ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE COMPOSING VIOLINIST: COMPOSITION AND INTERPRETATION IN RECITAL

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On a program for a classical music recital today you will typically find the names of the performers, as well as the names of the various composers who wrote the music. At first, this seems perfectly ordinary, until we consider that there was a time when such a distinction between performer and composer was not always so ordinary. Today, musical composition and performance are seen as separate practices. Looking at the works that dominate the modern repertoire of today's recitals, a disproportionate number of them are written by composers who *also* performed those very works themselves. This investigation has traced the history of the composing violinist back to the beginnings of the French Violin School of the 19th century. The composing violinist underwent a transformation into the interpreting and performance-oriented violinist in the latter half of the 19th century as a result of a growth in historical and interpretive perfor-

mance practices popularized by the Hungarian violinist, composer, and pedagogue, Joseph Joachim. Composing violinists have contributed greatly to the modern violin repertoire and their works comprise a significant portion of essential learning materials for the consummate violinist. This dissertation explores such works, through scholarly examination and performance, composed by Niccolò Paganini, Eugène Ysayë, and Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst. These are complemented by works written by composers associated with the rise of the interpreting violinist, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven. Finally, the program is completed with three original works composed by myself as a composing violinist.

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE COMPOSING VIOLINIST: COMPOSITION AND INTERPRETATION IN RECITAL

by

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The Rise and Decline of the Composing Violinist:
Composition and Interpretation in Recital

The composing violinist has become a relatively obscure figure in classical music and their presence has steadily declined since the middle of the 19th century. While it was no novel concept that a performer would also compose the music they performed, the establishment of the French Violin School at the turn of the 19th century gave rise to the composing violinist who necessarily advanced the technical capabilities of the instrument through their compositions. When Giovanni Battista Viotti arrived in Paris in 1782, he brought with him the already virtuosic elements of Italian violin performance and fused them with the stylistic elements that pervaded French music of the time.[1] Soon after arriving in France, Viotti worked closely with the bow luthier François Xavier Tourte and their collaboration produced the modern heat-cambered bow. This development in technology translated directly into a development in violin playing technique. The new bow made it possible to more easily produce a myriad of varying bow strokes that took advantage of its newfound spring-like quality. Viotti aptly displayed these advancements through the twenty nine violin concertos he wrote during his time in Paris, followed by his pupils' own violin concertos. Paradoxically, the establishment of the French Violin School, while encouraging composing violinists to write challenging and violinistically innovative compositions, also set the violinist on a course to become increasingly performance-oriented and more distant from the practice of composition. This shift in priority was perhaps exacerbated by the

[1] Schwarz, Boris. "Beethoven and the French Violin School." The musical Quarterly, vol. 44, no. 4, 1958. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/740706. Accessed 3 December 2020. p.432

fact that the newly founded Paris Conservatoire had designated Viotti's concertos as the only acceptable repertoire for the annual competition until 1853.[2] Today's violinists are renowned for their artistry as performers and interpreters of works written by other composers. Their departure from the simultaneous, if not obligatory, practice of composing has resulted in the refinement and establishment of performing itself as a distinct art. In finding a meaningful explanation for the decline of the composing violinist, it is necessary to first acknowledge the relationship between performance and composition. Performance, at its essence, is the final stage of the composition process. If this is true, then the performer composes in order to perform. Niccolò Paganini, the fabled virtuoso violinist that revolutionized violin technique, is an ideal example of this view. For Paganini, there simply was no music that had already been written by someone else through which he could aptly demonstrate his exceptional virtuosic skills, and his solution to this was that he composed them himself.[3] Since the time of Paganini–which overlapped the French Violin School–and the rest of the 19th century, there had been a great influx of technically demanding works written for the violin, and the necessity to compose new works for a lack of variety had begun to wane. While there are several factors that contributed to the decline of the composing violinist, Joseph Joachim's involvement in the performing centers of 19th-century Europe played

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[2] Schwarz, Boris. "Beethoven and the French Violin School." The musical Quarterly, vol. 44, no. 4, 1958. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/740706. Accessed 3 December 2020. p.432

[3] Ginsburg, Lev. *Ysaÿe.* Paganiniana Publications, 1980. p. 112

a significant role in shaping the identity of the modern violinist who claimed specialization of refined performance.

