

Waking the Dead Diva:
Recovering the Expressive Sound World of Forgotten
Nineteenth-Century Singers

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Abstract

Nineteenth-century singers were fundamentally defined by their powers of expression. What today constitutes “acceptable” performance practice of music from this period bears little resemblance, and in some cases, none, to the rich palate of expressive devices that once preoccupied the nineteenth-century singer.

Early recordings from the phonographic catalogue preserve some of the greatest voices from the nineteenth century. They expose a hidden world of elaborate and un-notated expressive practices that challenge well established truths concerning the performance of music from this period. Far from contradicting written evidence, early recordings often paint a more complex picture concerning the art of expressive singing than some scholars might suggest. Until recently, however, these documents remained the providence of connoisseurs and enthusiasts, and were largely overshadowed by investigations into instrumental music. This study comprises a thesis that offers a rare scholarly insight from the perspective of a professional classical singer into forgotten recordings of the oldest voices on the early gramophone.

Expressive slides (or *portamento*) and tempo modification, clearly preserved by artists on early recordings, represent two classes of popular nineteenth-century expressive devices that have gradually fallen out of favour in mainstream classical performance over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. The thesis seeks to re-evaluate the expressive potential of these extinct devices through a systematic exploration of their functional use, frequency, and musical context. The evidence gathered through this investigation informs the first Australian commercial recording projects of the historically informed performances of Schubert’s song-cycles, and comprise a performance portfolio which constitutes the rest of the PhD submission.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- i. The thesis comprises only my original work, completed while I was a postgraduate student enrolled at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at The University of Melbourne. This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other university or institution.
- ii. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously written or published by another person except where due reference is made in the text.
- iii. The thesis is less than 38,000 words in length, inclusive of tables, figures, examples and references.
- iv. The portfolio which accompanies this thesis comprises 187 minutes of recordings made by the author during the period of candidature.

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Abbreviations

Red curved line



Red jagged line



Accel

Rit

Rall

TR

LG

AG

TG

HIP

Scott 1

Scott 2

Müllerin

Figaro

WWII

Portamento

Accelerando

Ritardando

Arpeggiation

Crescendo

Diminuendo

Accelerando

Ritardando

Rallentando

Tempo Rubato

Leaping Grace

Anticipation Grace

Turn Grace

Historically Informed Performance

The Record of Singing to 1914

The Record of Singing 1914 to 1925

Die schöne Müllerin

Le Nozze di Figaro

World War Two

The Performance Portfolio

The performance portfolio that accompanies the thesis represents the creative research component of this study, providing the opportunity for the author to demonstrate a unique combination of practical performance fortified by scholarship. This study directly informs the historical experimentation and re-visioning of a number of extinct expressive nineteenth-century vocal practices explored in this thesis. The recordings of Schubert's *Winterreise* (recorded in 2018) and *Die schöne Müllerin* (recorded in 2019) represent the central output of this research. The recording of *J.S Bach: Solo Cantatas for Bass* (recorded 2018–19), while not nineteenth-century repertoire, also represents the primary agenda of the author to engage in the Historically Informed Performance (HIP) of repertoire within his career. These recordings attempt to place works from the eighteenth and nineteenth century into a twenty-first century context, through the collaboration with other HIP musicians dedicated to exploring the historical expressive possibilities within this music. The Bach recording features an orchestra of historically informed musicians playing on instruments, or replicas of, from the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The two-consul organ in particular is a new replica of an instrument originally built by one of Bach's own organ makers, Arp Schnitger. The author attempts to engage in historical expressive vocal practices of the eighteenth-century such as *tempo rubato*, *portamento* and expressive *vibrato*. For further information on the Schubert recordings see Chapter Five.

The three discs presented are professional commercial recordings that have been distributed by two international recording companies: the Australian label ABC Classics, and the Dutch label Brilliant Classics. The discs represent three quarters of the doctoral submission, with the thesis being one quarter.

Performance Portfolio Recordings

Winterreise (Winter Journey), D911

FRANZ SCHUBERT 1797–1828

- 1 Gute Nacht (Good Night)
- 2 Die Wetterfahne (The Weather Vane)
- 3 Gefror'ne Tränen (Frozen Tears)
- 4 Erstarrung (Frozen)
- 5 Der Lindenbaum (The Linden Tree)
- 6 Wasserflut (Deluge)
- 7 Auf dem Flusse (On the Stream)
- 8 Rückblick (Backward Glance)
- 9 Irrlicht (Will o' the Wisp)
- 10 Rast (Rest)
- 11 Frühlingstraum (A Dream about Spring)
- 12 Einsamkeit (Loneliness)
- 13 Die Post (The Post)
- 14 Der greise Kopf (The Aged Head)
- 15 Die Krähe (The Crow)
- 16 Letzte Hoffnung (Last Hope)
- 17 Im Dorfe (In the Village)
- 18 Der stürmische Morgen (The Stormy Morning)
- 19 Täuschung (Illusion)
- 20 Der Wegweiser (The Signpost)
- 21 Das Wirtshaus (The Inn)
- 22 Mut! (Courage!)
- 23 Die Nebensonnen (Mock Suns)
- 24 Der Leiermann (The Organ-Grinder)

David Greco *baritone*

Erin Helyard *piano*

1817 Anton Graf piano (replica by Chris Maene, 2016)

ABC Classics, ABC 481 7470

Die schöne Müllerin (The Beautiful Miller Maid), D795

FRANZ SCHUBERT 1797–1828

- 1 Das Wandern (To Wander)
- 2 Wohin? (Whither)
- 3 Halt! (Stay?)
- 4 Danksagung an den Bach (Thanks to the Brook)
- 5 Am Feierabend (The Hour of Rest)
- 6 Der Neugierige (The Eager Questioner)
- 7 Ungeduld (Impatience)
- 8 Morgengruss (Good Morning)
- 9 Des Müllers Blumen (The Miller's Flowers)
- 10 Tränenregen (Shower of Tears)
- 11 Mein! (Mine)
- 12 Pause (Interlude)
- 13 Impromptu D899–3
- 14 Mit dem grünen Lautenbande (With the Green Lute-ribbon)
- 15 Der Jäger (The Hunter)
- 16 Eifersucht und Stolz (Jealousy and Pride)
- 17 Die liebe Farbe (The Favorite Color)
- 18 Die böse Farbe (The Hated Color)
- 19 Trockne Blumen (Withered Flowers)
- 20 Der Müller und der Bach (The Miller and the Brook)
- 21 Des Baches Wiegenlied (The Brook's Lullaby)

David Greco *baritone*

Erin Helyard *piano*

1819 Anton Graf piano (replica by Paul McNulty, 2015)

ABC Classic, ABC 481 8741

J.S Bach
Solo Cantatas for Bass

Johann Sebastian Bach 1685–1750

Ich habe genug BWV82

- 1 Aria: Ich habe genug° 6'46
2 Recitativo: Ich habe genug 1'25
3 Aria: Schlummert ein, ihr matten Augen° 8'54
4 Recitativo: Mein Gott, wenn kömmt das schöne: Nun! 0'52
5 Aria: Ich freue mich auf meinen Tod° 3'30

Der Friede sei mit dir BWV158

- 6 Recitativo: Der Friede sei mit dir 1'46
7 Aria con Choral: Welt, ade, ich bin dein müde* 6'10
8 Recitativo: Nun, Herr, regiere meinen Sinn 1'20
9 Choral: Hier ist das rechte Osterlamm 1'04

Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen BWV56

- 10 Aria: Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen° 6'35
11 Recitativo: Mein Wandel auf der Welt 1'53
12 Aria: Endlich, endlich wird mein Joch° 6'28
13 Recitativo ed Arioso: Ich stehe fertig und bereit 1'21
14 Choral: Komm, o Tod, du Schlafes Bruder 1'22

David Greco *baritone*

Luthers Bach Ensemble

*Joanna Huszcza violin • °Amy Power oboe • Tymen Jan Bronda, artistic director

Brilliant Classics, 95942

Critical Reviews Arising from the Performances in this Thesis

- **Moffat, S.** *Backward look at masterpiece brings a winter of content.* Review of ABC Classics release, Schubert: *Winterreise*. Limelight Magazine, 23 January 2019.
<https://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/reviews/schubert-winterreise-david-greco-erin-helyard/>

LIMELIGHT

AUSTRALIA'S CLASSICAL MUSIC AND ARTS MAGAZINE

EVENTS NEWS REVIEWS FEATURES CLASSICAL MUSIC OPERA THEATRE DANCE VISUAL ART MAGAZINE Q

REVIEW

SCHUBERT: WINTERREISE (DAVID GRECO, ERIN HELYARD)

Backward look at masterpiece brings a winter of content.

★★★★☆

by Steve Moffatt on January 23, 2019

f t e 0 SHARES



With so many landmark recordings of Schubert's greatest song cycle, *Winterreise*, how can anything new be said? Well, one answer is to go back to the source, try to slough off the "skin" the work has assumed from all those wonderful recordings by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Hermann Prey and more recently a new generation of superb singers and try to recreate it as Schubert would have expected. To do this, Australian duo baritone David Greco and keyboardist Erin Helyard have slipped back 200 years using a fortepiano after Anton Graf (c 1817) from the Melbourne Conservatorium, where Helyard is a lecturer, and employing vocal techniques gleaned from early recordings of Schubert's songs.

Winterreise is such a bleak journey that it still has the power to shock today. When in 1824, with the symptoms of syphilis beginning to worsen, Schubert ran through the 24 settings of Wilhelm Müller's poems for his friends they were shocked. "These songs please me more than all the rest, and in time they will please you as well," he told them.

So how does this historically informed performance measure up? Extremely well. The ear does have to make an adjustment to the fortepiano, which has several extras for special effects, including a "bassoon" stop, but once acclimatised Greco's light and lithe timbre, expressive and sweet but still with plenty of emotional clout, sits very well with the gentler dynamic of the fortepiano. Helyard's playing is exemplary. Tempos are fairly brisk – the disc comes in at 69 minutes compared with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (71) or Christa Ludwig's Mahlerian 75 minutes. Production is intimate to capture all the nuances.

Greco has worked extensively in Germany so the text feels natural to him. He has researched early recordings including those of Gustav Walter, who was born only six years after Schubert's death, and who used rubato, slowing or speeding up the rhythm of the vocal line while the accompaniment remains steady, for "emphasis, energy and pathos".

Greco's rubato is subtle, as is his use of *portamento* when the singer slides between registers to stress, for example, suspense. One of the best examples of Greco's use of both of these devices comes in *Wasserflut* with the lines "Just follow my tears: their stream will soon carry you away".

This recording may not end up the definitive choice of all Lieder enthusiasts, but Greco and Helyard make a persuasive case for a different take on a deathless masterpiece.

- **Stancliffe, D.** *Bach: Cantatas for Bass*. Review of Brilliant Classics release, *J. S. Bach: Solo Cantatas for Bass BWV56, 82 & 158*. Early Music Review, 25 November 2019. <https://earlymusicreview.com/bach-cantatas-for-bass/>.

EARLY MUSIC REVIEW

Bach: Cantatas for Bass



Bach: Cantatas and Arias for Bass

Dominik Wörner, Zefiro, Alfredo Bernardini

62:17

Arcana A466

BWV56, 82, 158 + arias from BWV20, 26, 101



POSTED ON NOVEMBER 25,
2019

BY EMR2015

POSTED IN RECORDING,
UNCATEGORIZED

TAGGED BAROQUE, VOCAL
MUSIC

J. S. Bach: Solo Cantatas for Bass BWV56, 82 & 158

David Greco, Luthers Bach Ensemble

49:36

Brilliant Classics 95942

[Click HERE](#) to buy this CD on amazon.

It is entirely fortuitous that these two CDs with almost identical contents should arrive together for review. Dominic Wörner is a well-known name on German labels, and sings three cantatas here – BWV 82, 158 and 56 – together with the bass arias from BWV 22, 26 and 101. The model booklet has an essay by Peter Wollny and the texts in German, English and French. At the front are precise details of the tracks with who plays what in which cantata and on which instrument, and full details of the makers and dates are given. Zefiro uses single strings, a harpsichord in addition to the organ and Bernardini provides direction.

David Greco, an Australian who has sung with the Westminster Abbey choir and the Sistine Chapel choir, sings with an ensemble of (largely) ex fellow-students of the Royal Conservatory in the Hague, many of whom play in Groningen's Lutheran Church. The director of the ensemble and organist Tyman Bronda was instrumental in this church getting the organ-builder Bernhardt Edskes to remake the lost organ originally built by Arp Schnitger in 1699-1717 for the church in which he worshipped when in Groningen. There is an interesting website on this organ, which makes sense of Schnitger's various additions and restructurings made over a period of 18 years. It is tuned to A=415Hz and stands in a broad west gallery, with an additional detached console so that the director can play the recits and arias at least. Photographs on the website indicate that this console is a single manual with only 8', 4' & 2' and the only thing I found disappointing in this recording was that I did not hear more substantial organ sound, even in the concluding chorales. No details are given of the other instruments, but a theorbo or archlute forms an audible part of the basso continuo.

The programmes on both CDs are identical save that Wörner's disc includes the bass arias from BWV 20, 26 and 101, bringing the timing up to 62'17 as opposed to Greco who sings only the three complete cantatas and so is well under the hour. So, at first sight, the bonus of hearing Bernardini play the sparkling obbligato in BWV 20v and the three oboes (or two plus taille in 101iv) in 26iv makes the choice obvious.

However, several things make me want to recommend the CD by Greco and Bronda. First – and most fundamental – is the singing. While Wörner is well-practised in this repertoire, Greco's clarity of diction and elegant, vibrato-less baritone tone win for me over Wörner's more substantial bass sound. Second, the instrumental playing. I admire Berardini's playing and direction and Zefiro's wind band is splendid, but listen to the beautifully balanced violone in the last movement of BWV 82 from the Groningen Luthers band, who also use single strings; and the obbligato violin in BWV 158ii played by Joanna Huszcza is stunningly beautiful and a model of how to partner a voice in Bach's cantata writing, as is the oboe playing of Amy Power in BWV 56iii.

What a lot we have to learn about how to perform Bach cantatas, and while there is no one 'right way', you can gain immense insight from listening to two versions side by side. Why, I wonder, did the Groningen group not give us the soprano chorale in BWV 158ii with the Sesquialtera on the organ rather than with four soprano voices and a doubling oboe which plays no further part in this puzzling cantata, if they judged the line to be in need of a boost? Perhaps they tried it – but it would have displayed the virtues of playing cantatas around a more substantial organ.

David Stancliffe

THESIS

Chapter One

**Reviewing Historical Approaches to
Nineteenth-Century Singing**

Introduction

... most discussion of [vocal] performance style until quite recently was to be found in the work of collectors and enthusiasts, whose minute and deep knowledge of recorded performances remains, as yet, unmatched.¹

More such research needs to be completed, and using the widest possible range of [vocal] compositions, before it is possible to speculate about the implications [for historically approaches to nineteenth-century music].²

Recorded music holds within it much historical information yet to be fully explored and understood. The current project examines the performances of the very oldest singers on record to re-evaluate the potential of expressive devices employed by classical vocal performers in the nineteenth century. The study is unique in its undertaking of a systematic examination of the functional use, frequency, and rationale behind key examples of *expressive devices* made by singers, some of whose careers stretched back to the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Written from the perspective of a professional classical singer, this research distinguishes itself from many other scholarly investigations into early vocal recordings. It intersects with a series of recordings made by the author that complement and augment the overall doctoral portfolio to invite a comparison into nineteenth-century performance practices within the latter twentieth century. The recordings accompany the thesis. The thesis itself is divided into five chapters and this opening chapter contextualises the overarching research questions, primarily:

- 1) How can a deeper study of early vocal recordings bring us to a closer understanding of the wide variety and interchange of extinct expressive nineteenth-century practices?
- 2) How accurately do these historical recordings correspond with nineteenth-century vocal treatises?
- 3) How do we reconcile the disparity between written notation and what we hear on early recordings?

¹ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Recordings and Histories of Performance Style", Chapter. In *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 246–66, URL: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521865821.028>.

² Dorottya Fabian, "Commercial Sound Recordings and Trends in Expressive Music Performance: Why Should Experimental Researchers Pay Attention?", in *Expressiveness in music performance: Empirical approaches across styles and cultures*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199659647.003.0004.

- 4) Were un-notated expressive practices such as *portamento* and *rubato* arbitrary, or highly conditioned?
- 5) What do these historical documents reveal to us about the changing nature of expressive practices within in the nineteenth century?
- 6) How does a modern interpreter accommodate interceding historical re-workings and current performance aesthetics to articulate an “acceptable” historically informed performance of early nineteenth-century song today?

A Scholarly Paradox

Despite the increased popularity of historically informed performance (hereafter HIP) in recent years, attempts at the historical accuracy of nineteenth-century music are often sacrificed on the altar of convenience, with performers and listeners resisting to compromise on what is familiar and comfortable.³ Although nineteenth-century HIP is the subject of relatively recent attention within both scholarly and professional practice, historically, both groups have accepted the complacent truth of an unbroken performance tradition connecting nineteenth-century composers such as Schubert and Beethoven to the present day.⁴ Consequently, this has fostered an assumption of how nineteenth-century music should sound.⁵

The work of musicologist Clive Brown has largely led the way in fostering a renewed interest in nineteenth-century HIP, contributing to a current academic culture intent on redressing the many forgotten stylistic and expressive practices such as *vibrato*, *rubato*, *portamento*, and *ornamentation*.⁶ Much of this research has for the larger part been inspired by text-based sources such as musical treatises and a transcribed oral history. Early recordings for the most part contribute an intriguing

³ For more on the “Early Music Revolution” see John Butt. *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002) 3–68, 5. and Richard Taruskin, *Text and act: essays on music and performance*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 90–154.

⁴ Notable exceptions to this include the work of Roger Norrington into the performance-practice of Beethoven in the 1990s.

⁵ Eric Van Tassel, “‘Something Utterly New’: Listening to Schubert Lieder. 1: Vogl and the Declamatory Style.” *Early Music* 25, no. 4 (1997): 703–14. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/3128414. In this important paper Van Tassel strongly argues that singers today (performers and teachers alike) are very slow to re-examine core repertoire once they have learnt it. In doing so they would present a break with decades of institutionalised conditioning, both pedagogical and musicological.

⁶ Some of the most important historical research of nineteenth-century vocal music is included in the writing of Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice, 1750–1900* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999) and David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late-Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance*. (Ashgate, 2003).

aspect of their research, but often function as supplementary evidence in support of a treatise-based analysis.⁷

Investigations into early recordings of western classical music is a relatively recent development, and comparative studies of rare documents from the phonographic archive of the early twentieth century is increasingly becoming a rich area of study.⁸ Through the use of early recordings, we can investigate further into nineteenth-century performance practice than previously thought possible; a forensic luxury not available to studies of earlier music.

Early recordings captured some of the greatest nineteenth-century performers around the dawn of the twentieth century. Many of these performers worked along-side composers and even premiered works now integral to the mainstream classical canon. In rare instances documents of artists whose careers and performance style stretched back to the mid-nineteenth century are also preserved. However, that the evidence contained in these early documents is only the recent focus of scholarly interest suggests something of a curious paradox within musicology.

Musicology was borne out of the very fabric of *modernism*, characterised by an obsession with innovation and structure, and a rejection of the old-fashioned practices of *romanticism*.⁹ As such, musicology is an essentially twentieth-century academic preoccupation with musical text. Crucially, concerning this research, musicology carries an ideological objection and mistrust of studying music as sound in performance, the origins of which stretch back as far as the nineteenth century. The words of Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935), the “grandfather” of twentieth-century musicology, best portray this sentiment: “a composition does not require a performance in order to exist ... The reading of the score is sufficient.”¹⁰ This perceived “progressive” notion in some ways provides the friction that inspires this research—that the role of the *performer* and the *performance* since the latter nineteenth century has been systematically devalued in the pursuit of a more text-based approach to musicology.

⁷ Notable exceptions considering early recordings include Clive Brown “Performing Classical Repertoire: The Unbridgeable Gulf Between Contemporary Practice and Historical Reality.” *Basler Jahrbuch Für Historische Musikpraxis XXX*, Amadeus (2006): 31-43, *Performing classical repertoire* (2006) and “In Quest of the Distinctive Language of Classical and Romantic Performance” *Early Music* 42, no. 1 (2014): 113–118, DOI: 10.1093/em/cau017, and Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

⁸ Stephen Cottrell uses the word ‘phonomusicology’ in *The Rise of Phonomusicology, Recorded Music: Performance, Culture and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), to describe the study of recorded music, including its contexts of production and patterns of consumption.

⁹ For more on the modernist doctrines and their implications within musicology see George Barth, “Effacing Modernism, or How to Perform Less Accurately Through Listening”. *Historical Performance* 1 (2018): 148-89, 153. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/histperf.1.1.07.

¹⁰ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8.

Scholarly pursuit of musical performance has only just become a valid topic for research due to the score-based focus that had previously defined musicology.¹¹ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson expresses this sentiment:

... the idea that a piece of music might be studied from a performance rather than from the notation, or that anything interesting might be learned about music from the way it is performed is a new, and for some even a dangerous notion.¹²

A New Kind of Musicology

In his seminal essay *Finding the Music in Musicology*, scholar José Bowen argues that we must defy the archaic approach of purely score-based scholarly research.¹³ He suggests: “At best, a score is only a spatial representation of *some* of the elements of the temporal phenomenon we call music”, and that up until recently musicology has made the mistake of viewing the study of performance practice as separate to the study of the work itself.¹⁴ This preoccupation with musical text is not surprising as Bowen points out “it is easier to study what is both fixed and tangible”, however, failing to recognise the fact that “the qualities which distinguish performances of musical works are often neither.” He suggests we study performances of a musical work in the same way we would study the notes on the page. “The study of the performance tradition of a musical work **is** the study of the musical work.”¹⁵ His answer to musicologists everywhere is simple: “To just listen.”¹⁶

But listen to what, and how?

¹¹ Cottrell, *The Rise*, 27.

¹² Daniel Leech-Wilkinson ‘Using Recordings to Study Musical Performance’, in Andy Linehan (ed.), *Aural History* (London: The British Library, 2001), 1.

¹³ Jose Bowen “Finding the Music in Musicology: Studying Music as Performance.” *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1999): 430–31, suggests the analysis needs to account for the complex interaction of a number of factors such as collegial influence, adaptation to changing performance styles throughout a career and the artists physical maturation/ageing.

¹⁴ Bowen further expands on this idea in “Tempo, duration, and flexibility: Techniques in the analysis of performance”, *Journal of Musicological Research*, (1996): 116, DOI: 10.1080/01411899608574728.

¹⁵ Bowen, *Finding*, 430.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Musicologists Nicholas Cook and Robert Philip represent the most recent and exhaustive scholarly insight into the forensic analysis of early recordings and their implications on nineteenth-century performance practice. Philip expands on Bowen's ideas with extensive explorations into the realm of instrumental music, notably German mid-to-late nineteenth-century repertoire.¹⁷ His work sets the tone for other investigations into nineteenth-century expressive performance style, characterised primarily by an instrumental focus. In his book *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, the discussions on *portamento*, for example, offer fascinating insights into expressive violin and symphonic sliding, but avoid any significant comparisons into the vocal equivalent—for which the body of evidence far surpasses any other instrument preserved on early recordings.¹⁸ Similarly, his chapter on *vibrato* showcases woodwind and string playing but avoids any reference to the vocal idiom. (It is interesting that woodwind *vibrato* is dedicated a whole chapter in his book over the voice, especially as this practice is generally considered to be an explicit and polemic issue, more widely documented in singers.)

Cook complements Philip's work in his subsequent publication *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*. Here, his writing also considers the important notion of music's emancipation from a traditional text-based focus, though like Philip, his analysis doesn't really extend to the recordings of early singers, with only isolated paragraphs referring to singers such as Adelina Patti (1843–1919) to support instrumental practices.¹⁹ Cook emphatically reiterates his arguments in his article *Changing the musical object: Approaches to music performance*: “in short, discographic source-critical skills should be seen as an essential part of musicological research skills training today.”²⁰ Despite avoiding vocal recordings, these scholars offer some of the most extensive musicological studies to date on performance through recorded sound.²¹

¹⁷ Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven Conn: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ The sheer quantity of early vocal recordings that exists far outweighs instrument recordings.

¹⁹ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199357406.001.0001.

²⁰ Nicholas Cook, *Changing the Musical Object: Approaches to Performance Analysis in Music's Intellectual History*, ed. Zdravko Blažeković New York: RILM (2009) pp. 775–776.

²¹ Much research to date has also favoured a thorough exploration of piano music, notably that of core Austro-German composers such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Current texts focus particularly on nineteenth-century piano music as seen in the writings of da Costa *Off the Record*, and Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

Other writers offering valuable insight into instrumental nineteenth-century performance practice with the use of recordings includes Mark Katz, “Portamento and the Phonograph Effect”, *Journal of Musicological Research* 25, no. 3–4 (2006): 211–32. DOI: 10.1080/01411890600860733.

The tremendous irony regarding the low status of singers and vocal music within musicology is highlighted by George Barth, when he reminds us that the nineteenth century was the “age of the singer”.²² Vocal music, and opera especially, was traditionally accorded a much higher status than the symphonic and chamber idiom. Instrumentalists were encouraged to look to singers and imitate their expressive practices, with “gestures and effects that rarely left any traces in notation, but were standard in the advanced players.”²³ Singers after all have the advantage over instrumentalists, in that the text they sing is fundamentally derived from practices of rhetoric and gesture that defined centuries of music making, and arguably still do.

As modernism took hold in the twentieth century, with its fetish for function over expressivity and an inherent “rejection of the legacy of nineteenth-century performance traditions”, the focus shifted away from the singer.²⁴ That musicology should either ignore or undervalue vocal recordings as a source of historical evidence serves only to highlight the modernist doctrines still at play within its institution.

Looking Beyond Patti: **The State of Early Vocal Recording Analysis**

Early recordings of singers and their expressive performance practice are less the focus of large publications, but are considered more on a micro level by a handful of scholars in the form of essays and articles.²⁵

Two books by early recording enthusiast Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing to 1914* and *The Record of Singing 1914 to 1925* (now sadly out of print, including accompanying CDs on EMI), are solitary exceptions, standing alone as the most comprehensive compendium on early vocal recordings to date.²⁶ Although Scott is no musicologist and his writing is more anecdotal than academic, he provides an unmatched exploration into the vocal recordings of some of the greatest nineteenth-century singers.

²² Barth, “Effacing”, 153.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 150.

²⁵ Subsequent essays re on vocal performance practice of nineteenth-century music include Will Crutchfield “Vocal Ornamentation in Verdi: The Phonographic Evidence”, *19th-Century Music* 7, no. 1 (July 1, 1983): 3–54, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/746545>, Roger Freitas, “Towards a Verdian Ideal of Singing: Emancipation from Modern Orthodoxy”, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 127, no. 2 (January 1, 2002): 226–257 URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3840464>, and Martha Elliot, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practices*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006).

²⁶ Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing to 1914* (Duckworth London, 1977) and, *The Record of Singing 1914 to 1925* (Duckworth London, 1979)

Where many publications on recordings ignore these early documents, Scott provides a thorough chronological approach, and even attempts occasional reference to vocal treatises to instill the reader with some basic context into quasi-nineteenth-century performance practice. Although much of his writing is unmatched in detail and subject, the book remains empirical and non-academic.

In his book *Bel Canto*, Robert Toft offers one of the more substantial scholarly dedications to past vocal practices. He focusses on vocal treatises with the occasional reference to early recordings, and like Brown he does so by drawing primarily upon examples of famous singers such as Adelina Patti.²⁷ In this practice he is in league with other writers on the topic. Patti's recordings are something of a fascination among enthusiasts and scholars. Perhaps this is because of her immense fame, and also that she is the oldest female to leave a reliable catalogue of recordings. True though this is, she is also often confusingly portrayed as the oldest reliable *singer* on record.²⁸ Invaluable to nineteenth-century style though Patti is, she seems to occupy the majority of case studies musicologists draw on when referencing early voice recordings.²⁹ This comes at the expense of a scholarly gap in the wider analysis of early vocal recording artists.

