment. Since the same sixteenth-note accompaniment as found in the songs runs through the opening section of the sonata movement, a sort of dialogue is formed between the violin and piano, particularly in mm. 10-11. In these measures, the violinist must also produce an articulation matching that of the piano while continuing to aim for resonance.

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<sup>135</sup> Galamian, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Galamian, 10.

The penultimate example here is taken from the final movement of the Sonata in A Major, Op. 100.

Allegretto grazioso (quasi Andante)  
*espress.*

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (measures 1-6) features a violin melody starting on A4, moving through a series of eighth and quarter notes, and a piano accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands. The second system (measures 7-12) continues the melody with a trill-like figure in measure 7 and concludes with a half note A4. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and piano dolce (*p dolce*).

Example 4.10. Sonata in A Major, Op. 100, third movement, mm. 1-12

Unlike the passage found in Example 4.8 from the Sonata in G Major, in which the violinist must sustain and project above a very active piano accompaniment, the relatively sparse texture here allows the violinist an opportunity to execute the melodic line according to Brahms's instructions. However, like the above-mentioned passage, the violinist, while aiming to produce as much resonance as possible, should avoid placing the bow too close to the bridge. Many performers now choose to perform this passage entirely on the G string, or perhaps moving onto the D string a few times to play only the highest pitches (the C-sharps in mm. 6-7 and 10) of the melody. In preparation for performing this passage *sul G*, the violinist might consider studying

an etude like No. 14 from Fiorillo's *36 Etudes or Caprices* (Example 4.11), which, in addition to addressing the issue of shifts up and down a single string, also encourages the development of a sustained, and singing tone.



Example 4.11. Fiorillo 36 Etudes or Caprices, No. 14, mm. 1-4

Example 4.12 presents the opening melody of the first movement of Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108. It resides entirely in the upper range of the instrument and therefore is easily projected over the hushed but turbulent syncopation of the piano. However, Brahms directs both the violinist and pianist to play *sotto voce*, and indicates *espressivo* in the violin part. One of the most interesting elements of this passage is the appearance of mismatched “hairpins” between the piano and violin, particularly in mm. 3 and 4. Several historical resources consulted in the previous chapter provide evidence that some violinists of Brahms’s day felt that the symbol < > indicated that the violinist should use vibrato and also slightly emphasize the note with the bow, but without sacrificing the singing quality of the sound. To obtain this result, the violinist should engage in exercises that will allow him or her to plan for ideal bow distribution to correspond with the intensity of expression.

Allegro

*p sotto voce ma espressivo*

*p sotto voce*

Example 4.12. Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108, first movement, mm. 1-11

Although Simon Fischer includes the following exercise in *Basics* to assist with the development of a completely smooth bow stroke, it can also be used to promote proper bow distribution.<sup>137</sup> In this exercise, the violinist should use at least the first five measures of Example 4.12 and finger the pitches with the left hand as written. However, instead of bowing on the correct string, one should perform the phrase by playing on the adjacent string, aiming for proper musical phrasing, which is a direct result of good bow distribution. In the case of this phrase, one should save bow in the first beats of mm. 3 and 4, but increase bow speed to accomplish the hairpins in the last beats of each measure. It is also useful to finger the pitches on a different

<sup>137</sup> Fischer, 39.

string while playing on the correct string to gain an understanding of the response of the string to varying bow speeds. Finally, by including the left hand fingers in this exercise, one can practice altering vibrato speeds to enhance the expressiveness of the phrase.