Joseph Joachim was a renowned violinist, composer, conductor, and pedagogue. He collaborated with Johannes Brahms, and over the course of his career as a musician he influenced a paradigm shift in the performing culture of classical music. He studied at the Vienna Conservatory with Georg Hellmesberger Sr. (father of Josef Hellmesberger Sr.) and made his London debut in 1844, met with ecstatic praise, performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto. His debut performance consequently revived a work that had fallen into relative obscurity.[4] Before this performance, Beethoven's Violin Concerto was not regarded with the same reverence as it is today. Joachim also championed Beethoven's later string quartets,[5] and soon classical music circles began to reconsider these and other works from the past. Joachim's favor for music from an earlier time was not limited to Beethoven. He also brought Johann Sebastian Bach's works for solo violin back into the violin repertory. Perhaps this preservationist effort was emboldened after his time in Weimar, where the "worship of Wagner's music permeating musical taste" was "inordinate and unacceptable."[6] After this experience, Joachim unequivocally dismissed the New German School, and regarded Bach and Beethoven as the truest representatives of musical excel-

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[4] Moser, Andreas. *Joseph Joachim: A Biography (1831-1899)* Translated by Lilla Durham (London: Philip Wellby, 1901) p. 19

[5] Moser, p. 34

[6] Moser, p. 56

lence. Joachim's installations for the preservation and interpretation of these historical works of music–those written by Bach, Mozart (whose concertos Joachim also wrote cadenzas for), and Beethoven–has had a lasting influence on performing culture that extends to this day, where recital programs regularly include works such as Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata, Bach's C major Solo Violin Sonata, and Mozart's K.378. While *some* violinists may still compose today, certainly *all* violinists interpret and will in perpetuity continue to study the masterpieces of the past. Although Joachim had ignited the growth of the interpreting violinist, he himself was a composing violinist. From the later part of the 19th century into the 20th, the composing violinist coexisted alongside the budding interpreting violinist within the same artist. The development of recording technology since the 1880s, perhaps, was also a catalyst that further promoted the notion of refining performance and interpretation for the ability to produce an authoritative record. However, the unmistakable emergence of the purely interpretive violinist can be attributed to the various international competitions that were established in the 20th century. Violinists from countries around the world competed on these stages and did so by performing a selected repertoire which was now replete with works from the past. A violinist's skills were now judged by certainly their technical facility, but above all, by the conviction in their interpretation of the repertoire. From the time of Joachim's introduction of the art of interpretation, we can see a gradual but clear decline of compositional activity by violinists. The first wave of the interpreting violinists include Joseph Joachim, Eugène Ysaÿe, and Fritz Kreisler. The second wave of interpreting violinists with less compositional activity brought along David Oistrakh, Nathan Milstein, and Jascha

Heifetz (although Heifetz did produce a significant collection of arrangements that are an important part of the repertoire today). Finally, the third wave of violinists who are fundamentally interpreting violinists include Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Gil Shaham, and James Ehnes. Today the composing violinist is dormant but nevertheless remains within all interpreting violinists. That creative potential lies there as a tremendous source of artistic nourishment for both student violinists and performing artists alike.