Scholarship on early vocal recordings has for too long ignored less obvious singers who left a valuable recording legacy, choosing often to case study safer, perhaps more famous artists from the period such as Nellie Melba (1861–1931) and Adelina Patti. There is a curious omission of important singers who were born before Patti, such as Gustav Walter (1834–1910) or Charles Santley (1834–1922) who left an important body of recordings, but who have historically remained outside considerable scholarly analysis. The evidence in these documents contains vivid examples of a dormant but unique style of singing. It is possible that much of the quantitative data gathered from the analysis of early vocal recordings to date, as limited as it may be, lacks reliability and accuracy. This is because current scholarship tends to lack diversity in its choice of singers.

²⁷ Robert Toft, *Bel Canto: A Performer's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁸ A moderately more thorough investigation into other forgotten singers is considered in the writings of scholars such as Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and Roger Freitas.

²⁹ Writers who predominantly use Patti's recordings more than any others will be discussed further such as Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Clive Brown, Mark Katz, and Will Crutchfield.

Two Extinct Nineteenth-Century Expressive Practices

“Tempo modification” (notably *rubato* or a flexible *giving and taking* of time) represents one of the most explicit examples of expressive un-notated performance practice demonstrated by nineteenth-century singers. Yet curiously investigations into the wide varieties found within early vocal recordings represent a gap in scholarly research, and are often limited to repeated case studies of Patti’s personal *rubato* style.³⁰

Sandra Rosenblum’s essay *The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries* and Richard Hudson’s *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* both offer concise examples of nineteenth-century *rubato* combining examples from a wide range of treatises and early recorded artists, but most of these favour the instrumental.³¹ The scholar Roger Freitas comes closest to offering what can be described as anything approaching a thorough investigation into the recorded evidence of vocal *rubato*.³² Patti is once more the *order of the day* in his essay *Towards a Verdian Ideal of Singing*, and features comparative studies into arias of Mozart and Gounod, with that of her successor Nellie Melba.

Rubato, in its many forms, often courts more controversy in scholarship and current professional vocal practices than *portamento*, which is also considered here.³³ It also seems to be one of the practices that period musicians seem least willing to experiment with, and/or adopt as a core expressive output.

Brown states:

...very few professional musicians, either ‘modern’ or ‘period’, have begun seriously to experiment with un-notated rhythmic freedoms and flexibilities, extempore keyboard arpeggiation, contra-metric tempo rubato, or subtle accelerando and ritardando within a fundamentally constant tempo, all of which were integral to Classical and Romantic practice, and can be heard on early recordings.³⁴

³⁰ See arguments surrounding Patti above.

³¹ Sandra P. Rosenblum, “The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries”, *Performance Practice Review*: Vol. 7: No. 1, (1994). DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199407.01.03, and Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

³² Freitas, “Towards a Verdian Ideal”, 226–257.

³³ For examples of the type of fervor this practice generates, see the arguments concerting tempo modification in Schubert lieder directed by David Montgomery, “Modern Schubert Interpretation in the Light of the Pedagogical Sources of His Day”. *Early Music* 25, no. 1 (1997): 101–118. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/3128169, at the HIP interpretations of Robert D Levin, “Performance Prerogatives in Schubert”, *Early Music*, Vol. 25, No. 4, *25th Anniversary Issue; Listening Practice* (1997), 723–727, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3128416>, and Malcom Bilson, “The Future of Schubert Interpretation: What Is Really Needed?” *Early Music* 25, no. 4 (1997): 715–22. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3128415>.

³⁴ Clive Brown, *Rediscovering the Language of Classical and Romantic Performance*. *Early Music* 41, no. 1 (2013): 73, DOI: 10.1093/em/cat004.

Tempo modification continues also to be the target of scepticism and suspicion from many performers and teachers. Barth reiterates this sentiment, suggesting that “in masterclasses with world-famous performers, gifted students who perform with inflected tempos are frequently advised not to do this: the tempos of all themes must be identical in order to support the powerful continuity that clarifies to the listener the larger structure of the piece.”³⁵

Perhaps one of the most interesting displays of scepticism aimed at *rubato* practices found on early vocal recordings comes from the notable performer, Schubert scholar, and prominent educator, Graham Johnson. Accompanist to many of the finest singers in the second half of the twentieth century and “authority” on art song, Johnson still maintains a heavy schedule of masterclasses and lectures around the world. It then comes as a surprise to see him direct this level of cynicism at an area of respected study and increasingly sizable research. Johnson is critical of students listening too closely to expressive practices on early vocal recordings, suggesting that they represent misleading stylistic traits. He is sceptical of unfamiliar levels of tempo modification on many early recordings, suggesting they represent an essentially late nineteenth-century style of expressive *rubato*, far removed from early nineteenth-century composers such as Schubert.³⁶

Rubato was one of the most highly praised expressive devices available to a singer during the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth century, and in largely dismissing the practices found on early recordings, he not only neglects much scholarly research from last thirty years, but also misinterprets the body of recorded evidence available. The singers captured on many of these recordings were born anywhere from 1834 to 1888. His assumption that no singer captured on these early recordings represents a valid picture of early nineteenth-century singing, would suggest that these singers are all of the same generation, or that throughout the nineteenth century singers all sang the same way, or were in some way part of one unified nineteenth-century performance style. This of course is not the case. He fails to acknowledge the individuality of each singer’s expressive practices, and that these also changed during the nineteenth century.³⁷ The variety and interchange of expressive vocal practices as outlined in the writing of Brown and Potter illustrate the flaw in essentialising arguments such as Johnson’s, which are often espoused by performers operating without a deep historical and stylistic context.

³⁵ See the argument made by Barth involving a masterclass between pianist Lang Lang and conductor/pianist Daniel Barenboim - Barth, “Effacing”, 175.

³⁶ Jessica Arrasclão Heard, “Things I learned about Lieder at MIFLAS 2018”, CutCommon, published July 17, 2018, www.cutcommonmag.com/10-things-i-learned-about-lieder-at-miflas-2018.

³⁷ For an analysis of vocal changes during nineteenth century see John Potter, “The Development of the Modern Voice,” in *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 47–66.

Surprisingly, Richard Taruskin who is a well-regarded member of the HIP community, also declares his scepticism for reading too much into evidence found on early recordings. Referring to a 1914 recording of Tchaikovsky played by the *Mischa Elman Quartet* he declares “To our modern taste they sound like caricatures. Nobody takes them seriously, least of all the Early Musickers.”³⁸ Albeit not specifically relating to singers, he is generally sceptical of imitating early recordings.³⁹ Musicologist Eric van Tassel suggests, however, that “this is just one of Taruskin's army of straw men: no one seriously suggests that we imitate early recordings, but it is merely wilful to refuse to learn from them.”⁴⁰ From a purely logic based perspective, these recordings are by their very nature closer to nineteenth-century style than we are today in our post-WWII performance tradition.

Portamento (expressive sliding between notes) in early recordings occupies perhaps the largest focus of scholarly writing, due to the sheer frequency with which it is found on early recordings, but also perhaps because it is more easily quantifiable than *rubato*.

The most comprehensive writing on the topic is found in the works of singer/musicologist John Potter.⁴¹ Crucial to this research, as an academic, Potter represents one of the only professional singers writing on nineteenth-century performance practice who has a thorough understanding of vocal pedagogy. His writing is therefore in a class of its own, as the work of most other scholars is not grounded in any form of practical experience. It is no surprise then that his paper *The Rise and Fall of Portamento* offers one of the most specific and illuminating insights into the extinct practice of expressive sliding in early recordings. In addition to his hereto unmatched discussion of *portamento* found in early vocal treatises, he is able to draw on case studies and detailed comparative examples using the widest range of singers stretching from (unsurprisingly) Patti to the present day to posit unique cultural theories that influenced performance practice.⁴² When he confesses that “a complete analysis of one of Patti’s recordings is beyond the scope of this study, however...” he may unwittingly echo the challenge made by Dorottya Fabian calling for the need of a “richer study” of early recordings.⁴³

³⁸ Richard Taruskin, *Text and act: Essays on music and performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24.

³⁹ Taruskin, *Ibid.*, 169, challenges the reader to “...see if you can keep a straight face at their authentic scoops and slides. We have our own tastes, our own ways and our own agenda”.

⁴⁰ Van Tassel, “Something Utterly new”, 714.

⁴¹ Other isolated considerations of the device come from Deborah Kauffman, “Portamento in Romantic Opera”, *Performance Practice Review*, no.5 (1992), 139–58, DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199205.02.03, and Leonella Caprioli, *Vocal Strisciato between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (unpublished paper, Basel 2002).

⁴² John Potter, “Beggar at the Door: The Rise and Fall of Portamento in Singing.” *Music and Letters* 87, no. 4 (2006): 523–550. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4140308>. Potter posits interesting theories about the prevailing popularity of *portamento* in the popular idiom in the twentieth century, evidenced in the recordings of Judy Garland and Ann Miller, for example.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 536.

Eminent early keyboardist Malcom Bilson represents one of the few other scholars who has a strong grounding in professional experience as well. Although not denying the validity of *portamento* in early recordings, his seminal lecture recital entitled *Knowing the Score* from Cornell University is subtly sceptical that expressive practices found in these recordings are in some way arbitrary and unthinking.⁴⁴ When attempting, for example, to find reason in the *portamento* practices found in a recording of violinist Fritz Kreisler from 1924, Bilson confesses, “We couldn't find any sense, they just seemed to slide when they wanted to.”⁴⁵

Musicologist Daniel Leech-Wilkinson is another who acknowledges the forensic value of early vocal recordings:

It would be impossible to come anywhere near the sounds people actually make by following only what they write. Documentary evidence now seems hopelessly insufficient without sound.⁴⁶

Along with other scholars at CHARM (The Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music), Wilkinson's work provides a valid vocal companion to much of the research of Cook and Philip. He has considered the use of *portamento* in much of his writing, though he and others do not always agree on the strategic use of the device found in recordings.⁴⁷

In his most seminal writing on the expressive device, Leech-Wilkinson argues for a more random theory of application in his essay, *Portamento and Musical Meaning*. His theory is unique in its almost abstract nature “... *portamento* works—when it works—by switching back on our earliest emotional responses to musical sounds.”⁴⁸ He links the sliding of *portamento* with a psychological phenomenon known as *motherese* (the lilting, sighing and exaggerated soothing sounds reminiscent of a nursing mother).⁴⁹ Basing his theory in biology, Leech-Wilkinson makes a compelling case for a possible relationship between “infant directed speech” and musical meaning. Instead of considering a wider pool of under analysed recordings perhaps, or attempting a richer historically informed, treatise-based analysis, he

⁴⁴ Malcom Bilson, “Knowing the Score.” Produced by Cornell University Press, 2005, Lecture Recital, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C1794357.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1:08min mark.

⁴⁶ Leech-Wilkinson, *Recordings*, 247.

⁴⁷ See Leech-Wilkinson's work above *Recordings and Histories of Performance Style* and *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*.

⁴⁸ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson: “Portamento and Musical Meaning”, *Journal of Musicological Research* (2006): 25:3–4, 248. DOI: 10.1080/01411890600859412.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

posits a theory reducing this highly conditioned practice to a more unthinking biological impulse.

Motherese negates the possibility of there being a complex interplay between *portamento* and other expressive devices such as *tempo rubato*, and that this device could have strategic structural implications for a musical phrase, Leech-Wilkinson suggesting:

In *motherese* you don't try to be subtle, or to communicate layers of meaning, or puns, or paradoxes, or hint at darker meanings. It's a simple communicative world in which everything means exactly what it seems to, in which trust is absolute.⁵⁰

It will be argued in this thesis that *portamento* is in fact a highly conditioned practice with a rich cultural lineage, not limited only to Leech-Wilkinson's implication that it signifies a primarily "simple communicative world".⁵¹ Apart from the psychological element of his study, Leech-Wilkinson provides some very compelling arguments surrounding social change and its effect on the fluctuating nature of *portamento* in the twentieth century.⁵² He concedes that:

So by no means all portamenti are affecting in the way we generally associate with the technique, and these other varieties will need study before we can understand what kinds of associations they call up.⁵³

This research attempts to do just that through a detailed study of *portamento* in all its varieties on early recordings.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Lydia Goehr's "Canned Laughter", *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 135: S1, (2010): 63–66, DOI: 10.1080/02690400903414830, critical response to Leech Wilkinson's paper questions his methodology and reasoning in seeking to apply underlying biological impulses to justify multi variable and deeply-rooted cultural responses to music. It questions whether the (explanatory) movement between culture, nature, biology and music is as seamless as Leech-Wilkinson's argument suggests.

⁵³ Leech-Wilkinson, *Portamento*, 238.

A Post-Modern Tapestry:

Current Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Vocal HIP and Critical-Response

Not surprisingly, professional practice of nineteenth-century HIP displays inherent ideological bias to musicology, favouring instrumental application over vocal. HIP ensembles who originally made a name for themselves in performances of seventeenth and eighteenth-century music are extending their approach to cover large portions of early to mid-nineteenth-century repertoire. The most promising sign is the emergence of period orchestras, such as *Musica Eterna* and *Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique*, whose repertoire is dedicated almost exclusively to nineteenth and even early twentieth-century symphonic music from Beethoven to Gershwin. But what of vocal repertoire?

The current market is flooded with expert “period” or “historically informed” singers such as Sandrine Piau and Carolyn Sampson who devote themselves almost entirely to the works of Mozart and before, yet are increasingly attempting isolated works of the nineteenth-century. There are singers at the other end of the spectrum with essentially “modern” or “non-historically informed” techniques who also dedicate a large portion of their output to much earlier repertoire, such as sopranos Cecilia Bartoli and Renee Fleming.⁵⁴ The most incongruous sign is the observance of period nineteenth-century orchestras and opera companies who proudly wave the baton of historical performance, but partner themselves with modern instrumental virtuosos and vocalists who are clearly modern performers. The presence of a harpsichord or *period instruments* often indicates a level of historical integrity that generally is not applied to what is happening on stage. The result is often a post-modern dichotomy of mixed stylistic approaches to much of this repertoire.⁵⁵ Large scale choral works involving equal dedication to HIP from both vocalist and ensemble seems to be limited to the works of Mozart and Beethoven. In chamber music and art song there is more effort for parity of historical approach between singer and instrumentalist, albeit in isolated circumstances.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Take for example the 2000 recording of Fleming’s *Alcina* with period French ensemble *Les Arts Florissant* - Renée Fleming (soprano), William Christie (conductor). *Alcina*. Erato 8573-85356-2, 2001. CD, or any number of Cecilia Bartoli’s recordings with Italian period ensembles such as *Il Giardino Armonico*.

⁵⁵ Of recent note is period Italian Ensemble Europa Galante’s 2018 recording of Verdi’s *Macbeth* - Fabio Biondi (conductor). *Macbeth*. Glossa GCD92341, 2017. CD, or their 2001 recording of Bellini’s *Norma* - Fabio Biondi (conductor) Arthaus Musik 109199, 2001. DVD, using purely modern singers who employ extremely opposing musical styles to the instruments.

⁵⁶ Notable period-instrument chamber ensembles dedicated to nineteenth-century performance practice include UK’s Michelangelo Piano Quartet and Austria’s Quatuor Mosaïques.

Dutch soprano Elly Ameling and pianist Jörg Demus in their 1969 recording of Schubert and Schumann songs provide one of the first important attempts to combine a historically-informed singer and pianist.⁵⁷ Period fortepiano aside, more effort is made by pianist than singer to employ nineteenth-century performance practice in his use of expressive *rubato*. Ameling's performance is extremely "clean" with perfect rhythm and tuning, yet her delivery remains void of any awareness of nineteenth-century style such as *portamento* or prosodic-based rhythmic flexibility. Still extremely well regarded, however, this recording is one of the first real attempts at the historical performance of nineteenth-century vocal music.

The collaboration between German tenor Christoph Prégardien and historical keyboardist Andreas Staier represents a more recent example of singer and instrumentalist striving for a unanimous historically based approach.⁵⁸ Their recording of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* recorded in 1992 marks the beginning of a collaboration between the two artists that is dedicated to a historical approach of many of the composer's vocal works. Both artists instill a greater sense of expressive historical practice to their performance than Ameling/Demus. Staier employs vivid examples of nineteenth-century pedal effects, while Prégardien provides a heightened sense of text-driven *rubato*, vocal ornamentation and a treatment of vibrato in an increased expressive fashion to that of many modern singers. Curiously, however, like Ameling, his singing is very "clean" and it is hard to discern any dedicated use of expressive *portamento*, strategic or otherwise.

This is something of a paradox. Why would one of the most prolific "period nineteenth-century" singers employ some expressive practices, but choose to ignore others, especially one as heavily documented as *portamento*? Brown best describes the current trend amongst the select few singers attempting what comes close to a thorough nineteenth-century style:

With encouragement, they are often excited to experiment; but in public performance or recording all but a courageous few draw-back from implementing them, except in the most tentative manner.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Elly Ameling (soprano), Jörg Demus (fortepiano). *Schubert – A Program of Piano Music and Songs*. RCA Camden Classics VCCS-1405, 1969. Vinyl LP.

⁵⁸ Christoph Prégardien (tenor) and Andreas Staier (fortepiano). *Die schöne Müllerin*. Deutsch Harmonia Mundi (D-7800) 05472-77273-2, 1992. CD. Another example of recent historical collaborative parity is a 2008 disk of Mendelssohn songs with Hans-Jörg Mammel (tenor), Arthur Schoonderwoerd (fortepiano). *Mendelssohn: Songs*. Carus 83430, 2009. CD. The disk delivers similar results to Staier & Prégardien.

⁵⁹ Brown, *Rediscovering*, 74.

Brown reiterates the agenda set out by this research:

The growing body of scholarly writing about late 18th and 19th-century practice has as yet had limited impact on contemporary performance. Period performers have adopted a few documented practices, often in a partial way, but neglect others, which are felt to depart further from the norms of modern taste.⁶⁰

There are limited but brave attempts to offer historically-informed accounts of mainstream “romantic” repertoire, yet vocalists have also come under considerable scholarly criticism, and in some cases, condemnation from other artists.⁶¹

There are very few examples in the recorded catalogue today (and virtually none in mainstream performance) exhibiting evidence of approaching the music of Brahms, Mahler or Strauss in a historically-informed way from a professional singer outside the confines of scholarly practice. This research argues that a significant disparity exists between the state of research into nineteenth-century vocal music and its professional practice. Through the study of early recordings and practice-led research, we may discover a forgotten expressive language and attempt to bridge this current gap.

“Imagining an Alien Culture”: The Philosophy

The catalogue of early recorded singers presents us with some of the most well documented and under-analysed evidence of nineteenth-century vocal style, yet the question of relevance to contemporary practice remains. We may be able to identify extinct expressive practices within recordings, but what can their restoration mean for performers today? How and why would we present these historic practices to a modern audience?

Throughout the twentieth-century, musicologists, philosophers, and performers have been divided on the act of “re-creating” or “re-visioning” historic practices in music performance—the early music movement being the most prolific to gain prominence in recent years—yet much debate continues to be generated surrounding these practices.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 73.

⁶¹ See claims made by Montgomery, “Modern Schubert Interpretation”, 101–118.

In exploring the legitimacy of early music (or HIP), musicologist Peter Walls draws on the work of musicologist Carl Dahlhaus and composer/philosopher Theodor Adorno to identify two ideologically opposed perceptions of the historical debate. Dahlhaus cites the *conservative traditionalist*, one who believes in history as one continual line of unbroken tradition. This is a kind of accumulative bank of knowledge that connects us with a continuity to the past, yet allows for the idea of “progress” in music. The *conservative traditionalist* views historical investigation, or historical re-creation, as inherently flawed.⁶² Walls suggests:

We can recognise Dahlhaus’s *traditionalists* in those who have argued that in order to recapture the original impact as distinct from merely the sound world [of musical works] we should present them with the enhanced forces of our own time.⁶³

Crucially, he continues:

...such a view normally involves an assumption that the music of whatever period is best served by the range of expressive devices that have been accepted as standard over the past fifty years or so.⁶⁴

Adorno’s anti-restoration sentiment is highlighted in his emphatic belief that the only effective way of keeping faith with the past is via a process of musical transcription and adaptation, praising for example the avant-garde transcriptions of J.S Bach’s music by Webern and Schoenberg.⁶⁵ Adorno asserts:

Justice is done to Bach not through musicological usurpation but solely through the most advanced composition ... Perhaps the traditional Bach can indeed no longer be interpreted. If so, his heritage has passed on to composition which is loyal to him in being disloyal; it calls his music by name in producing it anew.⁶⁶

Adorno can be seen in many ways as the ultimate *conservative traditionalist*, militantly embracing the philosophy of “musical progress.” Butt alerts us to the aberration in Adorno’s thinking, that in advocating a musical culture where ideas of “development” and “progress” are accorded high priority, we risk misrepresenting music itself:

⁶² Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 65–85, 70.

⁶³ Walls, *History*, 115.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Butt, *Playing with History*, 5.

⁶⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Bach Defended against His Devotees*, (London: Spearman, 1967), 140–148, 146.

Each musical style and period before 1800 had a different ethos that brought with it different conceptions of performance, and it is thus wrong to think of changes in performance and instrument construction in terms of a necessary ‘progress’.⁶⁷

While it may be hard for many to subscribe to Adorno’s ideas, he highlights a deeper paradox inherent in HIP thinking, namely, to what extent is it possible to recreate the past, and what, or whom, will it serve if we do so?

In his second school of thought, Dahlhaus identifies the *historicist*—someone who believes in a state of ruptured history, that the performing practice tradition has at some stage been broken. The *historicist* in contrast to the *traditionalist* encourages historic investigation and attempted restoration, such as seen in the HIP movement today. According to Dahlhaus, this type of musician is someone for whom “[t]he historical faculty that analyses works of music in the context of their time of origin should be taken virtually intact into the aesthetic experience.”⁶⁸ He warns though that attempted restorations will always contain traces of the original break in tradition, no matter how hard a musician attempts to make that tradition seem “natural”.⁶⁹

An *historicist* can either approach tradition as “memory institutionalized into a science”, or via a process Dahlhaus calls “controlled estrangement” or a conscious reimagining of an entirely alien culture.⁷⁰ This recognises that we cannot take for granted an understanding of how the music should be performed, and more pertinent to this study, suggests the possibility that expressive practices once held different meanings for performers than they do today. We are reminded of Brown’s charter to us all:

If classical music is to regain its cultural significance, musicians must engage more courageously with the historical evidence, in a quest to read between the lines of the score, only then will our great inheritance of classical music regain its rightful place in the cultural life of our times.⁷¹

Perhaps it is through controlled estrangement that we may best reconcile historical meaning and our own musical instincts.⁷² In Chapter Five this outlook is adopted in the historically informed pursuit of

⁶⁷ Butt, *Playing with History*, 7.

⁶⁸ Dahlhaus, *Foundations*, 70.

⁶⁹ Butt, *Playing with History*, 7.

⁷⁰ This distinction is explicitly discussed in current approaches to fortepiano pedalling by Erin Helyard, “‘To Prevent the Abuse of the Open Pedal’: Meticulous Pedal Markings from Madame du Brillon to Moscheles”, *Keyboard Perspectives*, Vol. IX. (2016): 43–66, 44.

⁷¹ Brown, *In quest of*, 118.

⁷² Walls, *History*, 116.

Schubert lieder, where an attempt is made to approach Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* without *remembering* Wagner, for example.

This research is grounded on the premise of letting go of value judgement and in considering an artist's expressive impulses without bias. Placing ourselves within as rich an historical context as possible we move closer to bringing a greater understanding of a work to a contemporary audience.

Early recordings reveal to us a world of un-notated expressive practices that once preoccupied the nineteenth-century singer. Crucial though these recorded documents are, alone they lack historical context from a HIP perspective, and as such cannot tell us the origins of expressive practices such as *portamento* and *rubato*. Could these expressive practices once have been essential structural components of a nineteenth-century singer's vocal technique? Were these practices arbitrary, or were artists somehow connected to a rich expressive performance tradition that could have stretched further back into the eighteenth century?

Written treatises from the nineteenth century detail expressive practices of *portamento* and *rubato*, and constitute the majority of musicological focus research into nineteenth-century performance practice. Traditionally, however, a vagueness in terminology and narrative have plagued much of the scholarship in this area, which could benefit from a closer study into the functional use and rationale behind key examples of each expressive device. The subsequent chapter considers the wide variety and interchange of these largely extinct expressive practices from a variety of key written sources from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. It is an attempt to contextualise and compliment the evidence which follows in Chapter Three, from the analysis of early vocal recordings.

Chapter Two

Expressive Vocal Slides and Tempo Modification: The Written Evidence

***Portamento*, or “The Highest Degree of refinement”**

Arguably one of the most valuable and intriguing accounts of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century singing style comes from teacher and *impresario* Domenico Corri (1746–1825). He details many of the expressive devices a performer was expected to master in order to fashion themselves into a singer of the “first class”.⁷³ No expressive practice receives more praise from him than the sliding, or joining, of one note to the other:

Portamento di voce is the perfection of vocal music; it consists in the swell and dying of the voice, the sliding or blending of one note into another with delicacy and expression comprehends every charm [...] *Portamento di voce* may justly be compared to the highest degree of refinement.⁷⁴

Manuel Garcia (1805–1906), often considered the father of modern vocal technique, a generation later refers to *portamento* as a *slur* or a *glide*: “To slur is to conduct the voice from one note to another through all the intermediate sounds.”⁷⁵ Giovanni Mancini (1714–1800) describes the device similarly, and notes that it is essential “in every style of singing” and that it occurs “in ascending as [well as] descending [intervals].”⁷⁶

With isolated exceptions, *portamento* was often un-notated by the composer (the following notated examples, however, come from treatises designed to outline their “ornamental” and “refined” nature). The nineteenth-century singer would have had to be well versed in how and where it was appropriate to use this device, even though Garcia alerts us that this may be “very difficult to determine, and can scarcely be fixed by any general rules.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Domenico Corri, *The Singer’s Preceptor* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1810), 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

⁷⁵ Manuel Garcia, *Garcia’s New Treatise on the Art of Singing* (Paris, 1840; reprint, London: Leonard & Co., 1924), 8.

Other writers of the period describe the device in a near identical fashion such as Franz Joseph Fröhlich, *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Musikschule* (Bonn: N. Simorck, 1811), and earlier by Johann Adam Hiller, *Treatise on Vocal Performance and Ornamentation* (1780), trans. Suzanne J. Beicken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57.

⁷⁶ Giovanni Battista Mancini, *Reflessioni* (Milan, 1777), trans. Pietro Buzzi as *Practical Reflections on the Figurative Art of Singing* (Boston, 1912), 110–11.

⁷⁷ Garcia, *Treatise*, 53.

This vagueness in application extends also to written accounts of *portamento*. The figure Garcia uses for his “slur con portamento” is similar in nineteenth-century notation to delineate a *legato* (smooth and connected articulation) while at the same time it can also be spread over two notes to allocate the sharing of the same syllable. This unfortunate double meaning may have heightened some confusion in definition throughout the last two centuries of what constituted a true *portamento*, and was often propagated by contradictory descriptions from teachers throughout the period.⁷⁸

Semantics aside, each writer remains adamant that *portamento* serves to heighten affect, and the expression of the words and gesture of a phrase are deciding factors in its execution “it may be observed, that a slur will always be well placed [...] under the influence of [a] strong or tender sentiment.”⁷⁹ Corri also hints at the important connection to words, suggesting that *portamento* must be united with an elegant and noble delivery of text.⁸⁰

Despite some of the most recent writing on the topic, the rich and highly varied practice of *portamento* with its various permutations has not been fully realised or appreciated in its rightful place as part of a nineteenth-century singer’s strategic expressive arsenal.⁸¹ Was *portamento* a generic or extravagant “sliding” between two notes as is perhaps the opinion of many singers today? According to many current and respected vocal pedagogues and writers on vocal style in any case, *portamento* still suffers from inadequate description and misguided terminology. Often portrayed as “*quasi-glissando*”, a technical crutch, or worse, a decadent expressive hangover from the past, it is often considered to have no relevance to us today.⁸²

⁷⁸ See Potter, “Beggar at the door” for incongruities in terminology between Vaccai and Garcia’s description of ‘dragging’—Garcia and Bayly use term dragging, Vaccai says specifically ‘NOT to drag’.