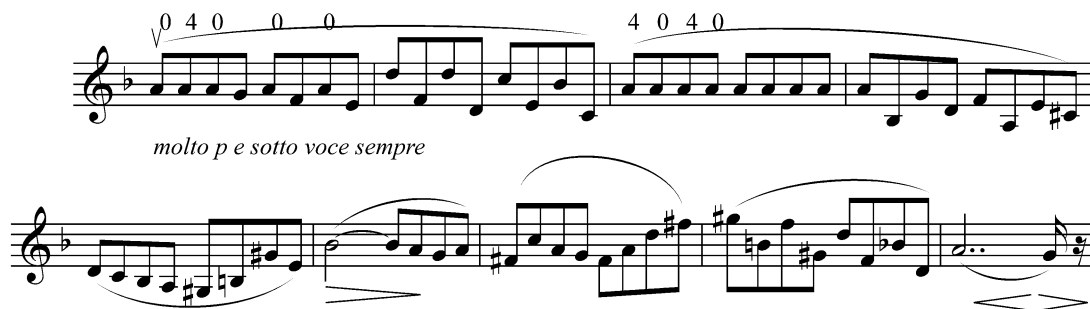
## CHAPTER 5

### OTHER TECHNICAL AND INTERPRETIVE ISSUES

In the previous chapter, issues relating to the production of a resonant and singing tone were discussed in connection with several lyrical passages from Brahms's three violin sonatas. These concepts should still apply even when passages require more advanced right or left hand techniques. While these sonatas do not require the same level of virtuosic pyrotechnics as a Paganini concerto, for example, technical demands still exist, albeit of a far more subtle nature.

#### String Crossings

The ability to produce smooth string crossings is vital to every string player's technique as each scale, exercise, etude, or piece of music, even for a beginning student, demands it. Brahms's string chamber and orchestral works in particular include numerous passages of rapid string changes, and at times extended oscillation between two strings within a single bow stroke. A typical case is found in the first movement of the Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108, as seen in Example 5.1.



Example 5.1. Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108, first movement, mm. 84-92

Before exploring a variety of techniques for practicing excerpts like this one, it is pertinent to summarize principles of bow levels and basic string crossing.

If one asks a student, particularly a younger one, how many bow levels one uses on the violin, the instinctive response is usually “four,” which seems logical because the violin does indeed have four strings. However, as Simon Fischer points out in *Basics*, there are actually seven levels of the bow: one for each individual string, and one for each combination of two adjacent strings. Fischer identifies the levels as such:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
G string	G-D double stop	D string	D-A double stop	A string	A-E double stop	E string

Example 5.2. Diagram of bow levels<sup>138</sup>

He encourages the violinist to gain familiarity with these string levels by first practicing moving among Levels 1, 3, 5, and 7 with a variety of different bow strokes and at slow, medium, and fast tempos. Fischer also describes an exercise in which the violinist systematically practices string crossings from each bow level to all others.<sup>139</sup> With this type of exercise the violinist learns of the value of Levels 2, 4, and 6, which serve as intermediaries for string crossings.

When a legato bow stroke includes more than two notes on different strings, a smooth string change is required. In order to accomplish this, the violinist should ensure that the new string is approached from as close a distance as possible. When a string crossing is practiced slowly enough, one should hear a double stop sound very briefly before the bow arrives on the new string entirely. This guarantees that the notes are well-connected within the bow stroke.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Fischer, 25.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>140</sup> Galamian, 65



The passage found in Example 5.1 contains instances of *bariolage*.<sup>141</sup> Here one should stay as close as possible to both strings, but continue to allow for clear articulation of each note. This movement from one string to another should result in an efficient wave-like motion of the bow and right arm instead of an awkward, angular movement.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to smooth string changes with the bow, one must also prepare the movements of the left hand's fingers to make certain that the proper pitches will sound immediately upon the arrival of the bow on the new string. As Simon Fischer states, "the left hand fingers must always lead. If the finger is late, a moment of 'fuzz' is caused by bowing a half-stopped string."<sup>143</sup> In order to achieve coordination between the two hands, Fischer advocates practicing a passage pizzicato initially, as one can very clearly notice the difference in timing between solidly placing the finger and plucking the string. One should proceed by practicing the same passage with the bow, but adhering to the same principles of timing as with the pizzicato version.<sup>144</sup>

Additional preliminary work for developing string crossing techniques can be carried out through the study of etudes. Though not considered a set of etudes, the variations of Giuseppe Tartini's *The Art of Bowing* contain several segments that focus on string crossings.<sup>145</sup> In addition, over twenty etudes from the standard collections of Dont, Fiorillo, Kreutzer, and Rode also address the issue.<sup>146</sup> Many of these exercises, including No. 7 from Kreutzer's *42 Studies for*

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<sup>141</sup> *Bariolage*: An effect produced by playing two strings, one open and the other stopped, in rapid alternation to produce a contrast in timbre. Definition adapted from Don Michael Randel, ed, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>142</sup> Flesch, 43-44. See also Percival Hodgson, *Motion Study and Violin Bowing* (Urbana, Illinois: American String Teachers Association, 1958). Hodgson's research delves into great detail about the anatomical aspects of bowing in violin playing and the types of rounded (as opposed to straight-line) movements required to produce a quality sound. To support his arguments, Hodgson defines the shapes of several bowing patterns, presents time-lapse photography of them, and provides exercises for the practical application of these movements.