Recital No. 1

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Sonata for Piano and Violin in B-flat major K.378

The Sonata for Piano and Violin in B-flat major K.378 was completed sometime in early 1799 in Salzburg. It is among his "mature" violin sonatas, contrasting from his childhood violin sonatas in that the two instruments now share equal roles in the music. The sonata is written in three movements. The first, a bucolic *Allegro moderato,* opens with the piano introducing the first theme with the violin in a purely accompanimental role. The music unfurls into a restatement of the same theme, now with the roles reversed. The second theme carries a more nostalgic scent, tinged gently with the bitterness of G minor, and all the while a burbling brook can be heard in the piano. The movement goes on to find introverted moments of contemplation, turning into internal conflict and outright turmoil, before gently floating back to the blissful character of the opening. The second movement is in E-flat major, a key that Mozart reserves for his most profound expressions on the marriage of beauty and love. The third movement is a rollicking

Rondo, shifting in mood as the music jumps from contrasting episode back to the irrepressibly ebullient refrain. One episode harkens back to the same G minor that we encountered in the first movement, and another episode leads to an unexpected shift not only in mood, but in meter all together. This last episode is coda-like as it builds on rhythmic momentum towards the end, but the movement comes to a close only after one last return to the playful refrain.

Mozart is as known for his compositions as he is for his legendary abilities as a performer. It has been suggested that this sonata was written for his pianist sister, Marianne, and his father, a violinist.[7] However, it is likely that W.A. Mozart himself could very well have performed either part. The supreme eloquence that is characteristic of Mozart's music, owing to its unrivaled level of distilled refinement, perhaps can be attributed to his equally refined understanding of and the ability to play the instruments for which he wrote. Mozart's works for the violin, specifically his violin concertos, are performed tirelessly and are also a staple item in the student library. Joseph Joachim wrote cadenzas for the Mozart concertos and this would suggest that he also taught the music of Mozart to his students. Today, any music school or music festival audition will require violinists to prepare at least a movement from a Mozart concerto. This is also true of Bach's Solo Sonatas and Partitas. In this way, these works by both Mozart and Bach have become a standardized measure of violin proficiency which suggests that the training of

[7] Einstein, Alfred, and Nathan Broder. Mozart: His Character, His Work. Translated by Arthur Mendel, First ed. (Oxford University Press 1945) p. 114

modern violinists emphasizes interpretation, of Bach's G minor Solo Sonata or a Mozart violin concerto for example, as an essential means to becoming proficient on the instrument.

Johannes Brahms – Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 2 in A major Op. 100

The Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 2 in A major, Op. 100 was written by Johannes Brahms in 1886 while spending a summer in Thun in the Bernese Oberland, Switzerland. During his stay there, he was visited by the poet Klaus Groth and the young German contralto Hermine Spies. Quite taken by the captivating singer, Brahms wrote his *Fünf Lieder* (Op. 105) that summer with the voice of Spies in mind.[8] Several motifs from three of these songs are found interspersed throughout the second sonata for piano and violin. However, Brahms did not find his muse only in Spies, but also in the natural beauty of his surroundings. While much of Brahms' music may evoke scenes of alpine resplendence, his Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Violin is particularly vivid in its pastoral tone.

Brahms had previously worked closely with renowned violinist Joseph Joachim, seeking advice on how to write well for the violin. Brahms had even asked Joachim to write the cadenza for his Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77, not to mention collaborating extensively with the violinist refining the solo part in the rest of the monumental concerto.[9] Joachim was himself a

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[8] Potter, Tully. "The Brahms Violin Sonatas". Deutsche Grammophon. 2017

[9] Schwarz, Boris. "Joseph Joachim and the Genesis of Brahms's Violin Concerto." *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 69, no. 4, 1983, pp. 518-521. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/741978. Accessed 1 May 2021

composer and this was undoubtedly a significant factor which made the collaboration between Brahms and Joachim so effective. Joachim's ability to communicate compositional ideas through the nuanced language of a capable performer was to Brahms an indispensable resource. In 1886, however, their friendship had seen some conflict and they were not on good terms. The Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 2 was premiered in Vienna on 2 December 1886 with violinist Josef Hellmesberger Sr. (son of Joachim's violin teacher) and Brahms himself at the piano.