⁷⁹ Corri, *Singer’s Preceptor*, 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸¹ Potter, Crutchfield and Katz all lead the way with excellent writing on vocal nineteenth-century *portamento*, but few adequately investigate the various historical varieties and permutations, or their connection with other expressive devices. (See for example the very brief allusion to varieties of expressive sliding described in the vocal treatises by Corri and Vaccai in: Potter, “Beggar at the door”, 524, and Crutchfield, *Vocal Ornamentation*, 20.

⁸² A prime example is revered vocal pedagogue Richard Miller, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, And Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited*, (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 216, & *The structure of singing: system and art in vocal technique*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 146. He generalises the *portamento* by pejoratively likening it to a nondescript ‘sighing’ motion or a *quasi-glissando*.

Portamento and Legato

In the nineteenth century, famed pedagogue Francesco Lamperti suggest “*Portamento* is a vocal technique related to *legato*, and it is one of the chief devices of the old Italian school of singing.”⁸³ What constituted a true *legato* changed with time, however, becoming broader than the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century variety and reaching its zenith in the expansive phrases of large-scale music dramas from the late nineteenth century. A continuous flow of tone and air pressure between notes, however, remained the foundation of what constituted good singing.⁸⁴ While *portamento* was a distinct event, *legato* appears to have been the foundation on which it was built and countless teachers and composers from before Mozart verify its importance.⁸⁵ Tosi in 1724 advises the voice teacher “take care that notes emitted by the student are well connected to one another and thus *legato*”.⁸⁶

Quantz (1697-1773) suggests instrumentalists where possible adopt the *cantabile* style of the singing voice as a benchmark of good articulation. In turn, both Corri and C.P.E Bach (1714–1788) encourage the singer to practise instrumental music or *solfeggio* (music without words) to reach an understanding of *legato*.⁸⁷ But it is in Garcia that we find clarification that *legato* was the default method of vocal delivery for the nineteenth-century singer:

Legato vocalisation being the most frequently used, needs no sign to indicate it; pupils should therefore be warned against singing staccato, slurred, marked, or detached, any notes in plain passages.⁸⁸

⁸³ Francesco Lamperti, *The Art of Singing* (New York, 1916), 17.

⁸⁴ Elliott, *Singing*, 98.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁷ Elliott, *Singing*, 97–98.

⁸⁸ Garcia, *Treatise*, 8.

The Graceful but “Unequal” Step....

Portamento seems to have encompassed two of the most popular and often un-notated “graceful steps” (grace-notes) of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. According to eighteenth-century theorist Anselm Bayly (1719–1794), these graceful steps are notably derived “not from the composer but of the singer which he takes in his way as a *graceful step* or prepare.”⁸⁹

Perhaps not famed for his compositions, composer Johan Friedrich Schubert (1770–1811) leaves us a valuable contemporary account of late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century *portamento*—if anything because it represents one of the rarely discussed German sources available to us.⁹⁰ Hinting at their inequality, Schubert recommends two species of *appoggiatura* or grace-note, involving a delay (*Vorschläge*), or anticipation (*Nachschläge*) of the destination-note.⁹¹

Ex. 2.1. Delayed Appoggiatura or *Vorschläge* – Schubert, *Neue Singe-Schule*, pg. 55



⁸⁹ Anselm Bayly, *The Alliance of Musick, Poetry and Oratory: Under the Head of Poetry Is Considered the Alliance And Nature of the Epic And Dramatic Poem, As it Exists In the Iliad, Aeneid And Paradise Lost*, (Printed for John Stockdale, London, 1789), 56.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Classical & Romantic*, 567, provides a good description of the application of the graces, and a concise comparison in descriptions of various writers of the time.

⁹¹ Johann Friedrich Schubert, *Neue Singe-Schule Oder Gründliche Und Vollständige Anweisung Zur Singkunst Indrey Abtheilungen Mit Hinlänglichen Uebungsstücken* [In German] (ca.1790 Leipzig), 56.

Ex. 2.2. Protracted Appoggiatura or Nachschläge – Schubert, *Neue Singe-Schule*, pg. 56



Although referred to as an *appoggiatura*, these two varieties demand a *portamento* connecting the grace-note to the destination-note in consonant harmony. Crucially each graceful step is unequal in motion (i.e. with an *irregularity of timing*) and Bayly suggests they be executed, either with the preceding word and syllable (protracted *appoggiatura* Ex. 2.2), or with the following (delayed *appoggiatura* Ex. 2.1) They must be used “just as the performer shall judge best”.⁹² According to Brown, the placement of where each grace-note and its accompanying *portamento* should take place in relation to the destination-note “was already controversial in the eighteenth century and has remained so until the present day.”⁹³ Further examination of written sources from the period seem very specific however.

Similar to Corri and Garcia, Schubert advises that where either a delayed or anticipatory *portamento* is unmarked “a singer must consult their own taste, and take into consideration the emotion of the text and the character of the music”⁹⁴ Four decades after Bayly, Domenico Corri (1810) crystallises in terminology these two varieties of *portamento*—the “leaping grace” sung on the beat, and the “anticipation grace” preceding the beat.⁹⁵

⁹² Anselm Bayly, *A practical treatise on singing and playing with just expression and real elegance*, (Printed for J. Ridley London, 1771), 46.

⁹³ Brown, *Classical & Romantic*, 478.

⁹⁴ Schubert, *Singe-Schule*, 55.

⁹⁵ The following writing adopts Corri’s terminology of the two *appoggiaturas* (‘leaping grace’ and ‘anticipation grace’).

Ex. 2.3(a). The Leaping Grace & Anticipation Grace – Corri, *The Singers Preceptor*, pg. 32



This Grace is similar to those above, but has this distinction, that the strength necessary to its execution must be regulated more or less according to the distance of the Intervals.



In descending, drop the Grace into the Note, and in ascending, swell the Note into the Grace.

Corri mentions another grace such as the less common “turn grace” which has *quasi-portamento* function. A blurring of pitch either side of a note, “it is executed rapidly in phrases that require energy”, though writers such as Garcia place little importance on it in relation to other expressive practices.⁹⁶

Ex. 2.3(b). The Turn Grace – Corri, *The Singers Preceptor*, pg. 32



The execution of this Grace ought to be very rapid, so as not to appear as part of the Melody, and such Graces are only to be used where particular energy is required.

Twenty years later influential teacher Nicola Vaccai (1790–1848) furthers Corri’s descriptions. Corri’s leaping grace is described by Vaccai as a delayed *appoggiatura*, or a “*posticipation...the insensible lengthening of the first note by pronouncing with it the following vowel.*”⁹⁷ (Ex. 2.3a) We notice from the examples and descriptions of Corri and Vaccai that the slide of the leaping grace is always within the harmony of the destination-note, and generally only occurs in an upward interval of between a third to a fifth. (Care should be taken to distinguish between the leaping grace and the *acciaccatura*, which although similar in appearance, rapidity of motion and on-beat placement, often delineates a quick step-wise grace note.)

⁹⁶ Corri, *Singer’s Preceptor*, 6.

⁹⁷ Nicola Vaccai, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano*, (London, 1832, reprinted Leipzig: Steingräber Verlag, ca.1880), 27.

Ex. 2.4(a). The Delayed Appoggiatura (Leaping Grace) – Vaccai, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano*, pg. 29

Allegretto.

0 pla - ci - do il ma - re lu - sin - ghi la spon - da, o

Allegretto.

p

Vaccai describes the anticipation grace as “the insensible anticipation of the following note by the vowel that proceeds it”.⁹⁸ (Ex. 2.4b) John Potter implies that the anticipation grace was “perhaps considered more tasteful than the other”, possibly because Vaccai suggests that it was more often used.⁹⁹ Garcia calls the leaping grace– “la petite note inférieure” (*the little lower note*)–and advocates primarily the use of the anticipation grace.¹⁰⁰ The anticipation grace, unlike the leaping grace, occurs on upward as well as downward intervals.

Ex. 2.4(b). The Anticipation Appoggiatura (Anticipation Grace) – Vaccai, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano*, pg. 27

Andante.

Vor - rei spiegar l'af - fan - - no, na - scon - der - lo vor -

Andante.

p *rinf.* *p*

⁹⁸ Vaccai, *Metodo pratico*, 6.

⁹⁹ Potter, “Beggar at the door”, 427.

¹⁰⁰ Garcia, *Treatise*, 54.

Testament to Garcia and Vaccai's implication that the anticipation grace became the preferable variant of *portamento*, further practical evidence can be seen in the writing of teachers throughout the latter nineteenth-century, such as Salvatore Marchesi (1822–1908). Mr Marchesi, husband to his more famous wife Mathilde the famous teacher of Nellie Melba and Emma Calve, specifically documents in his 1864 publication of vocalises (Ex. 2.5) that the term *portamento*, by the mid nineteenth-century anyway, encompassed only the anticipation grace.¹⁰¹

Ex. 2.5. *Portamento* circa 1864 – Marchesi, *20 Elementary & Progressive Vocalises Op. 15*, pg. 4

PORTAMENTO.

Andante.

Per - chē, per - chē lu - cal - ma - na - tu - ra, Le - pe - ne non cu - ra Del
 Wa - rum nicht süß! Na - tur darf die Lei - den, die Lei - den und Freu - den der

mi - ser mor - ta - le! Per - chē, per - chē sen - si - bil non è ! Per - chē, per -
 Menschheit, der ar - men, wa - rum, wa - rum ist süß - los Na - tur ! Wa - rum, wa -

¹⁰¹ Salvatore Marchesi, *20 Elementary & Progressive Vocalises Op. 15*. (Offenbach: J. André, 1903), 4.

Evidence of Articulation

Writers were often quite vague and indiscriminate in their descriptions of how and when a particular *portamento* be executed.¹⁰² In the writing of rather obscure Belgian composer and violinist Charles Auguste de Bériot (1802–1870), we discover some clearly described and notated examples of what constitutes acceptable and “good practice”, suggesting that “in passion, [and] in despair, the *portamento* may be more frequent, more plaintive: but always agreeing with the character of the prosody.”¹⁰³ Although his treatise is directed at violinists, he uses a series of vocal examples to portray correct *portamento*, and we have no reason not to glean an equivalency of vocal approach. Like many writers he warns of its overuse, its limited suitability in sacred music, and its progression away from the *leaping* to the *anticipated* variety of *appoggiatura*. (Ex. 2.6)

Ex. 2.6. *Portamento* c1870 – Bériot, *Méthode de Violon*, Op.102, pg. 214

EXAMPLE . <i>The song being written in this manner.</i>	EXEMPLE. Le chant étant écrit de cette manière :
<i>is interpreted as follows :</i>	doit s'interpréter ainsi :

¹⁰² See Garcia and Corri above.

¹⁰³ Charles-Auguste de Bériot, *Méthode de Violon*, Op.102 (Paris: Author, n.d, ca.1870), 214. Both Emma Williams “Franz Schubert: how can the vocal techniques of the late 18th and early 19th Centuries influence our way of interpreting portamento in Schubert’s violin music in an historically informed way?” (Masters dissertation, Royal Conservatory of The Hague, 2019), and Sarah Potter, “Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century” (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 2014), make an interdisciplinary comparison between Bériot’s descriptions of *portamento* for voice and violin.

Unique among other writers, however, Bériot is one of the first to give a clear articulation of the speed and duration of expressive slides. He classifies three gestures; the *Lively/energetic*  (Ex. 2.7 a) employed among notes of grace or energy, the *sweet*  (Ex. 2.7 b) reserved for “pathetic expression”, and the *drawn-out*  (Ex. 2.7 c) in phrases of plaintive or sorrowful expression.¹⁰⁴

Ex. 2.7 (a–c). Three Gestures of *Portamento*, Bériot *Méthode de Violon*, Op.102, pg. 214

(a)

Lively:

Employed among notes drawn with grace or pushed with energy.



(b)

Sweet:

Employed in pathetic expression.



(c)

Drawn-out:

Plaintive or sorrowful expression.



¹⁰⁴ Bériot, *Méthode de Violon*, 215.

Notation of The Graces Within a Vocal Context

Schubert (1790) amongst other writers suggests that the placement of an un-notated *portamento* was at the discretion of a singer's good judgement. In isolated occurrences when a nineteenth-century composer notated a slide that connected notes of two different syllables they did so by using a slur sign to delineate the two notes in question. But did this mean that a composer only ever imagined one type of expressive slide for their singer? Although few examples exist in a vocal context, it is curious to note that a composer was sometimes specific with the type of slide they wanted, and we note the following examples of some rare moments a composer notated Corri's *unequal* leaping grace.

Crucial notated evidence of the performance practice of the graces described by Corri and Vaccai come from Garcia's first publication of the second part of treatise in 1847.¹⁰⁵ Representing something of a "prototype recording", Garcia makes annotations to selected arias to show an approximation of a skilled performer's expressive interpretation. The few examples that form an appendix to Garcia's treatise reveal evidence of a rich and complex tradition of un-notated nineteenth-century expressive practices. The most intriguing addition is an aria from Morlacchi's *Tebaldo ed Isolina*, in which Garcia presents highly decorated annotations as sung by famous nineteenth-century castrato, Giambattista Velluti (1780–1861). Velluti's leaping graces have much wider intervals than those suggested by Corri and Vaccai. Also, they occur not just at the beginning, but also mid-word, providing an argument that the device was not essentially dictated by prosody, but more likely by phrase structure and intervallic/melodic contour.

¹⁰⁵ Manuel Garcia, *Traité complet de l'Art du Chant* – Part Two (Paris: Manuel Garcia, Troupenas, 1847) 100–102.

Ex. 2.8. Morlacchi, "Caro suono lusinghier", *Tebaldo ed Isolina* (Velluti's additions), mm. 35–62

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "e il su - o do lor con - so - la ca - ro suo - no lu - sin". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a complex texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Performance markings include *p*, *rall.^o*, and *And.^{te} mosso.*

leaping grace mid-word

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "ghier dolce o gnor mi scen - de al cor". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues with a similar complex texture. Performance markings include *colla parte.* and *ritard.^o*. A red arrow points to a leaping grace note in the vocal line.

8 bars omitted

Third system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "- pi de sua pura vo - lut h! Do - ve an - do h! Do - ve an - do do - h! vean". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues with a similar complex texture. Performance markings include *f*, *mf*, *sempre*, and *secondando*. A red arrow points to a wide interval in the vocal line.

Uncharacteristically wide interval

Fourth system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "do do ve ando mio ben quel di h! a - h! mai più h! a - h! mai più". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) continues with a similar complex texture. Performance markings include *sempre* and *secondando*.

If Corri's assertion that *portamento* was the domain of the well-trained singer, then a theory for their uncommon notation is perhaps the result of their improvised nature. Equally likely is the fact that their isolated occurrence within a vocal context may be the mark of a composer's prerogative and their wish for that *particular* grace at that *particular* moment—it is not to say they were unwelcomed elsewhere in the score.

Concerning the changing popularity of the leaping grace throughout the nineteenth century, it is no coincidence that the following examples are from the hand of Robert Schumann (1810–1856), whose compositions are rooted in mid rather than early nineteenth-century style. If we take Garcia and Vaccai's assumption that the leaping grace was in fact considered less fashionable, even untasteful, in some circles as the century progresses, is it not possible that composers, such as Schubert and Schumann, were increasingly obliged to be specific about its use, lest the singer omit it altogether?

Ex. 2.9. Schumann, "Er, der Herrlichste von allen", Op.42 no.2, mm. 19–23

19

Wand - le, wand-le dei-ne Bah-nen; nur be-

23

trach - ten dei-nen Schein, nur in De-mut ihn be-

33

Ex. 2.10, Schumann, “Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden”, Op.24 no.5, mm. 1–10

Bewegt.

p

Schö - ne Wie - ge mei - ner Lei - den,

p

schö - nes Grab - mal mei - ner Ruh.

Following descriptions, it is obvious that the anticipated *portamento* never suffered from ambiguity of fashion, unlike its leaping brother. This is not to say that early-mid nineteenth-century composers such as Schumann were not occasionally specific with its use. The following example clearly outlines the anticipation grace we observed in the writing of Mr. Marchesi in 1864.

Ex. 2.11, Schumann, “Die alten, bösen Lieder”, Op.48 no.16, mm. 44–47

p

Wisst ihr, warum der Sarg wohl so gross und schwer mag sein? — Ich

p

Notation of The Graces Within an Instrumental Context

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the singer was accorded an artistic precedent exceeding all other instruments. Countless treatises persuade the instrumentalist to either imitate or learn from a singer's style and technique.¹⁰⁶ There are countless examples in the instrumental idiom of graces whose origins stem directly from vocal music, supporting not just their popularity, but also their expressive potential.

Brown offers examples of some moments within an instrumental context where an eighteenth or nineteenth-century composer simulates an anticipated or "on-the-beat" *appoggiatura* in their notation.¹⁰⁷ Though further evidence suggests the vocal-style leaping grace might also have been more a part of the expressive practice of the time than previously thought.

Without using the term, Neumann identifies clear examples of what he calls "the upward leaping *Vorschläge*" (what we know now to be the leaping grace) in the string music of Mozart.¹⁰⁸ As with the voice, it is often unprepared, executed rapidly and in the consonant harmony of the destination-note.

Ex. 2.12. Mozart, *String Quartets* (K499/3, K589/1 & K590/1)

The image displays three musical excerpts from Mozart's String Quartets, each featuring a leaping grace. The first excerpt, K 499/3, is marked 'Allegro' and shows measures 130 for Vn I and Vn II. The second excerpt, K 589/1, is also marked 'Allegro' and shows measure 199 for Vn I and Vn II. The third excerpt, K 590/1, is marked 'Allegro moderato' and shows measure 74 for Vn II, with a dynamic marking of *mf*.

¹⁰⁶ See Elliott, *Singing*, 38 and Barth, "Effacing", 153.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *Classical & Romantic*, 484.

¹⁰⁸ Frederick Neumann, *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 70.

The vocal leaping grace must have been widespread during the late eighteenth-century, as Mozart's piano music also reveals strong evidence for its popularity. Observing the vocal origins of this form of *portamento*, however, may also be a way in which we avoid common mistakes in its articulation. The following example highlights a confusion often associated with how we realise the position of the grace-note in both vocal and instrumental music.

Neumann suggests "such a *portamento* is always anticipated" (i.e. played before-the-beat.)¹⁰⁹ Acknowledging the vocal origins of such a grace and using Mozart's C Minor piano concerto K.491 as an example, he argues that playing the grace note before the beat in an anticipated form is "the only approach that makes musical sense."¹¹⁰ This unfortunately contradicts a wealth of primary vocal sources signalling its protracted nature (placement on the beat) and showing clear similarity to the leaping grace. Here the leap is an octave, and although an uncharacteristically unvocal interval, in piano music this fits well under the hand and is perhaps a good justification for a wider leap.

Ex. 2.13. Mozart, *Piano Concerto* K.491/1, mm. 100–112



Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) was so preoccupied with the famous operas of Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835)—with their long lyrical “bel-canto” lines—that he sought to emulate the vocal writing in his own piano music, most clearly seen in his nocturnes. Garcia informs us that a singer is guided by sentiment and text in delivering a *portamento*, but how could a pianist possibly emulate a singer's *portamento* on a keyboard, and, without the help of vocal text, how would the pianist know when to do it? In a clear reference to this vocal practice, Nocturne Op 37, No. 1 is a perfect example of how Chopin attempts to convey the early nineteenth-century varieties of *portamento*, both leaping and anticipated in notated fashion. (Ex. 2.14) We can be confident Chopin intends a quasi-slide that accompanies each leaping grace as he virtually notates it, in the form of an *arpeggio*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Observe also how the leaping grace especially occurs in the middle of long arc-like phrases, and that the harmony of the grace note and distance of interval are similar to those demonstrated by Corri and Vaccai.

Ex. 2.14. Chopin, *Nocturne* Op. 37, No.1, mm. 1–16

Quasi Anticipation Grace
Nocturne
F. Chopin. Op. 37, No 1.

11. *Andante sostenuto*

p

f

cresc.

dim.

p

Leaping Grace (interval of octave)

Leaping Grace (interval of 4th)

Turn Grace

Even more compelling, however, is the following notated example as it comes from arguably the greatest song writer of the nineteenth century. Franz Schubert (1797–1828) was writing at the same time as Bellini, and like his Italian contemporary was preoccupied with the voice. The fantasy for piano and four hands Op.103 is intensely vocal in its lyricism, and features a heavy use of the leaping grace, and like Chopin, Schubert intends this to be as close to a *portamento* a pianist can achieve (Ex. 2.15). Again, the absence of text demands the composer stipulate the consonant harmony, location and interval of this, otherwise un-notated, expressive vocal slide.

Ex. 2.15. Schubert, *Fantasy in F-minor*, Op. 103, D. 940, mm. 1–20

Phantasie

(in F moll)

für das Pianoforte zu vier Händen componirt

von

FRANZ SCHUBERT.

(Erschien als Op.103.)

(113) 3

Serie 9. № 24.

Leaping Grace interval of 4th Primo. Leaping Grace interval of 3rd

If un-notated *portamento* appeared less instinctual to a violinist or pianist (as seen above), then this last example raises a further theory extending the un-notated practice beyond the realms of just a singer. Possibly the most famous operatic aria in the repertoire, and a showpiece for any soprano worth her reputation, the aria “Casta Diva” from Bellini’s *Norma* (1831) opens with a famous flute *obligato*. In every vocal score throughout the nineteenth century featuring a reduced piano accompaniment, the first note of the flute solo in each score features a prominent leaping grace (other such examples are scattered throughout the score).¹¹¹ Here, the grace itself varies from the interval of an octave (Ex. 2.16 b) to a major-tenth (Ex. 2.16 a).

Ex. 2.16(a). Bellini *Norma* Act 1 “Casta Diva”, Ricordi Edition (c1870), mm. 1–3



Ex. 2.16(b). Bellini *Norma* Act 1 “Casta Diva”, Unspecified French Edition (late 19th century), mm. 1–3



This identical phrase for voice and flute in the autograph copy of Bellini’s orchestral score, however, features no such *portamento* indication. So why insert them into the piano score? Perhaps Bellini heard something resembling a leaping grace *portamento* from his flautist and soprano on opening night, but the practice being less idiomatic for a pianist, we observe again the necessity for notated intervention (from the editor in this case).

¹¹¹ See 3 major nineteenth-century vocal score editions: [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Norma_\(Bellini%2C_Vincenzo\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Norma_(Bellini%2C_Vincenzo))].

It is no coincidence that a voice and a flute function both as wind instruments and as vehicles for melodic development. It is highly likely that this sort of un-notated *portamento* shared a similar practice amongst instruments related to the voice, such as the woodwind family, and is demonstrated as such by the composer's hand.

***Rubato*: “More easily demonstrated than described”**

The nineteenth-century singer was encouraged to exploit timing with the greatest of expressive freedom, and many teachers from the turn of that century devote large portions of their writing describing various permissible modifications of tempo and meter.¹¹²

There appear to be two distinct categories of tempo modification discussed by writers during the nineteenth century—*structural rubato* and the *tempo rubato*, the latter considered to be the providence of only the most skilful musician.¹¹³

In *structural rubato* the voice and accompaniment move in tandem. Corri (1779), dismissing the possibility that a singer should sing every note exactly as written, suggests that the “quickening or retarding of time,” encompasses entire phrases or longer passages “in order to give emphasis, energy, or pathos, to particular words”.¹¹⁴ This is sometimes indicated by the composer and at other times, although un-notated, still required of the performer. Garcia (1847) uses the term “irregularities in time” for *rubato*, and details instances where tandem movement especially may be used.¹¹⁵ Concerning the *accelerando*, the voice and accompaniment increase momentum momentarily to “add greater spirit and vivacity to the effect” whereas in the *ritardando* the voice and accompaniment decrease momentum momentarily to “expresses a decrease of passion...and to enhance grace and elegance.”¹¹⁶ In the *ad libitum* “time is slackened [...] whenever the singer intends ‘risking it’ he must not diminish the time throughout, but have recourse to the *tempo rubato*, which will be noticed immediately.”¹¹⁷

¹¹² See Garcia, Corri & Vaccai above.

¹¹³ *Structural rubato* is a modern musicological term used by scholars such as Rosenblum, “The Uses of Rubato”. The term *Tempo Rubato* historically, however, first appears in the eighteenth century and is used by composers and performers.

¹¹⁴ Corri, *Singer's Preceptor*, 6.

¹¹⁵ Garcia, *Treatise*, 51.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

In opposition to a collective movement of voice and accompaniment, *tempo rubato*, in the early nineteenth-century “allows liberty to the voice alone” wherein “the accents and time of an accompaniment should be strictly maintained”.¹¹⁸ This form of rubato is almost exclusively never notated by the composer, and only the domain of the well-trained performer.

Garcia also refers to another form of irregularity in time, in a practice he calls *prolongation*—a momentary increase in the value of a note found in a passage formed by notes of equal values.¹¹⁹ This practice of altered note-values takes the form of *tempo rubato* as it is never uniform, and accompaniment and melodic line remain independent during its application.

Much like a swiftly executed *portamento*, it seems reserved for moments of heightened expression in *energetic* or ornamented music.

Ex. 2.17. *Prolongation (Tempo Rubato)* - Garcia’s *Treatise on the Art of Singing*, pg. 27



Garcia is quick to note that “an excellent perception of rhythm, and great self-possession on the part of a musician, however, are requisite for the adoption of this method, which should be resorted to only in passages where the harmony is stable.”¹²⁰

Intriguingly, Garcia devotes the majority of his writing to detailing and advocating the *tempo rubato*, leaving virtually no descriptions or annotations of *structural rubato*. Could his relative disinterest in the *accelerando* and *rallentando* be that they were self-explanatory, or could it be that *tempo rubato* was more the fashion of the early nineteenth-century?

Leopold Mozart famously described *tempo rubato* as being “more easily demonstrated than described.”¹²¹ Although his famous son annotates an approximation of this practice in the oft-quoted

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 52

¹²¹ Leopold Mozart, (trans. Editha Knoch, and Alfred Einstein 1951) *A treatise on the fundamental principles of violin playing*. XII, §20, Augsburg (1787).

opening bars of his Rondo K.511, a more compelling and often overlooked example comes from the early nineteenth-century Italian opera composer Nicolas-Charles Bochsa (1789–1856). When referring to *irregularities in time*, Bochsa suggests that “any piece, if played throughout, in one unvaried time, would be extremely monotonous in its effect.”¹²² Bochsa (1826) attempts “as far as mere notes would enable him, to give some hints” regarding this highly skilled practice which allows liberty to only the right hand of a pianist or the vocal line of a singer.¹²³ Observe how Bochsa’s accompaniment stays strict in the left hand yet allows the melody in the right to display an “artful independence of movement” (Ex. 2.18 a & 2.18 b).¹²⁴ Curiously the melody never anticipates the note or phrase, but rather leans or nudges the note/s to the right to delay the beat, not dissimilar to Garcia’s description of *prolongation* from above.

Ex. 2.18(a). *Tempo Rubato* (Example *Lento*) Bochsa, *L'Anima di Musica*, pg. 25

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'Tempo Rubato' (Example Lento) by Nicolas-Charles Bochsa. The score is presented in two parts: 'As written' and 'As played'. Each part consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The 'As written' section is marked 'Lento.' and 'con espressivo.' and includes a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking. The 'As played' section includes a 'cres.' (crescendo) marking and a 'ritard.' (ritardando) marking. The notation shows various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

¹²² Bochsa, Nicholas Charles *L'Anima di Musica for the harp, a series of precepts & observations on style & expression, in the performance on that instrument*, London: Goulding & D'Almaine 1826, 25.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

26 **EXAMPLE in AGITATO STYLE.**

Allo Agitato e doloroso.