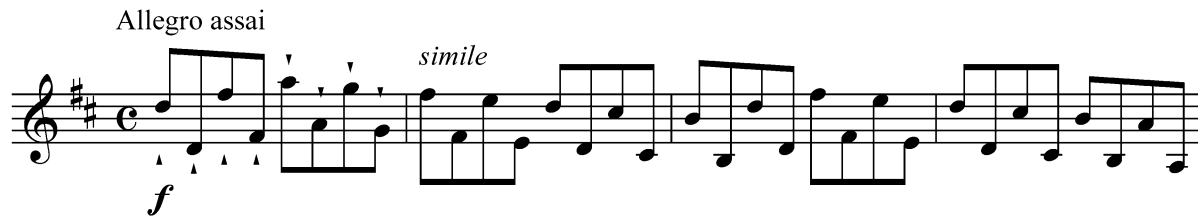
<sup>143</sup> Fischer, 129.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>145</sup> Giuseppe Tartini, *The Art of Bowing*, ed. Edith L. Winn (New York: Carl Fischer, n.d.).

<sup>146</sup> The collections of etudes consulted here include: Jacob Dont, *Etüden und Capricien, Op. 35*, ed. Ivan Galamian (New York: International Music Company, n.d.); Federigo Fiorillo, *36 Etudes or Caprices*, ed. Ivan Galamian (New York: International Music Company, n.d.); Rodolphe Kreutzer, *42 Studies*, ed. Ivan Galamian (New York:

Violin (Example 5.3) and No. 2 from Rode's *24 Caprices for Violin* (Example 5.4) focus on string crossings using separate bows.



Example 5.3. Kreutzer 42 Studies, No. 7, mm. 1-4



Example 5.4. Rode 24 Caprices, No. 2, mm. 1-4

Etudes such as these provide additional opportunities for the violinist to gain familiarity with different bow levels and obtaining string crossing efficiency without the added difficulty of maintaining a *legato* bow stroke. However, other etudes, including No. 29 from Kreutzer's *42 Studies* (Example 5.5) and No. 7 from Dont's *Etudes and Caprices*, Op. 35 (Example 5.6), incorporate string crossing technique and a sustained *legato* bow stroke simultaneously.



Example 5.5. Kreutzer 42 Studies, No. 29, mm. 1-4



Example 5.6. Dont Etudes and Caprices, Op. 35, No. 7, mm. 1-4

These preliminary exercises and methods of practicing are not only valuable for the passage found in Example 5.1, but also for several other instances within Brahms's sonatas. The development section of the first movement of the Sonata in G Major (Example 5.7) includes an extended passage of scalar and arpeggiated motion that must be performed forte and with emotional intensity, despite frequent string crossings within slurs. As stated previously, left hand preparation for string crossings is essential. In this case, one should practice slowly enough so that one can hear the intermediary double stop between the two pitches involved in the string change. In mm. 107-109, it is considered more stylistically appropriate to avoid string crossings in favor of shifts that remain on one string, and therefore maintain a consistent timbre. However, in mm. 110-115, string crossings are unavoidable. One possible fingering for this passage results in several opportunities to practice smooth string crossings with intermediary double stops.

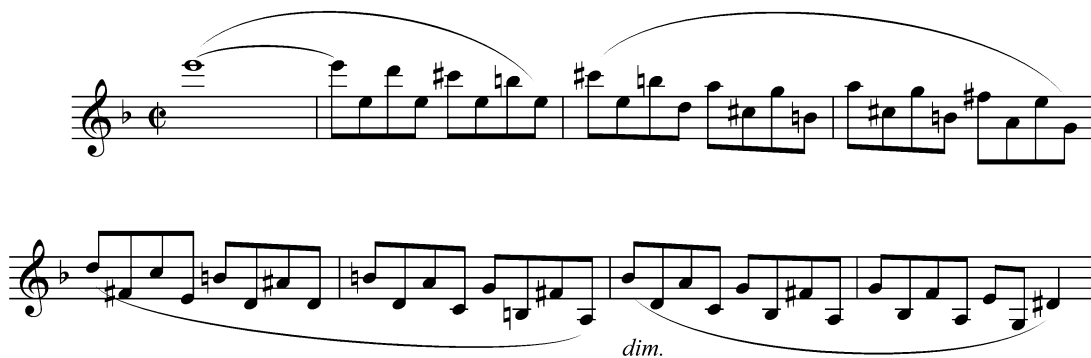


Example 5.7. Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, first movement, mm. 107-115

