

**The Role of the Violin in Expressing the Musical
Ideas of the Romantic Period and the
Development of Violin Techniques in the
Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.**

**Performance Practices in Romantic
Music for Violin**

Part II: Guide to Performance

SOHYUN EASTHAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	iii
A Note for Guide to Performance.....	iv
Recital 1 : September 16 th , 1999.....	1
1. Sonata in A minor Op. 105 – Robert Schumann (1810-1856).....	3
2. Mouvements Perpétuels – Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) & Jascha Heifetz (1900-87)..	18
3. Praeludium und Allegro in the style of Pugnani – Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962).	25
4. Havanaise Op. 83 – Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921).	34
Recital 2 : June 16 th , 2000	43
1. Sonata in A major Op. 162 – Franz Schubert (1797-1828).....	45
2. Sonata No. 2 in D major Op. 94a – Serge Prokofiev (1891-1953).....	61
Recital 3 : August 31 st , 2001.....	76
1. Sonata No. 3 in D minor Op. 108 – Johannes Brahms (1833-1897).....	78
2. Three Pieces Op. 42 – Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893).....	96
3. Tzigane – Maurice Ravel (1875-1937).....	107
Recital 4 : November 20 th , 2001	113
1. Piano Trio No. 5 in D major Op. 70 No. 1 – Ludwig Beethoven (1770-1827).....	114
Recital 5 : December 10 th , 2002.....	124
1. Sonata No. 1 in G major Op. 78 – Johannes Brahms (1833-1897).	126
2. Sonata No. 2 in A major Op. 100 – Johannes Brahms (1833-1897).	150
3. Scherzo in C minor – Johannes Brahms (1833-1897).....	168
List of Musical Examples	178

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 A suggestion from von Herzogenberg to improve the Scherzo part.....	79
Figure 2 The upward progression of the music.	163
Figure 3 Distribution of Weight of the Bow.....	173
Figure 4 Cross-section of bow showing tilting.....	173

A NOTE FOR GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE.

The aims of this section are:

- to provide a background to the creative component of the thesis,
- to discuss the choices of repertoire,
- to discuss the implementation of historical performance practices, and
- to offer a plan for an approach to study of such repertoire using the historical performance practices.

Background to the recitals

This thesis includes five live performances. The programme for the first two recitals was decided upon after much discussion with my supervisor. For these recitals I was preparing for my Master of Creative Arts degree where there was a different emphasis of the topic – *Romantic/Virtuoso Tradition of Violin Composition and Performance*. After upgrading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree the direction of the research changed slightly, however the inclusion of these recitals, and the works therein, were maintained for the reasons outlined below. The programme for the next three recitals was decided upon with more input from myself, but still in consultation with my supervisor. The pianist for the first, second and fifth recitals was Helen Smith. Unfortunately she was unwell for the preparation period of my third recital, and hence Helen English agreed to assist with my performance. I extend my gratitude to both pianists for their interest and enthusiasm for the project and for the large amount of challenging work they were prepared to undertake. Further, appreciation is extended to Anthea Scott-Mitchell and John Collyer for their assistance in performing the trio with me in my fourth recital.

The recitals were conducted over a time span of 4 years, with preparation time ranging from six months to nine months. The material in these recitals was not part of my regular repertoire. Hence, an enormous amount of new material needed to be prepared for each recital. One consequence was that most of the material was not performed by me to any other audience prior to the recital performance.

This *Guide to Performance* is an amalgamation of my logbook notes which I wrote for each recital with a detailed account of the choices for interpretation, including bowing and other technical choices, for each piece. As the research progressed, these choices developed from the study of the theories of performance practice and through practical experimentation. Some background information on the composers is also included in this *Guide* as a means of better understanding their music.

While the *Guide* was primarily written after the last recital, the information contained therein was sourced from the logbook that I compiled during and after each recital. Therefore it can be considered to be a record of my progressive understanding of performance practice. My thoughts on the performance are included for each recital and reflect my opinions immediately thereafter.