As written

espress.

As played

The image displays a musical score for a piece in Agitato style. It is divided into two main sections: 'As written' and 'As played'. The 'As written' section shows a complex melodic line with various fingerings (e.g., 2, 2, 1, 2, x, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, x, x, 1, x, 1, x, 1, 2, x, x, 1, 2, x, 1, 2, 3, 2) and accents. The 'As played' section shows a more fluid, expressive interpretation of the same material, with slurs and accents indicating a more continuous flow. The tempo is marked 'Allo Agitato e doloroso.' and the expression is marked 'espress.'.

Tempo Modification and *Portamento*

Early descriptions reveal that *portamento* was far more than a generic sliding between two notes, but rather a highly conditioned practice that carried structural implications for other expressive devices such as *rubato*. We note that writers often refer to the expressive device in terms of an inequality of motion. Bayly is one of the first to use the word “dragging” in relation to *portamento*, and although his description of what exactly constitutes a *drag* is vague (1789), his guide to its application suggests a vital connection between expressive sliding and tempo modification:

Dragging is much the same motion as that of gliding [*legato*], only with inequality, hanging as it were upon some notes descending, and hastening the others so as to preserve the time in the whole bar.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Bayly, *A practical treatise*, 44.

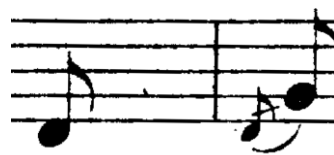
Garcia also uses the word *drag* when referring to the unequal motion of the two types of grace-like *portamento*, and Bayly, Corri and Vaccai clearly outline their delayed or anticipated motion. Therefore, the destination-note of each slide determines the species of rhythmic alteration—being either anticipated before the beat:

Ex. 2.19(a). *Rubato* within the anticipated grace – Vaccai, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano*, pg. 27



or delayed till after:

Ex. 2.19(b). *Rubato* within the leaping grace – Vaccai, *Metodo pratico di canto italiano* pg. 29



We therefore note an inherent tempo modification within the movement of each slide.

Brown describes them as “the minute deviations of rhythm and tempo that are a quintessential element of sensitive performance.”¹²⁶ Brown also hints that arguments over the execution of expressive slides were deceptive, not primarily due to their rapid nature, but because the beat was often so flexible and subject to expressive liberty so as to obscure their precise location.¹²⁷

The inherent variety of timing implications within expressive sliding make it necessary to consider *portamento* and tempo modification side by side, and the following analysis contemplates possible hidden relationships between these two expressive devices.

Rubato, like *portamento*, heightened expression and clarity in the vocal line, and it seems highly

¹²⁶ Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 485.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 478.

likely that the text and sentiment of a phrase were key factors in its execution. Both devices have in common a largely un-notated nature and the nineteenth-century artist was expected to be well versed in their execution. Yet, a lack of aural context and a reluctance of current artists to adopt these practices persist in the performance and recording of much nineteenth-century repertoire. The written documents of the period give great historical context, but their silent pages provide an incomplete picture and are able at best to tell us half of the story. The following chapter uses the analysis of early recorded singers to clarify historical practices discussed so far. Each singer under consideration was trained and worked in the nineteenth century, and through their recorded legacy we may have a way of more fully understanding the explicit nature of expressive nineteenth-century singing. (The reader is encouraged to listen to the corresponding [Sound File](#) that accompanies each score-based example.)

Chapter Three

**Expressive Vocal Slides and Tempo Modification:
The Recorded Evidence—The First Generation**

The Oldest Singers on Record

There are [...] good reasons to think that practices changed much more gradually during the century preceding the invention of recording.¹²⁸

The performances we hear may at first strike us as less accurate, but that is because performers then “knew the score” in conceptual terms that are now lost to us.¹²⁹

The period between this dissertation and the first wax cylinders of the 1890s represents barely 125 years, yet the evidence presented here and its implications on dormant stylistic traditions are far reaching. Brown’s quote that frames this chapter underpins the value of studying the following early recordings and suggests a deeper significance that an otherwise face value analysis might first reveal.

The research presented here is from the unique perspective of a professional singer, and Van Tassel’s comment rings true when he suggests that “most performers—singers especially—are slow to rethink their core repertory once they have learnt it”.¹³⁰ This is true not only regarding an active professional’s core repertoire, but also of their core vocal technique. It is rare that an artist will rebuild, or abandon, the foundations of their technique as they get older (except in rare cases of vocal damage).¹³¹ Therefore, may we not also assume the same is true of a singer’s basic stylistic and expressive philosophy?

Perhaps a clear and more recent parallel to draw on would be the career of twentieth-century German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (1925–2012). Fortunate to have taken advantage of the post war recording boom, we have clear documents of his singing as a very young man up until the time of his death. His diverse recording catalogue aside, the repertoire throughout his career was dictated by his love of poetry and art song, and the works of German Romantic composers such as Schubert and Mahler remained the focus of his career. Furthermore, we have the luxury of comparing multiple recordings of the same work throughout his life, such as several studio recordings of Schubert’s *Winterreise*. With some small variations of tonal colour and vocal wear, the first recording in 1948 to his last in 1990 remain consistent in interpretation and vocalism, with a distinctly declamatory and text-oriented

¹²⁸ Clive Brown, “Performing classical repertoire: the unbridgeable gulf between contemporary practice and historical reality”, *Basler Jahrbuch für Historische Musikpraxis* (2006): 31–43, 33.

¹²⁹ Barth, “Effacing”, 150.

¹³⁰ Van Tassel, “Something Utterly New”, 10.

¹³¹ Montgomery, “Franz Schubert’s Music”, 279.

approach that defined his style throughout his career.¹³²

What is true of Fischer-Dieskau is true of countless other singers recorded during the last seventy years, and we have every reason to believe that the same principle extends to the oldest and rarest singers captured on record. It is highly likely that stylistic change has advanced more quickly in the twentieth century compared to the one preceding.¹³³ If practices did change more slowly in the nineteenth century, then may we not also assume that these singers, whose careers were rooted in the mid-late nineteenth century, are representative of not just their generation, but also the generation, or generations before them?

When considering each singer, we need not concentrate so much on the date of recording, but rather when they were born, with whom they studied, and also the stylistic traditions to which they were heir. In doing so we may discover renewed value in these historic recordings that extends beyond the world of dilettantism.

Although providing valuable evidence of stylistic traditions past, the relatively small scholarly attention aimed at early vocal recordings so far only considers a curiously small pool of singers and familiar case studies of well-known names.¹³⁴ Much scholarly attention gives preference to the first big recording stars to have benefitted from the early recording boom of the first decade of the twentieth century: Nellie Melba (1861–1931), Enrico Caruso (1873–1921), and Luisa Tetrazzini (1871–1940) to name just a few. These singers were recording in the peak of their careers and produced a larger and more marketable output of recordings than those made by older singers the generation before, which were, and still are, often viewed as the fading remnants of a singer past their prime.

The oldest singers on record remain an uncharted territory in and beyond the scholarly world, yet are overflowing with valuable evidence to an even more distant past than the famous, younger singers to have come after them. These maligned recordings have been subjected to critical scepticism since their first publication, many of which have disappeared into obscurity.

¹³² The recordings in question are Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone) and Klaus Billing (piano), *Winterreise*, Archipel Records ARPCD0028, 1948, CD, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone) and Murray Perahia (piano), *Winterreise*, Berlin: Sony Records 48237, 1990, CD.

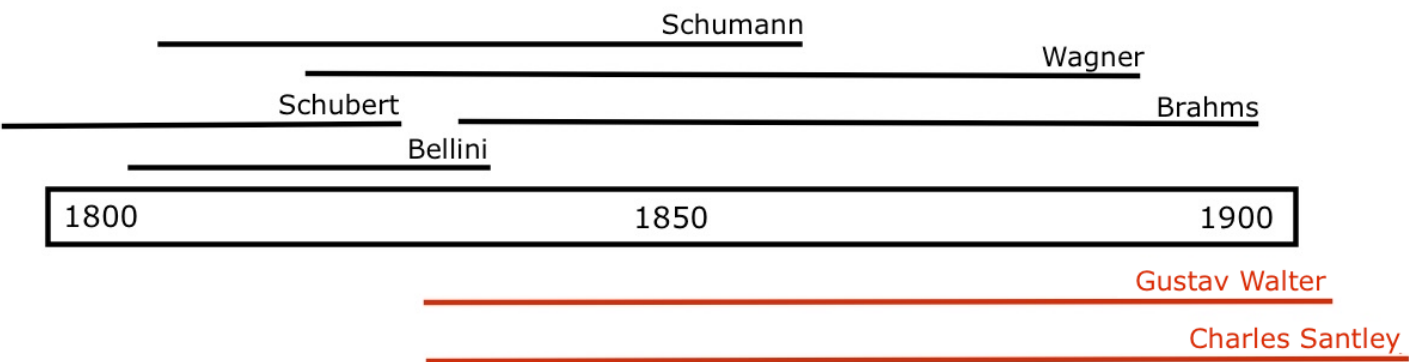
¹³³ Van Tassel, "Something Utterly New", 10.

¹³⁴ See discussion in Chapter 1.

Santley and Walter: *The Grandfathers of the Gramophone*

Although born in the same month and year, Czech tenor Gustav Walter (1834–1910) was two weeks older than British baritone Sir Charles Santley (1834–1922), and of all singers captured on the early gramophone is officially the oldest singer to leave a reliable phonographic record.¹³⁵ These men boast an extraordinary stylistic legacy, yet curiously both—Santley especially—remain virtually untouched by scholarly analysis.¹³⁶ Born during Bellini’s lifetime and just six years after Schubert’s death (Table 1), from an historical perspective these two oldest singers on record represent an archaeological curiosity unmatched by other artists on the early gramophone.

Table 1. Timeline for Sir Charles Santley and Gustav Walter



Beginning their education in the first half of the nineteenth century, both worked at the top of their field and across a rich variety of repertoire. Individually they are valuable from a nineteenth-century performance practice perspective for different reasons. Walter was a leading tenor at Vienna’s famous State Opera for thirty years from 1856, and after retiring from opera became the leading recital singer of his generation. He was a close colleague of both Johannes Brahms and Anton Dvorák and premiered

¹³⁵ There are three exceptions. The recordings of Swedish bass-baritone Peter Schram (1819–1895) and Italian baritone Antonio Cotogni (1831–1918) are in each case so deteriorated, the recording technology so archaic, and the age of each singer so advanced that very little can be gathered from either document. As for the case of French baritone Jean-Baptiste Faure (1830–1914), there is serious authenticity issues surrounding one surviving recording, and we can’t be sure that it is even him. (see Scott, *The record* 1, 78.) This is a tragedy as he created many important operatic roles in the current, canon including Verdi’s Posa from *Don Carlos*, and Thomas’ famous *Hamlet*.

¹³⁶ Small exceptions being some small references to Walter in Van Tassel, “Something Utterly New”, Montgomery, “Franz Schubert’s Music”, & Robert Wilson, “Style and interpretation in the nineteenth-century German violin school with particular reference to the three sonatas for pianoforte and violin by Johannes Brahms”, Sydney University 2014.

many of their original compositions. Santley too, had an illustrious international career across the most famous opera houses of Europe—famously inspiring composers such as Charles Gounod to compose additional arias in their operas for him.

More intriguingly perhaps than Walter, Santley represents the only singer captured on record to have directly studied with Manuel Garcia II—the father of the most famous school of singing teaching in the nineteenth century—making him of extreme scholarly value.

Luckily, from a recording analysis-perspective we are fortunate that the two oldest singers on record were men. Lower voices anatomically and technically not only preserve better than higher voices with age, but the acoustic diaphragms used in the recording horns of the early phonograph had a very limited frequency range and tended to favour baritones and especially tenors. Unfortunately, despite a wealth of wonderful recordings, female voices tended to transfer less well in the acoustic era.¹³⁷



Fig. 1. Sir Charles Santley, *Count di Luna* in Verdi's *Trovatore*, 1863.

¹³⁷ Michael Amundson, *Talking Machine West: A History and Catalogue of Tin Pan Alley's Western Recordings, 1902–1918*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 14–15.

Praised for his “energy, vigour, and feeling”, Santley undertook two known recording sessions in his life, one at the very end of his career in 1903 and one well into his retirement in 1913.¹³⁸ The recording considered here is from the first session, and exposes his expressive vocal practices most transparently from what exists of his small recording catalogue. Unfortunately, Santley recorded nothing of the nineteenth-century repertoire for which he was most well-known, and his recorded legacy is limited to essentially trivial Victorian ballads, with the exception of the following example.

Although Figaro was not a role Santley performed often, his recording of “Non piu andrai” from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* preserves in excellent detail his characteristically “sympathetic and dramatic” quality.¹³⁹ In this aria Figaro sarcastically taunts Cherubino (a love sick teenage boy) who is reluctantly being sent to war.

Santley’s use of timing is militant but fluid, that is to say he has strong rhythmic gestures, but does not often adhere closely to the accompaniment underneath him or exact vocal note-values. Garcia urges the singer attempting *irregularities in time*, particularly in music of the late eighteenth century, to draw primarily on the *tempo rubato* rather than *structural rubato*.¹⁴⁰ If we subsume altered note-values under a kind of *tempo rubato*, Santley follows his teacher’s advice exactly in redistributing note-values to match the prosodic inflection and natural word stress, but leaving the regularity of the beat fundamentally undisturbed (Ex. 3.1). More specifically Santley uses what Garcia termed the *prolongation*: “This distribution of notes into long and short, breaks the monotony of regular movements, and gives greater vehemence to bursts of passion”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Hermann Klein, *Thirty Years of Musical life in London*, (New York, The Century Co, 1903), 466.

¹³⁹ Scott, *The record 1*, 52.

¹⁴⁰ Garcia, *Treatise*, 50.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

f

Tra guerrieri, poffar Bacco! gran mustacchi, stretto sacco, schioppoin spalla, sciabla al

mp

Voice assumes orchestral rhythm

fianco, collo dritto, muso franco, un gran casco, un gran tur- bante, molto o- nor, poco con-

Altered Long/Short note values suggesting Garcia's description of Tempo Rubato

Although Garcia argues for a more *tempo rubato* approach in martial music, there seems to have been some flexibility. Consider Figaro’s ascending bugle-like motif on the words “delle belle turbando il riposo” (Ex. 3.2); Santley adds a *crescendo* “to enhance sentiment”, after all, Garcia suggests the practice of “prescribing the *crescendo* to ascending, and *diminuendo* to descending passages”.¹⁴² Yet, as the ascending bugle-like motif increases in volume, it curiously carries also an unmarked *accelerando*—i.e. the louder Santley gets, the faster he gets. Garcia confirms this precedent also in applying “to the *crescendo* [...] the *accelerando*, [to the] *diminuendo* [...] the *ritardando*”.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Garcia, *Treatise*, 55.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 56.

Cresc
Accel

Del - le bel - le tur-ban-do il ri -
Mongst the fair, their re-*po*se all dis-

Decres
Rall

- po - so, Nar - ci - set - to, A - don-ci - no d'a - mor, del - le
- turb - ing, Small Nar - cis - sus, A - do - nis of love, 'Mongst the

mf

There is nothing vague about Santley’s expressive sliding—his *portamento* is anything but generic. In this phrase above, for comic effect he executes a sarcastic *portamento* on the word “narcisetto” (*little narcissist*). Just as Bériot suggests the *sweet portamento* () for “pathetic” or “affectionate” expression, Santley uses an elongated slide here (Ex. 3.3). We can assume Santley’s *pathetic* expression is intended sarcastically here.

'Sweet'/Sarcastic portamento

1

Del - le bel - le tur-ban-do il ri -
and of the girls, upsetting their

ten. ten.

- po - so, Nar - ci - set - to, A - don-ci - no d'a - mor, del - le
rest, Little Narcissus and Ardonis of Love

mf

Easily missed perhaps due to the white noise from the archaic transfer, and just audible in the opening bars, we hear a very specific use of the turn grace, a testament to Santley’s sarcastic powers of expression (Ex. 3.4). A quasi-slide or blurring of pitch either side of the destination-note, this device “ought to be very rapid, so as not to appear as part of the melody, and [...] only to be used where particular energy is required.” Santley uses the grace here in this exact fashion in aid of the music’s playful, nonchalant gesture. Though it is curious to hear a grace like this used in such close succession. Perhaps expressive practices reserved special license in music of a comic or playful nature?

Turn Grace

~ ~ ^ ~

Non piu andrai, far-fal-lo - ne a - mo - ro - so, Not - te e
Now no more, like an am-'rous young ro - ver, Night and

^ ~ ~ ^

gior - no d'in-tor - no gi - ran - do,
day round a-bout you'll go whirl - ing,

Bayly refers to *portamento* in its inequality of timing, and we note that when Santley slides from note to note in this passage, each slide is rather unequal and irregular. This inequality extends to the delayed species of *portamento*, or Corri and Vaccai's leaping grace. Corri indicates that the grace may be used mid-phrase to connect two pitches, but also that it may be applied to the first note of a phrase.¹⁴⁴ In the following passage we see Santley interpret the grace in the latter sense.

Similar to Chopin and Schubert's instrumental examples, Santley's leaping grace primarily rises, the slide maintains at least the interval of a third, and is always part of the harmony of the destination-note. In terms of its relation to the text, it appears that Santley is less worried about pointing out specific words, and like the turn grace, uses it more broadly, and in close succession, to colour large patches of thematic material (Ex. 3.5).

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *Performing Classical*, 568.

Ex. 3.5. Mozart *Figaro* Act 1 “Non piu Andrai”, mm. 26–31 – [Sound File 5](#)

Leaping Grace

lor! non più a-vrai well no more quei pen-nac- such grace

Prosodic Appogiatura

- chi - ni, quel cap - pel - lo, such a fine hat quel - la such fine

chio - ma, quell' a - ria bril - lan - te! hair such a bright air

Although beyond the scope of this research, evidence of an extinct expressive device in the above example is too explicit to deny a small excursion. The *prosodic appoggiatura* (a dissonance applied to express the weight of an accented syllable) is described in a seminal article on this device by Will Crutchfield as historically being “not understood as an optional nuance, ornament, or expressive device, but rather as a simple principle of execution.”¹⁴⁵ Concerning this often un-notated dissonance, Corri (1779) dismissed the possibility that a singer should sing every note exactly as written “indeed, either an

¹⁴⁵ Will Crutchfield, “The Prosodic Appoggiatura in the Music of Mozart and His Contemporaries.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42, no. 2 (1989): 229–74.

air, or recitative, sung exactly as it is commonly noted, would be a very inexpressive, nay, a very uncouth performance.” Note that each *appoggiatura* in the example above falls on the stressed syllable in the specific word it is applied to—cappēllo, chiōma, brillānte (Ex. 3.5). It is common practice today to ignore this expressive *appoggiatura* that Mozart would have expected from his singers. This practice, however, continued well into the nineteenth century and is as valid for the music of Bellini and Rossini as it is for Mozart. Observe now two of the most famous current operatic baritones, Bryn Terfel ([Sound File 6](#)) and Christian Gerhaher ([Sound File 7](#)), avoid its use entirely. In avoiding this practice today singers rob themselves not only of a highly expressive dissonance but also the opportunity to express the natural inflection of the text

Walter was well into retirement when he laid down his voice for posterity in 1904, aged 71. Although showing signs of wear, the voice is remarkably preserved for his age, and the strength and burnished tone he was known for in his youth remains. He left only three pieces to us, one of which is a deeply moving and passionate reading of the aria “Gib Kraft, Mignon” (Have strength, Mignon) from one of his most famous roles, Wilhelm in Thomas’ popular French opera *Mignon* (1866, here sung in German as was the custom in the late nineteenth-century).



Fig. 2. Gustav Walter, *Romeo* in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, C.1874.

In the aria, the character of Wilhelm rejects the advances of the young Mignon, and with a brotherly affection and tender pleading, encourages her. The aria is a departure in sentiment from the sarcastic humour of Mozart's Figaro, and as such Walter's expressive gesture differs to Santley's, but the way he uses each expressive device remains similar in nature.

We notice distinct similarities in the connection between un-notated *rubato* and dynamics (Ex. 3.6). As per the writings of Garcia, the *decrescendo* at bar 6 indicates a *rallentando*, just as the *crescendo* at bar 12 indicates an *accelerando*. These moments aside, Walter does little to disturb the overall pulse and tempo of the piece. Like Santley, he opts more for moments of localised rubato through altered note-values. Where Santley assimilated note-values from the orchestra into the vocal line, Walter simply draws on rhythms from similar previous passages. It is also no co-incidence that he changes note-values to match the prosodic stress of the words, such as "hoffnung" (bar 19).

Ex. 3.6. Thomas *Mignon* Act 2 "Gib kraft, Mignon", mm. 1–21 – [Sound File 8](#)

Allegretto moderato (♩ = 96)

WILHELM Have strength Mignon, take heart,
 Gib Kraft, Mig - non, dem Her - zen,

MIGNON For the young, they quickly forget all the pain
 o wei - ne nicht! Die Jugend ver-win - det noch leicht al - le leiden
 o do not cry! do not cry!

Performance Instructions:
 - **Arpeggiation/Rubato L.H & R.H**: Indicated by red wavy lines in the piano accompaniment.
 - **Rall Decres**: Indicated by a red arrow pointing left above measure 6.
 - **Anticipation Grace**: Indicated by a red arrow pointing to the vocal line in measure 6.
 - **Leaping Grace**: Indicated by a red arrow pointing to the vocal line in measure 12.
 - **dim. pp**: Dynamic markings in the vocal line at measures 6 and 12.

12 *cresc. = accelerando*

Durch schwarze Wolken bricht, durch schwarze Wolken bricht der Hoff - nung

poco cresc.

Assimilated note values from previous phrase

trö - stend Licht, — der Hoffnung tröstend Licht, drum wei-ne nicht!

dim. p rit. vi- a tempo

dim. p colla parte pp a tempo f

Although beyond the scope of this research, mention should be made of a species of *tempo rubato* known as *arpeggiation* common in early recordings of pianists from the nineteenth century, and heard in the opening bars from the unnamed studio pianist in this recording.¹⁴⁶ We note that the chords in the accompaniment are spread over the left and right hands in an arpeggio-like fashion. Interestingly he/she continues this throughout the piece even when the singer is singing, creating a flexible *tempo rubato* and expressive rhythmic support for the voice.

The “affect” of this aria differs largely from Mozart’s comic Figaro. Following Bériot’s advice to use a *drawn-out portamento* in phrases of plaintive or sorrowful expression, (), Walter’s is dictated by the melancholy sentiment of the piece, and uses languid and elongated sliding, particularly on the repeated word “licht” (Ex. 3.7). Walter’s sliding gravitates towards a smooth, more even *portamento*. When he does use the rhythmically charged leaping grace, it is much less defined than Santley’s, though it functions similarly. (Ex. 3.6 bar 11 & Ex. 3.7 bar 17). Walter’s use of the anticipation grace, however, is of greater interest, where the purpose seems more to dislocate the beat through pre-empting the

¹⁴⁶ For more on *arpeggiation* see da Costa, *Off the Record*, 101–188.

written note (Ex. 3.6 bar 6). Here the device seems word specific, adding particular pathos to Wilhelm’s plea: “O do not cry!”.

Walter is able to strategically clarify the gesture of the whole aria in the last phrase at bar 20 by combining three expressive devices simultaneously, contributing to a moment of great emotional poignancy. He uses the turn grace, the anticipation grace and a *ritardando* to emphatically reiterate his plea to Mignon: “O, do not cry!”. Although the *portamento* is not notated, it is hard to imagine this phrase sung without an expressive slide from such a singer. (Note also the audible ‘sob’ on the word “weine” [cry]. This seems to further the rhetorical impact of this word)

Ex. 3.7. Thomas *Mignon* Act 2 “Gib kraft, Mignon”, mm. 17–21 – [Sound File 9](#)

17 LG

trö - stend Licht, — der Hoffnung tröstend Licht, drum wei-ne nicht!

Drawn-out 'pathetic' portamento

dim. p

slow anticipation + turn grace

colla parte pp a tempo

Comparing Walter’s account of Wilhelm’s aria to a more recent recording made in 1978 by tenor Alain Vanzo is very revealing. Walter’s singing is extremely moving—with its expressive *rubato*, prosodic altered-notes, and *pathetic* sentiment derived from *sweet portamento* (). Vanzo’s account, however, is what we might term “sanitised”. He has no tools to convey even a fraction of the expressivity of Walter, restricting himself to an inflexible pulse, a literal reading of note-values without any prosodic inflection, and a vocal approach almost void of any *portamento* that might stylistically convey sentimentality, or gesture. ([Sound File 10](#))

Capoul: A Forgotten French Tenor

Whether he was coaxed into the recording studio thirteen years into his retirement, or went of his own free will, we should be grateful for whatever led Victor Capoul (1839–1924) to commit his voice to the phonograph. At the age of 71 he is not just the third oldest singer preserved, but also the oldest Frenchman on record.

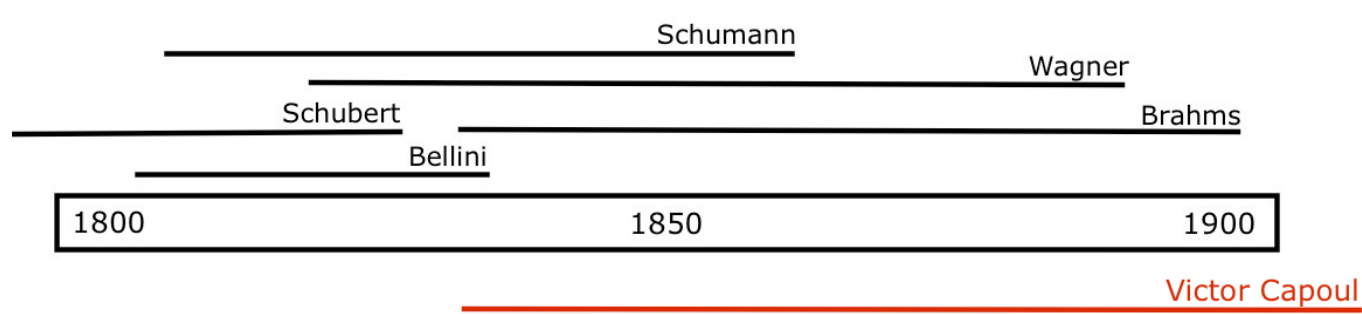


Fig. 3. Victor Capoul, *Count Almaviva* in *Rossini's Barber of Seville*, C.1864.

A student of the Paris Conservatoire in the 1850s, Capoul's light-weight but sweet tenor typifies the nineteenth-century French style and earned him invitations to the finest opera houses in the world, where he also premiered a number of new operas. By the time he entered the Fonotopia Studios in Paris in 1905, however, he was almost completely deaf, Scott eloquently offering "it would be stretching a point to suggest that his voice remained untouched by the hand of time, in fact very little of it remains

at all.”¹⁴⁷ The recording analysed here is Jocelyn’s famous “Berceuse” from Godard’s opera of the same name—a role he created—and representing the fourth and final take of the piece in that recording session. Suggesting this artist is of little forensic value because of his lack of hearing, however, (note the studio pianist playing his line as he sings), would be a gross mistake, for despite his diminished faculties, his singing is highly expressive and shows clear evidence of mid-century style.

Table 2. Timeline for Victor Capoul



Capoul is the same generation as Santley and Walter, although unlike their examples above, he sings a work written much later from 1888. By this time the *verismo* style was becoming popular and many of the un-notated expressive markings, that once were left to the discretion of singers from an earlier generation, were written in by the composer. One observes, for example, a rarely notated anticipation grace (Ex. 3.8). In generations of composers before Godard, what was often a hidden relationship between *dynamics* on *rubato* here is explicitly notated at the beginning of the second system (n.b. the *decrescendo* coupled with a *rallentando*)

Similar to his contemporaries above, Capoul judges his *portamento* based on the sentiment of the aria (a lullaby), and so they are *drawn-out* () in phrases of plaintive or sorrowful expression as per Bériot’s classification (Ex. 3.8).