The first movement, *Allegro amabile*, opens with a gentle narration in the piano, the musical embodiment of "Once upon a time," answered with fleeting violin interjections. The second theme is especially rich in its composite texture as created by the interaction between the two instruments' differing rhythmic bodies. The second theme culminates in an assertive trumpet-like call of two repeated notes followed by a triplet, and it is this rhythmic figure that becomes the recurring material in the development section, at first with the same forcefulness as in its introduction, and then in a more reflective temper. The second movement, *Andante tranquillo,* functions almost like two different movements but interpolated into one another. It begins with a lullaby in a distant F major, and as the music falls quieter and quieter, the music slips into a scherzo-like reverie. The lullaby returns, but this time in D major. The music shifts once again between the two contrasting sections, and after one last iteration of the lullaby, the fleeting scherzo music closes the movement swiftly. The last movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, is written in sonata rondo form, where each subsequent episode is developed further than the last. In the final return to the refrain, the main theme undergoes a gradual yet certain expansion until the end.

The 19th century was a time in which familiar musical forms such as the symphony and chamber music were beginning to take on extra-musical meaning, and the chamber music of Brahms can be particularly allegorical. The second sonata for piano and violin is filled with themes from songs such as "Wie Melodien zieht es mir leise durch den Sinn," Op. 105 No. 1 and "Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer," Op. 105 No. 2, both of which Brahms wrote that same summer. Brahms' most emphatic allegorical musical devices apart from song quotations is his use of recurring themes across many different works. Perhaps the most recognized of these is Clara's theme, in which he encrypted his unrequitable love for her. For Brahms, "notes were their means of exchange of ideas, and made ideal gifts."[10] These hidden meanings embedded during the composition of the chamber works of Brahms offer the interpreting violinist a significant background which could only enhance the performance of the work. While the music is beautiful even without any knowledge of these encrypted themes and quotations, the interpreting violinist has the opportunity to inform their performance of the work by bringing these hidden elements to the foreground.

Ludwig van Beethoven – Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 9 "Kreutzer," Op. 47

The Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 9, Op. 47 was composed in 1803. It is most widely known as the "Kreutzer Sonata" dedicated to the renowned violinist and composer, Rudolphe

[10] Sams, Eric. Brahms and his Clara Themes." *The Musical Times* vol. 112, no. 1539, 1971, pp. 432–434. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/955945. Accessed 1 May 2021.

Kreutzer. However, this was not the original dedication. Beethoven premiered the sonata soon after its completion with the violinist George Bridgetower.[11] Bridgetower, a rising British violinist, had been concertizing in Dresden while visiting family in 1802, and later made his way to Vienna in 1803. After performing with Bridgetower, Beethoven was delighted with the violinist's playing, so much so that he intended to dedicate his sonata to him. Not long after, however, the two quarreled and Beethoven instead dedicated the sonata to the preeminent violinist and composer, Rudolphe Kreutzer. Ironically, Kreutzer, an ambassador of the acclaimed French Violin School, dismissed the work as not only "outrageously unintelligent," but also too difficult.[12] And so, Kreutzer never performed it. Indeed, the ninth is perhaps the most demanding of the ten sonatas for piano and violin, owing to its considerable length and breadth of expressive range. In his sketchbook of 1803 Beethoven described the 9th Sonata as one written in "uno stile molto concertante come d'un concerto," or "a very concertante style resembling a concerto," recognizing the grand scale of the work.