For example, by remaining in first position, string crossings occur in m. 110 between the C-sharp and D, the G-sharp and A-sharp and in m. 111 between B and F-sharp, and D and B (twice).

While practicing in this manner requires a slow tempo, it fosters an efficiency of movement in the right arm.

Perhaps one of the most treacherous passages for both intonation and coordination of string crossings occurs in the opening movement of the Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108. Example 5.8 contains eight measures of a descending scalar passage that is ornamented with *bariolage* and descending sixths.



Example 5.8. Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108, first movement, mm. 120-127

Without question, daily scale practice is a vital part of a violinist's technical development. Preparatory work for this passage should include practicing scales in a variety of intervals, both blocked (two pitches sound simultaneously) and broken (each pitch sounds separately), but particularly in octaves and sixths. When working on the passage itself, one should begin by playing each beat as a double stop, checking for intonation, balance between the pitches, and smooth left hand motion when repositioning individual fingers and the hand for the following beat. Once the motions of the left hand are secure, one should apply the written bowing, gently rocking the bow between the two strings, aiming again for balance between the two "voices," and evenness of rhythm.

### **Double Stops and Chords**

Practice of double stopping techniques has already been suggested in relation to issues of sound production and string crossings, but it is necessary to discuss them in further detail here. Most of the violin's melodic material throughout Brahms's sonatas is monophonic, but several extended passages of double stops, and occasionally three- and four-note chords, appear at climactic moments in the pieces or during points at which the violin assumes an accompanimental role. Most of the double stops found in Brahms's sonatas are thirds, sixths, or octaves, with relatively few instances of perfect fourths and fifths, or dissonant intervals. As mentioned previously, one of the most basic ways to prepare for performing double stops within pieces is to practice them daily in the context of scales. Scale method books such as Carl Flesch's *Scale System for Violin* and Ivan Galamian and Frederick Neumann's *Contemporary*

*Violin Technique* include methods and suggestions for practicing the technique.<sup>147</sup> However, even prior to practicing scales or other exercises in this manner, it is important to comprehend fully some of the basic principles in the execution of double stops.

On account of the need for slightly heavier bow weight to ensure equal sound production on both strings, there is a tendency to press fingers into the string much more than one would if playing single notes. In many cases, this causes unnecessary tension in the left hand, which in turn hinders mobility. Should this be the case, the violinist must attempt to alleviate any unnecessary tightness in the left hand. To address the issue of excessive left hand pressure, Simon Fischer suggests a multi-step exercise in which both left hand fingers are continuously placed on their respective notes of a double stop, for example, but in an effort to encourage minimum left hand finger pressure, only one note is initially sounded with the bow. He recommends playing the lower note of the pair loudly and with a great deal of bow weight while the upper note is stopped, but silent. The exercise is then reversed so that the upper note is heard while the lower note is silent. Finally, both notes are sounded simultaneously, but with varying bow weight on each string so that one note is heard more prominently while the other is played quietly. The final step in this process is to perform both notes at a healthy mezzo forte dynamic, but without excessive left hand finger pressure.<sup>148</sup>

Excessive left hand pressure should also be avoided since shifts are frequent in passages of double stops. Shifting is defined in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as the “movement of the left hand from one position to another on any stringed instrument.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Carl Flesch, *Scale System: Scale Exercises in All Major and Minor Keys for Daily Study*, ed. Max Rostal (New York: Carl Fischer, 1987); Ivan Galamian and Frederick Neumann, *Contemporary Violin Technique* (Boston: ECS Publishing, n.d.).

<sup>148</sup> A complete explanation with a diagram of this exercise can be found in Fischer, 106.