¹⁴⁷ Scott, *The record* 1, 68.

Drawn-out portamento

Notated anticipation grace

In moments where Capoul chooses a less elongated slide, he almost exclusively uses the delayed *appoggiatura* or leaping grace (Ex. 3.9). As with Santley and Walter, note that each leap occurs within the interval of a fourth, ascends only, and stays always within the harmony of the destination-note. Capoul treats each grace note with very clear harmonic function, each being the tonic or dominant note of the chord it belongs to.

Capoul employs the leaping grace particularly in moments when the gesture of the music is dramatic or intense and he sings within a mezzo-forte/forte range, such as the first phrase of the piece (Ex. 3.9). Note the phrase following is less dramatic and calmer, containing no leaping grace at all. It seems the pronounced rhythmic “bounce” of the leaping grace *portamento* is favoured by Capoul at moments of intense emotion and a healthy dynamic, in contrast to the softer, more introspective passages which are free from any rhythmically active grace.

(Pendant le sommeil de Laurence)
Quasi récit.

JOCELYN.

rall. Ca _ chés dans cet a _ sile où Dieu nous a con _ duits U _

p a Tempo.

_ nis par le malheur du _ rant les longues nuits Nous repo _ sons tous deux endor _

pp

_ mis sous leurs voi _ les Ou pri _ ons aux re _ gards des tremblantes é _ toi _ les

pp sempre.

Although *recitative*, which by its nature is less equal and more prosodic rhythmically, Capoul’s treatment of *rubato* here is very free, inserting many altered note-values to give the text a more spoken inflection. By contrast, note a difference in rhythmic exactitude from a contemporary approach to the opening page of this aria from famous twentieth-century Swedish tenor Jussi Björling. ([Sound File 13 – refer to Ex. 3.9](#))

Two Special Sopranos: Patti and Moreschi

Recordings from of the legendary “Queen of Song” represent some of the most valuable and transparent documentation of nineteenth-century vocal style ever captured on the early phonograph.¹⁴⁸ Arguably the most famous soprano of the second half of the nineteenth century and also the oldest female singer on record, Adelina Patti’s contribution to the early recording catalogue is of immense value.



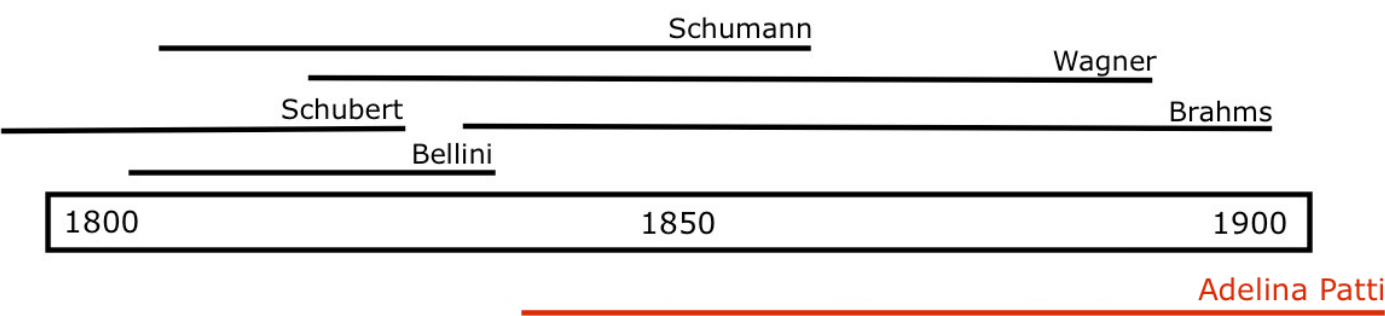
Fig. 4. Adelina Patti, *Marguerite* in *Gounod's Faust*, C.1865.

¹⁴⁸ Patti was attributed this name signalling her wide-spread popularity.

Most of all she was known for her powers of expression, dramatic singing and impeccable technique. Verdi, himself a devotee of her art, writes “I was struck dumb [...] by certain dramatic traits in which she revealed herself as a great actress”, and of her appearance in his *Rigoletto* “I cannot describe the sublime effect of [Gilda’s] words as she sung them.”

To think Verdi was talking purely of her acting ability would be to underestimate what made her craft truly unique, for despite “being an old lady and heavily enamelled” at the age of 71, preserved on her recordings better than almost any other singer is a highly refined variety of now extinct nineteenth-century expressive devices. Scott suggests “We hear so many of the ancient graces; here [is] the real *portamento* style [...] Her recording of ‘Casta Diva’ is a link in a chain leading back directly to Bellini.”¹⁴⁹

Table 3. Timeline for Adelina Patti



Patti’s Marguerite (from Gounod’s *Faust*) is a thing of legend, and like many nineteenth-century sopranos (often regardless of vocal suitability) she made it a staple of her repertoire. In the first of two takes of Marguerite’s famous “Jewel Song” from this 1905 recording session, Patti signals the ecstatic and sensual nature of this aria by using a wide array of expressive devices to express the heroine’s excitement.

Patti and her pianist have an impressive fluid sense of ensemble. We almost get the feeling that she uses the meter and note-values purely as a reference, around which her voice moves independently. The *rubato* (Garcia’s coined *irregularities in time*) is largely structural. They speed-up and slow-down together according to the implicit intensity of the music and is often informed by the dynamic marking.

¹⁴⁹ Scott, *The Record* 1, 22.

In fact, before Patti sings a note, the pianist demonstrates this by interpolating an exciting unmarked *accelerando* from the *crescendo*. (Ex. 3.10).

Ex. 3.10. Gounod, *Faust* Act 2 “Jewel Song”, mm. 1–11 – [Sound File 14](#)

AIR DES BIJOUX

Allegretto. (♩ = 50)

The musical score for "Air des Bijoux" from Gounod's *Faust*, Act 2, measures 1–11. The tempo is marked **Allegretto. (♩ = 50)**. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The piano accompaniment begins with a *leggiere* marking. A red arrow labeled **Accel** points to the right, indicating an acceleration. The vocal line has lyrics: "quette?", "cre", "scen", "do", "Ah!". The piano part has dynamics: *f* and *dim*. The score is divided into two systems.

We note again the hidden implications of the *diminuendo* on a *ritardando*, and the *crescendo* on an *accelerando* (Ex. 3.11, numbers 1–4). As we saw with Godard’s *Berceuse*, later nineteenth-century composers often choose to be explicit with expressive notation, evidenced in Gounod’s notated *ritardando* with a *diminuendo* (circled).

The musical score is presented in four systems, each featuring a vocal line (M.v.) and a piano accompaniment (M.p.).

System 1: The vocal line begins with the lyrics "C'est la fil - le d'un roi, Qu'on sa -". The piano accompaniment includes markings for *dim.* (diminuendo) and *p* (piano). Red annotations include "rit 1" with a left-pointing arrow and "2 accell" with a right-pointing arrow.

System 2: The vocal line continues with "Ah! s'il é - tait i - ci!". The piano accompaniment includes markings for *pp* (pianissimo) and *a Tempo.* (ad tempo). A red circle highlights a section of the piano accompaniment marked *rit.* (ritardando).

System 3: The vocal line includes the lyrics "Il me trouverait bel - le," and "Ah!". The piano accompaniment includes markings for *cresc.* (crescendo) and "4 accell" (fourth acceleration) with a right-pointing arrow.

System 4: This system shows the continuation of the piano accompaniment, ending with a *f* (forte) dynamic marking.

At other times Patti and her pianist appear extraordinarily independent of each other, the voice often pre-empting or slightly delaying the downbeat. Curiously though, they never sound particularly *out of time* with each other. Note her preference for altered note-values to highlight the prosodic stress of a particular word rather than large scale disruption of the pulse, creating a much-needed urgency in the phrase “réponds, réponds, réponds vite!” (*answer, answer, answer quickly!*) (Ex. 3.12).

The general fluidity of ensemble between pianist and singer creates an “elegant nonchalance”, or more specifically a kind of impressive *sprezzatura* (after the Italian term meaning the same).¹⁵⁰ This elegant nonchalance seems a result not only from a conscious use of *rubato*, but also from the way she uses *portamento*.

Patti is a master of *portamento*, and in turn her singing is imbued with a strong sense of *legato*. She combines virtually every type of expressive sliding described by the writers of the time to convey a myriad of expressive gestures. Her sliding clearly demonstrates each of Bériot’s three classifications (*energetic, sweet, pathetic*) and a myriad of older grace-like *appoggiaturas* described by Corri and Vaccai. Patti’s use of the leaping grace inspired Brown to position her as a kind of temporal beacon in fact, separating an earlier from latter nineteenth-century style:

The fact that this grace, executed in a similar manner, is also used by Adelina Patti, the oldest important soprano on record [...] but is absent from the performances of younger singers, is also suggestive of its connections with late 18th- and early 19th-century singing.¹⁵¹

She alternates between smooth slides without any *appoggiatura*, and slides with very distinct anticipation and leaping graces. In just the very opening phrases for example, she uses four different types of *portamento* alone in quick succession (Ex. 3.12).

More so perhaps than her colleagues above, in Patti’s *portamenti* we hear an audible sense of *tempo rubato* resulting from the destination-note of each slide delayed either via a leaping grace or brought in early with an anticipation grace. Her smoother slides also tend to blur the beat by creating a dislocation between the voice and accompaniment.

¹⁵⁰ This term is first used by Caccini in the seventeenth century to describe a similar practice of *tempo rubato*, as described nearly two hundred years later by Garcia.

¹⁵¹ Brown, “Performing Classical”, 35.

Patti's sliding is largely localised and word-specific (Ex. 3.12). The word "belle" (*beautiful*) receives a *sweet/affectionate* slide () and the shocked exclamation "Ah!" receives an *energetic* slide (). At other times, she seems content to be guided by the general sentiment of the larger phrase. We are reminded of Garcia's words "[*portamento*]" when applied to the expression of *forcible sentiments*, should be strong, full and rapid...when used in *tender and graceful* passages, it must be slower and softer."

Ex. 3.12. Gounod, *Faust* Act 2 "Jewel Song", mm. 12–36 – [Sound File 16](#)



The musical score for Gounod's *Faust* Act 2 "Jewel Song" (mm. 12–36) is presented in three systems. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line is in the soprano register, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower register.

System 1: The vocal line begins with a melodic phrase. A red annotation "*'Sweet' smooth portamento*" is placed above the vocal line, with a red curved line indicating a slide between the notes "Si" and "belle". The lyrics are "Je ris de me voir Si belle en ce miroir,". The piano accompaniment features a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic and a *leggiro* (light) tempo marking.

System 2: The vocal line continues with a melodic phrase. A red annotation "*'Energetic' smooth slide*" is placed above the vocal line, with a red curved line indicating a slide between the notes "Ah!" and "je". Another red annotation "*Leaping Grace*" is placed above the vocal line, with a red curved line indicating a leap between the notes "Est - ce" and "toi,". The lyrics are "Ah! je ris de me voir Si belle en ce miroir... Est - ce toi,". The piano accompaniment features a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking.

System 3: The vocal line continues with a melodic phrase. A red annotation "*Anticipation Grace*" is placed above the vocal line, with a red curved line indicating a grace note before the note "Mar". The lyrics are "Mar - gue - ri - te, Est-ce toi? Réponds-moi, réponds-moi,". The piano accompaniment features a *p* (piano) dynamic and a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking.

Prosodic altered note values

Leaping Grace

Anticipation Grace

dim.

p

dolce.

Leaping Grace

Anticipation Grace

cresc.

The expressive implications for differing vocal registrations lie beyond the scope of this research.¹⁵² Nonetheless, we note that Patti combines a use of the anticipation grace with very audible shifts into her chest voice (the lower thicker register of the female voice Ex. 3.12). Whether or not this is deliberate, she makes repeated use of this technique throughout the aria, resulting in a heightened sense of seduction and playfulness in the vocal delivery.

¹⁵² See Elliott, *Singing*, 126, for a discussion of how famous early nineteenth-century soprano Giuditta Pasta exploited her registers for expressive purposes.

Anticipation Grace + chest register shift

First system of the musical score. The vocal line (M.) is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The lyrics are: "lue au pas - sa - ge! Ah! s'il é - tait i - ci!". A red arrow points to a grace note on the word "ge!". The piano accompaniment (P.) is in bass clef. Dynamics include *dim.* and *p*.

'Pathetic' portamento/Anticipation Grace

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line (M.) has lyrics: "S'il me vo - yait ainsi!.. Comme u - ne demoi - sel - le". A red arrow points to a grace note on the word "sel". The piano accompaniment (P.) includes dynamics *rit.* and *pp*, and the instruction "a Tempo."

Third system of the musical score. The vocal line (M.) has lyrics: "Il me trouverait bel - le, Ah!". The piano accompaniment (P.) includes the instruction *cresc.*

Fourth system of the musical score. The vocal line (M.) has lyrics: "Comme une demoi - selle Il me trouverait bel - le,". A red arrow points to a grace note on the word "selle". The piano accompaniment (P.) includes dynamics *f*, *dim.*, and *p*, and the instruction "Text".

Leaping Grace

Fifth system of the musical score. The vocal line (M.) has lyrics: "Comme u - ne demoi - selle Il me trouverait bel - le!". A red arrow points to a grace note on the word "le!". The piano accompaniment (P.) includes the instruction *rit.* and the word "Tempo.".

Anticipation Grace + chest register shift

Compare this to a recording from American soprano Emma Eames born only 25 years later. Eames uses little *portamento* (certainly none of Corri's graces) and maintains a rigid tempo with few *irregularities in time*. As a result, there is nothing of the excited *joie de vivre* of a young girl. Patti was 71, Eames was barely 40: the expressiveness and drama of the former is testament to the power of Patti's use of expressive practices. ([Sound File 18 – refer to Ex. 3.12](#))

Although the only castrato captured on record might not technically represent the generation of Santley and Walter, Alessandro Moreschi (1858–1922) is included as a last case study within this group of singers on a technicality that constitutes something of a small musical and archaeological miracle. Nearly 200 years separates this soprano from the famous operatic castrati of the eighteenth century, such as Farinelli (1705–1782) and Senesino (1686–1758), though his cloistered existence within the Sistine Chapel Choir, which upheld a music tradition stretching back centuries, may have contributed to something approaching a kind of stylistic time capsule.

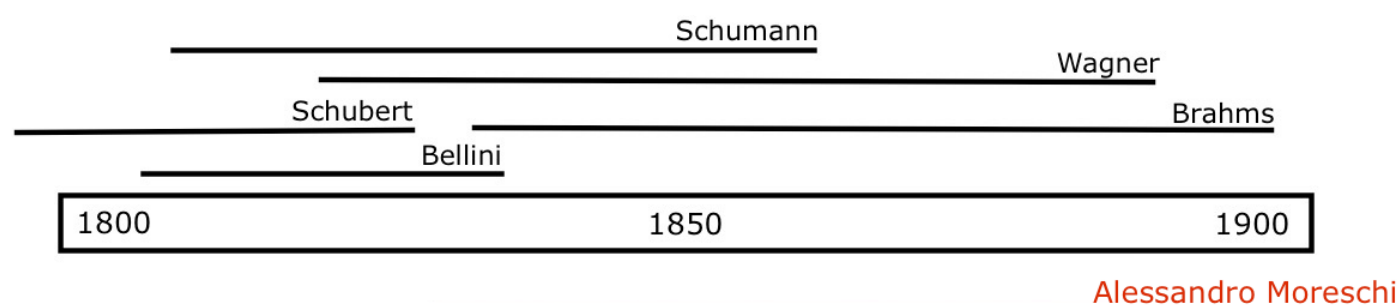


Fig. 5. Alessandro Moreschi, (no title), C.1900.

Brown's theory adds further intrigue—"the increasingly narrow role for castrati in the second half of the nineteenth century may well have encouraged the preservation of a number of older practices."¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Clive Brown, "Performing Classical", 35.

Table 4. Timeline for Alessandro Moreschi



Owing probably to his choral training, but also the choice of solemn religious repertoire chosen for the two recording sessions in 1902/1904, his treatment of timing and rubato is more conventional than remarkable. Although the voice is in a state of decay, his 1904 recording of Rossini's "Crucifixus" from *Petite Messe Solennelle* features a vivid and heavy use of *portamento*, containing explicit and repeated use of the leaping grace *appoggiatura* (perhaps to the point of being vulgar to modern ears).

Michael Scott in his book, "The Record of Singing to 1914" (1977), is one of the first writers to give Moreschi a platform equal to other early recording artists. He also gives one of the most succinct accounts of the leaping grace found in early recordings from a non-scholarly or theoretical perspective—"a deliberate effect, not to be confused with the unintentional sliding up to high notes [...] it was, like much else in the grammar of vocal ornamentation, technical in its origin."¹⁵⁴ 150 years earlier Mendelssohn (1808-1847), when visiting Rome in 1831 and hearing the Chapel Choir, describes something similar to Scott, mentioning the singers use of a repeated rapid, upward *appoggiatura*.¹⁵⁵ Moreschi is certainly excessive with his use of the leaping grace, so much so that it gives credence to Scott's suggestion that it may have technical implications. Garcia mentions only very briefly that premise of using an *appoggiatura* to assist in leaping to a high note.¹⁵⁶ Moreschi is indiscriminate about where he uses the grace, and in fact uses it virtually everywhere, from intervals consisting of a whole tone, to intervals well over an octave. (an approximation has been made, Ex. 3.14). Indeed, uncharacteristically compared to the singers above, he implements his leaping graces in the middle of words as well as the beginning. Both Corri and Garcia do not mention this type of usage.

¹⁵⁴ Scott, *The record 1*, 11.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, "Performing Classical", 35.

¹⁵⁶ Garcia, *Treatise*, 3.

In keeping with the singers above, Moreschi's use of *portamento* contributes to a dislocation of voice and piano and at times results in a *tempo rubato*. As we observed in Patti and Santley, we notice particularly in his use of the anticipation grace a slight blurring of meter, or a kind of *swimming* in-between the two notes of each slide. His treatment of the leaping grace is in this instance also so violent in comparison to those used by the singers above, that the delayed grace note also causes a small rupture of meter.

SOPRANO SOLO

Andantino sostenuto (♩=80)

Leaping Grace

Cru - ci - fi - xus, cru - ci -

Anticipation Grace

- fi - xus e - ti - am pro no - bis, e - ti - am pro

Anticipation Grace

no - bis sub Pon - ti - o Pi - la - to, sub Pon - ti - o Pi -

Notated Anticipation Grace

- la - to, pas - sus, pas - sus et se - pul - tus

pp

est, pas - sus, pas - sus et se - pul - tus

75

For Patti, Walter, Moreschi ect, the recordings made in the twilight of their lives provided for them only a modicum of success, their advanced age no doubt limiting the marketability and appeal of their distribution. At best, their recordings remained the token of a bygone age, displaying the curiosities of each artist well past their prime. The recorded documents of this first generation of singers none the less represent intriguing and indispensable stylistic and archaeological documents.

For the careers of the following generation of artist, however, recordings would come to play an altogether vitally different role in their careers. Chapter Four considers these more famous recorded documents that transformed the humble nineteenth-century opera singer into the world's first great recording superstars.

Chapter Four

**Expressive Vocal Slides and Tempo Modification:
The Recorded Evidence—The Second Generation**

The First Recording “Superstars”

For the second generation recording artists, the early gramophone served as a unique marketing platform that catapulted many of their careers into previously uncharted territory. Classical singers whose careers were either beginning or blooming when recording first came in were now able to capitalise on their recordings to subsidise and promote their performances, which reached larger audiences than ever before and turned many of them into household names.

The oldest singers (the first generation) would have been largely unaware of other new recordings being made at this time. The technology was still very new and the oldest artists considered above were well into their retirement when they made their recordings, and no longer part of the performing arena. It would, however, have been difficult for the next generation of singer not to have been swept up in the new recording hysteria given the tremendous business opportunity it represented for their, still very active, careers. As such, there is a certain amount of speculation amongst scholars as to how this new style of performing ‘for posterity’ may have reflected and influenced the true instincts of artists.¹⁵⁸ Did these younger singers, cautious of how vulnerable their recordings now made them to easy scrutiny, choose a more conservative vocal approach in recording – one less inclined to expose various idiosyncrasies innate to their expressive singing on stage? Regardless, these more famous documents below have much to offer, and represent vivid evidence of later nineteenth-century expressive practice, even though many of them still remain beyond the arena of scholarly curiosity.

¹⁵⁸ This notion is discussed by scholars such as Leech-Wilkinson “Recordings”, Van Tassel “Something Utterly New”, and most especially by Katz “Portamento”.

Nordica and Anthes: The Nineteenth-Century Wagnerian Singer

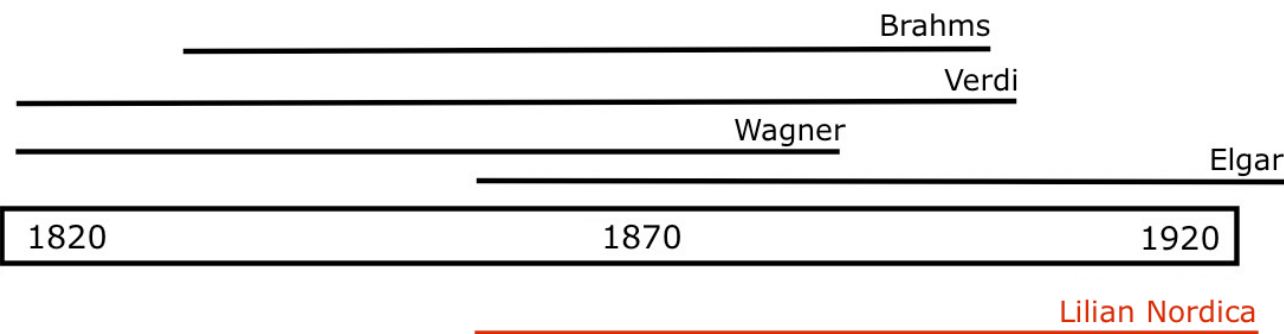
The “darling of the Coca-Cola empire”, American dramatic-soprano Lillian Nordica (1857–1919) was known for her extraordinary vocal flexibility. By modern standards she is something of an anomaly, singing the highest and most virtuosic roles for a soprano such as Ophelié, Gilda and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, but also making a name for herself as the leading Isolde and Brünnhilde (*Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*) on both sides of the Atlantic.



Fig. 6. Lillian Nordica, *Coca-Cola ad with Coupon*, 1905.

There exists no soprano functioning today who exercises a repertoire of such vocal variety and flexibility, the last notable exception being Maria Callas (1923–1977). (This of course raises intriguing questions about the parameters of vocal projection, technique and orchestral accompaniment. Perhaps more intriguing even is the question—does modern taste even allow for such a singer to exist today?) Regardless, her singing is of extreme interest regarding expressive nineteenth-century performance practice. Her vocal gestures are large and pronounced and her recordings show a voice well within its prime.

Table 5. Timeline for Lillian Nordica



In a studio recording made in 1905 of Isolde’s famous “Liebestod” from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* we hear a form of expressive practice derived from Nordica’s treatment of *rubato* that is largely extinct today, and certainly has been for many years. Much of the music in Wagner’s score is studded with extremely long and vocally fatiguing passages including a love-duet that lasts over half an hour (possibly a musical record!). Coupled with a large orchestration (especially given the twentieth-century phenomenon ignoring his instruction to restrain orchestral volume from within a lowered pit), Wagner’s *Isolde* represents a taxing prospect for any singer today.

In contrast to Moreschi’s prevailing use of *portamento*, Nordica’s use of *rubato* is what fascinates most here. It also gives us a clue perhaps as to why she might have been able to sing these demanding roles repeatedly while maintaining a freshness and a vocal durability that would be hard to find in many dramatic-sopranos today. In what is possibly one of the longest notated *crescendos* in vocal repertoire, lasting nearly 25 bars in length and culminating in what is perhaps the most famous climax in opera, we observe Nordica getting slowly faster and faster (*accelerando*) over the 25 bar-span, into nearly a tempo that is doubled. Likewise, moments of reduced dynamic carry the opposite effect and we notice a relaxation in tempo and a noticeable change in gesture. We are again reminded of Garcia’s words in “prescribing the *crescendo* to ascending, and *diminuendo* to descending passages” and “to the *crescendo* [...] the *accelerando*, [to the] *diminuendo* [...] the *ritardando*”.¹⁵⁹

Interesting to note, the *crescendo/diminuendo* markings (commonly referred to as “hair-pins”) occur at moments of heightened thematic importance. They signal not just an acceleration but a direction into the apex of the phrase (see the [red] parenthesis, Ex. 4.1).

¹⁵⁹ Garcia, *Treatise*, 55.

Ex. 4.1. Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* Act 3 "Liebestod", mm. 38–57– [Sound File 20](#)

tö - nend, in mich drin - get. auf ich schwin - get. hold er -

hal - lend um mich klin - - -

- - - get? Hel - ler -

schal - lend, mich um - wal - lend, sind es Wel - len sanf - ter

pp *cresc.* *P* *P.* *P.* *P.* *molto cresc.* *f* *p* *f* *p*

Lüf - te? Sind es Wol - ken won - ni-ger Duf - te? Wie sie

cresc.

P. P. *sempre con P.*

schwel - len, mich um - rau - schen soll ich at - men, soll ich

lau - - schen? Soll ich schlür - fen, un - ter-tau - chen?

pp

P. ✱ P.

Süss in Duf - ten mich ver - hau - chen? In dem

cresc.

The effect is an overwhelming sense of anticipation and excitement rarely heard in recordings or performances today. Wagner, after all was known for his excessive use of tempo modification, which makes an archetypal “modern” recording, such as Leonard Bernstein’s 1983 interpretation, all the more curious in its complete absence of any such expressive *rubato*. ([Sound File 21 – refer to Ex. 4.1](#))

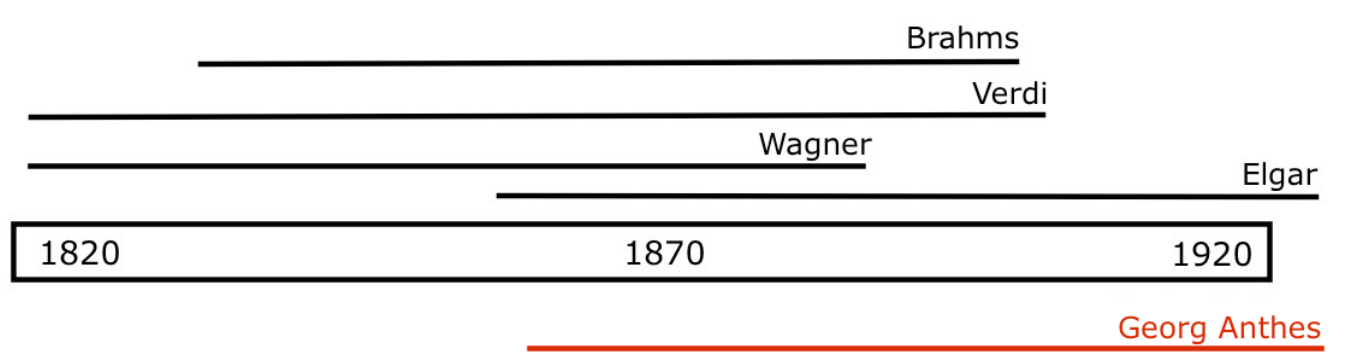
Eliminating any suspicion that what we hear in the 1905 studio recording of Nordica’s Isolde is in some way unrepresentative of what was happening in opera houses at the time, we have the rare luxury to compare it with an extremely unique wax-cylinder of a “live” performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. This research represents a unique analysis into one of the first public operatic performances of Wagner’s music ever captured in sound. Starring Nordica again as Isolde, the following recording presents some of the only audio remnants of a now forgotten nineteenth-century Wagnerian-tenor, Georg Anthes (1863–1923).



Fig.7. Georg Anthes, *Lohengrin* in Wagner’s *Lohengrin*, C.1895.