The first movement opens with an eruption of a cadenza in the violin alone. The piano answers more pensively, and the music is set on a course, building on an insistent two-note figure of a semitone, that leads to the *Presto*. This two-note figure serves as a central motive throughout the movement. While there are a few respites along the way, the movement as a whole is thor-

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[11] Solomon, Maynard. Beethoven. 2nd rev. ed. (Schirmer Books, 2001) p. 169

[12] Schwarz, Boris. "Beethoven and the French Violin School." *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 4, 1958, pp. 431-447. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/740706. Accessed 3 December 2020

oughly driven by motoric runs, rising and falling with marked velocity. After one final moment of solemn prayer, the movement comes crashing down with frightening fury to the end. The second movement, *Andante con variazioni*, offers a contrasting sense of peace and tenderness, considering the music that preceded it. The last movement –*Presto* – in contrast to the Sturm und Drang tempestuousness that pervades the first movement, is something more triumphant. Although equally driving as the first movement, the last beautifully transforms that feverish energy into a brilliant effervescence that most aptly concludes this concerto-like sonata.

Performances of the Beethoven sonatas for piano and violin, the *Kreutzer* especially, are met with considerable stylistic scrutiny. That is to say, Beethoven's sonatas must be performed in a style that is appropriate to the composer's musical period. This is also true of the music of Bach and Mozart. Today, that responsibility to be faithful to distinct styles of music rests with the interpreting violinist.

Recital No. 2

Johann Sebastian Bach – Sonata for Solo Violin No. 3 in C major BWV1005

The Sonata for Solo Violin No. 3 in C major BWV1005 was written during Bach's Cöthen Period between 1717 and 1723.[13] The third is the longest of the three sonatas from the seminal *Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato,* owing to the extensive second movement

[13] Buelow, George J., "Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)", A History of Baroque Music (Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 528

fugue. The works from this collection firmly established the violin as a capable solo instrument, even in the context of polyphonic music. The C major Sonata begins with an undulating *Adagio* that introduces one voice at a time eventually building to three and four-voice textures. A bridge connects the *Adagio* to the next movement, the *Fuga.* The subject of the fugue is derived from an anonymous melody recognized as a Lutheran hymn, which Bach also uses in the Chorale "Komm, Heiliger Geist" from his Cantata BWV 59. The fugue is an impressive articulation of contrapuntal ingenuity and poses a considerable challenge for the performer to bring out all of the internal complexity of independent lines intersecting one another, constantly shifting within the hierarchy of voices. The first of two expansive bariolage episodes is followed by an *al river-so* section where the subject is now inverted. The countersubject also, originally a descending chromatic line, is inverted into an ascending chromatic line. As in many of Bach's musical works, the architecture of the C major fugue is built around the significance of the Golden ratio. Of the 354 measures of the fugue, on the exact measure (m. 217) of the Golden mean, a cata-clysmic 4-voice C major chord mutates into C minor, taking the music through a tumultuous episode of tumbling subject fragments. The end of the second bariolage passage brings us back to a mirror recapitulation of the beginning of the fugue, only here the countersubject makes an earlier entrance within the exposition. The third movement, *Largo*, is a peaceful respite from the drama of the preceding fugue, that yearns for much needed space and collection. The final movement is a vibrant *Allegro assai* that brings rhythmic resilience and flowing runs of rapid notes together into a spirited expression of pure jubilance.

The solo violin works of Bach are today an essential part of the repertory, and this is true not only among performers, but students as well. In many ways, BWV1001–1006 is a treatise on violin technique, and it can be unforgiving. Joseph Joachim revived the solo violin works of Bach in the later 19th-century, and one particular performance of the C major fugue garnered not the kindest review by George Bernard Shaw. "Joachim scraped away frantically, making a sound after which an attempt to grate a nutmeg effectively on a boot sole would have been as the strain of an Aeolian harp…It was horrible!"[14] Nevertheless, Joachim's revival of these works has made them a permanent installment in the violinist's repertory. However, it was not until the 20th century that a dedicated effort was made to perform these works with historical aesthetic accuracy in mind. Historically informed performance or period performance has become a distinct area of specialization within classical music, and is an example of how concentrated the art of interpretation can be.

