Claudio Ordaz

A Comparison of Performance Practices of Johannes Brahms Second Symphony in D major, Opus 73

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the performance practices of Johannes Brahms’s Second Symphony in D major Op. 73. This includes discussions of nineteenth-century performance practice, a description of the orchestras Brahms worked with; Brahms as a performer and his correspondence, as well as a comparison of recordings of celebrated orchestras and conductors from the late nineteenth-century through the twenty first-century. The selection of recordings includes pre-second world war conductors such as Leopold Stokowski, Wilhelm Mengelberg, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Bruno Walter; it also compares mainstream musicians such as Carlos Kleiber and Simon Rattle, as well as Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Roger Norrington and John Eliiot Gardiner, widely identified among the historically informed movement. Brahms’s vast correspondence offers exceptional historical evidence for the study. The Investigation follows the recording analysis methods employed by Robert Philip in his book “Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900–1950” (1992) and includes an examination regarding metronome and verbal tempo markings, as well as the important aspects of vibrato, portamento and tempo rubato. Ultimately, this study suggests that important historical evidence is not sufficiently considered among historically informed interpretations of op. 73, and that they are not necessarily more historical than mainstream interpretations.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Anna and son Emil. It would not have been possible without their unconditional love, patience and support that inspire me to reach new and higher goals, and become a better individual every day.
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Prof. Mart Humal for his guidance through the process of writing this dissertation. Thank you Prof. Kristel Pappel for your guidance and encouragement during the final phase of this investigation. Additionally, I would like to thank Prof. Toomas Siitan who taught me important aspects about performance practice during his seminars. My heartfelt thanks to Prof. Margus Pärlas for having his door open and clarifying every aspect related to my studies always. My sincere thanks to Margit Võsa for her invaluable work. Many thanks to my colleagues for their constructive feedback during the doctoral seminars. I extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Marcia Fountain for her precise help concerning the use of language. To my family for their continuous support across the world, phone calls, letters and encouragement have been a great source of comfort. And last but not least, all my appreciation and gratitude to Prof. Eri Klas for his invaluable support and encouragement.
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1. Introduction

During my years of undergraduate studies in violin performance at the University of Texas in the late 1990’s, I became acquainted with an approach to music performance practice known as “historically authentic performance” or “period performance”, later named “historically informed performance” (HIP). A small ensemble formed by members of the faculty offered concerts from the baroque period. They played on “authentic instruments and applied the theories performance practices of early music. I became very interested on the subject, and soon I started asking questions to the members of the ensemble concerning their method and ideas. As a result of my conversations with those musicians I began to understand better the idea behind the historically informed performance movement.

Upon graduating from University, I moved to the Czech Republic to study orchestra conducting and violin at the Prague Conservatory. The active and rich musical life of the city, and my constant visits to Berlin and Vienna allowed me to attend live performances of some of the most prestigious HIP ensembles and musicians around the world such as Europa Galante, Il Giardino Armonico, Venice Baroque Orchestra, Charles Mackerras, Roger Norrington, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, et al.

Realizing my ignorance of this large part of performance practice affected me in a way that I began to question not only my own violin playing, but also my views of classical music in general. To my surprise, informal conversations with colleagues, musicians, and even some musicologists revealed a similar unawareness of HIP, as well as a division between non-HIP performance and HIP. This, increased my interest and curiosity to investigate the problems related to performance practices, and made me realize that research can help us not only to strengthen our understanding of music, but also to deliver more convincing and meaningful performances. Socrates pointed out that we should examine our life so that it becomes worthy. Similarly, music is in constant development and we must examine our views and criteria, being an intuitive performer in today’s Johannes Brahms Second Symphony world is just not enough.
Historically Informed Performance of Brahms’s orchestral works is a relatively new phenomenon. Until the last quarter of the twentieth-century it was believed that the style of playing of modern performers was the style of musicians during Brahms’s time. This possibly explains why HIP-Brahms appeared only recently. Although his music is still performed under those modern concepts, today we know that the performing style of the late nineteenth-century was considerably different than mainstream modern style. As the practice of HIP progressed to the music of Brahms, new recordings with this approach have emerged. Simultaneously, musicologists and musicians begun to study recordings of the early twentieth-century featuring musicians educated within the traditions of the late nineteenth-century. The performing style of this recordings sounds unfamiliar to present day audience, and at the same time it does not resemble the period style proposed by the HIP recordings. With all this new information, it can be sometimes challenging for a conducting student having to make musical decisions from varied and in some cases inconsistent sources. Thus, the student can be confronted with the challenge of presenting these concepts to an orchestra that is unfamiliar with these ideas. I had the opportunity to conduct Brahms’s Second Symphony D Major Op. 73 with the Estonian National Symphony. I remember asking the violas section for more volume of sound. Immediately, the musicians intensified their use of vibrato. On another passage, I recall asking the first violin section for a portamento. Some musicians in the section reacted with surprise, as if they would not understand what I mean. Some even refuse to play the portamento. With his study I intend to evaluate and balance the various sources already mentioned.

1.1. Aim of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to offer musicians, pedagogues and performers an introduction to aspects of performance practice in Johannes Brahms’s Second Symphony in D Major Op. 73 (1877). I intended to evaluate and study the work through different regards: Brahms as a performer and his preference for a large orchestra sound, nineteenth-century performance practice, existing literature, and a comparison of ten recordings that includes the first recording of the Second Symphony made in 1929. Ultimately, this study seeks to answer the essential research question of this dissertation: Are the Historically Informed interpretations of Brahms’s Second Symphony Op. 73 more historical than mainstream renditions? I hope
that this study grants the reader some awareness about present and past attitudes regarding the
performance practices of Brahms’s Second Symphony.

My curiosity to investigate the aspects of performance practice, and finding out whether
historically informed interpretation of Johannes Brahms’s Second Symphony are more
historically grounded than non-historical ones, was prompted by a similar study written by
American scholar Bernard Sherman (“Bach’s notation of tempo and early music
performance: some reconsiderations”; Sherman 2000: 455–466). The article was presented by
Prof. Toomas Siitan in a seminar on performance practice issues at the Estonian Academy of
Music and Theatre during the Spring of 2010, and gave me the final idea and focus of what
exactly I wanted to investigate. Sherman’s document deals with notational aspects in the
music of Johann Sebastian Bach, where he argues that Bach’s Historically Informed
interpretations ignore important notational distinctions, which makes them less historical than
pre-HIP renditions. Being aware of David Millsom’s research concerning late nineteenth-
century, specifically Joseph Joachim’s performing style and understanding Sherman’s
investigation, made me realize at least hypothetically that this could be the case with HIP-
Brahms, so I became inspired to investigate to what extent HIP interpretations of Brahms
incorporate the performing styles prevalent in the composer’s own time into their historical
approach.

Although the debate about HIP and mainstream interpretations is not new, this paper claims
that there is no single interpretation of op. 73 that is more “authentic” than others, and both
HIP and mainstream styles are blending in a “modern” style in which these styles become
indistinguishable, and where I situate myself. A clear example of this are Claudio Abbado’s
and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, as well as Estonian conductor Paavo Järvi’s and the
Bremen Chamber Orchestra interpretations of the Beethoven Symphonies, or Simon Rattle’s
and the Berlin Philharmonic Mozart Symphony no. 41.

1.2. Methodological overview. Selection of recordings

A research methodology employed by specialist on the history of early recordings and
musical style Robert Philip in his book “Early Recordings and Musical Style” (1992), has
been an important reference for my investigation. In this book, Philip affirms that early recordings are an important source for analyzing the history of musical performance, and concentrates on aspects of performance such as flexibility of tempo, rubato, the use of vibrato and portamento among string players. My investigation follows Philip’s method and compares ten recordings of the test subject composition, Johannes Brahms’s Second Symphony Op. 73, and data were collected concerning these characteristics of performance practice: flexibility of *tempi*; portamento; vibrato and portato. The data for each recording were compared with each other. Focus was placed on showing the various successful performance practices present in these recordings that may be valuable to performers and researchers.

The recordings were selected considering different criteria. An effort was made to include recordings from as many decades as possible, beginning with the first recording made in 1929 performed by Philadelphia Orchestra and conducted by Leopold Stokowski, following all the way to the twenty-first century. Recordings featuring a historical approach were selected considering that Roger Norrington, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and John Eliot Gardiner are some of the most representative musicians among the HIP-movement. The recording of Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the Berlin Philharmonic is of special interest since it evidences important discrepancies among the HIP-movement concerning the use of vibrato. A recording of the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Weingartner is of importance since the latter was Brahms’s contemporary. The differences between live and studio recordings were not considered for this study, and although studio recorded performances may lack the spontaneity and the actuality of a real time of live performances, they preserve valuable information concerning performing practices, which is the focus of this investigation. Thus recorded performances represent an advantage over the written text when interpreting historical aspects; for they give us a clearer idea of the way musicians perform in practice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conductor</th>
<th>Orchestra</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leopold Stokowski</td>
<td>Philadelphia Orchestra</td>
<td>1929/ Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1882-1977)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Willem Mengelberg</td>
<td>Concertgebouw Orchestra</td>
<td>1940/ Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1871-1951)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Felix Weingartner</td>
<td>London Philharmonic Orchestra</td>
<td>1940/ Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1863-1942)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilhelm Furtwängler</td>
<td>Vienna Philharmonic</td>
<td>1945/ Live Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1886-1954)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruno Walter</td>
<td>Columbia Symphony Orchestra</td>
<td>1960/ Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1876-1962)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carlos Kleiber</td>
<td>Vienna Philharmonic</td>
<td>1991/ Live Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1930-2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roger Norrington</td>
<td>London Classical Players</td>
<td>1993/ Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1934-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nikolaus Harnoncourt</td>
<td>Berlin Philharmonic</td>
<td>1997/ Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1929-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>John Eliot Gardiner</td>
<td>Orchestre Revolutionnaire et</td>
<td>2009/ Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1943-)</td>
<td>Romantique</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simon Rattle</td>
<td>Berlin Philharmonic</td>
<td>2009/ Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1955-)</td>
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</table>
For my comparison and analysis work I used the score, published by Dover Edition (1974) and edited by Hans Gal. The Dover edition has been selected for this study since it offers accurate edition of the information needed for the investigation. The main reason why the Urtext score of the Second Symphony was not considered for this dissertation was that the newest Urtext published by Henle presents measure numbering inconsistencies between the score and orchestra parts.