In the years 1901–1903, New York’s Metropolitan Opera librarian, Lionel Mapleson archaically transferred small fragments from performances onto wax-cylinder from the rafters of the famous opera house.¹⁶⁰ His efforts reveal many famous singers from the nineteenth century who never made it into the recording studio. One such artist was Anthes, himself a leading Wagnerian-tenor of his day, and one of the few surviving voices on record to have studied with influential nineteenth-century baritone Julius Stockhausen (1826–1906), himself a student of Manuel Garcia and close colleague of Schumann and Brahms.

Table 6. Timeline for Georg Anthes



This recording made 2nd September, 1903 captures an otherwise forgotten nineteenth-century voice. Due to the archaic recording method used to capture this performance, however, the following notated musical example can at best represent an approximation of what took place that evening. Taken from the end of the long love-duet between Tristan and Isolde, this excerpt features extremes of tempo fluctuation resulting from dynamic marking, and examples of both early and late nineteenth-century expressive sliding. This recording is a transitional representation of expressive nineteenth-century style, reflected in the generation of each singer—both born mid-century—and the repertoire—which would have been barely 30 years old at the time and representing an important shift from the earlier florid Italian style to the emergence of the new declamatory German music-dramas of Wagner.

Curtailing moments of reoccurring melodic material was common place in nineteenth-century operatic performance, and this excerpt begins just after such a cut (Ex. 4.2). The excerpt begins with a sharp and

¹⁶⁰ For more on the Mapleson Cylinder project see David Hall, “The Mapleson Cylinders - An Historical Introduction”, The Mapleson Cylinder Program Notes, (New York: New York Public Library, 1985), <http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/millennium/mapleson>

dramatic doubling of tempo from the preceding material before the cut. The two voices proceed to scale the melodic material with such rhythmic flexibility independent of the orchestra, that to modern ears it may verge on the comic. (Similar extremes of tempo flexibility are often associated today with operetta and less serious music drama.) Dramatic moments of tempo fluctuation are derived from two indicators; dynamics and expressive markings. The long *crescendi* equate to fanatically intense *accelerandi*, which in turn are abruptly studded with *rallentandi* following a sudden softer dynamic. Moments also marked with *espressione* (expressiveness) and *dolce* (sweet) represent large structural pillars of tempo variation, and carry a relax in tempo or *rallentando*.

Both singers observe the hair-pins (*crescendo/diminuendo*), and the broadening of each dynamic corresponds with a broadening of tempo. These are therefore not just signs of acceleration and deceleration, they are *pointers*, or proto-type phrase marks.¹⁶¹ (see the [red] parenthesis, Ex. 4.2).

The use of *portamento* from each singer is intriguing also, revealing examples of the older style leaping grace and also smoother less grace-like slides. The smoother slides are generally *energetic* () in nature following Bériot's description, and there appears no distinct pattern in their use. Nordica uses her expressive smooth slides to colour the phrase at random moments. Her approach is not word specific. Perhaps because her voice lies at the summit of the texture, Nordica's expressive practices are more easily identifiable than Anthes in this *noisy* recording. From her we note a heavy use of *portamento* (especially the leaping grace), but from Anthes a more conservative approach, isolated to smooth slides and a preference for the anticipation grace only.

Important to recognise is that regardless what variety of expressive slide is adopted by the singer, each *portamento* is at once created by, and contributes to, a very notable sense of *legato*. There is a very clear sense that although the singers employ a wide range of localised expression, from smooth slides to grace-like *appoggiaturas* or a flexible use of rubato, the vocal line is unified at base level by a conscious approach to maintaining a legato line.

Most importantly, from a vocal perspective, the way these singers approach this heavily orchestrated and dramatic music is something of a revelation to modern ears. They both seem to sing with a lightness and vocal spontaneity that is not associated with the performance of Wagner's music today. As in Nordica's "liebestod", both singers constantly vary their tone colour and vocal intensity and use tempo

¹⁶¹ Barth, "Effacing", 162.

modification to their advantage. They turn what is usually, by modern standards, a relentless and fatiguing 35-minute duet into something much less rigid and vocally taxing, while revealing the greater expressive and dramatic origins of this music. One wonders if a dramatic-soprano today might maintain the stamina and repertoire half as diverse and flexible as Nordica's if they were to use these un-notated expressive practices to their advantage.

Score on next page

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CUT

freit! _____

freit! _____

Wie es fas - sen,

espress.

f *dim.* *p dolce*

P. ✦

wie sie las - sen, die - se

P. ✦

Leaping Grace

LG

Fern _____ der Son - - ne,

f *p* *p*

Won - - - ne fern der Son - - ne,

P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦

fern der Ta - - - ge Tren - nungs -

fern der Ta - - - - - ge -

cresc. *f* *dim.*

P. ✱ P. ✱

LG

kla - ge! Oh - ne Wäh - nen,

Tren - - nungs - kla - ge! Sanf - - - tes

espress. *dolce*

P. ✱

LG

oh - - ne Ban - gen,

Seh - nen! Süß - - - Ver -

P. ✱ P. ✱ P. ✱

Anticipation Grace

hehr ——— Ver -

lan - - gen; oh ne We - hen hehr Ver -

p

p

p

P. ✦ P. ✦

p

ge - hen; oh - - ne Schmach - ten hold um -

ge - hen! Hold um -

p

p

p

P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦

nach - - ten! Oh - -

nach - ten! oh - ne Mei - den, oh - - ne

cresc.

fp

molto cresc.

P. ✦

ne Schei - - traut al - - lein, —

Schei-den, traut al - - lein, —

più f *più*

P. P. ✦ P. ✦ ✦ P. ✦

'Sweet' Portamento LG

e - wig heim, in un - - ge - -

e - - wig heim, in un - - - ge -

poco cresc.

P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦

LG 'Sweet' Portamento

mess' - - nen Räu - - men ü - - -

mess' - - nen Räu - - - men

dim. *più p*

P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦ P. ✦

ber - - sel' - - ges Träu - - men: -

ü - - - - - ber - - sel' - - ges

pp

LG 'Sweet' Portamento

Du - - I - - sol - - de,

Träu - - men: Tris - - - - tan -

start

LG

Tris - - - - tan - - ich, - -

du, - - - - **LG** ich - - - - I -

P. *+* *P.* *+* *P.* *+*

nicht ——— mehr I - sol - de!

sol - de, nicht ——— mehr

più p *pp*

P. ✱ P. ✱ P. ✱

Oh - ne Nen - nen, oh - ne Tren - nen,

Tris - tan! E - - - wig!

Sehr drängend.

morendo *p molto cresc.*

neu Er - ken - nen, neu Ent - bren - nen; end - los

End - - - los! End - - -

f

LG

e - - - - wig -

los, e - wig ein - - - be - wusst,

Harfe.

ff

tr.

più f

ff

P.

LG

ein - - be-wusst: end - - - los,

e - - - wig ein - - be-wusst: e - wig,

Harfe.

sempre f

In gleicher Form weiter bis zur 3. Scene.

ff

f

P.

Immer etwas drängend.

LG

e - wig, heiss er - glüh - ter Brust, end - los,

P. P. ✦ P. P.

Extreme Accelerando

höch - ste Lie - bes - lust!

P. ✦ P. P. P.

Wax cylinder ends

end - los, e - wig, Heiss er - - glüh - - - ter

più f

P. P. P. P. P.

Two things are transparent when we compare the same musical moment from the 1903 performance to the 1983 Bernstein recording. Bernstein's tempi are dramatically slower and he resists any large-scale *rubato* (especially *accelerandi*), the gesture and expression in the music is therefore radically different. Compared to Nordica/Anthes, Bernstein's singers maintain a reduced dynamic range (almost constant *fortissimo*), and the long rising vocal phrases sound like weighty stoic obstacles to overcome rather than the amorous sighs and intoxicated affirmations of two people in love. The 1983 recording may be expansive, but arguably robs itself of an intensity, drama and excitement found within the recording made 80 years before. ([Sound File 23 – refer to Ex. 4.2](#))

Second, it follows that the use of *portamento* (which we know follows musical sentiment) is completely alien between the two recordings. The intensity from the tempo modification in the early recording encourages a variety of rapid leaping graces and *energetic* sliding () from Nordica/Anthes. The more lethargic and less flexible tempo Bernstein cultivates creates a different gesture altogether, encouraging his singers to use slower and *sweeter portamenti* (). If we acknowledge the amount of un-notated *accelerandi* resulting from the sharp dynamic contrasts within the score, it is almost certain Wagner intended his singers to use the former variety of sliding.

Elwes and the Birth of the English Concert Singer

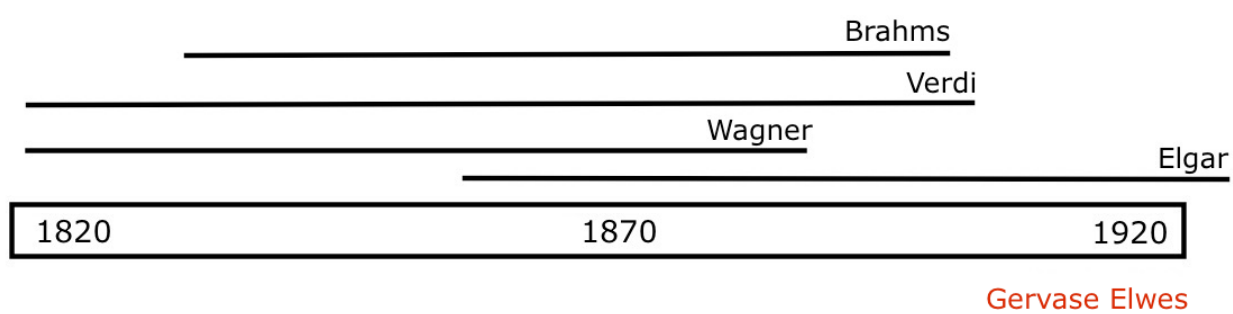
Revered English tenor Gervase Elwes (1866–1921) is the first singer considered here who was not an opera singer, but rather specialised in, and exercised great influence over the development of art-song and oratorio. His is one of the first English careers that specialised in concert work and paved a way for many great twentieth-century artists that followed him such as Peter Dawson (1882–1961), Kathleen Ferrier (1912–1953) and Peter Pears (1910–1986). Apart from working closely with many influential late nineteenth and early twentieth-century English composers such as Edward Elgar (1857–1934), Ralph Vaughn-Williams (1872–1958), Gerald Finzi (1901–1956) and Roger Quilter (1877–1953), he was the dedicatee of many of their important works currently in the modern classical canon. Owing to his relative youth at the time his voice remains one of the most clearly transferred onto the early gramophone.



Fig. 8. Gervase Elwes, (*no title*), C.1918.

Elwes was first great English interpreter of many works by Brahms, Schubert and Schumann. Sadly, no recordings exist of his German song repertoire, possibly as a result of his tragic early death from a train accident while on tour in America.¹⁶² Considering his partnership for much of this German music was Fanny Davies (1861–1934), a celebrated piano student of Clara Schumann’s, this would have potentially represented a great source of interest for the historically informed practice of nineteenth-century German art-song.

Table 7. Timeline for Gervase Elwes



¹⁶² Scott, *The record* 2, 172.

Preserved by Elwes in recordings from 1911/12 are some of the first audio documents of English art-song, which happen also to be sung by the artist who premiered them. The song considered here represents such a piece, composed by Graham Peel (1877–1937) it is dedicated to Elwes himself—“In Summer Time on Bredon”.

We have noted in singers analysed so far that *portamento* and *rubato* roughly feature as two dominant components of a nineteenth-century singer’s expressive vocality, but that inevitably they favour one device in particular. Uniquely strange among any singer from his generation, Elwes demonstrates not just a bias towards *rubato*, but a denial of almost any identifiable form of *portamento* whatsoever.¹⁶³

The absence of *portamento* does not imply that Elwes’ singing is devoid of *legato*, on the contrary, his line is held together with an almost constant thread of tone (the legendary strength of his upper register would have been impossible otherwise.)¹⁶⁴ Perhaps aided by the brisk tempo, the spaces between notes are shorter and precludes the possibility of much expressive sliding. He finds his *legato* another way, sustaining his vocal line with a constant presence of tone and breath pressure.

Elwes may have been reluctant to engage in overtly expressive *portamento* in a song of this nature, but it is likely he found his expressive outlet another way. Perhaps to an even greater extent than Nordica and Anthes, what intrigues most here is Elwes’ extreme flexibility of rhythm—from both he and his pianist. The poem is one of love lost, and the thematic motif within the accompaniment which unifies the song replicates the sound of ringing church bells. Whether or not this image of ringing-bells inspired Elwes and his pianist to adopt such a radical approach (by modern ears) to tempo modification—contained in this recording is some of the most vivid and extreme variety of nineteenth-century un-notated *rubato* on record.

The two-bar motif of the ringing bells in the piano (Ex. 4.3) lays the foundation for much of the localised *rubato* that occurs in the piece. Just as in the Wagner examples, Elwes and his un-named pianist observe a hair-pin in each two-bar motif with a corresponding broadening of tempo at each apex. The difference here is these hair-pins, or *pointers*, are largely un-notated by Peel, who only inserts a handful well into the middle of the song.

¹⁶³ There are plausible cultural and aesthetic reasons that could explain this phenomenon, especially from a singer of this generation. While beyond the scope of this research, it is curious to hypothesise about the possible implications of overtly emotionally expressive singing within an Edwardian England with its legendary conservative social values, not to mention the highly sensitive subject matter of the poetic opus *A Shropshire Lad* from which the song’s text is taken, with its preoccupation on death and the pessimism of a generation that went to war and experienced great loss.

¹⁶⁴ Scott, *The record* 2, 172.

Ex. 4.3 Peel, “In Summer Time on Bredon”, mm. 1–4 – [Sound File 24](#)



Both Elwes and his un-named pianist are almost never “in-time” with each other, yet at the same time you cannot say they are out of time either. We see in this performance a highly sophisticated sense of *sprezzatura*. Even though they speed up and slow down together with a general sense of unity, their individual pulse remains independent at the same time. Sometimes Elwes arrives at a bar line before his pianist, and vice versa.

In the traditional sense the accompaniment would have to be stable to call this a strict *tempo rubato*, but in a way, it is. Even though the pianist uses a heavy *structural rubato*, the performer is bound to the localised two-bar pattern which runs the course of the song (Ex. 4.4). Liberally altering note-values based on the prosodic inflections of the words, Elwes then turns this into a very sophisticated *tempo rubato*. We recall Garcia’s words calling for the use of *prolongation*, or a redistribution of notes by way of the *tempo rubato* into *long and short* fashion, and so we notice Elwes treats his *tempo rubato* in the same way.

Elwes is word specific and much more localised in his use of *rubato* than, in say, Nordica’s long and broad approach. The result is a song full of poignant imagery, gesture and declamation. Here, the poem seems as important as the melody. This is an important distinction to make that often separates opera and song, and contributes to one of the defining characteristics of a concert singer.

Ex. 4.4 Peel, "In Summer Time on Bredon" (Verse 1 & 2), mm. 3 – [Sound File 25](#)

Elwes

Peel

In sum - mer - time on Bred - on the

Bells they sound so clear; round all the shires they ring them In

stee-ples far and near, A hap-py noise to hear.

Here of a Sun - day__ mornin - ing My love and I would

lie, And see the colour'd - coun - ties, And hear the Larks so

high A - bout us in the sky.

For distinction, compare this to the “normative” recording from 1990 of Elwes’ compatriot, baritone Thomas Allen with pianist Geoffrey Parsons. Both artists represent the definitive interpretation of English song in the last decades of the twentieth century, yet the poetry has nothing of the transparency and immediacy of Elwes’ extremely moving interpretation. Elwes conveys a complete scene to us and translates a story almost entirely through the expressive use of rubato. ([Sound File 26 – refer to Ex. 4.4](#))

Melba and Sembrich: Two *Rival* Prima Donnas

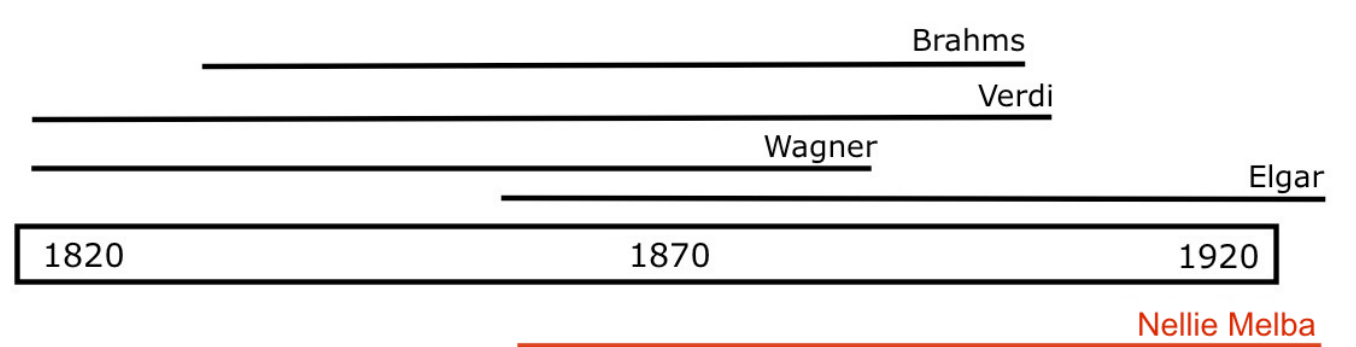
Inheriting the crown from Adelina Patti as the leading prima donna of her generation, Australian soprano Nellie Melba (1861–1931), also lays claim to being one of the first great recording superstars. In fact, for the first time it can be said for any opera singer that the large wealth accrued during their career was due largely to the extraordinary success and wide dissemination of their recordings aided by the early recording industry. Had Patti been a younger woman when recording came in, her recorded legacy would be very different today.



Fig. 9. Nellie Melba, *Violetta in Verdi's Traviata*, 1907.

Melba’s voice was unique in its evenness of tone and phenomenal agility. Apart from her close lineage to Garcia (via her teacher Mathilde Marchesi), she studied many of her roles with composers such as Gounod, Thomas, Delibes, Saint-Saëns, Massenet and Verdi, making her interpretations of great interest for nineteenth-century vocal performance practice. She was also known for fostering the popularity of the new *verismo* style in opera houses across the world, but for the purposes of this research we will consider her in earlier nineteenth-century repertoire.

Table 8. Timeline for Nellie Melba



The high quality and sheer quantity of Melba’s impressive studio output ensured that her recorded legacy remains strong till this day. It is these recordings that provide the primary source of interest for many scholars interested in vocal performance practice of the past.¹⁶⁵ This research aims not to further discourse into her well known studio catalogue, but to showcase the expressive practices found on a rare and controversial document, whose only scholarly consideration till now has been over the issue of authenticity.¹⁶⁶

One of the more divisive recordings captured in the fly tower of New York’s Metropolitan Opera House by Lionel Mapleson was a wax cylinder dated March 11th 1901, containing roughly two minutes of Queen Marguerite’s famous aria “A ce mot tous s’anime” (*At this word all becomes alive*) from Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots*. Controversy among critics and enthusiasts has plagued this recording,

¹⁶⁵ See references in Chapter 1 to works by Crutchfield, Katz, Potter & Brown.
¹⁶⁶ See Will Crutchfield, “Still More on the Mapleson Cylinder”, *The Opera Quarterly*, Volume 5, Issue 4, 1987, 37–45.

many believing it is in fact not Melba but her contemporary also singing during that season, the American soprano Suzanne Adams.¹⁶⁷

Assessing the uniqueness of her recordings, Scott adds “With Melba we come, for the first time, to a singer who recorded while still in the plenitude of her powers, but with one qualification.”¹⁶⁸ Although far from retirement, Melba was already forty-three when she entered the studio, and although the voice was in good shape, the flexibility and coloratura she was so famous for in her early career was no longer as dazzling.

This “qualification”, as Scott puts it, is what makes the incredibly fragile document analysed here all the more revealing.¹⁶⁹ Archaic technology and white noise aside, this represents the earliest known fragment of Melba’s voice on record (made nearly five years before her first EMI studio sessions in London).¹⁷⁰ The voice is extremely powerful, fresh and agile. The coloratura, difficult passagework and high tessitura are handled with ease and *sprezzatura* that match many descriptions we know of her singing from her early career especially.¹⁷¹

As expected from a singer so closely associated with Garcia’s famous school of teaching, Melba’s singing bears resemblance to many expressive practices and gestures from his own student Santley. It is likely that for this reason also some elements of her singing style might hark back to generations before.

Melba doesn’t treat her *rubato* with the extremes of Elwes and Nordica. Her rhythm is strongly marked like Santley’s, and her *irregularities in time* primarily occupy the *tempo rubato* in the form of altered note-values. (Ex. 4.5) The *tempo rubato* seems less for the sake of prosodic clarity here and more to further the expressive flamboyance of this bravura. Like Elwes and Patti, this involved a general delaying of certain notes and redistribution of them into long and short values.

¹⁶⁷ There has been no definitive proof concerning this debate, despite worthy evidence favouring each singer. My thorough knowledge of both singer’s repertoire and vocalism points firmly to Melba not Adams, and for the purposes of this research we will treat it as such. For more on the issue, see Crutchfield, *Still More*.

¹⁶⁸ Scott, *The record 1*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ The only exception being a Mapleson cylinder from two months earlier capturing a fragment of Massenet’s *Le Cid* on January 16, 1901.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Ex. 4.5. Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots* Act 2 “A ce mot tous s’anime”, mm. 1–19¹⁷² – [Sound File 27](#)

Melba

Meyerbeer

♩ = 124-130

piqué

rall.

a tempo (meno, ♩ = 116-120)

5

10

14

ancora meno mosso ♩ = c. 88

(rall.)

17

torcendo a tempo 1º

poco sfz

A ce mot tout s'a - ni - me et re - naît la na - tu - re les

oi - seaux l'ont re - dit sous l'é - pais - se ver du - re le

ruis - seau le ré - pè - te a - vec un doux mur - mu - re;

la ter - re, les on - des, la ter - re, les vœux re - di - sent, re -

di - sent nos chants nos chants nos chants

¹⁷² These comparative examples come from Will Crutchfield's paper "Still more", the red annotations are this author's own.

There are only two real moments the pulse audibly changes, slowing down the middle section of the aria as is consistent with late nineteenth-century practice, and more impressively executing a thrilling unmarked *accelerando* into the cadenza. As we saw with Nordica and Patti, speeding up a passage, either gradually or with speed, increases tension and excitement. This final cadenza represents the crowning moment for any coloratura soprano singing this part. Melba virtually doubles her tempo making the difficult coloratura even more thrilling. The result is audible in the audience's eruption into shouts of approval, completely drowning out the concluding orchestral material. It is possible this is one of the first pieces of audio evidence registering the sound of an audience.

Ex. 4.6. Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots* Act 2 "A ce mot tous s'anime", mm. 30–41 – [Sound File 28](#)

ter - re et cieux re -

32 di - sent nos chants, chants a - mou -

35 reux, chants a - mou - reux, nos

piqué *piqué*



Compare this to Melba's compatriot in the most famous recording of this aria made by Joan Sutherland in 1962. Thrilling coloratura aside, there is nothing of the excitement of the Melba cadenza, which she achieves solely by way of her use of un-notated *rubato*. ([Sound File 29 – refer to Ex. 4.6](#))

The aria expresses Queen Marguerite's ecstasy and delight in nature, and the sentiment of the expressive sliding is matched in Melba's use of *sweet portamento* () which Bériot tells us can be used for affectionate phrases. Here it aids the tender expression of the slower middle section.

Melba's *portamento* also contains elements suggesting an earlier influence. Born in 1861 she did the majority of her studies in the 1880s, by which time we know the leaping grace was well and truly on the way out, having been superseded in fashion by the anticipation grace. Yet we can hear even through the background hiss two very audible uses of the leaping *appoggiatura*. As we have seen with the singers above, in these instances the leaping grace tends to partner a more *energetic* gesture, and indeed we note Melba using them at moments involving elaborate coloratura.

Ex. 4.7. Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots* Act 2 “A ce mot tous s’anime”, mm. 1–19 – [Sound File 30](#)

Allegro $\text{♩} = 124-130$

piqué

A ce mot tout s'a - ni - me et re - naît la na - tu - re les

Allegro

rall. *a tempo (meno, ♩ = 116-120)*

oi - seaux l'ont re - dit sous l'e - pais - se ver du - re le

Allegro

ruis - seau le ré - pè - te a - vec un doux mur - mi - re;

Allegro

ancora meno mosso $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$ *(rall.)*

la ter - re, les on - des, la ter - re, les cieux se - di - sent, re -

Allegro

tornando a tempo

di - sent nos chants nos chants nos chants

poco sfz

'Sweet' portamento

Leaping Grace

Patti and Melba may have been the darlings of opera house management, but it was Polish soprano Marcella Sembrich (1858–1935) who was the critics' favourite.¹⁷³ She was the first great prima donna of New York's newly built Metropolitan Opera House where she sang over 450 performances. Sembrich represents that rare breed of nineteenth-century soprano who was at home in song repertoire as in opera, Scott suggesting "in an age of Nevin, Rasbach and Steven Foster, here was an artist daring not just Schubert, Schumann and Brahms, but also Wolf, Pfitzner and Strauss."¹⁷⁴ In fact, she seems to have been at home in practically any genre, singing and speaking in over five languages and a virtuoso of the violin and piano, and her humble and amiable demeanour made her a strong counter-image to the histrionic goings-on of Patti and Melba.



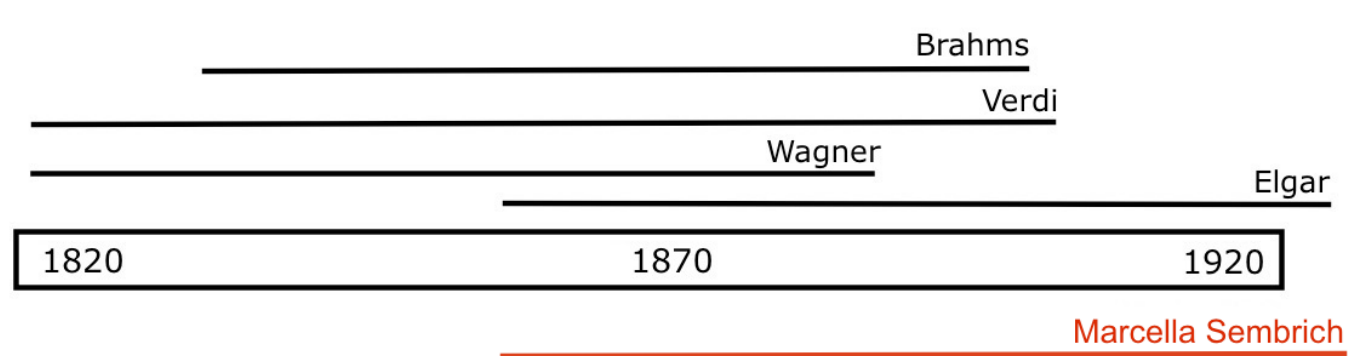
Fig. 10. Marcella Sembrich, (no title), C.1880's.

¹⁷³ Scott, *The record* 1, 26.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Continuing to champion the works of early nineteenth-century composers even when it was unfashionable, she was dubbed the “Polish Patti”, and seen by many to represent the last queen of the Italian bel canto.¹⁷⁵ Though what makes her most interesting to this research is her teacher, Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839–1910), son of the famous early nineteenth-century Italian pedagogue, Francesco Lamperti (1811–1892). Garcia and Lamperti senior represent the two most important writers on early nineteenth-century singing. This coupled with Sembrich’s preoccupation with music of that era makes her recordings a source of great scholarly interest.

Table 9. Timeline for Marcella Sembrich



An interesting counterpart to the many opulent operatic show pieces from her substantial catalogue is the Miller’s second song “Wohin?” from Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin*. As was customary in the nineteenth century, females often sang works that current performance practice would have us believe was male-only territory. The issue of extinct practices of gender fluidity in performance aside, Sembrich’s represents the oldest interpretation of this song on record.