<sup>149</sup> Sonya Monosoff, “Shift,” in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/45640> (accessed February 28, 2011).

Galamian characterizes the motions involved in the technique as “a shift is an action of the entire arm and hand, including all of the fingers and the thumb.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, he emphasizes that the shape of the hand should not be altered or distorted in any way when shifting up and down the fingerboard. This can only be accomplished through incredible flexibility in the left hand, wrist, and thumb, in particular.<sup>151</sup>

Even before demonstrating how to move from one position to another, Carl Flesch advocates helping the student to establish a solid understanding of the feeling of the hand within each position.<sup>152</sup> Upon achieving this awareness, students develop a mental “map” of the fingerboard which contains a conception of the location of each individual position. Such a mental map would allow the student to visualize the exact distance that must be covered in any given shift. The student may benefit from talking through each shift, thinking about the exact starting and ending points of the motion. One must make certain that the left hand retains elasticity when moving up and down the fingerboard. This is accomplished by releasing pressure of the left hand fingers from the string as the shift occurs. Upon reaching the destination, sufficient pressure must be reasserted for the notes to sound clearly.

In violin playing, it is customary for the location of the first finger to determine the position in which the hand resides at any given point. As such, the violinist should practice using link or guide notes (i.e., using a previously placed finger to shift to a new position, then playing the next note with a new finger) to ensure that the proper position has been reached before placing additional fingers, either for single notes or double stops. In her postscript to Galamian’s *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, Elizabeth A. H. Green described Galamian’s etude

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<sup>150</sup> Galamian, 24.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>152</sup> Flesch, 12.

recommendations for the practice of double stops, one of which is No. 33 from Kreutzer's 42 *Studies for the Violin*, the first few measures of which are seen in Example 5.9.



Example 5.9. Kreutzer 42 Studies, No. 33, mm. 1-4

This etude seems particularly suited for preliminary double stop exercises before approaching Brahms's sonatas because of its somewhat Brahmsian characteristics. One of the key skills that should be acquired from studying this lyrical exercise is the ability to move smoothly from one double stop to another without disturbing a smooth bow stroke. Thanks to the mostly scalar motion here, the student may gain a better understanding of the link or guide note technique, as well. In general, the shifts found in this etude are from one position to the next adjacent position (for example, ascending shifts from first position to second position, or descending shifts from third to second), therefore resulting in the link notes being part of the melodic structure of the exercise.

Green's postscript serves to describe how Galamian led his studio, and explains some of the practice techniques he suggested for his students. Some of his suggestions for the following etude (Example 5.10) prove useful in several other contexts.



Example 5.10. Kreutzer 42 Studies, No. 34, mm. 1-2

While only a short excerpt, this example illustrates the mixed double stop content of this etude. Green states that Galamian encouraged his students to practice this and all other double stop



etudes with separate bows at first, eventually working one's way up to the notated *legato* bowing through a series of steps. Because of the relatively fast speed of the sixteenth notes in this etude, Galamian also encouraged practicing with different rhythms, which allows the student to practice moving from one double stop to the next with varying speeds. This practice method gives the student a chance for both mental and left hand preparation, while increasing the speed of the shifts.<sup>153</sup>

Galamian encouraged his students to practice rhythms that contained any number of notes; in fact, his scale method includes a separate book containing a vast number of rhythms with which to practice various techniques. For this etude, in order to increase the speed with which the double stops are performed, two- and four-note rhythm practice might be the most helpful method, as the notes are grouped in fours. When practicing in four-note rhythms, the technique works as such: the student begins by holding the first double stop of each group of four as a dotted eighth note, and then performs the next three sixteenth notes as written. The student then plays the first double stop as a sixteenth note, holds the second as a dotted eighth, and the next two as sixteenth notes. The next two cycles of the exercise would treat the third and fourth double stops as dotted eighth notes respectively. Practicing in this manner is time-consuming, but upon completion of an exercise like this, the student will have practiced, at some point, moving between all notated double stops at the appropriate speed, which assists in the development of left hand dexterity.

An extended passage of double stops that serves in both a melodic and accompanimental capacity can be found in the final measures of the last movement of the Sonata in A Major, Op. 100, as seen in Example 5.11. Over the course of these thirteen measures, the character of the

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<sup>153</sup> Galamian 128.

music is transformed drastically from a simple, *dolce* atmosphere to a much more bold and triumphant statement in the closing measures.