The choice of repertoire

The repertoire for the recitals was selected in an effort to display a cross-section of composers and styles of instrumental music for the violin. My intention was to implement the performance practices outlined in the thesis, employing the techniques of the period when appropriate, but in some instances employing my own. For example, fingering was not often indicated on scores in the early part of the period and even later when it was sometimes indicated, it was acceptable for the performer to use his or her own fingerings.¹ The first and second recitals comprised a selection of compositions from the period under study. The third recital concentrated on material with a deep Romantic spirit. The last two recitals used specific composers as their theme: Beethoven (from early in the period) and Brahms (from the heart of the period) respectively.

As discussed in Appendix B, p. 289, recording technology was only in its infancy at the turn of the twentieth century. Therefore, quality recordings of violinists performing at their peak are not available from the nineteenth century. However, where recordings from the period were available² (from later in the early twentieth century) they were

¹ See Chapter 6.2 *Fingering in Romanticism*, p. 135.

² For most of these I used material from the CD entitled *The Recorded Violin: The History of the Violin on Record*.

consulted in the interpretive process. I did avoid listening to any modern recordings as my aim was to create an interpretation based on the findings of research and from the musical score itself. I was conscious of minimising stylistic influences from other modern artists, a challenge in preparing the music for these recitals.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are traditionally known as the Romantic Period and it was this period that was chosen to be the subject of study for this thesis. I considered both Beethoven and Schubert, at least in the latter stages of their compositional output, to be early Romantics. Hence, the inclusion of Schubert's Op. 162 and Beethoven's Op. 70 No. 1 can be justified in terms of the "Romantic spirit": Beethoven, however, more so in the piano writing than the violin.

I chose the three Brahms sonatas and Scherzo, the entire Brahms violin output, because I consider Brahms to be the most Romantic writer – both in the piano and violin writing. His sonatas are especially suited to demonstrating the concepts of Chapter 5 *An Analysis of the Music Considering the Expressive Reasons Behind the New Style*, particularly rhythm, texture, tone colour and dynamics as well as tempo, style, et cetera.

While Ravel's composition is toward the very end of the period, it was included for performance because it is a late example of the gypsy virtuoso idiom and 'a spiritual descendant of the caprices and rhapsodies of Paganini and Liszt.'

The next two pieces to be discussed were performed in the first two recitals respectively where, as part of my Masters degree, there was also an emphasis on virtuoso pieces. With hindsight I would have chosen different pieces to include for this thesis – possibly one of Beethoven's solo works and/or another work from the early nineteenth century. However, for the reason discussed below and because they demonstrate the notion of an afterglow of Romanticism, as discussed in Chapter 3.2 *The End of the Romantic Era in Music*, p. 21, they remained part of this thesis.

Poulenc was included because it is a Heifetz transcription. Heifetz was a master of violin techniques and was one of the violinists to make the use of vibrato fashionable in the early twentieth century. The piece displays many of the techniques that were developed since Paganini.

I chose Prokofiev's Op. 94a for inclusion because even though it has little to do with Romanticism, it does demonstrate Paganini's expanded idea of the use of the left thumb and the use of the whole fingerboard. Many nineteenth-century violinists chose to use a more advanced thumb position to attain greater mobility and facility in extensions, sometimes avoiding shifts between positions. Some of Paganini's fingerings, for example, anticipated the flexible left-hand usage of twentieth-century violin technique. These techniques included contractions, extensions and creeping fingerings, which liberated the hand from its usual position-sense and the traditional diatonic framework. Prokofiev's Op. 94a, originally not even written for the violin, includes increased chromaticism, whole-tone and other scale patterns, and non-consonant double and multiple stopping that demanded the techniques mentioned above which were first pioneered by Paganini.

The choice of editions

Where possible I endeavoured to evade modern edited publications of printed music in the belief that the closer the edition was to the original date of publication, the more accurate would be the score. After more research, I found that there are more recent and scholarly editions available and that editors of later editions of the original score often had very idiosyncratic approaches according to their background. These differences between the scores that I used in my performances and the original scores have been discussed, where necessary, in this *Guide*.

It was found that string indications on the editions I used in my performances were added by the editors of the editions. There appeared to be very few string indications indicated by the composers themselves.