The following segment encompasses key-terms used for this study and offers a brief description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-war Recordings</th>
<th>Recordings made before the Second World War</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Performers</td>
<td>Performers that do not connect themselves to the HIP-movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIP-performers (conductors)</td>
<td>Musicians that are widely identified with the HIP-movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mainstream</td>
<td>A new emerging wave of performers that embrace both HIP and Mainstream tradition, but do not connect themselves directly to the HIP-movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3. Structure

This thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the background and the aim of this study, outlines the process for evaluating this study and provides an introductory overview of the Historically Informed Performance Movement. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the historical framework of Op. 73 and brings out important performance aspects. Chapter 3 offers a description of Johannes Brahms as a performer and touches on his expressed preferences concerning orchestral sound. Chapter 4 provides written historical data of Brahms’s own time that supports the intent of this thesis. Chapter 5 concentrates on the
recordings. The performance issues that are important to the Second Symphony are evaluated in a sample of recordings. It focuses on aspects of tempo and verbal markings, as well as important stringed instruments techniques such as vibrato, portamento and portato. Chapter 6 introduces the conclusions and findings that answer the central question of this thesis: Are the historically informed interpretations of Op. 73 more historical than mainstream interpretations?

1.4. Historical Informed Performance (HIP) Movement

As Nicholas Kenyon observes, no change has more deeply influenced the development of music over the last fifty years than the historical performance movement. He states: “The search for original methods and styles of performance has brought about a change in our listening habits, and indeed our approach to the whole question of repertory and musical tradition in classical music (Kenyon 1988: 1).

Historically Informed Performances are important and a well-established feature of public performances and academic musical activity around the world. It may be described as an attempt to perform music according to the performance practices of a certain historical epoch and the composer’s musical intentions. HIP stresses scholarship of the performance characteristics during the composer’s life time. Period instruments are frequently found in the concert hall and are almost mandatory in many areas of the repertory, especially in music before 1750. Great interest has developed in obtaining instrumental techniques of the past. This means not only searching for significant equipment, but at the same time investigating performance styles of the past.

Historically Informed Performance involves the composer’s original autographs, sketches and drafts, instrumental and theoretical treatises, old instruments, historical archives, references in literature, journals, newspapers reports and early recordings. This can be expanded to other artistic disciplines such as dance, which involves musical tempo. These sources can be unreliable or contradictory with one another. However, they build an idea and sometimes give valuable information of specific circumstances in which musical works were performed at the time, the conventions expected by musicians and public.
The goal of historical research is to build an image of the past. The construction of a musical event can be more convincing when is related to physical records such as sculptures, films, photographs or paintings. Autobiographies, memoirs, letters and travel diaries have proved to be helpful sources. Vocal and instrumental treatises give a direct approach to technical aspects, music history, notation, interpretation, aesthetics and taste.

Surviving collections of instruments around the world are of enormous value. They strongly support the credibility of the historically informed movement thus helping experimental interpretation, style, and technique matters. The performance of late nineteenth-century music with a historical approach is becoming more present in the concert hall, as well as in the studio recording.

Traditionally, the Historically Informed Performance from about before the second half of the nineteenth-century consisted in performing on period instruments and playing them with a historically accurate style. Accordingly, it has been supported mainly by earlier pedagogical texts and treatises, pictures and descriptions made by musicians and commentators; and brought about important information concerning the changes of musical attitudes. It was only until well established in music of early periods that HIP could progress to music of the late nineteenth-century and the music of Brahms. But is it possible to build a solid and reliable perspective of performance practice based on these sources? In spite of the fact that there is abundant and valuable information preserved in written text, it seems that this can only provide us with an estimate of the actual habits. Recordings represent an advantage over written texts, they offer us a direct testimony of performing styles, which would be otherwise inaccessible without the audible proof. Consequently, for the study of HIP Brahms we have both documented and recordings from the first half of the twentieth-century, which preserve the performing attitudes of the late nineteenth-century.
2. Historical Background of the Second Symphony Opus 73

Knowing the historical aspects of a musical work can help us in getting close to the music and imagine how it was first experienced. It can offer important hints about tastes and attitudes prevalent during the composer’s lifetime, or whether the composer was concerned or committed to specific performance practices. Thus, historical information can help us in delivering more convincing performances. This segment offers important clues from Brahms’s correspondence and it appears that he was more concerned with conveying musical content than with specific performance practices.

The birth of the Second Symphony appears to have been more effortless than the First Symphony. Although there is not much creative sketching, the surviving evidence points to the composition occurring between June and October 1877. It has been suggested that there is a connection between the sunny mood of the Second Symphony and the surroundings at Pörtschach in southern Austria. Brahms himself described the symphony to Eduard Hanslick as “so cheerful and lovely that you will think I wrote it especially for you or even your young lady! That’s no soil, with so many melodies flying about that you must be careful not to tread on any” (Frisch 2003: 67).

Brahms had in his mind the over-all structural design and the complete first movement in score by the time of his arrival in Lichtental in September 1877. Clara Schumann reported: “Brahms is in good spirits, highly delighted with his summer stay, and has finished, in his head at least, a new symphony in D major. The first movement is now written out, of a quite elegiac character” (Brinkmann 1997: 11).

Brahms often performed his new works for close friends and appreciated their artistic views. By September 1877, he had played for the conductor Otto Dessoff not only the first movement but sketches of the fourth movement as well. Later in October in the same year, he also played on the piano for Clara Schumann the first movement and sections of the fourth movement and according to Clara, Brahms decided to write down the whole Symphony: “Johannes came this evening and played me the first movement of his Second Symphony in D major, which greatly delighted me. I find it in invention more significant than the first
movement of the First Symphony. I also heard a part of the last movement and am quite overjoyed with it. With this symphony he will have a more telling success with the public as well than he did with the First, much as musicians are captivated by the latter through its inspiration and wonderful working-out. Saturday the 6th we really did go to Büdesheim. Johannes accompanied us to Oos but then returned to Baden, where he plans to finish writing down his D major Symphony” (Brinkmann 1997: 12).

 Apparently, the score was finally completed towards the end of October along with possible preliminary performances in Leipzig and Berlin. On October 20th 1877, Brahms wrote to Simrock:” I have been breathing down a copyist’s neck in Karlsruhe and must now make a start in Vienna. Actually I would like to rehearse the “D major” with the Hochschule. I shall ask Joachim some time. I was thinking you see, of going around New Year to Berlin, then to Leipzig” (Brinkmann 1997: 12).

 By late October, Brahms had found in Vienna the right copyists to work on the orchestral parts and arrange the premiere of the Second Symphony for December 9th, at the Vienna Musikverein and the Philharmonic Orchestra with conductor Hans Richter. On November 8th, 1877, Brahms wrote to Simrock: “The new symphony is due here on December 9th. But I fear the copyists aren’t going to allow it. Then it would be possible on the 30th of December. It will at all events be a proper flop, and people will say that this time I took it easy. You, though, I advise to be careful!” (Brinkmann 1997: 12).

 By mid-November 1877, Brahms was working on the reduction for four hands of the Second Symphony, which was already creating excitement among his circle of friends. Theodor Billroth commented: “Bearer of these lines is a trusty man; give him to bring to me what you’ve finished of the piano reduction of the symphony; I’d be glad to read it through during the evening, so as to come to you at 11 o’clock tomorrow morning and play with you. Why, it is all blue sky, babbling of streams, sunshine and cool green shade! By the Wörther See it must be so beautiful. If the instrumentation isn’t altogether too chaste, the Viennese will get a quite special pleasure out of this piece!” (Brinkmann 1997: 13).

 It is possible that Brahms sought to lead his friends view by inducing false expectations. Before the premier of the Second Symphony, Brahms gave the work peculiar characterizations such as of a ‘quite elegiac character’, ‘lovely monstrosity’, ‘no symphony
but merely a sinfonietta’ and ‘innocent cheerful little thing’. This sort of strategy was not uncommon for Brahms, what is remarkable concerning the Second Symphony is his earnestness. Thus, the melancholic connotations in Brahms’s music obviously emerge and what started as a naïve game becomes an important aspect for understanding the composer and the Second Symphony.

The initial attempt to premier the Second Symphony was postponed due to the orchestra’s extremely busy working schedule as Brahms testified: “Perhaps it is quite a good thing that the performance has been postponed, for the orchestra seems to be dominated by unrest and indiscipline, being tired of the disagreeable grind with Rheingold, The Deadly Sins” and other things” (Brinkmann 1997: 12).

Finally, the Second Symphony was premiered on December 30th, 1877, performed by the Vienna Philharmonic under the direction of Hans Richter. After fruitful rehearsals, the Symphony enjoyed great reception; the audience loved it and the local press wrote excellent notes. The music writer Ferdinand Pohl reported: “Model performance, warmest reception. 3rd movement (Allegretto) da capo, repeated calls for more… Only the adagio, in keeping with the profound content, not applauded, but still the most valuable movement musically. And now: a toast to the New Year!” (Brinkmann 1997: 16).
3. **Brahms as a Performer**

When dealing with aspects of Performance Practice, it is important to have an understanding of the composer’s own conventions and expectations of performing practices. Brahms’s playing on the piano was characterized during his time as powerful but sometimes rough. Robert Schumann openly recognized Brahms’s artistry as a pianist, and some of his contemporaries described him as a performer of unique qualities and impressive technique able to deliver interpretations of music from the eighteenth-century to his own compositions. His close friend Joachim described his playing as so free, imaginative and fiery, yet tender.

As a conductor, Brahms had a meticulous approach and received recognition during his performing life. His performances of earlier periods were specially praised. As his fame as a composer increased, he conducted more and more his own works and made a significant impression on the conductor Felix Weingartner: “I was most favorable impressed by his unassuming appearance, his restrained movements and broad conceptions… His fine patriarchal head with its grey hair and his kindly, frank blue eyes affected me profoundly” (Philip 2003: 352). Musicians generally described his conducting style as economic and simple with a communicative quiet energy. The recounts about Brahms’s conducting scarcely include detailed or direct information concerning his performances as a conductor.

3.1. **Brahms’s expectations concerning the performance**

Brahms statements about performance may not always tell us exactly the way he performed and evidence suggests that he was a flexible performer who did not consistently followed his own music notation literally. In the Andante grazioso of his Third Piano Trio, Brahms writes down that the *quasi animato* middle section should maintain the opening tempo; but Fanny Davies recounts: “in a performance of this piano trio, Brahms accelerated the tempo by 20 percent” (Shernan 2003: 2). Apparently, at places with considerable change of dynamic, Brahms was reported to modify the tempo. He also approved making accelerandi during crescendi, which was more common during his time than it is today. In a performance of his Fourth Symphony, Brahms complimented Fritz Steinbach’s interpretation even if it presented different musical views than his own.
Another sign of his flexibility regarding music performance is an admiration for Joseph Joachim (Brahms long time chamber partner) violin playing and his use of a subtle vibrato. At the same time, Brahms was very enthusiastic about Richard Muhlfeld’s exuberant vibrato. Both musicians phrased with extraordinary taste and the extent of their vibrato was not so important for Brahms (Sherman 2003: 3).