Eugène Ysaÿe – Sonata for Solo Violin No. 3 "Ballade" Op. 27

Eugène Ysaÿe is a quintessential example of the composing violinist. He began early violin studies with his father, but soon went on to study at the Liège Conservatoire with Henryk Wieniawski, at the recommendation of none other than Henri Vieuxtemps. Both Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps themselves were accomplished composing violinists, and Ysaÿe was now destined

[14] Eschbach, Robert E. "A Victorian Musician." *Joseph Joachim, 10 April 2021, https://josephjoachim.-com/2016/01/23/a-victorian-musician/#_edn15*

to continue the tradition of the performing composers. His Six Sonatas for Solo Violin are among his most celebrated works. After hearing Joseph Szigeti perform J.S. Bach's Solo Sonata in G minor, Ysaÿe was inspired to write a complementing set of six sonatas that reflected the evolution of violinistic idioms since Bach's time as well as some 20th-century compositional devices that were in vogue. Each sonata is dedicated to a notable violin virtuoso, and Sonata No. 3 "Ballade" is dedicated to George Enescu. Incidentally, while studying at the Vienna Conservatory, Enescu was hosted by Josef Hellmesberger Sr.[15], the violinist who premiered Johannes Brahms' Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 2 with the composer. Ysaÿe's Sonata No. 3, like his other five sonatas, exhibits characteristically quartal voicing and highly chromatic polyphony. Much of the sonata draws on the augmented triad as a source of nonconventional harmonic movement, and in a few passages even employs microtonal procedures. It opens with an enigmatic *Lento molto sostenuto* that paints the harmonic landscape that will serve as the background for the entire sonata. Ysaÿe wastes no time in challenging the violin and its capabilities to produce dense harmonic textures. As the introduction builds momentum, the music is propelled into the *Allegro tempo giusto e con bravura*. Perhaps as a nod to the baroque stylisms found in J.S. Bach's works that inspired these solo sonatas, Ysaÿe frequently punctuates his music with mordents and suspensions. In continual flux between tranquility and turmoil, the sonata finishes with a coda that thrashes through one final sequence before accelerating and going out with a decisive bang.

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[15] Malcolm, Noel. *George Enescu: His Life and Music*, with a preface by Sir Yehudi Menuhin (London: Toccata Press, 1990) p. 34

Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas for Solo Violin are in keeping with the works of celebrated performing composers, such as Henryk Wieniawski and Henri Vieuxtemps, in that they serve equally as a vehicle for artistic expression and as pedagogical material. These solo sonatas are notated with great detail as to articulation and fingerings, and even come with a thorough key of indications as prescribed by Ysaÿe–instructing on the part or amount of bow to be used, how to execute a 6-voice chord, on what string to play, what is with and without vibrato, etc.– and this gives us great insight on his philosophies on violin playing. Among Ysaÿe's pupils were Oscar Shumsky and Joseph Gingold, both of whom had a significant part in shaping the modern American school of violin playing.

Niccoló Paganini – Caprice for Solo Violin No. 1 in E major "The Arpeggio" Op. 1

Niccoló Paganini's 24 Caprices for Solo Violin, Op. 1 were composed between 1802 and 1817. They are written in the form of a set of études, and each explores a different technical skill, albeit at a most virtuosic level of difficulty. Paganini had later dedicated each caprice to a specific artist but at the time of the complete set's publication, the caprices were dedicated to "alli artisti" or simply "to the artists." Paganini's own annotated score dating from 1832 and 1840 reveals the artists to whom he dedicated each caprice, including Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (No. 5), the composer of the last work on this program.[16] Caprice No. 1 in E major was dedicated to Hen-

[16] Borer, P. (1995). The twenty-four caprices of Niccolò Paganini [PDF]. https://eprints.utas.edu.au/11438/2/Borer_Ch.1-3.pdf

ri Vieuxtemps. Often referred to as "The Arpeggio," the first caprice is an exercise in ricochet bowing, with a middle section of cascading runs in thirds.