Example 5.11. Sonata in A Major, Op. 100, third movement, mm. 146-158

The double stops are marked *espressivo* when they begin in m. 148, but in m. 150 the violin assumes an accompanying role before resuming the melodic double stops which lead to the final cadence. In addition to the practice techniques discussed in relation to the above Kreutzer etudes, practicing this excerpt with the “Viotti bowing” to accomplish smooth and efficient left hand motion between pairs of notes is also useful because of the contour of the melody and number of repeated notes across beats. One of the clearest examples of the Viotti stroke is found in No. 36 of Kreutzer’s *42 Studies for Violin*.



Example 5.12. Kreutzer 42 Studies, No. 36, mm. 1-4

As the notation in this exercise indicates, the violinist is to play two eighth notes, with space between them, in a single bow stroke. The unusual aspect of the Viotti bowing is that the two

half beats connected by the bow stroke are not part of the same beat, and the second note within the stroke is accented. Ignoring Brahms's notated rhythmic values for this exercise, one should practice the closing measures of the Sonata in A Major in this fashion, and also with a smooth variation of the Viotti bowing. Eliminating the space between the eighth notes to form a legato stroke can be helpful in promoting coordination between the two hands and smoothness of arm motion.

Just as he reserved double stops for specific musical purposes within the sonatas, Brahms also did not make frequent use of three- or four-note chords except at important cadences. Even in these instances, only one or two isolated chords are found, with the exception of a six measure passage in the third movement of the Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108, as seen in Example 5.13.



Example 5.13. Sonata in D Minor, Op. 108, third movement, mm. 64-69

Galamian provides detailed explanations about the types of chords violinists encounter in the repertoire and the motions required to play them. He posits that there are three elements involved in performing chords. Two of these components involve the left hand, intonation and the process of building the chord, and the third involves sound production and the right hand. As with many other techniques, Galamian encourages students to separate tasks into more manageable sections, particularly if difficulties of execution arise.<sup>154</sup> According to Galamian, three types of chords exist:

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<sup>154</sup> Galamian, 88.

- (a) the broken chord in which the lower notes are played before the beat (similar to the execution of a grace note) and the upper notes arrive on the beat;
- (b) the unbroken chord in which either all notes are played simultaneously, or the lower notes are attacked *on* the beat with the higher ones coming imperceptibly later;
- (c) the turned chord, used mainly in polyphonic music and played in such a way that a note other than the top note emerges at the end of the chord.<sup>155</sup>

The first two types of above-described chords are found in all three of Brahms's sonatas.

When executing three-note broken chords, examples of which are found at several cadence points within the sonatas, it is customary to play the low and middle notes simultaneously, but slightly before the beat. Using the middle note as a pivot point, one rotates the bow so that both the middle and top notes sound together on the beat. Four-note chords are played in a similar manner, although Galamian suggests that it may be advisable to lift fingers off the lower notes of a four-note chord to allow the hand to be more flexible and use vibrato on the upper notes. To perform these types of chords, the right arm as a whole must move in a downward motion, and the elbow leads the motion of the bow across the strings to create the slightly arpeggiated quality.<sup>156</sup>

The chords seen in Example 5.12 fit in the unbroken category because of the speed with which they must be played. Galamian suggests that the best way to ensure that all three strings sound at the same time is to "suspend the bow slightly above the middle string, then to drop it straight down for a good solid grip on the strings. Pressure has to be sufficiently great to depress the middle string far enough for the neighboring strings to be properly contacted and sounded by the bow."<sup>157</sup> For all chords, broken or unbroken, Galamian states that it is more beneficial to approach the string from the air rather than from a resting position on the string. By doing this, a simultaneous attack of all notes in the chord is possible. Additionally, the violinist will find it

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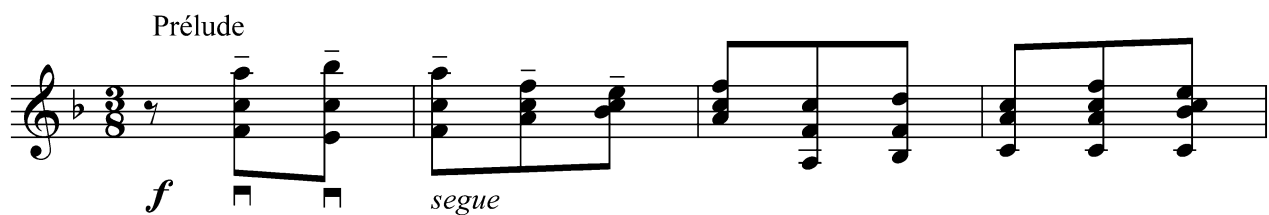
<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>156</sup> Galamian, 88-89.