We may be accustomed to singer’s (extreme in some cases) un-notated expressive performance practice in opera, but in a “canonised” art form like German lieder we are most definitely not (see Chapter Five).¹⁷⁶ What would disturb listeners perhaps today is the variety of rubato and altered note-values Sembrich uses. Though Scott suggests “they need not be: these [alterations] are stylistically correct in music of that period [...] it is the most purely vocal [interpretation] on record, utterly spontaneous in

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
¹⁷⁶ Note the controversial description from the YouTube channel that presents Sembrich’s rendition – “Famous Polish soprano Marcella Sembrich takes a lot of liberties in this recording of the second song from Schubert's cycle "Die schöne Müllerin" - really a LOT!", “Schubert, "Wohin" - Marcella Sembrich, 1913”, April 2018, YouTube video, 2:04 mins, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUEyPoCRMlo>.

delivery, its bejewelled brilliance rippling along like Müller's brook in the sunlight (and do not brooks have impediments and rapids?)."¹⁷⁷ Scott is half right!

What we hear in Sembrich's very fluid and youthful portrayal of the young man's dialogue with the rippling brook are two approaches to *rubato* that, while related to each other, originate from different ends of the nineteenth century spectrum.

Sembrich's dates place her squarely in the latter half of the nineteenth century, so it is fair to assume she represents a hybrid of old as well as new expressive practices. Her *rubato* consists of altered notes redistributed into long and short values which suggests the earlier nineteenth-century style described by Garcia, but also sizable irregularities of pulse resulting from heavy unmarked *ritardandi*, the style we heard in Peel's "In Summer time on Bredon", and that would suggest a possible post-Wagnerian influence.

We know un-notated *structural rubato* (tandem *irregularities in time* in voice and piano) did occur in the early nineteenth-century, but what makes us slightly sceptical of Sembrich's *rubato* here are two points—her excessive use, coupled with the date of the composition.

We have noted that Garcia primarily advocates the *tempo rubato* and altered note-values in music from the beginning of the century, and Schubert is still many years away from the extremes of Wagner's tempo modifications we heard in Nordica and Elwes' singing. It is likely Schubert shared similarities with his Italian contemporaries such as Bellini when it came to un-notated *rubato*, allowing for a liberty of voice above a stabilised accompaniment, rather than sizable irregularities of pulse

Clearly in an attempt to employ localised word painting, her ruptures to the pulse do however adopt a familiar pattern we've seen many times already, and described by Garcia—*accelerando* for ascending, and *rallentando* for descending phrases. It is true, that with Santley, twenty-four years her senior, we note a similar use of *structural rubato* in music even earlier (Mozart), but it is much more subtle and isolated. The difference here is that Sembrich's are much more obtrusive than Santley. She seems to be operating in a whole different aesthetic.

¹⁷⁷ Scott, *The record* 1, 28. (The impediments to which Scott refers we can take to mean her alterations to note-values and expressive sliding).

Sembrich

Schubert

Hin - un - ter und im - mer wei - - ter, und

im - mer dem Ba - che nach, und im - mer fri - scher rausch - te und

im - mer hel - - ler der Bach und im - mer fri - scher rausch - te und

im - mer hel - - ler der Bach ist dass den meine

Anticipation Grace

Leaping Grace

The musical score consists of two staves. The first system shows the beginning of the song with the lyrics "Straße? O Bäch-lein, sprich, wo - hin? wo - hin? sprich, wo-". The second system continues with "hin? Du hast mit dei - nem Rau - schen mir ganz be-rauscht den". The third system starts with "Sinn Du hast mit dei - nem Rau - schen mir ganz be-rauscht den". The fourth system concludes with "Sinn, Was sag ich denn vom Rau-schen? das kann kein Rau-schen". Red boxes highlight specific passages: the first box in the second system covers "Du hast mit dei - nem", the second box in the second system covers "Rau - schen mir ganz be-rauscht den", the first box in the third system covers "Du hast mit dei - nem", and the second box in the third system covers "Rau - schen mir ganz be-rauscht den". Red arrows indicate melodic movement: a long arrow at the top points left, a shorter arrow below it points right, and another arrow below that points left. A red "LG" (leaping grace) is marked above a note in the third system.

Straße? O Bäch-lein, sprich, wo - hin? wo - hin? sprich, wo-

hin? Du hast mit dei - nem Rau - schen mir ganz be-rauscht den

Sinn Du hast mit dei - nem Rau - schen mir ganz be-rauscht den

Sinn, Was sag ich denn vom Rau-schen? das kann kein Rau-schen

Her *portamento* confirms her hybridity as well. We note the use of the, by now, quite unfashionable leaping grace, and of course the ever-present anticipation grace *appoggiatura*. She compliments these graces with more popular smoother slides also which, given the nature of the song, predictably take on a sweet () and drawn-out () character.

We compare the oldest interpretation of “Wohin?” on record to one by arguably the most famous interpreter of German song in the twentieth century. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau is a master of word painting and was even criticised for excessive expressivity and over-theatricality, which is what makes the comparison to Sembrich’s interpretation all the more startling.¹⁷⁸ Her un-notated *portamento* and localised expressive *rubato* (stylistic or otherwise) instill the poetry with such vivid colours and imagery, making the more rhythmically exact performance of Fischer-Dieskau seem somewhat reserved and inexpressive in comparison—which we know is not the case, at least by current standards. ([Sound File 32 – refer to Ex. 4.8](#))

Less Accurate, but More Beautiful: A Summary

For the purposes of continuity, it would be satisfying to say that the two generations outlined clearly point to separate and well-defined nineteenth-century expressive singing styles. The truth is unfortunately more complex. Each artist is consistent in their inconsistency. For although there are definitive trends and identifiable patterns in each artist’s expressive use of *portamento* and *rubato*, expressivity by its very essence is unquantifiable and highly unique to each singer and musical context. Patti uses extremes of *portamento*, Elwes, virtually none. The leaping grace which fell out of fashion during the course of the century is used heavily in Santley’s recordings, yet Walter who was born in the same year and whose career was steeped in almost identical repertoire prefers only the anticipation grace.

Each early recording is steeped in the very personalised rhetoric of that particular singer. Yet, while we may hear a disparity in the frequency and choice of a singer’s particular un-notated expressive device, there is a unanimous approach to text and lyrical line which remains the unifying element in each artist’s expressivity.

¹⁷⁸ See newspaper article “The Heckler: My decades-long campaign against Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau”, *The Spectator*, published 13 June 2015, www.spectator.co.uk/2015/06/the-heckler-my-decades-long-campaign-against-dietrich-fischer-dieskau, and Alan Blyth, *Song on Record: Volume 1 Lieder* (Cambridge, 1986), 31–5.

A revealing feature of each singer is their preoccupation with melodic and lyrical continuity, but without major shifts in vocal tone colour or abruptly pointing to particular words—at least as we might know the practice today.¹⁷⁹ The prosodic nature of the text is upheld and remains a defining principle in their singing, but each singer rather employs a complex system of un-notated expressive devices to signal emotional meaning and subtext. It follows that as this rich tradition fell out of favour throughout the twentieth century, singers had fewer and fewer tools at their disposal in which to be expressive. Regarding *rubato* for example, Philip notes, “by the second half of the twentieth century [...] singers were by now expected to convey the meaning and emotional force of the words, but within quite strict rhythmic limits.”¹⁸⁰

Portamento and *rubato*, rather than a decadent hang-over of an overly sentimental style of expression, prove to be integral components of a highly skilled language of expression that, better perhaps than any other expressive device, can so efficiently convey subtleties of prosody and emotional subtext. Santley doesn’t massively alter his tone colour to highlight Figaro’s sarcastic inflection of the word “narcisette”, (*little narcissist*) – he colours with the combination of a *sweet portamento* () with a “nonchalant” *rubato*. Avoiding sentimentality, Patti doesn’t have to put on the voice of a sixteen-year-old girl to convey Marguerite’s child-like gasps of astonishment at the box of bright jewels before her. She is able, especially through sheer variety, to use *portamento* to signal a number of contrasting emotional states side by side, while exploiting the anticipated or delayed motion of each slide to imbue her singing with a sophisticated *tempo rubato*. These devices assist in creating a more transparent expressive sound world. (Attempting to shy away from the use of the phrase a *simpler sound world* due to its pejorative connotation, the fact is the effect is more immediate and honest).

Marcella Sembrich rather than adopting a Stanislavskian approach and replicating the sound of a nervous young boy naïvely interrogating a babbling brook, signals this through a *rallentando* and carefully coloured pathetic () *portamento* when she pleads “wohin, spricht, wohin” —(*where brook, tell me where*).

Patti signals Marguerite’s urgent pleas of delight not with a change in volume for the words “réponds, réponds, réponds vite!” (*answer, answer, answer quickly!*), but with altered note-values to bring out the

¹⁷⁹ This analysis is not dissimilar to one made by Leech-Wilkinson concerning practices heard in Patti’s generation Leech-Wilkinson, “Recordings”, 251.

¹⁸⁰ Philip, *Performing Music*, 112.

word stress. Sembrich and Elwes, too, rather than overly fetishising particular words or phrases, rely on a prosodic-based rhythmic flexibility in order to bring out the word-stress of the poetry (usually considered a highly inappropriate liberty by current standards). We see written evidence in Garcia's explanation of the art of *prolongation*: "This distribution of notes into long and short, breaks the monotony of regular movements, and gives greater vehemence to bursts of passion"¹⁸¹

Considered one of the most challenging and fatiguing love-duets in operatic history, Nordica and Anthes efficiently signal Tristan and Isolde's fluctuating and alternating emotions in consecutive phrases by altering the speed and intensity of their *portamento*.

In the same way that Elwes is able to somehow allegorically signal the sound world of ringing church bells, Anthes and Nordica observe the un-notated broadening of tempo that corresponds with an acceleration and deceleration in tempo (hair-pin) to add an elasticity to the music which heightens the emotional affect. As a result, their characters appear more transparent, more human to us, and transform what is often an overwhelmingly thick and heavy piece of music back into a more believable love-duet complete with the amorous sighs and exchange of lovers.

Furthermore, one of the great revelations from studying nineteenth-century singers such as Nordica and Anthes, is their conscious use of *accelerando*—a form of *rubato* that is almost extinct today, or extremely isolated in use. It is likely that as classical music began to adhere to conservative structuralist ideologies within modernism in the twentieth century, such extreme forms of tempo modification began to be seen unsavoury, an idea hinted at by Philip, "an acceleration can seem impulsive, or uncontrolled...or to be dangerously wild."¹⁸²

We hear the excitement it creates in Melba's virtuosic cadenza from *Les Huguenots*, but no more effectively than in the Wagner examples. The use of *accelerando* in these recordings creates a tension and excitement rarely heard in these pieces today. It signals a state of ecstasy in Isolde's famous "liebestod" and the love-duet that is entirely alien to modern interpretations. It is almost as if we are hearing these pieces for the first time, and affirms what we know to be more in-line with not just Wagner's use of extreme tempo modification, but the aesthetic nineteenth-century sound world.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸² Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 149.

Chapter Five

**“Something Utterly New”: Recapturing the
Nineteenth-Century Expressive Sound World of
Schubert’s Songs**

The “Fischer-Dieskau Effect”

It is impossible to listen to Schubert’s *Winterreise* today without inevitably conjuring up the familiar sounds and images of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, accompanied by Gerald Moore, or other luminaries, such as Herman Prey or Peter Schreier from the twentieth-century’s so-called recording “golden era” (circa 1945–1985). Just like Glenn Gould’s seminal 1954 recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, the Fischer-Dieskau/Moore recordings and their media promotion seem ossified in our memories, and have become benchmarks against which to judge all subsequent recordings and interpretations of works, such as *Winterreise*. Indeed, we have the recording boom in the latter half of the twentieth century to thank for this, with the associated media promotions and dissemination of information about artists and repertoire making the music’s accessibility and artist’s status grow faster than ever before. Consider that Fischer-Dieskau recorded *Winterreise* eight times, meaning that a wide range of artist comparisons and preferences were now possible, generating an additional level of appeal and influence. And in recent years YouTube and online streaming have made recordings and listener engagement even more accessible.¹⁸³ Figure 11 depicts the intimacy forged between the two artists by decades of collaboration that lead to the seminal recordings of works such as *Winterreise*.



Fig. 11. D. Fischer-Dieskau & G. Moore, (no title), C.1960's.

¹⁸³ The recording industry especially has suffered in recent years as listeners increasingly switch to streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music or YouTube videos to consume their music rather than purchasing CDs.

So revered are the interpretations of Fischer-Dieskau that today (almost a decade after his death), we hardly think about the musical sound world before his landmark recordings of Schubert. As this thesis has argued thus far, it is worth knowing how people sang Schubert in the nineteenth century, before the likes of Fischer-Dieskau and others shaped our understanding and perceptions of these works. Of course, the pertinent question is: Do we even have any idea of how different it might have sounded from today's mainstream interpretations? If the evidence gleaned from the earliest recordings has anything to offer, then perhaps the answer is yes.

Early recordings captured some of the greatest nineteenth-century performers from the dawn of the twentieth century. In rare instances documents of artists whose careers and performance style stretched back to the mid nineteenth century were also preserved as we have observed in the analysis of George Santley, Gustav Walter, and Victor Capoul in Chapter Three.

On first listening, these recordings are challenging to modern ears, ugly even in some cases. Archaic recording technology aside, the performance styles and now extinct expressive devices found within challenge well established truths regarding the performance practice of nineteenth-century music. (Many of these expressive devices disappeared from mainstream classical performance a little after World War II, in fact, almost precisely at the time of the first seminal recordings of Schubert's songs.)

We notice performers "indulging" in all types of extravagant expressive practices. They unapologetically slide between notes and treat the pulse with an almost jazz-like freedom; sometimes the pulse changes uniformly, sometimes they *surf* above a steady accompaniment. They alter notated rhythms and often ornament—sometimes even excessively—the notated melody. There is a fluidity and an uninhibited style to these early performers that is extremely compelling and (to many) deeply moving.

But what if these were not extravagant, unthinking or even indulgent practices, but evidence of a highly conditioned and un-notated nineteenth-century style of singing that many composers desired—even expected—of their singers? This chapter contextualises Schubert's music within a nineteenth-century performance practice, as evidenced in early recordings and written treatises. An attempt is also made to position the figure of one of Schubert's favourite singers as a reference to the author's own interpretation of Schubert's song repertoire.

“Our Master of Declamatory Song”: Repositioning Vogl’s Legacy

Johann Michael Vogl was one of Schubert’s favourite singers, and his dramatic training in the theatrical style of Italian opera and *Singspiele* would have led him to be an expert in un-notated expressive practices and improvisatory elements, often invisible in musical text. From 1795 till 1822 Vogl sang in 200 operas, notably Pizarro in Beethoven’s 1814 premier of *Fidelio*, as well as the premier of Schubert’s *Die Zwillingsbrüder* in 1819, the only *Singspiele* performed during the composer’s lifetime. From his first associations with Schubert in 1817, he was devoted to the performance, promotion, and publication of the composer’s music. It was through opera, steeped in its drama and theatricality, that Schubert first came to know Vogl, and it was, foremost, this theatrical style that drew him to the singer. Josef von Spaun, an inner member of Schubert’s circle remarked:

The great impression Gluck’s ‘Iphigenia’ made on Schubert was further enhanced by the masterly acting and splendid singing of the Court Opera singer Vogl. Schubert’s enthusiasm for that artist rose with every performance and nourished the ardent wish in him to become acquainted with this master of song.¹⁸⁴

The accounts of Vogl’s singing that are left to us today, in tandem with his connection to a well-documented late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century performance tradition, constitute valuable evidence into the performance practice of Schubert’s lieder. Figure 12 shows the informality and authority with which Vogl might have sung Schubert’s songs. The composer is seated at the piano next to him, as accompanist.

¹⁸⁴ Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: memoirs by his friends* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), 129.



Fig. 12. Moritz von Schwind, *A Schubert Evening at Josef von Spaun's*, C.1868.

In the summer of 1825 Schubert wrote to his brother Ferdinand the following description about his working relationship with Vogl:

The style and the manner in which Vogl sings and I accompany, so that at such a moment we seem to be one, is for these people *something utterly new and unheard-of* [emphasis added].¹⁸⁵

It is hard to make much of this cryptic account from Schubert, but it does suggest that the way in which the composer and singer performed was different to what had come previously. Vogl was reported to have declaimed and recited poems to Schubert before he set them to music, such was the importance both musicians laid on the dramatic and theatrical.¹⁸⁶ Vogl was championed for his uniquely expressive marriage of text and musical declamation, a preoccupation he hints at in his diary entry dated 1817:

Nothing else has so openly revealed the lack of a practical method of singing as Schubert's songs. How many would otherwise not have realised, perhaps, for the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 314.

¹⁸⁶ Andreas Liess, *Johann Michael Vogl: Hofoperist Und Schubertsänger* (Böhlau, Köln, 1954), 87.

first time what is meant by: Speech, poetry in tones, words in harmony, thought garbed in music. They would have learned that the loveliest word-poems of our greatest poets, translated into a musical idiom of this kind, may be enhanced, even surpassed.¹⁸⁷

Could the “lack of a practical method” that Schubert’s songs provoked in Vogl perhaps further the notion that Schubert’s style was altogether new?¹⁸⁸ After all, Schubert himself uses the term “something utterly new”.¹⁸⁹

Schubert’s songs offer a heightened connection between pianist and singer in which the accompaniment was promoted to match the importance of the voice, compositionally and dramatically. The expressive interplay between singer and piano is a distinctly Schubertian characteristic, and unique from the songs of previous composers such as Haydn (1732–1809), Mozart and Weber (1786–1826).

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749–1832) dramatic poem “Die Erbkönig” became Vogl’s declamatory signature piece. In Vienna’s *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* the critic refers to Vogl as “our master of declamatory song,” and that Vogl performed *Erbkönig* with “all his greatness.”¹⁹⁰ Spaun added later that: “By his performance Vogl created an interest not only in the music but in *the poem* as well.”¹⁹¹ Vogl’s strength lay in his theatricality and in his fascination of the rhetorical, all of which place him squarely within Biedermeier culture.¹⁹² Muns notes:

[The] declamation theory inherited most of its concepts from rhetoric. It also continued the age-old rhetorical interest in the expressive and musical qualities of speech prosody. A widespread doctrine holds that there is a vocal continuum, from declamation as a heightened form of speech to song as heightened declamation.¹⁹³

It is possible Vogl had peculiarities not common to other singers of his generation. It is even possible there is some truth in the accusations he might have taken liberties with Schubert’s music.¹⁹⁴ He was

¹⁸⁷ Deutsch, *Memoirs*, 314.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 870–6.

¹⁹¹ Liess, *Johann Michael Vogl*, 87.

¹⁹² For more on Biedermeier culture see Alice M. Hanson, *Musical Life in Biedermeier Vienna*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

¹⁹³ Lodewijk Muns, “Concert Song and Concert Speech around 1800,” *Music & Letters* Vol 98, No.3 (2017), 393, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcx082>

¹⁹⁴ A large preoccupation of literature in recent years regarding Vogl’s performance practice and expressive singing focus on the polemic issue of his taking liberties with Schubert’s music. Notable sources include Walther Dürr, “Schubert and Johann Michael Vogl: A Reappraisal”, *19th-Century Music* 3, no. 2 (1979), David Montgomery’s two publications “Modern Schubert Interpretation in the Light

after all criticised for his excessive dramatic flair, even his alleged dandyism:¹⁹⁵

Michael Vogl, it is true, overstepped the permissible limits more and more [...] His performances were marked by an unmistakable affectation [...] In performance, Vogl often achieved a momentary effect with a word spoken tonelessly, a shout or a falsetto note, none of which could be justified artistically, nor repeated by anyone else.¹⁹⁶

Many accounts of Vogl, such as this from Leopold von Sonnleithner, a member of Schubert's inner circle, were written many years after Schubert's death, and by that time the Vienna of Beethoven and Schubert had changed, Montgomery suggesting:

...it had become a city of cultural memories instead of realities. Schubert's songs must have suffered enormously in the hands of sentimentally-minded personalities determined to recapture the past. Posthumous accounts of Schubert's music grew less and less reliable with the years and thus more susceptible to polemics.¹⁹⁷

Within the doctrines of the *Werktreue* movement (translated as *true to the work*), which gained momentum in the course of the nineteenth century, perhaps Vogl's critics can be put into clearer perspective.¹⁹⁸ *Werktreue* served to "demote" the idea of the performer to a position of a mere vessel to the musical work.¹⁹⁹

A singer of great expressive potential, leanings towards occasional "dandyism", and who assisted in the published alterations of Schubert's scores might very well have come under posthumous scrutiny in the latter half of that century. The duty of performers became, according to Goehr, "to show allegiance to the works of the composers."²⁰⁰ This meant that:

of the Pedagogical Sources of His Day Early Music", *Early Music*, Vol. 25, No. 1. (1997), 100–118, and "Franz Schubert's Music in Performance", *Compositional Ideals, Notational Intent, Historical Realities, Pedagogical Foundations. Monographs in Musicology*, No. 11. Hillsdale, (2003). Further dissertations on the topic include, Timothy Mussard, "Embellishing Schubert's songs: a performance practice", (DMA dissertation, University of Washington, 1987), Joseph R. Matson', "Johann Michael Vogl's Alterations to Schubert's Die schöne Müllerin", (Thesis dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2009)

¹⁹⁵ Deutsch, *Memoirs*, 573.

¹⁹⁶ Deutsch, *Memoirs*, 111.

¹⁹⁷ Montgomery, "Franz Schubert's Music", 21.

¹⁹⁸ For more information on *Werktreue* see Mary Hunter, "To Play as If from the Soul of the Composer" The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 58, No. 2 University of California Press (2005) 357–398.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 231–232.

...they had to comply as perfectly as possible with the scores composers provided [...] Performers should interpret works in order to present the work as it truly is with regard to both its structural and expressive aspects [...] A performance met the *Werktreue* ideal most satisfactorily, it was finally decided, when it achieved complete transparency.²⁰¹

The idea of the “invisible performer”, whose highest level could be reached through total self-effacement, gained momentum as the nineteenth century progressed, and in some ways had its torch relit by modernist ideologies within twentieth century musicology. Taruskin draws on an interesting current day example of this notion. In a recent review of Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* performed by famous lieder interpreter Ian Bostridge, a critic praised the singer for his apparent “self-elimination” during the performance.²⁰² The invisibility of the performer, whose personality is completely evacuated in order to best express the intentions of the composer through a literal reading of the text, can be seen as a remnant of *Werktreue* culture.

Schubert would not have understood what the critic reviewing Bostridge’s *Dichterliebe* was talking about. Vogl’s personality and expressive qualities were what inspired and drew Schubert to his singing, and were crucial not only to his compositional process, but also the performance of his works. Potter too, shares this opinion:

Our overly literal respect for pre-twentieth-century composers’ scores is something that neither original composer nor performer would recognize. We can cope with a score - a controlled environment, standardized and quantifiable. What Schubert actually heard would probably have been none of these things. Schubert was inspired by the performances of Vogl, whereas we tend to prefer measurable excellence to the randomness of inspiration.²⁰³

The subsequent fidelity towards printed notation that took hold in the late nineteenth-century could not be further at odds with the musical culture of Vogl’s generation. An explicit description of how a text-based fidelity represented an aberration of early-nineteenth century thinking comes from *Le Pianist*, a mid-1830’s French music journal devoted entirely to the piano. Fidelity towards printed notation, in the estimation of *Le Pianist*, “[...] robbed the performer of his or her domain, desiccated the piece, and

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Richard Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1.

²⁰³ Potter, “Beggar at the Door”, 549.

bored the listener.”²⁰⁴

Opera was partly shielded from the *Werktreue* austerity, but concert and recital audiences began to expect a heightened reverence.²⁰⁵ As it gained momentum, it is possible the ideology carried with it a reluctance for future singers to indulge so heavily in un-notated expressive practices. Could it be these expressive practices that Sonnleithner and others retrospectively found so offensive in Vogl’s singing? Schubert’s image continued to gather a canonised stature throughout the nineteenth century, and it is very likely that un-notated performance practices, such as *portamento*, tempo modification and declamatory text delivery, were at odds with the sacred vision of his work. Youens suggests that “[a]s the nineteenth-century tastes shifted and greater adherence to the composers notated wishes became fashionable, one can trace a gradual purging of the score.”²⁰⁶

Sadly, we have no recordings of Johann Michael Vogl. Some scholars would suggest we have no way of knowing how he even might have sounded.²⁰⁷ We do, however, know he was operating within an Italianate aesthetic, a style that had been well established in Vienna from even before Mozart’s arrival in that city. Schubert’s teacher was, after all, famed Italian composer Antonio Salieri. We know that late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Italian teachers such as Corri, Vaccai and Garcia documented expressive vocal practices such as *portamento* and *tempo rubato*, which were not exclusively the domain of opera singers. Potter notes “[t]hough almost all of Garcia’s examples are from operas, it must be remembered that successful singers sang operatic arias in concerts alongside non-operatic material.”²⁰⁸

Is there any reason for us to believe an advanced virtuoso of great culture such as Vogl, when singing Schubert’s new songs, would have dramatically altered his rich palate of stage-led, un-notated expressive practices he had developed and nurtured throughout his career? If we accept that practices did change more slowly in the nineteenth century, and that, like the case of Fischer-Dieskau, a singer rarely re-builds their core technique or expressive philosophy, might the gulf that separates us from Vogl be narrower than we think?

²⁰⁴ Shaena B Weitz, “Monochromatic and Polychromatic Performance: Improvisatory Alteration in Early Nineteenth-Century French Pianism”, *The Musical Quarterly*, Volume 101, Issue 1, (2018): 76–109, DOI: 10.1093/musqtl/gdy011.

²⁰⁵ Van Tassel “Something Utterly New”, 709.

²⁰⁶ Susan Youens, *Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 21.

²⁰⁷ Montgomery, “Modern Schubert, 104, suggests “The pedagogical sources of Schubert’s day reveal nothing about his own thinking, for he made no impact upon the theoretical world”, claiming also that because Vogl left no vocal treatise of his own we have no reliable evidence of how he might have sung.

²⁰⁸ Potter, “Beggar at the Door”, 538.

Potter suggests “It is very hard to judge how excellent these old singers [Vogl] were without a common standard to apply.”²⁰⁹ If we look to early recorded singers such as Santley, Walter, Capoul and even Moreschi, then we may indeed have something approaching a “common standard” for reclaiming the expressive sound world of Johann Michael Vogl.²¹⁰

The Recording Project: A New Approach

In April, 2018, historical keyboardist Dr Erin Helyard and I began a commission from the Australian Broadcasting Company to undertake the first Australian historically informed recordings of Schubert’s three major song cycles, *Winterreise*, *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Schwanengesang*.²¹¹ *Winterreise* was released on the ABC Classics Label in September that year and *Die schöne Müllerin* in July 2020. (see Figure 13, showing the CD sleeves. *Schwanengesang* at the time of writing this thesis remains unrecorded).²¹²



Fig. 13. David Greco & Erin Helyard, *Winterreise* & *Müllerin* CD sleeves

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 549.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ From here on the first-person voice is adopted to explore the interpretative choices made in experimenting with historical knowledge to develop interpretations of Schubert’s song repertoire.

²¹² This project represents the first professional attempts at an historically informed reading of these works recorded in Australia to receive national and international distribution. David Greco (baritone) and Erin Helyard (fortepiano). *Winterreise*. ABC Classics ABC4817470, 2018. CD, *Die schöne Müllerin*. ABC Classic ABC4818741, 2020. CD

Helyard himself is known for his research into historical piano techniques and the HIP of music ranging from the seventeenth to early nineteenth century. On these recordings he uses replica nineteenth-century Anton Graf Viennese pianos built by Chris Maene (*Winterreise*, 2015) and Paul McNulty (*Müllerin*, 2016).