Paganini's legendary status mostly speaks to his unrivaled level of virtuosic violin playing. However, it is worth noting that to have conceived the music that he also performed is itself a tremendous accomplishment that forever would change the way composers wrote for the instrument. The 24 Caprices achieve the paradoxical combination of redefining what is idiomatic violin writing and expanding on the technical possibilities of the instrument.

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst – Polyphonic Study for Solo Violin No. 6 "Die letzte Rose"

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst's life as a violinist and composer was deeply influenced by Niccolò Paganini. After hearing Paganini perform in Vienna in 1823, Ernst dedicated much of his time to studying the master's technical feats by following him on his concert tours and observing every performance. By this time Ernst was studying violin and composition at the Vienna Conservatory. Paganini, upon hearing the young Ernst play, ostensibly foresaw a brilliant career ahead for the young violinist. For Ernst, composition was a means to emulate Paganini's skills as a virtuoso violinist. They met again in Frankfurt, and there Ernst performed Paganini's *Nel cor più non mi sento* which had not yet been published, much to the composer's astonishment. After many years of concertizing around Europe, Ernst settled down in London, where he joined the Beethoven Quartet Society and performed Beethoven string quartets alongside Henryk Wieni-

awski, Joseph Joachim, and the cellist Afredo Piatti.[17] Ernst wrote his own set of études that rivals the technical complexities of Paganini's caprices. "Die letzte Rose" is the last of Ernst's Six Polyphonic Studies for Solo Violin and is based on an Irish folk melody to which Thomas Moore's poem "The Last Rose of Summer" is typically set. The work is written in the form of a theme and variations, and runs the gamut of violin technique. After a declamatory introduction, the main theme enters, gently accompanied with strums of left hand pizzicato. The first variation ventures through a myriad of complex chordal sequences which highlight the acrobatic independence of each voice in operation. The second variation embeds the theme into ricochet arpeggios. The third variation is comprised of block chords. Ernst's skills of contrapuntal writing can be heard here as imitative fragments emerge from the three and four-voice chords. In the fourth variation, pizzicato in the left-hand gets the theme, all the while accompanying itself with rising and falling waves of arpeggios. The theme is developed in the B section of the variation, where the pizzicato is replaced with artificial harmonics, accompanied by waves of arpeggios nevertheless. The final variation builds on the possibilities of writing in artificial harmonics, even with multiple voices.

Compositions as a Composing Performer

A significant component of my dissertation is the three compositions I have written and recorded, in the role of the composer in addition to interpreter. All three works are written for violin, as

[17] Rowe, Mark W. *Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst. Virtuoso Violinist* (Aldershot: Ashgate) 226

a solo or in some form of ensemble. The process of composition was a process of playing ideas on the violin. And so, in this instance, being a performer had informed my composing. At the same time, the process of composing encouraged me to view the works by Bach, Mozart, Brahms, etc., in novel analytical ways. This was particularly fascinating for my research on the Bach C major Solo Sonata as it allowed me to recognize the extensive organization in a work of such complexity.

The first of the three works is the *Rhapsody* for solo violin. The purpose of this work was to treat the instrument as a truly vocal and lyrical instrument. The entire work is in one voice. That is, there are no pronounced chords. Yet, underlying the inflections of the melodic line is a structure based on a system of harmony. The expectation is that each listener will hear a different implied harmony from the next listener. The composer violinists investigated in this dissertation wrote works that have also found educational purposes, that benefit the violinist who is refining their facility. *Rhapsody* is no such work as it was not conceived to challenge the polyphonic capability of the violin. Instead, the solo work is an étude not for the violinist's hands, but for alerting their aural imagination.