Sherman argues that musicianship is a set of habits and Brahms comments about performance make confuse us because they take for granted habits that have now disappeared, such as the example of making an accelerando and getting louder. He observes that this fashion may have been more natural to musicians during Brahms's time considering Brahms's pencil markings in his autograph score of his Second Piano Concerto. These markings indicate accelerations of tempo non-existent in the published score, and they happen during a crescendo that is written down (Sherman 2003: 3).

Although we have evidence of performing conventions during Brahms’s time such as slow-downs while playing lyrical themes, and speed-ups during crescendos, Brahms and his contemporaries did not employ these practices of tempo and dynamics everywhere. Tovey observes: “In the quiet B Major passage [in the scherzo of the op. 40 Horn trio] where the horn and violin pull the theme out by holding every third note for an extra bar while the piano forte interpolates pianissimo arpeggios, a convention has long arisen of taking a slower tempo. This I can testify, from the above experience [of performing the work with Joachim in 1902], to be a mistake. This B Major episode is no ruminating profundity or concentrated development, but the lightest and most playful episode in the work” (Sherman 2003: 4).

Apparently, Brahms appreciated interpreters of widely varied sorts, including some generally regarded by the standards of the day as free and others thought of as strict. Felix Weingartner was a conductor known to have supported fidelity to the score, while Hans von Bülow conducting style was freer and highly nuanced, and Brahms showed appreciation for both. Walter Frisch observes: “Like composers, he was open and responsive to compelling interpretations of different kinds” (Frisch 2003: 179).

Another striking example is an occasion when Brahms complimented a performance that finished his last song in the cycle “Vier ernste Gesänge” *diminuendo* and *p* as written down in
the score; still, in another performance of the same song, Sherman explains: “yet he also praised a performance that ended it *fff* (Sherman 2003: 3).

Suggesting any indication of a “right” tempo in the music of Brahms would be contrary to his own views. As a musician who encouraged freedom, he openly rejected the metronome: “I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together” (Philip 2003: 354).

What Brahms signified by freedom can have different meanings and we can never learn how it was reflected form his own performances. What we know is that Brahms possibly took more liberties than most musicians during his time: “Brahms’s interpretation of his works frequently differs so inconceivably in delicate rhythm and harmonic accents from anything to which one is accustomed, that the apprehension of his intentions could only be entirely possible to another man possessed of exactly similar sound-susceptibility or inspired by the power of divination” (Philip 2003: 355). Thus, Brahms’s sense of freedom would certainly sound surprisingly unfamiliar to present day audiences.

**3.2. Brahms's large orchestral sound**

The richness of orchestral sound was something Brahms enjoyed fully. His correspondence alludes to his desire for relatively large orchestras and choruses. In contrast, the Historically-informed approach suggests that Brahms’s orchestral works should be performed with more reduced forces than commonly has been during the twentieth-century. Norrington suggests that orchestra sizes in Germany from 1830s until late nineteenth-century did no change considerably and he comments: “When Joachim gave the first British performance of Brahms’s Symphony no. 1 at Cambridge, he had nine firsts, nine seconds, five violas, five cellos and four bases” (Norrington; Musgrave 1999: 239).

Is there a solid ground for taking Joachim’s orchestra size for the premier of the First Symphony as a model for Brahms’s desires? Based on Brahms’s comments and letters he exchanged with friends there is no consistent evidence to believe he preferred orchestras to be as reduced as proposed by Norrington.
During the premiere of his Third Symphony op. 90, the string section of the Vienna Philharmonic normally used eighteen first violins, twelve seconds, twelve violas, ten cellos, and ten double bases, and once he wrote in a letter to a friend that while passing on the orchestra parts he commented: “But I have more if you want them” (Avins 2003: 16).

The orchestra of Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde was smaller, normally the string section included fourteen first and fourteen second violins, ten violas, ten cellos and ten double bases, a considerable size even by present day standards. It appears Brahms enjoyed richness of sound not only among orchestras but also among choruses. In November of 1879 Brahms wrote to his friend, the conductor Ferdinand Hiller, describing a performance of “Ein deutsches Requiem” with the Vienna Opera Orchestra conducted by Hans Richter: “The orchestra included four harps ‘will I even have one with you?’ (complaining to Hiller), and an opera chorus augmented by sixty extra men’s and women’s voices” (Avins 2003: 16). We have no evidence that Brahms would have refuse the augmentation of the chorus and orchestra and ask for more reserved size groups. By his comment to Hiller, it seems that the enlargements of the performing forces was ideal for Brahms.

Another remarkable example of Brahms’s preference for large sound and choruses is found in a letter he wrote to Karl Reinthaler: “I conducted a performance of the Alto Rhapsody with a chorus of 200 men. 24 would have been too few for me, the more the better if they can sing pp, so then 48 if at all possible” (Avins 2003: 16). What Brahms used at that time or any performance was not exactly what he had wished to use. For example, the Meiningen Court orchestra may have been too small for his wishes with only about 49 member, but he used what he had available.

As we have learned, Brahms had no fixed image of how large the ensembles performing his music should be. At the same time, it appears there is no reason to believe that he preferred smaller musical groups.
4. Important Techniques

This chapter introduces and clarifies important technical aspects of earlier performance practice that have survived in teaching treatises of the period, and helps us to get a closer look at those traditions prevalent during the composer’s lifetime. During the late nineteenth-century and earlier twentieth-century most stringed instrument musicians often combined orchestral, chamber music and solo playing. The style and techniques did not change according to the ensemble. At the time, orchestra playing was less coordinated and did not achieve the homogeneity of playing of well-trained modern orchestras.

4.1. Vibrato

Modern vibrato on stringed instruments is the result of a quest for a more powerful and intense tone quality among musicians during the twentieth-century, and is perhaps the most important and debated aspect when it comes to performance practices in Johannes Brahms orchestral music. Before musicians and musicologists started using recording as evidence for investigating performing practices, studies were based upon pedagogical texts and reports by commentators or images. However this approach has provided considerably important information, the accurate application of these practices continues to be uncertain and sometimes inconsistent. We can underline two major types of vibrato: the continuous vibrato, which is more common among mainstream interpretations of Brahms, and ornament vibrato; a more reserved vibrato employed in order to emphasize or accentuate certain notes, which is supported by Gardiner and Norrington. On the other hand and as observed from the analysis of the recordings, Harnoncourt’s position toward vibrato resembles more the mainstream idea which is more substantial (Hurwitz 2012, accessed April 9, 2015).

Although there is not a single evidence that Brahms favored any type of vibrato, the historical approach suggests that vibrato should emulate the style of Brahms’s time and specially Joachim’s style who was his close friend. Norrington mentions Joachim’s adherence to Louis Spohr’s “Violinschule” (1832) stressing the vocal connections of the device: “the singer in the performance of passionate movements, or when forcing his voice to the highest pitch, produces a certain tremulous sound resembling the vibrations of a powerfully struck
bell. This, with many other peculiarities of the human voice, the violinist can closely imitate. It consists on the wavering of a stopped note…this motion, however, should only be slight in order that the deviation from purity of tone may scarcely be observed by the ear…the player, however, must guard against using it too often and in improper places” (Norrington 1999: 235).

From the statement above, it appears almost impossible to form an idea about Joachim’s use of vibrato, and what could have been proper places to use the device. Fortunately, early twentieth-century audio recorded materials have preserved his style of playing. Joachim’s own use of vibrato was considerably much more reserved than present day mainstream vibrato, and it may very well be a more general and basic element in stringed instrument playing in the late nineteenth-century. However, while this is consistent with what Norrington formulates about the frequency in the use of vibrato in Brahms’s orchestral music, he seems not to observe important characteristics such as the quickness and narrowness of his vibrato, which has been preserved in early recordings. A reason for this can be the fact that such vibrato qualities would probably sound unstylish to present day audiences.

As a strong believer of the lack of vibrato as a pure classical tone Norrington argues: “vibrato did not become common in European or American orchestras until the 1930's”. He adds: “The Berlin Philharmonic does not appear on disc with serious vibrato until 1935 and the Vienna Philharmonic not until 1940” (Norrington 2003, accessed April 9, 2015).

Norrington’s remarks about orchestral vibrato deserve some attention as he suggests that the treatment of orchestral vibrato became relevant only at the end of the first half of the twentieth-century. Video recording evidence of the New York Philharmonic conducted by Henry Hadley (1926), the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Bruno Walter (1930), and the Concertgebouw Orchestra lead by Willem Mengelberg demonstrate the abundant use of orchestral vibrato in those years, which suggests that vibrato in those orchestras was common even earlier. Thus, Norrington’s comments and the use of vibrato among orchestras at the turn of the century remains uncertain.

The sparing approach to vibrato may be a common trend in the second half of the late nineteenth-century, while continuous vibrato is a feature developed at the turn of the century. Brahms showed enthusiasm towards different vibrato styles and there is no reason to believe
that his music should be played senza vibrato or with a specific type of vibrato. After all, there is no evidence of Brahms expressing preference of either one. He expressed enthusiasm for Richard Muhfeld's pronounced vibrato on the clarinet, and at same time he had for Joachim's spare vibrato. In his arrangement of Brahms's Fourth Hungarian Dance, Joachim marks the trio *pp sempre, ma vibrato*. Seemingly, we can understand the use of vibrato in Brahms's day from an ornamentation approach, being certain that vibrato was less used in those days, than in present day.

4.2. Portato

Portato is a technique much employed among the romantic repertoire and perhaps the least controversial of the techniques considered for this study. It is close to détaché bowing and performed using similar technique as series of détaché strokes played with one bow stroke. This articulation is used to bring more expression to slurred legato notes. A slight swelling at the beginning of the note is applied, followed by a gradual lightening of the sound. Strokes are distinctly separate, yet unaccented, and the expressive swell is produced by applying pressure and speed to the bow at the beginning of the note.