<sup>157</sup> Galamian, 90.

much easier to perform multi-note chords if the point of contact is slightly nearer the fingerboard, as the strings are closer together and the shape between them flatter.<sup>158</sup>

Perhaps the most notorious etude for improving chord-related technique, the first selection in Dont's *Etudes and Caprices*, Op. 35 (Example 5.14) requires the violinist to perform three- and four-note chords in quick succession, in similar manner to that found in the Brahms example.



Example 5.14 Dont *Etudes and Caprices*, Op. 35, No. 1, mm. 1-4

The techniques discussed in relation to the execution of double stops should also prove helpful for the practicing of chords. However, because at least three notes are always involved in this technique, the violinist must time finger placement very carefully and quickly. Particularly among students who have less experience playing chords, there is a tendency to spend too much time placing fingers in the correct spots before playing any given chord. Simon Fischer advocates training the fingers to move immediately to the next chord after completing one.<sup>159</sup> Some of Galamian's practice methods for Dont No. 1 include performing the chords on both up- and down-bows, breaking the chords, and grouping the chords into groups of two, three, and four (in a similar manner to the rhythm exercises discussed in conjunction with Example 5.9).<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Galamian, 90.

<sup>159</sup> Fischer, 86.

<sup>160</sup> Galamian, 130.

Exercises in which the student breaks the chord into smaller units, particularly single notes or double stops, prove helpful for addressing intonation and right hand pivoting issues.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Fischer, 87.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Johannes Brahms's three Sonatas for Violin and Piano hold an important place in the standard repertoire for violinists and collaborative pianists. These works are performed frequently on the concert stage, and are featured on numerous professional recordings. The sonatas also prove to be valuable pieces for the advancing student as the works provide a wide variety of technical and musical challenges.

A considerable portion of time teaching violin is spent addressing technical concerns, which assists the student to develop the coordination and dexterity required to play the instrument. Another aim of violin pedagogy is to instruct and encourage students to listen critically, so as to improve intonation, ensure synchronization between the hands, and for overall quality of sound. The study and performance of Brahms's sonatas will assist in each of these facets of violin pedagogy. for purposes of improving intonation for the left hand or ensuring synchronization between the hands, but also for the overall quality of sound produced by the bow.

This document highlights the importance of the ability to execute technically demanding passages of music, and also the significance of continually creating a resonant and singing sound in Brahms's sonatas. The issues involved have been addressed by the inclusion of exercises and practice suggestions to improve both right and left hand techniques. This has been presented with a variety of pedagogical and historical sources that are readily available to students, teachers, and performers. Such sources are valuable not only for the purpose of becoming more familiar with

different methods of teaching the violin, but also to provide a sense of historical context by which students may gain a more comprehensive understanding of the Brahms sonatas as they are being learned and performed.