The second work is a violin duet titled *Incidental Music for Two Violins: Scenes of a Village.* While the music of *Rhapsody* was abstract in its conception, these short movements take inspiration from their respective titles. The first scene, *Idyll*, is a glimpse of a blissful summer afternoon in the mountains. The two violins mimic birds, a frog, and a grasshopper. The second

scene is a *Nocturne*. The quiet music is a dance between two stars orbiting one another. One celestial entity is B major, the other, C major. The two are very distinct keys, yet a particular arrangement of their pitch collections render an interesting consonant harmony. The pitches are arranged as follows:

Violin I in B major: E - F# - G# - A# - B B - C# - D# - E - F#

Viollin II in C major: C - D - E - F - G F - G - A - B - C

The last scene is a brisk dance that is at work in both lydian and mixolydian modes. The hybrid modal inflections create a characteristically folk sonority.

The third composition, *Scherzo*, is written for 8 violins. Typically, an ensemble with this many violins is found only in an orchestral setting, where an entire violin section shares the same part. An instrumentation such as this, where the eight violins each have individual parts, gives a composer the opportunity to explore endless textural and timbral possibilities. The *Scherzo* opens with all pistons firing. The ensemble quickly undergoes mitosis and enters an episode of butting forces, and the two resulting 4-part bodies create a stereophonic experience as the music jumps from one group to the other. After a tumultuous introduction, the music becomes increasingly expressive despite an unrelenting pulse. The unescapable pulse culminates in a break in time. The B section of the scherzo, *lento,* is essentially metered atemporality. Instead of an incessant pulse, there is but a murmur of a current on top of which sinuous lamentations soar. The A section returns not without a commotion. Fragments and permutations of the secondary motive

bump and crash into one another like excited atoms, until the eight violins fuse together once again and heat up until they reach a point of spontaneous combustion.

After a close examination of the history of violin performance since the 19th century, the decline of the composing violinist can be attributed to an evolution in the art of performance. At one time, composition and performance were one and the same. However, starting with Joseph Joachim's reinstatement of the works of Bach and Beethoven, violin performance was beginning to look more at past works as a source of both artistic exploration and pedagogical material. As the violin canon expanded with Bach's Solo Sonatas and Partitas, Mozart's violin concertos, and Beethoven's violin sonatas, violinists were called upon to specialize in interpreting and performing these masterpieces, simultaneously entailing their distancing from composition. Today, it is unthinkable that any formal training in violin performance would neglect the works of Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven, and they have become the standard by which music institutions and conservatories measure a violinist's proficiency. Additionally, the works of composing violinists have consistently contributed to the advancement of the violin idiom. Paganini, Ernst and Ysaÿe, all composing violinists, have pushed the boundaries of the violin's technical and expressive capabilities, and their individual works offer invaluable insights to their respective philosophies on violin performance. During the course of preparing for and giving my dissertation performances, I have seen a growth in myself as a violinist and attribute this to my compositional activities. Engaging myself as a composing violinist led me to examine all of the works I performed from a

compositional standpoint. The Bach C major fugue in particular benefited from my deeper understanding of its harmonic architecture as studied as a composer; rather than attempting to learn an endless sequence of chords, I could now organize the same aggregate of notes into an elegant expression of multiple voices. Furthermore, on the philosophy of making music at a broader level, the concept of "correct notes" is eclipsed by what I see with harmonic and musical clarity as "unmistakable notes." In this way, even when I am performing Bach's C major Sonata, I am vicariously *composing* my way through the entire work. This investigation began on the premise that there is value in composition for the interpreting violinist, and my experience as a composing violinist throughout this dissertation project has only strengthened my belief in this view. Young violinists today will study Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven–and will most definitely benefit from doing so–but they can also be encouraged to study themselves through their instrument. The instrument as a compositional tool enables a violinist to navigate their strengths and weaknesses, for it is when we truly create music, through composition as well as interpretation, that we reveal what we are actually capable of performing.

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This article explores the relationships Joachim had with his compositional colleagues, Brahms and the Schumanns, and discusses his role as a consultant to Brahms, in particular, as a violinist. His proficiency at the instrument proves to be an essential element to Brahms's compositional education as regards to how to write well for the instrument. Here, again, the critically important relationship between composition and performance is brought under examination.

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