However this technique does not present important differences on the way it should be performed, some discrepancies on the way it should be indicated have occurred. The French violinist Pierre Baillot was one of the most influential stringed instrument pedagogues of the nineteenth-century and Norrington uses him as a guide to apply portato: “… the undulation produced by the bow alone (indicated by dots over the notes covered by a slur), is of a calm and pure expression, because on the one hand, it is generally used in slow or moderate tempi and on an open string, and on the other hand, when it is played with one finger on the string, which does not move, the intonation of the note remains fixed” (Norrington 1999: 236). Although a slur and horizontal lines are commonly used to indicate this effect as proposed by Baillot, Brahms was enthusiastic about this technique and still used dots with slurs to indicate it. He avoided to use this notation even after discussing with Joachim, who preferred lines under slurs, and continue to write dots under a slur to indicate portato. From the comment above, we can observe that we need to be cautious with the belief of performing the aspects to Brahms’s music in question according to Joachim’s style. Although in this occasion they differed on the way it should be notated, it does not
necessarily mean they did not have other disagreements. One should always have in mind that Brahms was not only a great composer, but he was also a musician of deserved recognition supported by a vast performing experience.

Joachim mentions vaguely on this technique and recommended occasionally: “must not sound neither too sharp nor too dull… the violinist “should also endeavour to equal them in their gentle separation of the notes. This will depend chiefly on the capacity of the player to lift and guide the bow so steadily, that in letting it fall again on the string, no trembling occurs, but a fleecy tone of soft roundness is produced” (Joachim; Moser 1956 (1905): 14).

There is not substantial disagreements on the way this technique should be performed, and the reader can confirm with the analysis of the recordings. From the techniques considered for this study, portato is perhaps the technique that presents less changes throughout the twentieth-century. Apparently, and to my knowledge, there is not a recording that would assist in forming picture of Joachim’s use of portato. Therefore, I would not draw assumptions on the subject.

4.3. Portamento

While the employment of vibrato was becoming more common among string players during the twentieth-century, the use of portamento became less popular and reserved. The frequent use of portamento, as well as the sparing approach to vibrato were essential elements in stringed instrument playing in the late nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth-century. It was employed regularly among violinists in changing positions. On the cello it was perhaps even more recurrent with wider distances between the notes. While it is commonly known that portamento was frequently used at the turn of the century, it has lost its popularity especially among Historically-informed interpretations of Brahms.

The following example explains the three main types of portamento:
(x): a slide on one finger.
(y): the finger of the starting note travels to a second intermediary note, and another finger concludes the effect.
(z): one finger plays the first note, and another finger travels to the desired note.
During the late nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth-century portamenti “x” and “y” were common, while “z” was avoided.

Example 1. Important Techniques, Portamento

Norrington does not address the different types of portamenti but discusses Joachim’s position towards portamento: “the audible change of position…If two notes occurring in a melodic progression, and situated in different positions, are to be made to cling together. It is likewise borrowed from the human voice (Italian: portar la voce= carrying of the voice, French= port de voix)... The portamento used on the violin between two notes played with one bow-stroke corresponds, therefore, to what takes place in singing when the slur is placed over two notes which are meant to be sung on one syllable” (Norrington; Musgrave 1999: 236). As in the case of vibrato and from what Norrington observes, one cannot form an idea about how Joachim would have employed portamento in his violin playing. Again, and thanks to earlier recordings, we can appreciate that he used portamento quite frequently. His reserved vibrato and persistent use of portamento evidence an older style of playing. What is distinctive in Joachim’s portamento and is probably a trend of his time is the employment of decrescendi and diminuendi while performing a portamento. While listening to his playing, at certain places one has the sense of a continuous portamento. Although the frequent use of this device seems at times repetitious, his portamenti were different depending on dynamic and tempi.

The style of playing among chamber, orchestral and solo string players of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century was common and they applied the techniques in similar ways. Therefore, it would be expected to hear orchestras using portamento as frequently than any renowned soloist such as Joachim.

In a comment Norrington observes: “the twentieth-century has shown increasing reserve towards portamento, which is often seen as tasteless and has largely disappeared from the performance of classical music (Norrington 1999: 236). Norrington’s observation seems to
confirm some limitations within the Historically-informed approach to Brahms; without addressing the implications of modern good taste, it is somehow difficult to achieve an accurate Historically-informed performing style. In my opinion, the disappearance of portamento from the performance of classical music seems an excellent opportunity for someone who seeks to restore historical performance practice in the music of Brahms.

While it is commonly known that portamento was frequently used at the turn of the century, it has lost its popularity in present day among mainstream and Historically-informed interpretations of Brahms.

4.4. Tempo Rubato

During the nineteenth century, there was a widespread acceptance of tempo alterations, which required a modification of the basic pulse without interrupting the beat. Thus, during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, tempo rubato (literally ”robbed time”) was considered the principal practice of modifying the tempo. Spohr, Brahms, Joachim and Mendelssohn practiced this device (Brown 1999: 385). According to Clive Brown, tempo rubato could apply to a single note or small groups of notes that were slightly longer or shorter than their written length, as an almost imperceptible flexibility that was present in the performances of sensitive musicians. He distinguishes two types of tempo modifications: (1) the alteration of the basic pulse of the melody, while the accompaniment continues disturbing the tempo; and (2) the alteration the basic pulse of the music for dramatic, expressive or structural purposes which generates a real modification of the tempo (Brown 1999: 409).

Among nineteenth-century performers who favored the use of tempo rubato are the violinist Nicolo Paganini and the vocal pedagogue Manuel García. García’s son noted how his father employed tempo rubato: “Every change introduced into the value of the notes, should, without altering the movement of the time, be procured from adopting the tempo rubato, by tempo rubato is meant the momentary increase of values, which is given to one or several sounds, to the detriment of the rest, while the total length of the bar remains unaltered” (Brown 1999: 409).

As explained by Milsom, Joachim disregarded the dullness of metronomic tempo. We can deduce that Joachim favored the use of flexible tempo from his remark in his introduction to
the edition of the Mendelssohn violin concerto: “For Mendelssohn, who so perfectly understood the elastic management of time as a subtle means of expression, always liked to see the uniform tempo of a movement preserved as a whole” (Milsom 2003: 153).

There is no record of Brahms being positive towards the metronome. He expressed serious suspicions over printed metronome markings, and once he wrote to Clara Schumann when paying too much attention to the markings of Robert's works: “I consider it impossible as well as unnecessary; just as I also believe less in Schumann's faulty metronome than in the uncertainty of making a decision. You will naturally set the work aside for at least a year and scrutinize it from time to time. Then you will mark them with fresh numbers each time and finally will have the best selection. Consider carefully, too, that one cannot arrange performances of choral and orchestral works for oneself just for this purpose and on the piano, because of the lighter sound, everything is played decidedly livelier, faster, also is more forgiving in tempo. I advise you to stay clear of it, for intelligent people will pay little attention to your painstaking labor and will not use it” (Avins 2003: 21).

Brahms had a lifetime antipathy for metronome markings. He refused to provide any help to his friend Joseph Joachim when he was to conduct Brahms Fourth Symphony. He became annoyed with his publisher just thinking about providing the metronome numbers. He made sharp comments and jokes with friends about the subject. Once the violinist Alwin von Beckerath sent a letter to Brahms explaining a disagreement with a musician over the right tempo for one of the movements of one of his string quartets, Brahms replied the letter: “In your case, I can quite easily start you on a subscription for metronome markings. You pay me a tidy sum and each week I deliver to you different numbers; for with normal people, they cannot remain valid for me than one week! Incidentally, you are right and your violinist friend as well” (Avins 2003: 21).

We assume that Brahms was careless about tempos. Quite the contrary, he chose them with the greatest care and awareness. Perhaps one of the strongest evidences of Brahms's aversion to metronomes and the concern he paid when choosing tempos is a letter he sent to the conductor George Henschel when asked to provide him with metronome numbers for “Ein Deutsches Requiem”. Brahms replied: “In my view, the metronome isn't worth much; at least, so far as I know many a composer has withdrawn his metronome markings sooner or
later. Those, which are found in the Requiem, are there because some friends talked to me into them. For I, myself I have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together. The so-called elastic tempo is not a new discovery, after all, and to it, as to many another; one should attach a “con discrezione”. Is that an answer? I know of none better; what I know, however, is that I indicate my tempos in the heading, without numbers, modestly but with the greatest care and clarity” (Avins 2003: 22).

Brahms was very insistent about written tempo descriptions always strongly reminding his publisher to be very precise about this. A remarkable example of written tempo indications is found in one of his letters to his editor Robert Keller. Keller explained about a difference between the word Tranquillo and tranquillo. The first, means a definite change of tempo, whilst the second suggests not to rush the tempo (Avins 2003: 22).

4.5. Over-Dotting

Generally, performers during the late nineteenth century did not interpret notated rhythms literally. They allowed rhythmic freedom for expressive reasons, and notation represented only approximate note values. The general practice in the late nineteenth-century over short and long notes was to prolong the long ones and to lighten the short ones and was addressed by theorists and musicians from earlier centuries. To a twenty first-century audience this effect can be unusual since in present day, commonly among mainstream musicians the tendency is to pay literal observation of rhythm as synonym of accuracy.

The German cellist and composer Bernhard Romberg recommended that the rhythm “will not fail to properly express if the semiquaver be played very short”. Similarly, the violinist Rowsby Woof observed that pedagogues should “insist on a disproportionate lengthening of doted notes” (Milsom, 2003: 162). Commonly, composers during the late nineteenth century left much of the interpretative details up to the performers. During a rehearsal of Parsifal, Wagner interrupted to demand: “Hold the quaver with the dot longer, the semiquaver can then be somewhat shorter” (Brown 1999: 625).
Felix Weingartner, a conductor whose recording of the Second Symphony was selected for this study addressed the popularity of this tendency in the beginning of the twentieth-century: “Lack of rehearsal time cannot, by itself account for the most common string practice of the 1920s, the almost universal habit of over-dotting and of lightening the short ones.” (Milsom, 2003: 161). Over-dotting was a common late nineteenth-century practice, in which rhythmical freedom can intensify the expression. However the aspects concerning over-dotting do not seem to represent an important subject for discussion among the HIP of Brahms orchestral music, it lost popularity during the twentieth century among mainstream and HIP musicians.

Attitudes towards interpretations of rhythm, portamento, flexibility of tempo and rubato in present day, are considerably reserved in comparison with those of the late nineteenth-century. On the other hand, the modern continuous vibrato is a unique development of the twentieth-century, which was more common and earlier than suggested by Roger Norrington.

5. Analysis of the recordings

Recordings preserve considerably valuable information about performance practice that would be difficult to discern only from pedagogical treatises. Thus, analysis of recordings offers an excellent opportunity to get a closer idea about the way actually performed, at least under recording conditions. The analysis discusses: 1) Tempo Rubato, 2) Comparative Tempi, 3) Vibrato, 4) Portato, 5) Portamento and 6) Over-Dotting.

5.1. Tempo Rubato

Brahms style of orchestral performance was neither pointedly detailed and self-consciously highlighted, nor as rhythmically straight and uninflected. He evidently wished for tempo inflection, but inflection felt integrally as part of a sonic flow (Sherman, 2003: 238).