Helyard and I were drawn to this project with a shared fascination for the figure of Johann Michael Vogl and the expressive sound world he might have occupied. Distinguishing itself perhaps from other HIP recordings of these works, we were equally inspired by the early recordings of singers whose careers and education were firmly rooted in the nineteenth century.²¹³ Through the combined investigation of extinct expressive practices documented in early nineteenth-century sources and subsequently demonstrated by the oldest singers on record, we attempted to revision the expressive sound world of Schubert's oft-recorded masterpieces. In the pages that follow, I explore the many ways Helyard and I attempted to restore early nineteenth-century expressive practices within this music. The reader is encouraged to listen to the ABC recordings to consider the decisions made and impact achieved.²¹⁴

Partaking in Vogl's "Liberties": Ornamenting Schubert²¹⁵

Vogl was known to embellish Schubert's lieder, and indeed some of his ornaments survive.²¹⁶ Historically speaking this should come as no surprise "—for what Vogl was doing was only part of the soloist's normal contribution to a performance".²¹⁷ Evidence reveals that Vogl physically wrote out some of his ornaments, but it is almost certain that the majority of these were the result of un-notated improvisatory practices, a sentiment echoed by Walther Dürr, the editor in-chief of the most recent authoritative Urtext Schubert edition *Neue Schubert Ausgabe*:

Such practices were characteristic for Schubert's time, and Schubert surely accepted his songs as embellished by Vogl just as readily as his friends did. But it is also true that Vogl's embellishments were improvised.²¹⁸

²¹³ Although other prominent recordings such as Steier/Pregardian & recent recording Mark Padmore (tenor) and Kristian Bezuidenhout (fortepiano). *Winterreise*. Harmonia Mundi 902264, 2018. CD, make an attempt, through the use of historical pianos and vocal techniques, to provide a HIP reading of the works, none mention the investigation of historical early recordings.

²¹⁴ The ABC recordings of *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* represent a primary component of my submitted performance portfolio.

²¹⁵ Owing to the word limit of this thesis I will not analyse each song, but rather give indicative examples of each practice.

²¹⁶ Vogl's published embellishments in Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* are detailed in Mussard, "Embellishing Schubert's songs", and Matson, "Johann Michael Vogl's Alterations".

²¹⁷ Van Tassel 'Something Utterly New', 709.

²¹⁸ Dürr, "A Reappraisal", 140.

The embellishments, compared to those we may expect in operatic works of the time, appear quite minimal—isolated to passing note *appoggiaturas*, turns and occasional altered note-values—all of which are observed in the early recordings. Unfortunately, eminent musicians such as Fischer-Dieskau hold the misinformed idea, echoed by many scholars, that Vogl's published alterations, to note-values especially, were to compensate for his age and diminished breath capacity:

Vogl's actual ornamentations were kept within quite reasonable bounds—shortage of breath and vocal imitations were the much more frequent cause of [his] alterations.²¹⁹

This theory is refuted by very clear recorded evidence of this practice by early singers such as Gervase Elwes, Marchella Sembrich and Nellie Melba, all of whom at the time of recording were relatively youthful. In Fischer-Dieskau's defence, however, he does concede that in altering note-values, Vogl "above all...wanted to emphasise the drama of the song."²²⁰

Strophic songs seem to have occupied the focus of much of Vogl's ornamentation, and *Die schöne Müllerin*, more so than *Winterreise*, features many.²²¹ Dürr, in order to get as close as possible to the practices of Schubert and Vogl, recommends introducing ornamentation "if not in every stanza then probably in the final stanza wherever warranted by emotionally charged words."²²²

Inspired by Vogl's example I focus my embellishments on strophic songs and areas with repetitious melodic material in each cycle. Following nineteenth-century practice, I introduce my own embellishments, and do not copy Vogl's. In *Müllerin* this is not difficult because of the high number of strophic numbers and many lyrical phrases. In *Winterreise* the embellishments tend to sweeten the relatively fewer lyrical moments, consequently producing a brief respite from the intensely sombre poetry.

In "Gefrorne Tränen" (song no. 3, *Winterreise*), a chromatic *appoggiatura* is added to the word "geweinet" (*weeping*) to highlight the despair of the protagonist.

Ob es mir denn entgangen,
Daß ich geweinet hab'?

How could I have not noticed,
That I have been weeping?

²¹⁹ Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Schubert's Songs: A Biographical Study* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 293.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Vogl ornamented famous strophic songs such as *An Sylvia*, *An die Musik*, and from *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Mein* and *Das Wandern*.

²²² Dürr, "A Reappraisal", 140.

Ex. 5.1. "Gefrorne Tränen" (*Winterreise*), mm.6–11– [Sound File 33](#)

Greco

Schubert

daß ich ge - weinet hab'? daß ich ge - wei - net hab'?

Arguably the most famous song of the cycle, "Der Lindenbaum" (song no. 5, *Winterreise*) is in modified strophic format, with repeated thematic material. In the last verse, I take this opportunity to add passing notes and turns at specific cadences to sweeten the melodic material for what is one of the lighter and more joyful songs, as the protagonist, steeped in nostalgia, dreams of his lost love.

Ex. 5.2. "Der Lindenbaum" (*Winterreise*), mm.66–76– [Sound File 34](#)

Greco

Schubert

Nun bin ich manche Stu - nde ent - fernt von jenem

Greco

Schubert

Ort, und im - - mer hör' ich's rau - schen: Du fän - - dest Ruhe

Greco

Schubert

dort! Du fän - - dest Ruhe dort!

“Das Wandern” (song no. 1, *Müllerin*) features five verses, similar to many songs within the cycle, and might seem like an obstacle to many singers attempting to maintain interest and variety of expression. (The same applies to the accompaniment). The approach Helyard and I took with this song represents one similar to many of the other strophic songs within the cycle, with an inclination to ornament the last versus with embellishments that illuminate the poetry.

The third verse deals with the perpetual motion of the mill-stone wheel. By altering the rhythm in the vocal-line I could highlight the length and breadth of the turning motion of the wheel.

Die gar nicht gerne stille stehn,
Die sich mein Tag nicht müde drehn,
Die Räder.

They can hardly bear to be still,
They never tire all the livelong day,
The wheels.

Ex. 5.3. “Das Wandern” (*Müllerin*), mm. 51–59 – [Sound File 35](#)

Greco

Schubert

Die gar nicht gerne still - e stehn Die sich mein Tag nicht

Greco

Schubert

mü-de drehn, Die Rä - der Die Rä - der Die Rä - der, Die

Greco

Schubert

Rä - der

(*Note Helyard’s embellishments in the piano immediately following to set up the grinding motion of the heavy stone depicted in the following verse.)

The embellishments in the piano and voice in the final verse are conceived to depict the wonder and excitement of the poet embarking on his journey, and are thusly restricted to flourishes of the final utterance of the word “wandern”.

O Wandern, Wandern, meine Lust,
O Wandern!
Herr Meister und Frau Meisterin,
Laßt mich in Frieden weiter ziehn
Und wandern.

O wand'ring, wand'ring, you my joy,
O wand'ring!
Good master and good mistress mine,
Let me freely go on my way,
And wander.

Ex. 5.4. “Das Wandern” (*Müllerin*), mm. 92–10 – [Sound File 36](#)

Greco

Schubert

Herr Mei - ster und Frau Mei - ster - in, Laßt mich in Frie - den

wei - ter ziehn Und wan - - dern, Und wan - - dern, Und wan - - dern, Und

Greco

Schubert

wan - - dern.

Early Nineteenth-Century *Portamento* and *Rubato* Re-imagined

Schubert's dates place him firmly within an early nineteenth-century music tradition, the expressive practices of which are clearly outlined in the writing of Corri, Vaccai and Garcia. These written sources, however, are often allied solely to music within Italy at the time, such as Schubert's Italian contemporaries, Bellini and Donizetti (whose works indeed preoccupy the majority of Garcia's writing for example). Nonetheless, we are reminded that Vienna was also steeped in a rich Italianate tradition during this period, whose many expressive practices such as *portamento* and *rubato* would have been deeply imbedded in the performance rhetoric of artists within that city. Further to this, Vogl also was some thirty years older than Schubert, and whose performance practice would have been heavily rooted in a late eighteenth-century style, making the relevance of particularly Corri's writing crucial.²²³ It was therefore important for Helyard and I to isolate expressive practices that were unique to the first part of the nineteenth century.

Descriptions of *portamento* at this time clearly outline the significance of the leaping grace and anticipation grace as the dominant forms of expressive sliding, and it is no coincidence these match practices demonstrated by the oldest singers on record such as Santley, Capoul and Patti. It is certain the style of *portamento* Vogl would have known and used would have featured heavily the grace-like *appoggiaturas*, especially the leaping grace which we know was unique to the latter eighteenth, early nineteenth century.

The last verse of "Das Wandern" (song no. 1, *Müllerin*) is the most optimistic in the song with the poet's resolute affirmation:

O Wandern, Wandern, meine Lust,
O Wandern!
Herr Meister und Frau Meisterin,
Laßt mich in Frieden weiter ziehn
Und wandern.

O wand'ring, wand'ring, you my joy,
O wand'ring!
Good master and good mistress mine,
Let me go on my way in peace,
And wander.

The *energetic* nature and the wide intervals lend themselves perfectly to the use of Corri's leaping grace particularly on the words "O Wandern" ([Sound File 37](#))

²²³ Corri's writing spans from the last quarter of the eighteenth century through till 1810.

At the time of the ABC recording of *Müllerin* and the written analysis component of this study a crucial piece of recorded evidence was unknown to me. The subsequent discovery of this came to have extreme significance for the particular variety of *portamento* I used in this song.

Baritone Sir George Henschel (1850–1934) is the oldest male singer on gramophone to leave a recording of “Das Wandern”, or in fact any piece from *Müllerin*. Deeply embedded in the musical landscape of mid-late nineteenth century Germany, coupled with his close ties to Brahms, Clara Schumann and Liszt, he represents a valuable stylistic reference. His age also means he likely avoided much of the harsh censorship of the *werktreue* movement.



Fig. 14. George Henschel, (no title), C.1891.

Henschel’s *portamento* on his 1928 recording contains explicit use of the leaping grace, but what is astounding to note is that he positions the expressive device identically to my own, on the words “O Wandern”. The following excerpt compares my 2019 recording to Henschel’s 1928 version of the same phrases. ([Sound File 38](#))

We observe especially from the recordings of Walter and Patti, the particularly effective melancholy sentiment that often accompanies the use of the anticipation grace, and that the inherent *rubato* within this device resulting from the anticipated destination-note was highly expressive. “Morgengruß” (song no. 8, *Müllerin*) is a delicate and highly sentimental song where the poet contemplates the possibility his feelings are not met with mutual affection from the beautiful miller girl. The poet, however, remains optimistic and in the last verse I use the anticipation grace in close succession to intensify this “affect” by connecting the phrase “Und aus dem tiefen Herzen ruft–Die Liebe Leid und Sorgen” (*And from the depths of the heart–Love draws grief and cares*). Particularly effective is its use on the last note “Sorgen” (*worries*) where the grace anticipates Helyard’s change of chord, creating a *tempo rubato* and making the voice stand out in relief of the accompaniment.

Die Lerche wirbelt in der Luft,
Und aus dem tiefen Herzen ruft –
Die Liebe Leid und Sorgen.
Leid und Sorgen.

The lark is trilling high in the air,
And from the depths of the heart
Love draws grief and cares.
Grief and worries.

Score on next page

Ex. 5.5. "Morgengruß" (Müllerin), mm.30–40 (Verse 4) – [Sound File 39](#)

4. Die Ler- che wir- belt in der Luft, und

4. aus dem tie- fen Her- zen ruft die Lie- be Leid und

4. Sor- gen, die Lie- be Leid und Sor- gen, Leid und

4. Sor- gen.

Similarly, in “Trockne Blumen” (song no. 18, *Müllerin*) I use a combination of the graces to heighten expression. It is interesting to note that I gravitate towards a use of the energised leaping grace for verbs and actions—“machen” (*to do*), “kommen” (*to come*), “warden” (*to become*)—reserving sentimental and descriptive words for the melancholier anticipation grace, for example the two on “Liebe” (*love*).

Ex. 5.6. “Trockne Blumen” (*Müllerin*), mm.16–24 – [Sound File 40](#)

16 LG AG AG

Ach Trä-nen ma-chen nicht mai - en - grün, ma-chen to - te Lie- be nicht

20 LG

wie - der_ blü- hn, und Lenz wird kom - men, und Win - ter wird gehn, und

23 LG

Blü- lein wer- den im Gra - se_ stehn,

This is another moment when a piece of encouraging evidence was discovered subsequent to the recording process that confirmed an historical precedent for my specific use of *portamento*. In January of 1824, within a year of *Müllerin's* composition, and within months of its publishing, Schubert composed his *Introduction and Variations on Trockne Blumen* for flute and piano. Within its pages I was excited to learn that this time it was not Vogl with whom my expressive practices aligned, but actually Schubert himself.

In the variations Schubert inserts the leaping grace in the ornamented flute line as well as in the piano (Ex. 5.7), at precisely the same moment as my un-notated practices in the song itself—on the words “machen” and “kommen” (See Ex. 5.6, bars 17 and 21). The composer, however, makes no such use of the anticipation grace in the variations, which although was still used, clearly had not yet surpassed the leaping grace as the fashionable variant of *portamento* at the time.

Ex. 5.7. Theme One: *Introduction and Variations on Trockne Blumen*, D.802, mm.1–15

The image shows a page of a musical score for Schubert's *Introduction and Variations on Trockne Blumen*, D.802, measures 1–15. The tempo is marked 'Andantino'. The score is in 2/4 time. The piano part is marked 'pp' (pianissimo). The flute line is marked 'THEME 1.' and 'pp'. Two red circles highlight specific passages: one in the piano part (measures 10-11) and one in the flute part (measures 12-13).

We know that Vogl was an exponent of a declamatory style of singing, which “inherited most of its concepts from rhetoric”, as a kind of “heightened form of speech.”²²⁴ Rhetorical or heightened speech carries an inherent freedom of meter, or *rubato* of its own. This expressive technique is therefore common to the declamatory delivery of an actor, as to the singer in their song.

Vogl’s preoccupation with reciting and “acting out” poems to Schubert is well documented, and the idea of him delivering these at a metronomically unvaried rate seems ludicrous, so how can this have been accepted then in his songs—even in the absence of any form of written tempo modification?²²⁵ After studying the written evidence and recordings of nineteenth-century singers there was no doubt that a world of hidden expressive tempo instruction lay beneath Schubert’s notes and the poet’s texts on the page.

Tempo rubato was an expressive technique reserved for the greatest musicians of the early nineteenth century, and arguably one of the greatest of these was Italian Soprano Guidita Pasta (1797–1865), who famously created the title roles of Bellini’s *Norma* and Donizetti’s *Anna Bolena*. Critic Henry Chorley refers to Pasta’s *tempo rubato* as a “gift [of] measurement and proportion of time.”²²⁶ This included “metronomic correctness” balanced by an “artful license in giving and taking.”²²⁷ Garcia describes it more clearly in relation to famous contemporaries of Vogl:

Two artists of a very different class—Garcia (1775–1832) & Paganini (1782–1840) excelled in the use of *tempo rubato* [...] while the time was regularly maintained by an orchestra, they would abandon themselves to their inspiration.²²⁸

Just how these pioneers of early nineteenth-century style “abandoned themselves” is a further question. Evidence gleaned from Garcia’s descriptions of *prolongation* together with the type of *rubato* we hear from the oldest singers on record point towards altered note-values being an important component.

We notice that prosodic inflections of words often coincide with many early singers using this form of *tempo rubato*, and in fact Vogl himself left an explicit example of this practice in his annotations of Schubert’s songs. (Not surprisingly these are often referred to as “embellishments” in most important

²²⁴ Muns, “Concert Song”, 393.

²²⁵ Ibid., 382.

²²⁶ Rosenblum, “The Uses of Rubato”, 129–130.

²²⁷ Ibid., 41.

²²⁸ Garcia, *Treatise*, 52.

literature on the subject—highlighting the lack of proper historical context in which most writers operate).²²⁹

“Am Feierabend” (song no. 5, *Müllerin*) features a dramatic scene in which the voice of the poet’s master addresses his employees:

Und der Meister spricht zu Allen:
Euer Werk hat mir gefallen;

And the master says to us all:
"I am pleased with your work"

Schubert marks a quasi-recitativo indication for this section, which only heightens the argument for Vogl’s use of *tempo rubato*. Observe how he shortens and lengthens certain notes depending on the prosodic nature of the words in clear reference to a declamatory delivery.

Ex. 5.8(a). “Am Feierabend” (*Müllerin* – Vogl’s Annotations), mm.45–49

Vogl



Schubert



Und der Mei- ster spricht zu Al - len: Eu - er Werk hat mir ge - fal - len

I was similarly inspired to emulate this effect at this precise moment to make the voice of the master stand out in relief to the poet’s.

Ex. 5.8(b). “Am Feierabend” (*Müllerin* – Greco’s Annotations), mm.45–49 – [Sound File 41](#)

Greco



Schubert



Und der Mei- ster spricht zu Al - len: Eu - er Werk hat mir ge - fal - len

²²⁹ Writers such as Dürr, "A Reappraisal" and Montgomery, "Franz Schubert's Music".

In “Der Leiermann” (song no. 24, *Winterreise*), the chilling conclusion to the cycle, the protagonist anxiously speaks to the haunting figure of the hurdy-gurdy man. I use altered note-values (*tempo rubato*) to give as close a spoken quality as possible to the poet’s desperate plea:

Wunderlicher Alter!
Soll ich mit dir geh'n?
Willst zu meinen Liedern
Deine Leier dreh'n?

Strange old man!
Shall I go with you?
Will you play my songs
On your organ?

Note that the *tempo rubato* follows the long-short description of Garcia’s *prolongation*.

Ex. 5.9. “Der Leiermann” (*Winterreise*), mm.43 – [Sound File 42](#)

Greco

Schubert

dreht, und sei - ne Lei - er steht ihm nim-mer still.

dreht, und sei - ne Lei - - er steht ihm nim-mer still.

Wun - derli - cher Al - ter, soll ich mit dir geh'n?

We know that the other important form of tempo modification in the early nineteenth-century was structural *rubato*; Garcia’s coined *irregularities in time*. Much of this form of tempo modification was clearly un-notated as observed from the practices of early recorded singers as well as the written treatises. It is easy enough to follow a *ritardando* or *accelerando* when marked in the score, but just how integrated was un-notated expressive rubato in musical life of the early nineteenth-century, and to what extent was it considered “normative”?

In 1833 J. Feski, a critic in a German music journal commented on the extent to which un-notated tempo fluctuations had become a major part of the performance practise of the early decades of the nineteenth century:

ritardando and *accelerando* alternate all the time. This manner has already become so fixed in the minds of the musical public that they firmly believe a diminuendo must be slowed down and a crescendo speeded up; a tender phrase (e.g. in an allegro) will be performed more slowly, a powerful one faster.²³⁰

This account supports much of the evidence concerning the correlation between dynamic markings and un-notated *rubato* observed in the early recordings of Santley, Patti and Melba, for example. Perhaps Schubert's greatest rival, Weber, clarifies this precedent – "The beat should not be a tyrannical restriction or the driving of a mill hammer. On the contrary, it should be to music what the pulse beat is to the life of a man."²³¹

The weathervane swings uncontrollably in the wind in "Die Wetterfahne" (song no.2, *Winterreise*) as does the poet's turbulent mental state. Schubert marks *fortissimo* and two large *crescendi* in the poet's final angry utterance:

Was fragen sie nach meinen Schmerzen?
Ihr Kind ist eine reiche Braut!

Why should they care about my grief?
Their child is a rich bride

Following Garcia's advice in applying the *accelerando* to the *crescendo*, and as seen in nearly every early recording above, Helyard and I use an un-notated *accelerando* to match the *crescendo* indications in the piano part for dramatic effect.

²³⁰ Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 384.

²³¹ Elliott, *Singing in Style*, 219.

(laut)
Was fra - gen sie nach meinen Schmerzen? was fra - gen sie nach meinen
Schmerzen? ihr Kind ist ei - ne rei - - - che Braut.

cresc. *mf* *cresc.*

tr *pp* *tr*

The poet is anxious at seeing the mill house and the opportunities it might hold. In “Halt” (song no. 3, *Müllerin*) I am able to isolate subtleties of contrasting emotion through a variety of *rubato* and *portamento* that would otherwise be impossible to portray in such close proximity.

An energised leaping grace combined with a *tempo rubato* highlights the poet’s anticipation and rhetorical unease on the phrase:

Und das Haus, wie so traulich!
Und die Fenster, wie blank'!

The house looks so inviting,
The windows so clean and shiny!

This is contrasted immediately by an *accelerando* to mark the *crescendo* in the piano part signalling the poet’s resolute decision.

Und die Sonne, wie helle
Vom Himmel sie scheint!

And how brightly the sun
Shines from the sky!

Ex. 5.11. "Halt" (Müllerin), mm.31-41 - [Sound File 44](#)

Greco

Schubert

Und das Haus, wie so trau - lich! Und die

Fe - - nster, wie bla - - nk! Und die Son - - ne, wie

hel - - le Vom Him - - mel sie scheint!

Benjamin Britten (1913–1979) once observed just how much *Winterreise* relies on the vocalist and pianist to bring it to life:

One of the most alarming things I always find, when performing this work, is that there is actually so little on the page. [Schubert] gets the most extraordinary moods and atmospheres with so few notes. [...] He leaves it all very much up to the performers.²³²

Britten's astute observation bears much resonance with the process behind which Helyard and I attempted to realise the historical sound world of Schubert's music. Devices such as *portamento*, ornamentation and *rubato* may seem like small details when analysed in isolation, but these subtle, explicit practices formed part of a unique and forgotten language that was essential to the expressive communication between nineteenth-century singers, and their audience.

²³² Donald Gislason, "Program Notes: Gerald Finley & Julius Drake", Vancouver Recital Society, (January 17, 2014), <https://vanrecital.com/2014/01/program-notes-gerald-finley-julius-drake/>.

We both feel that these devices—far from being meaningless and inexpressive—make the music and text far more fresh and alive than the literalist approach that one often hears. Beyond the consideration of this study perhaps, it bears remembering that both *rubato* and *portamento* are used today much more by popular singers with much larger audiences than that of trained classical musicians. Clearly, their expressive worth remains.

Conclusion

Expression is intrinsic to musical style, but style and performance practice is a thing which is forever changing. It constantly shifts and is governed by influential practitioners, cultural factors, and taste and relevance. As uncomfortable as it is for musicians to admit today, established and sanctioned expressive practices within classical music have not evolved from a homogenous or uninterrupted chain of practice, but rather as the result of a ruptured history. Whether it was the austerity of *werktreue*, the fetishisation of innovation and structure within the minimalist movement, or simply the unprecedented rate of change in the twentieth century, many celebrated expressive traditions of the nineteenth century fell into extinction over the course of the last hundred years. The resulting increased fidelity towards printed notation that still currently consumes the classical singer represents an aberration of late nineteenth-century thinking and practice. For the nineteenth-century singer and composer alike, an ideal performance could never exist on paper alone, it required the performer's personality and individual expression to illuminate the work.

Early recordings preserved many of the expressive practices from singers whose careers stretched back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Despite their important implications for the performance practice of core works within the classical vocal canon, old recordings are still viewed with a scepticism and often held to different standards to those of contemporary "live" or recorded performances. These recordings are often paradoxically venerated and yet ignored as a resource from which we might learn.

After all, how can something that moved an audience in 1827 possibly have relevance today? Historic recordings, with the archaic sounds of forgotten singers sometimes well past their prime, "indulging" in expressive practices may strike us as less accurate, or extravagant even, but that is because performers then understood the score in ways that are now lost to us.

Through the systematic comparison of written treatises and the oldest singers on record, this study reveals that beneath the heavy surface noise of these recordings there lies a lost language of expression and a rich tradition of conditioned un-notated vocal practices that occupied the nineteenth-century singer.

Familiar confused narratives, however, continue to play out, inside and out of the music conservatory, from respected performers operating without a deep historical and stylistic context, similar to Graham Johnson's comment:

Music on paper has to be released into life by the performer, and sometimes the best way of doing this is to follow the composer's directions faithfully, and sometimes the only way is to take the law into your own hands. But when and how, and with which composers, that is the question, and in that question alone lies the work of a lifetime.²³³

Perhaps if students and performers alike knew how to “listen” and had the tools with which to *read behind the score*, they may know how to interpret the composer's score and save themselves the lifelong toil to which Johnson is devoted.

We need only listen to the most famous Brünnhilde and Isolde of the latter nineteenth-century in Lillian Nordica, or to Elgar's favourite tenor in Gervase Elwes to understand that the nineteenth-century composer's score was littered with hidden expressive tempo instruction. Indeed, the rich varieties of *portamento* heard in the recordings of Adelina Patti and Alessandro Moreschi for example, are testament to the “highest degree of refinement” an early nineteenth-century singer could attain, while exposing a tradition of expressive sliding that would have been familiar to not just Schubert and Verdi, but likely Mozart and Haydn as well.

The nineteenth-century singer had an interventionist approach to their expressivity. Instilled with a highly personal rhetoric and a heightened subjectivity compared to current performance which to modern taste they may appear overly sentimental. Practices such as *portamento* and *rubato*, however, assisted in creating a more transparent expressive sound world, one that was immediate, honest, and text-based, the wide varieties of which could so efficiently convey subtleties of prosody and emotional subtext. Abstract though it may sound, this study of extinct expressive practices that once occupied the nineteenth-century singer reveals that music from the so-called “Romantic era”, was much more *romantic* than we might have thought. These practices, however, would soon come under the censorious glare of opposing twentieth century doctrines that would see them as increasingly at odds with modern tastes, in an age obsessed with literalism and objectivity.

²³³ Graham Johnson, “The Lied in Performance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, edited by James Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 315–33.

John Potter, whose research on expressive nineteenth-century vocal *portamento* is unmatched, unwittingly set the challenge for a large portion of this study. (We can assume Potter's comments are as equally relevant to expressive practices such as *rubato*):

As research on early recordings gathers pace we are likely to see more debate about the possible revival of forgotten techniques and styles. Whether this will encourage singers to experiment anew with *portamento* is doubtful ... with both 'authenticists' and 'uninformed' performers in agreement about its awfulness, we are unlikely to see a revival of *portamento* in the near future despite the welcome recent beginnings of a revisionist musicology.²³⁴

With Potter's words the challenge for me was set. As one of the few recent vocal practitioners to write on this topic, my aim was to utilise the data and analyses gathered from this thesis in a practical way that could be disseminated not just in an academic circle, but also within the wider professional realm by way of commercial recordings. Here I am inspired to bridge the often-unfathomable gulf between musicology and performance.

The Australian Broadcasting Company's 2018–2020 recording commissions represents the first practical attempts at a wide-spread, professional distribution of HIP Schubert songs that are grounded in scholarly research. Remembering Dahlhaus' described process of controlled estrangement I experimented with the historical knowledge to revision an expressive sound world that might have been familiar, at least in part, to Schubert and his singers.

In the re-creation process, I found that by re-instating historical practices of *portamento* and *rubato*, I had a larger artillery of expressive choices at my disposal. Enabling me to illuminate the text with a subtlety and immediacy of emotion, I could convey a level of subtext that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. The accumulative effect of this experimentation brought me closer to what I believe to be the origins of a declamatory and rhetorical delivery in which Schubert's favourite singers were known to be pioneers.

This study stands alone in its attempt to recover the forgotten historic practices once intrinsic to a more subtle, honest and immediate expressive sound world. Yet, in the process, it has unwittingly built for itself a further charter: to involve performer scholars in publishing their findings for practical application.

²³⁴ Potter, "Beggar at the Door", 550.

Mainstream publishing houses are increasingly commissioning the new authoritative Urtext editions of instrumental works from Brahms, Beethoven, and Schumann and others from scholars with a strong background in HIP performance. The ideological imbalance within musicology, favouring nineteenth-century historically-informed research into instrumental music, extends once again to the realm of the professional practice. Not one major publishing house has of yet commissioned, or been even willing to consult with, a current scholar with a professional singing background.

The current thesis and portfolio of professional recordings emerge from my own dedication to the historically informed performance of nineteenth-century music. Perhaps it is in these words and through these recordings that John Potter and others may find hope after all in the revival of this rich expressive sound world, in which the nineteenth-century singer was so deeply defined.

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