The implementation of historical performance practices

It is a moot point whether issues associated with the differences between nineteenth-century and modern instruments should have been considered in greater depth. Much of the development of the violin occurred before the nineteenth-century and, as discussed

in Chapter 4.1A *How Did the Violin Shape and the Bow Develop?*, developments in the violin were largely to do with types of strings and a few other technical aspects. I was not able to arrange instruments and/or fittings from the period and therefore was unable to investigate the differences in approach this may have suggested. However, after listening to recordings of Joachim (1831-1907), Rosé (1863-1946) and Powell (1868-1920) et. al., which were recorded between 1903 and 1910, I found that the sound was very unsatisfactory to “modern” ears because they used portamento with very little to no vibrato. I certainly made clear statements in Chapter 6.1G *Vibrato and Portato* that whereas vibrato had been viewed primarily as an ornament in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its constant use as a component of ‘good taste’ dates from as recently as the 1930’s. I therefore decided to use portato in some instances and to limit the use of vibrato to give a compromise between the old playing style and modern taste. However, I have tried to follow the other aspects of the period such as bowing styles, tone colourings and other musical interpretive ideas of nineteenth-century playing.

A reciprocal stimulation for the researcher-performer is provided by this concept of ‘research through performance’. He or she can begin to determine through experimentation, by experimenting with and applying the theoretical performance practices, how music was interpreted and transformed into a living art. This in turn further informs and stimulates the research process. The recitals, then, demonstrate a progressive awareness of the performance practices and how they might be applied.

Part II *Guide to Performance*, then, provides an historical background for each piece that I performed, as well as the aims for each recital and a review of the performance. The performance considerations provide a work of some analysis, which aims to give the progress of the research through performance and interpretive issues encountered. It provides a rationale for the techniques and strategies in the creative component.

Baillot’s treatise, *The Art of the Violin*, is considered the most influential of the nineteenth century, and hence I have mostly used this book, as well as Part I, for referencing in this creative-practice process.

A strategy for studying repertoire

Following is a strategy that materialised during the course of study for approaching the repertoire of the period.

- i) Choose a composition from the repertoire.
- ii) Read the music score without knowing any historic style or background.
- iii) Practice passages with a metronome at a slow speed for several days to several weeks, working on pure intonation. Gradually increase speed until the correct tempo for the music is achieved. To practice intonation play the technical passages by forming chords or double stops. Slurred passages can be checked for any unevenness by playing them with spiccato.
- iv) Research the background to the piece and determine the period of the composer and his style.
- v) Determine which techniques need to be applied and from study of the treatises from the period, follow exercises that may be suggested. Choose the expressive fingerings to best produce the Romantic sound. Also, where available, listen to early recordings to help in the process of deciding what and how much of a technique to use. For example, the amount and intensity of vibrato.
- vi) Practice the passages that use challenging techniques by using the exercises discovered from the treatises. Practice some of the left-hand techniques without the bow, listening to the sound in the mind. Practice also bow techniques without the left hand, if necessary.
- vii) Determine the dynamics and tonal colours that the composer may have implied in the score. This should be done by examining the overall mood of the piece, then by examining individual phrases, then by looking within the phrase at the musical periods.
- viii) In consultation with treatises determine the interpretative choices.
- ix) Begin to discuss with the accompanist the ideas of the interpretation of the music. At this point, fingerings may change depending on whether the passage sounds correct. More expressive fingerings may be required. The selection of bow strokes may also need to be modified.

- x) Have several rehearsals with the accompanist to get the correct balance between the piano and the violin. Possibly record the rehearsal with a home recording device to listen to the performance and make adjustments in techniques and dynamics.
- xi) Practice both by oneself as well as with the accompanist to a level for performance.

From the above discussion, it may be seen that the application of performance practices from the period under study enhances the understanding of the theory through the process of experimentation. Problems of interpretation that may be neglected through a purely theoretical study may be detected in performance. The required balance of all the different aspects of the theory in performance can ultimately best be understood through application. As Auer (1925) mentioned in his book, the best advice set down on paper is no substitute for an actual demonstration of its application (p. 19).

Notes on formatting:

- Example 4-3 refers to example number 3 in recital 4.
- ff. after a number, eg 16ff., means bar or page 16 and the following ones.
- Footnote references appear with this order: pages in this *Guide*, other books, pages in Part I: *Thesis*.