The rubato was commonly used during crescendi, ending an important passage or when transferring to a different theme. Example 1 is an exceptional illustration. In measure 44 of the First Movement, the theme is played by the first violins. The theme encounters a
crescendo in measure 54, and moves to the next section erupting in the last beat of measure 58 with a \textit{sf} D major chord. Stokowski, Weingartner, Furtwängler, and Kleiber take measure 44 at the opening tempo, and make an accelerando while passing through the crescendo in measure 54. Walter and Rattle, play measure 44 slightly faster and accelerate the tempo at the crescendo, but Walter holds the tempo back in measure 59. Mengelberg, plays clearly a new tempo at measure 44, and makes no accelerando. Harnoncourt plays measure 44 also barely faster and makes no accelerando. Gardiner and Norrington take a new tempo and carry on the phrase without accelerando.

Example 2. Second Symphony, I, m. 44-60
Another example of the tendencies towards the use of tempo rubato is the *largamente* passage of the Fourth Movement in measure 78. This section is an 8+8+4 measure passage with a crescendo in measure 90, and culminates *f* in measure 98. Every conductor holds the tempo back at the largamente. Mengelberg, Weingartner, Furtwängler, Kleiber and Rattle decisively move the tempo forwards especially during the crescendo. Walter, Stokowski, and Norrington accelerate the tempo lightly during the passage. Gardiner and Harnoncourt keep the same tempo through.

Example 3. Second Symphony, IV, m 78-101

5.2. **Comparative Tempi in recordings of Second Symphony**

Music writers as well as musicians of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century advocated flexibility of tempo as an expressive device and disapproved music played at a stable pace. Hugo Riemann wrote in 1897: “Hurrying implies intensification, and
drawing back, the reverse… as a rule, pressing forward is in place when the musical
development becomes more intense, when it is more positive; and on the other hand, a
tarrying, when it approaches the close. These changes must be naturally be exceedingly
minute detached musical phrases, but can already become more important in a theme of a
certain length; while for whole movements they are of such extent as to be seldom ignored in
the notation” (Philip 1992: 7).

Wagner believed that modification of tempo is a *sine qua non*, (something absolutely
needed) and his flexibility of tempo changes as a conductor was a matter of argument even
during his time. The critic Henry Smart reported Wagner’s conducting: “Firstly, he takes all
quick movements faster than anybody else; secondly, he takes all slow movements slower
than anybody else; thirdly he prefaces the entry of an important part, or the return of a theme,
especially in a slow movement, by an exaggerated ritardando; and fourthly, he reduces the
speed of an allegro in an overture or the first movement fully one third immediately on the
entrance of its cantabile phrases” (Milsom 2003: 156).

Mahler’s opinion on flexibility of tempo exemplifies the romantic attitudes towards this
device and goes possibly beyond musicians of his time: “All the most important things, the
tempo, the total conception and structuring of a work are almost impossible to pin down. For
here we are concerned with something living and flowing that can never be the same even
twice in succession. That is why metronome markings are inadequate and almost worthless;
for unless the work is vulgarly ground out in barrel-organ style, the tempo will already have
changed by the end of the second bar” (Philip 1992: 8).

It appears that attitudes towards flexibility of Tempo have change considerably over the
course of the twentieth-century. As it can be observed in the comparative tables below, pre-
war recordings commonly show more flexibility of tempo when compared with modern
interpretations, in a way that for a twenty first-century listener those attitudes would sound
amateurish. This seemingly “amateurish” playing in fact had to do with the conventions and
style of the early twentieth-century, a style that perhaps was closer to what Brahms would
have expected to hear in a performance, than modern performance conventions. The places in
the comparative tables were chosen at moments where most conductors change the tempo
and there is not an indication of it in the score.

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I would like to indicate that in this section numbers were not easily achieved. Metronome markings represent only a brief moment on a constant movement from or to different tempi. I recommend the reader to verify the illustrations with the actual recordings in order to have a sense of tempi differences, tempi modifications, as well as the amount and types of portamenti and vibrato used by performers of different epochs.

In the next segment I describe the tables below, which inform us how attitudes towards flexibility of tempo have changed over the twentieth-century.

What is striking in table 1 is the approximation of the opening tempo in all of the recordings. Rattle, Gardiner, Harmoncourt and Furtwangler start the Symphony at $\text{\textit{\textbf{♩= 108 MD.}}}$ Kleiber’s opening is the only one above 110 MD, and none of the conductors takes the opening under 100 MD. According to Frisch, taking a brisker tempo at the start of the second group subject b. 82, is more responsive to the spirit and its relation to what has gone before. The transition phrase has been characterized by a hemiola, which by its very nature slows the overall metric-rhythmic flow (Frisch 2003: 184).

Pre-war recordings with the exception of Stokowski, evidence the “brisker” tempo Frisch suggests. After war recordings except Walter, take this passage at almost the very opening tempo.

In b. 136, Brahms introduces a theme heard at the opening of the movement (b. 6) played by the woodwinds. The flowing force of the sixteenth notes compels us to push the tempo forward and unleashes the preceding quasi ritenente in b. 118. As we can observe from this table, Stokowski’s tempi fluctuate comparatively less than the rest of the conductors. Post-war conductors including Gardiner clearly differentiate by constraining the tempo at the quasi ritenente and liberating the energy in b. 136, which will reach its climax in b. 152.

At the contemplative four bars (b. 298) right before the recapitulation, where agitated emotion has transformed into serenity, again we can recognize that post-war conductors with the exception of Stokowski, achieve transforming drama into calm by considerably restricting the tempo earlier taken at the climatic tutti in b. 282.
Table 1. Comparative Tempi in Movement

**Movement I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDUCTOR</th>
<th>m. 1</th>
<th>44</th>
<th>82</th>
<th>118</th>
<th>136</th>
<th>282</th>
<th>298</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stokowski 1929 ♩=</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Phil. Orch.</td>
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<td>Mengelberg 1940 ♩=</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>122</td>
<td>138</td>
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<td>Concertgebouw Orch. ö</td>
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<td>Weingartner 1940 ♩=</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>112</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Furtwängler 1945 ♩=</td>
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<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walter 1959 ♩=</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>116</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Kleiber 1991 ♩=</td>
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<td>108</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vienna Phil.</td>
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<td>Harnoncourt 1997 ♩=</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Norrington 2005 ♩=</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gardiner 2007 ♩=</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The most astonishing feature in table 2 is the increase of tempo at bar 18 taken by conductors Furtwängler and Rattle. Furtwängler’s opening tempo is $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{=}} 66$, and at bar 18, at the entrance of the horn solo he has increased the tempo by 42 metronome degrees (MD). But Rattle moves the tempo at this same place further. He goes from an initial tempo of $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{=}} 74$ and increases the tempo by 46 MD, which is the most substantial increase of tempo at this point among the recordings. Gardiner is on the other extreme with an increase of only 12 MD. The rest of the conductors increase the tempo more or less in a similar degrees.

The second subject of the second movement appears in b. 33, marked “L’istesso tempo, ma grazioso”. It is lighter in character than the opening theme of this movement and Brahms replaces the 4/4 time by an invigorated 12/8. Most conductors with the exception of Gardiner and Stokowski clearly bring out the dance-like attributes of the second subject by moderately increasing the tempo.

The table shows us the subtle change of tempo between bars 32 and 33, and how similarly they move the tempo forward. On the other hand, Stokowski and Gardiner seem to have literal attention to the mark “L’istesso tempo, ma grazioso” (the same tempo) but the difference between what had occurred earlier and the new thematic material does not seem as well acknowledged as in the rest of the other recordings. One can argue that if the score calls on for L’istesso tempo, the composer’s intentions were exactly to keep the same tempo; and these “composer’s intentions” has been for a while one of the Historically Informed Performance movement’s most important postulations. But as always, questions of interpretation arise: What where those “intentions”? Can we categorically express that these were the composer’s intentions… if we do not have evidence of the composer expressing: “these, are my intentions”? The composer’s intentions are very difficult to attain ”The result is that composer’s intentions even though they may far more properly be called wishes or suggestions, provisional instructions, or tentative recommendations, by the very naming take on an authority that composers perhaps never “intended” them to have (Kivy 1995: 11).

The last two sections of this movement clearly differentiated in the score are the closing theme in b. 92 and the coda in b. 97. Before the restrained coda, Brahms marks the closing theme 12/8, which gives the exchange between strings and woodwinds an agitated and
impulsive character that is supported by the crescendo rolled timpani.

The coda is marked again 4/4 and the timpani that supported the restlessness of the closing theme, now along with the horn leads the more mournful conclusion. As it can be seen from this table, every conductor with the exception of Norrington and Stokowski restrain the tempo at the coda achieving a darker and more solemn mood that announces the conclusion. Whereas Stokowski and Gardiner preserve the same tempo during the closing theme and the coda but the result is not as successful in creating solemnity.
Table 2. Comparative Tempi in Movement II

**Movement II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDUCTOR</th>
<th>m. 1</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>33</th>
<th>92</th>
<th>97</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stokowski 1929 ♪=</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Phil. Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mengelberg 1940 ♪=</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concertbeouw Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weingartner 1940 ♪=</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Phil. Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furtwängler 1945 ♪=</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter 1959 ♪=</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Symphony Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Kleiber 1991 ♪=</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnoncourt 1997 ♪=</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrington 2005 ♪=</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Classical Players</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner 2007 ♪=</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattle 2009 ♪=</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apparently, Brahms preferred this movement to be calm and that some of the conductors in his time took this movement at a faster tempo. When informed that Hanslick preferred a faster tempo in the Allegretto of the Second, Brahms replied that he wanted the movement to be quite peaceful, especially at the end, suggesting that his tempo was slower than Richter’s (Sherman 1997: 118).

As we can observed from table 3, all the pre-war conductors take the opening tempo at a more moderate tempo than all the post-war conductors. At the end of the movement, the tempos taken by Stokowski and Furtwängler seem to correspond with Brahms’s own indications.
Table 3. Comparative Tempi in Movement III

**Movement III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDUCTOR</th>
<th>m1</th>
<th>233</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stokowski 1929 ♩= 78</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Phil. Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mengelberg 1940 ♩= 88</td>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concertgebouw Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weingartner 1940 ♩= 88</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Symphony Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furtwängler 1945 ♩= 78</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter 1959 ♩= 78</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Symphony Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Kleiber 1991 ♩= 94</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnoncourt 1997 ♩= 86</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrington 2005 ♩= 94</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Classical Players</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner 2007 ♩= 100</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattle 2009 ♩= 90</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In present day and possibly as a result of the Historical approach towards the aspects of tempo in Brahms’s music, some believe that his fast tempos should be performed at a brisker pace. There is not a direct comment or indication by Brahms that could confirm such proposition. On the contrary, some believe that Brahms often took rather slow ones and “possibly musicians who performed Brahms’s symphonies under his direction he would not have approved of the rushed tempi we now sometimes hear” ( Sherman 2003: 113).