## APPENDIX A

### SELECTED EDITIONS OF BRAHMS'S SONATAS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

#### Scholarly Editions

- Brahms, Johannes. Sonata in G Major, Op. 78. In *Johannes Brahms sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, edited by Hans Gál, 1-30. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sonata in A Major, Op. 100. In *Johannes Brahms sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, edited by Hans Gál, 31-56. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sonata in D minor, Op. 108. In *Johannes Brahms sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, edited by Hans Gál, 57-87. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-7.
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- Brahms, Johannes. *Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, Op. 100*. Edited by Franz Kneisel and Harold Bauer. New York: G. Schirmer, 1918.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonata No. 2 in A for Violin and Piano, Op. 100*. Edited by William Preucil, in collaboration with Emilio Colón. Boca Raton, Florida: Masters Music Publications, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonata No. 3 in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108*. Edited by William Preucil, in collaboration with Emilio Colón. Boca Raton, Florida: Masters Music Publications, 2007.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonata No. 2 in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108*. Violin part edited by Leopold Auer, piano part edited by Rudolph Ganz. New York: Carl Fischer, 1917.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonate für Klavier und Violine G-Dur, Op. 78*. Edited from the autograph and original edition by Bernhard Stockmann, violin part edited by Günter Kehr, fingering in the piano part by Jörg Demus. Vienna: Wiener Urtext Edition, 1973.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonate für Klavier und Violine d-moll, Op. 108*. Edited from the autograph and original edition by Bernhard Stockmann, violin part edited by Günter Kehr, fingering in the piano part by Jörg Demus. Vienna: Wiener Urtext Edition, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonaten für Klavier und Violine*. Edited by Hans Otto Hiekel, fingering by Hans-Martin Theopold, fingering and bowing of violin part by Karl Rörig. Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Three Sonatas for Violin and Piano*. Edited by Ivan Galamian. New York: International Music Company, 1975.

## APPENDIX B

### SELECTED RECORDINGS OF BRAHMS'S SONATAS FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

#### Historical Recordings

Brahms, Johannes. *Historic Sonata Recordings*. Performed by Jascha Heifetz, violin and Emanuel Bay, piano, William Primrose, viola, and Gerald Moore, piano, Emanuel Feuermann, cello, and Theo van der Pas, piano. Biddulph, 1989.

Busch, Adolf, violin, and Rudolf Serkin, piano. *Brahms: Violin Sonatas No. 1 and No. 2; Bach Partita No. 2*. Magic Talent, 1996.

Busch, Adolf, violin, and Rudolf Serkin, piano. *The Busch/Serkin Duo: Public Performances, 1934-1949*. Music & Arts, 1995.

De Vito, Gioconda, violin, Edwin Fischer, piano, and Tito Aprea, piano. *Brahms Violin Sonatas*. Testament, 1993.

Ferras, Christian, violin, and Pierre Barbizet, piano. *Christian Ferras Plays Sonatas of Schumann, Brahms, Franck, Lekeu*. Brilliant Classics, 2009.

Menuhin, Yehudi, violin, and Hephzibah Menuhin, piano. *Sonatas by Bach, Beethoven & Brahms*. Biddulph, 1996.

Morini, Erica, violin, and Rudolf Firkušný, piano. *Sonata Recital: Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms*. Arbiter, 2007.

Seidel, Toscha, violin, and Arthur Loesser, piano. *Sonatas by Brahms and Grieg*. Biddulph, 1990.

Suk, Josef, violin, and Julius Katchen, piano. *Brahms Violin Sonatas*. Decca, 1990.

Szigeti, Joseph, violin. *The Art of Joseph Szigeti*. Performed by Joseph Szigeti, violin, and Egon Petri, piano. Biddulph, 1989.

#### Modern Recordings

*Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms: Violin Sonatas*. Performed by Gidon Kremer, violin, and Martha Argerich, piano. Deutsche Gramophon, 2004.

- Brahms, Johannes. *Complete Works for Violin and Piano*. Performed by Nikolaj Znaider, violin, and Yefim Bronfman, piano. RCA Victor Red Seal, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Die 3 Violinsonaten*. Performed by Pinchas Zukerman, violin, and Daniel Barenboim, piano. Deutsche Grammophon, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sonatas for Piano and Violin Op. 78, 100, 108*. Performed by Isaac Stern, violin, and Yefim Bronfman, piano. Sony Classical, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Violin Sonatas*. Performed by Pamela Frank, violin, and Peter Serkin, piano. London, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Violin Sonatas*. Performed by Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin, and Alexis Weissenberg, piano. EMI Classics, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Violin Sonatas*. Performed by Ilya Kaler, violin, and Alexander Peskanov, piano. Naxos, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Violin Sonatas, Sonatensatz*. Performed by Pinchas Zukerman, violin, and Marc Neikrug, piano. RCA Victor Red Seal, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Violin Sonatas 1-3*. Performed by Kyung-Wha Chung, violin, and Peter Frankl, piano. EMI Classics, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Violin Sonatas Nos. 1-3*. Performed by Itzhak Perlman, violin, and Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano. Great Recordings of the Century. EMI Classics, 1999.

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