Clearly, this table illustrates how HIP conductors Norrington and Gardiner take faster tempos than the rest. All other conductors do not go above half note: 100. Mengelberg and Stokowsky take a more relaxed tempo which, concurs with Rudolf’s statement. At b. 375, right after the abrupt modulation in b. 373, Kleiber, Furtwängler and Rattle increased the tempo by 56, 48 and 42 MD respectively. Stokowsky, Walter, Harnoncourt and Norrington move the tempo similarly; whereas Gardiner and Mengelberg speed up by 18 MD and Weingartner moderately only 10 MD. In largamente section of bar 78, HIP’s conductors tempi fluctuate more than pre-war and modern conductors this time. They decrease the tempo more evidently. Whereas Kleiber and Weingartner continue at the opening tempo.

There seems to be a common practice regarding the development of the fourth movement b. 155. Most conductors seem to point out at the unusual fact that the development starts with the tonic and they take the tempo slightly slower than the opening tempo.
Table 4. Comparative Tempi in Movement IV

**Movement IV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDUCTOR</th>
<th>m1</th>
<th>78</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>155</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stokowski 1929  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Symphony Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mengelberg 1940  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concertgebouw Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weingartner 1940  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Symphony Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furtwängler 1945  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter 1959  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Symphony Orch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Kleiber 1991  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnoncourt  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrington 2005  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Classical Players</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner 2007  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattle 2009  ( \downarrow = )</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Phil.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3. Vibrato: First Movement

The change in the use of vibrato in the twentieth-century is an evident subject since musicians started using this device more consistently searching for a more energetic and powerful sound. As explained above musicians during the late and early twentieth centuries used vibrato less openly than modern musicians, with the exceptions of HIP-conductors Norrington and Gardiner. The analysis of the recordings shows clearly this tendencies.

In the exposition of the first movement in the last beat of measures 19 and 46 (Example 4 and 5), when the first violin part plays a high E and D respectively, the recordings of pre-war conductors Stokowski, Mengelberg, Weingartner, Furtwängler and Walter, clearly show the use of vibrato achieving a sort of singing warm sound. HIP conductors Norrington and Gardiner employ a sparing almost imperceptible vibrato. On the other hand, the recordings of Kleiber, Harnoncourt and Rattle evidence the use vibrato much more openly.

Example 4. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement I, m. 14-21
Example 5. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement I, m. 44-47

In measure 477, at the *in tempo, ma piu tranquilo*, the use of vibrato is evident among pre-HIP conductors, with Stokowski applying the expressive tool in a more conservative manner. Kleiber, Rattle and Harnoncourt exploit the use of vibrato obtaining a rich and lush sound in this section; on the other hand, Gardiner and Norrington prefer to play almost non-vibrato (Ex. 6).

Example 6. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement I, m. 477-484
Second Movement

In the main theme of the Second movement played by the celli in measure 1, and later taken by first and second violins, the use of vibrato among pre-war recordings is more selective compared to mainstream. Recordings conducted by Kleiber, Harnoncourt and Rattle’s show a vibrato that produces a mellow and rich sound. Gardiner’s use of vibrato is almost imperceptible, whereas Norrington seemingly disregards this expressive device (Ex. 7 and 8).

Example 7. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement II, m. 1-5

Example 8. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement II, m. 12-14
In the canonical passage which starts at the end of measure 27 and culminates in bar 33, vibrato in the recordings of Gardiner and Norrington is absent. The rest of the conductors exploit this tool significantly throughout the entire passage (Ex. 9).

Example 9. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement II, m. 27-32

Third Movement

In the last section of the Third Movement measure 205, we find a remarkable example of how almost all of the recordings benefit from the use of vibrato. In this segment played by the first and second violins, all the recordings show the use of vibrato with the exception of the recordings made by Norrington and Gardiner (Ex 10).

Example 10. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement III, m. 205-210
Fourth Movement

The clearest general evidence of the use of vibrato in the Fourth Movement is found in measure 94. In Norrington’s recording, the use of vibrato is imperceptible. Stokowski and Walter are more reserved; the rest of the performers benefit from the vibrato emphasizing and bringing out the half notes G# and B in measures 94 and 96, which are played by the first violins (Ex. 11).

Example 11. Second Symphony, Vibrato, Movement IV, m. 89-96

Although vibrato among pre-war recordings seems less generally applied than in present day, it appears to have been more commonly used during the first half of the twentieth-century than some suggest. It is of interest that in Rattle’s, who has studied Historical-performance practice thoroughly, his recording presents similar and substantial employment of vibrato to Harnoncourt’s. Here, I take the opportunity to point out that in Harnoncourt’s recording with the Berlin Philharmonic, I give the credit for deciding about the use of vibrato to the conductor. In present day, many of the orchestra members of The Berlin Philharmonic have studied performance practice and can change from style to style comfortably. The orchestra’s employment of vibrato for example can change easily according to the conductor; as we can observe from performances of the orchestra’s chief conductor Simon Rattle or Giovanni Antonini featuring works from the baroque and classical periods.
5.4. Portato

As mentioned in Chapter 3, portato is the undulation produced by the bow alone and is indicated by dots over the notes covered by a slur. It produces a calm expression and it is generally used in slow or moderate tempi. Below, I intend to illustrate the discrepancies between past and present idiosyncratic tendencies when using portato among the selected recordings of Brahms’s Second Symphony.

Two of the most noteworthy examples of the use of portato in this symphony are the subsidiary theme of the first movement in the violas and cellos (Ex. 12), and the opening theme of the Second Movement played by the cellos and later by the first and second violins (Ex. 13).

Example 12. Second Symphony, Portato, Movement I, m. 73-93

Example 13. Second Symphony, Portato, Movement II, m. 1-5
It is striking how consistent all the performers are in their own use of the portato in both selected examples. In the recordings of Stokowsky, Weingartner and Gardiner portato is used in an almost imperceptible way, producing almost a legato effect. Mengelberg, Furtwängler, Kleiber and Harnoncourt, approach the portato in a subtle but slightly more audible articulation of the notes achieving the calm expression described by Baillot (Chapter 3.2). Walter and Rattle play the portato articulating the dotted notes under a slur with rich sound, decisive but still gentle. On the other hand, Norrington separates the notes in a drier way and his use of portato seems almost a staccato articulation. 

If according to Joachim, portato should be played neither too sharp nor too dull, we could point out that in recordings of Stokowsky, Weingartner and HIP Gardiner, portato is on the dull side of Joachim’s remark. On the other side, we find HIP conductor Norrington with the sharpest separation of notes that makes it difficult to differentiate between staccato and portato. In rest of the recordings, Harnoncourt, Kleiber, Rattle, Walter, Mengelberg and Furtwängler, the use portato seems in accordance with the description offered by Joachim. Thus, Gardiner and Norrington on contrasting sides and seemingly away from Joachim’s statement, we could note that their employment portato is not necessarily more historical than main stream conductors. There seems to be a consistent “tradition” using portato among the recordings featuring the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras under conductors Furtwängler, Rattle, Harnoncourt, and Kleiber.

5.5. Portamento

During the early twentieth century, portamento was still common among string players, but lost popularity over the course of the century. As Philip observes: “One would expect orchestral players at the turn of the century to play with more frequent portamento and sparing vibrato, but by the end of the 1930s with more vibrato and less portamento” (Philip 1992: 179).

Portamento appears to have been integral to the art of string instrument playing among pre-HIP performers. The amount of portamento in pre-war recordings is through-out the entire symphony significantly evident and we can observe that indeed, portamento was used to a greater extent in early twentieth century, than it is today. Non-HIP conductors Kleiber and
Rattle use commonly more portamento than HIP conductors, but less than Pre-HIP conductors. It appears that HIP interpretations employ portamento rarely during the entire symphony. Below, I have attempted to indicate accurately where and how many times each performer used portamento in the selected examples.

The lyrical passage in measure 477 of the first movement played by the first violins, is an exceptional example of past and present tendencies towards the use of portamento; the interpretations of HIP performers Gardiner, Norrington are played almost *senza portamento*, whereas the rest of the conductors including HIP Harnoncourt notably exploit the use of portamento in the first violins through-out the passage (ex. 5-10).

Stokowsky: Total: 4 times.

![Measure 477](image)

Mengelberg: Total: 5 times

![Measure 477](image)

Weingartner: Total: 3 times.

![Measure 477](image)

Furtwängler: Total: 2 times.

![Measure 477](image)

Walter: Total: 2 times.
Kleiber: Total: 3 times.

Harnoncourt: Total: one time.

Gardiner: No portamento

Norrington: No portamento

Rattle: Total: 4 times.

Another remarkable portamento tendency is the opening theme of the second movement played by the cellos. (ex. 5-11).

Stokowsky: Total: 11 times
Mengelberg: Total: 8 times.

Wiengartner: Total: 5 times.

Furtwängler: Total: 8 times.

Walter: Total: 4 times.

Kleiber: Total: 8 times.
Harnoncourt: Total: 6 times.

Gardiner: Total: 4 times.

Norrington: 1 time bar 5 (between the first D# and the B).
Rattle: Total: 8 times.

In measure 225 of the Third Movement where Brahms writes down *molto dolce*, most performers benefit from the use of portamento, obtaining the sweetness of color that Brahms pointed out in the score (Ex. 14). The portamento is placed between the G descending to a B flat, and from the A ascending to an E flat played in the strings section. Harnoncourt, Walter, and Gardiner are discreet with the portamento, whereas Kleiber, Stokowski, Weingartner, Mengelberg, Furtwangler and Rattle are more open. Norrington’s recording does not present any portamento in this passage.

Example 14. Second Symphony, Portamento, Movement III, m. 217-227

5.6. Over-Dotting

Lightening the short notes and playing the long notes longer was a symbolic feature in late nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth-century. Musicians employ this effect frequently in order to strengthen specific notes.

The march-like passage of the Third Movement in measure 51 is a pertinent example of over-dotting. Stokowski, Mengelberg, Weingartner, Furtwängler, Walter play a dotted quaver...
and seem to wait until the last moment to for the semiquaver. Harnoncourt, Kleiber, Rattle and Gardiner’s perform a slightly shorter dotted quaver, whilst Norrington plays a shorter quaver than everybody else (Ex. 15).

Example 15. Second Symphony, Over Dotting, Movement III, m. 42-54

The opening theme of the second movement (Ex. 16) played by the cellos is another good example of over-dotting. In the recordings lead by Stokowski, Mengelberg, Weingartner, Harnoncourt and Rattle we hear the cello section playing the sixteenth note considerably shorter and the dotted quarter note substantially longer. From the recordings conducted by Furtwängler, Walter, Kleiber and Gardiner we can observe that the sixteenth is played shorter, though not as short as the others, and still they hold the dotted quarter note longer. In the recording lead by Norrington the rhythm of the sixteenth note is played more literal and the dotted quarter note is shortened. Over-dotting attitudes from the late nineteenth-century seem to be especially still in use among pre-war recordings. Surprisingly, twenty first-century recordings conducted by Harnoncourt and Rattle evidence similar attitudes.

Example 16. Second Symphony, Over Dotting, Movement II, m. 1-6
5.7. Verbal Tempo markings

Even though Brahms expressed doubts about metronome markings and he refused to provide his friends indications of the sort, he was precise about his verbal tempo markings. Brahms clearly differentiated between the words “Tranquillo” and “tranquillo”. The capitalized word means a determined change of tempo, whilst the lower-case “t” recommends not to rush the tempo. (Sherman 2003: 22)

Example 17. Second Symphony, Verbal and Tempo Markings, Movement IV, m. 204-211

Measure 206 of the Fourth Movement is an exceptional illustration. Brahms writes down the word “Tranquillo” for this section. The selected recordings demonstrate that the only conductors who markedly change the tempo in this measure are Furtwängler, Mengelberg, Weingartner and Kleiber. Walter, Harnoncourt, Gardiner and Norrington slightly hold the tempo back, whereas Rattle and Stokowski keep in tempo (Ex. 15). Thus, for the musician who seeks historical accuracy and faithfulness to Brahms intentions, a determined change of tempo would have to be taken at places like this.
6. Conclusions: Reflections on past and present approaches

This study is an attempt to explore the idiosyncrasies in Johannes Brahms’s Second Symphony performance practices from late nineteenth to early twenty-first century. It evaluates hypothesis through practice, and examines the musical tendencies by analyzing recorded and documented evidence. I encouraged myself to investigate technical and historical issues as well as finding out my own intellectual limits. The experience and observation during this project inspired me to challenge myself to understand and embrace the ever growing extent of musical approaches. These performance questions could not have been answered without the recorded proofs evidencing crucial techniques such as vibrato, portamento, tempo rubato and other devices; how and to what extent performers exploited these techniques would not have been easily understood. Therefore, audible evidence can be regarded as the most important primary source for appreciating performing traditions of that period. Pre-war recordings preserve important practices inherent in the interpretative style of the late nineteenth-century, and as in the case of the examples presented above the style could not have been appreciated only from judging the written text. Constructing a performing style grounded merely on documents would not possibly offer an approximation of the performing practices preserved in the recordings. One must be careful in assuming that texts can transmit performing aesthetical ideals of the era in question faithfully.

Nevertheless, combining the information in texts and pre-war recordings can offer a closer look into the prevalent practices at the end of the nineteenth-century. It is more likely that the pre-war recordings style would be more familiar to Brahms, than modern and HIP interpretations. Although there are inconsistencies among written texts, early recordings evidence that vibrato, tempo rubato and rhythmic modifications and specially portamento were a common part of the performance practices in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century orchestral playing, and this performing style contrasts considerably with mainstream and the period style approach suggested by Gardiner and Norrington.

Historical evidence supports a strong ground asserting that the idiosyncratic features of these practices are the result of long-established conventions. The examples examined in this study present that pre-war and some post-war mainstream recordings display these techniques that correspond to the historical evidence; therefore, their performances were and are not less historically informed than HIP performers. If the performing style of early recordings sounds...
unfamiliar or even amateurish to the contemporary ear, it is important to understand that musicians of that period had different aesthetic viewpoints concerning performing practices than in modern times.

What makes HIP recordings be more “historically” supported than others? Certainly, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, performers generally employed less vibrato, but used portamento and tempo rubato surprisingly much more than in present day. HIP conductors Gardiner’s and Norrington’s use of vibrato is significantly less obvious than the rest of the performers including Weingartner’s, whose performances were praised by Brahms himself. However, their interpretations lack the effort in regards to portamento, rhythm, flexibility of tempo, which were elemental characteristic of the interpretative style during Brahms’s time. The accuracy of the historical approach in Brahms’s Second Symphony is a complex subject and its limitations may be part of a greater debate addressed even by notable musicians in the HIP-movement and scholars. Claire Holden, a violinist with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a researcher on historical string performance observes: “The success and increasingly mainstream profile of the period instrument artists and ensembles have led to audiences and some players having the perception that the recordings of well known ‘period’ conductors like Gardiner, Norrington etc. are stylistically faithful”. (Holden 2012: 13, accessed April 9, 2015). She adds: “it has become in danger of mass, lower quality and losing touch with what its customers want…” (Holden 2012: 27, accessed April 9, 2015).

Others describe Norrington’s recordings as: “showing little flexibility of tempo…” and “one cannot deny that the primary function of any commercial recording is to sell records and it seems likely that his performances are compromised by the need to appeal to modern tastes sensibilities” (Milsom 2003: 2).

These statements imply that Norrington’s recordings are concerned with generating financial profit, rather than creating or recreating a genuine historically grounded interpretation of Brahms’s music. They also reveal the great challenges of putting stylistic ideas into practice; and although this investigation suggests that HIP interpretations of the Second Symphony are not necessarily more historical than mainstream interpretation, I believe that both Gardiner and Norrington offer singular and exciting performances. Therefore I compliment their efforts to deliver different and invigorating performances.
There has been a change of flexibility of tempo that we can observe by comparing the more elastic pre-war recordings with the more rhythmically literal modern ones. Concurrently, it is of interest that many performance practices of the late nineteenth-century are preserved in the more modern recordings of Carlos Kleiber and Simon Rattle with the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras respectively. They differ from Norrington’s and Gardiner’s recordings in their marked use of vibrato, but exploit the other techniques thoroughly. On the other hand, Harnoncourt’s observance of vibrato, portamento and flexibility of tempo, resembles more any mainstream or modern approach, than HIP Brahms.

In present day, and as a result of the contribution from both HIP-approach and “mainstream tradition”, the author of this study suggests that a “new-mainstream” is emerging and identifies himself with the latter. The “new-style” embraces both approaches but does not connect directly with HIP-movement nor claims to be more historically accurate than others. It is difficult to make a distinction between HIP and the “new-mainstream” since they present similar stylistic ideas put into practice; this can be confirmed by observing the interpretations of Kleiber, Harnoncourt and Rattle used for comparison in this study.

As another good example of this, we can mention the recordings of the performances of Mozart’s Symphonies with the Berlin Philharmonic and Simon Rattle, the Beethoven Symphonies with the Bremen Chamber orchestra and Estonian conductor Paavo Järvi, or the performances of also the Beethoven Symphonies with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Claudio Abbado. Thus, an important question arises: Will it be still necessary in the near future to make a distinction between HIP and “mainstream” approach? This question is perhaps a fertile field for a postdoctoral study and further investigation, and it is hoped that we continue to revise our criteria and continue to find new and fresh ways to communicate to modern audiences.

This study suggests that there is no single performance that can be called authentic or historically authentic. Interpretative styles at the turn of the twentieth-century were so varied, and as we have learned Brahms admired musicians of different sorts that it is impossible to name any of his contemporaries as bearer of his tradition.

Brahms HIP interpretations of the Second Symphony do not represent the musician’s commitment to “historical truth”, neither are they a reconstruction of the past; they are more the result of modern beliefs and ideas of “good taste”; thus, they seem to be committed to
present aesthetical values. A HIP music interpreter, in order to be more historically authoritative has the responsibility to integrate history as much as there is information available. By not observing extremely valuable historical evidence we could be confronted the “I know very well, but anyway, I feel it and like it this way” approach, which was precisely what the HIP movement criticized from mainstream musicians. I believe that HIP-Brahms Second Symphony has an enormous opportunity and potential to offer more historical faithfulness due to the vast early twentieth-century recorded materials. As for the music of earlier periods and without the recorded evidence we can never have a close idea of their performing styles.

In order to understand the musical tendencies of the late nineteenth-century, it is important to understand that performers in those years had very different aesthetical performance views than musicians in present day. A historically supported performance cannot be attained only by introducing instruments of the period without challenging present conceptions of good taste.

While historically informed performance has provided us with valuable information of specific circumstances in which musical works were performed at the time, the conventions held by musicians and public, they expose the prevailing gap between theoretical and practical performance. Performances built upon the information on written texts, do not remotely approximate the style and character of early recordings, as shown in the comparison between HIP recordings and the documented evidence. HIP recordings deserve thoughtful listening, and although their predominant tempi are brisker and they show less flexibility of tempo than suggested by the historical evidence and the recordings of pre-war conductors, the balance between the different sections of the orchestra is particularly compelling. Achieving historical faithfulness is a complex matter. The idea that music should be performed in a way that would be familiar to the musicians and audiences of the period in question, implicates that music belongs to specific people in a specific period of time. This represents a challenge for the modern musician since performing a musical work with a modern perspective would be historically inaccurate. On the other hand, it also confronts the historical approach with important limitations. Today we can replicate a fairly authentic older model of a clarinet or cello, but how can we replicate the audience?
Even historical faithfulness is an unattainable concept, we can expand, broaden and strengthen our musical views and interpretations by preparing ourselves with as much information as possible concerning the aspects that gave birth to musical works. Having more and different alternatives can help us being more flexible musicians, and hopefully offer a performing style that can communicate with audiences of the present day. We should celebrate that HIP-Brahms is bringing people to the concert hall, selling records and stimulating people to engage in discussing and finding new varied and interesting ways to interpret his music. This, confirms that the music of Brahms does not necessarily belong only to the people of his own time.

What is important are the common descriptions of Brahms’s time, instead of aspects of purely technical elements. For example, when Brahms heard Leonard Borwick, a piano student of Clara Schumann, Brahms described his performance as: “played quite excellently with the most perfect freedom, warmth, energy, passion, in short everything that one could desire” (Sherman-Musgrave 2003: 369). From Brahms’s comment we can learn that we should incorporate historical evidence in order to create for present audiences a sense of freedom, warmth, energy and passion.

With this study, it is hoped that the reader will find an opportunity to reconsider Brahms performance. His reluctance to provide his friends with indications on how to perform his music proves that he was concerned with inspiring the performer with conveying musical content, rather than remaining faithful to specific performance practices. When he was asked to provide indications regarding the tempi of the Second Symphony, he replied with a quote from Goethe’s “Faust”:

“Unless you feel it, vain will be your chase;
Unless it pour from the soul
And with primeval joy
Compel the hearts of all who hearken”

Next time I have the opportunity conduct Brahms Second Symphony I will most definitely have Faust’s passage in mind when making musical decisions. For we can only deliver convincing performances when the music is felt deeply inside us. I would not doubt to ask
certain section in the orchestra for an occasional portamento; much less I would doubt about employing substantial vibrato in order to achieve a robust sound like the kind we can hear in the recordings conducted by Harnoncourt and Rattle.

Studying the aspects of HIP in Brahms’s music has inspired me to continue to investigate these issues. Through Brahms’s comments fortunately preserved in his vast correspondence, I feel closer to his character and ideals than through Joachim’s performing style. Nostalgia is a word that encapsulates the character of Brahms’s music, and this study has certainly filled me with that feeling when thinking about the past as Brahms did. Gary Tomlinson observed: “There are deep and rewarding kinds of musical knowledge that involve neither the score nor its performance. The most profound and authentic meanings of music will be found not in musical works themselves but behind them, in the varieties of discourse that give rise to them. The deepest interpretation of such meanings will spring from minds caught up in the mysterious and fundamentally human act of pondering the past” (Tomlinson 1988: 136).
Sources
Score:

Recordings:


Bibliography


Töö lühikokkuvõtöe

Brahmsi Teise sümfoonia D-duur op. 73 esituspraktika võrdlus

Käesoleva väitekirja eesmärk on uurida Brahmsi Teise sümfoonia D-duur op. 73 esituspraktikat. Töö sisaldab arutlust 19. sajandi esitusstiilist, Brahmsi juhatatud orkestritest, temast kui interpreedist ja tema kirjavahetusest, samuti tuntud orkestrite ja dirigentide esitusest alates 19. sajandist kuni käesoleva ajani. Võrreldavaist salvestustest osa päineb Teise maailmasõja eelsest ajast (Stokowski, Mengelberg, Furtwängler ja Walter), osa aga hilisemast ajast, kusjuures omavahel on võrreltud peavoolu esindajaid (Kleiber ja Rattle) ja nn. ajaloolistliku esituse praktiseerijaid (Harnoncourt, Norrington ja Gardiner).

mu kolleegid – muusikud ja isegi mõned muusikateadlased – polnud kursis ajalooladlikki esitusviisiga ega selle erinevusega tavalisest esitusviisist.


Käesolevas uurimuses püüan hinnata ja värrelda eelmainitud esitusi ajalooladlikku esituse seisukohast. Püüan oma töös vastata küsimusele: kas nimetatud teose “ajalooladlikud esitused” on peavoolu omadest ajalooliselt tõetruumad?


Ajalooladlik esitus on tänapäeval laialt levinud üle maailma nii interpretatsiooni- kui ka öppepraktikas. Seda võib kirjeldada kui kätset esitada muusikat kooskõlas mingi ajaloolise perioodi esituspraktikaga või helilooja muusikaliste kavatsustega. Rõhutatakse vajadust uurida helilooja eluaegse esitusviisi iseärasusi, kasutades sageli vastava perioodi pille (eriti 18. sajandi keskpaigast varasema repertuaari puhul) ning huvitutakse minevikul mängutehnikatest.

Heliteose ajalooliste aspektide tundmine aitab mõista teost ennast ja selle esialgset esitusviisi. See võib pakkuda tähtsat teavit helilooja elualal valitsenud maatsete ja suhtumiste kohta, soodustades seega veenvat esitust. Selles mõttes sisaldab väärtsusliku teavet Brahmsi laialdane kirjavahetus: ilmneb, et heliloojat huvitas rohkem muusikalise sisu edastamine kui esituspraktika spetsiifilised küsimused.


Näiteks kasutab Stokowski Brahmsi Teise sümfoonia teise osa algul portamentot 11 korral,
Norrington aga ainult ühel korral (takti 5 algul käigus *dis–h*).

Appendix

Brief Biographies of the Performers

Leopold Stokowski (1882–1977) one of the British leading conductors of the early and mid-20th Century, best known for his long association with the Philadelphia Symphony. He appeared in several Hollywood films and was a long life champion of contemporary composers. He made his official conducting debut in 1909, appeared in public for the last time in 1975 but continued making recordings until June 1977, a few months before his death at the age of 95. ¹

Wilhelm Mengelberg (1871–1951) was a highly idiosyncratic conductor who through extensive and detailed rehearsal achieved by current standards the most personal of performances. His approach to interpretation is exemplified by his comments that ‘…the performer must help the creator’, and ‘…faithfulness to the notes is a recent invention.’ He used the several playing norms of the period, such as rubato (tempo adjustments) and portamento (sliding from one note to another, generally on the strings) in such a way as to deliberately intensify his interpretations, and frequently adjusted dynamic markings and orchestrations with the same aim.²

Felix Weingartner (1863–1942) was born into an aristocratic Austrian family. Here he heard Tchaikovsky conduct his own works, and controversially offered a straightforward alternative to Bülow’s highly subjective interpretations. Weingartner’s significance in the history of recording lies in the fact that he was the first major conductor to record a representative repertoire. His legacy of recordings has been eloquently described by the critic Christopher Dyment, who has written that Weingartner ‘…left posterity performances unique in their equipoise and vitality, their patrician dignity and singular directness of expression.’³

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Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886–1954) was one the very greatest interpretative musicians of the twentieth century. As a conductor, he possessed a highly personal technique, and completely rejected the idea of the conductor as virtuoso. His studies with Schenker gave him a powerful grasp of musical architecture, and he had an unrivalled capacity to reveal this in performance, as well as to create a sustained sense of mood, with a mastery of tempo, phrasing, dynamics and transitions, all of which were geared to the realisation of his ideal of the moment. The results were frequently outstanding as well as unique, creating a sense of intensity equalled by few and exceeded by none. Every recording conducted by Furtwängler is of interest.4

Bruno Walter (1876–1962) was a pre-eminent conductor in a period rich in musicians of stature. He rehearsed orchestras with a seemingly gentle but firm and persuasive manner; in performance he was more concerned with intensity of expression than precise technical exactitude, and always maintained a strong emphasis upon the lyrical qualities of the music which he was interpreting. He had a close relationship with Gustav Mahler. Walter’s recorded accounts and represent, as does all his music-making, the very finest aspects of the nineteenth-century Austro-German tradition of musical performance.5

Carlos Kleiber (1930–2004) was the son of the eminent conductor Erich Kleiber. In many ways he was the conductor’s conductor: fellow musicians such as Herbert von Karajan and Bernard Haitink publicly expressed their admiration for him, and he was the first choice of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to succeed Karajan following the latter’s death, an offer which he declined. The level of intensity which he demanded both of himself and of his musical colleagues was of an order that could not be sustained on a day-to-day basis. While the small number of commercial and unofficial recordings of Kleiber conducting both in concert and in the opera house are a poor substitute for the real thing, they do help to show to some extent how and why he created such an enormous impact during the short period of his international career.6

http://www.naxos.com/person/Wilhelm_Furtwangler/32218.htm  
http://www.naxos.com/person/Bruno_Walter_31907/31907.htm  
http://www.naxos.com/person/Carlos_Kleiber/31442.htm
Nikolaus Harnoncourt (b. 1929) is an Austrian conductor. He has taught performance practice and the study of historical instruments at the Mozarteum University of Music and Dramatic Arts in Salzburg. He founded the Concentus Musicus Wien ensemble together with his wife Alice, to provide a forum for his increasingly intensive work with period instruments and Renaissance and baroque musical performance tradition. Today, Nikolaus Harnoncourt is one of the few true stars among conductors worldwide, displaying the characteristic passion and fiery intensity that identify him, first and foremost, as a true servant of his art.\(^7\)

Roger Norrington (b. 1934) is a British conductor. In order to pursue the performance of a wider repertoire on period instruments than was then usual he formed the London Classical Players in 1978. Norrington’s research into original scores and into the size, seating and playing style of the orchestras of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has had a remarkable influence on the way music of this period is both perceived and performed. He has been particularly vigorous in his pursuit of reducing the amount of vibrato used by string players in symphony orchestras. ‘It’s one of my missions to make this way of playing freely available to any intelligent musician,’ he has commented in interview. Norrington’s career has developed in an outward progression from musical specialist to acclaimed international maestro. He has effectively harnessed contemporary academic ideas of period performance to concerts and recordings in ways that have attracted wide interest and popular enthusiasm, and above all he has successfully bridged the potential divide between conducting orchestras that use period instruments and those that use modern ones, bringing new ideas to both.\(^8\)

John Elliot Gardiner (b. 1943) is a British conductor. Most of Gardiner’s performances and recordings during the 1970s were of Baroque music. As he moved more in the direction of period performance, in 1977 he founded the English Baroque Soloists, playing on period instruments. In 1990, he formed another new period instrument orchestra, the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, this time to play Classical and Romantic music, and with this Ensemble, Gardiner has performed and recorded key works of the nineteenth-century repertoire.

\(^7\) Naxos Artist Biography, accessed February 12th, 2013.
http://www.naxos.com/person/Nikolaus_Harnoncourt_30361/30361.htm

\(^8\) Naxos Artist Biography, accessed February 12th, 2013.
http://www.naxos.com/person/Roger_Norrington/32125.htm
Gardiner has had at times a stormy relationship with musicians, and his strong individual vision occasionally results in performances that can seem hard-driven and inflexible. Gardiner has effectively made the transition from niche to general conductor, while at the same time maintaining his specialist profile, notably in period performance. 9

Simon Rattle (b. 1955) is an English conductor. In 1980 he was appointed chief conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He held this position for eighteen years before relinquishing it in the summer of 1998. Rattle’s conducting style has certain characteristics that are constant. On the podium in concert he is physically highly animated, using his facial expressions and eyes especially to indicate his intentions. His priorities are clarity and precision, and the two go hand in hand. Since the mid-1980s Rattle has been an enthusiastic conductor of performances on period instruments, most frequently with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Unlike previous conductors, such as Furtwängler and Karajan, who essentially worked within a uniform performance style, Rattle seeks to realise ‘the maximum diversity of tradition’, to quote his biographer, Nicholas Kenyon. The practical application of this philosophy is the pursuit of variety, which works strongly against the homogeneity of performance and interpretation that recordings may encourage. What Rattle is seeking is to get the varying grammar of performance known, accepted and understood in the appropriate repertoire. In this he has to date been largely successful. 10